Coming off the heels of last year’s 50th anniversary celebration of the Urban Studies concentration at Brown, this year’s edition of the Urban Journal showcases the bold and exciting directions the program is heading. The tenth installment of the Urban Journal spans multiple forms of expressive media, from photography to illustration to poetry to persuasive writing. These submissions grapple with urban phenomena in a local, national, or global setting. These student works truly stretch and bend the meaning of “urbanism.”

Included works explore how the city manifests in one’s self and why humans behave the way they do in urban spaces. They also explore contemporary issues in the city setting, including long-term sustainability, economic stimulants, annexation, and zoning hurdles. Works also celebrate, grieve, question, and promote recent happenings in Providence, Brown’s own backyard. These are only a few of the topics you will encounter in these works, and I am sure you will leave this Journal with many new-found questions and insights.

The contributors to this year’s journal come from a variety of backgrounds, and each brings aspects of their experiences to their work. Each writer’s contribution is shaped by the people they know, the places they spend time, and the cultures they embody. Especially this year, the works show just how many lenses can be deployed to study the urban. Every one of these submissions make me very excited for the future of Urban Studies at Brown and in the world at large. I hope you take as much away from these submissions as I have.
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Overview: In my artistic journey, I delve into the urbanism of the body. As an abstract sculptor and installation artist, my work is not merely a reflection of physical forms but a dynamic exploration of the mental and emotional landscapes within the urban context. Inspired by my personal experiences, including episodes of uncontrollable psychosis and the discovery of a cyst in my brain, my sculptures embody a unique dialogue between the intricacies of the mind and its environment. By fusing elements of brain function awareness, meditation, and introspection into my abstract expressionist pieces, I seek to create a synergy between the internal realms of consciousness and the external dynamics of living within urban fabrics. Each sculpture, with its deliberate size, elevation, and play of light and shadow, acts as a contemplative space within the urban landscape, inviting observers to explore the urbanism of their own bodies and minds. In this way, my art serves as a catalyst for a more profound understanding of the interconnectedness between mental well-being and the urban experience, offering a unique perspective on the urbanism of the body as it navigates the complexities of life. Two of my works, Subtle and Elevation are shown here.

“Subtle” (2023) (right)
Materials: plastic, wire, light
Dimensions: 12” x 5” x 5.5”

The showcased lamp is part of a collection strategically positioned to create an immersive environment. These unassuming yet abundant pieces, through their deliberate play of light and shadow, transform the surrounding space into a haven of serenity and contemplation. Within the narrative of my artistic journey, these lamps symbolize the urbanism of the body, inviting observers to explore the intricacies of their mental and emotional landscapes within the urban context. Each carefully placed lamp, with its intentional size and placement, contributes to the mission of fostering contemplative spaces in the urban landscape. As viewers engage, the cumulative effect prompts reflections on the interconnectedness between mental well-being and the external dynamics of urban living. These hanging lamps serve as gateways, offering a tangible and thought-provoking experience that delves into a deeper understanding of the self within the complexities of urban existence.
Subtle and Elevation
In this piece, where size, elevation, and the interplay of light and shadow converge, the artwork serves as a visual chronicle of my journey from mental turmoil to clarity after the discovery of a brain cyst. Blending the simplicity of Minimalism with the profound depth of Surrealism, the piece becomes a captivating embodiment of urban resilience. The intentional choices in size and elevation, coupled with the dynamic play of light and shadow, symbolize not only a personal transformation but also mirror the complexities of navigating mental well-being in the urban landscape. This artwork unironically takes on the appearance of a landscape model, adding an intriguing layer to its narrative. It becomes a metaphorical exploration of the resilience required within the urban fabric, inviting viewers to engage with the narrative of urbanism and self-discovery. As observers immerse themselves in this piece, they partake in a visual journey that resonates with the challenges and triumphs of finding clarity amidst the intricacies of urban existence.

Evolving from my artistic repertoire, this piece introduces a captivating twist by incorporating internal illumination, infusing a fresh and dynamic dimension into my exploration of the urbanism of the body. The light, emanating from within, not only enhances the visual spectacle but also plunges the viewer into a heightened state of introspection and tranquility. It stands as a symbolic beacon, marking my continued quest for mental and perceptual clarity within the intricate tapestry of urban life. This work, building on the foundation of Elevation, becomes a luminous metaphor, enticing observers to navigate the intricate dialogue between mind, body, and ever-evolving urban environment. The internal illumination becomes not just feature but also pulsating expression, offering a riveting and contemplative journey through the urbanism of the body.

In this intriguing iteration within the same project, the interplay of light takes center stage as the piece is photographed in two distinct states: one bathed in darkness, the other illuminated by the ambient glow of the room. With the lights off, the artwork unveils a mysterious and enigmatic facet, shrouded in shadows that invite the viewer to explore unseen depths within the urbanism of the body. Conversely, when the lights are on, more surface is exposed and less depth. This dual photographic presentation encapsulates a dynamic narrative, showcasing the duality of urban experiences and the profound impact of light on our perceptions of self within the ever-evolving cityscape.
Subtle and Elevation
Airports
By Mason Scurry

i love airports.

i love the chaos, the hustle and bustle, the thousands of people with their plans and their boredom.

i love them for different reasons than i used to.

when i was a kid, i loved airports. i loved the airport bathrooms, because they were crowded and busy and clean and people were moving quickly.

i loved the treat that was watching movies on the planes, i loved watching the flight attendants buckle buckles that kept nobody safe, and i loved yogurt parfaits.

i loved the window seat the most, and my sister and i fought each other for it. when i won our battle i’d move the window cover up and down, open and closed, and do the same with the tray table. the seat on an airplane is prime play territory, so many things to do, so many things to keep me occupied.

it’s more difficult to keep myself occupied than it used to be.

well, really, it’s much easier. i’m not really ever bored anymore. how could i be? with my laptop and phone and second phone and classes and business and book and blog and more friends and apps and travel plans than i know what to do with.

there’s something to be said about neglecting to plan.

because, as you already know, nothing goes according to plan.

we like to pretend otherwise, especially in airports.

in airports, things are planned carefully. flights are scheduled, bags are checked, security is tight, and everything, must always, go according to plan.

when things don’t go according to plan (and they never do) airports, airplanes, travelers, staff crumble. delays and canceled flights and overbooked hotels and lost baggage and revised seat assignments are just a few threats in the airport. maybe that’s why we all have our ears plugged with airpods and headphones and our eyes blinded by flashing pixels. it distracts us from the terror, the stress of traveling. because there is so much that could go wrong, and for some reason nobody believes in their ability to handle mistakes
when traveling.

i don’t really understand if we’re being honest.

to me, airports are not that different from everyday life. the only real difference is we’re all going somewhere, and we’re here because we’re going somewhere, and we all know exactly where we’re going.

because of that, we need to get there as fast, as easily as possible. and we can’t stand for mistakes, because airports are wastes of time, they are some in-between, no man’s land, places nobody really wants to be because airports are never the destination.

c’mmon now.

can’t we learn to appreciate the journey like we used to?
“Hope” and “The Gate”  
By Ciprian Buzilla

Overview: As an artist turned architectural historian, I have always been fascinated by the synergy of art and architecture. For me, it forms an endless cycle: I explore the intersectionality between art and architecture through the lens of my camera. Whether writing about urbanism or architecture, it is impossible for me not to view my subjects through my camera—a second pair of eyes, sometimes the first. Both “The Gate” and “Hope” were captured during a trip to the Loire Valley in France. I employ my camera to capture the interplay between architecture, the surrounding landscape, and light.

“The Gate”

“The Gate,” as an artwork, represents to me the symbolic venue for beauty in the world; it was photographed at Castle Saint Aignan, a small town on the Cher River. To me, the open
Gate symbolizes freedom, with the sunset backdrop enhancing the sense of liberation and the pursuit of new horizons.

“Hope”

“Hope” is, like the subject in the photograph, an intersection between the external and inner worlds, a place for reflecting on this continuous change and exchange. “Hope” was taken at Chenonceau Castle in France, constructed on a bridge in the 16th century. I was intrigued by the juxtaposition of “living” on a bridge, a heterotopic experience where at least two former architectural layers are juxtaposed. What fascinated me most was the concept of a view, an opening to the natural world, simultaneously enclosed by window panes. The changing light and shadows underscored the idea that everything is in a constant state of transformation.
Grey Nature
By Sophia Decherney

Blue-grey concrete, scratchy with the scraping of surrounding sneakers
Adidas, scrape, Converse, scccccape, Nike, scraaape
Blue-grey concrete solid from afar, porous when scrutinized
Little bubbles of air bursting through solidifying concrete magma, frozen in time

Rocks — little misshapen ones nestled between big square ones
Nature’s invention between man’s
Shiny silver wrappings floating on the tops
Flaunting their polished capes against the ashen world

Tall branches stretching up and up and out towards the sky
Tall branches falling down and down and crashing in slow motion towards the sidewalk
Small branches supported in between two sturdy poles
Prickly hedges pricking the air

The smell of descending misty cloud
Cloaking the grey street in an even greyer haze
Mixing with the smell of smog
The people too give in to the stultifying mist

A still and quiet morning
People and cars and buses and scooters and motorcycles sleepwalk through the streets
Identical white cars glisten from within the haze
Uniform white-trimmed windows neatly reflect the mirrored city

Unidentifiable blue spray paint breaks the monochrome landscape
Clearly marking something unknown,
As does a tall rectangle jutting out skyward above the rest
The smaller squares fading into the smoky skyline
Swimming with the Sharks: The National Aquarium as an Asset, Burden, And Symbol of Changing Municipal Financing Strategies

By Nicole Samios

Introduction

In 1950, Baltimore, Maryland was the country’s sixth most populous city. Largely a product of southern migration during the 1910s and 20s for war-time industrial manufacturing work at Bethlehem Steel, Baltimore saw its population grow by nearly 200,000 during the first thirty years of the twentieth century.1 This influx of workers spurred development—for example, housing units in Northeast Baltimore alone increased from 279 to 14,000 between 1900 and 1939.2 However, in the year 1950, although a peak year in terms of population, the city of Baltimore began a slow but definite decline in population, housing growth, and overall safety. Federally funded and racially motivated migration to the suburbs resulted in only 35,000 residents remaining in the city by the 1960s.3 Beginning in 1950, census data shows consistent outmigration from the downtown area towards the suburbs. Retail and economic activity followed its patrons, and the new highways created by the Highway Act of 1956 changed the visual language of shopping districts, centering them around beltways and relocating manufacturing to industrial parks rather than brick waterfront warehouses.4

The overall effect was a vacated downtown Baltimore, and the port, once the hub of commerce, was left as a memorial to a once thriving steel-dependent city. In an effort to revitalize this former heart of Baltimore, planners centered redevelopment efforts in 1976 on the Inner Harbor, with the centerpiece being the National Aquarium. In the National Aquarium’s financial reports, it boasts strong numbers as both a magnet for tourist revenue and a prominent employer. As the focal point of a changing waterfront, it is disheartening that the economic effects of the aquarium are very narrow as seen by the average income of families living in the area. Although the Inner Harbor Community Statistical Area boasts a median household income average of $104,058, its neighboring communities Downtown/Seton Hall and Harbor East/Little Italy have averages of $59,158 and $61,235, respectively.5 This paper seeks to evaluate the actual fiscal benefit of the National Aquarium to Baltimore and illustrate how the National Aquarium, despite its asserted success at drawing in tourism dollars, employing Baltimore workers, and stimulating nearby businesses, is unable to successfully benefit the local economy due to its tax exemption status, its reliance on funding for maintenance, and its location.

National Aquarium and Inner Harbor Development

The National Aquarium was proposed in 1976 by the housing commissioner for Baltimore city, Robert Embry Jr., in an effort to generate tourism and spur development. Funding for
the National Aquarium came from city general funds that were sourced from a $7.5 million bond issue as well as money from the sale of the Baltimore-Washington International Airport to the state of Maryland. The end cost of the project was $21 million, with community buy-in measured by a referendum. Today, the aquarium justifies its sticker price through its impressive numbers in tourism and employment. It is reported that $1 of every $6 dollars in tourist spending is from the aquarium. In 2022, almost 70 percent of all aquarium visitors were from outside of Maryland, and 80 percent from outside Baltimore. In terms of stimulating nearby retail revenue, half of visitors eat at local restaurants during their visit, and a quarter shop at local stores. This infusion of funds from outside Baltimore is essential, as “municipal officials equate fiscal sustainability with entrepreneurial efforts to attract outside investment. They view revenues derived primarily from nonresidents—like sales and other taxes assessed on commercial activity—as ‘good,’ while viewing those that burden residents as ‘bad.’” This “good” tourist revenue is coupled with the positive contribution the aquarium makes through employing 3,397 workers, creating an amplified effect of $153.5 million dollars through its employees’ individual income taxes. Thus, one would assume that despite the $21 million cost of the aquarium, its catalytic effect in drawing additional indirect tourist revenue and the gains from employee income tax would far outweigh the cost.

The National Aquarium estimates its generated revenue across the state of Maryland as totalling “$1.3 billion in economic impact and $109 million in state and local tax revenue.” This number is partially inflated as it includes the supply chain workers manufacturing products for the aquarium and assumes employees at the aquarium will reinvest their wages in the local economy. The inaccuracy of this assumption is seen in how different the conditions of the Inner Harbor are in relation to the surrounding neighborhoods in Baltimore City. Despite the many ways in which the aquarium generates tourism and employment opportunities, the reality is that its impact report brushes over the many ways in which the aquarium’s finances pull money from the city of Baltimore and burden the residential tax payers.

**Reality of National Aquarium Revenues: Property Tax Exemption**

In 1979, the National Aquarium filed for 501(c) tax exemption status, relieving it from the cost of income tax and property tax. Looking at the aquarium’s 2022 revenue/expense report, only 0.15 percent of operating expenses represented tax payments to the city of Baltimore. The average resident in Baltimore is expected to pay 3.2 percent on income, $2.248 per $100 of assessed value on personal property, and $1.10 per $100 of assessed value on real property. As Baltimore’s property values have increased 20.6 percent over the last three years, and the property tax rate within the city is more than double the rate of the county overall, Baltimore residents are forced to withstand extensive increases in tax payments relative to their neighboring suburbs. The rate of the property tax is so crippling that city residents pushed for a 44 percent reduction in the property tax in 2022, though failed to bring about actual tax reform. Baltimore residents currently pay such high taxes that it has begun to push people out, contributing to a strikingly high vacancy rate of 6 percent, in comparison to 4 percent in stable communities. Thus, the privilege granted to the aquarium through non-profit exemption allows it to operate as a tax haven, while its
neighbors carry the tax base burden—a stressor so great that it forces many to vacate the city.\textsuperscript{15}

Further exacerbating this issue of property tax exemption is the privilege of free rent granted to the aquarium. In the original agreement, Baltimore agreed to “not require annual rental payments” from the aquarium with the lease term extending until 2049 and promised to renew the lease for additional ten year periods.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, the land and building, valued at $37,926,300,\textsuperscript{17} belong to the National Aquarium free of charge while property valuations (and therefore taxes) are only increasing. Entities with 501(c) exemptions are abundant in Baltimore, as 19 percent of the state’s tax-exempt property is located within the Baltimore city limits.\textsuperscript{18} The Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements that the city formed with non-profit organizations, predominantly Johns Hopkins-owned properties, only pay a total of $6 million in annual contributions. The total property tax revenue from these institutions in 2019 would have been $120 million if they had been taxed at a rate consistent with other residents.\textsuperscript{19} Thus, although the aquarium generates revenues and employs several thousand employees, it is afforded various tax privileges that allow it to occupy land at quite a significant discount while its neighbors bear the brunt of increasing tax rates.

**Reality of National Aquarium Revenues: Maintenance Cost**

In the preliminary contract that the aquarium entered into with the city of Baltimore, it stated that the aquarium must “operate the facilities on a self-sustaining basis, dedicating its excess of revenue over expenses for exhibit additions, replacements and renovations.”\textsuperscript{20} However, the aquarium continues to request money from both the state and local coffers as its infrastructure deteriorates. In 2023, the aquarium requested “a favorable report for the $3 million included in the Governor’s Fiscal Year 2024 Capital Budget for the National Aquarium.” The aquarium planned to use this money to support “critical infrastructure projects at the National Aquarium, allowing [them] to address necessary repairs to [their] 40-year-old building” as a part of their “rigorous eight-year Capital Improvement Plan outlining over $90 million in capital needs.”\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, in 2021 the “Aquarium was awarded $7 million in capital grant awards from the state of Maryland for the RainForest Glazing Project expenditures.”\textsuperscript{22} In the Aquarium’s impact and financial report, it also thanks “the Citizens of Baltimore County,” and the “Maryland State Department of Education,” for each contributing grants between $100,000 and $999,999.\textsuperscript{23} Clearly, based on the grant requests to both the city and state, the National Aquarium struggles to hold up its side of the original contract with the city. Yet, this seems to be a predictable, inevitable aspect of a tourist-based economy. A report on Baltimore’s investments in tourist amenities concluded that “building a tourist sector is not a one-time expense. In addition to maintenance and infrastructure costs for existing attractions, tourism requires constant reinvestment in new facilities to remain competitive with other cities pursuing their own tourism strategies.”\textsuperscript{24} Given the “$109 million in state and local tax revenue” that the Aquarium generates, one would assume that they have more than ample funds to maintain their facilities. But rather, they dip into already struggling municipal and state coffers.
The final way in which the National Aquarium fails to deliver its promised benefit to Baltimore is caused by its location on the Inner Harbor, which prevents its revenue from being invested in the city. The Inner Harbor has been the site of targeted investment since the withdrawal of manufacturing from the port. In 1963, Mayor Theodore McKeldin called for a new planned urban center at the harbor and pushed for the acquisition of the 250 acre district, most of which was taken through eminent domain.25 His initial plan was for a "federally funded public housing project called "Inner Harbor West" but its funding was cut within a year." In 1971, his final plan for the area included a convention center and shops, in addition to the aquarium as a way to draw commercial revenue to the area.27 The Mayor's ideological shift is a testament to the policy and privatization initiatives during the 1970s and 1980s which "worsened the urban crisis in Baltimore by gradually undermining the ability of Baltimore's residents, especially those with low incomes and African Americans, to influence decision-making that impacted their city."28 Instead, "urban policies compelled Baltimore's officials to link the city's future to the profit-making potential of its business community at the expense of efforts to combat poverty."29 Today, these trends in prioritizing capital rather than need persist in the Inner Harbor. This is largely due to the approval of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in Maryland as a funding strategy in 1980. TIF works by promising developers all future property taxes generated from development in the district as a way of incentivizing construction without the municipality having to provide the upfront capital for the project. The TIF process circumnavigates the democratic process, as it does not require a referendum in the same way that a general obligation bond would. "In this way, cities obtain capital by turning the rights to their own heterogeneous property tax base into standardized, tradable assets—often without the knowledge of the individual property owners paying their tax bills."30 Harbor Point, Harbor View, Locust Point, and the Baltimore Convention Center Hotel are all TIF-funded projects within a mile from the National Aquarium. This is essential in explaining why the National Aquarium hasn't functioned as the catalyst for spurring beneficial urban development that it was promised to be. Catalysts are defined by their "traffic-generating effects that can spur physical development across private property lines and, therefore, raise questions of the merits of public subsidy."31 A catalyst is only effective when it is "properly sited, designed, and linked to its surroundings" through "pathways, distances, starting and ending points, and retail destinations through which the catalyst connects...to surrounding establishments."32 This is most likely to occur when the pedestrian is able to access other retail destinations within 700 feet. In analyzing the location of the National Aquarium, it becomes clear that due to its positioning on the harbor, with the visitor recommended parking structure located across the street, the majority of pedestrians are not leveraged by a catalytic planning model. The retail venues located within this 700 foot barrier that the aquarium reports to support include The Cheesecake Factory, Chick-Fil-A, and a Hard Rock Cafe. Thus, the statistics boasting that half of visitors order from local restaurants during their visit may not translate to a booming local economy where Baltimore-based stakeholders collect the revenue, but rather international franchises winning the payout.

Another reason why the location of the Aquarium inhibits a catalytic economic benefit is
due to the nearby TIF districts. In TIF districts, any increase in property value created by a catalytic hub is not pocketed by the city, but rather collected as an increment by a private investor. Despite other regions of Baltimore needing development and commercial districts, Harbor Point was included as a TIF sponsored “enterprise zone,” even though it was classified as being too wealthy to technically qualify. These new harbor projects poach “business from the older, unsubsidized, and therefore more expensive properties” meaning areas that support the tax base struggle to stay afloat while TIF areas succeed. In the TIF for Harbor Place, it is predicted that the end cost of the project, outside of the $125M public investment for the project, will “cost city and state taxpayers $88 million in forgone tax revenue.” Thus, although Baltimore sees TIF as a way of attracting development and cultivating a thriving waterfront, the increases in property value created through a commercial district are not pocketed by the city and are often paid for by the citizens. As a result, despite the National Aquarium’s location in a prime commercial zone with surrounding new construction, the foot traffic that it brings to the area does not necessarily serve the city as much as it pays back developers and supports international stakeholders.

Conclusion

Jed Walentas, a prominent New York developer once asserted, “What is tourism? It’s people who work 50 weeks a year, then put all their money in a bag, come here, and throw it in the air. Then they go home without consuming health care or education or anything. It’s the greatest return on investment you could ask for.” He claims the best money a city can attract is that of the out-of-towner. Yet, a report on Baltimore’s tourism funding strategies found “the city is often last in line to get a return on its investment in tourist-industry businesses” and, sadly, “funds from tourism are not all reinvested back into the community.” In fact, during the time of Mayor Schaefer, who founded the aquarium, “the city increased spending on economic development by 400%” while simultaneously cutting “spending on education and social welfare by 25%.” Similar trends are mimicked in other downtown areas trying to use aquariums to stimulate development and tourism. In 1995, the Tampa-based Florida Aquarium was built and, within 8 months, reported a $1.5 million operating deficit, while simultaneously being tax-exempt to the city. The National Aquarium is an apt case study in illustrating the value and cost of a municipal investment in tourism. The Aquarium advertises its many benefits to the broader Baltimore region, including sales tax revenue, employment opportunities, and increased visitor foot traffic. Though these perks of the aquarium provide a sense of pride and magnetism to the Inner Harbor, other factors prevent the local government and tax base from fully benefiting from the aquarium. These factors include tax exemptions, costs for maintenance, and the aquarium’s location. The Inner Harbor and Baltimore’s efforts to revitalize the area through TIF and tourism demonstrates the trickle-down approach that the city uses in supporting its residents. Perhaps tax reforms to make the property tax rate competitive for both residents and developers, as well as renegotiating PILOT agreements to help alleviate the property tax burden on residents, is a more effective municipal finance strategy.
Arena
By Sarkis Antonyan

Overview: My 5-image photography series “Arena” documents a trip I took to San Francisco, California in March 2022. Using black and white 35mm film, I investigated the mystical, pensive, and melancholic undertones of the city, focusing on roads and walkways. These downtown areas were fast-paced, semi-abandoned, shadowy, and cerebral.
The Coffee Shop
By Spencer Francis

Overview: Here follows some thoughts on the closing of a coffee shop copied out of a diary entry. The photograph following the writing depicts children’s drawings attached to the door of the shop in the days before and after its closure.

I don’t know that I have ever fallen in love with a place as quickly as I did with The Shop, a quirky little coffee stop on Wickenden Street. I feel, like most first lovers, as if I will never love again.

Every morning on my way to work, I would eagerly dismount my bicycle in front of the cozy modernist shack and order a cappuccino. It would take 5-10 minutes for the man behind the counter to complete the order, but I never minded one bit. I would wait in that place forever if I had to. I wish I could describe The Shop in a way that didn’t contradict itself. The interior was farmhouse, in a victorian sort of way, and bohemian with a minimalist bent. Altogether itself in way a that was warm, inviting, and… well, like home. But once my coffee was made I would wrest myself from The Shop’s charybdic hold and continue on my trek. That is until today when, from a glass door wallpapered with kind notes and crayon drawings, I learned The Shop had closed for good.

I knew it was coming. For the entire time I knew it, The Shop was listed on Google as “The Shop’s Last Dance” before it was changed to “The Shop’s Final Countdown.” It is a sort of foreboding I chose to ignore. If not ignore, then perhaps smother. Coffee this good was certain to be around for a long time.

I suppose it explains the distance that I sensed whenever I visited. The apprehension on the owner’s face at acquiring a new regular, so late in the life of his business. It was the sort of distance that an old man imposes on a child playing at his feet. “I love you too, child,” both say, with shaky hands and weak voice, “but you don’t know what is coming for me… or how soon.”

In its place now stands a different coffee shop. No doubt, it is someone else’s first love, but it only reminds me of what is gone.

It feels embarrassingly like grief for coffee, but it is really grief for a place.
And yet, I cannot help but feel I have touched something unique to urban life. To fall in love with a hole in the wall; the sort of place that can only exist in the tight and crowded corners of a city. To go there every day. To truly treasure it. To piece together a biography of the owner through snippets of conversation overheard from frequent customers. To spread the word to everyone you know; and then on second thought, spread the word only to those you think are worthy. To see this all come to a close.
Now I and a few others who shared this magical place, have one thing in common which no one else in the history of the world has ever or will ever again.

Goodnight and goodbye, the Shop.
The shop has been a special place to all who have known it. Now it’s coming to an end. I hope you will come in and say goodbye. The shop will be open 24/7. Don’t keep it full all the time and when it is empty, remember us. That is all we could ask for. Thank the shop for all it has been to me for so long. I hope it is as special to you as it is to me.

-Nikolai

We will miss the shop.

We love it!
Prismatica!
By Eddie Woods

Overview: On a February walk downtown with Brown-Providence Original Photography (B-POP), a photo club on campus, I was pleasantly surprised to stumble across the Prismatica art installation! We had a great time seeing what kinds of photos we could capture through the reflective prisms. Public art is one of my favorite parts of urban living. Prismatica is part of the larger Lumina light festival in downtown Providence. The installation consists of 25 rotating prisms standing 6 feet tall and create a rainbow of refracted colors. Prismatica is courtesy of Quartier des Spectacles International.
Portland’s Urban Growth Boundary and Happy Valley City
By Caitlyn Carpenter

Overview: This research examines the development and fiscal impacts of the Portland Urban Growth Boundary’s expansion on the nearby municipality Happy Valley City.

Located about 10 miles southeast of downtown Portland, OR and deemed one of the metropolitan area’s “best-kept secrets,” Happy Valley City provides a suburban, small-town alternative to typical city life. While today the city boasts a population of about 26,000 residents, for most of its history until 1990, it was home to less than 1,500 individuals. The city was without electricity or paved roads until 1925, and wasn’t officially incorporated until forty years later. Incorporation—the result of a mere 111 to 66 vote—came in an effort to maintain the quaint image of the area’s past and resist annexation by the neighboring, ever-growing and urbanizing City of Portland. To this day, Happy Valley City continues to emphasize its “small town character within the vast and urbanizing metro area,” despite its growing population and modern development efforts. Yet, even though it has retained its nominal independence, its land use patterns have not remained without influence from the city it has consistently defined itself in contrast to: Portland. Instead of direct annexation by Portland, Happy Valley City has been impacted by way of incorporation into Portland’s infamous Urban Growth Boundary.

An Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) sets a physical limit to development, preventing it from spreading into rural or forested areas and maintaining a strict green-gray divide. Within the boundary, a local government will zone for higher density development, while the land on the other side is kept for farm and forest usage. In theory, a UGB artificially inflates the value of developable land by virtue of restricting its supply. However, the impacts of UGBs on land values and development patterns are widely contested among urban scholars. Today, Happy Valley City is entirely located within Portland’s UGB. However, only about half of the city’s land area was included in the initial establishment of the UGB in 1979 and 1980. The other half of the city was brought into the boundary after a set of expansions in 1998 and 2002, meaning it has only been designated for development for two decades (see Figure 1). Thus, Happy Valley City provides an interesting case study for examining long-term hyper-local impacts of the implementation and expansion of a UGB in a city’s outlying suburb. In this way, it can be used as an example for similar municipalities who may face incorporation into the UGBs of their neighboring major city.
This study uses Happy Valley City’s unique relationship with the UGB to analyze the long-term fiscal and development impacts of UGB expansion in outlying suburbs. Across all instances of historical UGB boundary expansions in Happy Valley City, there is little to no significant difference in present-day land values—although there is a strong positive correlation between the year a property was built and its value—but there is a notable difference in zoning designations directly across the lines of UGB expansion. These findings serve to support recent literature on the boundary that indicate the UGB as a lesser factor in determining land values compared to population trends, income per capita, and others. They ultimately show that the artificial restriction of development does have some long-term impact on the nature of a city’s growth. By staggering development across each half of the city, Portland’s UGB sectioned Happy Valley City into land use patterns it otherwise may not have been subject to, relegating denser development to the newer half and more residential development to the older. In doing so, it acts at odds with the local control the city has emphasized for over a century and lessens some of its control over the future of its “small town character.”

**Historical Context & Significance**

Originating from the country’s first statewide planning law in 1979, Oregon’s Senate Bill 100 (SB100), and governed by the country’s only elected regional government, the Metro, the Portland UGB has received significant attention by urbanists, economists, and environmentalists alike. The UGB touches or engulfs 23 cities and three counties and, since its implementation in 1979, has expanded by nearly 32,000 acres. To expand the UGB, the
Metro must determine that there is a need for new development to support a growing population. By far, the largest year of UGB expansion came in 2002 when it opened over 19,000 acres of land for development, much of it located southeast of Portland, directly around and within Happy Valley City. Over the course of the decade prior to this expansion, Happy Valley City had seen a 197.5% increase in population, with population jumping from 2,288 in 1990 to 4,519 in 2000. Whereas prior to the 20th century, such population growth and suburban spillover may have been managed by annexation of Happy Valley City into Portland proper or adjustment of local boundaries themselves, it was instead managed by expansion of the UGB.

Just as Happy Valley City opposed annexation by Portland upon its incorporation in 1965, it also opposed inclusion into the area’s UGB as it saw the boundary as a similar means of losing local control to the larger city. This falls in line with broader trends across the twentieth century, as localities across the U.S. viewed local autonomy as the best means of providing adequate public services, thereby making annexations less common. “[Municipalities] were not rejecting the growth of development,” states historian Kenneth Jackson, “but were expressing a determination to control the physical and social environment in which they lived.” Portland’s UGB threatened local control, nominally encouraging development of the small city within UGB borders and barring development outside of it. When the idea for a UGB was first introduced after the passage of SB100, Happy Valley City also opposed it. The City’s discontentment with statewide planning efforts would culminate in a legal battle with the state over minimum density requirements—a battle which they would ultimately lose.

Therefore, the extent to which the expansion of the UGB impacted land values and development patterns in Happy Valley City reflects the extent to which the city lost local control over the expansion of its built environment. Finding a distinct difference in development between lots on the borders of areas incorporated into the UGB at one, two, or even eighteen years apart from one another indicates that it was the expansion of a regionally-controlled boundary, rather than the decisions of Happy Valley City itself, that caused such disparities.

**Methodology and Findings**

This analysis examined all tax lots located directly on a UGB expansion boundary line—as dictated by the city’s publicly available ArcGIS map, referred to as the “source map” in this paper—with both sides located within Happy Valley’s city limits. Four types of boundaries are identified: (1) 1979 to 1980; (2) 1980 to 2002; (3) 1990 to 2002; and (4) 1980 to 1998. A total of 578 lots were surveyed across the four types of boundaries. Lots directly along the boundary were chosen to determine whether the boundary itself dictates a stark contrast between its two sides. The value of each lot is approximated using Zillow.com’s Zestimate, which approximates a property’s market value using an independent algorithm. Not all properties could be found on Zillow and not all of those that could be found on Zillow had a Zestimate available. Lots without an address, notated as “NO SITUS” on the source map, are considered undeveloped or an empty plot. Zestimate per square foot is calculated...
This survey found that the UGB has remained largely effective in dictating when development occurred. Across all parcels examined, the vast majority of lots along the boundary were constructed after the introduction or expansion of the UGB into each respective area. In the 1998 and 2002 parcels, about one third of lots do not have a “Year Built” on record, indicating they have yet to be developed. This is in contrast to only 14.6% and 10.9% of the 1979 and 1980 parcels, respectively, remaining undeveloped. This trend is likely because they have been available for development for a longer period. While there was some development along the borders present prior to the boundary’s introduction to all areas, it never exceeded about 15.0% of the total boundary lots examined. Only the 1998 and 2002 parcels had some development between 1979 and when the UGB was expanded to their area, acting in conflict with the UGB.

While UGB expansion maintains a correlation with the timing of development, it holds a much weaker correlation with property values. Among residentially-zoned lots, there is no significant difference in property values between those located in different sections of the UGB expansion. “Residentially-zoned lots” are defined as lots with a R-5, R-7, R-8.5, R-10, R-15, R-20, R-40, RRFF5 designation. The median Zestimate per square foot for each set of corresponding parcels across each boundary remains around the same value. The only exception is the 1998 side of Boundary Type 4, which consists of only four very large, high priced lots. There is, however, a noticeable upward trend in value per square foot in relation to the year a lot was developed (Figure 2). While the value per square foot of properties built before 1990 remains largely steady, fluctuating between about $6.00-50.00 per square foot, properties built between 1996 and 2002 fluctuate between about $50.00-115.00 per square foot. This increase corresponds to the city’s 1990s population boom and precedes...
the 1998 and 2002 UGB expansions, indicating that population growth may be a larger indicator of increasing property value rather than timing of UGB expansion into a specific area.

Figure 3: Zoning Designations Along UGB Boundary Expansions, organized by year of expansion

Figure 4: Zoning designations along each section of UGB boundary, by percentage
Changes in zoning designations directly along the boundary expansion edges indicate a shift towards denser mixed-use development in newer sections of the UGB. A vast majority of less-dense residential developments—zoned for 10,000 acre lots or more—are built within the 1979 or 1980 UGB expansions, while, of the 578 lots studied, all mixed-use developments are located within the 1998 or 2002 boundary expansion areas (Figure 3). Overall, studied properties located within parcels absorbed into the UGB in 1998 or 2002 have a much greater diversity in zoning designations (Figure 4).

This study also examined the frequency and types of zoning changes between lots located directly adjacent to each other across each boundary. When adjacent lots were both residentially-zoned but with different minimum square footage, they were labeled according to whether they were zoned denser or sparser than the corresponding lot: “Denser than” or “Sparser than,” respectively. When adjacent lots were not both residentially-zoned (i.e. one lot is zoned for commercial use while the other is residentially-zoned), they were labeled as “Different” and then further examined for how the type of zoning was altered across the boundary. The greater the percentage of “Denser” and “Different” zoning changes across a section of a UGB for a particular year, the more dense and mixed-use the properties are in that year compared to the properties directly across the boundary.
The trend toward increased dense and mixed-use zoning designations in more-recent sections of the UGB area is further shown by a difference in zoning changes across Boundary 2 and Boundary 3 (Figure 5). While 28.9% of the lots in the 2002 border area are zoned as denser compared to their 1980 counterparts, only 12.5% of 2002 lots are zoned as denser than their 1998 counterparts. Therefore there is a greater difference in density across the UGB boundary when the years in which the UGB was established on either side of the boundary are farther apart. This indicates a greater difference in the density of general development trends over time.

**Discussion**

The results highlighted above largely support the narrative that, although Portland’s UGB expansion into Happy Valley City is not a primary long-term factor in determining land values, it did have implications for long-term development patterns and, by extension, local control over those patterns. The city’s concentration of denser, more mixed-use zoning designations is generally relegated to the half of the city more-recently included within UGB territory (see Figure 6). Moreover, the stark difference directly across the lines of UGB expansion indicate that the boundary itself has served as a dividing line between these types of development.
Happy Valley City’s staggered opening to development has essentially made the two halves of the city—as divided by the relative periods in which they were incorporated into the UGB—act as relics of the development preferences during the period in which they became open to development. Prior to the city’s population boom starting in 1990, its development style reflected that of the “small town character” it used to define itself. In the studied area where development was permitted, Happy Valley City zoned for and constructed almost exclusively low-density residential houses. Yet, as the population exponentially increased and the Metro opened the eastern half of the city to development, denser, more mixed-use developments were prioritized, showing a temporal shift in the city’s zoning tactics and long-range planning. In fact, along the expansion boundary of the newer sections of the UGB, there are almost no lots zoned for residential development above 20,000 square feet in size.

Today, the more-recently developed half of the city is not only home to denser, more mixed-use zoning, but also to development incentives that further reflect its more modern approach to municipal governance. Happy Valley City’s only Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district overlaps almost exactly with the eastern half of the UGB expansion history. Nicknamed its “Urban Renewal Area,” the TIF district exemplifies that Happy Valley City is not exempt from the broader trend of financialization faced by U.S. municipalities today. Municipalities more so now than ever rely on outside markets and capital, along with the development that incentivizes it, to finance their services. Happy Valley City introduced its TIF district as a response to these demands, but was forced to place it in the area newly-opened to development as the western half of the city had already been zoned and built on for primarily residential use. Thus, the staggered expansion of Portland’s UGB across Happy Valley City—alongside the broader market pressures forcing a TIF district’s creation in the first place—took away some direct local control the city would have otherwise had in choosing where to now incentivize development.
As cities around the world continue to evaluate how to regulate land use and development, Happy Valley City’s nearly 50-year history with its boundary can serve as a useful case study. The story of the Portland metropolitan area’s “best-kept secret” is one that shows the power that comes from dictating land use. Where the UGB once drew a line between green and gray remains an impact settled in concrete—lines that may be erased, but never entirely washed away. Over the coming decades, it remains to be seen whether Happy Valley City will retain the “small-town character” it was founded upon. Similarly, it remains to be seen the extent to which the preservation or loss of that character will be attributed to the expansion of a growth boundary largely outside of its control. In the end, the City may have resisted annexation in 1965, but it could not resist its modern counterpart: the Urban Growth Boundary.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study serves as a preliminary survey of zoning designations, property values, and development timelines directly across Portland’s UGB in Happy Valley City, OR. Data was manually collected and the only properties examined were those directly along the boundary’s lines of expansion. This survey also remained narrow in its primary question. It does not ask the question of whether the boundary has been effective in limiting suburban sprawl. For further analysis of the UGB’s impact, including its potential impacts on sprawl, similar surveys may be conducted using automated programs and including a larger sample of properties including those not directly along the boundary.
Atlanta: A Case Study in De-Annexation
By Gustin LaFave

Overview: This paper discusses the political, economic, and social tensions around the Buckhead neighborhood’s attempt at de-annexation from the city of Atlanta. Historical politics of race and wealth manifest in present day annexation debates.

Founded in 1847 at the terminus of a westward-bound railroad line, Atlanta has come to embody the boldness of the “New South.” The city has been praised as racially integrated, economically robust, and saturated with job opportunities, innovation, and culture. In many respects, this identity rings true. It has seen population growth, both in its Black and white residents, became the home of several Fortune 500 companies, and birthed trap music – one of the dominant hip hop subgenres of the 2010s. However, this story of success masks a malignant underbelly. In this paper, I analyze Atlanta’s fiscal condition from a historical and political perspective, then draw data from its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report to explain its largest contemporary sources of revenue and expenditure. Secondly, I will discuss the creation of Buckhead City, a de-annexation movement stemming from one of the whitest and wealthiest neighborhoods in Atlanta, conveying the political turmoil in the continued cohesion of Atlanta’s metropolitan area. Finally, I will analyze the financial challenges such a geographic separation would pose for Atlanta, drawing on case studies from Detroit and Chicago.

Atlanta’s municipal history is similar to many American cities. Throughout the nineteenth century, annexation became a powerful tool in expanding the boundaries of the city. As Kenneth Jackson explains in Crabgrass Frontier, annexation in this period was in essence, a ploy to push the physical boundaries of the city, almost in an imperialistic fashion. For those living in areas considered for annexation, the move seemed logical – an easy way to capitalize on the more robust city services of water, sewage, and education. As the city of Atlanta developed its municipal services, so too did it stretch its boundaries, making major moves of annexation from 1886 through 1910.

The expansion of Atlanta’s boundaries coincided with a massive population boom. From 1870 to 1900, the population of the city grew from 21,789 residents to around 100,000. In large part, these residents were black – freed slaves and the children of freed slaves seeking permanent residence. Unsurprisingly, the growth of this population resulted in the passage of de jure segregation laws, restricting the rights of black residents to street cars, public works, schools, and other municipal services. As the city developed past the turn of the century, white hegemony over black residence in Atlanta intensified, involving both legal and violent tactics. As Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton remark in American Apartheid, unlike in Northern cities, as black residents arrived in Southern cities, there existed an extant tradition of instituting legal strictures to restrict the residential opportunity of blacks. Atlanta itself began instituting racially restrictive housing ordinances, legally separating black and white neighborhoods. By 1940, the index of racial segregation in Atlanta
was 87.4, almost exactly the average for southern cities at the time.\footnote{7}

In the post-war years, federal housing programs and the construction of the highway system facilitated white flight, with many white residents fleeing north of the city, abandoning the core of the city. This coincided with the ongoing construction of new development on the fringes of Atlanta’s city borders, largely replacing the previously rural farmlands of the north with single-family homes.\footnote{8} In light of this massive reorganization, then-mayor William B. Hartsfield feared the complete abandonment of the city by whites, thereby losing political control of the city to its black residents. As he stated in 1943: “Our negro population is growing by leaps and bounds. They stay right in the city limits and grow by taking more white territory inside Atlanta. Our migration is good, white, home-owning citizens.”\footnote{9} In an effort to reclaim white hegemony over the city of Atlanta, he initiated the largest annexation of the city to date, seeking to incorporate over 50,000 acres of land north of Atlanta’s city boundaries. The residents of this area, known as Buckhead, were comparatively wealthy and white, and resisted the move. Through continued compromise and political pressure, including a renewed Plan of Improvement that detailed the economies of scale realized by expanding metropolitan governance, the annexation movement passed in 1952, adding 150,000 residents, 50,000 acres of land, and five white city council members into Atlanta’s arsenal.\footnote{10}

The historical politics of race, space, and annexation all contribute to Atlanta as it stands today. In 2023, the city’s population stood at just under 500,000 residents, a figure that has seen a slight dip since the 1952 annexation, but has steadily grown since the late 1990s. In the fiscal year of 2022, the city’s assets massively exceeded its liabilities, putting it in a net position of $8.8 billion dollars, up from $8.2 billion dollars in 2021.\footnote{11} Over the past ten years, Atlanta has seen significant growth in its per capita personal income, rising from $40,738 in 2012 to $58,773 in 2022.\footnote{12} In the same period, unemployment fell from 8.8% to 2.4%.\footnote{13} These figures are indicative of the great economic development that has been realized by the city over the past two decades. The city has leveraged Tax-Allocation Districts (TADs) alongside tax abatements to draw in private investment in an effort to revitalize its neighborhoods. These Tax-Allocation Districts act in a similar fashion to Tax Increment Financing, where bonds are issued on the assumption of rising property values in the wake of private investment. Six of Atlanta’s TADs have seen their property values nearly double since their creation in the early 2000s, with only slight dips resulting from the Great Recession.\footnote{14}

Atlanta’s revenue structure is largely situated within property, sales, utility, and permitting taxes. The city collects about $511 million annually from property taxes, amounting to around $1,059 per capita, and just under $198 million in sales tax, which is around $396 per capita.\footnote{15} Their expenditures are largely concentrated in general government, costing $471 million dollars annually or $942 per capita, and police, costing around $195 million dollars annually, or $390 per capita.\footnote{16}

A major concern facing the city of Atlanta and the future of its prosperity is the rising Cityhood movement, both in the unincorporated exurbs ringing Dekalb and Fulton county, and within its own boundaries. The largest voice of this movement came from the Buckhead
City Coalition, a group that emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and protests following George Floyd’s murder. This group hails from Buckhead, the largely-white suburb that put up the greatest resistance to the 1952 annexation. From the Buckhead City Coalition website, their expressed goals are to: “make Buckhead safer, improve our schools, fix our infrastructure, protect single-family zoning, and deliver a better Buckhead for all residents.”17 Disguised in the rhetoric regarding crime is a thinly veiled cry for control. Atlanta is about 50% black and 38% white, while the Buckhead neighborhood is only 11% black and 74% white.18 Buckhead, which falls under the jurisdiction of Precinct 2 of the Atlanta Police Department, actually has the lowest rate of personal violent crime (aggravated assault, murder, and rape) in the city of Atlanta.19 From these goals sprouted the Buckhead City Movement, a political and social movement advocating for the de-annexation of the Buckhead neighborhood from the city of Atlanta, thus forming their own municipality that would operate an independent government.

It’s eminently clear where the Buckhead City Coalition came from. Despite existing on around 18% of Atlanta’s land, the neighborhood holds around 47% of the city’s property digest.20 It has become a hub for economic opportunity, with one of the largest retail centers in the American Southeast, bringing in $38 billion in revenue to the city and sustaining 130,000 jobs annually.21 It contributes around $203 million in property and sales tax revenues to the city of Atlanta every year, which accounts for around 10% of the city’s operating budget.22 Buckhead residents provide a disproportionately-large contribution to the city’s economic well-being while not having an equally large sized voice in the political and financial direction of Atlanta’s administration. In a feasibility study published in 2021, the proposed Buckhead City would remedy this issue by splitting off from Atlanta entirely, retaining the approximately $200 million in annual tax and spending only $89 million on its own government, police force, and fire department.23 Operating with a $110 million surplus, Buckhead City would still utilize certain Atlanta services – public schools, wastewater, and electric services – providing only a meager portion of its property tax revenue as compensation.

What the Buckhead Feasibility Report fails to address is the pernicious effect such a separation would have on the city of Atlanta. In the past ten years, Atlanta has engaged in a series of large-scale civil redevelopment projects, including the BeltLine – an idea to turn a long abandoned railway corridor into an elongated biking and walking path that encircles the city. The BeltLine is being financed primarily by the ongoing issuance of general obligation bonds, alongside a Tax-Allocation District that encompasses nearly the entire stretch of the development.24 Seeing as the Beltline TAD has not seen smooth recovery since the Great Recession in the late 2000s, the future of this project and the projected $10 billion it will bring into the city is relying heavily on Buckhead’s current sales tax contributions. If Buckhead were to secede, the loss of revenue would be a massive blow to the project.

Furthermore, the issuance of these bonds relies on the city’s AA+ credit rating from leading rating agencies Moody’s and Fitch. The low interest rate that such a high credit rating provides is essential to keeping the Beltline project affordable. The average median income of the proposed Buckhead City was around $140,000; if Buckhead were to separate
from the city, not only would the taxable base of Atlanta shrink sizably, but they would lose a large portion of their higher-income residents. This would unquestionably factor into considerations of the future of the city’s credit rating. As Timothy Sinclair writes in *The New Masters of Capital*, when Detroit experienced a massive loss of white, wealthier residents in the wake of suburbanization, the city faced a credit rating decline from investment grade to speculative grade.\(^{25}\) It incited a period of economic turmoil for the city, necessitating “fiscal surgery” by municipal leadership to stay afloat. We must consider the racialized politics that the Buckhead City Committee operated under as a new period of white flight emerged – one in which white residents flee the central city for fear of crime and the loss of white hegemony. Though the white flight undertaken in Detroit was a much slower process than that which Atlanta would experience in the event of complete Buckhead separation, it provides a demonstrable case of the foundation-shaking effects of a change in credit.

Another consideration in the event of a Buckhead separation is the outstanding pension liabilities of the city of Atlanta. The city currently runs three separate pensions: one for general government employees, one for police officers, and one for firefighters. Combined, the three pension funds currently have outstanding liabilities totalling over $1 billion, one of the greatest financial burdens that the city shoulders.\(^{26}\) This is compounded by nearly $980 million in unfunded post-employment benefits, most prominently retiree health care promises. Buckhead’s estimated share of these payments sits at around $452 million and $397 million respectively.\(^{27}\) If Buckhead were to secede, it would need to include contingency plans to make legacy payments to the city of Atlanta to continue funding these payments. Otherwise, black and low-income residents are likely to be saddled with an accumulated debt accrued by workers who are no longer contributing to it. We may see a situation like that of Harvey, Illinois, where white flight resulted in the newly black and lower-income suburb of Chicago facing incredible outstanding pension debt, built up by people who no longer worked there.\(^{28}\) Compared to Harvey, the situation in Buckhead would be a much accelerated process, but it is a salient case of the racialized textures of pensioning and the changing demographics of cities.

The Buckhead City Coalition came to a slow, dwindling demise as Atlanta and surrounding cities conspired with the state of Georgia to once and for all put an end to the legislation that would create the city. However, the sheer force of the movement and traction it gained among Buckhead residents points to the underlying tension within the city. The racialized geographies of Atlanta’s expansion have contributed to a growing ferment that threatens the future financial health of the city. We must think of the Buckhead separatist movement as a new age of white flight, one in which white residents seek to escape the racially heterogeneous city center, even if already physically located outside of it. Examples from Detroit and Chicago demonstrate the fiscal vulnerability that this phenomenon creates, and Atlanta was correct in maintaining Buckhead by all means necessary. Even as the idea of Buckhead City becomes a whisper of memory, Atlanta — and American cities like it — must be continuously cautious of movements like this and their potential to fragment metropolitan systems as we know it.
Dwelling on Change: A Comprehensive Analysis of Single-Family Zoning in America
By Logan Danker

Introduction

It is illegal, on 75% of residential land in most major cities in the United States, to build anything other than a single-family home.1 Single-family zoning is the most prominent land use mechanism in the United States, but it is also one of incredible controversy and legal uncertainty.2 Single-family zoning refers to ordinances only allowing single-family units in a particular area. It is a type of exclusionary zoning policy—an ordinance that places restrictions on what types of homes can be built in a particular area.3 This paper will explore the effects, history, critiques, and legal doctrines around single-family zoning in the United States to illuminate the optimal paths policymakers should take in addressing the nationwide housing affordability crisis. Part I will explore recent developments in residential zoning reforms and provide an overview of housing affordability challenges in the United States. Part II will discuss the history of single-family zoning and its origins in racial segregation and class discrimination. Part III will examine the legal doctrines underpinning single-family zoning and the indirect ways the Supreme Court legitimized its use. Part IV will synthesize these discussions, providing optimal pathways for policymakers who wish to promote housing affordability. Ultimately, I argue that legislators hold the key to mitigating the harms of single-family zoning. By using the same broad police power doctrine that legitimizes single-family zoning, legislators can enact new forms of land use ordinances to begin a new chapter in the history of American zoning.

Part I: Zoning and Housing in the Present

Contemporary Development in Exclusionary Zoning Reform

Legal scholars and land use experts have long understood zoning to be one of the most important powers of local government.4 Historically, most land use decisions have been made by local governments and the Supreme Court has repeatedly expressed considerable deference to local zoning authorities.5 Local dominance in land use decisions has a natural logic: local governments are those closest to the people and are most able to understand the history, topography, and culture of communities in the intimate way that complex zoning decisions require.6 But despite this well-developed understanding of zoning as a key local power, state governments have been increasingly willing to supersede local zoning ordinances to reform exclusionary zoning practices.

Within the past five years, states have attempted to preempt local zoning authority with mixed results. Preemption is a legal doctrine capturing the idea that higher authorities of law will displace a lower level of authority when the two conflict.7 In disputes between state and local authority, state constitutions enshrine the state legislature’s supremacy over local ones.8 In disputes between state and federal law, the Supremacy Clause of the U.S.
Constitution gives the federal government supremacy over state authority. In 2019, the Oregon legislature preempted local zoning authority by passing HB 2001, which practically banned single-family zoning in state municipalities. The new law requires municipalities with 25,000+ inhabitants to allow multi-family units in areas previously zoned for single-family houses only and requires municipalities of 10,000+ people to allow duplexes. California passed a similar bill in 2021, which would allow homeowners across the state in single-family zones to split their lots or convert their homes into duplexes. While these bills essentially put an end to single-family zones in municipalities, other states have taken less aggressive preemptive measures. For instance, Massachusetts passed the MBTA Communities Law in 2021, which requires communities with an MBTA stop to create at least one zone that allows multi-family housing. Numerous other state legislatures, like those in Washington, Connecticut, Virginia, and Maryland have unsuccessfu asserted to enact similar responses to single-family zoning. This recent wave of reforms hinges on a growing movement critiquing both contemporary and historical problems with exclusionary zoning, which the following sections will examine in detail.

**Contemporary Critiques of Exclusionary Zoning**

These critiques are driven by three main factors: (1) policymakers are searching for policy mechanisms to combat housing affordability problems, (2) social science literature increasingly views exclusionary zoning as inefficient and inequitable, and (3) policymakers are becoming increasingly aware of exclusionary zoning’s problematic and anachronistic origins. This section will explore each of these streams.

**The Affordable Housing Crisis in the United States**

Policymakers have begun scrutinizing exclusionary zoning, in part, because all forms of exclusionary zoning place limits on the density of housing, which limits how much supply of housing can exist in a given area. All state preemptive efforts have made housing affordability arguments, claiming that bans on single-family zoning or mandated increases in housing density will improve housing affordability. In recent years, affordable housing shortages have become acute across the United States. As of December 2023, the average 30-year fixed rate mortgage APR is 7.03%. This 20-year high, coupled with the millions of millennials poised to purchase homes as they enter typical child-rearing age, is beginning to exacerbate an already tenuous housing situation for owners and renters alike. On the home-buying front, potential buyers already face unprecedented housing costs. Controlling for inflation, median housing prices reached an all-time high in 2022, only moderating slightly since meaning that median-income Americans would need to earn 53% more than their current wages to afford a median-priced home. With these cost barriers in mind, it is unsurprising that homeownership among young Americans (millennials and Gen-Z) is 12.2% lower than it was among young Americans 20 years ago. High interest rates have made home-builders wary, and with potential millennial buyers beginning to enter the market, economists forecast that the current shortage of affordable housing is likely to worsen before it improves.
The affordability situation is also precarious for renters—average rents in American cities are at an all-time high, even when accounting for inflation. In early 2023, Moody's found that over 50% of Americans were cost-burdened by rent, meaning that they spend more than 30% of their monthly income on their rental payments. While cost-burdened renters have been common in many major U.S. metropolitans for several years, this is the first time in the history of conducting this survey, that most Americans found themselves in this situation.

With exclusionary zoning's fundamental links to housing density, it is unsurprising, given the current tenuous housing affordability landscape in the United States, that legislators have been increasingly willing to step into traditionally local domains to address lacking affordable housing supplies in their states.

Social and Economic Critiques of Exclusionary Zoning

Policymakers are also increasingly willing to critique exclusionary zoning because of a growing body of social science literature that views these zoning practices unfavorably. Scholars like Lens and Monkkonen argue that exclusionary zoning helps drive urban high-income segregation. By high-income segregation, they mean that exclusionary zoning helps create isolated enclaves of affluent households, separated from middle and low-income households. They explain that this phenomenon creates a disproportionate concentration of resources, amenities, and political power among wealthy neighborhoods, while cutting off lower-income residents’ access to these benefits. Additionally, social science research has shown that exclusionary zoning also excludes non-wealthy individuals from high-opportunity neighborhoods, and increases housing costs for low and middle-income earners.

Many of these critiques have been extended to single-family zoning specifically. First, single-family zoning has been shown to negatively affect housing supply and affordability. As economist Tom Davidoff explains, single-family zoning props up expensive housing prices by placing constraints on the potential supply of housing, serving as a sort of “socialism for the rich.” In addition, Richard Reeves explains that single-family zoning provides wealthy residents “with a way to ‘buy’ a better quality K-12 education for their children through higher house prices rather than through fees for a private school” by virtue of how public school districts are funded through taxation. Finally, studies like those from U.C. Berkely have shown that single-family zoning contributes to urban sprawl and helps perpetuate unequal health, education, and job outcomes. While the scholars of this study explain that single-family districts have better schools, higher property values, higher incomes, and lower poverty, they argue that their exclusionary nature restricts other residents from having access to these same opportunities. Other experts affirm this sentiment, arguing that it is far easier to make existing opportunities—in areas currently zoned for single families—more accessible than it is to create that same level of opportunity elsewhere.

Despite the extensive existing literature exploring the ills of exclusionary and single-family zoning, this scholarship is not without its limitations. Importantly, many of these studies do
not firmly explain how these zoning mechanisms contribute to these adverse outcomes. Nevertheless, the rise in this literature’s prominence has brought zoning to a heightened awareness among the public and elected officials, leading to more legislative action.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Historical Critiques}

Scholars and policymakers also express concern over the historical origins and legacies of exclusionary zoning practices and see reforming or abolishing them as means for creating racial and socioeconomic justice. In 2018, Minneapolis became the first major U.S. city to end single-family zoning. In doing so, Mayor Jacob Frey explained that single-family zoning was devised to keep Black Americans, people of color, and low-income individuals from moving into certain neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{35} Arguing that single-family zoning still creates barriers, the city concluded that abolishing it would be a powerful step in repairing the harms of segregation.\textsuperscript{36} The Minneapolis mayor and city council are not alone in emphasizing and criticizing exclusionary zoning’s origins in segregation and racism, with scholars across disciplines broadly acknowledging its historical problems.\textsuperscript{37} The next section will explore the historical origins of exclusionary zoning and single-family zoning.

\textbf{Part II: Zoning in the Past}

\textbf{The History of Exclusionary Zoning and Single-Family Zoning}

In the early 20th century, municipal governments often enacted exclusionary zoning ordinances to create racially segregated communities. In 1910, Baltimore became the first American city to separate Black and white communities outright, passing an ordinance that banned Black people from buying homes on any majority-white blocks and vice versa.\textsuperscript{38} Numerous cities like Atlanta, Dallas, New Orleans, and others followed in Baltimore’s steps.\textsuperscript{39} This legally-sanctioned segregation was short-lived, however, with the Supreme Court unanimously deciding in \textit{Buchanan v. Warley} that these ordinances violated the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{40}

As Richard Rothstein explains, many municipal governments still wanted to segregate their communities, and sought to employ other zoning tactics that could produce similar results to segregation ordinances without using the explicitly racial mechanisms that the Supreme Court deemed unconstitutional.\textsuperscript{41} This desire for more covert segregation coincided with the increasing utilization of single-family zoning.\textsuperscript{42} Single-family zoning was first enacted by the Berkeley City Council in California, who passed legislation to prevent a Black dance hall from opening in an all-white housing community.\textsuperscript{43} Racial motivations for single-family zoning persisted well beyond its first documented use, with one proponent saying bluntly in 1931, that “racial hatred played no small part” in many cities’ decisions to enact single-family zoning ordinances.\textsuperscript{44}

Its early usage was not only racially motivated, but also deeply damaging to Black communities. By design, single-family zoning served to indirectly segregate communities by income, because only those able to afford a detached single-family home could afford to
live in these zones. This implicit income segregation, also led to indirect racial segregation. During the early 1900s, white people on average earned 2.85 times as much in wages as Black people, meaning Black Americans were disproportionately low-income and were thus less likely to be able to afford a single-family home.\textsuperscript{45}

Racial covenants and discriminatory mortgage lending practices also reinforced this racial segregation. Many real estate developers, usually building single-family homes, included racially restrictive covenants in their deeds, which prevented owners from selling to people of color.\textsuperscript{46} Racial covenants began in the late 19th century and became incredibly common in the United States in the early 20th century.\textsuperscript{47} Importantly, \textit{Buchanan v. Warley} did not deem racial covenants unconstitutional. Because most of these covenants were in place for single-family developments, that meant single-family zoning ordinances would, in practice, serve as mechanisms to racially segregate communities.

Racist federal lending practices also gave systematic advantages to white borrowers that it denied to Black families, perpetuating housing segregation. In 1933, the Roosevelt administration created the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) to issue federal mortgages and make homeownership more accessible to middle-class Americans.\textsuperscript{48} To assess risk and prevent lending to borrowers with a high probability of default, HOLC created maps of every major metropolitan area in the United States, coloring the safest neighborhoods green and the riskiest ones red.\textsuperscript{49} In this process known as “redlining,” HOLC deemed all communities of color as inherently risky: if Black people lived in a neighborhood, it was colored in red, even if the community was composed of middle-class earners presenting little risk of default.\textsuperscript{50} The federal government would infrequently lend and insure mortgages in communities they deemed risky.\textsuperscript{51} By systematically denying access to federal mortgage programs, the U.S. government helped make single-family zones not only economically exclusive, but racially exclusive.

Single-family zoning ordinances appear innocuous and indeed logical on their surface. On their face, they are completely race and class neutral: they restrict what kinds of buildings can be in certain places. They do not say where people can and cannot live. Many contemporary supporters of single-family zoning argue that these zones have many valuable benefits, like allowing municipalities to protect homeowner’s property values and preserve the historic character of communities.\textsuperscript{52} These arguments should not be dismissed or discounted, and they are common reasons why attempts to reform or abolish single-family zoning fail. Nevertheless, single-family zones, in practice, promote class segregation by creating communities composed only of those with enough economic means to obtain mortgages or buy properties. More concerning, the historical combination of redlining, racial covenants, and single-family zones in the early to mid-twentieth century created a complex mechanism of racial segregation that circumvented the Supreme Court’s decision in \textit{Buchanan v. Warley}.

In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court decided \textit{Shelley v. Kraemer} which made racial covenants practically unenforceable, while the 1968 Fair Housing Act made redlining and discriminatory lending illegal.\textsuperscript{53} Despite two components of the segregation trifecta collapsing, racist
justifications for single-family zones continued, while the legacies of housing segregation persist today. Those currently living in historically redlined communities are highly vulnerable to pollution, have negative reproductive health outcomes, and less green space.\textsuperscript{54} Further, 60% of previously D-graded communities (those colored in red) remain almost exclusively nonwhite.\textsuperscript{55}

Ultimately, the end of redlining and racial covenants did not strip racism from single-family zoning. In 1977, the Supreme Court upheld a zoning ordinance in Arlington Heights, a Chicago neighborhood, that prevented multi-family units anywhere except for areas adjacent to an outlying commercial area.\textsuperscript{56} While the ordinance itself contained no racial content, members of the public urged the city council to accept the ordinance to prevent Black people from living in white neighborhoods, and local newspapers printed letters from supportive citizens who argued that the ordinance would keep white neighborhoods racially pure.\textsuperscript{57} Though the Supreme Court saw differently, in the eyes of white Chicagoans, single-family zoning still represented a viable avenue for racial discrimination.

\textbf{Part III: A Legal History of Zoning}

Attacks on the harms and historical legacies of single-family zoning usually take the form of municipal ordinances or state preemption of local zoning authority to abolish the practice. But the very constitutionality of this exclusionary zoning practice is and was not certain. Rather, the legal validity of single-family zoning has evolved piecemeal, often through judicial decisions that appear rather removed from the question of single-family zoning. As this section will illuminate, the doctrinal concerns with single-family zoning are almost entirely different from the historical and contemporary concerns discussed above.

\textbf{Early Judicial Debates on Single-Family Zoning}

Before the Supreme Court first considered exclusionary residential ordinances, lower courts reached conflicting conclusions about the constitutionality of single-family zoning. Courts considered two interrelated questions: (1) was single-family zoning a valid exercise of police power, and if so (2) how did single-family zoning advance public safety, health, or welfare? Police power lacks a precise definition, but generally refers to a government's ability to enact laws to coerce citizenry for the public good.\textsuperscript{58} These powers fall under state authority through the Tenth Amendment, and due to gradual judicial developments, the U.S. Supreme Court now gives broad authority for states to legislate how they deem fit on matters concerning “public safety, public health, morality, peace and quiet, and law and order.”\textsuperscript{59} Legislating for these categories is the most common way police power is exercised, but the Supreme Court emphasizes that these categories are not exhaustive, and grants considerable deference to legislatures in how they articulate and conceptualize police power.\textsuperscript{60}

In the early 20th century, the police power doctrine was not as solidified and courts began articulating that zoning, which was a relatively new practice, should be legally justified through the lens of police power.\textsuperscript{61} As courts began viewing zoning as an exercise of police
power, many jurists expressed hesitation about whether single-family zoning could be defended under this emerging zoning doctrine.

Many single-family zoning advocates did offer several arguments justifying the practice as a valid exercise of police power. Proponents argued for the exclusion of multi-family residences and apartments in districts, with the belief that denser housing increased congestion on streets, exposed children to heightened danger from traffic when playing outside, and propagated the spread of fires and disease. These critiques were not offered in light of substantive social science evidence, but descended from late 19th century stereotypes of urban tenements as sources of immorality, crime, and disease.

Several courts did not find these arguments compelling. In Youngstown v. Kahn Building Co., the Ohio Supreme Court deemed an exclusionary ordinance void, arguing that land use limitations permitting one or two-family residences only, “[have] no relation to the public health, safety, morals, and welfare, and falls outside of the inherent police power of the municipality.” In this case, developers seeking to build a 30-unit apartment building challenged a Youngstown ordinance that allowed only single and two-family houses in the district where their intended development was located. The Ohio Supreme Court did not find Youngstown’s arguments compelling, attacking the commonly asserted public health, safety, and welfare defenses directly. They found no basis for the assertion that apartments were inherently noisier or led to more congestion within a district, and argued that “[t]here is not per se more danger from fire from an apartment house than from a private house, for modern apartments are apt to be fireproof.” More likely, the court reasoned, this exclusionary ordinance was enacted to protect the aesthetics, property values, and comfort of single and two-family homeowners. They deemed these more realistic motivations invalid, stating that “the police power cannot be invoked for purely aesthetic considerations, nor to promote merely private comfort or private welfare.”

Other courts shared this skepticism about police power arguments around single-family zoning, but nevertheless afforded deference to legislatures’ decision-making. In City of Providence v. Stephens, the Rhode Island Supreme Court considered a zoning ordinance that involved a district limited to one and two-family residences. Anthony Stephens was in violation of this ordinance, as his property was occupied by five families. The court did not find police power justifications particularly compelling for single and two-family districts, explaining that “such a classification of residential districts is not as clear to us as is that of the exclusion of trade and industry from the sections devoted to residence.” Here, the court probes deeper than the Supreme Court eventually would in Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co., considering the separation of kinds of residential properties to be less obviously justified than the separation of commercial and residential properties. The court argued that these kinds of separations, between types of residences, could serve residents’ aesthetic preferences or “pecuniary interest[s],” but maintained that “private advantage or purely aesthetic (sic) considerations do not supply sufficient basis for the exercise of police power.” Despite the court’s reservations around the doctrinal justifications for one and two-family zoning, they ultimately deferred to the legislature’s judgment, speculating that the legislature may, “with some ground of reason,” have come to the conclusion that these
zoning districts would promote public safety in some legitimate way, such as minimizing fire risks.\textsuperscript{73}

Other courts were far more accepting of single-family zoning’s validity under the police power doctrine. In Brett v. Building Commissioner of Brookline, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court reasoned that single-family zones promoted public health and safety by limiting the number of “persons or of stoves or lights under a single roof,” thus reducing fire risks.\textsuperscript{74} In the following decades, the U.S. Supreme Court would begin embracing these pro-single-family zoning arguments, creating doctrinal problems that persist to this day.

**Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.**

In 1926, the Supreme Court considered a zoning ordinance containing single-family districts for the first time. Further, through *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.*, the Court upheld local zoning ordinances as legitimate forms of exercising police power, solidifying police power as the primary doctrine through which zoning ordinances would be evaluated.

The petitioner, Ambler Realty, claimed that a zoning ordinance created by the Village of Euclid violated its Due Process rights by dramatically reducing their property value, since the ordinance restricted how the company could use its land.\textsuperscript{75} Euclid created this ordinance to prevent industry from sprawling into the village from nearby Cleveland.\textsuperscript{76} The ordinance created a sizeable single-family zone in the village, but none of Ambler’s land fell within it, so the Court decided not to rule specifically on single-family zones in this case.\textsuperscript{77} Rather, the central question at hand was whether localities like Euclid could create districts that separated industrial/commercial properties and residential ones, not whether types of residences could be separated. Nevertheless, the Court’s interpretation of police power and its application to zoning, would prove beneficial to single-family zoning advocates.

Writing for the majority, Justice Sutherland explained that “the ordinance now under review, and all similar laws and regulations, must find their justification in some aspect of the police power, asserted for the public welfare.”\textsuperscript{78} This declaration from the majority solidified zoning’s place within the police power doctrine. The Court also adopted the principles of deference that earlier courts in *City of Providence v. Stephens* or *Brett v. Building Commissioner of Brookline* articulated, with Justice Sutherland explaining that all zoning ordinances must be upheld as constitutional unless they are “clearly arbitrary and unreasonable, without substantial relation to the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare.”\textsuperscript{79} Thus, without explicitly ruling on single-family districts, the Court created a definition of police power and a standard for evaluating ordinances that would be favorable to their continued use.

Additionally, the majority expressly endorsed many criticisms of multi-family housing in their opinion, despite having little need to do so. Justice Sutherland echoed many of the criticisms common in the era against multi-family housing, exclaiming:
The apartment house is a mere parasite... bringing, as their necessary accompaniments, the disturbing noises incident to increased traffic and business, and the occupation, by means of moving and parked automobiles, of larger portions of the streets, thus detracting from their safety and depriving children of the privilege of quiet and open spaces for play, enjoyed by those in more favored localities -- until, finally, the residential character of the neighborhood and its desirability as a place of detached residences are utterly destroyed.60

By enshrining these critiques in the majority opinion, Justice Sutherland implicitly backed single-family zoning, depicting apartments as threats to public safety, health, and community character. Interpreting multi-family housing in this way, he legitimized single-family zoning's justification within the police power doctrine, undermining earlier lower courts who viewed these arguments with skepticism.

This framing of multi-family housing is logically problematic. If single-family zoning is justified by the benefits it creates for health, safety, and community makeup, (as the Court implies), that would suggest that multi-family housing should be banned outright. If apartments are parasites, why should some communities be left to dwell in them while others are protected from their ills? Justice Sutherland addressed this concern by comparing apartments to nuisances: “[a] nuisance may be merely a right thing in the wrong place, -- like a pig in the parlor, instead of the barnyard.”81 While this may be true, Justice Sutherland’s categorization of apartments as “parasites,” comparing them to pigs in a parlor, betrays his hostility towards them. With apartments, predominantly occupied by lower-income individuals, many could interpret this hostility towards multi-family housing as classism. Furthermore, with the presence of racial covenants at this time preventing people of color from living in single-family homes, one could also interpret Justice Sutherland’s hostility as veiled racism.

In future cases, the Court never addresses this logical quandary or the potential racial and class-based thrusts these statements could embody, opting to continue broadening the scope of the police power doctrine to more firmly support single-family zoning.

**Single-Family Zoning After Euclid**

In the years following Euclid, the Supreme Court continued to indirectly strengthen the legal legitimacy of single-family zoning. After Euclid, the Supreme Court became increasingly accepting of aesthetic justifications (like those deemed unrelated to police power by the Rhode Island and Ohio Supreme Courts) and rarely examined how a particular provision of a zoning ordinance advanced general welfare, public safety, or public health.82 In 1927, the Court affirmed a 1925 Minnesota Supreme Court decision in Beery v. Houghton on the authority of Euclid. In affirming this decision, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a Minneapolis zoning ordinance that excluded a four-family flat building from a residential district.83 The Minneapolis Supreme Court justified the ordinance, by saying that “the construction of such apartments or other like buildings in
a territory of individual homes depreciates very much the values in the whole territory.” In affirming the decision, the U.S. Supreme Court signified that these financial justifications fit within the bounds of police power. How property values relate or promote public health, safety, morals, or general welfare, the Court does not explain.

While some earlier courts may have hesitated to broaden the scope of the police power to include things like financial interest or aesthetics, the Court became increasingly willing to do so. In Berman v. Parker, a case focusing on eminent domain—the government’s ability to seize private property without compensation—the Supreme Court further expanded the scope of the police power. In the majority opinion, Justice Douglas conceptualized public welfare as “broad and inclusive,” arguing “[t]he values it represents are spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary.”84 As a result of this case, single-family zoning advocates could now defend their ordinances as the promotion of the public welfare on broad and inclusive terms, appealing to monetary incentives like protecting property values or to ambiguous concepts like the aesthetic makeup of a community. The majority also underscored the common applications of police power, public safety, public health, etc., while also emphasizing that any attempt to “trace its outer limits is fruitless.”85 This gave single-family zoning advocates considerable leeway in justifying exclusionary residential ordinances. Additionally, the decision precluded and invalidated judicial arguments like those made in City of Providence v. Stephens that questioned aesthetics and financial interests as valid expressions of police power.

**Village of Belle Terre v. Boraas**

In 1974, the Supreme Court again evaluated an ordinance that contained single-family districts. As in Euclid, the Court did not rule on their constitutionality outright. The Village of Belle Terre in New York created an ordinance restricting land use to one-family dwellings, defining the word “family” to mean “one or more persons related by blood, adoption, or marriage, or not more than two unrelated persons, living and cooking together as a single housekeeping unit.”86 The owners of a house in the village leased their property to six unrelated college students and were cited for violating the ordinance, and the owners subsequently brought action arguing that the ordinance violated the Equal Protection Clause and the rights of association, travel, and privacy.87

The petitioner’s central argument was that the village’s definition of “family” violated their constitutional rights. The petitioners were not challenging single-family zoning ordinances because of how they could constrict development or the physical nature of their property, but how the ordinance controlled who was able to live on their property. This is an important complication, because properties may be designed as single-family homes, as this one was, but could still be in violation of an ordinance depending on how single-family dwellings are defined and depending on who is living there. The Court did not take time to discuss this distinction in depth. Instead, the Court expanded and reaffirmed the existing case precedent around the broad scope of the police power and in giving deference to legislatures in zoning matters. Ultimately, the 7-2 majority found none of the petitioners’ arguments persuasive, upholding the ordinance as valid land use legislation.88 Douglas

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underscored the arguments in Berman v. Parker, explaining that “[t]he police power is not confined to elimination of filth, stench, and unhealthy places. It is ample to lay out zones where family values, youth values, and the blessings of quiet seclusion and clean air make the area a sanctuary for people.” As such, Douglas reasoned that the usage of the word “family” to restrict land use was legitimate and squarely within the scope of the police power articulated in Berman. He also reiterated the Court’s position in Euclid, explaining that “deference should be given to governmental judgments concerning proper land use allocation.”

Over the last century, the U.S. Supreme Court has created definitions of police power in a manner that amounts to an implicit endorsement of single-family zoning. But considering single-family zoning’s historical and contemporary implications, this legal doctrine becomes rather weak, resulting in important policy considerations that the last part of this essay will examine.

**Part IV: Implications and Paths Forward**

**The Weakness of the Single-Family Zoning Doctrine**

The police power justifications of single-family zoning do not hold up to scrutiny. While welfare, health, and safety outcomes are better in single-family communities, these high-quality outcomes come at the expense of other communities’ wellbeing. Those unable to buy into single-family homes typically must live in districts allowing multi-unit housing. But as Rothstein explains, the only districts permitting multi-family housing were and often still are home to polluting industry, liquor stores, and nightclubs. These commercial and industrial properties lead to adverse health outcomes and result in higher levels of crime, compared to single-family zones, which almost always outlaw these kinds of commercial and industrial properties. Even if these multi-family zones do not contain these harmful features, they are often located adjacent to industrial zones and toxic waste facilities at a disproportionate rate. Based on the historical and contemporary evidence on single-family zoning’s negative impacts, it simply cannot be sustained that this practice contributes generally to public health, security, or welfare. Rather, it serves to privilege the health, security, and welfare of only those who can afford to live in single-family districts.

With single-family zoning advocates realizing that this practice cannot reasonably be defended on these grounds, contemporary arguments for single-family zoning now rely primarily on aesthetics. This defense is at least plausible: permitting multi-family houses or apartments in a single-family community probably would alter the appearance of a neighborhood’s architecture in some way. But these arguments seem quite weak, particularly when compared to the racist and classist origins of single-family zoning and its growing contemporary critiques within social science literature. Given the large intrusion single-family zoning imposes on property rights, courts could conceivably reevaluate the legal soundness of this practice, particularly now that aesthetics are the only common defense offered. Namely, the Supreme Court could adopt an understanding of police power more like some of the critical courts in the early 20th century that rejected single-
family zones as a valid exercise of police power. But there are several reasons why this is both unlikely and undesirable for reform advocates.

**Optimal Paths Forward: The Double-Edged Sword of Zoning Doctrine**

A judicial ban on single-family zoning is unlikely not only because of the Supreme Court's prior attitudes but because of the unique judicial challenges zoning cases face. First, judicial challenges to zoning ordinances have strict standing requirements. To challenge zoning decisions in courts, states require plaintiffs to prove standing, which typically means they must suffer an injury distinct from that incurred by the community at large.96 Typically courts only grant standing to those who live in the district affected by the ordinance, and in the case of single-family zoning challenges, this would mean people who own a single-family home there.97 Unsurprisingly, people in this position are often the most ardent defenders of single-family zoning, and would stand to benefit the least from reforms. Second, the standard of review for zoning decisions is favorable to the legislatures that enacted them. Courts generally review claims against zoning ordinances under a deferential rational basis standard, meaning laws are presumed to be constitutional in deference to legislators unless there is no clear state interest implicated in the ordinance or no rational connection between the ordinance’s means and goals.98,99 Particularly when considering police power's broad definition, this gives legislators considerable leeway to articulate a rational state interest for single-family zoning.

These practical challenges aside, legislative reforms on single-family zoning and exclusionary zoning remain the optimal paths forward, while judicial challenges may invertedly stall efforts to increase housing density and promote affordability. A judicial ban on single-family zoning from the U.S. Supreme Court would undoubtedly have sweeping effects, far greater than that of the individual states that have banned single-family zoning through legislative reforms. But elimination of single-family zoning, on its own, has proven not particularly effective in reducing housing costs and increasing housing density.100 Positive zoning ordinances—ordinances that mandate rather than merely permit a specific mode of development—may be necessary. Mechanisms like inclusionary zoning policies, parking lot maximums, and minimum unit density per acre requirements are often needed to mandate denser development.

Many states have mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinances in place, which require a minimum percentage of units within a development project to be dedicated to low-income and middle-income families at below-market prices.101 Other ordinances require a specific amount of development density. For instance, Massachusetts’ MBTA Communities Law requires communities with MBTA stops to have at least one multi-family zone with a minimum density of 15 units per acre.102 These measures extend beyond simply permitting greater housing density and lower costs: they affirmatively mandate them. These zoning ordinances are permissible through the same deferential, broad legal doctrine that enables single-family zoning. Thus, the reconfiguration of police power and zoning doctrine could pose problems. Judicial alterations could invertedly jeopardize these kinds of positive zoning measures, limiting governments’ abilities to take positive actions to increase...
housing density and promote affordability.

Given the legal obstacles involved with bringing judicial challenges to single-family zoning, along with the potential adverse consequences, I argue that state governments should continue the trend toward more frequent preemption of local authority to reform or abolish exclusionary zoning practices like single-family zoning, while also promoting zoning ordinances that actively encourage and require more affordable, denser development.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the contemporary and historical ills of single-family zoning—its origins in racial segregation efforts and classism, along with its enduring socioeconomic consequences in the present. I have also explored the legal history of single-family zoning and its gradual, implicit inclusion within the police power doctrine. Racial and economic disparities persist in the American housing landscape: lower-income renters are significantly more cost-burdened than their higher-income counterparts. Black and Hispanic renters are 10% more likely to be cost-burdened than white renters and the racial gap between white and Black homeownership is greater than it was in 1960 (white people are 30% more likely to own homes than Black people). The current housing landscape requires attention from policymakers, who should focus on practices that have historically been racially-motivated and racist in their consequences. Ultimately, legislative reforms prove the most likely and most beneficial avenue in repairing housing in the United States. Indeed, broad, and deferential zoning doctrine may be legislators’ biggest advantage. By enabling legislators to take more positive steps toward denser, more affordable housing, current zoning doctrine might paradoxically be a window of opportunity, empowering legislatures to turn the page on America’s troubled zoning history.
Carr Haus Cafe Painting
By Avery Guo

Overview: This oil painting was created during the RISD Painting Marathon Wintersession course which focused on improving observational skills, meeting approximately five hours a day for five days a week for five weeks. The Carr Haus cafe is a gravitational center of RISD for its coffee and chocolate croissants, and intercepts everyone at the intersection with quirky architecture and cozy vibes. I was interested in capturing the variety of planes that compose its surface, and practice capturing outdoor space on site! I most enjoy a variety of linear and organic forms, and this building was the most special and exciting.
Analysis of the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Updated Bus Network

By Kylee Hong

DART is a regional transit agency that serves 13 cities in North Texas: Addison, Carrollton, Cockrell Hill, Dallas, Farmers Branch, Garland, Glenn Heights, Highland Park, Irving, Plano, Richardson, Rowlett, and University Park. The vast multimodal network includes the DART Light Rail, the Trinity Railway Express commuter rail, bus routes, GoLink on-demand services, and paratransit services. DART has a bus fleet of around 700 buses and the longest light rail system in the country, spanning 93 miles.¹ DART is funded by various grants and sales tax revenue from its member cities, who are stretched across over 700 square miles of North Texas’ greater sprawl.² Perhaps due to its breadth of sprawling service and suburban loyalties, the transit agency, which has a history of ranking as one of the least effective transit agencies in the United States according to various reports, struggles to efficiently get people around in an automobile-dominated landscape.³

“Simpler. Better. Faster. Easier!” are the adjectives that Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) uses to describe its new bus network, which was rolled out in 2021. In the introductory video about the redesign, DART outlines the enormous growth of the urban area and the changes in patterns of where people work, shop, and play as the reasoning behind this new network.⁴ DART highlights that the rail and bus networks were originally designed solely around downtown Dallas. Most of the bus network was designed in the 1980s, with some buses servicing the same routes they had since WWII.⁵ Now that increasingly more and more activities are outside of the downtown area due to the rapid development of Dallas’ suburbs, DART emphasizes the necessity of reforms to an outdated transit network to better serve the Dallas area. And DART isn’t wrong about the failures of its previous system. An op-ed from the Dallas Morning News Editorial Board in 2018 outlines two facts behind the “crisis of confidence” confronting DART: the population within its service area rapidly increases annually, while the total number of riders of its buses, trains, and vans decrease every year.⁶ Many critics, such as the Dallas Morning News, attribute this phenomenon to flawed and expensive failed initiatives to get riders on rail which resulted in a loss in bus ridership nearly nine times greater than the gain in rail ridership.⁷

In 2019, DART hired Jarett Walker, an esteemed transit consultant who worked with bus networks in major cities such as Houston and Seattle to revamp their dated networks. DART ran an experiment where more buses were run on seven lines so that a bus came every 15-20 minutes—within a week there were ridership gains of 10-25 percent.⁸ DART also found that riders preferred a slightly longer walk followed by a short wait for the bus over a short walk with a long wait.⁹ Planners were testing the idea that increasing frequency would increase ridership and justifying the trade-offs of that approach, which would include a decrease in the number of bus stops. Furthermore, while DART transit ridership had already been declining since 2006 and the network redesign was already in the works since 2018, the pandemic drastically exacerbated DART’s pre-existing ridership problems. The new proposed network was revealed in early 2021 accompanied with a website detailing the
The plan would be budget-neutral, meaning that it will cost the same as the previous bus network. DART accepted feedback up until June of 2021, did some final revisions, signed it off with the DART board of directors, and operationalized the new network by January 24, 2022.

The main pillars supporting the new bus network are increased frequency, reduced travel time, better service, and better access. The redesign hopes to accomplish these goals by reducing the number of routes overall and focusing on having longer, straighter, more direct routes with buses every 15-20 minutes in high ridership areas and expanding hours of service. The new bus routes are more direct by focusing on major transit corridors, reducing the number of bus stops, and timing connections to prevent long waits when transferring—which DART asserts will make bus service faster. All redesigned routes will provide service 7 days a week between the hours of 5 a.m. and midnight at a minimum; the 22 core frequent bus routes will operate between 4 a.m. and 1 a.m.

In areas where routes have been eliminated, they will be replaced by GoLink, a pre-existing DART service which provides on-demand rides to places within its Go-Link zone or to a connection with a high-frequency network. GoLink serves to provide first-mile and last-mile connections and specifically aims to fill in service gaps in low-density areas, which characterizes large swaths of the metroplex, where traditional fixed-route service is neither efficient nor cost-effective. In 2019, DART started partnering with Uber Transit to supplement GoLink; this allows riders the option to choose Uber rides at the cost of transit fare with lower wait times and gives DART the benefit of flexible fleet options and lower operating costs. The new plan has a dramatic increase in the total number of Go-Link zones: from 7 to 30.

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**Figure 1: GoLink Statistics. Courtesy of Uber.**

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<td>- GoLink monthly ridership: 46,600 (15,900 on Uber)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Average trip distance: 7.1 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Average GoLink subsidy/rider: $17.04 ($8.58 on Uber)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Average GoLink wait time: 13 minutes (8 minutes on Uber)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 30 zones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rider fare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- GoLink one-way fare: $2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reduced GoLink one-way fare: $1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A.M./P.M., daily and monthly passes are also accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most significant value-shift in the new model is an emphasis on ridership over area coverage, although it can be argued that in suburban areas, coverage is actually expanding with GoLink even though their designated routes may be diminished. DART reflects this on their website as it states: “a network designed for higher transit ridership would get the most useful service near the greatest number of people and activities.” The finances support this as in the previous bus network, about 55% of the budget was spent on routes that attract high ridership relative to cost and the other 45% was spent on routes with low ridership relative to cost. In contrast, the new network is directed to spend 70-75% of the bus budget on high ridership services while reducing spending on low ridership services. The new network is more similar to a grid, shifting away from a spoke and wheel layout with downtown Dallas at its center.

With this new network, DART emphasizes the improved access by citing that 74% of DART service-area residents will have access to transit services within walking distance, an increase of 6% above the current network. Furthermore, DART calculates that the new network will increase the number of jobs accessible to the average resident within a one hour commute by 34%. In a document put together by Jarett Walker and associates, the new plan provides greater accessibility to lower income and non-white groups compared to higher-income groups.

Figure 2: DART Draft New Network Viewer Web Page Displaying the Change in Job Access
Figure 3: Table from Draft of New Network Plan, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residents, by demographic</th>
<th>Additional jobs reachable by transit in 60 minutes (incl. waiting time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>+28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>+30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>+28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>+26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>+27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower income</td>
<td>+27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(earning &lt; 150% of the fed. poverty level)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium and higher-income</td>
<td>+27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(earning &gt; 150% of the fed. poverty level)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-income</td>
<td>+17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(earning &gt; 200% of the fed. poverty level)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the age of 65</td>
<td>+29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: DART Ridership Levels Since 2019

Figure 4: DART Ridership Levels Since 2019
Figure 5: Map of the DART System Effective September 26, 2022. Each GoLink zone is indicated by the light tan. The frequencies reflect the driver shortage.
In the first two weeks of the new network's implementation, DART bus fares were free and there were DART personnel at stops to help riders navigate their routes. GoLink micro-transit experienced the highest consistent increase (80-120%) in ridership after the new bus network. This is likely due to the dramatic increase in the number of GoLink zones and the low-cost ease and accessibility of DART's on-demand rideshare. In January of 2023, DART increased GoLink hours in all zones to operate from 5 a.m. to midnight, 7 days a week to match local bus service hours and days. While there has been a steady increase in ridership since the drop off of the pandemic, ridership in the first few months of the new network did not significantly increase. In June, DART actually had a reduction in bus frequencies due to a driver shortage of 163 drivers; twenty minutes turned into thirty minutes and fifteen turned into twenty or twenty-five minutes. In response, DART began an aggressive hiring initiative—involving media campaigns, hiring fairs, and a $4 increase in starting wages to compete with companies like Amazon and FedEx; because of this, normal service was expected to resume by January of 2023.

In January of 2024, DART Spokesman Gordon Shattles reported to CBS News Texas that total DART ridership has been steadily climbing—reaching up to around 75% of pre-pandemic levels with bus ridership bouncing back more quickly—which he attributed to workers returning to the office. It is difficult to analyze the effectiveness of the new bus network with ridership numbers alone as the economy and behaviors are still bouncing back in the past few years following the pandemic. Regardless, ridership is still nowhere near where it was over ten years ago, which reflects the consistent challenge for DART: loss in ridership despite massive population growth. This phenomenon is not unique to Dallas as transit systems across the United States are similarly bleeding ridership, however, it is particularly prominent and alarming in the rapidly developing areas of Dallas and its suburbs.

This perceived rider aversion and inefficiency inform disagreements within the DART Board regarding whether to cut or increase the 2024 budget. Those who proposed budget cuts argue that the budget's growth is unsustainable and excessively wasting sales taxes from its member cities for unnecessary services. DART President and CEO Nadine Lee, who was surprised by the push for budget cuts, emphasized rising operating costs in areas such as fuel, electricity, technology, and salaries. Ultimately, the Board voted 8-5 and passed a proposal with an increase of $49.4 million or 7.7% to the previous budget of $687.2 million. The proposal to trim $25 million was defeated.

DART continues to channel resources towards Phase Two of redesigning its bus network with a focus on increasing the frequency of its most heavily used bus routes and adding five additional routes. The DART Mobility Project Updates presentation listed potential frequency improvements up to every 15 minutes for both rail and core frequent bus routes, with potential costs of over $30 million for peak times and $70 million for both peak and off-times. DART also identified two 200-series (every 40-60 minutes) routes (Route 239 Tollway Corridor Dallas-Addison-NW Plano and Route 241 Coit to NW Plano) that showed strong ridership performance with potential to become 100-series level service (every 30 minutes), which would increase costs for each route by 60%. In addition, over the next two years, DART plans to install over 350 shelters and over 300 benches in the City of Dallas.
Meanwhile, there is also the Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) Fleet Transition Plan in development. These efforts are much needed towards improving public transportation and supporting smart growth in the Dallas Areas. However, the question remains: can DART’s efforts increase ridership quickly enough to catch up and keep up with the rest of Dallas?
**Keep Austin (Teachers) Weird: Teacher Retention and Attraction in an Urban District**

By Daniel Solomon

**Overview:** Combatting a decades-long crisis in American public schooling, Austin Independent School District employs creative and innovative policies to improve teacher retention and attraction in the district. Through literature review, analysis of current policy implementation, and recommendations for future policy implementation, this paper seeks to broaden understanding on teacher retention and attraction, while connecting back to the district’s namesake: Austin.

In the early 2000s, when local librarian Red Wassenich pledged a call-in donation on a local radio station, he proclaimed his intention was to support local establishments and institutions that enable the unique local culture and distinct peoplehood working to “Keep Austin Weird.” Shortly thereafter, the Austin Independent Business Alliance coined the now-famous phrase as a vehicle to bolster small businesses and embrace Austin’s distinct local persona, charm, and intrinsic differences from other Texas cities. While originally instituted to support local businesses that reflect the unique character of the city, Keep Austin Weird has evolved into a way of life; one that embraces collectivism and community, togetherness and camaraderie, and social justice and equity.

The Austin Independent School District (Austin ISD), while ultimately a subsidiary organization of the Texas Education Agency, exhibits these values in its policymaking, operations, and culture. As the nation continues to grapple with a decades-long teacher retention crisis, Austin ISD seeks to draw inspiration from its community ethos in addressing this unprecedented situation. While Austin is regarded as one of the most liberal cities in America alongside strongholds such as New York City, San Francisco, and Seattle, Austin is uniquely positioned within Texas, a hotbed conservative state known for neoliberal policymaking, particularly surrounding education. Because Texas school districts are structured as “creatures” of the state, Austin ISD is ultimately at the whim of Texas legislators.

This theory can be thoughtfully examined through the lens of education policy relating to teacher retention, attrition, and attraction. While deliberation from school board meetings amongst administrators and elected officials alike suggests that Austin ISD is acutely aware of this growing policy concern; noting that teacher retention was the district’s primary policy concern in Academic Year 2022-2023, they are forced to develop unique and sometimes operationally destructive policies to circumvent the Texas Education Agency. This research paper aims to examine the implementation of policies pertaining to teacher retention, attrition, and attraction through three sections that, as prior research suggests, are primary issues within this policy area: recruitment and teacher preparation; compensation & school/workplace climate; and personal forces & externalities. Each section will provide a brief review of background literature, an analysis of the current state of policy implementation, and recommendations for future policy implementation based on current progression and statuses.
Attraction: Recruitment and Teacher Preparation

Background and Literature Review

While not inherently market-based, aspiring teachers often look towards a number of different factors when deciding which school district to begin their teaching career. In doing so, school districts – particularly large urban districts – are inherently competing with each other to attract the most qualified pool of applicants to helm their classrooms. As examined by Guarino et al. (2006), aspiring teachers are drawn to school districts that can provide a competitive compensation and benefits package, foster positive working environments, and provide regularly-recurring opportunities for professional development. This study also notes the importance of pre-service policies towards teacher retention, such as structured alternative-certification programs through teacher residency models. Guha et al. (2017) corroborate this sentiment, arguing that implementing a teacher residency program is a comprehensive strategy to combat the teacher retention crisis in America. Such a policy would resemble practical education progression commonplace for medical students. Guha et al. (2017) state that a number of factors make residency programs a viable solution, noting that integrating a sustained and monitored classroom practicum coupled with rigorous coursework in pedagogical theory lead to more confident and prepared teachers on day one, which can drastically improve teacher attrition rates among young teachers. A multi-part research study conducted by Schmitt and Cornetto (2015) argues that amongst the factors that lead to teacher retention in Austin ISD, a primary positive correlation is amongst those who were hired from within the district. Furthermore, See et al. (2020) introduce the argument that teachers are far more likely to begin and continue their teaching career in the district in which they train, reinforcing the notion that teacher retention is inextricably connected to teacher preparation and recruitment.

Current State and Evaluation

Upon analyzing the frequency of policy items discussed in regular meetings of the Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees during the 2022-2023 academic year, a primary component of teacher retention policy in Austin ISD was the district’s commitment to developing pipeline and partnership programs with local universities. In an effort to drive cohorts of aspiring teachers to begin – and hopefully, continue – their teaching careers in Austin ISD, the Board of Trustees executed a number of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Austin-area teacher preparation programs for aspiring teachers to conduct their teacher residencies within the district. This strategic practice is in direct support of the arguments developed by Schmitt and Cornetto (2015) and See et al. (2020), and serve as long-term, strategic methods for teacher retention within the district, invoking a number of positive factors impacting students, teachers, and schools alike that work to change the cultural fabric of the school district and foster more symbiotic relationships between teachers, the district, and Education Austin (the teachers union). At ten of the seventeen regular school board meetings in the 2022-2023 Academic Year, the Board of Trustees deliberated new and renewed memoranda of understanding with local universities. From my personal account examining videotape footage from these meetings, trustees approached these
conversations and deliberations with glee and optimism towards the anticipated outcomes of these programs, advocating for the installment of more teacher residency programs to attract larger cohorts of locally-sourced teachers to serve in the Austin Independent School District.

Not only does this teacher retention policy work towards shoveling an onslaught of new teachers into Austin ISD to counteract the staggering teacher shortage, but this policy actively works towards attaining quality, value-added teachers whose experience is rooted in theory, practice, and institutional knowledge. Through the implementation of innovative residency-style programs for aspiring teachers, teachers are better equipped to serve their students from the start of their career, significantly curtailing attrition rates for new teachers. Moreover, these partnerships with local universities work to create opportunities for students in the school district, hopefully instilling a “homegrown” teaching workforce that equitably and accurately reflects the experience of students and families in Austin ISD. Creating and sustaining a local student-teacher pipeline enables and encourages invaluable prerequisite training and experiences that will inevitably yield to better student performance and long term outcomes through the implementation of – explicit or implicit – culturally-sustaining pedagogy and a more diverse workforce that more aptly reflects the student population served.7,8

Through deliberate policymaking, strategic teacher residency programs with local universities, an institutional focus on teacher mental and physical wellness, a competitive compensation and benefits program, and distinct – weird – qualities unique to the city, Austin ISD has earnestly and effectively implemented teacher recruitment and teacher preparation programs that serve to the mutual benefit of students, families, and aspiring teachers alike. While empirical evidence is yet to be determined given how recent these policies have been implemented, aforementioned literature and studies of similar models argue these avenues to be effective methods towards teacher attraction and long-term retention. However, there is some reasonability that recency bias – and optimism – may contribute to this sentiment of policy effectiveness. Data produced by the Austin ISD Department of Program Evaluation will analyze the effectiveness of these policy implementations in due time, as they have in the past.

**Recommendation for Future Policy Implementation**

While implemented policies regarding teacher attraction in Austin ISD seem highly effective, literature suggests possibilities for further advancement. One avenue of doing so is expanding the base from which to attract prospective teachers. Mancenido argues that there is a phenomenon propagated by social and cultural normalities that students who graduate from highly-selective universities are far less likely to enter into the teaching field.9 A number of different factors influence this mindset: financial disincentives, especially given the cost of attendance at America’s elite colleges; peer and social influence; counselor guidance; and personal expectations. Conversely, amongst these students who do decide to become teachers, primary factors that influence their decision surround aspirations to use teaching as a vehicle for activism and creating social change; engaging in a broader
movement of social policy; and to harness the social capital of their elite education to rise towards positions of leadership.¹⁰

Understanding these parameters, there is great potential for teacher attraction policymaking surrounding these principles to allure elite-educated graduates to 1) enter the teaching profession in general and 2) attract these teachers to Austin ISD, specifically. Given that elite-educated students who decide to become teachers are influenced by the prospect of civic engagement and leadership development within the broader social system, Austin ISD can employ a system similar to the citizen-centric model tested in Los Angeles for deliberative democracy. Creating mechanisms for deliberative democracy foster a more engaged and informed population, form policy issues around community concerns, and promote collaboration.¹¹ By establishing a system of deliberative democracy within the Austin ISD faculty ecosystem, teachers will have greater opportunities for participation in shaping policy, foster mutual understanding amongst teachers with diverse issue interests, and engage civic-minded young teachers to become thoughtful, engaged participants of the broader policy movement.

**Retention: Compensation, Benefits, and School Climate**

**Background and Literature Review**

Political scientist and education policy scholar Jonathan Collins once said “we have the solutions to the exam, we just need to invent the pencil.” In McLaurin et al.’s (2009) research – aptly titled research “...Problems and Solutions,” the authors argue that the teacher retention crisis in America is perpetrated by a consolidated number of factors: low salaries compared to other trained professionals, increasingly tense school climate, and lack of pedagogical autonomy.¹² Hansen et al. provide empirical evidence to corroborate the claim regarding salaries through examining internal and external relative pay using the Annualized Cost of Leaving (ACOL) framework.¹³ At the end of the day, teaching is a profession. As licensed professionals in a field where 60% of whom possess post-baccalaureate degrees (NCES, 2023), no teacher should face concerns over personal finances at the whim of their school district. Ultimately for school officials, teachers’ general welfare elevates from a concern of moral clarity to one of practical implication. Research finds that teachers from high-poverty urban school districts who exhibit signs of financial-related stress can exhibit significantly impaired teaching performance and efficacy.¹⁴

Factors other than compensation have significant impact on retention, namely the physical and pedagogical conditions under which teachers are required to perform. A crucial factor that contributes to teacher retention and attrition is their perception, relationship, and perceived support from their school administrators. Boyd et al. (2011) argue that this is the most significant factor in teacher retention, noting that teachers are far more likely to continue in their position – both the teaching profession and their respective school site – when they feel supported and respected by their school administrators.¹⁵ Through their empirical analysis in the New York City Department of Education, Boyd et al. find that humanistic and interpersonal factors such as administrator relations and overall school climate
prove more significant to modeling teacher retention than other factors like compensation and benefits.¹⁶

School climate and working conditions also include pedagogical autonomy and flexibility for teachers to teach students based on their professional evaluation of what methods, practices, and principles would be most effective for their respective students. The passage of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act severely restricted teachers’ ability to adequately address the unique needs of students, and drastically increased teacher workload and pressure driven by the outcome of standardized tests.¹⁷ These factors significantly impacted overall teacher morale, job satisfaction, and retention, and fostered a stress-induced and hostile workplace environment.¹⁸

**Current State and Evaluation**

At the April 27, 2023 meeting of the Austin ISD Board of Trustees, Interim Superintendent Matias Segura introduced a crucial policy item that impacts teacher retention in the district. She said, “From day one we wanted to be aggressive. We wanted to acknowledge that it is incredibly difficult for those serving our community to actually live in the community they serve…So, we asked the team to be creative.”¹⁹ The incredible difficulty Segura references is the skyrocketing cost of living in the Austin-Round Rock MSA, where the average home price increased by 9.7% from 2022-2023.²⁰ At this April meeting, the Board of Trustees introduced three possible compensation policies for teachers and professional staff (such as counselors and librarians) under Policy Item 14.4. Compensation Scenario One offered a 5% midpoint increase for teachers and librarians and 5% increase for counselors; Scenario Two offered a 5% salary increase (or salary-step elevation, whichever is more advantageous) for teachers and a 6% increase for counselors; and Scenario Three offered a 7% salary increase (or salary-step elevation, whichever is more advantageous) for teachers, librarians, counselors, and instructional coaches. On May 18, 2023, the Board of Trustees entered into a consultation agreement with Education Austin approving Compensation Scenario Three, the most significant of the three options.²¹ Through this, Austin ISD also implemented additional $7,000 annual stipend programs for teachers holding advanced certifications in Special Education and Bilingual Education, two high-need areas where the district faces especially severe teacher turnover and retention issues. Austin ISD also adopted a number of benefits programs for employees, including increased employer contribution to health insurance, expansion of the district's retirement plan, and the establishment of a district-wide wellness program armed to tackle rising rates of burnout through mental and physical health.

Education Austin served as an essential actor in developing these teacher retention policies in Austin ISD. During a January 26, 2023 Austin ISD Board of Trustees Regular Voting Meeting, the Board entered into three consultation agreements with Education Austin working to foster better working conditions towards their teacher retention objectives (Austin Independent School District, 2023). The first agreement (Policy Item 12.1: Required Time For Teachers Outside the Duty Day) states that responsibilities outside Duty Hours must be limited to one hour per week with 48-hour notice provided, and 24-hour notice is required for meeting cancellations. The second agreement (Policy Item 12.2: Meeting Moratorium)
states that teachers are not required to engage in professional development meetings during weeks that are designated for parent-teacher conferences. The third agreement (Policy Item 12.3: Substitute Coverage) provides guidelines for compensation and scope of teachers/TAs assuming substitute duties of other classes in the absence of a substitute teacher.

Another valuable aspect to the district’s policy agenda is the installment of a Chief Equity Officer. Concurrently, the district expanded its policy on employee welfare to include an additional clause on Gender-Based Harassment; expanded the scope of Sexual Harassment; and altered rhetoric changing “his or her” to “their,” and adjusted phrases from “reports may be filed,” to “reports should be filed,” affirming teachers’ right to an inclusive workplace.

While data is yet to be collected and analyzed on the effectiveness of these policies towards teacher retention, the research suggests that these policies will yield effective results towards mitigating teacher turnover and retaining the current teacher workforce in Austin ISD. Higher compensation, expanded scope of benefits including mental health coverage, and workplace policies that prioritize teacher welfare and respectable working conditions reinforce studies described in the literature as effective models of teacher retention.

**Recommendation for Future Policy Implementation**

Two possible areas for future policy implementation surround compensation and benefits and school-workplace climate. While the district’s 2022-2023 implementation of a 7% salary increase was widely touted as a progressive and substantial move forward in the teacher retention policy debate, it came at the expense of a $54 million deficit to the district’s annual budget. It is reasonable to conclude that this practice might not be a regularly-recurring policy undergone by the district. Thus, some creativity is in order. An interesting compensation program from Minnesota titled Q Comp is a performance-based payment system that analyzes student performance, professional development, and faculty leadership; this method yielded a positive effect on teacher retention and a positive impact on overall student achievement. This approach invites some market-based elements into the social system, and has potential as an innovative method to retain teachers in Austin ISD. Another interesting model examined by Springer et al. (2016) studied the effectiveness of issuing $5,000 retention bonuses for high-performing, value-adding teachers in Tennessee schools with low student achievement. While overall there was not a statistically significant impact on teacher retention overall, this program was highly successful for some subjects/grade levels; thus, this solution might be effective as a targeted approach rather than a universal model that could be applied to all of Austin ISD.

In addressing school climate and working conditions, attention must be paid to school-level administrators in understanding their role in teacher retention. As aforementioned, teacher retention is largely dependent on humanistic and interpersonal relationships with superiors. Thus, to strengthen teacher retention, Austin ISD must ensure that their school administrators are the most qualified, most effective, and most charismatic leaders.
possible. This can be accomplished through a leadership style dubbed Servant Leadership, wherein the chief leader of an organization prioritizes employee empowerment, well-being, and growth. There is a strong positive correlation between school principals perceived to exhibit servant leadership and high rates of teacher retention. This finding suggests that hiring school administrators who exhibit servant leadership are more likely to helm schools that foster positive workplace environments for teachers and elevate retention. Servant leadership also has great potential to incorporate elements of deliberative democracy through teacher empowerment and activism.

“Keep Austin Weird”: Personal and External Factors

Background and Literature Review

Counterfactual to young students’ predisposition that teachers eat, sleep, and live within the four walls of their classrooms, teachers function in daily society as any other professional. Thus, an aspiring teacher’s decision to teach in Austin ISD is inextricably linked to its namesake metropolitan area. The same theory applies to a veteran teacher choosing to remain in Austin ISD, or a mid-career teacher choosing to transfer to Austin ISD. In 2022, Austin was among the top ten U.S. cities with the highest influx of millennials, comprising over 40% of the city’s population. As reported in the Austin American-Statesman, another study found that in 2019, Austin ranked as the friendliest and cleanest urban city in the United States. Over the past two decades, as Austin has properly developed into its post-industrial society, the city has emerged into a “technopolis,” where technology-oriented businesses originally in California have relocated to Austin for the city's unique socially-liberal policy coupled with the Texas fiscal conservativeness pertaining to personal and corporate income tax. The influence of the technology industry on Austin has developed an entrepreneurial spirit that has guided a successful, thriving post-industrial economy.

Concurrently, there are forces working in conjunction with this entrepreneurial spirit to embrace the city’s unique culture, strong foundation of small businesses, and famous live music. Austin serves as an incubator for community-driven initiatives that work to preserve the unique cultural fabric of the city fostered around core political values including deliberation and inclusive policymaking. If the success and vitality of Austin ISD is dependent on attracting high-quality and value-added teachers, retaining these professionals, and preventing teacher turnover, the role that the City of Austin plays in this ecosystem is vital.

Current State and Evaluation

The City of Austin serves as an impactful and increasingly important actor that encourages teacher attraction and maintains teacher retention. In many ways, Austin ISD harnesses the significant bargaining power that the City of Austin holds on attraction and retention both explicitly and implicitly. The 2022-2023 teacher consultation agreement on teacher compensation between Austin ISD and Education Austin was inherently driven by the district’s desire to retain its workforce within the Austin-Round Rock MSA, and was a vehicle
to ensure that teachers and instructional personnel can live in the same neighborhoods as their students and schools, fostering a more symbiotic school environment. In an evaluation of urban elementary schools, teachers who reside locally are essential in building mutual trust with their students, yielding higher educational outcomes for students.\textsuperscript{29} When students – particularly young students – can better resonate with their teachers and understand the similarities of lived experience, trust is formed on a more profound level. Local teachers are better suited to serve as advocates for students and families and combat stereotypes and prejudice.\textsuperscript{30}

Another method that Austin ISD actively employs to harness the City of Austin in its retention and attraction policymaking is through its expansive partnerships with Austin-area universities through teacher residency programs. According to Imeraj et al. (2018), while the mainstream perspective on post-graduate retention in urban cities has been associated with economic drivers such as employment prospects, this study argues that non-economic factors (i.e. social, cultural, political) play a much more significant role in retaining individuals post-graduation.\textsuperscript{31} Economic incentives are merely short-term phenomena, and a city’s retention rate is dictated by non-economic conditions such as quality of life, political atmosphere, and culture; prevalence of these factors has a highly positive correlation with retention. As Austin ISD continues to execute memoranda of understanding with local Austin-area universities, they are directly and expressly working towards teacher retention policymaking rooted in two areas of research: 1) that students are more far more likely to begin their teaching career in the district in which they conduct their classroom residency, and 2) that retention of post-college individuals in an urban city is based on socio-cultural drivers, of which Austin is abundant.

**Recommendation for Future Policy Implementation**

The foremost recommendation to continue attracting and retaining teachers to Austin ISD can be capitulated in three words: Keep Austin Weird. While internal policies within Austin ISD bear significant consequence to retention and attraction of qualified, value-added teachers, this must be coupled with a successful and thriving metropolis that prioritizes values beyond economic opportunities. The inherent factors that make Austin a unique and thriving city, including its vibrant arts and culture scene, its focus on community and collective activism, and its inherently inclusive environment significantly contribute to teacher retention and attraction. As Austin continues to introduce meaningful and impactful social policies that contribute to keeping Austin Weird, even more aspiring teachers will look to Austin ISD to begin their teaching careers, and by shared responsibility of the city and district, will continue to for years to come.

**Conclusion**

Austin ISD is a diverse urban school district in Texas that, in many instances, sits between a rock and a hard place. While the district actively works to implement meaningful policies and practices that benefit its students and staff, as exhibited herein through teacher retention policy, it is constantly at odds with the Texas Education Agency, succumbing to
the implications of the 10th Amendment. Through crucial partnerships including Education
Austin, the City of Austin, and university teacher residencies, Austin ISD is working to shape
the next generation through creative and innovative policymaking.
Threats to Archipelago Sustainability: Tourism, Fishing, and Infrastructure Development as Growth Machine Actors in the Faroe Islands

By Adam Gendreau

Overview: A hypothesis put forward by Scheidel et al. asserts “more metabolism, more conflicts.” In the face of globalization, the small nation of the Faroe Islands is compromising its reputation as an isolated and predominantly “sustainable society” as it increasingly evolves into a growth machine. Rapid growth in tourism and fishing industries—two contemporary economic drivers for the islands—has resulted in a host of contemporary conflicts regarding land use, Faroese sociocultural behaviors, and environmental degradation. A growth machine framework has caused increasing resource use, consumption, and environmental degradation across both industries as the islands increasingly globalize. Furthermore, the fishing and tourism sectors have spurred recent infrastructure developments like large subsea tunnels that prioritize economic development over local needs, illustrating a clear political bias towards external growth. Under a growth machine system, the astonishing expansion of tourism, fishing, and related infrastructure needs more governmental policy to decouple growth and expansion from environmental degradation in the face of urbanization.

Background: Overview of the Faroe Islands

The Faroe Islands are a self-governing territory in the Kingdom of Denmark with its own Faroese Home Government (FHG) and parliament. The majority of the population lives on Streymoy, the largest island that also holds the capital, Torshavn. As of 2021, the Faroe Islands have a population of 52,889 and a high growth rate of 0.9% annual change. Like their modern-day descendants, sheep farming and fishing were a means of sustenance for the initial Viking settlers. Geographic isolation resulted in close cultural ties to land and a clear need for self-sufficiency. Sustainability is critical in island communities; some tactics the Nordic settlers used were grass roofs to retain heat, local diets heavy in preserved meats and vegetables, and land and water conservation, all of which rationed the limited resources that the archipelago offered to human settlement. Despite improved well-being over time, the population remained quite small. Population growth is a more recent phenomenon in the context of globalization and capitalism. For example, after establishing tourism and fishing industries in the 1960s in the global capitalist market, the population grew by 55% from 1960. The fishing industry flourished because the Faroese are situated at the confluence of four marine flows that keep ocean temperatures around eight degrees celsius year-round, which allows fish populations to remain there rather than migrate away for parts of the year.

Yet even today, people remain outnumbered by the 80,000 free-roaming sheep on the islands, and the majority of the archipelago’s area remains unpopulated. Characterized by long, winding roads alongside natural formations of volcanic rock, travel times for communities only a few miles apart are disproportionately long. Ferry networks also
transport vehicles between islands, though this practice is declining due to recent sub-sea tunnel projects. Wind farms and hydropower installations have been installed around the entire archipelago, though they only account for around half of the energy consumption. Since 2000, energy demand has doubled from 210,000 kWh to 420,000 kWh, which is 7,937 kWh per capita. Increasing energy demand has inevitably led to more imports of fossil fuel products. The islands have a goal of 100% sustainable energy use by 2030, a challenge as the growth machine framework becomes further entrenched.

The Fishing Industry

Overview

During the 1900s, fishing exports propelled the Faroes into the global economy. Fish products represent around twenty percent of the Faroes’s GDP and ninety-five percent of the total export value. The Faroe Islands are often categorized as a “mono-product” economy, meaning that the growth machine’s success is predominantly tied to the fishing industry. Fishing is at the heart of Faroese politics, and differing opinions over catching regulations are a significant reason why the Faroes did not join the European Union (EU) with Denmark in 1973. The Faroe Islands historically used fishing as a means for sustenance, and only recently has leveraged the industry to drive growth in the global economy. More recently, in addition to ocean fishing, salmon aquaculture has been introduced in the estuary regions between islands as a “blue growth” tactic. After a severe fishery collapse in 1996, a new fishery management system was implemented for the coastal fishing industry; it has only shown modest effectiveness, however, and salmon aquaculture remains largely unregulated. The Faroe Islands act as a growth machine in their over-exploitation of both coastal waters and estuary systems between the islands. Under the guise of a “blue growth” program promoted by local government and private industry, the fishing industry’s accelerated social metabolism for both coastal fishing and aquaculture farming is causing a regression in Faroese sustainability.

Growth of Fishing and Land-Use Conflicts

Analysis shows that the Faroe Islands’ “blue growth” strategy amid urbanization is unsustainable, as seen in resource and energy flows and land use conflicts. Bogadóttir argues that industry investments reflect political and private interests, which is often guised as “natural” economic development. Political and private actors in the Faroe Islands both seek to maximize returns from the fishing industry. In 2023, the Faroe Islands caught 783,392 tons of fish, corresponding to about 0.5% of global fishery capture. They also harvested 80,462 tons of salmon. The Faroes have the highest per-capita fishing output globally at 1.8 tons per person. Fishing contributed to more than half of the total Faroese greenhouse gas emissions in 2017. Furthermore, the acceleration of social metabolism coincides with growing income inequality, environmental justice conflicts, population growth, and increasing urbanization of Faroese communities.

Bogadóttir writes that “rather than leading to a reduction in energy and material
throughput, these [blue growth] ideologies are maintaining and forging new resource-intensive dependency paths for Faroese society.”11 Blue growth ideologies further the growth machine framework, resulting in drastic increases in input resources, overconsumption of fish stocks, and ecosystem harm.

**Coastal Sea Fishing**

Both the previous and current fishery management system proves to be heavily influenced by the wants of industry over ecological science, thus defaulting land-use decisions to those with a vested economic interest. The lack of regulation and loopholes in all iterations of Faroese fishing policy encourage more unsustainable practices. For example, during much of the 20th century, Faroese fishing output grew annually at a rate of about 6.6% through the exploitation of new fish species.12 Initially focused on demersal fish like cod, haddock, and saithe, declining populations have led to the capture of pelagic species such as blue whiting, mackerel, and herring. This shift, known as “fishing down the food web,” reflects a contemporary fishing approach that prioritizes exploiting new resources rather than sustainably managing existing ones under a “blue growth” plan.

The TAC limit system in effect from 1994 to 1996 caused the 1996 fishery collapse. Fishermen had different quotas for each species, forcing them to either stop fishing entirely when one quota was reached or illegally sell or discard over-quota fish. Such overexploitation, coupled with the underreporting of catches, led to the depletion of demersal fish stocks by an estimated 60-75% and subsequent collapse of the ecosystem in 1996.13 From then and until 2018, the Faroese fleet was managed via fishing days, spatial closures, and gear restrictions. The Faroes adopted an “effort based” system that controlled inputs instead of the UN’s TAC output control system. However, this system was poorly implemented, and was criticized by scientists for allowing overcapacity.14

The Faroese effort-based management system (1996-2018) used capacity regulation, a cap-and-trade system, and area closures, among other measures to regulate coastal fishing. Fleet capacity and total “fishing days” were capped at 1997 levels, though scientists argue that 1997 should not be considered as a benchmark level to maintain sustainability, since fisheries collapsed under those same volumes the year before.15 Scientists argue that too many fishing days were initially allowed, and in subsequent years, there was no effort to decrease the total number of fishing days. Under the cap-and-trade system, “fishing days” can be traded between vessels. Thus, as technological advances led to increased catch rates per fishing days, efficient vessels increasingly depleted the fish stock. This technological creep to maximize fishery output means that the effort-based system cannot ensure that total catch levels are maintained. Even worse, there is now no penalty for over-fishing because the TAC limit was repealed under the effort-based system. Research by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) found that catches of cod, saithe, and haddock exceeded the system’s recommended limit of 33% of the stock, with some years seeing over 80% of the cod stock caught.16

As noted, the political landscape of coastal fisheries under this growth machine emphasizes
increasing yields over scientific opinion, continuing to threaten the coastal ecosystem into the 21st century. The Ministry of Fisheries receives input from the Fisheries Advisory Committee and the Committee on Fishing Days, both of which are lobbied and even partially represented by the fishing industry. While the Faroe Marine Research Institute also provides input to the Ministry of Fisheries, such a system pits the scientific proposals against majority-industry opinions. Unsurprisingly, the Ministry's recommendations to Parliament consistently reflect industrial desires for growth at the expense of the marine ecosystem's long-term health and sustainability.\(^{17}\)

In 2018, auctions were introduced to buy fishing rights. This system replaced the cap-and-trade system for fishing days under the effort-based management system. This shift has led to rapid consolidation within the coastal fishing industry because both new and small fisheries are unable to compete financially with established competitors.\(^{18}\) Auctions not only intensify capitalist pressure on the industry but also redefine fishery success, now emphasizing growth and wealth accumulation instead of the traditional sustenance-based practices that defined success in centuries prior. Thus, the effort-based management system and the recent auction amendment threaten fishery sustainability. Present-day Faroese fishing policy, characterized by industry-backed decisions at the expense of scientific input and regulatory oversight, prioritizes profit from global exports. In sum, the turbulent state of Faroese coastal fishing policy underscores its focus on economic growth in a global capitalist market rather than sustainability.

### Salmon Aquaculture

Introduced in the mid-20th century, the salmon aquaculture industry remains largely unregulated in the face of privatized consolidation, greater material demands, and ecosystem degradation, showing a drastic departure from traditional sustainable practices on the islands.

Faroese salmon aquaculture yields grew from 14,484 tons in 1996 to 71,172 tons in 2017, which is 47% of total Faroese export value. While production has increased almost every year, the number of licensed operators has dramatically declined from 85 in 1989 to only three licensed operators in 2018. Faroese government regulations in the 1990s limited the amount of aquaculture farms in the Faroe Islands to 20, though the main driver of consolidation was foreign investment from the global capitalist market. While Faroese policy restricts the maximum share a single foreign entity can have in an aquaculture farm to 20%, it still allows for five foreign parties to each own 20% of a Faroese salmon farm. As a result, the three salmon farming operations are all majority foreign-owned.\(^{19}\) Recent policies aimed to close this loophole, yet Bakkafrost and Mowi, the two largest salmon producers, managed to exclude their ownership percentages from such regulations. This exemption highlights the Faroese government's preferential treatment of privatized, consolidated industries at the expense of more sustainable fishing practices. In his book *Risky Cities*, author Albert Fu writes “a major fixture of [increasing social metabolism] is the role of monopolistic firms [...] the volume and source of a treadmill of production is high-energy monopoly-capital industry.”\(^{20}\) Bakkafrost, the largest salmon producer on the
islands, became a listed company on the Oslo Stock Exchange in 2010 as its global exports dramatically increased. This move made Bakkafrost’s success reliant on compounding economic growth, increasing the treadmill of production and social metabolism for the industry. Harvesting 54,615 tons of salmon in 2017, Bakkafrost now generates 77% of total Faroese salmon production, an overt yet unpenalized violation of Faroese fishing policy. Three salmon farms now have autonomy over nearly the entire waterway network between the islands, despite being mostly foreign-owned. These large producers justify their continuous growth and expansion by vaguely citing global food security, a key pillar of a “blue growth” economy.

Unlike local oceanic pelagic species, farmed salmon depend on direct external feed input. The salmon producer Mowi imports fish feed from Norway, while Bakkafrost uses local fish food from its subsidiary, Havsbrún. The three salmon farmers now control the entire process from growing to processing to exporting of their product. Vertical consolidation has increased profit margins and total outputs for all three companies, but such growth has caused significant environmental harm. Many Faroese people believe that industry should pay for their pollutive practices and be subject to stricter political regulation. Private aquaculture industries are allowed to externalize their costs due to a lack of regulation, a common feature of a capitalist market; these costs are burdened upon Faroese people and ecosystems, threatening sustainability.

The production of Faroese salmon requires significantly more material and energy inputs than coastal fishing of local pelagic fish species. For example, producing one kilogram (kg) of salmon requires an input of 3.6 kg of wild fish. Blue whiting is often used as salmon food. In every year since 2017, Havsbrún caught nearly half of all coastal fish in the Faroes, which is exclusively used as fish food for salmon aquaculture farms. It is far more sustainable to directly consume pelagic fish rather than use them to support the industrial growth of a high-trophic level fish like salmon. Solås et. al. write that “problematization and questioning of the size and sustainability of material resource and waste flows is avoided through a focus on how waste flows may be utilized for further growth.” Bakkafront constructed a biogas plant to process the increasing waste from salmon production. Metabolic growth has necessitated the rapid build-up of smolt plants, energy infrastructure, processing facilities, and transportation means. This rapid development of harbor areas is disrupting both the natural ecosystems and the local residents nearby. It is estimated that 10% of the Faroes Islands’ greenhouse gas emissions comes from the three salmon production companies. The recent introduction of salmon farming into the growth machine has shifted focus away from the sustainable harvesting of local pelagic fish towards economic growth driven by a consolidated salmon industry; this need for compounding growth accelerates the islands’ social metabolism and threatens both human and marine health.

Numerous social groups have challenged the salmon industry for its detrimental effects on the local environment. Salmon, introduced from Iceland in 1947 for their profitability, are not native to the Faroe Islands. The introduction of salmon brought Infectious Salmon Anemia Disease, leading to devastating consequences for both local fish populations and the salmon themselves. This disease underscores the environmental and economic
unsustainability of salmon farming in Faroese waters. A survey of Faroese people in 2018, found that most respondents felt as though industry drives fishing policy and that economic growth is valued above people and nature. Ecological concerns from the salmon industry include the placement and expansion of fish farms into protected areas, constructing industrial sites near harbors and nature areas, pollution, and marine diseases. Socioeconomic concerns from the industry include appropriation of land and water resources from local communities, construction of industrial infrastructure near residential areas, lack of participatory decision-making, displacement of alternative economic practices, and privatization of common areas like harbors. Both ecological and socioeconomic tensions in this case threaten sustainability. These actions have been advocated against by local NGOs and environmental justice groups. Local lobster fishermen have also accused the salmon industry of illegally displacing them and affecting their lobster yields through proximal pollution and disturbance from salmon farms. In 2023, Bakkafrost reported declining yields attributed to unspecified “environmental factors,” signaling the fragility of the industry’s unsustainable practices into future years.

The Tourism Industry

Overview

Tourism is another industry that the Faroese growth machine has leveraged. Environmentally-exploitive advertising from the Faroese government and international media and the lack of oversight has led to land-use and local resident conflicts. Given the small size of the Faroe Islands, the vast majority of the tourism industry is owned, advertised, and managed by the local government. Capitalizing on the natural environment’s beauty and unique ecosystem, the Faroe Islands have seen higher tourist volumes and increasing financial gains. In 2015, tourists purchased 96 million U.S. dollars in goods, and that number has only grown. In 2016, 2.7% of all island employees worked directly in the tourism industry though many others indirectly orient business towards visitors. Santana et. al. writes that “demand for island tourism is “on the rise due to increased interest in the environment and in tranquil, less developed areas such as coastal settings which are still pristine for tourism purposes.” As tourism annually becomes a larger economic driver, unsustainable land use decisions and commodification of nature threaten the islands’ environmental health.

Global and Local Campaigns for Tourism Growth

The Faroese Ministry of Trade and Industry has been campaigning for decades to draw in more tourists due to their economic benefits towards the growth machine. Through global advertising, the tourism industry has been increasing by about ten percent each year in the Faroes through their agency called Visit Faroe Islands. Recent post-pandemic years have seen 110,000 annual tourists, more than double the population of the entire archipelago. By advertising the great sweeping landscapes and unique Faroese culture full of grass-roofed homes, unique foods, and sheep, Visit Faroe Islands has successfully fostered a rapidly accelerating tourism industry. However, increasing tourism calls for increasing land
use, consumption, and environmental harm, thus suggesting that the increase in social metabolism is not sustainable.

Local governmental campaigns promoting “sustainable” tourism are contradictory in nature because they simultaneously depict the Faroe Islands as a place “ripe” for extractive tourism. The Visit Faroe Island’s campaign mantra on their website is “Unspoiled, Unexplored, Unbelievable.” By depicting the islands as undiscovered— which the local population would obviously disagree with— the islands are portrayed as a new and “off the beaten path” destination. Visit Faroe Islands has a “preservolution” campaign, which they define as a “new tourism strategy designed to preserve and evolve the nation’s distinct nature and culture and to help the tourism industry grow in a responsible and sustainable manner into the next decade.” However, this strategic plan calls for “spreading tourists everywhere in the Faroe Islands, all year round,” which would cause continuous and far-reaching harm to the archipelago’s natural environment instead of preservation. Because tourism infrastructure is especially absent in less-populated areas, tourists often risk their lives on unsafe terrain to see scenic sites, often harming the surrounding environment. For example, the mountain of Slættaratindur has seen unprecedented erosion due to the increase in hikers. Jørgen Niclasen, the Faroese Minister of Finance, states that “nature is our primary trademark and we must ensure that doesn’t change.” According to Helgi Abrahamsen, the Minister of Environment, Industry, and Trade, “we want tourists who spend more money here. Because it is business and we need to look at income sources.”

A potential policy being discussed is a centralized, more costly booking system that would draw “higher spending visitors” while discouraging “low impact budget travelers from coming to the Faroe Islands.” Nature is commodified by the Faroese government as they call for unsustainable and environmentally-harmful volumes of tourists. Tourism is a tool used by the Faroese growth machine to increase the social metabolism of the islands, which carries negative environmental implications.

Global media outlets have also increasingly promoted tourism to the Faroe Islands, partially explaining the recent visitation surge. In 2007, National Geographic surveyed 111 island communities worldwide for their tourism desirability. The survey rated the Faroe Islands as the number one tourist destination, calling it “authentic, unspoiled, and likely to remain so.” However, the tourism National Geographic promoted actively hinders the archipelago’s sustainability. Reader’s Choice magazine listed the Faroes as the best tourism destination in 2015, and the Lonely Planet travel magazine gave it the same title in 2021, also labelling it as “the best kept secret in Europe.” Social media influencers have also been very influential in drawing tourists to the archipelago. Increased global advertising of the Faroe Islands as a site of pristine and untouched nature has aided in bolstering the amount of annual tourists. However, the Faroese government has essentially no tourism regulation or legislation, resulting in harm to the environment and local residents.

**Potential Land-Use Conflicts From Tourism**

In a community-based GIS mapping study, Plieninger et. al. surveyed local Faroese and visiting tourists to understand why tourists visited the islands, and how the growing industry
Threats to Archipelago Sustainability

can negatively influence land use practices. According to the survey, tourists visit the Faroe Islands primarily for their remarkable nature and have been categorized as “globetrotters” (22%), “nature lovers” (14%), “sightseers” (11%), and “culture lovers” (9%). Based on the results of this survey, both governmental and media efforts to advertise the pristine nature have been quite effective, as it is the primary reason for visitation.

The survey also asked local Faroese residents about their views on tourism, and respondents indicated a clear desire for the economic gains associated with the industry but also deep apprehension about the negative externalities imposed upon nature. In the face of globalization, respondents acknowledged a need for new opportunities to generate wealth.

The two most often mentioned concerns around tourism were that the sector is unorganized and unsafe and that tourists disturb nature and wildlife (57.3% of respondents). However, most respondents saw economic revenues from tourism as an opportunity to spur local development. Plieninger et. al. describe this contradiction as a “double-edged sword”, where the growth machine requires increased capital, yet this stands at odds with the Faroese people’s deep connection with nature and desire for environmental sustainability and protection. 42.7% of respondents worried about the government’s perceived inability to manage the industry and its environmental externalities. Anxieties also focused around the lack of political strategies and resources for tourism management as well as a fear that small Faroese villages are unable to govern tourism themselves properly. Currently, tourists are allowed to visit any area without regulation or oversight, offer no local economic benefit to the people, harm the environment, and leave. As such, tourism gains under the growth machine are captured by the government at large who essentially controls the tourism industry, leaving little economic benefits for local villages that lack tourism infrastructure.

Tourists were asked to identify sites with beautiful landscapes/landmarks, which showed clear spatial conflicts with cultural, economic, and historical sites valued by locals. High densities of “beautiful landscapes/landmarks” sites were found around the capital Tórshavn and in some of the well-known tourism hotspots such as Mykines, Western Vágar, and the Northern parts of Eysturoy and Streymoy– typically outer coastal areas with spectacular cliffs and high mountain scenery. These same areas were identified by locals on the map as areas with rich culture, history, and heritage values and are known for their historical and archaeological monuments and excavations. Many popular tourist sites are also settings of Faroese sagas, which are Scandinavian prose stories and histories about viking settlement and conflict. Many Faroese citizens have called for the closing of certain saga sites to tourists due to the damage they’ve suffered from increased foot traffic, though the government has expressed no interest in doing so. Faroese people have long valued the rule that no permission is needed to explore the archipelago’s nature, though that value is complicated by more external tourism. Plieninger et. al. writes that a central narrative from respondents “outlines that the Faroe Islands are a cultural landscape where people and nature live together. People are part of nature, and are entitled to its sustainable use. Past and current anthropogenic development is visible in the nature of the islands. Conservation
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of the landscapes and nature is important while development such as tourism and use of resources should be allowed, but carefully considered.” Though the validity of such a claim is arguably false, Faroese people view their nature as “untouched” and “unpolluted”, and tourism threatens those ideals as it surges in socio-cultural land valued by locals.

Conflicts Between the Faroese People and Tourists

Some Faroese residents, particularly the farmers who own large swaths of private land, remain staunchly opposed to the tourism influx encouraged by the growth machine. Lifestyle disturbance and environmental harm caused by incoming visitors creates tensions with local residents that sometimes result in outright conflicts.

For centuries, Faroese people have had a deeply intertwined relationship with the natural environment. Bertolucci et. al write that “the Faroe Islands are a cultural landscape where people and nature live together. Local people are part of nature and are entitled to its sustainable use. In this context, tourists are seen as a threat and this causes clashes between locals and visitors.” For example, the village of Saksun is a very popular tourist destination. Saksun is an inland village with six grass-roof houses, a church, and a dramatic waterfall flowing into a lagoon. Though this trend is happening in villages all over the Faroe Islands, Saksun has truly become overrun by an estimated 100,000 annual tourists. Bertolucci et. al write that “the thousands of visitors are totally disproportionate to the eight adults and two children residing in the village and the traditional lifestyle loved by locals has been threatened by the massive flows.” As a rare example of government-backed tourism infrastructure, Saksun now has public restroom facilities and a parking lot. Saksun’s residents report that visitors have trampled the grazing grass for sheep, tresspassed on private property, and caused significant erosion and damage on the local trail up to the waterfall. Despite such cultural and environmental disturbances, the Visit Faroe Islands agency continues to advertise Saksun on its website and its “jaw-dropping panoramic views” and “untouched and serene feeling.” Despite there being signs like “No Drone Zone,” “Keep off the Grass,” and “Keep off the Fence,” tourists violate all three. In an infamous example, one Saksun resident actually shot a tourist’s drone out of the sky with a gun. Less overt forms of conflict are occurring in villages all over the island, especially regarding tresspassing on private property, disturbing sheep, and driving off-road onto grasslands. The Faroese growth machine’s successful efforts to expand the tourism industry via government and media efforts has caused land-use conflicts, tensions with locals, and accelerated environmental degradation.

Exploitive Capitalization by Faroese People

Even amid apprehensions related to tourism’s potential to disrupt the fragile landscape and locals’ tranquil lifestyle, many Faroese residents still find ways to capitalize off the heightened visitation. This market exploitation in local villages emerged due to the government’s lack of far-reaching tourism infrastructure. As tourist numbers continue to surge due to the islands’ increased global presence, locals uphold the growth machine ideology as they exploit their natural surroundings in pursuit of economic gains.
Bertolucci et al. use a personal model to demonstrate three local farmers’ attitudes towards tourism; their analysis reveals that even though all individuals are resistant to the tourism increasing, they have found clever ways to capitalize on visitation. One farmer, Trondur, wants tourism to remain exclusively for higher spenders. He and his family operate a homestay for tourists, and make and sell sweaters made from their sheep wool. When asked about the current situation of the business and the perception of locals about tourism, he described how his village’s inhabitants were initially skeptical, but have developed a more positive perception of tourists after the creation of tourist-housing and the related profits.51

In Saksun, residents decided to convert the church into a part-time museum as it would be more profitable for them. Sonja, the personal model’s second subject, works at the museum and is married to the man who shot down the tourist drone. Sonja once collaborated with the Visit Faroe Islands agency, but has since parted ways because she does not trust them. Ironically, Sonja operates a museum for tourists, though feels as though they invade her family’s privacy and harm their village. In an interview, Sonja said:

“When Visit Faroe Islands markets the free and wild nature, people don’t know that there is no wild nature in the Faroe Islands whatsoever. Everything is farmland in the law. I don’t think Visit Faroe Islands or the politicians knew that and now people say it is just an old law. It’s just so annoying! You don’t want people to think they can just walk everywhere. We used to have a lot of sheep around here, around the church but they just don’t like to be there anymore, there were too many people.”52

Ironically, Sonja is a proponent of cruise ship tours to her village as they come with a guide who tells them not to step on the grass or disturb the residents. Saksun has started charging visitors for the restroom, even accepting credit card payment. Saksun is forgoing various aspects of its culture— even its traditional place of worship— in lieu of the growth machine’s increased tourism-generated economic gains.

The third member of the persona model, a farmer named Johannes, has successfully capitalized on increased visits to his small village on Kalsoy Island by charging an entry fee to certain scenic areas and by offering private tours to certain lookouts. Jonannes is not alone in this endeavor— farmers all over the archipelago are charging anywhere from $10 to $80 to access certain areas. This practice stands in stark opposition to the Faroese ideology of open-access to nature. Johannes lives near a filming location from the James Bond: No Time To Die film, which has caused an influx in tourists to Kalsoy Island specifically. Johannes created a granite gravestone marking Bond’s fictional resting place along the cliff edge. He charges $30 for a guided tour to the gravesite, and had more than 15,000 visitors in the summer of 2023.53 In his interview, Johannes justifies farmer’s involvement in the tourism industry:
Urban Journal

As numbers have increased, I’ve had to take on guides to help people hike safely, as every year we have guests slipping on the path and injuring themselves. I think it’s fair that farmers get a share of tourist revenue.14

All three members of the persona model conveyed initial hesitancy towards tourism, though to various extents have welcomed the growth machine ideology as they financially gain off of the increased visitation rates.

Outside of the persona model made by Bertolucci et. al, there are many other examples of the exploitation of the Faroese culture and natural environment. The Patursson family currently resides in the famous Roykstovan residence, the oldest inhabited wooden house in Europe. The Patturssons actually divided their home in half and treat part of it as a “living museum” that tourists can visit.55 The seventeenth generation of the Patturssons have decided to capitalize on their daily lives, illustrating just how far Faroese residents are willing to go under the growth machine. Jørgen Niclasen, the Faroese Minister of Finance writes:

Tourism is now appreciated as an alternative way to make a living and people take pride in settling down in their local community as an alternative to departure. We experience landscapes and townscapes that are thriving with a much larger choice of cultural offerings and where new concepts and interpretations of good old customs have been transformed into unique attractions. Attractions which give tourists and locals new incentives to discover the Faroe Islands in a new light.56

The Faroese growth machine, even despite local resistance to tourism, has become embedded in the political and economic actions of the government and locals. The resultant land-use conflicts and exploitation of culture threaten the islands’ sustainability on the whole.

Infrastructure Development

Harbor Industrialization and Privatization

Industrial growth has urbanized and privatized harbors, causing noise and air pollution in nearby communities. This privatization is unprecedented in Faroese culture, where harbors have historically played a vital role. They now serve as crucial hubs for speeding up social metabolism, handling the landing, processing, and export of fish to global markets. In Torshavn and Klaskvik, the two largest cities in the Faroe Islands, are both deepening their harbors to better accommodate large fishing export ships as well as tourism cruise ships.57 Bakkafrost, in their work to consolidate the fishing supply chain, sited their processing and biogas facilities in these harbor areas, streaming the export process. The environmental justice group Heimafriður (meaning “Peace at Home”) is challenging urbanization, industrialization, and privatization in port areas, critiquing the unsustainable
growth practices as preferential to industry over the well-being of local residents. Such developments stand in stark contrast to the Faroese ideology of everyone having access to harbor spaces. Harbors devolve into less-sustainable spaces as the government prioritizes economic stimulants: fishing and tourism.

**Tunnel Infrastructure Development Overview**

Tunnel construction on the Faroe Islands had a tremendous impact on the metabolism of not just industry, but all aspects of local life. As the Faroes continue to globalize, submarine travel facilitates the ceaseless movement of tourists, fishery exports, and capital. In 1948, the Faroese government established a public institution called Landsverk, which oversees the tunnel construction as a pseudo-governmental branch. Since 1963, Landsverk has blasted into the natural landscape to create 20 new tunnel shortcuts around the archipelago, three of which are long tunnels under the sea. There is nearly one meter of tunnel per inhabitant on the islands. With the completion of the most recent Sandoy tunnel, 88% of the Faroese population is now directly connected via tunnel infrastructure. For example, a tunnel connection between Torshavn and the town of Runavik has reduced travel times from an 1 hour and 14 minutes to only 16 minutes. Generally, across the entire archipelago, half-day journeys have been reduced to minutes thanks to tunnels. It is irrefutable that these infrastructure investments have drastically benefitted the Faroe Islands as a whole. One tunnel, known as the Eysturoy Tunnel, drew global recognition when it opened in 2020; the 11.2 kilometer tunnel has a roundabout in the underwater center of it and connects Torshavn to the island of Eysturoy. The Faroese government justifies such significant tunnel investments by noting that there will be less of a reliance on vehicle-ferrying connections (which are quite slow), a stimulant for local businesses across all islands. Landsverk promotes the idea that the “Faroes is one city and no-one should be disadvantaged by where they live.” However, such a large investment cannot be paid back by the local population’s usage alone; other economic actors must benefit from the infrastructure advancements in order to pay back the tunneling debts. Like most prior tunneling projects, the recent Sandoy tunnel costs nearly $55,000 USD per resident, equivalent to a debt representing 55% of the country’s total existing loans. Faroese tunnels are an economic investment that the government needs increasing revenues to pay back fishery-ferrying connections (which are quite slow), a stimulant for local businesses across all islands. Landsverk promotes the idea that the “Faroes is one city and no-one should be disadvantaged by where they live.” However, such a large investment cannot be paid back by the local population’s usage alone; other economic actors must benefit from the infrastructure advancements in order to pay back the tunneling debts. Like most prior tunneling projects, the recent Sandoy tunnel costs nearly $55,000 USD per resident, equivalent to a debt representing 55% of the country’s total existing loans. Faroese tunnels are an economic investment that the government needs increasing revenues to pay back fishing and tourism growth offers that profit.

**Tunnels and the Fishing Industry**

Tunnel infrastructure has greatly expedited the metabolism of the fishing industry; fish could now be rapidly transported around the islands for processing, packaging, and exporting. With product transport no longer acting as a limiting factor, the both the coastal and aquaculture sectors have been able to export more product at the expense of local sustainability. Santana et. al. write that with the advent of tunnels to major port cities across the archipelago, “fish companies can now cut travel times by 50%...the starting point for the tunnel is that you tie the largest areas together in the Faroe Islands and the areas that have the most industry... so it becomes easier to drive from Klaksvik to Torshavn and from Runavik and such. An axis from where you have the most industry.” With more efficient
tunnel connections, Faroese towns are now hubs for farming, processing, packaging, and exporting that are strung along an island-wide production line. In particular, the Eysturoy Tunnel has undoubtedly become the most effective transport link for the fishing industry, enshrining its consolidation. The Eysturoy Tunnel cost $62.5 million USD. The Landsverk CEO justified this massive project by describing how “the main export route of the Faroe Islands is from Tórshavn, and the main production of the fishing industry and farming and salmon is in the north region, so it will make the business environment more efficient.”

Vaga tunnel, which now connects the airport to Torshavn, was advertised as benefitting local communities, though it provides major benefits for fish product exports. The Faroese government now allows private fishing companies to perform their own tunneling projects, showing a clear lack of regulation over infrastructure. Bennett describes how “Bergfrost, a frozen fish storage company, blasted the country’s first privately owned tunnels into the side of a mountain near the fishing port of Fuglafjørður in the 1990s. Their capacity has grown from 7,000 to 25,000 tons in two decades, which has allowed them to keep pace with the ongoing North Atlantic fishing boom and store hauls of mackerel and whiting brought in by fleets from Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Scotland and Russia.”

Bakkafrost is also in the planning stages of their own private tunnel to increase export volumes. Blasting for tunnels has been documented as causing significant disturbances to both local terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and has arguably been the cause of accelerated erosion in some areas. Tunnels are both a government-sponsored or privately-funded investment to increase the metabolism of the fishing industry; this infrastructure not only indirectly encourages less sustainable fishery management, but negative environmental harms to the archipelago landscapes.

### Tunnels and the Tourism Industry

Tunnels have enabled the tourism industry to expand its geographical range, showing a clear preference for the industry’s expansion while also harming communities who may be unprepared for rapid tourism influxes. Previously relatively inaccessible areas – which Visit Faroe Islands calls “unexplored” despite their local populations – are now viable day trip options for tourists due to tunnels. Overnight stays in the Faroe Islands grew more than 60% in 10 years. The peripheral islands are now more interconnected to the central islands, reducing the feeling of insular seclusion for tourists and encouraging them to stay beyond Torshavn. Many of these towns are now developing hotels or other lodging to accommodate these tourists.

Generally, local resistance remains high against tunnel projects as they provide greater benefits to tourists than to local communities. Many residents complain that the tunnels are too expensive and costly. The Eysturoy Tunnel costs local residents 75 danish kroner, or around $5 USD per use. Frustrated that the toll applies to them alongside tourists, many locals still choose to take the longer route around. One resident describes the tunnels as “luxuries” that are more catered to tourists. By charging around $12 USD for tourists to use most tunnels, the government has a concerted interest in increasing tourism volumes to pay back their tunneling loans. In a field study conducted by Santana et. al, they found that the cost of a certain tunnel was not presented on a sign along the route. Furthermore,
most rental cars from the airport have a built-in digital chip that automatically charges the driver for the tunnel passage, often resulting in tourists unknowingly racking up fees for the Faroese government. This system is particularly effective due to the highly ordered structure for points of arrival and departure for visitors to the Faroe Islands, which almost guarantees profits from all unsuprecting car renters. Even still, tunneling projects continue to deepen the Faroe Islands into a budget deficit as they earn back less profits than expected, curating a need for the expansion of the tourism industry as a funding source.

Towns and villages recently connected via tunnels find themselves facing explosive tourism numbers, putting pressure on developing the area into a more tourist-oriented market. For example, in 2006 a 1,400 meter tunnel was completed that connected the tiny village of Gásadalur to the rest of the tunnel-based road network. Bennett writes that:

That’s the tiny town at the literal end of the road in the Faroes, where an isolationist farmer lives with his sheep, chickens and wife and mythologically-named children. Prior to 2006, residents (and the mailman, who made the journey three times a week) had to walk three kilometers over a steep and windswept mountain to shop for groceries or pick up supplies. Even burying the village’s dead required carrying coffins up and down the steep slopes. Given the town’s tiny population, [a member of Parliament] called this tunnel ‘a bit of a crazy one.’ Yet he noted, ‘It opened up Gásadalur for all of us.’

The Gásadalur Tunnel disproportionately serves the needs of tourists over the needs of the Gásadalur inhabitants, who actually opposed the tunnel’s construction. The picturesque village is home to the most photographed site in the Faroes: a waterfall plunging off a cliff into the Atlantic Ocean. Tourists often head straight for this spot after landing since Gásadalur is just 12 kilometers from the airport. Opening up Gásadalur not only went against the desires of locals, but was environmentally disruptive and perpetuates the unregulated growth of the tourism industry. Continued expansion of the tunnel network into unprepared villages is unsustainable for the cultural, economic, and environmental health of the islands.

**Conclusion**

The rapid evolution of the Faroe Islands into a growth machine, propelled by the booming tourism and fishing sectors alongside ambitious infrastructure projects has raised critical sustainability concerns. The intensifying social metabolism within the fishing industry, marked by resource exploitation and energy-intensive practices, reflects a trajectory unsustainable for the island’s marine ecological balance. For the tourism industry, aggressive governmental and private marketing campaigns have spurred unprecedented growth in tourist numbers. Land-use conflicts, cultural commodification in local villages, and harm to landscapes all threaten local communities and nature. Infrastructure projects biased towards the expansion of the fishing and tourism industries exemplify the challenges posed by prioritizing external growth over local well-being. Moving forward,
addressing these issues demands a shift towards policies that decouple economic expansion from environmental degradation and cultural commodification, fostering a more sustainable and resilient future for the Faroe Islands. The Parliament must enact stringent regulations to balance economic aspirations with environmental stewardship, curbing unsustainable practices and promoting responsible tourism and fishing practices. Collaborative efforts involving government agencies, local communities, and industry stakeholders are essential to develop sustainable management frameworks that safeguard natural resources and cultural heritage. Integrating sustainable practices across sectors will be pivotal in charting a more sustainable and resilient future for the Faroe Islands, safeguarding its unique natural beauty and cultural identity for generations to come.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks are in order for Sandy Zipp, Lauren Yapp, and Matthew Roth for supporting this year’s edition of the Urban Journal; without their efforts, none of this would have been possible.
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