

DUSP  
 FALL 11.40 Introduction to Housing  
 Community and Economic Development

**First Memo**  
**Due AT START OF Class: Thursday October 3, 2002**

**Choose one of the following two options**

**Option I**

**Neighborhoods and the Metropolitan Community:  
 The New Mayor's Strategy Dilemma**

You are the policy advisor to the just-elected Mayor of the City of Your Choice. (i.e. use one you know or "invent" one) The new mayor is in public office for the first time, having just moved over from the private sector where she was vice-president of a major bank. She has been involved in public issues for a long time as a strong defender of downtown interests and the need to increase the tax base.

Now that she is Mayor she finds herself facing the following dilemma.

During her recent campaign she made a strong pitch for the need to connect the city to the metropolitan community, to reach out to surrounding municipalities and to introduce a "metropolitan dialogue" within which to try to solve some of the city's economic and social challenges. Her argument was that the region as a whole could not grow and prosper without a strong central city.

Now that she is mayor however, she is being criticized by neighborhood groups for failing to focus on their issues: for looking beyond the city limits for solutions to jobs and housing which these local spokespersons argue need to be addressed within neighborhoods themselves. An increasingly organized group of critics maintains that "the metropolitan solution" is unrealistic - a way of avoiding the tough issues faced by the neighborhoods and a subtle strategy for fostering "Downtown" interests by leap-frogging the true problems of the city.

Suddenly what looked like a good strategy for linking the city to its region is becoming a political liability with a large part of the mayor's constituency. The mayor, hoping to keep her neighborhood critics happy while maintaining her metropolitan agenda, turns to you for advice.

Can she have it both ways?

Is there a way of framing the mayor's agenda that will calm down the neighborhood critics while keeping the issue of the metropolitan community on the table? Or must she back off and face the political reality represented by neighborhood unrest?

As a twenty-five year veteran of programs to "revitalize the neighborhoods and "to enhance the metropolitan community," you have seen it all. But you still have an imagination and are a risk-taker. This characterization of you may seem like a contradiction but for academic purposes accept the premise.

**In four (more or less) double-spaced pages of dynamic, hard-hitting historically grounded analytic prose tell the mayor what her strategy ought to be.**

When writing the memo remember:

1. the differences among analysis, exhortation and recommendation

2. the need to back up general statements with evidence grounded in specifics
3. the importance of stating up front the route your memo is taking: i.e. a clear introduction and road map as to what follows
4. the value of acknowledging limitations and dangers to your approach-if there are any.
- 5.the importance of clarity of recommendations
6. If you do not have a specific city which you know well, you can make one up with particular characteristics. Just be clear about what they are and stick with them throughout the memo.
7. Remember to get into and behind the role you are playing-advisor to the mayor.You are writing from that perspective and with that “framing” of the issues discussed above.

## **Option II**

### **Whither Community Development Corporations?**

The Ford Foundation (yet again) is rethinking its urban grant strategy. For years it has been putting money into community development corporations (CDC's) and betting on them as the lead agent of change in poor urban neighborhoods. In preparing for a major internal Foundation meeting on the issue of "whither CDC's?" the new director of the Foundation's Urban Poverty Program, has come upon the Stoecker-Bratt-Keating-Stoecker exchange.

While the new director is versed in the complexities of urban problems, she is not a veteran of the CDC world: its history, its pluses and minuses. She is perplexed by the Stoecker et. al. presentation.

Is the debate simply academic chatter? An ideological cat fight? Who is right? Why? How ought she to think about the issue(s) raised in the article and the exchange generated by it? Should the Foundation change its view of CDC's? If so, what ought that view be?

She turns for advice to you her trusted policy advisor.

Based on your experience (both in the field, in the readings and in class discussion as well as the article and responses) what would you tell her.

**In four (more or less) double-spaced pages of dynamic, hard-hitting historically grounded analytic prose tell the mayor how she ought to react to the Stoecker et. al. exchange.**

When writing the memo remember:

1. the differences among analysis, exhortation and recommendation
2. the need to back up general statements with evidence grounded in specifics
3. the importance of stating up front the route your memo is taking: i.e. a clear introduction and road map as to what follows
4. the value of acknowledging limitation to your approach-if there are any.
5. the importance of clarity of recommendations
6. If you steer a "middle road" between the positions be sure to justify why and how you can do so.