

# - Lutheran Brotherhood

→ Vet / Taxi -

Really can't have it both ways -

I want you to do something for me: just imagine for a moment that it's <sup>1950</sup>1953, in downtown Jeannette, Gbg., or Latrobe or Irwin or Mr. Pleasant, on a Saturday night. The sidewalks are so crowded that it was slow going; three and four abreast. There's two departments stores, a number of small clothing apparel stores, men and woman's, and more than four drug stores, with soda fountains and all, two or three hardware stores and at least that many appliance stores. Banks and savings and loans were as numerous as the types of checking and savings accounts now. - Restaurants of a size in scope seem to be in every block.

Police

The <sup>Police</sup>cops are walking up and down the Main Street and some are actually directing traffic.

2ND  
FLOORS

The stores all have active second floors: doctor's offices, apartments, homes of the shop owners, insurance offices. A number of stand alone apartment buildings with first floor lobbys.

There are three movie theaters all playing double features.

movies

WALKING

Just about everyone was a five or ten minute walk from their homes; most of which are in neighborhoods with tree lined streets, and sidewalks with on street parking on both sides. The houses are located in close proximity to those narrow streets providing an atmosphere of an outdoor living room, sheltered, aesthetically pleasing and safe.

NEIGHBORHOODS

GARAGES

Garages were in the rear serviced by alleys, as were utility connections and garbage can pick up.

PORCHES

Just about every house has a front porch. Gathering places for neighbors and families on warm summer nights. It is a connection between the private and the public. Sidewalks provided the interrelationships among people, even strangers.

STREET CARS

If you were in need of transportation there are electric <sup>Street cars</sup> ~~trolleys~~ that frequently run between the neighborhoods and down town and even in to the next town: Jeannette to Greensburg, Irwin to Jeannette, Mt. Pleasant to Scottdale. One could get just about any where without a car.

Civic -  
Public  
ART

There were a lot of public art in our down towns: municipal buildings, <sup>some</sup> libraries, schools, parks, train stations, fire houses. All built to last—in fact <sup>architectural treasures -</sup> they still exist for the most part, and all built within the confines of the downtown boundaries.

SENSE  
COMMUNITY →

The air is crisp, and there is a hint of snow and yet we have a feeling of warmth out of a sense of belonging to a community. We felt it, but like many things, we don't understand or recognize it. It just feels good.

→ We really didn't know what we had until we no longer <sup>have</sup> had it. We took for granted these wonderfully rich, mixed use, pedestrian friendly, non-polluting, diverse, population centers.

→ <sup>you know</sup> That feeling of being part of something more than yourself, more than your family or even your extended family. A sense of charm and uniqueness was the character of these towns in Southwestern Pennsylvania and all over this country.

Now  
shells

We no longer recognize these cities. They're a shell of their former selves,

→ Empty and under utilized store fronts attest to the lost and rejected feelings of the past. They are barren old maids that turn out the lights after 5:00<sup>o'clock</sup> and go to sleep. They could not compete against the newer and fancier, hip divas called the suburbs. So over the course of fifty years that scene we just imagined has all but disappeared.

→ The newer neighborhoods, the suburbs, have become the watered down, spread out replicas<sup>A</sup> of our old towns. ~~A~~ Characteristics of what used to be our TOWNS AND cities.

- SPAWL

Subdivision after subdivision, shopping malls and strip malls, office parks, fast food restrurants by the gross, convenience stores (gas stations), auto parts stores, discount big box stores, etc. etc. Endless neon on strips of paved ~~stripped~~ parking lots is our vision of America. <sup>WITH NON-DISTINCT ONE FLOOR, CINDER BLOCK</sup> <sup>↑ ~~WINDOWS~~ UGLY HULKS.</sup> The next time you take

TEST

a trip in the U.S., and I don't care where it is, try this test: Go a mall, <sup>a</sup> box store <sup>OR STRIP MALL</sup> and ~~strip~~, they won't be hard to find, and <sup>close</sup> <sup>above</sup> ~~such~~ your eyes and open them up <sup>again</sup> and you realize that this same sight is exactly what you left and will be the <sup>EXACTLY what you will</sup> ~~same~~ when you stop anywhere else. What's wrong with that picture?

→ What was promised as a healthy, relaxing country environment, one of the original selling point of the <sup>SUBURBAN</sup> subdivision life, after fifty years, belies that promise. ~~Because~~ <sup>W</sup> what we have ended up with is a polluted, both visually and in terms of our air quality, congested, stressful existence.

EXCHANGED

We have exchanged an existence in unique cities and towns to the sameness of suburbia: Monroeville, Murrysville, McNight Road, Rt. #51, or the Rt. #30 corridor.

↑ FULL OF CHARACTER AND WARM

But there is an irony of a reflective nature that needs to be understood: a nostalgic magnetic appeal that is only satisfied if we travel ~~some distances~~.

We spend countless hours and serious dollars visiting and walking the streets of "quaint and charming" tourist destinations: Georgetown, <sup>B</sup> Beacon Hill,

Annapolis, Shady Side or even Ligonier. We find these places soothing and calming, interesting and remarkable. But <sup>think about it</sup> they were Greensburg, Jeannette,

Irwin, Latrobe and Mt. Pleasant <sup>→ ANYWHERE USA</sup> weren't they? We just didn't realize <sup>we</sup> ~~we~~

grew up in places very much akin to those tourist destinations and our need

to fill <sup>that</sup> void <sup>IN OUR LIVES</sup> of a ~~connectedness~~ which is really harkening us back to a time of good but distant memories when we had a community, a sense of place.

→ Through a series of direct and indirect actions both by the private and public sectors we have built an entire society completely dependent upon the internal combustion engine. There is no possible existence in this life, or at least, very little, that any of us can do with out a car; or more to the point two or three cars. You can't buy a quart of milk or loaf of bread, pick up your cloths at the dry cleaners or go shopping or a movie without your vehicle. And recreational events such as concerts and sporting events require one to calculate drive time and parking availability. Heck, we even <sup>AND COMMUTING TOWARD FOR MANY HAS BECOME A BLIND SPORT</sup> drive to places so we can work out because we don't get enough exercise due to our need to drive everywhere.

This auto centric society has created problems that only now are coming to light.

Although air pollution has been recognized as a bad health effect it really hasn't been taken seriously until recently. Sickness and death from pollution generated machines, cars being significantly accounted, is an accepted

AIR POLLUTION

phenomonon. How we deal with that data is highly contentious and far from a solution. Electric cars? Possibly but the electons have to be generated and next biggest pollution <sup>source are</sup> ~~is~~ coal fired electric plants.

HIGHWAY CONGESTION

Congestion of our highways is a disaster. Hours in our steel cages, particularly around our urban areas is the norm. Did you ever consider that spending just two hours a day commuting equates to <sup>500 hours</sup> ~~twelve~~ work weeks of

2 hour commute

your time ~~per year~~. Usually, <sup>MOST OF US</sup> we only have two to three weeks annual vacation so that <sup>NUMBER</sup> ~~should cause some~~ pause. Time that all of us could be put <sup>GIVE US</sup> to better use with our families or time just for ourselves.

How Do we Solve?

And of course, the conventional wisdom is <sup>that</sup> we <sup>CAN</sup> solve this problem by building more highways!! But as we all know that ~~is~~ just exacerbates the problem; More highways, more development which eventually causes the needed ~~for~~ more highways, and on and on. But it can't last. It's like an obese person putting off the inevitable by losing his belt, ~~every now and then~~.

OBESE

And since we develop suburban streets for cars and not people we make them wider <sup>AND SCARY</sup> which induces people to go faster. Which of course is the plan, right? Speed up our time in our vehicles. Which makes the dangerous <sup>very, very dangerous -</sup> nature of our roads, particularly our collector roads: the ones that all of the developments dump onto like Rt. 136 by Hempfield High School.

COLLECTION ROADS VS GRIDS

MPH

Not to even mention that the average commuting speed on the major beltways <sup>AND PARKWAYS</sup> and freeways is only about 20 mph.

Supposed to be

Safety  
For  
Kids

An further ironic twist to this suburban allure is that it's <sup>supposed to be</sup> safer for our kids, as opposed to city living. And yet far and away, car wrecks are the largest killer of American teenagers, accounting for one third of all deaths. ~~And~~ the first thing we need to do for our kids when they turn sixteen in the suburbs is to buy them a car so they can have the freedom to be independent from us. And we feel the same way. Having to drive to fullfill all of our children's needs out side of the home is a ~~freedom~~ <sup>of THAT SAME freedom</sup> desire that we express by buying that car as well.

And relatedly we have disenfranchised those who do have access or <sup>the</sup> ability to operate a vehicle from society: the youngest and the oldest of us. Without <sup>where they need to go</sup> someone to take them they are completely helpless.

We have created an auto dependant country. But did we really create it?



Or was it <sup>it just created for us by a combination of</sup> ~~forsted upon us there~~ a mix of different actions and inactions? And does it really matter? I know some of you have to be saying to yourself I like it just the way it is, thank you.

Let's take a few minutes to examine it.

Starting at the end of WW II ~~the governments,~~ <sup>GOVERNMENTS,</sup> the Federal Government, State and local, with the complicit support of many private entities ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> encouraged ~~created~~ this auto centric world. Up until that point most Americans, except for our farming friends lived pretty much as described above.

~~However,~~ <sup>HA-VA</sup> the Federal Government, through the FHA and VA Housing programs, after the war, promoted only new construction, so rehabilitation of our existing housing stock mostly in urban areas was omitted; and the national highway interstate system that was built under the rubric of National Defense encouraged this growth as well, ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> the State and local government's zoning laws that only permitted single use activities, ~~That is~~ <sup>so</sup> to say ~~that~~ even if a developer wanted to build a plan than was similar to the

of home in a traditional

GOVERNMENTS -  
PRIVATE COMPANIES

HA-VA  
INTERSTATE HIGHWAY

ZONING LAWS

NEIGHBORHOOD, like

cities and towns ~~that~~ evolved over hundreds of years, it would be illegal. (All of these were significant contributors to the trend of auto saturation and the resultant outward movement from and abandonment of our cities.) Further infrastructure development such as highway collector roads, sewers and water lines and schools all added to quest for more and more virgin land. Which by the way is being gobbled up in this state in a proportion that dwarfs the small per centage of population growth that we experienced.



LOCAL REVENUES -

Of course, local governments in the outlying areas were only too happy to accommodate developers in their quest to build more and more housing units ~~AND KEEP THEM~~ which was increasing their revenue streams considerably. And who can blame the developers, they're in the business to make money and this was pretty easy with the a lot of the infrastructure needs being paid for by the tax payers.

Develops BLAMELESS

Another

INDIRECT STIMULUS

WAS BY

The Federal Government further stimulated ~~this explosion of~~ auto not only ~~by~~ providing a large portion of the funding as mentioned but by also not providing any commensurate funding for rail lines or transit systems. As a matter of fact highways ~~and airport~~ <sup>the</sup> subsidies dominate other transportation

Feds SIN OF OMISSION

which is comparable to

spending by a ratio equaling the size of a 747 to a bicycle. So those potential equalizing transportation modes didn't have a chance.

ADVERTISING

Private Interests!

Of course, the advertising mania of a home in the suburbs required the newest, fastest, biggest cars that can move from that home to work. As cynical as I am I can say that it's not a large of leap to think that steel, tire, oil, auto, concrete, asphalt and construction companies and unions had a singularity of purpose in furthering this effort. But that's me.



I have avoided the use of the S word so far but I've come to the point where it becomes necessary to employ it. SPRAWL!!!

It has been used in a perjorative fashion and as you can tell I feel that it's fraught with negatives based on what I've just described to you. But even if you don't feel the same kind of anguish as I do, would you not agree at the very least we ought to provide an alternative, or level the playing field vis-a-vis for other choices?

NOT SUGGESTING  
to AWAY WITH  
CARS - it CAN'T  
SENSE A  
CHANGE -

WHAT TO  
DO -

A NUMBER of possible ways that need to come together - TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES, TAX Reform -> Smart Growth. Toward that end there is really two movements ongoing in Harrisburg to accomplish that. One is the Smart Growth initiatives, which change the way

the State Government allows municipalities to zone and plan, which takes the emphasis from uncontrolled growth to more planned and reasonable

approaches ; ~~hopefully~~, by ~~protecting~~ <sup>SETTING ASIDE</sup> our valuable rural assets and developing infrastructure <sup>STRATEGIC PLANS</sup> in cooperative fashions among <sup>A NUMBER OF</sup> the municipalities.

1 <sup>AN</sup> The other, in which I have devoted the last five years of my legislative life, is to enhance and revitalize our cities and small towns. <sup>BY MAKING THEM ATTRACTIVE</sup> ~~And I have taken one~~ <sup>FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP</sup> approach, although there are many.

My approach is through the preservation of our historic homes which in my opinion makes a city or town unique. That which makes it special and further that which can be used as a draw to those who have a desire to perhaps to live in a community with amenities that the suburbs don't have, and one that caters to people and not cars.

Preserving historic properties in other States have served this purpose very well. In fact, 46 other States have provided the same kind of incentives that I have proposed, namely tax incentives.

Through our tax code we have devised various exemptions and tax credits that will encourage people to buy and rehabilitate designated historic properties as long as they agree to occupy those for a minimum of five years.

We offer incentives to absentee owners of multi-family units that if they can find someone who will agree to those conditions of rehabilitation and longevity then he will not have pay any capital gains <sup>OR</sup> ~~and as well as~~ realty

transfer tax<sup>s</sup>. The buyer also gets the realty transfer tax exemption, sales tax exemption on any products needed for the rehab and a 20% tax credit on the cost of that rehabilitation.

The buyer may keep the property as a multifamily unit if they want but they can have no more than four units and they must live in one of the units.

One could even buy a downtown storefront and be entitled to the tax incentives but would have to live upstairs. We think that might be an incentive for perhaps a young professional who could start his practice, whatever its nature, or for that matter an older professional who wants to get rid of his large home and office.

Empty nesters and young professionals, seem to be the ones most attracted to this kind of offer. Although, if one is familiar with Academy Hill in Greensburg then it becomes apparent there are many type of family units that would find this life appealing.

*This approach*

~~It~~ increases property values and enhances neighborhoods. It produces jobs and it reduces pollution, not only because of less driving miles but because the largest contributors to our land fills is demolition debris. It uses more local labor and suppliers than new construction and it puts people into

homes that wouldn't have a chance otherwise. I haven't found anyone against it.

It hasn't taken five years to write such a bill but rather in trying to accomodate all of the varied interests of the parties involved. We have yet to convince the Governors people, particularly in the budget office, that we need to change the tax code. But because there is so much support not only by a bipartisan colation of House and Senate Members but also a large group of advocacy groups we have been able to get a \$500,000 grant demonstration program to serve to prove the effacacy of historic preservation as a major economic development tool in revitalizing our cities. Very shortly, hopefully in the next two weeks we will be voting on the enabling legislation to put into place the language necessary to spend the half a million dollars put into this years budget.

But I have haven't given up on the tax credits. Next week I'm reintroducing the Historic Property and Neighborhood Preservation Act with 170 cosponsors. And I've added a commercial piece dealing with large type developments as well as a non-profit piece that is working very well in Maryland.

Well, that my story, Perhaps some of you find the whole sprawl issue unworthy of the Legislature's time. I hope not, but I really want to impress

upon you how important it is to help our cities and small towns make a come  
back. Perhaps not to the level of 1950 but certainly more than they are now.