

**The Politics of Housing and Community Development**  
**G AFL-569/URBS 451**  
**John Kromer, Fels Institute of Government**  
**Wednesdays, 2:00 – 5:00**  
**Lecture Room, 3814 Walnut Street**

**Course Information**

**Summary**

This course offers an exploration of how legislative action, government policymaking, and citizen advocacy influence plans for the investment of public capital in distressed urban neighborhoods. This year, the class will participate in a special semester-long project: the completion of a *Housing and Community Development Briefing Paper* on Philadelphia neighborhood reinvestment issues, to be presented in December to Philadelphia's Mayor-Elect and incoming City Council.

**Goal**

The goal of this course is to enable students to 1) become well acquainted with key issues associated with urban neighborhood reinvestment, 2) analyze municipal government policies and practices through the use of Internet-accessible information, 3) form intelligent opinions about community development policy and strategy decisions, and 4) organize a briefing paper addressing these issues, for submission to Philadelphia's next Mayor and City Council members, who will be elected in November and will take office in January 2008.

**Course Structure**

*Class Period.* The first 60-70 minutes of each class period will be devoted to a lecture and discussion of the topics described in the Syllabus and Schedule section below. These topics will be presented and discussed in broad terms, as they relate not only to Philadelphia, but to other U.S. cities, primarily postindustrial cities of the Northeast and Midwest.

The remainder of each class period will be a work session on the *Housing and Community Development Briefing Paper*. During this portion of the class, students will report on the completion of individual and team work assignments, will discuss key issues and how to present and analyze them, and will meet with guests who can provide related information and insights. A schedule for work sessions will be distributed at the beginning of the semester.

*Homework.* Homework will consist of 1) reading assignments described in the Syllabus and Schedule section below; 2) research and writing associated with the production of the briefing paper. Most of the research/writing assignments can be completed in less than an hour. They will include the review and evaluation of published material, research on

special topics, and in-person, phone, or email interviews, followed by the preparation of written interview summaries, with individuals who are knowledgeable about issues to be addressed in the briefing paper. Homework assignments will not require major commitments of time; however, it is essential that students stay on schedule and be prepared each week. Because the material generated in response to these assignments will be published at the end of the semester, timeliness and accuracy are essential.

*Briefing Paper.* The briefing paper, to be completed between September and November, is a descriptive and analytical report on Philadelphia housing and community development policy and program development issues. This report will be designed to provide interested parties—including elected and appointed officials, members of community constituencies, and the general public—with information about housing and community development opportunities and challenges that have been addressed during the administration of Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street (which began in January 2000 and will end with the inauguration of a new Mayor in early January 2008) and that will have to be addressed during the coming years through the sustaining of current policies and programs and/or the development of new ones.

The briefing paper will not be a critique or “report card,” but a summary of readily available information, combined with some basic analysis. This publication will differ from transition materials that an outgoing administration prepares for members of a new administration in that it will include information and insights from persons outside city government who are knowledgeable about housing and community development issues. Although the briefing paper will document criticisms of the Street Administration and counter-proposals to existing policy, the briefing paper will not be an advocacy document, but will instead focus on describing and analyzing current and alternative approaches.

*Key Issues.* The briefing paper will include information and analysis relating to all significant Street Administration policies and programs. Some issues, including eminent domain, homelessness, housing agency reorganization, and the ten-year tax abatement will require special attention and in-depth research by individual students or student teams. Students will also have the opportunity to complete specialized research on other issues in which they may have a personal interest (a few possible examples: neighborhood economic development, Section 8 housing, mortgage foreclosure prevention).

## **Reading**

1. The primary text is *Neighborhood Recovery: Reinvestment Policy for the New Hometown* by John Kromer (Rutgers University Press, 2000).
2. The syllabus includes web addresses for Internet-accessible reading. Some of the longer and more technical documents (e.g., Cramer Hill redevelopment plan) are for quick review only; others need to be read and understood as a whole. I’ll tell you which of the longer readings are most important as we go along.

3. Copies of news articles and other current material not identified in the syllabus will be circulated via Blackboard between classes or distributed during class period. Students are expected to read and be prepared to discuss/respond to this material.

There is no “course pack” for this course.

Additional, optional recommended reading: Check [www.philly.com](http://www.philly.com) regularly to see what’s being written in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia Daily News* about issues we’re discussing, particularly as they relate to the mayoral election. Look at the columnists who write about these issues: Inga Saffron and Tom Ferrick in the *Inquirer* and Mark Alan Hughes and Elmer Smith in the *Daily News*. Check the *Philadelphia Weekly* and *Philadelphia City Paper*. Almost everything that Kia Gregory of the *Philadelphia Weekly* writes about is relevant to this course! Also take a look at the web site of the Design Advocacy Group (DAG) at <http://www.designadvocacy.org>. Although DAG has focused primarily on the downtown area, a lot of the group’s issues touch on public policy matters affecting neighborhoods as well.

### **Exams, Written Assignments, and Grading**

A final exam will be scheduled at the end of the semester.

Grading will be based on completeness and quality of responses to written assignments (40% of grade), class attendance/participation (40%), and final examination results (20%).

### **Contact Information/Office Appointments**

My phone number is (215) 573-7240, and my email address is [jkromer@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:jkromer@sas.upenn.edu). I don’t have fixed office hours, but would be glad to schedule office appointments when requested; please feel free to do so anytime you feel that it would be helpful.

## Syllabus and Schedule

\* = Handout or Blackboard Item

### September 5

#### Introduction

**Top Ten Influences on the American Metropolis of the Past 50 Years**  
**Disinvestment and Revitalization in Philadelphia**

### September 12

#### How to Revitalize a Neighborhood

##### Reading

\* Jon Gertner, "How the Mega-Developers Have Transformed What We Call Home," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 18, 2005.

Robert Fishman, "The American Metropolis at Century's End: Past and Future Influences," *Housing Facts & Findings*, Winter 1999 — Volume 1 Issue 4 at <http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org/programs/hff/v1i4-metropolis.shtml>

*Neighborhood Recovery*, Chapter One, "A Strategic Problem."

### September 19

**Tour of Neighborhood Development Sites**  
**The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative**

##### Reading

\* City of Philadelphia, Office of Housing and Community Development, *Neighborhood Transformations: The Implementation of Philadelphia's Community Development Policy*, 1997.

Robert W. Weissbourd and Christopher Berry, *The Changing Dynamics of Urban America*, numbered pages 11-23 and pp. 30-32. At [http://www.ceosforcities.org/rethink/research/files/Changing\\_Dynamics-Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ceosforcities.org/rethink/research/files/Changing_Dynamics-Full_Report.pdf)

Research for Democracy, *Blight-Free Philadelphia: A Public-Private Strategy to Create and Enhance Neighborhood Value*, 2001 at <http://www.temple.edu/rfd/content/BlightFreePhiladelphia.pdf>

**September 26**

**The “Blight-Free Philadelphia” Investment Strategy  
The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative**

Guest: Anne Shlay, Temple University

**Reading**

City of Philadelphia, *Program Statement and Budget, FY 08* at <http://www.phila.gov/nti/REPORTS/PrgmStatem2008ProposedFinal.pdf>  
Read pp. 1-6 carefully, review remainder for highlights.

\* Stephen J. McGovern, “The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative: A Case Study of Mayoral Leadership, Bold Planning, and Conflict,” *Housing Policy Debate*, Volume 17, Issue 3 (Blackboard).

**October 3**

**The Community Development Block Grant  
Development Financing Strategies**

Guest: Stephen McGovern, Haverford College

**Reading**

City of Philadelphia, Office of Housing and Community Development, *Year 33 Consolidated Plan* at <http://www.phila.gov/ohcd/consolplan.htm>. Look over “Strategic Plan,” “Action Plan,” and “Budget” sections.

*Neighborhood Recovery*, Chapter Three, “Trophies and Landmarks.”

John Kromer and Vicky Tam, *Philadelphia’s Residential Tax Abatements: Accomplishments and Impacts*, 2005 at <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/fels/FGRS/Philadelphia%20Residential%20Tax%20Abatements.pdf>

**October 10**

**Vacant Property Strategies**

**Reading**

*Neighborhood Recovery*, Chapter Two, “Advancing the Plan.”

Fels Institute of Government, *Vacancy Inventory and Reinvestment Strategies for Reading, PA* (Blackboard).

Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, *Reclaiming Abandoned Pennsylvania: From Liability to Viability* pp. 23-49 at <http://www.housingalliancepa.org/Issues/HAPsummary.pdf>,

Local Initiatives Support Corporation, *Land Bank Authorities: A Guide for the Creation and Operation of Local Land Banks*, Chapter 1, “Models of Local Land Bank Authorities” at <http://www.lisc.org/content/publications/detail/793/>

**October 17**  
**Anchor Institutions and Community Development**  
**Homeownership**

**Reading**

John Kromer and Lucy Kerman, *West Philadelphia Initiatives: A Case Study in Urban Reinvestment*, University of Pennsylvania, 2005 at <http://www.upenn.edu/campus/westphilly/casestudy.pdf>

*Neighborhood Recovery*, Chapter Four, “The New Homeownership.”

**October 24**  
**Homelessness and Special Needs Housing**

**Reading**

Mayor’s Task Force on Homeless Services, *Philadelphia’s Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness*, Spring 2005 (Blackboard)

*Neighborhood Recovery*, Chapter Eight, “The Unfinished Policy.”

**October 31**  
**Public Housing**  
**Small Pennsylvania and New Jersey Cities in Transition**

**Reading**

“Public Housing 101” PowerPoint presentation at [http://www.pha.phila.gov/web\\_files/PublicHousing.pdf](http://www.pha.phila.gov/web_files/PublicHousing.pdf)

“Redefining Public Housing” PowerPoint presentation at [http://www.pha.phila.gov/web\\_files/Redefining.pdf](http://www.pha.phila.gov/web_files/Redefining.pdf)

Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, *Cities in Transition: New Jersey's Urban Paradox* at <http://www.hcdnnj.org/Cities%20In%20Transition%20NJ%20Urban%20Paradox%20Final.pdf>

Read Executive Summary only.

Fels Institute of Government, *Housing Strategy for Allentown's Central-City Neighborhoods* (Blackboard).

**November 7**  
**Cities and Suburbs**  
**Economic Development and Jobs**

**Reading**

- \* Erin McClam, "Heroin use shifts from cities," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 18, 2001.
- \* Lini S. Kadaba and Aletta Emeno, "Poverty quietly moves to suburbs," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 31, 2002.
- \* Dwight Orr, "Crime spurts follow suburban growth," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 23, 2002.
- \* Rich Henson, "In the suburbs, it's a traffic mess," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 6, 1997.
- \* Jerry Adler, "Bye-Bye Suburban Dream," *Newsweek*, May 15, 1995.
  
- \* Andres Duany, plenary session presentation, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Neighborhoods Conference, 1999 (Blackboard)
  
- \* Michael Porter, "The Competitive Advantage of the Inner City," 1985 (Blackboard).

**November 14**  
**Gentrification and Equitable Development**  
**Public-Sector Organization and Management**

**Reading**

NeighborWorks America, *Managing Neighborhood Change: Best Practices for Communities Undergoing Gentrification*, April 20, 2005 at <http://www.nw.org/network/pubs/studies/documents/ManagingNeighborhoodChange.pdf>

- \* Public Financial Management and The Reinvestment Fund, *OHNP Reorganization Final Report*, 2005 (Blackboard)

**November 21**

**Neighborhoods and the Political System**

**Housing Advocacy and Activism**

**The Philadelphia Mayoral Campaign**

Guest (tent.): Kevin Hanna, City of Philadelphia Secretary of Housing.

**Reading**

*Neighborhood Recovery*, Chapter Nine: “Jump-Start and Payoff”

- \* 198<sup>th</sup> House District, ward and division map.
- \* Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, nominating petition.
- \* Election notice, Municipal and Special Elections, Tuesday, November 6, 2001.
- \* Ralph Pinkus and Michael Nix, “Ralph’s Review and Mike’s Message,” November 11, 2003.
- \* Sample ballot, November 4, 2003.

**November 28**

**Rescuing Camden**

**Reading**

Hammer Siler George Associates, *Strategic Revitalization Plan for Camden*, 2003

at

[http://www.camdenerb.com/srp\\_final/CamdenSRP\\_July03.pdf](http://www.camdenerb.com/srp_final/CamdenSRP_July03.pdf)

Robert Lake *et. al.*, *Civic Engagement in Camden, New Jersey*, 2007  
(Blackboard).

**December 5**

**Evaluating City Government Performance**

**Progress Reports: Philadelphia, Camden, Allentown, Reading, York**

**Review and Wrap-Up**