

Booknotes

Martin, Judith A. *Recycling the Central City: The Development of a New Town — In Town*. (Minneapolis: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs) 1978, 161pp., softcover.

Urban America is slowly witnessing the emergence of the New Town — In Town approach for recycling the inner city as a result of a renewed emphasis on comprehensive planning coupled with the “back to the city” movement. Judith Martin’s work, *Recycling the Central City*, traces the history of the urban redevelopment efforts at Cedar-Riverside in Minneapolis, the first federally supported New Town — In Town. The New Town — In Town movement bases its approach on the development of a total community concept dependent upon the support and involvement of a diverse resident population. This mode of redevelopment is posed as an alternative to urban renewal’s slum clearance or past attempts at limited housing rehabilitation. The Cedar-Riverside story unfolds both the problems and potential gains encountered in the planning and implementation of a New Town — In Town.

Martin appropriately begins her book with a well-written introduction outlining the current problems associated with urban growth as well as potential responses to the urban situation. The preliminary overview provides the reader with a conceptual framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the New Town — In Town alternative for dealing with deteriorating inner city areas. This sets the stage for evaluating the New Town — In Town form of urban redevelopment and its potential influence on the future of our cities as it attempts to redirect growth back into the inner city. Martin stresses the importance of both a new and systematic approach for dealing with current urban disorders in her support of the New Town — In Town ideology as a viable

means for reversing the self-perpetuating system of urban waste.

The history of Cedar-Riverside is detailed through an overview of the area’s growth and eventual decline. Martin’s historical research is well documented through her use of local records and census data. The author presents an in-depth historical review to provide the reader with a background of Cedar-Riverside’s transition from a stable community of working class German and Scandinavian immigrants to a neighborhood characterized by a migrant renter population and dilapidated housing stock. An area which first began as an expansion settlement across the Mississippi River from Minneapolis in 1855, by 1920 Cedar-Riverside had served its growth function for the city of Minneapolis.

In the 1920’s Cedar-Riverside had become little more than a way station for individuals seeking upward mobility and prosperity. Area residents offered little in the way of support or stability for the community. As such, the decline of Cedar-Riverside seemed inevitable. By 1934 a housing survey documented by the Work Projects Administration called the area one of the most delapidated in Minneapolis and recommended that most of its housing stock receive immediate attention. The transformation from declining inner city to a New Town — In Town development did not take place overnight for Cedar-Riverside.

Martin addresses several factors which contributed to this New Town — In Town transformation. Community residents had reacted vehemently against the 1950 Minneapolis City Planning Commission’s renewal plans for total clearance of slum areas to be followed by the construction of low-income housing. At this same time the University of Minnesota, located across the Mississippi River, formulated plans to expand into the Cedar-Riverside area where land could be acquired at a low cost. Accompanying the University expansion were student renters attracted by the area’s low rents and proximity to the University. Consequently, the area’s population in

general lacked a strong financial base needed for new construction and redevelopment.

A unique feature of the Cedar-Riverside New Town — In Town study is the role played by private enterprise as opposed to the standard government intervention in the redevelopment of deteriorated inner cities. A small group of individuals, called Cedar-Riverside Associates, was largely responsible for both the planning and implementation of Cedar-Riverside's New Town — In Town movement. Evolving initially for the purpose of real estate investment, the Cedar-Riverside Associates expanded their initial speculative role to one encompassing community developmental concerns.

The financial background of the Cedar-Riverside Associates' investment scheme was unusual in its reliance on limited private funds for land acquisition. Initial land purchases took place while real estate prices were exceptionally low. In addition to their limited investment funds, the Cedar-Riverside Associates were unique in their commitment to the community at large. Martin unfolds a picture of community involvement by the Cedar-Riverside Associates through their desire to provide low-cost housing to area residents and their policy of maintaining initial rent levels. The author suggests this community commitment stemmed from a sincere moral conviction to do "right" for the area. Whatever the reason, the Cedar-Riverside situation is novel in its portrayal of an individual value system playing itself out at the expense of excess profits.

Recycling the Central City traces the overall planning stages of the New Town — In Town developmental scheme for Cedar-Riverside. A multidisciplinary team planning approach was used to meet the goal of a central-city nature for the finished product. Housing concerns, recreational needs, commercial uses, industrial operations, community facilities, and traffic circulation were all addressed under this multi-discipline approach.

Martin's work depicts several unique aspects of the New Town — In Town movement. The con-

scious effort to foster a sense of community by the developers was a novel approach to urban redevelopment. The innovative role of an individual value system influencing developmental concerns played an important part in the ultimate decisions which went into the New Town — In Town project at Cedar-Riverside. While Cedar-Riverside's New Town — In Town progression was not without its disappointments and setbacks, it does provide the reader with a realistic alternative to urban redevelopment.

This book should be recommended reading for those individuals concerned with reversing the tide of urban blight and saving our central cities. While *Recycling the Central City* portrays an excellent case study for readers interested in the New Town — In Town movement this is not its most important contribution. The potential and hope the book offers for the development of communities with diverse yet compatible populations and uses is by far Martin's greatest contribution.

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Kinton, Jack, ed. *Neighborhood Revivals And New Towns, vol. I, American Communities Tomorrow* series (Aurora, Ill: Social Science Services and Resources) 1978, 262pp., \$11.95 hardbound.

The volume on *Neighborhood Revivals and New Towns* is to be the first of two semi-annual volumes of a permanent series on subjects relative to "American Communities Tomorrow". In addressing the general subject of neighborhoods, the twelve articles discuss a broad array of topics.

To begin the volume, Donald I. Warren's article on neighborhood theory, "Neighborhood Theory: Loose Knit, Tight Knit and Unraveled", explores the relationship of neighborhood social