

# Engaging Urban Youth through Technology: The Youth Neighborhood Mapping Initiative

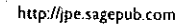
Journal of Planning Education and Research  
30(1) 52-65

© The Author(s) 2010

Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

DOI: 10.1177/0739456X10366427

<http://jpe.sagepub.com>

 SAGE

Charles A. Santo<sup>1</sup>, Nathan Ferguson<sup>1</sup>, and Andrew Trippel<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Processes designed to capture youth perspectives and engage young people in community development decisions can improve planning outcomes, support the development of sustainable and family-friendly urban areas, and foster civic-minded future leaders. This article reflects on the Youth Neighborhood Mapping Initiative, a university-community partnership that sought to foster civic engagement among urban teens and help them voice their perspectives while providing training and exposure to careers in city planning and geographic information systems. Participants identified assets and liabilities in their neighborhoods and learned to use technology to tell their stories through maps, photography, and blogs.

## Keywords

civic engagement, geographic information systems, mapping, planning education, university-community partnerships, youth participation

*This example starts w/ a thesis statement instead of a research question*

*↳*

Processes designed to capture youth perspectives and engage young people in community development decisions can improve planning outcomes, support the development of sustainable and family-friendly urban areas, and foster civic-minded future leaders.

In the summer of 2007, the City and Regional Planning program at the University of Memphis sponsored the Youth Neighborhood Mapping Initiative (YNMI). Participants in this university-community partnership took an active role in improving their neighborhoods, while receiving training and exposure to careers in city planning, community development, and geographic information systems. High school students worked with city planning faculty and graduate students to identify assets and liabilities in their neighborhoods from a youth perspective and learned to use technology to tell their stories through maps, photographs, and blogs.

This article describes and reflects on the process and outcomes of the YNMI. The context for this case study is set by a review of the rationale for youth involvement in community development and planning and an examination of principles of good practice.

exists a professional and moral imperative for involving youth in planning and community development decisions. Additionally, evidence indicates that youth participation can enhance both planning processes and outcomes, while improving the lives of participants and the greater community. These rationales are described in brief below. For a thorough review of the benefits of youth involvement in planning, see Frank (2006).

## Imperatives of Professional Ethics

A significant motivation for practitioners to connect with youth relates to the nature and inherent ethics of the planning profession. For community development and city planning professionals, engaging the public in meaningful participation is a prerequisite to good practice.

The American Institute of Certified Planners' Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2005) states that planners "shall give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include

## Why Cities Need to Consider Youth Perspectives

The extent of youth participation in planning has been limited by a variety of impediments, including structural barriers and general societal perceptions of youth as vulnerable to manipulation or lacking the capacity to make meaningful contributions (Frank 2006). Despite these difficulties, there

Initial submission, March 2009; revised submissions, August 2009 and February 2010; final acceptance, February 2010

<sup>1</sup>University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Charles A. Santo, University of Memphis, Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning, 208 McCord Hall, Memphis, TN 38152, USA  
Email: [casanto@memphis.edu](mailto:casanto@memphis.edu)

*Notice there are multiple sections to this lit review because the literature has multiple relevant themes*

those who lack formal organization or influence." Although this is a somewhat subjective statement, it would take a particularly narrow interpretation to exclude children and youth as among those who lack formal influence. And it would be nonsensical to argue that young people are not affected by planning strategies. Similarly, the Community Development Society's Principles for Good Practice (2007) instruct practitioners to "promote active and representative participation toward enabling all community members to meaningfully influence the decisions that affect their lives."

At an international level, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) obliges signatories to uphold the right of youth to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Although not specific to the planning practice, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has served as an underlying mandate for several projects that involve youth participation in community development and examine how youth relate to their physical environments. Notable among these are the efforts Roger Hart (1997) and Louise Chawla and David Driskell with the UN-sponsored Growing Up in Cities (GUIC) program (see Chawla 2002a, 2002b; Driskell 2002).

### *Youth as Stakeholders: Future and Current*

Failing to consider youth input and recognize youth viewpoints in the process of determining a long-term community vision is not only counter to professional ethics but antithetical to good planning practice (Frank 2006; Simpson 1997; Knowles-Yanez 2005).

As tomorrow's adults, the role of young people as *future* stakeholders is obvious—they will inherit the outcomes of our decisions regarding physical development patterns. What is sometimes less obvious is the fact that young people are affected by planning decisions and development patterns today as *young people* and are, therefore, important *current* stakeholders.

Although some decisions, like those regarding schools or community recreation facilities, have clear and direct impacts on youth, others affect youth in ways that are less obvious and sometimes unforeseen. For example, poor infrastructure development decisions, zoning practices that prohibit a mix of land uses, or a lack of mass transit options can create a dependency on the automobile that adversely affects young people. Auto dependence has contributed to a decline in physical activity and a substantial increase in the rate of obesity among young people, which is linked to a wide range of other health consequences like diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure (Goldberg 2002).

### *Participant and Community Benefits*

While the above justifications point to the immorality and ill effects of *excluding* youth, there are clearly many benefits to

their *inclusion*. Youth engagement creates a number of potential benefits for participants, including the development of specific technical skills and general social skills, as well as the opportunity to practice democracy (Checkoway and Richards-Schuster 2003). Through participation in planning processes, young people learn to question and challenge inequalities and develop attributes that will contribute to greater democratic participation later in life (Chawla 2002b; Hart 1997). Hart (1992, 4) argues that democratic participation is a skill and that "the confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice."

Driskell (2002) notes several benefits external to youth participants that can accrue to communities and planning professionals as the result of a commitment to youth engagement. These include the ability for planners to "more fully understand the needs and issues of the communities they serve," the opportunity to "educate community members on the inherent complexities and trade-offs involved in policy and development decision-making," and the ability to "create urban environments that are more child-friendly and humane" (p. 35).

Young people have the potential to act as accumulators and distributors of knowledge in a way that other members of a community cannot. Whereas the benefits of adult involvement in planning and development decisions spread upward toward local government and outward among the broader community, the insights gained through youth involvement also span generations. Hart (1997) cites this intergenerational exchange of information as essential for creating sustainable communities.

One of the most important reasons to involve youth in planning processes is to gain access to the unique insights that only young people can offer. Central cities now place great emphasis on attracting creative, educated, twenty-five-to thirty-four-year-old individuals for the sake of revitalization and economic growth (partly to counter the outward tide of healthy families). The success of such efforts will not be sustainable if these individuals become couples that later flee to the suburbs because they do not feel comfortable raising a family in city neighborhoods. Maintaining healthy cities will require a focus on making neighborhoods more youth-friendly and more appealing to healthy families. Understanding youth perspectives and finding ways to engage youth in their communities are important first steps. As Driskell (2002, 39) notes, "Things have changed since adults were young. Nobody knows better than today's children what it is like to be young today."

### *Youth Engagement in Context*

Perhaps the most well-known examples of youth engagement projects are those that have arisen from the GUIC initiative developed by Kevin Lynch in the early 1970s. Originally designed to explore the ways in which children and youth



Table 1. Realms of Youth Participation

Realm	Project characteristics
Romantic realm: <i>Children as Planners</i>	View children as having the best perspective on how to design their space. Limited adult involvement.
Advocacy realm: <i>Planners for Children</i>	Children's interest advocated by adult professionals. Based on inherent general belief that nonplanners, both adult and child, can contribute to planning projects.
Needs realm: <i>Social Scientists for Children</i>	Utilize environmental psychology to understand the needs of children to best design an environment that contributes to their development. May rely more on observation of children than on direct youth participation.
Learning realm: <i>Children as Learners</i>	Environmental education at the core of attempts to instill an understanding of one's environment, both natural and built.
Rights realm: <i>Children as Citizens</i>	Includes all projects in which the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of a Child is used to compel nations to involve children in all decision-making processes that affect them.
Institutionalization realm: <i>Children as Adults</i>	Children's input is incorporated through same processes used to capture adult input. Includes processes in which youth input is a required element. While increasing the level of youth participation, institutionalized involvement may result in processes that fail to fully engage youth.

Source: Francis and Lorenzo (2002).

interacted with their environment, the program eventually transitioned into one that sought to involve youth in the design and development of public space. GUIC, currently operating in fifteen countries, is a collaborative effort among a wide range of public officials, academic researchers, and UNESCO's MOST Programme. The theoretical foundation for the program lies in the obligation held by signatories of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

While GUIC is the most often cited example of youth participation, numerous other approaches and methodologies have developed over the course of the past thirty years, with a variety of objectives ranging from studying how children and youth use public space to actively engaging youth in planning and community development.

In the literature that examines these approaches, three common themes emerge, providing guiding principles for practice in future projects:

1. Foster *real* participation, where youth are not just subjects, followers, or learners, but are empowered to be determinants of change.
2. Instill connections to real-world practice and projects.
3. Let young people be (or express themselves like) young people.

Francis and Lorenzo (2002) provide one of the most comprehensive analyses of the evolution of youth participation efforts. The authors categorize projects based largely upon the degree of and motivation for youth participation. They identify six *realms* of youth participation, as summarized in Table 1, with a proposed seventh, which they argue is needed as the field approaches maturation.

Francis and Lorenzo's (2002) prescribed approach, the *Proactive Realm*, is described as "participation with vision"

and attempts to redesign the process from one which simply *involves* youth "to one directed at empowering children and adults to reinvent childhood and the places that support it" (p. 164).

Hart (1992) stresses the need for assessing youth participation to prevent or recognize potential exploitation or mere tokenism. He proposes an adapted version of Susan Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation to offer a preliminary measurement of youth participation. Driskell (2002) offers a similar metric that assesses forms of participation among two dimensions: the level of decision-making power afforded to youth and the degree of youth interaction and collaboration with other people in the community. Both Hart and Driskell provide a hierarchy that includes multiple forms of participation and *nonparticipation*.

In her thorough review of the literature on youth participation in planning, Frank (2006) echoes the calls for real participation and real-world connections. Her analysis indicates that "the first condition for effective youth participation was to address the power imbalance between young people and adults at the process level. The literature recommended that adults relinquish some of their control and give youth voice and responsibility in the planning process" (p. 367).

Knowles-Yanez (2005) argues that youth projects tend to have *weak connections* to professional planning practice, which predetermines a failure to translate that work into formal policy or action. Frank (2006) also asserts that youth programs would benefit from more tailored and direct access to city officials and community leaders, calling for youth initiatives to "adapt to the sociopolitical context." "Researchers concurred that the current state of the sociopolitical context posed a significant barrier to the full realization of youth participation and suggested changes in the context to make it more responsive" (Frank 2006, 368).

Young people express themselves differently than adults. Rather than expecting youth to communicate like adults, projects are better served by recognizing these differences and adapting more creative or informal techniques to capture youth perspectives. Frank (2006, 368) explains that "although building youth capacity to engage in traditional, adult-oriented planning activities was important, researchers also emphasized the need for processes to reach out to the participants by incorporating youthful styles of working. Youth responded to techniques that were social, dynamic, interactive, expressive, constructive, and challenging."

### The Youth Neighborhood Mapping Initiative

City and Regional Planning faculty and students at the University of Memphis spent the summer of 2007 working with teens in two Memphis neighborhoods through the YNMI. The program sought to foster civic engagement among participants and help them voice their perspectives while providing training and exposure to careers in city planning, community development, and geographic information systems (GIS).

Participants worked with the University of Memphis team to identify assets and liabilities in their neighborhoods from a youth perspective. The program incorporated technology to heighten interest among the young participants and help the teens communicate their stories and perspectives in new ways to influence community change. The participants created representations of life in their neighborhoods through digital photo-maps, kept track of their progress and shared stories with blogs, collected data with handheld computers, and used their newly acquired GIS skills to create interactive asset maps that they shared online.

This remainder of this article will describe and reflect on the process and outcomes of the YNMI.

### Institutional Structure

The YNMI was developed within the City and Regional Planning program at the University of Memphis and reflects the university's growing emphasis on community engagement, driven by a desire to embrace its urban setting and foster mutually beneficial relationships with its community. The program provided an opportunity for continued interaction in neighborhoods where other forms of university engagement had already begun. Implementation of the program was directed by a City and Regional Planning faculty member and a team of four graduate students, who were selected through a competitive application process and paid a small summer graduate assistant stipend. Graduate student involvement was not tied to a particular class but provided an opportunity for experiential learning. Through sharing planning concepts with others and stretching their understanding

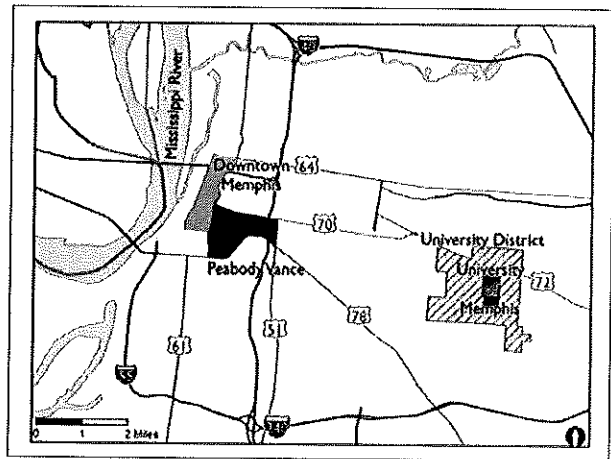


Figure 1. Location of Youth Neighborhood Mapping Initiative (YNMI) neighborhoods

to relate those concepts to their unique audience, the graduate students developed a more intimate understanding of the subject matter.

Our vehicle for conducting the YNMI was the Memphis Summer Youth Employment Program, sponsored and funded by the city of Memphis. The 1,320 participants in the Summer Youth Employment Program were selected through a random lottery process, with preference given to those representing certain "target populations" (e.g., teens from families receiving public assistance, teens in foster care, or teen parents). Placements were made with thirty-five public agencies, nonprofit organizations, or programs. Youth participants worked thirty hours per week for an eight-week period and were paid an hourly wage.

The YNMI project involved two groups of teens—a team of eight in the Peabody-Vance neighborhood and a team of six in the University District neighborhood (see Figure 1). The only prerequisite for placement with the YNMI project was residency within one of these two neighborhoods. Participants did not have a choice in their placements; all placements decisions were made by the city's Summer Youth Employment Program staff. YNMI participants ranged from sixteen to eighteen years of age, and most were approaching their senior year in high school.<sup>1</sup> All participants were African American.

The Peabody-Vance neighborhood, one of the city's oldest, is adjacent to downtown and the Beale Street entertainment district. The neighborhood is located in the city's poorest zip code and contains the city's two remaining public housing complexes, Foote Homes and Cleaborne Homes. Most of the Peabody-Vance participants were public housing residents. The neighborhood is still home to many historic buildings, but it was removed from the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district after losing a

significant number of contributing structures over time to demolition or fire.

The University District is a larger area that comprises five neighborhoods adjacent to the University of Memphis. The area is split in half by the CSX rail line, which separates the southern portion of the district from the main university campus. All but one of the University District participants lived south of the tracks, across from campus.

### *Program Objectives*

The YNMI program was designed to meet multiple objectives. Because of its connection to a city employment program, the process intended to foster career-related knowledge and skill sets by exposing participants to the field of city planning and providing hard-skills training in GIS and related uses of computer technology. The program also sought to accomplish the following broader objectives related to civic engagement:

- to teach youth to recognize, take pride in, and build on the assets in their neighborhoods;
- to teach youth to seek solutions for, rather than simply dwell on, the liabilities in their neighborhoods; and
- to teach youth that they are neighborhood stakeholders and that they can be neighborhood leaders.

Sociodemographic indicators suggest a critical need in Memphis to provide youth with a formal voice, expanded social networks, and career skill training. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2007 American Community Survey, a staggering 42 percent of children and youth (less than eighteen years of age) in Memphis live in poverty. In rankings comparing statistics across cities, Memphis is at or near the top in terms of children and youth living in poverty, families in poverty, families headed by single parents, births to teen parents, and percentage of sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds who are neither working nor in school.

Approximately 80 percent of children and youth in Memphis are minorities, and the opportunity to encourage greater minority participation within the field of city planning was among the motivating factors for our work. The AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2005) states that "we shall seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. We shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs." Despite an institutionalized objective to promote "racial integration," the profession has fallen short of achieving such integration within its ranks. Minorities make up less than 10 percent of the membership of the American Planning Association (APA), according to the 2008 APA/AICP Planners Salary Survey (2008). Only 4 percent of APA

members are African American. As a city with a majority African American population, strong minority civic leaders, and a rich civil rights heritage, Memphis provides an appropriate environment in which to create exposure among minority high school students as they consider career options.

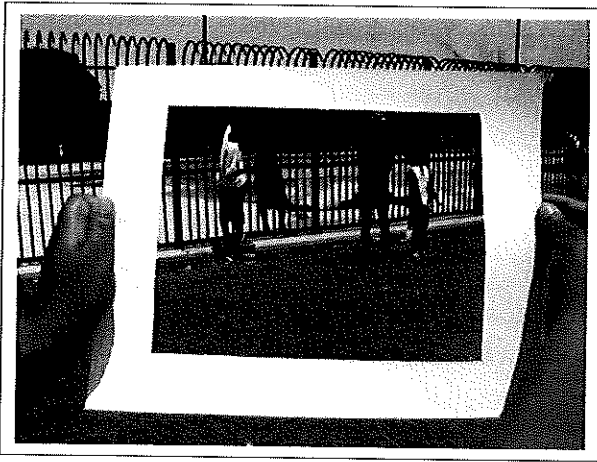
### *Process*

The YNMI process was designed with flexibility in mind. We sought to foster authentic, youth-directed participation whenever possible, but we did not specifically design the program to adhere exclusively to any particular model of participation as defined by the Hart (1992) or Driskell (2002) typologies. (Driskell [2002, 42] notes that "most projects will exemplify different forms of participation at different points in the process, or even within a single project activity or event.") We developed the program with an awareness that our ability to achieve the true buy-in necessary for the highest level of youth participation would be somewhat limited by the institutional structure of the Summer Youth Employment Program. Our participants were technically employees, not volunteers, who did not choose their placement in the YNMI program. In addition, we had an interest in accommodating certain predetermined objectives (developing career skills and promoting civic engagement). Within this context, we tried to create opportunities for youth ownership and youth-directed activities.

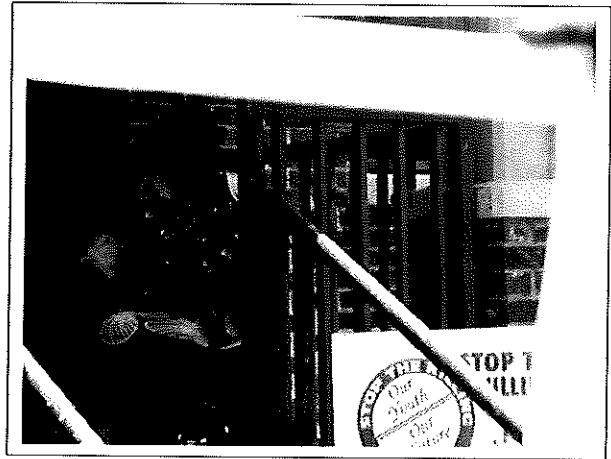
Because we wanted the outcomes of the YNMI project to reflect the voices of the young participants, we did not predefine a set of projects for the teens to address. Instead, we provided a set of skills and tools for analysis and expression and guided the participants in determining how to apply them. The participants' work program was ultimately shaped by the types of neighborhood issues they identified as important and the strategies they chose to address those issues.

To prepare the participants to define and develop their own projects, we spent the first four weeks of the program working through a series of training modules. In general, the exercises were designed to introduce the teens to planning concepts and help them take a fresh look at their neighborhoods, to think in terms of geography, to see relationships between the built environment and how people feel about a place, and to recognize assets and liabilities. The teens also learned how to use technology to collect and analyze geographic data, how to create maps with computers, how to work with community groups, and how to interact with community and government agencies. Training module exercises were grouped into the following categories:

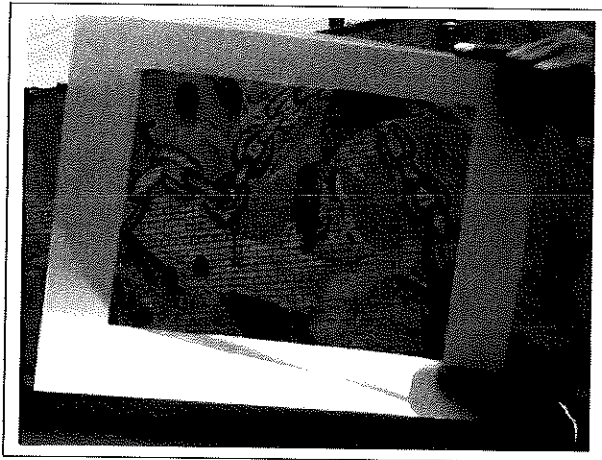
- Orientation and Group Development Exercises
- Introduction to Mapping Resources
- What Is City Planning?
- Assets and Liabilities
- Public Space



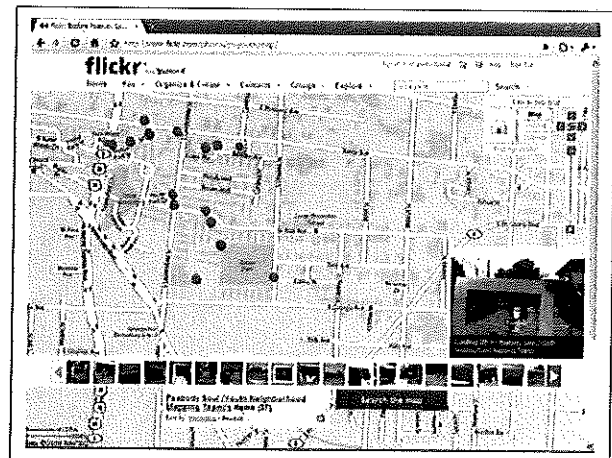
**Figure 2.** Framing photo: The pool at the public housing complex; a favorite summer hangout



**Figure 4.** Framing photo: A neighborhood "candy lady"



**Figure 3.** Framing photo: Mural on one of the many neighborhood minimarts



**Figure 5.** Photomap screen capture

- Making Connections
- GIS Training

Many of the training module exercises were based on tried and true techniques described in manuals like Driskell's (2002) *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth*, updated with a technology twist. For example, the teens used digital cameras to conduct a "framing" exercise. Using a picture frame to isolate scenes in their surroundings, the participants were asked to capture images that represent life in their neighborhood—photos that would show an outsider what it is like to grow up in Peabody-Vance or in the University District. Figures 2 through 4 are representative of the results. (The "candy lady" captured in Figure 4 is an example of a unique community attribute often overlooked as an

asset in neighborhoods like Peabody-Vance.) The teens then uploaded these photos and gave them geo-reference tags to create photomaps using Flickr, an online photo hosting site (see Figure 5).

The use of computer technology as a means of expression was intended to heighten interest among the participants and offer them new and creative ways to communicate their stories—through mediums with which young people may be more comfortable. For example, in addition to the digital photo albums and photomaps, each team kept a blog, which acted as an open journal where participants could reflect on what they learned about planning and about their neighborhoods throughout the summer. The blogs allowed candid insight into the unique perspective of these teens, which at times included despair at neighborhood conditions, but ended

with hope and a developing awareness of the role that individuals can play in a community. (The blogs can be viewed at [www.peabodysoul.blogspot.com](http://www.peabodysoul.blogspot.com) and [www.youthmappers.blogspot.com](http://www.youthmappers.blogspot.com).)

The digital photography and blogging exercises allowed the participants to express themselves through technology tools with which they were already familiar, but the program also introduced the teens to new technology skill sets related to GIS. The four-week series of training modules ended with a quick course in using GIS software to collect and analyze data and prepare maps. Using and developing maps helped participants examine their neighborhoods in an analytical way. In addition, developing maps helped the youth represent their perceptions, ideas, and concerns in a way that is clear and convincing to others. GIS training included a combination of classroom exercises, hands-on computer work, and neighborhood field surveys. Data collection was conducted with handheld computers using ArcPad mobile GIS software and GPS receivers.

### Outcomes

The teams spent the second four weeks of the program applying their newly acquired knowledge and skill sets in self-determined work programs informed by their perceptions of neighborhood assets and liabilities.

The University District team focused their efforts on Davis Park, a small park with a community center located at the geographic midpoint of their neighborhood. The teens saw the park as an underutilized and poorly designed space that was not living up to its potential as an important community asset—one that, because of its location, could act as a central gathering place and foster community cohesiveness while providing recreational amenities.

The teens identified abandoned properties as a neighborhood concern early in the summer and, as part of their planning process, sought to explore the relationship between the generally ignored public space of Davis Park and property conditions in the surrounding blocks. Team members used ArcPad mobile GIS software to conduct a field survey on handheld PCs loaded with parcel maps and custom-designed templates for data collection. In the field, the participants were able to tap on the appropriate parcel on the base map and pull up a series of drop-down menus where they could enter data on occupancy, lot, and structural conditions. The data were then uploaded and used to prepare a set of property conditions maps.

The University District team's final product was a set of physical and design recommendations intended to improve Davis Park. To develop their plan, the group mapped the elements of the park, considered what worked and did not work from their own perspectives, interviewed neighborhood

residents, and visited other more successful parks in the city to identify potential programming elements.

The University District participants presented their concepts to community members at the end of the summer and came back together in the fall, after the program was over, to share their ideas with the City of Memphis Division of Park Services.

The Peabody-Vance team focused on promoting and sharing the heritage and cultural assets of their neighborhood in a series of interactive maps. Getting to this particular focus required something of an awakening for the participants, which will be discussed further in the "Reflections, Lessons, and Lasting Impacts" section, below. Although the teens were living in a neighborhood rich in civil rights history, they were either unaware of this heritage or did not inherently relate to it as an asset prior to the program.

With the help of a local historic preservation organization, interviews with longtime neighborhood residents, and archival research at the city's Central Library, the teens began to broaden their understanding of their neighborhood and unearth hidden or forgotten assets that they wanted the rest of the city to know about.

A small section of the Peabody-Vance neighborhood was once listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but it was later removed after a significant number of contributing structures were lost. The teens conducted a field survey of the old district and developed an interactive map to illustrate what once was and what remains today using "then and now" (archival and current) photos. The Peabody-Vance area still contains many individual properties that are historically significant; on a second map, the teens plotted the dozen properties in their neighborhood that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A third map highlights cultural assets and other places the teens thought would be appealing to others in their age group (including Beale Street and the adjacent Peabody Place mall, the FedEx Forum sports arena, and the local public library branch).

The teens packaged their GIS maps in an ArcReader format, which allows viewers who do not have GIS software to explore the maps with interactive features, including the ability to turn layers on and off, zoom in and out, and pan to various positions. The properties featured on the maps also included hyperlinks; clicking on a particular asset or historic property identified on the map takes the viewer to a slide prepared by the teens that provides a photo and additional information about that particular feature. (A static version of the *Historic District: Then and Now* map is included as Figure 6.) The team shared their interactive maps with the public by posting them online; loading them on the computers at the local public library branch; and hosting an open house that was attended by neighbors, community leaders, and city officials.

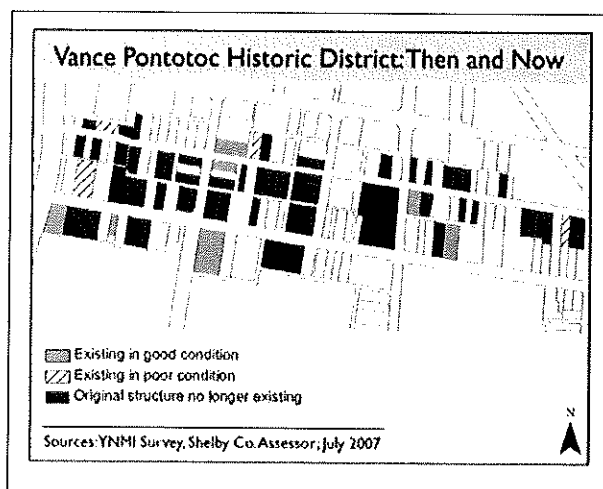


Figure 6. Peabody-Vance team sample product

## Reflections, Lessons, and Lasting Impacts

The following discussion will reflect on the YNMI process and outcomes, considering the guiding principles discussed in the literature review, the program's stated objectives, and the impact and importance of youth insights.

### Perceptions and Neighborhood Identity

Through our interactions with the participants, we learned a great deal about how these teens perceived their neighborhoods and observed that their sense of neighborhood awareness and identity evolved throughout the summer.

In a short survey given during the first day of the program, we asked participants, "What neighborhood do you live in?" While most of the University District team members lived in what local planning practitioners refer to as the Messeik-Buntyn neighborhood, many gave a generic response (e.g., "East Memphis"), and some self-identified with the nearby Orange Mound neighborhood.<sup>2</sup> The Orange Mound neighborhood is often perceived as a "tough" place, and it is possible that the teens wanted to be associated with this reputation.

As the teens began to actively consider the assets and liabilities of their neighborhood, they eventually developed a deeper connection with the place. They came to view the railroad tracks separating their neighborhood from the university campus, which at first they saw only as a source of inconvenience, as a unique symbol of neighborhood identity. The name the group chose for their blog, "Our Side of the Tracks," reflects this connection.

At the beginning of the summer, most of the Peabody-Vance participants considered their neighborhood to be the area inside the fences that surrounded either the Foote Homes

or Cleaborne Homes public housing complexes. In responding to our opening survey question ("What neighborhood do you live in?"), almost all of the Peabody-Vance teens responded with the name of their public housing complex; none of them offered "Peabody-Vance" as a response. In another early exercise, the teens were asked to draw their neighborhood. The instructions for this task were intentionally ambiguous, but participants were encouraged to consider landmarks, places they like to go, and the routes they take to get to those places to help them envision their neighborhood as a physical entity. The Peabody-Vance drawings tended to focus on elements of Foote or Cleaborne Homes—buildings, the pool, the playground—with very little detail beyond the fences of those complexes. Although tenancy in public housing can be transient, and some of the participants had only lived in their current residence for a short while, others had spent the majority of their lives in the neighborhood.

Compounding the lack of broader neighborhood identity was a sense of deep-rooted negativity that these participants carried with them about where they were living. In striving to achieve our objective of instilling local pride and recognition of community assets, we struggled to move the teens beyond a tendency to dwell on neighborhood liabilities. Facilitated discussion of neighborhood conditions tended to focus on trash and crime, and the teens' informal communication was similarly bleak. Several of the participants spent their downtime in the computer lab querying the Shelby County jail's online database of inmates. The process of developing a work program that focused on the heritage of the Peabody-Vance neighborhood represented a sort of awakening for this group.

A visit to the Stax Museum of American Soul Music in Soulsville, a neighborhood adjacent to Peabody-Vance, provided an impetus for positive thinking. The Soulsville neighborhood, once a strong working-class community and cultural center influential in the emergence of American soul music, suffered through many of the same socioeconomic and policy changes that led to decline in Peabody-Vance. The Stax Museum, built on the site of the Stax Records studio, and its adjoining Stax Music Academy and Soulsville Charter School, are anchors for the neighborhood's ongoing revitalization, which includes a new urbanist-inspired Hope VI development and other public and private investment.

The lesson that the teens gleaned from the Stax and Soulsville visit is that the area's *heritage* caused people to take an interest in its rebirth—enough of an interest to make significant, tangible investments. From this, the group began to consider whether their neighborhood had elements that might have similar appeal and began to think about promoting Peabody-Vance.

Following the Stax visit, we invited the executive director of Memphis Heritage, a local historic preservation organization, to meet with the team. Memphis Heritage became an invaluable partner, helping the teens imagine and understand

the significance of their built environment and the historic events that unfolded there and sharing important data that became central to the team's work program (including old photos and newspaper clippings and the surveys and text of the original nomination for the neighborhood's former historic district).

By the end of the summer, Peabody-Vance participants took pride in telling others that their neighborhood was home to the Cleaborne Temple, where Dr. Martin Luther King convened with striking sanitation workers in 1968; Robert R. Church Park, built by and named for the South's first black millionaire; the site of Church's house on Lauderdale and a his Solvent Savings Bank, the first black-owned bank in Memphis; and a dozen nationally noted historic properties.

### Unstructured Learning Environments

The teens' interest in neighborhood heritage was further heightened by an encounter with a local street character that illustrates another lesson learned regarding process. In teaching some of the fundamental concepts early in the summer, we tended to rely on the classroom pedagogy with which we were most familiar, but eventually we found that approach less effective than real-world "show and tell." For example, in trying to illustrate the importance of design, we began by showing the teens a series of visual preference surveys. These instruments show scenes representing alternative design choices for public spaces, buildings, roads, and so forth and ask participants to indicate a preference after reflecting on how they would feel in each of the hypothetical environments. We quickly found that the teens were not able to connect with the process, and we decided that a walk through the neighborhood would provide us plenty of opportunities to point out and experience design elements.

As we walked with the Peabody-Vance group toward the nearby Lorraine Motel, the site of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination and the current home of the National Civil Rights Museum, we stopped to examine some renovated shotgun houses. We intended to talk about the context-sensitive character of the renovations in juxtaposition to the modern infill structures across the street, but we were interrupted by a boisterous, and somewhat aggravated, homeless man. Our instinct was to hurry the teens down the street to try to avoid a prolonged encounter, but the man's message was a pertinent one that captured the attention of the group. What at first seemed like incoherent ranting turned out to be a lucid bemoaning of the impact of "white corporate interests" on what once was a "black-owned block." When we shared the background of our summer project with the man, he offered his version of the history of the street and the area surrounding the Lorraine Motel—giving a living lesson that cemented the teens' understanding of "gentrification," a term we had discussed with limited success in the classroom earlier that

week. He also reflected on his experience of marching with Dr. King in 1968 and what it was like to be in that neighborhood at that point in history. The encounter provided the teens with an experience they would reflect back on often throughout the summer and helped them imagine and connect to the past life of their community.

Although it is not possible to replicate this kind of encounter, processes can be designed to provide opportunities for spontaneous learning in unstructured environments. In general, we found that we were able to generate more interest and motivation when we made time to take the group outside the classroom and interact with the built environment and the living community. Our walks through the neighborhood were often interrupted as friends or neighbors of the participants would shout over to us from their porches. This allowed us to illustrate the close social connections and true sense of community that exist in traditional, dense urban neighborhoods but that are harder to find in the large-lot cul-de-sacs of suburban developments.

### Flexibility and Real Participation

Because we wanted the outcomes of the YNMI project to reflect the voices of the young participants, the YNMI process was designed to be flexible. After some instruction in concepts and tools, each group was expected to define a focus for their summer projects based on what they identified as important neighborhood assets and liabilities. This desire to accommodate an open-ended set of outcomes and relinquish control created some difficulty in the preparation and administration of the project; although we knew that the groups would be mapping something, we could not anticipate and prepare for what that *something* would be (e.g., street trees, community centers, pedestrian pathways, favorite hangouts, etc.).

Ultimately, we were moderately, but not entirely, successful in achieving sustained authenticity and real participation. Both groups *did* determine the focus of their projects; however, this required more guidance and prompting than we had hoped—particularly with the Peabody-Vance team, where our process was hampered by a lack of motivation as well as issues of self-esteem and educational deficiencies.

Hart (1992, 1997) notes that successful youth engagement hinges on the *willingness* of youth to participate in the process. To some extent, the overall structure of the program that hosted the YNMI affected our ability to achieve true buy-in. As described above, YNMI participants were employees (not volunteers) of the city's Summer Youth Employment Program. Furthermore, participants did not choose their placement for the summer; all placements decisions were made by the city's Summer Youth Employment Program staff. This process was useful in that it gave us geographically targeted groups with a common ground, but we began the summer

with participants who exhibited no preexisting buy-in or interest in the community engagement objectives of the YNMI program.

The University District teens, for the most part, were able to adapt to their placement with the YNMI program, but the Peabody-Vance team was not as quick to develop an interest in the program or as willing to embrace its objectives. This difference in ability to develop self-motivation is difficult to explain, considering the socioeconomic similarities between the groups. Both groups represented economically disadvantaged areas of the city and almost all of the participants were living in nontraditional family structures. The University District participants tended to be higher academic achievers, focused on preparing for college, while the Peabody-Vance participants were steeped in negativity, as described above. The most obvious socioeconomic variable that differed between the two groups was that the Peabody-Vance participants were mostly public housing residents, while the University District teens were not. It may be that social networks and peer groups were a behavioral factor. The male Peabody-Vance participants in particular focused on violence and displayed signs of gang affiliation (real or pretend), which were never seen amongst the University District teens.

For those who embraced the program, the paycheck became a "fringe" benefit associated with working to improve their neighborhood, but for others it became the only means by which they could be enticed to participate. At times when the content of the work became more arduous and less entertaining, those individuals who would not have chosen the YNMI program often became despondent or obstinate to requests by either the facilitators or their peers. Such attitudes sometimes became viral and led to a decline in the productivity of the other team members and altered the dynamics of the group.

In some cases, educational deficiencies (possibly symptomatic of learning disabilities) made it difficult for some of the participants to grasp the big-picture ideas and make connections between the concepts and tools they were learning and the real problems their community was facing. These issues also contributed to (or exacerbated existing) self-esteem problems, which manifest themselves in participants' unwillingness to contribute to group work or counterproductive behavior in group work settings. Hart (1992, 31) makes the following observation about the relationship between self esteem and youth participation:

Self esteem is perhaps the most critical variable affecting a child's successful participation with others in a project. It is a value judgment children make about self-worth based upon their sense of competence in doing things and the approval of others as revealed by their acceptance as intimate friends. Children with low self esteem develop coping mechanisms which are more likely to distort how they communicate their thoughts and feelings; group interactions among these children is particularly difficult to achieve.

Once these issues became apparent, one of the administrators from the university team worked with the participants in need of extra attention and assigned them individual tasks in which they could demonstrate a level of competence (e.g., taking photos, videotaping interviews, etc.) and contribute to the process without the pressure of potentially letting down the group.

In retrospect, the background of the university team (faculty and graduate students) left us unprepared to deal with these issues in an ideal manner. Our expertise lay in our knowledge of planning subject matter, but not in the means of transferring that knowledge to a teen audience, especially a teen audience dealing with difficult social circumstances and potential learning disabilities. Some of our greatest challenges were related to finding ways to motivate and connect with the participants and deal with their varying levels of aptitude and interest. These sorts of obstacles are likely to be common for processes geared at engaging disadvantaged youth in planning, especially those run solely by planning practitioners, who are generally inexperienced in working with young people. Future endeavors would benefit from either direct involvement of colleagues in other disciplines (e.g., education, counseling, or social work) or appropriate preprogram training.

Certain characteristics of the age group involved in the program may have also played a role in shaping the extent of our success. While young people develop a broader range of skills and capacity to take perspective of others as they grow older, it is possible that a younger group may have been more willing to work with adults who could be perceived as "authority figures," less concerned about the social implications of engaging intellectually, and more open to exploring the assets of their neighborhoods with fewer preconceptions about the liabilities.

### *Letting Young People Be Young People: Using Technology as a Means of Expression*

The program used a variety of technology tools to help the participants express their perspectives. Both groups used a computer lab as their "home base" and daily meeting location.

Although there was a wide range of educational attainment among the participants, most were able to achieve a sufficient comfort level with GIS in a short time period. This is likely a reflection of the high level of exposure to computer applications among current teens, which seems apparent even for lower-income groups, indicating a potential closing of the "digital divide." (Most of the teens did not have a computer at home but spent large amounts of free time in community center or public library computer labs.) The teens seemed accustomed to thinking in terms of computer processes and drop-down menus, and the mechanics of the GIS software were somewhat intuitive to them.

The teens were particularly expressive with their digital photography. When they were sent out into the neighborhood with specific photography assignments (e.g., to photograph a specific set of historic buildings), they would often return with a full memory card and dozens of telling and candid images.

The blogs also provided a useful tool with which the teens could share their reflections with a broad audience in a casual and informal manner. The participants' writing was often raw and unpolished, and we considered editing the posts to make their message more "presentable," but in the end we found that the contents were more telling and useful in their unedited, authentic voice.

At times the unlimited computer and Internet access became a distraction, with the teens spending a great deal of time on social networking applications. We tried to incorporate their passion for MySpace into the program by allowing the teens in the Peabody-Vance group to build a Peabody-Vance/YNMI MySpace page. We eventually abandoned this experiment when some of the teens added images of guns, music with lyrics that could be considered offensive, and various types of gang references to the page. This may reflect a missed opportunity to allow the youth to take a unique form of ownership in the project, but the decision was ultimately made in deference to some of the youth participants who deemed their peers' postings to be inappropriate, counterproductive, and not reflective of the efforts of the group.

Despite our attempts at open discussion, it was never clear to us whether these outward signals of gang affiliation (which also included style of dress, language, and imagery doodled on notepads) represented real involvement, "pretend" involvement to portray an image, or mechanisms of coping or survival.

### *Real-World Connections/Lasting Impacts*

The potential to be part of a project with a lasting impact was clearly a motivator for participants in the University District. Their buy-in and sense of ownership in the Davis Park plan was evidenced by their willingness to come back together in the fall, after the summer program had ended, to present their ideas to the city's Division of Parks Services.

The teens' efforts have since been carried forward by their neighbors and by the University Neighborhood Development Corporation, a nonprofit community development corporation that serves the area. The community development corporation enlisted the help of students and faculty in the University of Memphis Architecture program, who hosted the "Re-design: Davis Park" community charrette and completed a set of official plans for the redevelopment of Davis Park, which have been submitted to Parks Services for further action.<sup>3</sup>

The teens also shared the findings of their field survey of property conditions in the area around the park with the

city's Division of Housing and Community Development. The city representatives were especially impressed with the teens ArcPad GIS data collection process and were inspired to commission a citywide problem properties audit to be conducted using the same technology and approach. (The division had been collecting similar data using paper maps and forms.)

The Peabody-Vance team was able to share their interactive maps with neighbors, community leaders, and city officials at their final open house and made the maps available online and at the local public library branch. The group considered preparing a walking tour of the neighborhood to accompany the interactive maps that could have been the centerpiece for a larger community event and led to greater awareness of their work; however, we were not able to maintain the momentum of motivation to complete the planning for such an event. This may prove a worthy endeavor for a future youth engagement project.

The efforts of the Peabody-Vance team are not likely to result in long-lasting physical impacts like those of the University District team, but the changes in how these teens understand, perceive, and relate to their community may equate to a more significant personal impact.

In a blog post from the end of the summer, one of the participants wrote, "Everyday people come to me and ask what has the program done for me. I say it has taught me a lot about my community that I didn't know. The Peabody-Vance area is a really big historic district and I am glad that I live in this area." If these teens can share what they learned about the heritage and civil rights history of their neighborhood with relatives, friends, and classmates, it is possible that their personal eight-week awakening can contribute to a broader sense of awareness and pride throughout their community.

Participation in the YNMI program also generated some important lasting impacts for the graduate planning students involved. One of the students drew heavily on his summer experience to develop his final capstone project, a curriculum designed to involve young people in the assessment and improvement of their community's sustainability. Another, who had worked with the University District teens during the summer, was able to remain involved with that neighborhood and the Davis Park project as an employee of the University Neighborhood Development Corporation and later as a community liaison for the university.

### *Achieving Objectives*

Providing a clear assessment of the program's success in meeting our stated objectives is difficult because so much of what we hoped to accomplish could only be manifest in changes internal to the participants and in their future actions and behaviors.

Because of its connections with a city youth employment program, one of the primary objectives of the YNMI program was to provide career-related skills through exposure to the

field of city planning and an emphasis on GIS training. The participants' products speak to the success of the program in instilling technical skills. Individual levels of acumen varied among the teens, but their group efforts resulted in high-quality outcomes. The University District team successfully conducted an ArcPad property conditions survey, using the results to generate useful maps, and shared their data with appropriate city agencies. The group also used their newfound skills to develop an effective representation of their vision for change at Davis Park. The Peabody-Vance teens captured and shared their growing knowledge of neighborhood heritage in a series of sophisticated interactive maps.

Ultimately the products the teens developed were on par with work done by college students with access to more sustained and structured training. The university team coached the participants through parts of the process and helped them polish their products, as a supervising professor might with a studio class project, but did not alter the teens' final work in any way. The outcomes were particularly impressive since none of the youth participants had been exposed to GIS in their school curricula or elsewhere, and most had not even used more accessible online mapping tools such as GoogleMaps.

Although it is too early to know for certain whether the YNMI program generated any sustained interest in city planning as a vocation among participants, there was clearly some success in creating both a new awareness of a potential career option and a new awareness of the field of planning in general. For the most part, the participants had no familiarity with the profession of city planning prior to their involvement in the YNMI program. The program helped the youth participants develop an appreciation of the benefits of planning and an understanding of planning practice by introducing them to concepts through instruction, allowing them to interact with local practitioners, giving them a leadership role in developing and carrying out community development initiatives, and providing them an outlet to share their ideas and knowledge with others. The knowledge and experience the YNMI participants gained over the course of the program will be of value to them in whatever careers options they ultimately pursue, and the technical computer mapping skills they acquired are applicable to a wide variety of vocations.

In addition to the development of career skills and awareness, the program also sought to enhance local civic engagement among participants and increase neighborhood pride. In an effort to measure changes in attitudes about civic engagement, we conducted a preprogram and postprogram survey of participants, using indicators and questions developed by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). Because of the small number of respondents, the fact that some participants did not take both surveys (which were voluntary), and the short duration of the program, accurately assessing the impact of

the program in such a quantitative manner was difficult and ultimately not very useful.

As described in our reflections above, however, our interactions with the teens showed evidence of increasing pride and neighborhood awareness throughout the summer. Neighborhood perceptions clearly changed for the Peabody-Vance participants as they made new connections with the community beyond the boundaries of their public housing complexes and uncovered an impressive heritage with important ties to the civil rights movement. The youth shared their interactive maps with pride at their final open house and were especially excited to make the maps available at the local public library branch for the benefit of their neighbors. The University District teens who came back together in the fall to present their plan to the city's Division of Parks Services surely saw themselves as important neighborhood stakeholders with valuable ideas.

### *Youth Insights: Impacts on Communities and Planning*

Much of the preceding discussion has focused on the effect of the program on participants, but the program also provided the youth with an outlet to affect their communities, and their insights contributed to our understanding of community development.

The YNMI process gave the University District teens an opportunity to raise awareness of an issue they deemed important to the health of their neighborhood, which others may have overlooked. As representatives of an age group among the primary intended users of Davis Park, these young people saw the promise of the park as an important asset, while recognizing its current limitations. They also keenly observed the connection between the underutilized facility and surrounding property conditions. Through careful observation of other, more successful public spaces, the youth participants shared their unique vision for change at the park, and their ideas became the impetus for a larger process that grew to involve others. As described above, the team's successful use of ArcPad to collect and map property conditions data served as an example to city government of how technology can be used to improve efficiency and played a role in changing the way in which one city agency collects data.

Participants from the Peabody-Vance team, who discovered new perspectives and connections to neighborhood heritage through their own efforts, are now positioned to carry forth a neighborhood narrative that may have otherwise slowly disappeared and to share a source of pride with classmates, teachers, relatives, and other community members. Similarly, the University District teens developed new connections with their built environment as they came to view the railroad tracks that separated their neighborhood from the

university campus as a unique symbol of neighborhood identity, rather than solely as a source of inconvenience.

In addition to the specific insights the teens shared through their team projects, our interaction with the youth also offered broad lessons about community development and raised awareness of some important challenges facing planners seeking to foster stronger urban neighborhoods.

We observed that the extent of community connection inherent in the teen participants prior to the program was tempered by circumstances that may be unique to low-income populations. For many of the teens, a connection to place was limited by the fact that they had not lived in their current neighborhood for very long. This reflects the unstable housing situation that many low-income families and young people face, as evidenced by the higher frequency with which poor children change schools as compared to more affluent children (Skandera and Sousa 2002). For some participants (especially the Peabody-Vance participants), housing instability was the result of a dependence on public housing options. Others moved to live with relatives (grandparents or aunts), due to financial circumstances, because of the inability of parents to provide a suitable home environment, or to gain access to schools that were perceived to be better. This suggests that no matter how successful planners are at fostering built versions of Clarence Perry's neighborhood unit, with walkable schools at the center, our ability to create communities with high levels of engagement will be hampered unless we find ways to solve housing stability (and school mobility) issues among low-income families.

Real or perceived issues of crime and safety also seemed to impede the teens' willingness to embrace their communities both psychologically (e.g., speaking about the neighborhood with pride) and physically (e.g., walking in unfamiliar areas or using public spaces).

The teens often focused on safety, along with physical appearance, as primary issues that would need to be addressed to improve their neighborhoods. As this indicates, the insights and concerns that the youth shared about their neighborhoods were often not specific to the needs of their peers alone. Our experience with youth reflects Chawla's (2002a, 19) conclusion that "the priorities that children express are conditions for making cities more livable for all ages."

Insights from the youth also reflect a concern for equity in local planning priorities and, more specifically, suggest that local efforts to improve urban quality of life should focus on neighborhood improvements, rather than large-scale downtown investments. The University District teens were quick to point out what they perceived as an inequity between the substantial spending being proposed for downtown tourist-related projects and the apparent lack of investment in their neighborhood infrastructure. The youth suggested that such money would be better spent on purchasing or securing abandoned residential properties. For the Peabody-Vance

teens, the attractions of the nearby Beale Street entertainment district and downtown seemed far less important to their daily quality of life than the conditions of their more immediate surroundings.

The YNMI process provided a useful framework for introducing young people to community development and planning, advancing practice, and fostering civic engagement. The process and outcomes indicate that technological tools can prove useful as a means of capturing youth perspectives and fostering informal expression, that youth can offer meaningful insights that impact communities and contribute to a broader understanding of community development issues, and that neighborhood perceptions and awareness can change for the better through processes that promote engagement.

For youth participation programs that exist within structured settings like ours did, instilling flexibility in the process can help achieve a degree of real participation. The ability to fully achieve and sustain high levels of youth participation marked by youth-directed outcomes was somewhat hampered by the institutional framework required to implement the program. Because participants were employees who were *placed* in the program, rather than volunteers who *chose* the program, the necessary buy-in and commitment to the objectives of the program was more difficult to achieve. This is a shortcoming we may be able to reverse in future youth engagement endeavors by creating a screening process; however, those teens most in need of a voice and a reason to find hope in the community are, perhaps, the least likely to seek out such an opportunity on their own.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article: Funding from the City of Memphis Office of Youth Services and Community Affairs.

### Notes

1. While we have used the terms "youth" and "young people" throughout the background and literature review portions of this article to refer generally to community members under the age of eighteen, we will use the more specific term "teens" to refer to the Youth Neighborhood Mapping Initiative (YNMI) participants.
2. The University District consists of several small neighborhoods adjacent to the University of Memphis. The Orange Mound neighborhood is located just outside the University District to the west.
3. Improvements to the park, based on the teens' input and the process they initiated, will be fully considered following the completion of the city's overall parks master plan.

## References

- American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). 2005. AICP code of ethics and professional conduct. <http://www.planning.org/ethics/conduct.html> (accessed February 27, 2009).
- American Planning Association. 2008. APA/AICP planners salary survey. <http://www.planning.org/salary/> (accessed February 27, 2009).
- Arnstein, S. 1969. A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35 (4): 216-24.
- Chawla, L. 2002a. *Growing up in an urbanizing world*. London: UNESCO Publishing/Earthscan Publications, Ltd.
- Chawla, L. 2002b. "Insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment": Integrating children and youth into human settlement development. *Environment and Urbanization* 14 (2): 11-21.
- Checkoway, B., and K. Richards-Schuster. 2003. Youth participation in community evaluation research. *American Journal of Evaluation* 24 (1): 21-33.
- Community Development Society. 2007. Principles of good practice. <http://comm-dev.org/> (accessed February 27, 2009).
- Conventions on the Right of a Child, Article 12. 1989. <http://www.unicef.org/crc/> (accessed February 27, 2009).
- Driskell, D. 2002. *Creating better cities with children and youth: A manual for participation*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing/Earthscan Publications, Ltd.
- Francis, M., and R. Lorenzo. 2002. Seven realms of children's participation. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 22:157-69.
- Frank, K. I. 2006. The potential of youth participation in planning. *Journal of Planning Literature* 20 (4): 351-71.
- Goldberg, D. 2002. Children, youth and families and smart growth: Building family friendly communities. Translation Paper Number Nine, Funders' Network, Coral Gables, FL.
- Hart, R. 1992. Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship. Innocenti Essay no. 4, UNIFEC International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy.
- Hart, R. 1997. *Children's participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.
- Knowles-Yanez, K. 2005. Children's participation in planning processes. *Journal of Planning Literature* 20 (1): 3-14.
- Simpson, B. 1997. Toward the participation of children and young people in urban planning and design. *Urban Studies* 32 (5/6): 907-25.
- Skandera, H., and R. Sousa. 2002. Mobility and the achievement gap. *Hoover Digest: Research and Opinion on Public Policy* 3:1-5.

## Bios

**Charles A. Santo** is an assistant professor of city and regional planning at the University of Memphis. His research interests include youth participation in planning; economic analysis; and the relationship between sports, economic development, and urban public policy.

**Nathan Ferguson** is a researcher with the Center for Partnerships in GIS at the University of Memphis. His research interests include sustainable redevelopment, spatial analysis, and participatory GIS.

**Andrew Trippel** is the community liaison for university-community partnerships at the University of Memphis. His research interests include public/private partnerships, neighborhood revitalization, and coordinated university-community transportation demand management.