

## Summary of Key Points from

# Revitalizing the First-Suburbs: The Importance of the Social Capital-Community Development Link in Suburban Neighborhood Revitalization—A Case Study

by JoAnna Mitchell-Brown

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Main Point: Social capital (the bonds between people and organizations) is a critical component of community development because it can promote revitalization and stability.

The article explores this topic by reviewing articles that make the case for social capital, explaining different types of social capital, and then provides two case studies: Elmwood Place, OH and Mount Healthy, OH.

Key Terms:

**Social Capital** – “The social ties and networks in the community development process” [...] “the extent to which members of a community can work together effectively to develop and sustain strong relationships, solve problems, and collaborate to accomplish collective goals” (pg 12).

Types of Social Capital:

**Bonding social capital** – the strong, tight relationships between family, friends, neighbors, and people in the same organizations

**Bridging social capital** – the looser connections between people of different groups or organizations that people can seek help or information from such with local associations or the local government

**Linking social capital** – the loose connections between local groups and formal institutions that have access to money, power, or other resources that the local groups can then tap into

Some challenges that make it difficult for a community to build different types of social capital include a lack of human capital (self-esteem, trust, communication skills), lack of material well-being (when people are struggling for their daily needs), lack of physical infrastructure (not having social spaces to gather), and lack of opportunities to network (pg. 15-16).

## Case Studies:

Elmwood Place, OH – the Mayor leaned on support of regional planning commission to access resources and technical assistance to develop a regional plan. The Mayor also connected to a nonprofit to build housing. Though the community didn't have strong bonding (not many organizations) or bridging social capital (not a supportive village council), the Mayor's ability to lean on linking social capital (through the regional planning commission and nonprofit) led to improvement of housing in a couple of neighborhoods.

Mount Healthy, OH – The local business association partnered with the city to improve relationships between business and community members through events (bridging social capital). They've been able to raise funds to improve infrastructure and created an Economic Development Committee to respond business vacancies through an action plan. The resident beautification committee was created with a group of neighbors (bonding social capital) and there is Mount Health Alliance to support the local food pantry. The city administration worked with Cincinnati's public housing agency and a local nonprofit to improve housing conditions (linking social capital). These various social capitals have led to improved community development in many aspects.

Why does this matter

Building social capital between residents, local groups, and external nonprofits or resource and building relationships with the local municipal administration create strong opportunities to improve community development.

Questions to think about:

1. What types of social capital are in your community?
  - a. Bonding
  - b. Bridging
  - c. Linking
2. What groups or individuals are strong actors in the community to get connected to?
3. What resources do you want to bring into the community that can't be directly addressed by the Village because it requires some additional technical skills?
4. How can we use the project to improve the social capital in your community?

## Summary of Key Points from

# Suburban Boomtowns of North Texas – A New Model of Urban Growth

by J.H. Cullum Clark

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**Main Point:** For suburban areas to thrive, they need to play a role in the economy of the nearby metro/city area. This can be achieved by pro-growth policies, continued investments in people's quality of life, education and innovation, thoughtful community building, and diversity. These factors together help drive tax revenues which allow the municipality to invest more in the community.

The article explores this topic by reviewing quantitative data that showcases that the suburban communities are becoming popular through several case studies in Collin County, Texas.

Key Terms/Concepts:

**Alternative downtowns** – packed (dense or concentrated) areas that have multiple uses (which could include different types of businesses offering a variety of jobs and services, dining locations, it can include different types of housing, parks, etc)

**Community building** – opportunities to create a shared sense of identity in the town and opportunities for shared community decision making

**Continued investment in quality of life** – when municipalities spend money to improve people's experience so that they want to live and stay in town. This can include funding public spaces, parks, arts, music, food, transportation, infrastructure, and public safety. It considers building places and spaces that community members would enjoy and use and get to easily (walkable, instead of depending on driving).

**Density** – creating a place where people and goods can move relatively easily without too much time or too much distance, keeps the space manageable

**Diversity** – includes a variety of people across race, class, background, professional sector, etc

**Education & Innovation** – municipalities invest in education from preschool to twelfth grade as well as post-high school opportunities that can bring people to work towards careers.

**Pro-growth policies** - policies that welcome new housing and businesses (expansions or relocations). These policies work towards growth but are centered on community goals and can uplift historic points of interests while bringing in new development.

**Strong governance** – strong leader and municipal staff that are long term and manage finances well within the town and in the surrounding region because the region builds from one another.

Other Notes:

Some challenges to watch out for in this model include:

- Building enough infrastructure to adequately serve people, which means paying attention to density
- Building the right amount of infrastructure and keeping maintenance up to ensure tax dollars aren't wasted over time
- Destroying the environment in the process of development
- Fitting in with the major city's economy because if that fails, then the surrounding areas tend to fail as well
- Continued support for the policies either because of residents no longer desiring it or because needs aren't adequately met

Lessons for Other Cities:

- Increase all types of housing to continue affordability
- Focus on investing in education because families move to areas with good quality schools
- Focus on improving quality of life
- Create mixed-use areas that include housing, jobs, shops, food that is easy to get to
- Build community intentionally

Questions to think about:

1. Which of the above key concepts are already happening in your town? What is your town doing well?
2. In what ways could your town improve to better address the key concepts or lessons mentioned?