

Urban Policy in the Twenty-first Century: Legacies of the Johnson Administration

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Introduction

Lyndon Baines Johnson brought a dedication to eradicating poverty, particularly urban poverty, to his presidency.¹ With pressure from much of his political base—including Civil Rights leaders, labor unions, and big-city mayors—and with a large Democratic majority, Johnson passed a breathtaking array of social programs beginning in 1964. With the mission of creating the Great Society, Johnson and Congress enacted programs to reduce poverty and hunger, build better housing, improve education and urban infrastructure, and create jobs. Many of these programs had an explicit big-city focus. Others targeted poor people: Medicare and Medicaid brought greater health care and security to the elderly and the poor. In proposing these programs, Johnson built on the New Deal and expanded the social safety net.

Although most of the resources for these initiatives originated in the federal budget, Johnson wisely recognized the importance of enlisting the energies of state and local governments and community organizations. In August 1967, he said:

This job cannot be done in Washington alone. Every housing official, every mayor and every governor must vigorously enforce their building, health, and safety codes to the limit of the law. . . . Not even local officials, however, can change these conditions themselves. Unless private citizens become indignant at the treatment of their neighbors, unless individual citizens make justice for others a personal concern, poverty will profit those who exploit the poor.²

Johnson was concerned not only with the poor who lived in cities but also with cities themselves as engines of economic growth. In 1967, he formed a Task Force on the Cities and directed it to provide suggestions to reduce segregation and poverty in cities. The president wrote, “No one can doubt that much of the future of America hinges upon how we deal with the problems of our cities. Not only are our cities home for most Americans, they are also the nerve centers for our communications, transportation, and commerce.”²

¹ Importantly, Johnson’s goal of fighting poverty was not widely shared by the American public. According to public opinion polls at the time, only 9 percent wanted to end poverty (Newman and Jacobs 2008).

² Lyndon Johnson, Letter to the Task Force on the Cities, July 22, 1967.

Conflict abounded in this era. A growing sense of urban decay—high levels of concentrated unemployment and poverty, and the like—and urban rioting became all too common. The pressure on Johnson from minorities clashed with the views of Southern Democrats, the conservative wing of the party that opposed help for minorities and the poor. To succeed, Johnson had to marshal his considerable political skills to put together large majorities in both houses.

Despite the overarching successes of his legislation agenda, Johnson would certainly find that few of the Great Society initiatives had much longevity. Many of the programs were changed or dropped by subsequent administrations. Some were altered or terminated by LBJ during his time in office. In 1969, 13.7 percent of the population was in poverty, a figure that declined slightly a decade later. By 2007, the figure stood at 12.5 percent, largely unchanged over the past four decades (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2008). More than 40 years later, the promise of the Great Society to reduce poverty remains unfulfilled.

We will review Lyndon Johnson’s urban policies within the context of the 1960s’ political environment and urban conditions.

- What were LBJ’s major initiatives?
- Which succeeded and which did not?
- Importantly, what legacy did Johnson leave to America’s urban future?
- How did cities change, and what role did policies play in these changes?

We find that few of Johnson’s policies survived intact the conservative counter-revolution that began in the late 1970s and became full-blown in the Reagan era and later. Conservative political forces reduced federal resources for cities and especially for poverty alleviation, thereby reducing social spending—an approach known as “starving the beast.”³ Yet, despite attempts to tear down the Great Society, Johnson’s legacy—like LBJ himself—looms large. We provide some important lessons for urban policymakers from the experience of the Johnson years and find that federal roles in cities established during the Johnson era continue.

In conclusion, we draw some recommendations for President Barack Obama from the experiences discussed in the final section. Although Mr. Obama comes to office at a very different juncture in history—the economy is deeply distressed compared with the rapid growth of the Johnson era—many of the problems that Johnson faced continue to plague the nation. These include concentrated poverty and a shortage of affordable housing, among others. We lay out some of the lessons learned from the last 40 years of urban policy that might inform the Obama administration.

³ This term was used widely in conservative circles. David Stockman (1986) quotes an anonymous Reagan staff member using this term.

The Johnson Administration and Cities

Our Approach

We recognize the difficulties in defining a satisfactory framework for examining urban policy. Urban policies can be narrowly defined as federal policies whose purpose and effects are explicitly urban, such as federal aid to cities. But some federal policies not principally concerned with cities do, in fact, have substantial urban impacts (Glickman 1980).⁴ For instance, the nation's largest housing program, tax subsidies to homeowners, is an implicit or "stealth" policy that has substantial effects on cities (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). Similarly, policies to improve metropolitan transportation through highway construction also lead to suburban sprawl and the decline of central cities. Defense expenditures helped move much manufacturing to the South and West, known as the "Gun Belt." Military spending was more than national defense: it also had powerful spatial effects. We understand that policies such as social security have significant urban impacts because the elderly reside disproportionately in cities. These critically significant policy arenas are beyond the scope of this paper. Similarly, we will not discuss landmark civil- and voting-rights legislation in detail, even though these had significant impacts on urban residents.

We also recognize that urban policy debates occur in the context of a powerful anti-urban bias dating from the Revolution. Thomas Jefferson famously spoke of the virtues of a rural society, and the United States Constitution makes no mention of cities or local governments. The emergence of the industrial city in the early 20th century contributed to anti-immigration legislation. Another source of opposition to urban policy is the belief that free markets produce the best social outcomes. In particular, the Tiebout application of the public choice doctrine argues that allowing, or even encouraging, people to relocate to those local government jurisdictions with an array of public services consistent with their preferences will maximize social outcomes. Thus, decisions on the provision of local services should be entirely the responsibility of local governments and their citizens (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). Despite significant opposition to the federal government's involvement in cities, federal actions that affect cities are common although, as we will show, often weak.

Given the difficulties of defining and sorting out the effects of direct urban programs from those that indirectly affect our cities and the wide range of LBJ's policy initiatives, we aggregate urban-oriented policies and programs into three categories:

1. Urban infrastructure and aid to cities

⁴ For example, tax subsidies for mortgage interest payments are far larger than what HUD spends on affordable housing, but the former go to people living in wealthy suburbs; they are generally not considered "housing" programs even though they have far more impact on the housing stock than HUD's efforts. Similarly, military spending has had immense impacts on the urban development of the South and Southwest—the so-called "Gun Belt" (Markusen et al. 1991).

2. Human capital programs (education and job training)
3. Family income support, community development, and housing

Policies and programs in each category involve substantial federal funding and differ from the other categories in terms of (1) policy objectives, (2) mechanisms of service provision, and (3) evolution of the federal role. The changing nature of federalism and intergovernmental relations in each of these policy arenas is an important backdrop to the study. After Johnson, urban policy was largely devolved to states and localities.

Federal Policies and Cities before Johnson

Johnson's initiatives extended and amplified an activist federal role in urban affairs established during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. The Great Depression had created a context in which a substantially larger federal role would receive Congressional approval, but the specific approach reflected the fact that the United States was well on its way to becoming an urban, industrial society. The wide range of social policy initiatives—social welfare (especially Aid to Families with Dependent Children), Social Security, assistance to working-age poor, public health, and labor laws, among others—had become elements of the country's national public agenda and social safety net, often first addressed by some state governments and eventually adopted by the federal government.

Many of the FDR initiatives attempted to revive the economy by building infrastructure and creating labor-intensive public works—new roles for the federal government (Table 1). Given their urban impacts, we observe the emergence of new urban policy systems and new sets of intergovernmental relations involving federal, state and local governments (Kleinberg 1995). The Public Works Administration (PWA) (1933) funded highways, bridges, buildings and other infrastructure with heretofore rarely observed cooperation between federal, state and local governments in program implementation. The Works Progress Administration (1935) utilized direct employment programs, including labor-intensive urban projects, employing about 2.3 million individuals each year (Kleinberg 1995, 101). FDR pursued an aggressive approach to housing. The reform of the banking system encouraged the creation of home loan banks (savings and loans, or S&L institutions) to mobilize capital for affordable home mortgage loans, thereby encouraging homeownership (Hays 1995; Kleinberg 1995, 101–10; Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom 2004). Subsidized public housing, involving initially the PWA and later the Federal Housing Administration (1934) and United States Housing Authority (1937), was initiated. A significant expansion of public housing and revitalization of declining inner cities occurred under the Housing Act of 1949. Urban Renewal funds were transferred to local government agencies for slum clearance, housing construction, and economic development. In these efforts, we witnessed two distinct policy objectives that will become a continuing source of political conflict in the decades that follow: (1) providing assistance to lower-income urban populations, and (2)

promoting economic development through infrastructure investment and commercial redevelopment.

**Table 1. Urban Policies and Programs:
Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower Administrations**

Direct Urban Aid and Infrastructure	Human Capital and Training	Income Support, Community Development, and Housing
Public Works; Interstate Highway System; Urban Renewal	Not considered federal issues (important labor relations legislation, but no human capital programs)	Public-sector employment (FDR); promotion of homeownership; Public Housing; Aid to Dependent Children; Unemployment Compensation

The policies adopted during the Eisenhower administration represented a significant reorientation of federal policy toward cities, from redistributive policies and focus on urban populations to urban renewal and commercial redevelopment. The aversion to government intervention and preference for free markets reflected Eisenhower's policy agenda but also captured Congressional resistance to the New Deal from both Southern Democrats and Republicans (Hays 1995; Mollenkopf 1983). Criticism from residents and small businesses displaced by urban renewal resulted in a provision of the Housing Act of 1954 that encouraged citizen participation in urban renewal projects, a practice that would become institutionalized in the urban legislation of the 1960s and later. Federal government investments in infrastructure and housing policy tilted heavily toward suburban development. Intervention in housing markets was weighted toward homeownership, through the Veterans Administration and the FHA, and a preexisting tax credit for interest payments on home mortgage loans facilitated new housing construction. It should also be understood that the FHA and other federal agencies redlined many neighborhoods in order to prevent integration and to placate home builders who had lobbied heavily with the agency. Revisions to urban renewal, observed in the 1954 creation of the Urban Renewal Administration, emphasized commercial development and less focus on public housing (Dreier, Swanstrom, and Mollenkopf 2004).

The National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956 created a joint federal-state-funded program, reshaping the New Deal highway program to one administered through state governments and providing greater benefit to rural states (Kleinberg 1995; Mollenkopf 1983).⁵ However, this system was important to cities, especially in places like Atlanta and other developing cities in the New South, which became more fully integrated with other regions of the county. The National Highway System helped provide better access between regions and between cities and suburbs. In large part, the system helped decentralize metropolitan regions and aided suburban development.

⁵ The rationale for the Interstate Highway System was in part as an element of national defense system. It was formally known as the "Interstate and Defense Highways" and gained considerable political support during the height of the Cold War in 1956. It is funded by fuel taxes.

Advocates of central cities decried these new highways as the primary cause of the abandonment of urban cores and as a facilitator of “white flight.”

At the start of the Roosevelt Administration, the United States was well on its way to becoming an urban, industrial society. Thirty years later, at the conclusion of the Eisenhower presidency, a new pattern of urban geography had emerged, that of suburbanization and declining central cities. The prosperity of the post–World War II era and rising family incomes led to changing patterns of housing consumption; widespread use of the automobile and an array of federal policies further encouraged suburbanization. This pattern was reinforced by public school desegregation following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and redlining practices in the real estate industry (Hays 1995; Jackson 1985). The ability of suburban areas to form separate local government jurisdictions, including independent school districts, permitted a new form of educational segregation that reinforced metropolitan-level racial housing segregation previously confined to cities. In addition, federal housing policies encouraged suburbanization and racial segregation in declining central cities (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). In this context of urban change, the JFK-LBJ ticket, committed to renewing the income security agenda of the New Deal, was elected in 1960.

Urban Challenge in the 1960s

Lyndon Johnson’s initial urban policy proposals occurred within the context of a growing economy, which allowed him to propose policies for redistributing the economy’s bounty and helping the poor. In fact, the Johnson era came in the middle of one of the nation’s most vibrant economic booms: between 1948 and 1973, real family incomes grew by 3 percent a year, and poverty rates declined through the mid-1970s. As Goodwin (1976, 187) writes, coming to power in the early 1960s, Lyndon Johnson believed that so long “as the economic pie continues to grow, there will be few disputes about its distribution among labor, business, and other groups. But as soon as it begins to slow down, the conflict over who gets what begins.” Johnson was soon confronted with this problem, as Vietnam War expenditures began to compete with domestic programs in the mid-1960s. Longer term, however, major transformations in the economy also created challenges to his dream of better cities and less poverty. As the economy was transformed, so too was the spatial distribution of jobs and population.

The 1960s ushered in a revolutionary change in cities and attitudes toward them. The combined effects of the suburbanization of the white population and economic restructuring had become clear. Poverty increasingly affected women and children. Riots in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles in 1965, Cleveland and Chicago in 1966, and in more than 60 cities in 1967 reveal the depth of racial tensions. Racial riots were by no means unique to the 1960s, but growth of ghetto populations and the sharply declining economic prospects for inner-city residents during a period of robust national economic growth provided the context that fostered urban violence.

The Johnson Administration (and the Kennedy Legacy)

John F. Kennedy's New Frontier addressed urban poverty through proposals for job creation and manpower training for the unemployed. Kennedy also attacked the problems of housing in the inner city through the expansion of public housing programs and a new subsidy program targeted to rental housing for low-income families (Hays 1995). After assuming the presidency following Kennedy's assassination and winning the presidency in his own right in November 1964, Johnson moved quickly and ambitiously on his social agenda, including a significant focus on the urban poor (Dallek 1998). LBJ led a transformation in the federal government, including reforming the federal bureaucracy to align with the needs of a modern industrial society and implementing the Great Society programs. His view of the federal government's role was clear. He stated in a 1966 message to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

The only legitimate function of government is to help people. Your job is not just to run an efficient office. Your real job is to enrich the lives of the two out of three Americans who now live in our overcrowded cities. You know that you are the people who must carry our cities from the dark ages of stagnation and neglect into the bright sunshine of the twenty-first century.... You have not only to plan for the future, but also to make up for the neglect and the failures of more than 50 years.⁶

Relying heavily on external and interagency task forces,⁷ Johnson placed the issues of cities on the national policy agenda and produced an extraordinary litany of federal legislation, as we describe in the following section organized around our three categories of urban policy (Table 2).

Table 2. Urban Policies and Programs: Johnson Administration

Direct Urban Aid and Infrastructure	Human Capital and Training	Income Support, Community Development, and Housing
Urban Mass Transit Administration; Creation of Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development; Economic Development Administration; Water and Wastewater Grants	Head Start; Neighborhood Youth Corps; Job Corps; Upward Bound; Manpower and Development and Training Act; Public Employment Program; Work Incentive Program; Aid to Schools with High Student Poverty (Title I); Teacher Corps; Immigration Act of 1965	Office of Economic Opportunity; Community Action Program; Model Cities; Special Impact Program (CDC Funding); Aid to Families with Dependent Children; VISTA; FHA to support lower income families; Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae); Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA, or Fannie Mae] for Low-Income Housing; Expansion of Public

⁶ Johnson's speech to HUD employees on the first anniversary of the Department's creation, November 9, 1966.

⁷ Johnson made extensive use of external (eight between 1964 and 1967) and interagency (17 between 1965 and 1968) task forces to analyze issues and to develop policy recommendations on urban matters.

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		Housing; Housing Rental Support; Fair Housing Act; National Housing Act; Expansion of Food Stamps
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Urban Infrastructure and Aid to Cities

Funding of urban infrastructure by the federal government began with the New Deal. Despite the construction of the Interstate Highway System (envisioned in 1938, and becoming a reality under Eisenhower as the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways), another approach was needed to solve urban transportation problems. The Interstate system was effective in moving traffic into and out of cities and on loops around cities; it was less successful in moving people within center-city areas with their relatively high urban densities. The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 provided \$375 million for large-scale urban public or private rail projects and created the Urban Mass Transit Administration. Adopting the financing program of the Interstate Highway System, federal funds had to be matched by cities and states. At LBJ's request, Congress created the Department of Transportation in 1966, reflecting the importance of transportation to the national economy. Although the funding of urban transit programs did not gain the sustained support enjoyed by highway programs in the decades to follow, they did become permanent features of federal efforts in the nation's cities. The Johnson administration also expanded infrastructure investment through the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, creating the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to fund projects in economically distressed communities. The mission of the agency, which addressed both rural and urban communities, was to generate employment, retain existing jobs, and stimulate industrial and commercial growth.

The Johnson administration expanded another federal role in the funding of urban infrastructure when it resolved a Congressional stalemate on water policy. The problems of water pollution, resulting from both industrial wastes and urban water issues (waste treatment and runoff) had grown substantially in preceding decades. Industrialists, public health specialists, conservationists, and municipal authorities brought different interests and perspectives (Rohrer 1970). Attempts to encourage federal involvement in the 1950s, through grants to localities for water systems and water quality standards, were largely unsuccessful due to the inability to gain Congressional agreement. LBJ's administration, through the Water Quality Act of 1965 and Clean Water Restoration Act of 1966, established an important presence in the funding of water systems through matching grants. This federal role in metropolitan areas was particularly important, given the challenges of multi-jurisdictional collaboration in water supply and river systems.

Urban crime emerged as a major challenge in 1966–67, given even more prominence by the urban riots. Complicating Johnson's ability to mobilize federal resources in this area was his opponents' inference that the riots were the result of his urban policies (Dallek 1998). Johnson's 1966 proposal, the Safe Streets and Crime Control Act, was opposed by both conservative and liberal forces in Congress and became enmeshed in debates of wire-tapping and a growing federal deficit caused in part by the financing of the war in Vietnam. Although Johnson failed to secure Congressional approval, he introduced a new form of federal aid to cities that would be pursued in later administrations (see below).

Human Capital

The War on Poverty framed the question of poverty alleviation in a unique way. Rather than an intractable social condition, Johnson believed that it was the obligation of the government to help lift individuals from such conditions and give them the education and skills needed for self-sufficiency. Despite rapid economic growth and full employment in the 1960s, poverty rates increased, leading to a policy focus on increasing the ability of individuals to gain productive employment (Kleinberg 1995). This perspective translated into a variety of programs designed to enhance what we now call “human capital,” through basic education, job training, and work experience.

The Great Society included several age-specific programs: Head Start (for pre-school children), Neighborhood Youth Corps, Job Corps (teenagers) and Upward Bound (college preparation). These programs were implemented through categorical grants and targeted to specific disadvantaged populations. The Head Start program, in particular, gathered broad support, both political and from education specialists; it continues to this day. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, another major piece of legislation associated with these efforts, provided significant federal funds to support education in areas with large shares of disadvantaged children.

For adults, especially those with limited job skills, Johnson proposed employment and training programs for individuals being displaced by automation, later consolidated under the Department of Labor’s Manpower Administration. Even though these efforts were relatively modest and not adequately linked to employment opportunities (a key concern in later legislative reforms), job training became a new federal government role.

Another important initiative, one with long-lasting impacts, was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. It abolished racist immigration curbs passed in 1924, which limited immigration mainly to people from European nations. The 1965 bill opened immigration to people from the Eastern Hemisphere and allowed immigrants for purposes of family reunification. Johnson (1965), in signing the bill, said “Those who can contribute most to this country—to its growth, to its strength, to its spirit—will be the first that are admitted to this land.” This act led to far more diversity in cities, especially “gateway” cities like Los Angeles and New York, which became magnets for new immigrants. It fundamentally changed the demographic profile of the country (Singer 2004).

Income Support, Community Development (CD), Housing

To address urban poverty, a critical element of the War on Poverty, the Johnson administration adopted multiple strategies. Some programs were targeted to individuals, including a major expansion of income security programs and social services programs, such as food stamps, supplemental social security, indexing of social security, and Medicaid and Medicare (Katz 1989). Given that poverty populations were substantially urban, these programs tended to have particularly large effects in cities. A long debate about welfare eligibility and the potential for federal policy to indirectly encourage out-

of-wedlock children led to changes in the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program, including its renaming in 1962 to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The 1967 Work Incentive Program (WIN) introduced the expectation that mothers who participated in welfare programs would also enter the labor force, marking a change in the public attitude toward welfare recipients in job training assistance.

The Great Society programs broke with past initiatives in that the federal government became directly involved in neighborhood social service provision. Further, low-income, inner-city residents participated in the design and governance of these programs. Though this represented new federal roles and innovation in policy implementation, important elements of the programs were drawn from experiences of nongovernmental community-based organizations. By the 1960s, new initiatives such as the Gray Areas Program and Mobilization for Youth (addressing problems of youth gangs in New York City's Lower East Side) provided innovative neighborhood-based models (Weismann 1969; Halpern 1995).

Based on earlier experimentation with forms of development in poor communities (Halpern 1995; Kleinberg 1995), the Community Action Program (CAP) adopted an innovative form of policy implementation. It sought partnerships with disadvantaged communities so that these communities could act on their own behalf. Under the "maximum feasible participation" provision of the OEO Act and changes in local political processes resulting from the Voting Rights Act of 1965, low-income, inner-city residents had the opportunity to become actively involved in the design and implementation of services (Howard, Lipsky, and Marshall 1994). Importantly, the Voting Rights Act led to greater minority participation and the election of ethnic and racial minority mayors, council members and state officials (Sampson 2004).

Substantial resistance to CAP, not the least from mayors who feared loss of political power, forced a reformulation of the program design for federal assistance to disadvantaged communities. In the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (more commonly referred to as the Model Cities Act), federal assistance was restructured, giving local governments more control over program implementation, including the extension of program focus to urban redevelopment and weakening citizen participation requirements (Howard, Lipsky, and Marshall 1994). Politically, the Model Cities effort reflected the practical accommodation to local government resistance to political mobilization of disadvantaged communities, as well as the largely unsuccessful intergovernmental framework of CAP.

The Johnson administration adopted another idea—community economic development—created outside of government purview (Halpern 1995, chapter 4). The concept dates to rural cooperatives and African American economic strategies adopted in the context of racial segregation, especially based on the ideas of Booker T. Washington. Community economic development attempts to mobilize capital and markets in local, low-income communities. In contrast to social assistance and human capital efforts of the Great Society, support was provided to community development corporations (CDCs) to

directly create economic activity, with multiplier effects that would be realized in poor neighborhoods. Emerging as a result of nongovernmental efforts in the late 1950s, CDCs were formed in Chicago, Philadelphia, Newark and Cleveland. The federal government extended support to this emerging field in the Special Impact Program (SIP), under Title 1-D of the Economic Opportunity Act and administered by the OEO. The SIP was of modest size, with expenditures focused on only relatively few CDCs (Vidal and Keating 2004). Nevertheless, federal government support for CDCs was maintained in following administrations, and these types of efforts substantially expanded and diversified, as discussed below.

Johnson took aggressive action on housing needs of low-income families. Following reports from several task forces, he proposed (and Congress approved in 1965) the Department of Housing and Urban Development Act. Building upon some of the Kennedy administration initiatives (Hays 1995), he expanded the provision of public housing, encouraged FHA to expand support for homeownership to lower-income individuals, and substantially expanded rental assistance programs for low-income housing. To complement the federal institutional structure for support of middle-class housing created in the 1930s, the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) was privatized. Its functions were transferred to the newly created Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae) in 1968, thereby expanding the availability of mortgage funds for moderate-income families through government-guaranteed, mortgage-backed securities. Early on, it became evident that the focus would be on housing and not on broader issues of urban development (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004).

The Housing Act of 1968 called for “a decent home and living environment for every American family,” capturing one of Johnson’s most ambitious goals (Hays 1995, 107). The Act called for the rehabilitation or construction of 26 million housing units, including six million for low- and moderate-income families. In addition, the Act prohibited racial discrimination in housing markets. It also required that equal numbers of any low- and moderate-income units demolished had to be replaced, thereby overturning the highly criticized practice of displacing low-income residents from so-called blighted areas for purposes of commercial revitalization (Hays 1995). The many efforts of the Johnson administration to expand support for housing to low-income populations met substantial resistance on several fronts: the housing industry voiced concern about housing-market disruptions; others feared that undeserving families would gain access to housing services subsidized by the public sector.

Urban Policy after LBJ

The Changing Political and Economic Context for Cities

Johnson came to power in an unusual period of political and economic history. Economic growth was strong, liberal forces were at their height of power, and there were grave concerns about the future of cities. These forces ebbed toward the end of

Johnson's administration and, by end of the 1970s, three decades of growth and shared prosperity ended. Productivity growth slowed after the mid-1970s, and income gains fell sharply, especially for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. Income inequality, which had narrowed substantially after World War II, expanded greatly. Between 1947 and 1973, real income growth of the bottom fifth of families rose a bit faster (116 percent) than that of the top fifth (85 percent). However, real growth of the bottom fifth dropped precipitously between 1973 and 2000, to only 12 percent; at the same time, the richest fifth got 67 percent more income. This was true not only for poor people, but for the middle class as well.⁸ At the beginning of the 21st century, the top 1 percent of families takes in about 20 percent of income—roughly, what it did in the Gilded Age of one hundred years ago, and about twice what it captured in the 1960s.

So, the relatively equal sharing of productivity growth during Johnson's administration, as reflected in changes in income distribution, vanished soon thereafter. Hacker and Jacobs (2008) also demonstrate that families have ridden an economic roller coaster—large ups and downs in their incomes from year to year. Not only have working families made meager economic progress, but the disparity in incomes changed far more than it did in earlier decades. Again, the goals of social policies that sought to reduce instability of the 1960s were thwarted by economic change in later years.

As the economy restructured, so did American cities: suburbanization increased, and interregional shifts to the Sun Belt continued. In addition, technological change reshaped the business environment. In particular, electronic and telecommunication advances allowed firms to disperse worldwide; at the same time, there were immense increases in international trade and direct foreign investment. The United States lost considerable manufacturing employment overseas, which negatively affected many Rust Belt cities. These economic changes were exacerbated by changes such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which liberalized international trade, often at the expense of workers and cities in the Rust Belt. At the same time, migration to the Sun Belt and the growth of regional financial services helped cities in that region grow. Another facet of America's deindustrialization was the substantial increase in low-wage retail trade and service jobs—many of which do not pay a living wage or carry benefits.

Simultaneously, central cities continued to hollow out, as highway construction, mortgage subsidies, and many other factors propelled households and jobs from central cities to the suburbs and, later, the exurbs (Glickman, Lahr, and Wyly 1996; Wyly, Glickman, and Lahr 1998; Garreau 1992; Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom 2004).⁹ Unemployment became more concentrated in blue-collar, inner-city neighborhoods (Thoma 2008), and job growth in cities trailed that in the suburbs (Brennan and Hill 1999; Glaeser, Kahn, and Chu 2001). Sprawl meant a spatial mismatch of jobs for many

⁸ The increase in inequality can also be seen in the sharp rise in the Gini coefficient and other statistical measures beginning in the early 1970s.

⁹ Leichenko (2001) shows that the population ratio of central cities to suburbs declined from 0.43 (1970) to 0.35. That ratio declined further in the 21st century. Suburban employment growth brought forth population shifts as people followed jobs outwardly within metropolitan areas.

low-income, low-educated workers, especially minorities (Kain 1968). The spatial reconfiguration of cities that continued and reinforced long-standing patterns exacerbated problems of poverty and unemployment. Urban poverty, which had declined in the 1960s and 1970s, increased significantly in the 1980s, declined again in the 1990s, but increased thereafter (Jargowsky 2003). Further, central city poverty rates remain more than twice those in the suburbs.

In the 1980s and later, many inner suburbs began to see more poverty (Berube and Kneebone 2008), deteriorating housing, and crime that deconcentrated along with the population. Although still more of a problem in central cities, these historically urban indicators of decline became a broader problem away from the cores of metropolitan areas. The notion of “distressed cities” changed: no longer could policymakers refer to poverty as solely a central city issue.¹⁰

Since the Johnson administration, three Republicans and two Democrats have held the presidency. Each president adopted distinctive approaches to urban affairs, influenced in part by partisan and electoral considerations as well as economic conditions (Mollenkopf 1983). Democratic presidential candidates had typically drawn higher support from urban areas and Republicans from suburban jurisdictions, tending to favor Republicans in terms of overall votes.¹¹ But Barack Obama’s election in 2008 suggests suburban areas may be more competitive in the future. Patterns of spatial benefits consistent with the traditional partisan voting can be identified in federal policies that must incorporate the priorities and interests of both the President and Congress (Caraley 1976).

When Richard Nixon assumed the presidency in 1969, considerable Congressional interest in urban programs generated during the Johnson administration remained. The Urban Growth and New Communities Development Act of 1970 was adopted after Richard Nixon took office (Wolman and Agius 1996). In 1977, amendments to the legislation required the development of a national urban policy. Sensitive to the national concern over urban poverty, Nixon created the Council of Urban Affairs, consisting of the eight secretaries of domestic policy agencies, and appointed Patrick Moynihan (later a Democratic senator for New York) to serve as executive secretary (Orlebeke 1990). Although concern with urban affairs substantially faded by the time of Nixon’s resignation, he left an important legacy for a more decentralized urban policy system—labeled “The New Federalism”—by replacing categorical programs with block grant programs and expanding the roles of state and local governments. This shift was beneficial to Nixon’s suburban, Republican political base and detrimental to central cities dominated by Democrats.

Gerald Ford created the Cabinet Committee of Urban Development and Neighborhood Revitalization, led by the HUD Secretary, and his “targeted New Federalism” placed a

¹⁰ We recognize that rural areas had higher rates of poverty than metropolitan areas; our discussion here is limited to non-rural areas.

¹¹ In 2004, Gore beat Bush in urban areas by 61 percent to 35 percent, but urban voters comprised only 29 percent of the electorate (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004, 146).

priority on declining urban areas. As a former governor, Jimmy Carter maintained Ford's interest in urban affairs, but he was also concerned with intergovernmental relations. His "New Partnership" argued for state and local governments being full partners in the federal government's initiatives in cities (Schambra 1990). He created a cabinet-level Urban and Regional Policy Group: his administration presented a formal urban policy in 1978, the first and last of its kind (James 1995; Orlebeke 1990). Midway in his administration, facing a declining economy, Carter largely abandoned cities as a focus of policy. This marked the beginning of the end of urban policy's importance.

Ronald Reagan put an end to urban policy. Although biannual reports had been presented by presidential administrations since 1972, they represented little more than executive branch compliance with the Congressional mandate (Eisinger 1985; Orlebeke 1990). Reagan's 1982 *Urban Policy Report* stated that targeted urban programs were ineffective and, as a matter of principle, urban matters were the responsibility of state and local governments. Along with Reagan, many members of Congress, conservative think tanks, and the business community argued that urban policy was counterproductive. The private sector, they maintained, could solve problems of poverty and poor housing without government intervention: urban poverty could best be remedied by promoting a healthy national economy. This notion was encapsulated in the expression that "a rising tide will lift all boats."

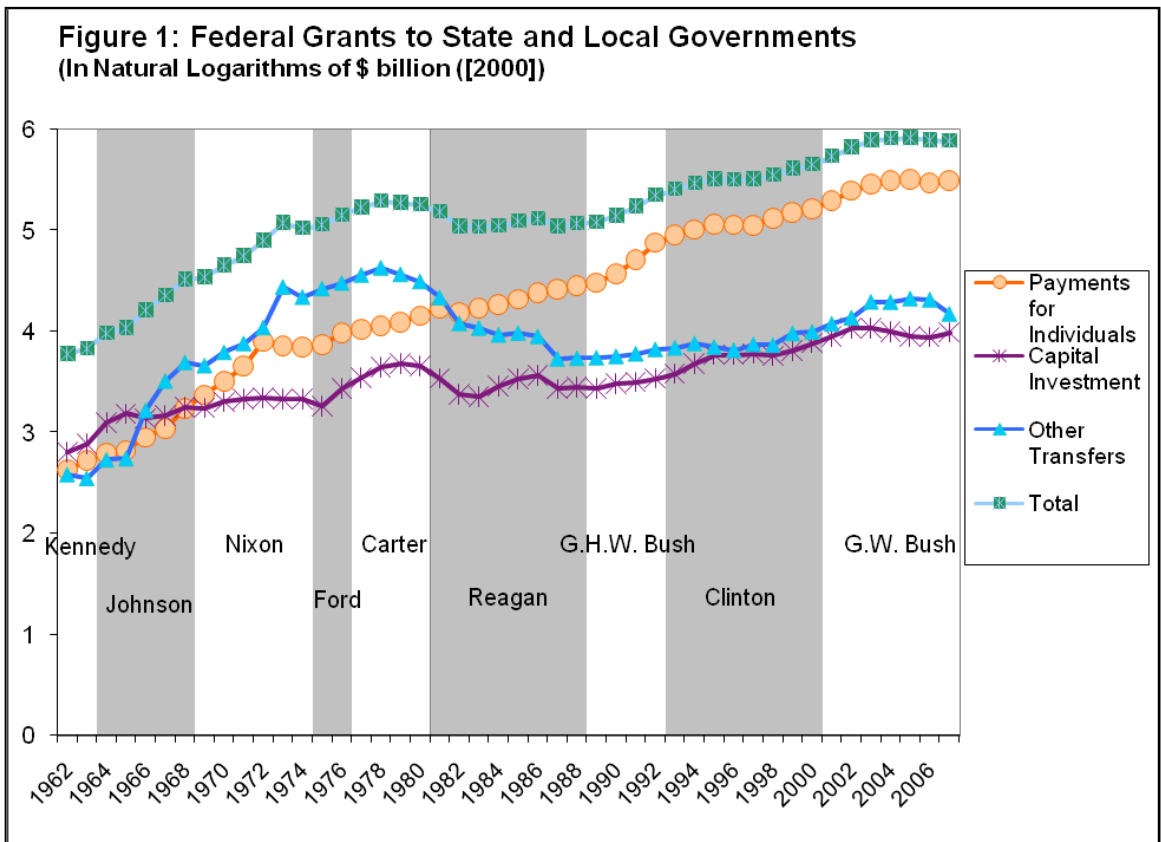
Reagan slashed urban programs, as we discuss below. The presidential campaign of George H.W. Bush promised a "kinder, gentler nation," but once in office, his so-called New War on Poverty (Rich 1993) sharply cut federal funding. The Republican-controlled Congress, in the mid-1990s, attempted (unsuccessfully) to eliminate HUD. Soon after taking office, President Clinton proposed legislation for a stimulus package with several urban elements (Rich 1993), but Congress did not approve it, and the administration's urban policy agenda was modest. After obtaining a Congressional majority, Republicans tried once again to dismantle HUD. George W. Bush's administration reaffirmed the position that the federal government should have no formal role in urban policy and proceeded to cut urban programs further.

Programs and Funding

Given this broad characterization of the economic and political context of urban policy under various presidential administrations, we now move to an empirical assessment, relying on both federal spending and programmatic efforts affecting cities. Transfers of funds to state and local governments provide an initial measure (though imperfect) of the federal government's involvement in cities and its use of state and local governments to implement federal policy. The major increase in transfers to state and local government during the Johnson era was followed by substantial increases during the Nixon years, through 1972 (Figure 1; all figures are in natural logarithms of constant dollars in order to capture relative rates of increased spending).¹² The Nixon administration not only

¹² The use of the natural logarithms in presenting federal expenditures in Figure 1 and the graphs that follow is intended to provide a visual representation of the rates of change in funding levels. Given that the level of funding in the later

reformed and consolidated federal initiatives but also expanded funding. The rate of increase slowed in the late Nixon/Ford though Carter periods and a precipitous drop, especially in capital investments and other transfers, occurred under Reagan. Transfers to individuals, however, continued to rise from 1972 until 2005. Federal support for capital investments by cities and states has remained essentially unchanged since the early 1980s, thus producing a tilt toward people-based over place-based policies. In the following sections, this general pattern will be disaggregated into our three primary policy categories and major programmatic initiatives identified (Table 3).



Source: Congressional Budget Office; Table W-8. Total Federal Spending for Infrastructure, 1956-2006.

years is magnitudes larger than in the early years of the time series, presenting the data graphically in terms of dollars—even dollars per capita—precludes an effective characterization of rates of change. A steep positive slope measured by natural logarithms indicates rapid increase in funding, whereas a flat curve represents minimal change in funding level.

Table 3. Urban Policies and Programs, 1972-2007

Direct Urban Aid and Infrastructure	Human Capital and Training	Income Support, Community Development, and Housing
	<i>Nixon/Ford</i>	
General Revenue Sharing; Increased Benefit to Suburbs; Aid to NYC (Ford); Environmental Impact Statements; Water and Air Quality	Comprehensive Employment Training Act (Consolidation of LBJ's programs)	Community Development Block Grant; Reform of Model Cities; Reduced Income Support; No Targeting of the Poor; Housing Assistance Plans; Black Entrepreneurship; Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC); Adopted-Limited Scale; Section 8 Housing Vouchers
	<i>Carter</i>	
Urban Development Action Grants; Aid to Distressed Cities	Expansion of CETA and Public Sector Employment, Youth Employment and Training Programs; Creation of Department of Education	Expansion of public service jobs
	<i>Reagan</i>	
Ending of General Revenue Sharing and cuts in UDAG and mass transit; Superfund	Job Training Partnership Act	Economic Recovery Program (expected to reduce urban poverty); Cuts for CDBG and housing; Expansion in EITC
	<i>G.H.W. Bush</i>	
Reform of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act)	Teach for America (NGO-1990); School Choice	Expansion of Housing Vouchers; Public Housing Reform; Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategies; Community Policing
	<i>Clinton</i>	
Further Reform of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (Transportation Equity Act)	Accountability Measures for Federal Transfers to Schools (IASA); Workforce Investment Act (repealed JTPA)	Enterprise Zone/Enterprise Community; AmeriCorps and Corporation for National and Community Service; Welfare Reform (TANF); Expanded EITC; Public Housing Reform; Moving to Opportunity
	<i>G.W. Bush</i>	
Further Reform of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act)	No Child Left Behind	Faith-Based Initiatives for Community Services; Expansion in EITC

Urban Infrastructure and Aid to Cities

In expanding federal support for cities, Nixon employed a substantially different method of implementation than that of the LBJ period. Under general revenue sharing, federal transfers to state and local governments were relatively unrestricted, and the level of funding was significantly increased (see Figure 1). Soon after assuming the presidency

following Nixon's resignation in 1974, Ford faced a new urban problem: the looming prospect of bankruptcy in New York City (Orlebeke 1990). Urban decline and fiscal instability became the principal challenges of the day. The emergency loan that the federal government provided to New York City did not lead to a "run on the federal government" by other cities in fiscal distress, as some had feared (Orlebeke 1990; Congressional Research Office 2003).¹³ Another programmatic innovation, the Urban Development Action Grant, appeared during the Carter administration. The UDAG program provided flexible private-public partnerships in development projects in severely distressed communities (Druessi and Leahy 2000). But support for these urban policies ended with the Reagan administration (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). Reagan believed that unfettered markets devoid of government regulations on business investment decisions would resolve the problem of spatial differences in growth, even if it meant the downsizing of some cities and substantial migration—including interregional migration—of workers and families.

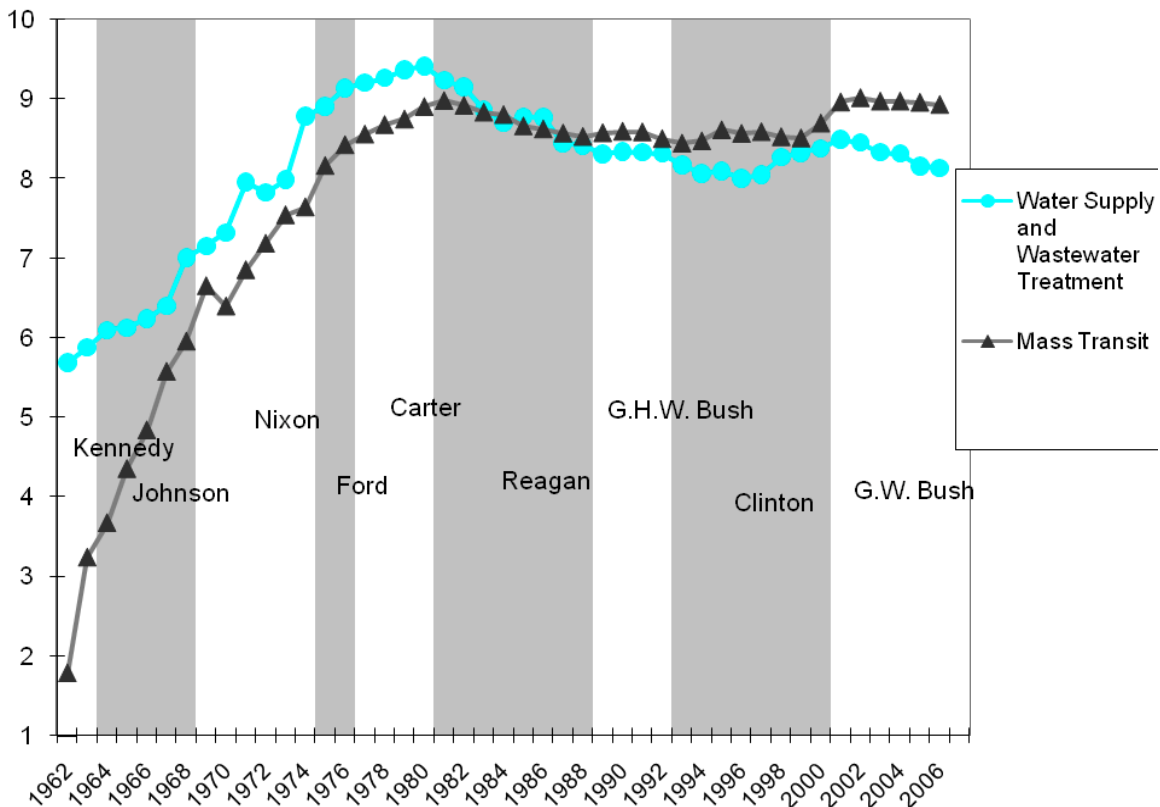
Federal expenditures on mass transit systems, initiated during the Johnson Administration, continued to increase through the mid-1970s (Figure 2) but stagnated through the remainder of the period under study. Although funding did not substantially increase, other policy initiatives proved helpful to cities and metropolitan areas. Extensive collaboration among local policy actors through metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) around transportation planning emerged under federal mandates. The consolidation of funding for highway and mass transit systems provided local decision-makers discretion over the types of intermodal transportation investments to be made.

The environmental issues faced by cities had become a concern during the LBJ period, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), signed into law by Nixon, introduced environmental impact statements that continue to be used today. Other important environmental legislation followed soon thereafter, including national standards of particular relevance to urban areas. Spending on water and wastewater systems continued to expand until the mid-1970s (see Figure 2). The 1970s' crisis at Love Canal (a toxic waste site in a residential neighborhood near Niagara Falls) and its threat to public health led to the creation of the so-called Superfund sites. The program was intended to protect the health of individuals from abandoned industrial sites with high levels of toxic waste, many of which were urban industrial sites. But again, a Reagan administration hostile to these policies constrained funding and relaxed regulatory requirements. Thereafter, promotion of regulatory relief from environmental regulations became part of the national discourse. Nevertheless, this set of programs concerned with water supply, water and air quality, and remediation of hazardous sites, adopted over a 15-year period, represented a new albeit highly contested federal role in cities.

¹³ Almost 30 years later and again in response to an emergency, another Republican president would provide very substantial support to New York City following the attack on the World Trade Center (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004, 149).

This overview reveals a robust federal government expanding its role in the provision of urban infrastructure and protection of environmental quality in the 1960s and 1970s. But a national consensus around the appropriate federal roles in this policy arena faded as the 20th century ended. Initiatives to provide aid to cities have come and gone, such as General Revenue Sharing. A multitude of approaches to urban development, including urban revitalization, brownfield remediation efforts, and enterprise zones have been tested. Today, urban infrastructure investment relies largely on local governments to raise capital. Even when federal funding is available, as in urban transportation or water systems, matching local funds are the norm.

Fig 2. Urban Infrastructure
(In Natural Logarithms of \$ million [2000])



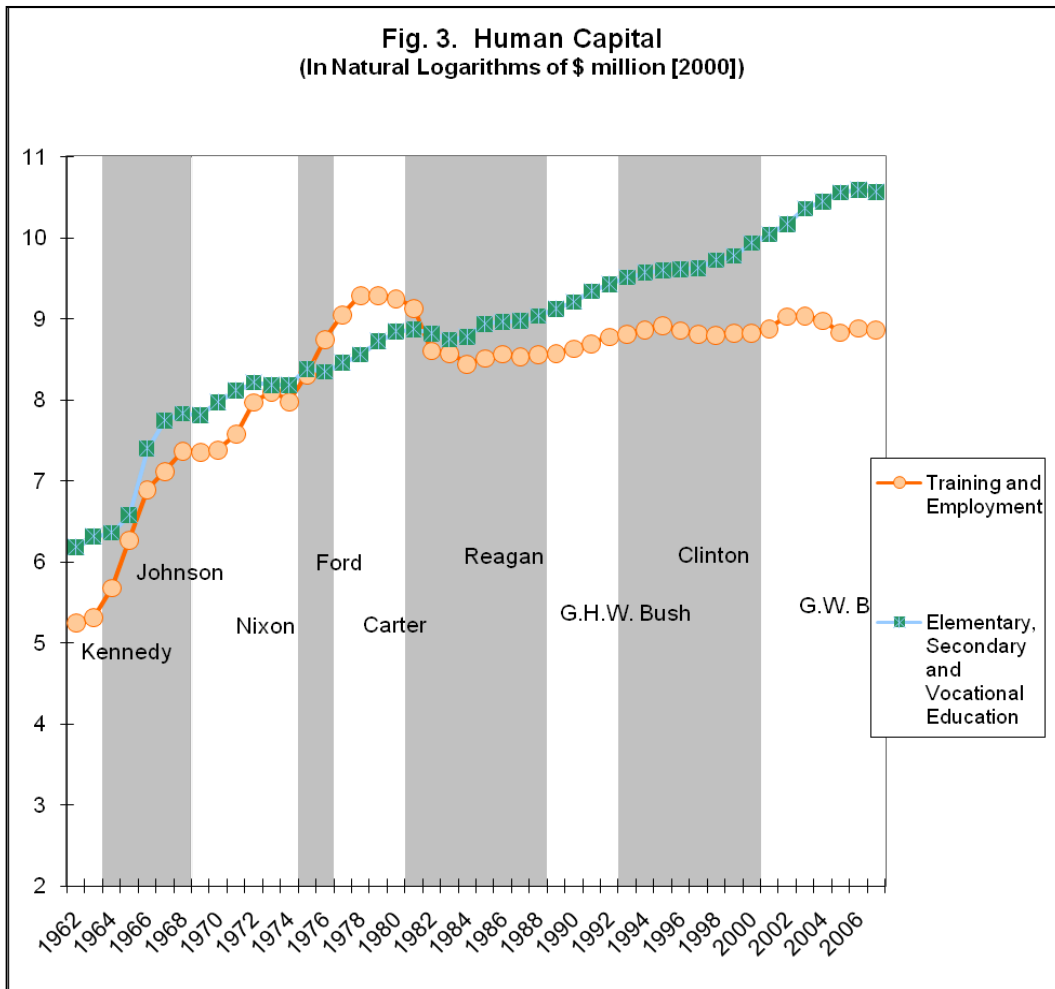
The stagnation in federal funding of urban infrastructure occurred during a period of underinvestment in national infrastructure. In the 1980s, an analysis of the quality of the U.S. infrastructure system generated a great deal of national attention and concern (Choate and Walter 1983). Following the catastrophic failure of infrastructure during Hurricane Katrina and the August 2007 collapse of the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis, the Society of Civil Engineers estimated that \$1.6 trillion in investments is needed to resolve

infrastructure deficits (American Society of Civil Engineers 2008). During periods of economic distress, calls for federal capital investments as an economic stimulus are heard. Of course, the moral-hazard problem associated with financing these investments is well-known. In the 19th century, fiscal crises resulted from overinvestment by localities in canals and railroads. There is little evidence, however, that a new generation of financing mechanisms, such as user fees and privatization, is sufficient given the magnitude of these problems. In view of these tax base disparities, it is almost certain that some localities will not be in a position to make needed infrastructure investments. Regrettably, the lack of national consensus to mobilize capital for urban infrastructure represents a lost opportunity.

Human Capital

The first clear articulation of training and employment policy as a federal priority appears with Kennedy and LBJ, discussed above. The Nixon administration consolidated the job training efforts of the Great Society, including 17 categorical programs, into a block grant program under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 (CETA). CETA's objective was to train workers and provide them with public-sector employment (Kleinberg 1995). President Carter in 1977 substantially increased funding for job training (Figure 3), expanded the public-sector employment program of CETA (Ginzberg 2000), and implemented a new initiative for youth (Betsey et al. 1985). The Reagan administration reformed this system with the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 (JTPA) and decreased funding. JTPA eliminated the public service employment of CETA, but included provisions for summer youth employment and training programs as well as employment and training assistance for dislocated workers. The Clinton administration repealed JTPA and instituted the Workforce Initiative Act, attempting to gain more private-sector involvement in job training through the institution of workforce investment boards.

The job-training system relies heavily on state and local governments and community colleges for service provision. Although funding levels have remained fairly stagnant since the 1980s, this programmatic area has become a permanent feature of the federal government, including programs for high school dropouts, dislocated workers, and welfare treatment.



Federal funding of public schools (K-12), an altogether new role introduced by Johnson, was maintained by the Nixon Administration, although with relatively little increase in levels (see Figure 3). From the Carter Administration until the present, a fairly steady increase in spending on public education is observed even though each president introduced distinct educational initiatives. The Carter Administration created a cabinet-level department to consolidate and administer the existing federal initiatives. National concern with the outcomes of the public education system grew substantially in the 1980s, and a multi-headed school reform movement emerged. The formation in 1990 of Teach for America, a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization, represented one focus—that of attracting young, socially motivated teachers. School choice, advocated by the George H.W. Bush Administration, promoted competition among schools. The Clinton Administration introduced accountability measures for federal aid to schools and supported charter schools, but recognizing the dramatic increase of children from Spanish-speaking homes, provisions for increases in bilingual education were also made. The George W. Bush administration extended the reform effort in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which requires primary-age school children to achieve certain testing standards

for the school to maintain federal funding. Despite being a serious attempt to enhance accountability in schools, strong opposition to the Bush initiative arose on many fronts, including the serious charge that it led to “teaching to the test” rather than truly increasing student learning. Conservative critics argued that it represented further intrusion of federal government into a policy arena that historically fell to local and state governments. The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in schools, especially urban schools—and the resegregation of inner-city schools—ensures that public education will be a fundamental challenge for decades to come.

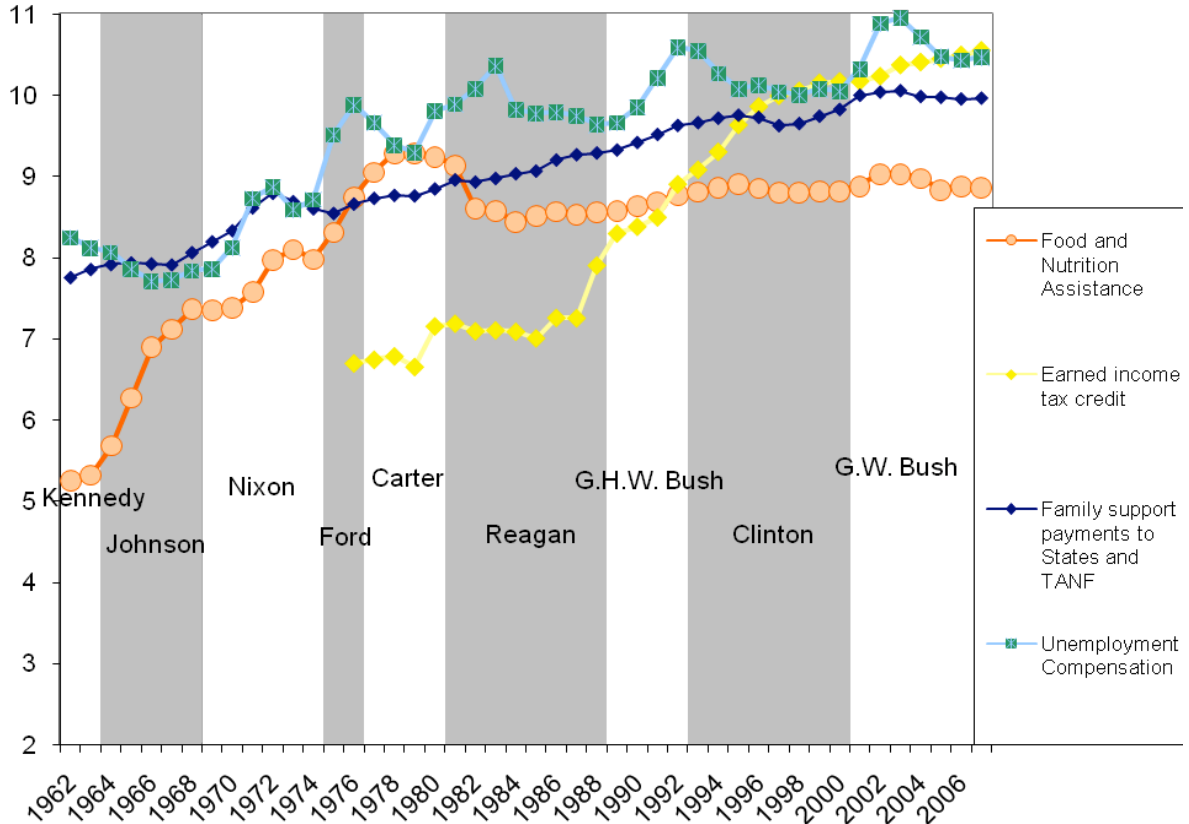
The priority placed on human capital investments by the Johnson Administration is significant both because it established a federal role in a policy that had heretofore been under local control and because the rate of increase in spending has not been matched since (see Figure 3).¹⁴ LBJ’s federal aid to schools with large shares of students from disadvantaged families and Head Start programs have garnered broad support and are permanent elements of the education system. But long-standing and deep dissatisfaction with the public school system continues despite significant reforms introduced by recent administrations, both Republican and Democrat.

Income Support/Community Development/Housing

Income support. At the end of the Johnson administration, the concept of a guaranteed minimum income entered the national debate as an alternative to the federal assistance programs targeted to the poor (Kershaw 1970). In 1969, the Nixon Administration proposed a guaranteed minimum income for families with dependents (Katz 1989). Although this legislation was defeated, support for such a concept continued to grow, eventually evolving into the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC was enacted in 1975 as part of an economic stimulus package and further expanded in 1986 (Holt 2006) and several times thereafter. By the early 2000s, the program had grown as large as other federal income-support programs such as food and nutrition assistance, unemployment compensation, and housing assistance (Figure 4).

¹⁴ Another important federal role in public education, not explored in this paper, is enforcement of desegregation of public schools.

Fig. 4. Income Support
(In Natural Logarithms of \$ million [2000])



Political support for programs addressing the needs of the non-working poor, that is, the AFDC-welfare population, eroded over decades of debates. During the Clinton administration, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that capped block grants (Holt 2006) replaced the individual entitlement provision of the AFDC program, which dated from the Johnson administration. The reform led to significantly lower federal expenditures (temporarily) and broader discretion on the part of state government for determining eligibility requirements. The reformed program required recipients to find employment. Despite serious reservations as to its potential impacts on those cities with large numbers of welfare recipients (Weir 1997), the quite remarkable growth of the U.S. economy during the late 1990s led to significant declines in urban poverty (Jargowsky 2003). Unfortunately, the number of working poor expanded in the decade that followed (Kneebone and Berube 2008).

Community Development. Nixon substantially transformed the community development efforts of the Johnson Administration. He dismantled the Office of Economic Opportunity, marking a milestone in the reshaping of LBJ's federal policy legacy, and modified Model Cities by downgrading citizen participation requirements, expanding

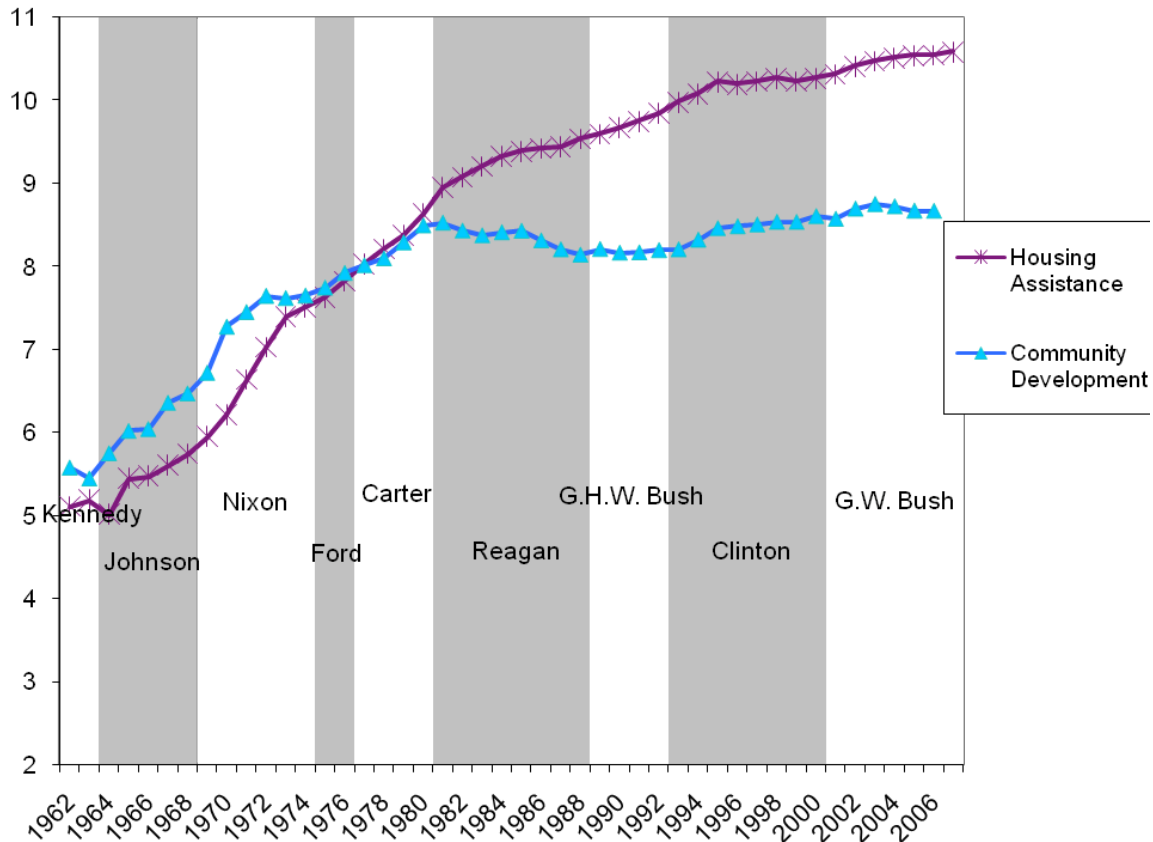
local discretion, and expanding eligibility to many more cities. Finally, his Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program consolidated many of the Great Society categorical grant programs (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). Even though citizen participation in the CDBG process were relatively weak (Howard, Lipsky, and Marshall 1994; Kleinberg 1995), such provisions were extended to other federal policy areas, including environmental and energy policy,¹⁵ and state and local governments adopted similar such requirements for a wide range of local programming. But community-based movements emerged in their own right and were key to the passage of the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act in 1975 and the Community Reinvestment Act in 1977 during the Nixon Administration. Although a decline in federal funding for community development occurred during the Reagan administration and stagnated thereafter (Figure 5), the CDBG program has survived a number of attempts to eliminate it, in large part due to significant support from local governments (Hays 1995; Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004).

In April 1992, the nation witnessed with horror the rioting in South-Central Los Angeles. Even though many argued against the view offered by Marlin Fitzwater that the riot reflected the failure of the anti-poverty policy of the Great Society, an emerging consensus was forming around the need for a new approach to urban problems (Rich 1993). In May 1992, President George H. W. Bush offered a six-point proposal, including community policing, to address the problems of the nation's cities. Soon after taking office, President Clinton proposed legislation for a stimulus package with several elements addressing cities (Rich 1993). As with the Bush administration, Clinton's proposals were not approved by Congress, and in the following years the administration's urban policy agenda was of modest proportion. But given politic constraints of a divided Congress, Clinton adopted symbolic actions that legitimized institutions, especially churches located in the inner city, engaged in issues of urban poverty (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). The one significant community development initiative by the Clinton Administration was the Enterprise Zone/Enterprise Community legislation, but it was of too modest a scale to have significant impact (Vidal and Keating 2004; Hays 1995; Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004).¹⁶ President George W. Bush's faith-based initiatives also attempted to address urban issues. Despite the controversy concerning separation of church and state, this initiative utilized community-based partners in addressing the needs of low-income populations, but its effects were quite limited (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). Notwithstanding the programmatic initiatives of each president, funding for community development stagnated (see Figure 5).

¹⁵ One-third of all federal grants to state and local governments required some form of citizen participation by 1978 (ACIR 1979).

¹⁶ The origins of this legislation can be traced back to G. H. W. Bush's HUD Secretary Kemp (Rich 1993), but no Congressional action was taken at that time.

Fig. 5. Housing and Community Development
(In Natural Logarithms of \$ million [2000])



In retrospect, LBJ can be seen as a pioneer in mobilizing neighborhoods and community organizations in implementing federal policy, a strategy that Clinton (and later, G.W. Bush) also adopted (Halpern 1995). Nonetheless, it should be recalled that the community-based movement, particularly in minority or low-income neighborhoods, predates the Johnson period and later gained ground with the 1968 campaign of Robert F. Kennedy. Based on the experiences of immigrant communities and often motivated by disruptions of urban programs, such as urban renewal in the 1950s, the neighborhood social movement emerged. Lessons learned from the LBJ period were reflected in the programs designed by later administrations in terms of the need for a local government presence in such initiatives. And while some critics view the reliance on nongovernmental actors as a means of rationalizing the lack of serious public-sector commitment, there is little doubt that the proliferation of such groups represents a measurable improvement in social capital among these populations (Halpern 1995; Vidal and Keating 2004; Rich 1993). Furthermore, despite stagnation—if not reductions—in

federal support for community advocacy in the administrations that followed LBJ, as well as declines in place-based funding support, the movement has grown to become an important element in local policy making.

Housing. By the beginning of the Nixon administration, political support for the range of housing initiatives of LBJ, discussed above, had declined significantly (Hays 1995). First by Nixon (Hays 1995) and later by Reagan (Rich 1993; Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004), housing policy was redirected from support of new housing production for low-income families to a reliance on housing vouchers to be used in the existing housing stock. Taking advantage of scandals at HUD at the end of the Reagan administration, Jack Kemp, Bush's HUD Secretary, introduced further changes in housing policy (Wolman 1986; Hays 1995), especially for public housing reform. By the end of this study period, a national consensus on rental housing vouchers and tax credits for affordable housing construction as the focus of federal policy had emerged. Housing assistance itself has shown a long-term, though moderate, pattern of growth after the 1980s (see Figure 5). In the small-scale Moving to Opportunity program created during the Clinton Administration, inner-city residents were provided portable housing vouchers to enable them to move to suburban areas. But supply did not meet demand, and the number of affordable apartment units declined by almost 100,000 during the 1990s (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004, 145). Efforts to privatize public housing and to rely more on markets and nonprofit organizations to build affordable housing prevailed as conservative policies gained strength. In addition, market-based strategies for increasing homeownership among moderate- and lower-income families, a federal policy that dates back to FDR, were maintained throughout this period. The system was reformed during the savings and loan crisis of the mid-1980s. But policies, regulatory and others, adopted during the Clinton and G.W. Bush administrations to encourage homeownership, especially through subprime home mortgage loans, contributed to the current crisis in capital markets.

Urban Policy after LBJ: Concluding Observations

Even though few of the urban programs introduced or expanded during the Johnson years have survived intact, federal spending in these urban policy arenas has become an enduring feature of federal policy. In several areas, such as public education, community development, and poverty alleviation, the Johnson initiatives largely represented new, or substantially expanded, federal roles. The Nixon administration, despite its preference for less targeting and more block grant programs, sustained the growth of spending in several programmatic areas. But the Reagan administration effectively ended the expansion of federal funding in several areas, especially place-based expenditures in community development and urban infrastructure. Still, despite opposition derived from a free-market philosophy to many of these federal efforts, President Reagan and the two Bush presidents did not succeed in ending federal involvement: they limited growth in expenditures and reshaping policy, but not in terminating the federal role. Some have argued that the Johnson efforts in inner cities were misplaced and that other forces, including federal policies, produced a spatial restructuring of cities and tax-base

disparities that rendered Great Society initiatives ineffectual (Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom 2004). But nearly one decade into the 21st century, urban problems remain, and neither political party promotes the return to a strong federal presence in urban policy.

Lyndon Johnson's Urban Legacies

Four elements define Johnson's urban legacy. First, he made unparalleled attempts to help cities. These were embedded in the Great Society and Model Cities efforts, as well as in changes in the Social Security program and the introduction of Medicare and Medicaid. Compared with the administrations that followed, the Johnson initiatives stand out as the most ambitious federal attempts to address problems of the inner city. Johnson drew heavily on the successes of the New Deal and the tragically abbreviated Kennedy Administration. The scale and breadth of LBJ's efforts are truly impressive. Johnson believed that a Great Society required vibrant and just cities.¹⁷ Johnson believed that the federal government had an important role to play in the everyday lives of all people, especially the poor. His vision was for a broader and more activist role than that of his predecessors and those who followed.

Second, he believed that to accomplish his goals, a restructuring of the federalist system was important. States and localities—what Justice Louis Brandeis correctly labeled the “laboratories of democracy”—were important implementers of programs, with considerable federal financial support. Johnson reconfigured the machinery of the federal government to align with the needs of an urban, industrial, and racially divided society. But the hollowing out of the federal government during the conservative age and lack of policy focus rendered federal action inadequate for addressing the problems of urban America. Even though Johnson's attempt to reshape the intergovernmental system to address urban issues failed, the new forms of intergovernmental relations consolidated by Nixon and further modified thereafter—in which federal funds and guidelines are provided to local governments but with considerable decision-making authority—maintain a visible federal presence in urban matters.

Third, Johnson championed the role of community-based organizations and other nonprofit groups in designing and carrying out many of his initiatives. Although their roles were later circumscribed under pressure from mayors, they acquired legitimacy: the CDC movement grew and increased capacity. But Johnson's efforts helped establish a community economic development architecture that later spawned the work of nonprofit intermediaries like the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Enterprise Foundation, and Neighborworks America. In addition, LBJ's efforts to combat racial discrimination and secure voting rights for minority populations have further empowered urban minority communities. Thousands of such groups (some faith-based, others secular) play important roles in the lives of citizens today.

¹⁷ LBJ's efforts to combat racial discrimination, a topic not fully addressed in this paper, undoubtedly improved the lives of many minorities. Despite some variation in the level of active support to eliminate racial discrimination after Johnson, no subsequent administration has directly questioned the rightfulness of this position.

We also believe that many of Johnson's policies, though well-intentioned, did not provide solutions to the breadth of difficult problems facing cities and the poor. Many of Johnson's programs were abandoned or slashed by subsequent governments, either on the grounds that they were ineffective or because more conservative presidents opposed the philosophy of an activist government central to the Great Society.

LBJ argued that federal government had the means and responsibility to improve people's lives. A free-market ideology grew after Reagan dismissed this notion, and it is not clear whether a majority of Americans currently endorse this view—although the housing and financial collapses of 2007-08 may bring back more interest in an activist government. Even though most Americans can rally in support of greater government accountability, it is unclear whether a president could prevail in convincing the public of this view of government. In fact, the record of federal government in addressing urban policies described in this paper shows a shift of risk from government solutions ("We can solve our problems together") to individuals ("You are on your own"), as Hacker (2008) argued.

Distinct from his attempt to mold the national will on moral arguments, LBJ also argued that programs to help the disadvantaged, particularly in education and training, were necessary for unleashing human potential. In fact, most presidents since LBJ have promoted the same argument, even though substantial differences in approach are found. There can be almost no doubt that education is a critical element. Here the American policy system encounters its most significant failure and frustration. George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act can be seen as a bold strategy, but it is also one of desperation and in direct opposition to the long-held value of local control over public education. But the public education system is not effectively preparing far too many youth for the challenges they will face in an economy that places a premium on education. The accumulation of disadvantages continues to accrue to families and individuals in low-income urban neighborhoods.

Recommendations to President Obama

To a substantial degree, cities have been off the national agenda since the Carter administration. However, as one public finance expert said, "There has always been an urban policy. Unfortunately, no one has ever known what it was."¹⁸ In the 2008 presidential campaign, there was little debate about the policy issues of contemporary cities and how to address them.¹⁹ Yet, several problems that plague cities and low-income populations observed in the 1960s remain serious and demand proper attention, including concentrated poverty, lack of affordable housing, and poor urban education. Changes in the urban landscape generated by globalization, technological change, and migration are evident. Cities have decentralized substantially, and some of the inner-city problems have spread to the inner suburbs and beyond. Most large cities are now

¹⁸ Comments of Roy Bahl in Briggs (2008).

¹⁹ Barack Obama devoted a portion of his Web site to urban policy: (http://origin.barackobama.com/issues/urban_policy/), while John McCain did not. We will address some of the Obama proposals below.

minority-majority with ever-increasing linguistic and cultural diversity.²⁰ The emerging information-intensive economy requires new forms of infrastructure even while traditional types of infrastructure need major investments for maintenance and expansion. The demands for human-capital investments have become even more critical. Finally, the sustainability of sprawling cities with increasing energy costs is becoming ever more difficult.

We end this chapter with seven recommendations to President-elect Barack Obama about the future of our cities and what his administration can do. We believe that he must take a broader view of cities and their problems than presidents since LBJ have done.

First, give cities more visibility in the White House, reflecting current problems. Appoint a high-level policy official or create an office of urban affairs within the White House to coordinate the efforts of federal agencies, and work with the nation's embattled mayors to help build cities from the bottom up. We applaud President Obama for advocating a similar notion during the 2008 campaign.²¹

Mr. Obama should pay attention to how urban policy is organized within our federalist system. In addition to shepherding work among federal agencies and bringing new legislation through the Congress, his urban policy advisor could do three things. First, help refocus federal efforts: the means to achieve effective intergovernmental relations, recognizing the policy-making capacity of local governments is now much better understood, and recognition of this experience should be integrated into new federal efforts. Second, protect civil and political rights of urban residents, including immigrants. Urban politics, though conflictive, must be broadly participatory, especially given the increasing demographic and linguistic diversity of cities, and the federal government can help secure this goal through traditional enforcement mechanisms. Third, help promote innovative linkages across policy areas, by establishing relationships between environmental, transportation, and energy initiatives. Realizing the benefits from collaboration across policy arenas requires leadership originating with the president—but the president must also be able to learn from experts at the state and local levels. The appointment of a high-level policy official is an effective way to signal a change in priorities and bring fresh ideas to this presidency.

Second, deal promptly with the vast crisis in financial markets. The mortgage disaster started as an urban phenomenon but quickly spread to the suburbs and, of course, to other financial markets. A million jobs were lost in 2008 throughout the economy, tens of thousands in the financial sector alone. The unemployment rate in October 2008 stood at the highest level since 1992. The 2008 Housing and Economic Recovery Act to support hard-pressed borrowers and neighborhoods (and actions of the Fed and Treasury) has not worked to date; neither has the Troubled Assets Relief Program, the massive financial

²⁰ The change in the ethnic mix in the nation's cities is due, in part, to the immigration legislation passed during the Johnson years.

²¹ See the Obama campaign Web site for a discussion of an urban policy office and related matters at: http://www.boston.com/realestate/news/articles/2008/01/24/its_time_to_save_the_housing_sector/.

bailout of financial firms. The country needs presidential leadership to ensure reform and regulation of capital markets and a more lasting solution to these deep and broad problems.

Third, make a major commitment to rebuilding the nation's infrastructure so that we will not repeat the disasters that followed Hurricane Katrina and the bridge collapse in Minneapolis. Since the New Deal, the federal government has made significant infrastructure investments, utilizing its ability to mobilize capital and create effective cost-sharing strategies with local and state governments. In the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government assumed leadership in mass transit and water-related infrastructure to address urban pollution. However, as we showed in Figures 1 and 2, federal funding of capital investments in today's dollars only moderately exceeds the levels of the early 1980s. Senators Christopher Dodd and Chuck Hagel introduced legislation in 2007 to establish an infrastructure bank to raise up to \$60 billion in bonds for large-scale construction projects. President Obama has endorsed this notion. With a staff of engineers, economists, and others, the infrastructure bank would put together financing packages for proposed projects that could include direct subsidies, loan guarantees, and bonds to help states and localities construct needed facilities. The federal government has the opportunity to be a primary mover in investments for economic development and disaster mitigation.

Fourth, raise support for job training and other human capital investments, beginning with preschool education. Broad-based and bipartisan efforts have not led to improvements in the educational system desired by all, as we discussed above. However, maintaining and even expanding the Johnson-era program of Title I that helps educate children in poor families in an increasingly complex urban context is the foundation for federal support. The new challenge faced by urban school districts is an expanding linguistic diversity. Title I should incorporate in its funding formula a factor taking into account linguistic diversity among the poverty-level student population, thus providing increased funding for resource-strapped inner-city schools. In addition, change the intergovernmental finance system so that states and local governments achieve adequate levels of funding for public education and achieve higher levels of effectiveness.

The nation's job-training system also needs improvement: a highly skilled workforce is central to any urban economic development strategy. The federal government should lead a collaborative effort with states and localities, incorporating community colleges, to review governmental initiatives in this arena and to develop consensus on strategies, with particular attention on the training needs of individuals with limited formal education. The Workforce Investment Act is a step in the right direction for a more-competitive labor force within the global economy.

Fifth, help make housing more affordable. Increase housing vouchers, tax credits, and other subsidies to poor families. In addition, help developers and nonprofit organizations build more low-cost housing. Too many families must choose between paying for shelter and paying for dinner in the 2008-09 housing market. Housing vouchers have the

potential to deconcentrate low-income families and foster mixed-income neighborhoods. Through tax credits, we must expand aid to developers and nonprofits that build low-cost housing.

The experience of the subprime mortgage market is a sobering one. Increasing homeownership among lower-income families is a lofty goal, but past strategies were too frequently abused, and present prospects for many families are dismal. This experience must be incorporated into the design of new homeownership policies. Numerous proposals have been advanced for diminishing the cost of construction, such as reforming building codes and zoning regulations and encouraging competition in the title insurance industry. With sensitivity to past practices of using regulation to impose racial and economic segregation, the federal government is well positioned to promote best practices in local housing policies, including metropolitan-wide housing policies. In addition, we must rehabilitate older housing, removing lead paint and other contaminants, and stop poisoning so many city kids. Until incomes for working families improve, it will be hard to increase the number of families able to move into affordable houses.

Sixth, support working families. Support for the poverty population has increased somewhat, but there has been a dramatic increase in support for working families through the Earned Income Tax Credit. A major expansion took place during the second Clinton term, and there appears to be considerable support in Congress. The next president should expand the Earned Income Tax Credit—but also raise the minimum wage, and index both to the cost of living. These measures will go a long way toward supporting those hard-working families at the bottom of the income distribution—many of them living in our cities. In the near term, unemployment compensation must be extended as millions of long-term jobless people run out of benefits.

Seventh, make our cities more sustainable and attractive by adopting smart-growth policies. With high oil prices, we need investments to make cities more compact and walkable, and local regulations to encourage this. Much innovation has taken place in state (e.g., Maryland and New Jersey) and local governments, and these agencies also have significant roles, along with the federal government. Whether in the traditional areas of financing water and wastewater systems or establishing environmental standards, the federal government can encourage, if not force, state and local actors to engage in this policy area. The metropolitan planning organizations, formed in no small part as the result of federal requirements, provide an excellent model that potentially can be expanded to incorporate other dimensions of sustainability. We can, for example, use federal tax credits to encourage smart growth, minimize the environmental footprint, and build livable downtowns.

We understand that this is an ambitious strategy, requiring the redirection of federal spending in ways that will provide fairness and economic prosperity. Issues concerning funding of these initiatives have not been directly addressed in this paper. Not only do we advocate a more central place for cities in federal policy, but we also believe that significant reform of the tax system that has over the last several decades come to

increasingly favor the wealthy can contribute to achieving the objectives we outline. In particular, repeal of the Bush tax breaks for the ultra-rich will free up funds for the urban initiatives we are outlining. As the nation goes into recession in late 2008, a Keynesian, deficit-spending approach—using the funds generated by tax reform and deficit spending—might help both rebuild cities and fight the decline in jobs that is engulfing the economy (Reich 2008).

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