

Reinventing Downtown: Sports, Culture, Conventions and the New American City

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Michael N. Danielson, B.C. Forbes Professor of Public Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School and Elizabeth Strom, Associate Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University are directing a study that examines contemporary efforts to restructure central business districts in the United States. The focus is on three kinds of development: 1) sports facilities, most commonly in the form of arenas and stadiums for professional teams; 2) cultural development, broadly defined to include the performing arts, museums, halls of fame and related attractions such as aquariums; and 3) convention centers and associated visitor facilities.

Danielson and Strom are interested in comparing the three approaches - sports, culture, and conventions - in order to highlight the distinctive political and economic forces behind each type of urban revitalization program. For each, a distinctive set of actors interacts to presumably affect downtown priorities, agendas, plans, financing, siting, approval and implementation as well as the nature and intensity of political conflict. The project will include case studies of Philadelphia, Charlotte, Seattle, Detroit, Boston and Dallas, an empirical study of several dozen of America's largest cities, and a review of cost-benefit studies and critiques for a smaller sample of cities. This project has been funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.