

# **Rust Never Sleeps: Infrastructural Urbanism and Planning for Change**

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This research project explores how infrastructure can be used to plan for municipalities that are experiencing economic restructuring. This research falls into a gap identified in the planning literature where infrastructure is generally regarded as outside the purview of urban planning, despite the huge implications that infrastructure has for urban form, land use and development. I am using the example of deindustrialization in the Rust Belt region to better understand the process of economic restructuring, the possible consequences of this for municipalities, and for examples of how infrastructure can be used to repurpose, reconfigure and regenerate these places.

Linked to any discussion of economic restructuring and deindustrialization is the issue of decline. Of particular interest for this project is the conflation of decline and slow growth, as identified by Leo and Brown (2000). Because slow growth and decline are realities facing places undergoing economic restructuring, and because these call for a different planning approach than places undergoing rapid growth, this will inform this research project. In addition, a more general look at the issue of regional disparity and decline will also be of interest for this project.

To inform the discussion of planning for change and infrastructure, I draw on the emerging theory of landscape urbanism and its understandings of infrastructure. The principles of flexibility, adaptability, dynamism and process that characterize landscape urbanism can potentially offer a new and useful lens for thinking about planning for changing urban areas using infrastructure. In addition, the examples of landscape urbanist projects have commonly occurred in industrial sites that have been contaminated, abandoned or rendered obsolete, which further suggests that landscape urbanism is an appropriate and valuable way of thinking about planning for places undergoing economic transition.

Enhancing this research, I present a set of examples of innovative and interesting planning strategies to address the new realities of economic restructuring – whether that means population decline, abandoned industrial sites or infrastructure, or a significant shift in the economic structure. Specifically, I look at the Chattanooga waterfront revitalization, the Youngstown 2010 Plan in Ohio, the High Line in New York City, the Syracuse Connective Corridor, the Beltline initiative in Atlanta, the Route Verte cycling trail in Quebec, the recent economic transition in Elliot Lake, Ontario, and the Flexible Workplace Initiative in Houston, Texas.

Finally, to illustrate this analysis, I will synthesize these theories, ideas and planning strategies to develop a conceptual planning response for the struggling downtown of Oshawa, Ontario. Oshawa is an example of a city that is still experiencing growth – largely due to growth in its health, education, and other service sectors – but is also undergoing significant economic restructuring, with decline and uncertainty within its manufacturing sector, which had been the city's economic engine for decades. Learning from the experience of other Rust Belt cities as well as the literature on decline and infrastructure, this response will use infrastructure to plan for the realities of slow growth and economic restructuring in Oshawa.