Josh Roberts
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Throughout the Western world, we have seen an upswing in economic development and redevelopment on urban waterfronts and city centers that promote walkable and transit-oriented accessibility and close proximity to parks, boardwalks, vantage points, and restaurants and retail shops at various points of affordability for virtually all classes. This, along with other development plans, are part and parcel of the efforts by public and private partnerships to encourage all citizens to be active citizens that are increasingly aware and familiar of one another. By encouraging development that gets citizens out of their cars and onto the sidewalks, parks and "third places" walking, running, commiserating with their families and friends, community development is nurtured and preserved that, in theory, melts away ethnic and class divisions that have truncated our society for too long.

It is vitally important to easily access public spaces and establishments that are within a reasonable walking distance from residential clusters. Until recently, cities across the country have focused mainly on economic development purely to attract big-box stores like Wal-Mart and Costco on one hand, and large corporate behemoths to fill office space and manufacturing hubs. Somehow along the way, the people that lived in these cities were not always considered, in varying degrees. The post-World War II suburban and interstate highway construction boom spread our populace further and further away from each other, into increasingly private, enclosed, and gated communities where, in theory, you could live your entire life without knowing anyone beyond 50 feet of your property line.

In the book *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream,* authors Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck lament the "splintering" of modern society "into insular factions, each pursing an increasingly narrow agenda" by "withdrawing from public life into the shelter of their private homes, from which they encounter the world primarily through their television and computer screens" (Duany, et.al., pg. 59-60). They add that "community cannot form in the absence of communal space, without places for people to get together to talk" and that the notion of community and familiarity of one's neighbors is nearly impossible without a public square or local "third places" to congregate and meet after work and other obligations.

The inequalities of suburban development have of late been rectified by attempts at the local level to plan new developments that are immediately inviting, walkable, and community-based. While there is universal agreeance that Portland, Oregon is a model of civic-minded, community-focused city planning and development in virtually all areas of its boundaries, its recent and formal embrace of its unique food cart industry has made its way into its master plan for the next few decades. In January 2008, The Urban Vitality Group, in cooperation with the City of Portland, formed a "Food Cartology Technical Advisory Committee" made up of a diverse collection of Portland citizenry. Representatives from the City of Portland's Planning, Environmental Services, and Housing and Community Development Bureaus, Mayor Sam Adams' Office, Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations, Multinomah County Health Department, as well as nearly half dozen-foot cart owners, were recruited for this project. The goal was to "study the effects

that food carts have on street vitality and neighborhood livability" (UVG, pg. 4) mainly due to the unprecedented growth of food carts opening up throughout Portland. Moreover, the question asked by the UVG was whether there were beneficial or negative consequences coinciding with the food cart proliferation around Portland and "to ascertain what economic opportunities may be offered by food carts, especially for low-income and minority entrepreneurs" (UVG, pg. 4). What they learned is that the presence of food carts had "significant community benefits to neighborhood livability by fostering social interactions, walkability, and by providing interim uses for vacant parcels" that would otherwise be underutilized.

The overwhelming success of the Portland food cart scene has a. created much-needed small businesses and jobs over the past few years, b. used previously underutilized property throughout Portland, and c. provided affordable, quality food for downtown employees and neighborhood residents throughout Portland. Seattle or Tacoma could take advantage of its own under-utilized properties, loosen its draconian food handling laws (which is a mixture of local and state regulations) in order to accomplish the same success that Portland enjoys. My initial hope was to prove that a close replication of a Portland food cart pod model was possible in Seattle (and perhaps beyond). By freeing up zoning restrictions in Seattle to allow a series of food carts to proliferate side by side atop a land parcel in a densely populated neighborhood, such as an underused parking lot, near bike paths, transit lines, and within walking distance from work or home, could in theory replicate Portland's rich food cart scene.

The bust of the home and especially the condominium construction boom throughout the Northwest and the rest of the country (thanks in no small part by the malicious sub-prime loan lending industry) has left its indelible mark – and literal – footprints all over the metropolis. One striking example is a vacant land parcel in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood that runs one city block along East Pine Street between Summit Avenue and Belmont Avenue. Up until two years ago, this parcel provided the foundation for a nearly 100 year-old apartment building on Belmont Avenue and, most notably, a stretch of popular and vibrant bars that served as the de facto community center or "third place" where Capitol Hill's rich array of young artists, musicians, and photographers mingled with its predominant gay population. From the legendary Cha Cha Lounge rocker bar (which has since moved 4 block to the east) and its adjacent Bimbo's burrito restaurant, the beer-and-pool (and divey) Kincora Pub, the karaoke-mecca that is the Bus Stop (also relocated and reopened in a separate location), to the futuristic-interiors of the aptly titled Man Ray bar, this was the unofficial epicenter of what defines the Capitol Hill neighborhood. It also fostered inadvertent community outreach that may not have been as possible without these dynamic watering holes. Unfortunately, in an ironic twist of fate, the properties and land parcel was purchased in March 2007 by developer Murray Franklyn, who decided to raze the entire block to make way for a mixed-use development. All tenants of the apartment building and the businesses along East Pike Street were evicted and, almost immediately, the structures were bulldozed in March 2009. Since the razing of the East Pine Street block, the property owner attempted to use the parcel as a parking lot and Zipcar pick-up/drop-off kiosk, but

was not able to make a venerable profit and abandoned the venture after just over a year of operation. According to an article in The Stranger, while Murray Franklyn had initial issues with the City of Seattle over "whether its design for the building jibed with city code" (The Stranger, April 2009), they still received permission to move forward with construction. One could assume that the funding for this project dried up when the economic downturn began. To date, all that remains of what was previously a bustling block of successful, community-building businesses is a flat, graveled, and underutilized land parcel in one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Seattle (and certainly the most familiar and popular destinations for residents and visitors under 35 years of age).

Perhaps this and other property owners in similar predicaments dealing with underutilized or undeveloped land parcels should take note of how savvy property owners in Portland, Oregon have taken advantage of the unique land zoning codes that allows 170 food cart operators to proliferate in districts and neighborhoods all over the Rose City. In so many cases around town, Portland food carts and food cart pods (a collective of multiple food carts laid side by side next to each other) have used abandoned (but privately owned) land parcels and made space rental deals with parking lot and convenience store owners to lease spaces upon their property that have been perennially underutilized.

Locally-owned and managed institutions, while built from scratch, could absolutely not come into being without care, commitment, and time invested from community members who seek out locally derived alternatives to corporate fast-food entities and high-end "foodie" establishments that usually require lofty

amounts of disposable income to gain the price of admission. As cited in the article "Alternative Financial Spaces," Duncan Fuller and Andrew E.G. Jonas stress that start-up institutions such as food carts are dependent in part "upon social relations and organizational capacities specific to a local area or community" (Fuller, 2003). In this context, food cart proprietors deliberately construct third places for the community that have "distinctive *social* values and ideals that stand in contrast to *economically* rational values supposedly at large in the wider space economy" – placing quality food and community participation and ownership over profit margins.

Additionally, food cart culture can also be considered part and parcel of asset-based community development, for its proliferation relies on individual talent from citizens that may be looking for a uniquely specific opportunity for themselves, especially if they cannot find traditional employment in our current economy. Moreover, as Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham explain in their article "From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community Driven Development," the social capital of a community that encourages the find of street presence and community interaction that street carts can invite flourishes due to the "relationships that fuel associations and informal networks" (Cunningham & Mathie, 2003) that are largely underutilized. In this scenario, community citizens regain "the rights and entitlements of state and global citizenship" that asset-based community development seeks out in its brand promise.

As previously mentioned, what makes the Portland food cart industry unique is its usage of previously underutilized land parcels and parking lots. Heidi Guenin, a planning intern with the City of Portland's Planning Bureau and graduate student at Portland State University, feels that Portland's high unemployment rate and the recent influx of well-educated and young, under-40 transplants to the Rose City were strong contributors to the food cart phenomena. But while she agrees that, for a time, there was an increased interest around temporary use of vacant or underutilized space in Portland, it occurred largely around commercial areas and private property, not necessarily in residential areas. But this has raised the ire of terrestrial restaurateurs. "There's been some push-back against the expansion of the food cart from other restaurant owners," she says. "Cart owners are not required to provide restroom facilities (among other costly facilities) that other restaurants are required to have," which has resulted in a series of complaints to her bureau in recent months. Still, food carts and food cart pods continue to multiply all over Portland.

My initial theory was based mainly in my casual observation of food carts and food cart pods in the Portland area. Pods were mainly found in downtown area near Pioneer Courthouse Square. Where Seattle can find examples of how to use underutlized land parcels can be found in a myriad of different places, but more notably near underutlized land parcels and existing parks and parcels such as the Seattle's East Pine Street land parcel and downtown Westlake Center. In the case of the latter, there seems to be, with exception to special events, an aversion by the general public to frequent these public places. Both are within walking distance to

places of employment, retail stores, bars and pubs, and tourist attractions such as Pike Place Market. The argument would be that if Seattle's zoning laws were such, and its existing setback codes were adjusted to allow food cart pods to proliferate at both Westlake Center and the East Pine lot, it would in theory replicate the success of the food cart pods on or near Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon. It would also bring more people to the parks themselves for the aversion currently is centered around the population of perceived "drunk" or "homeless" citizens which, whether true or not, discourage the "average" citizen to spend time at parks, plazas, and other public spaces.

When I started my GIS project, I had mildly surprising difficulty locating Seattle food cart locations. Therefore, I abandoned the Tacoma portion of the study mainly due to time investment in the project. I was very fortunate to have found a pre-existing Google Maps list of all Portland-area food cart locations, which was produced by a Portland resident (this link was found on the Portland Food Cart blog). I was not immediately able to convert the resulting .kml files of each Portland food cart location to shapefile format in order to add it in ArcMap. I actually had to convert *each* individual point from .kml to shapefile with an online kml-to-shapefile converter (http://www.zonums.com/kml2shp.html). This took up a great deal of time. Conversely, I had to create my own Seattle food cart location layer by a. spending days searching on the internet and driving and walking around the Seattle area; b. searching for each address in Google Earth, then converting them from .kml to shapefile; c. unzipping each individual zip file; d. adding each point to my feature dataset; e. adding each point as separate layers in my Seattle map in ArcMap; and f.

merging all points into a dedicated Seattle food cart location layer, then deleted the individual location layers (this was also the basic process of creating my Portland food cart location layer). Obviously, unlike the Portland map, there does not appear to be a comprehensive listing or map of the Seattle food cart locations (although there are rumors that a Seattle food cart blog is in the works that may create such a document).

Remarkably, I was unable to locate a Seattle street location shapefile that allowed me to overlay my Seattle map. Therefore, I was unable to include this on my final project. The Portland map was created relatively smoothly, although there does not seem to be a shapefile available of Portland's building footprints. To further my study and build a potential model, I found points in Google Earth of Pioneer Courthouse Square and Portland State University. The model itself was based on my observations after adding all Portland food cart location points where the majority of said locations were located, most specifically the food cart pod clusters. There are over 170 food cart locations in Portland currently, and this number grows almost weekly due to the myriad of food cart openings outweighing any closures that take place due to lack of sales or other reasons.

My study shifted from a suitable walking distance from one point to another to a study of why food cart pod clusters proliferate in certain areas of Portland versus others and what the factors were in determining why. What I learned what that the food cart pods were typically found near downtown districts where there were many office buildings, places of employment, retail shopping centers, tourist attractions, and transit routes. More specifically, the food cart pods were located

near city public spaces in Portland, especially its Pioneer Courthouse Square (aka the "living room" of Portland) located in the downtown area, surrounded by a plethora of multi-story office buildings. Three separate food cart pods are located within 3 blocks of Pioneer Courthouse Square. According to The Oregonian, Pioneer Courthouse Square has seen a 30 percent drop in crime and an increase in patronage that frequent the park, particularly the many citizens – "more than 86,000 people come to the city's core to work" (The Oregonian, 2009) - that work in the area that grab breakfast or lunch at one of the dozens of food carts within walking distance to the Square. Furthermore, these food cart pods are close to light rail and streetcar lines, and bicycle paths that were painted by the City of Portland. Conversely, there is not a comprehensive bicycle map in the Seattle area similar to Portland; therefore, I was unable to add this to the Seattle map (which obviously could have been a factor in replicating the Portland model in Seattle). However, as previously mentioned, the "perfect" locations for food cart pods in Seattle would be near Westlake Center, which is within walking distance of bus and light rail lines, high density work environments, multi-story structures, and shopping centers (just like Portland).

In conclusion, the model that Seattle could use would be to allow zoning that would enable food cart pods of varying quantities to proliferate on or within 3 city blocks of city plazas such as Westlake Center that are located in richly populated and easily accessible city centers, and underutlized land parcels such as the East Pine Street parcel on Capitol Hill to accommodate area residents, students at the nearby Seattle Central Community College, and those enjoying area nightlife. These areas would be

the most ideal to accommodate food cart pods, as they would in theory serve a variety of cuisines for large populations of workers, residents, students, and tourists. Potential stand-alone food cart locations could proliferate around Seattle similarly to Portland, such as Portland's Parkers Waffle Cart on Lombard Avenue in North Portland (which shares a parking lot with a video store) and Grilled Cheese Grill on Alberta Street in NE Portland (which rents the land parcel from the property owner). But these locations could, like in Portland, be found virtually anywhere in Seattle and are most effective in residential areas that also share a high density of retail and commercial options and are near transit and light rail lines, as well as arterial streets. I chose not to include potential land parcels in my maps, for while they could in theory illustrate where potential food cart pods could proliferate, one cannot factor out the potential usage of underutlized parking lots or portions of parking lots.

Recent conversations within the City of Seattle have hinted at a very real possibility that the decades-long strict restrictions upon street vendors by the health department might be relaxed enough to encourage growth in Seattle's miniscule but popular food cart scene. Last December, Seattle's Department of Planning and Development met with the Capitol Hill Community Council to discuss changes in zoning for street vendors. These would include: an elimination of an existing 200-foot setback of vending near city parks, which, according to the Capitol Hill Seattle blog, is being dropped because "vending has been shown to activate and improve park safety" (Capitol Hill Blog, 2009); the creation of a specific street use permit for food carts and mobile vendors (which only food trucks serving

construction sites enjoy, save for private property owners); standardization of trash maintenance; setbacks from terrestrial restaurants that would "require food vendors to be 50 feet from adjacent food service" (CHS, 2009); and the allowance by Seattle's Department of Transportation to "designate public places (such as Occidental or Westlake Parks, or on-street locations) for mobile vending" (CHS, 2009).

Tacoma also appears to be open to experimentation with a food cart economy of its own. According to the Tacoma News Tribune, a pilot project is in the works, spearheaded by Mayor Marilyn Strickland that would allow food carts to proliferate within the Downtown Business Improvement Area, which encompasses the area between South 7th. to the north, South 21st to the south, A Street to the East, and Market Street to the west. Furthermore, the article cites that Tacoma's health department would decrease its regulations "such as a requirement that any food cart needs to operate within 200 feet of a 'commissary,' or food preparation site, with a water source" (Tacoma News Tribune, 2009), along with a redefinition of foods previously deemed "high risk" such as chili or hamburgers (provided they are pre-cooked at an approved site.

While there are fears that food carts will affect the business of terrestrial restaurants, the hope is that more people will use public spaces such as Seattle's Westlake Center and Tacoma's Tollefson Plaza in the latter when food cart pods are allowed to set up shop, which gets more foot traffic into the downtown area, which in turn could in theory help *all* business in these districts. Furthermore, with more outdoor plazas and land parcels populated by food cart aficionados comes stronger

community-building and lessened fears of the perceived “dangers” or misconceptions that may have been previously attributed to these areas by perceived “criminal,” “homeless” or “drunk” looking citizens. Furthermore, food carts provide affordable, quality food options for citizens in a variety of cuisines (breakfast sandwiches, yogurt, organic ice cream, grilled cheese sandwiches, among a myriad of other options). People gain a better understanding of their community, different kinds of food variations, and potentially gain employment or a small business opportunity for themselves.

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