



Class One

Urban Policy ***4211/6606***

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Class One

*Introduction to the Course and Overview of Goals
and Themes (with some training thrown in)*

There are three primary goals of the class

1. Provide you with deeper understanding of what cities are, how they promote human flourishing, and **the role that municipal governments play in ensuring that cities deliver on their promise**
2. Examine why cities (and city governments), at times, fail in this role. Specifically, **why they have failed to eliminate the racial equity gaps that persist in our cities in education, public safety, health and economic mobility**
3. Provide you with some of the **conceptual, analytical and communication tools** you would need to be an effective policy advisor



Policy is the art and science of helping an organization achieve its strategic objectives

The setting doesn't matter - the work is basically the same - but where can you find *MEANING?*



Maximizing
Public Value
(1988-1992)



Achieving
Excellence in
Education and
Research
(1992-1995)



Migrating to a Digital Future
(1995-2002)



Reinventing
Local
Government
(2002-2010)



Making
Cities
"Smarter"
(2010-2014)



Closing
Racial Equity
Gaps
(2014-2021)



Closing Racial Equity Gaps
Across an Entire City
(2021-2024)

You never know where you might make an impact

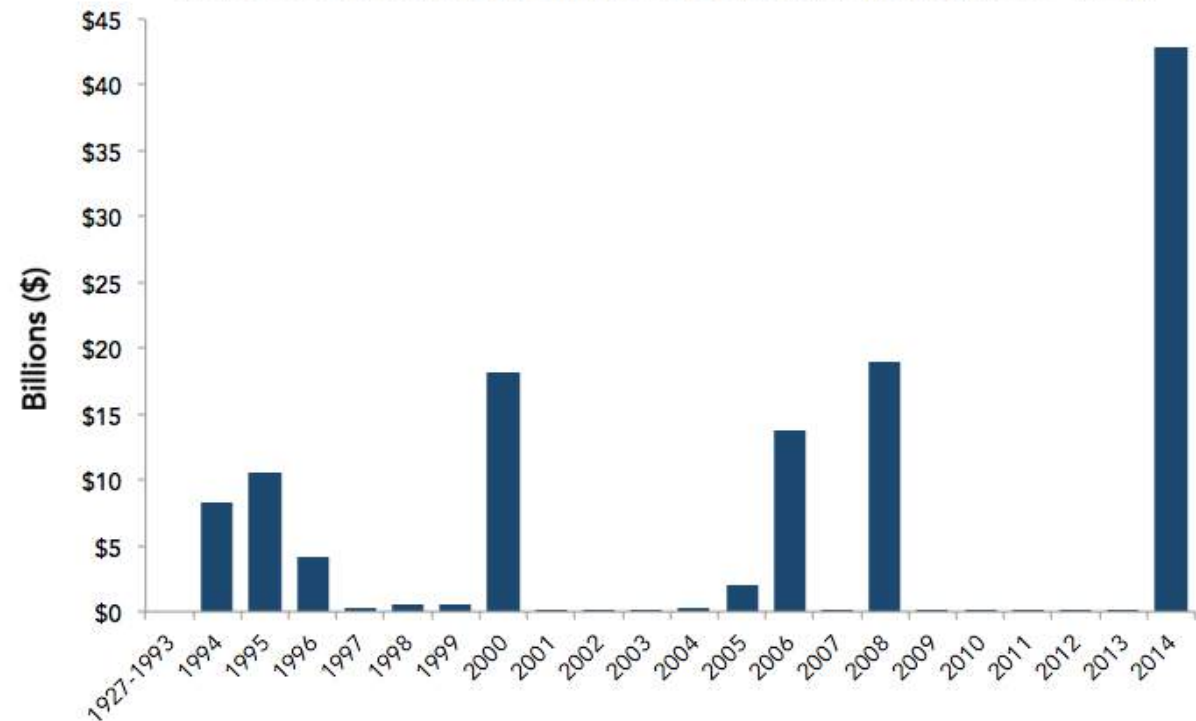


- In the early 1990s, Federal government was running large deficits (so what else is new?)
- We were asked to develop proposals for how to raise money
- I had read some research suggesting that companies would be willing to pay for radio spectrum
- Wrote a White Paper, got it approved, and the rest is \$120B worth of history

In 1993, Congress authorized the FCC to use competitive bidding (i.e., auctions) to grant licenses for rights to use specific frequencies for commercial wireless communications. That general auction authority was originally due to expire on September 30, 1998, but Congress has extended it several times. The most recent long-term extension, granted as part of the Middle Class Tax Relief

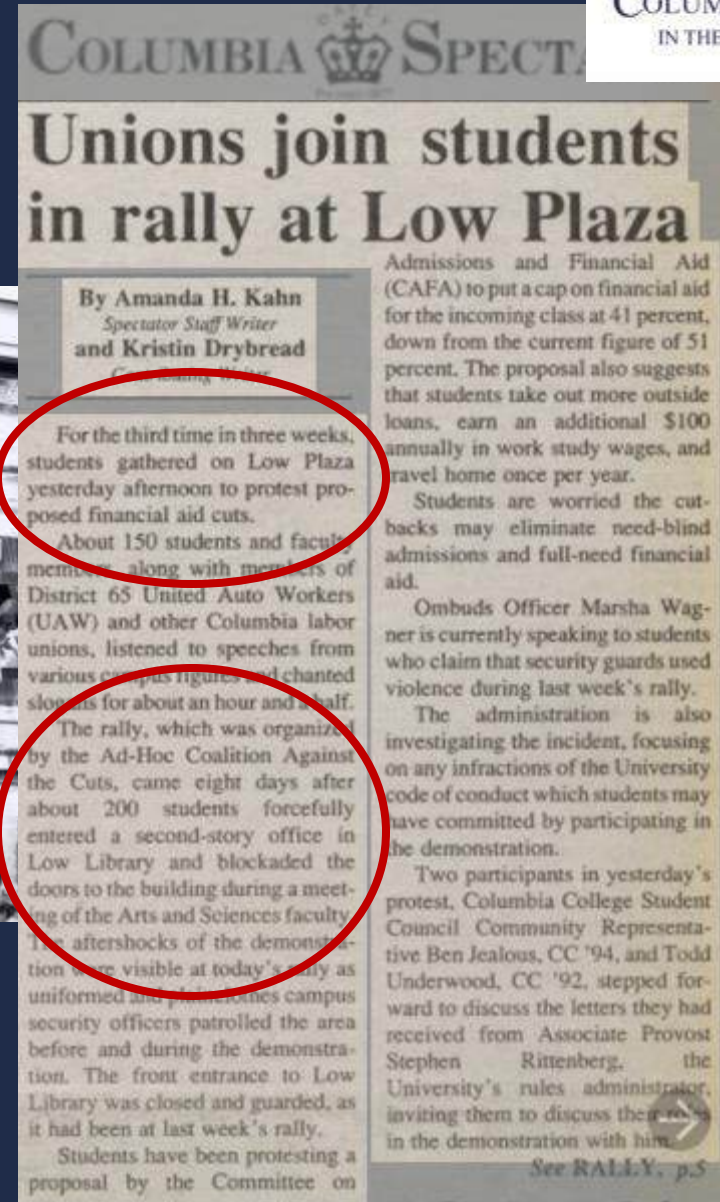
Over \$120 Billion in Revenue over 20 Years

Net F.C.C. Revenue in Billions of Dollars (Nominal), 1994 - 2014



Policy advising has its thrills

- First assignment in my new job was to analyze the financial aid budget shortfall and develop a set of options
- One option I presented was to end “need blind” admissions and cap spending
- Baumol’s Cost Disease and the challenges of funding functions subject to low rates of productivity growth
- Students weren’t interested



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

It is not expertise that really matters, its imagination

- Colleague in my office pitched the idea of providing Internet access on airplanes
- We took the idea to United, American and Delta
- Built the first business plan that led to the “Connexion” service, the first WiFi service available on aircraft in 2001



And its 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration



- In 2002 I visited the Police Chief at the City Hall East building
- Came back to the Mayor and said “we need to get out of this building”
- Ten years later, Ponce City Market opens

Historic Development Opportunity in Atlanta



A unique opportunity in the heart of Atlanta. City Hall East, formerly the regional distribution headquarters for Sears, is available for redevelopment. This one-of-a-kind facility occupies 16 acres of prime real estate near Downtown and is an ideal candidate for mixed-use development.

- 675 Ponce De Leon Ave, a focal point of redevelopment activity
- Built in 1926 with 2 Million sqft on 11 floors
- 1200 space parking garage; approximately 900 space surface lot
- Ceiling height between 13 – 15 feet with extensive hardwood flooring
- 1.3 miles from rapid rail station
- Strong local urban residential demographics



And you'll be surprised where you may make a real difference (however small)



- Focused on selling “smart city” solutions around the world
- While in China, officials seemed oddly interested in our facial recognition software
- Petitioned IBM CEO to restrict sales to China and other countries

How China uses facial recognition to control human behavior

When facial recognition is everywhere, anything you do is fair game for public shaming and punishment.



Key is to always widen your aperture



- Attended the kick-off session for the Westside Future Fund
- Mark Teixeira presented work he was doing around Proctor Creek restoration
- Dan Cathy introduced us, and we took a drive...



The Dickens administration has adopted the goal of eliminating racial equity gaps in Atlanta by 2044

We will have achieved **fairness of place** when we have created the conditions needed for **all children to lead happy, healthy and productive lives**

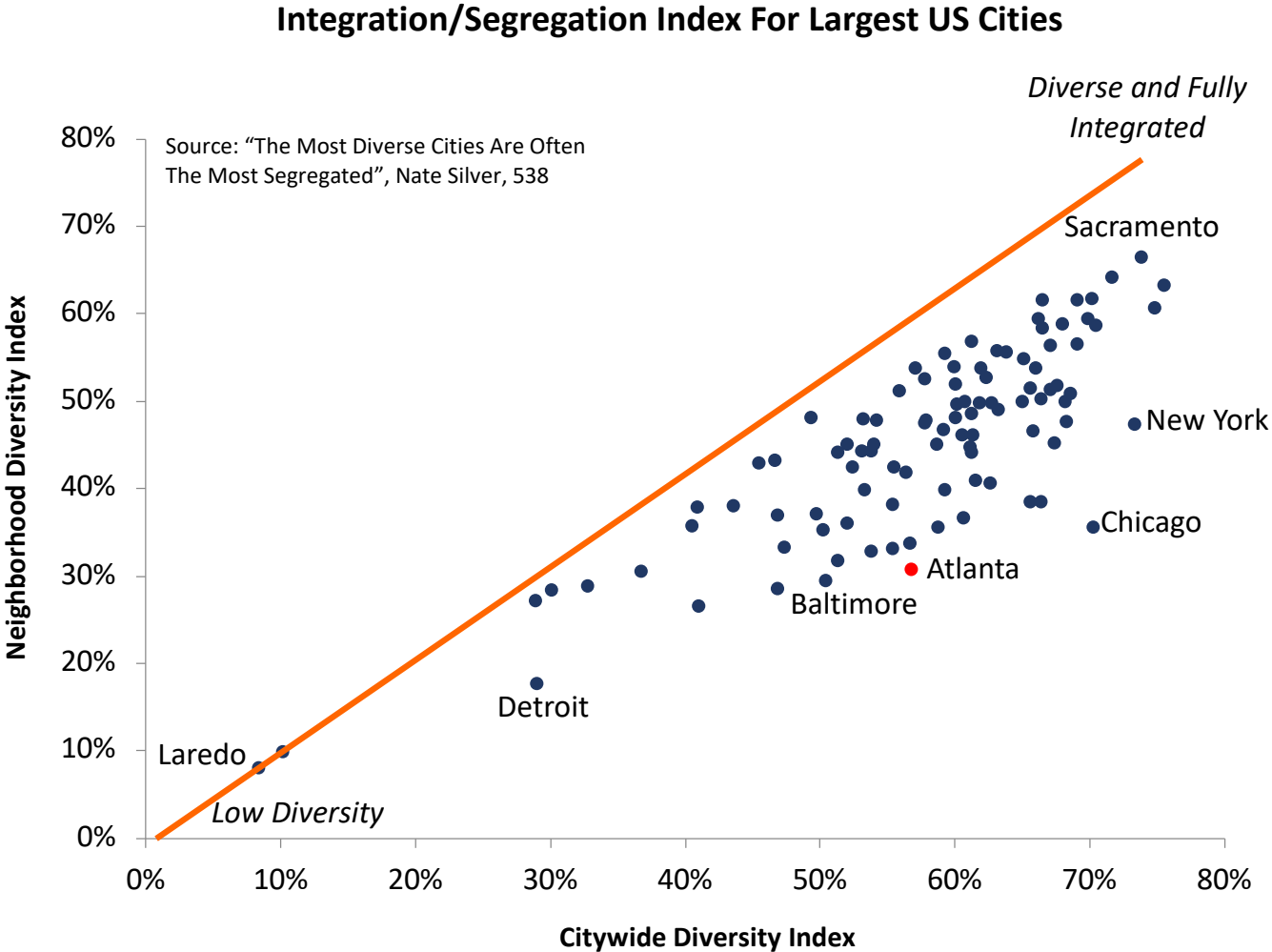
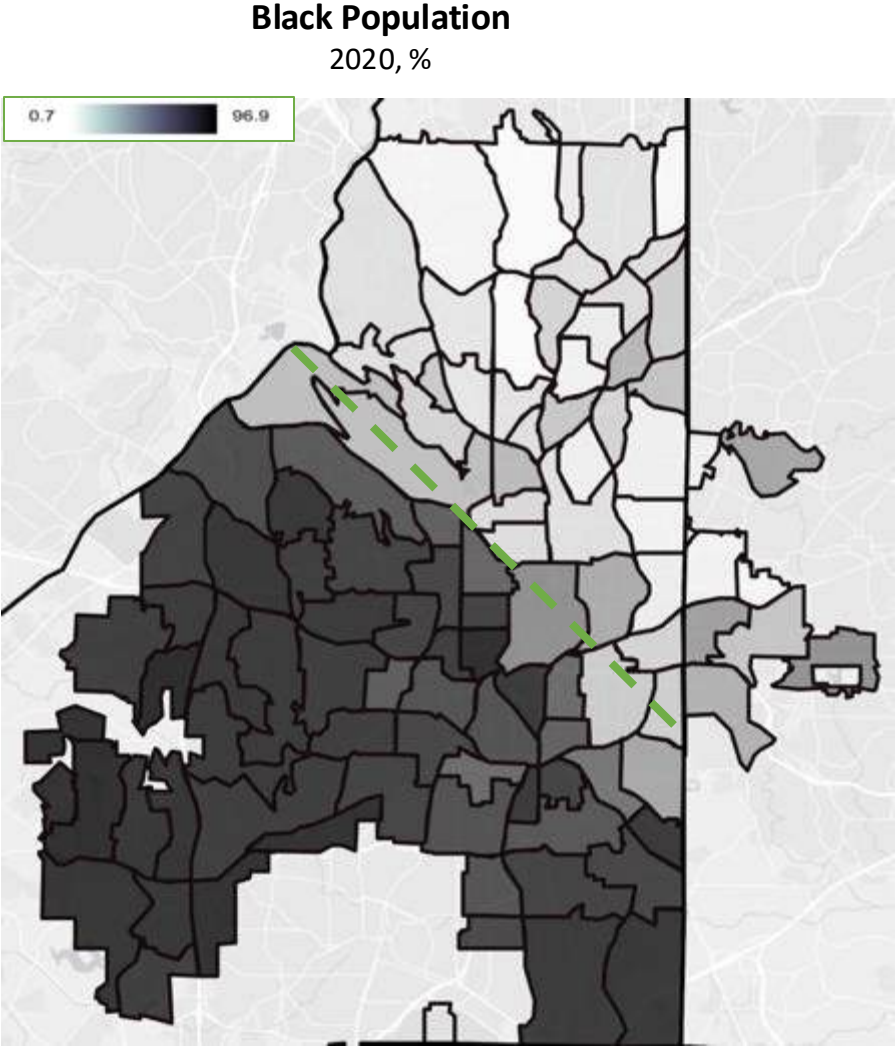
- “By joining together –right now, today –by strengthening our partnerships and aligning our missions; by working together in a spirit of innovation and service; **by focusing on transforming our most disinvested places**; and by centering equity and the voices of our residents, we can make Atlanta **the best city in the country to raise a child.**”
- “We need to reimagine a future for our city. **A city of healthy, thriving neighborhoods that are structurally accessible to people of all races and income levels.** Neighborhoods that are safe, healthy, culturally rich, with good schools and dynamic economies. “
- “If we can achieve that goal, then all the outcomes we all care about –**public safety, educational opportunities, health equity, economic mobility** –will improve.”

-Mayor Andre Dickens

Mayor Andre Dickens

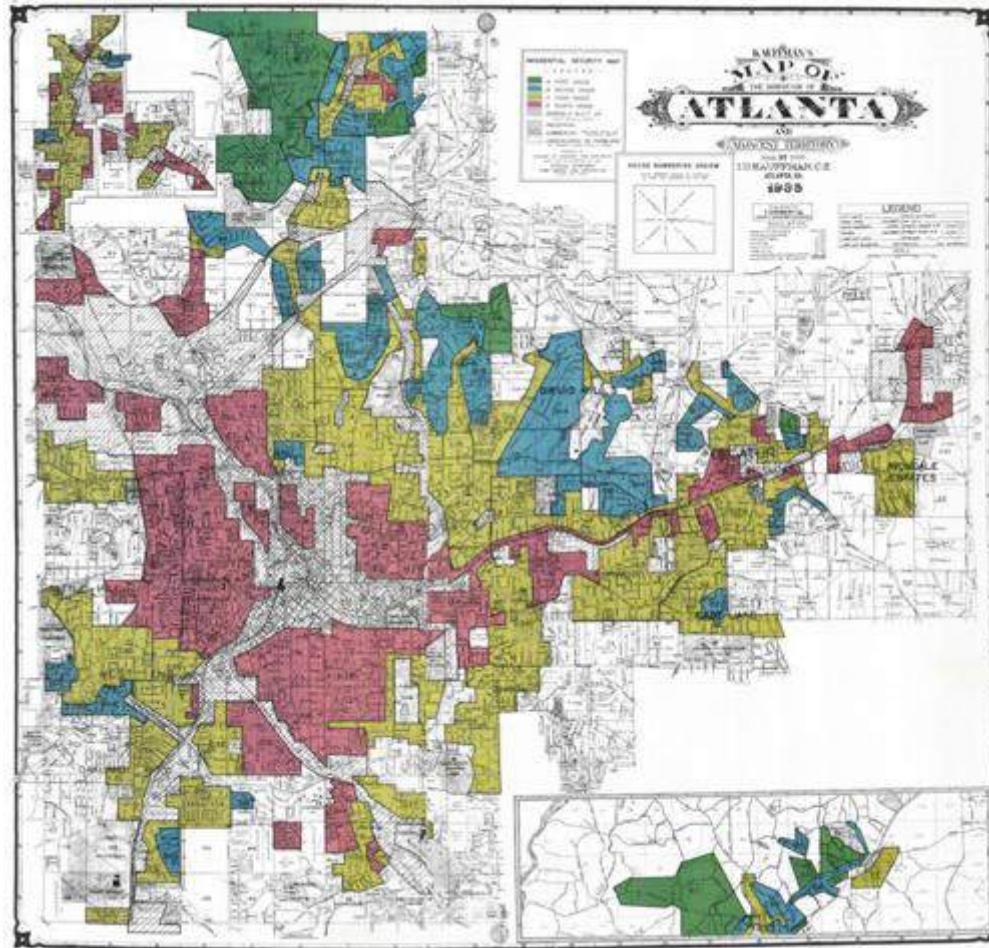


Atlanta is one of the most segregated cities in the country



This segregation is a consequence of policies and actions intended to concentrate Black residents into certain neighborhoods

- In 1922 a zoning ordinance was adopted that divided the city into an “R-1 white district” and an “R-2 colored district”
 - The City’s Planning Director at the time argued that “**home neighborhoods had to be protected from** any further damage to values resulting from inappropriate uses, including **the encroachment of the colored race.**”
- Despite the increase in Black political influence that accompanied the transition to a majority Black city in the early 1970s, **these patterns of racial segregation persist to this day**



The Red-Lining of Atlanta (1938)

- Red areas with large African-American populations were designated as “hazardous place to underwrite mortgages.”
- The consequence is that little if any wealth was generated in these neighborhoods, with Black families missing out on generations of residential equity and inherited wealth

Despite legal victories, practices ensured the spirit of legally-sanctioned segregation dictated settlement patterns for the next century

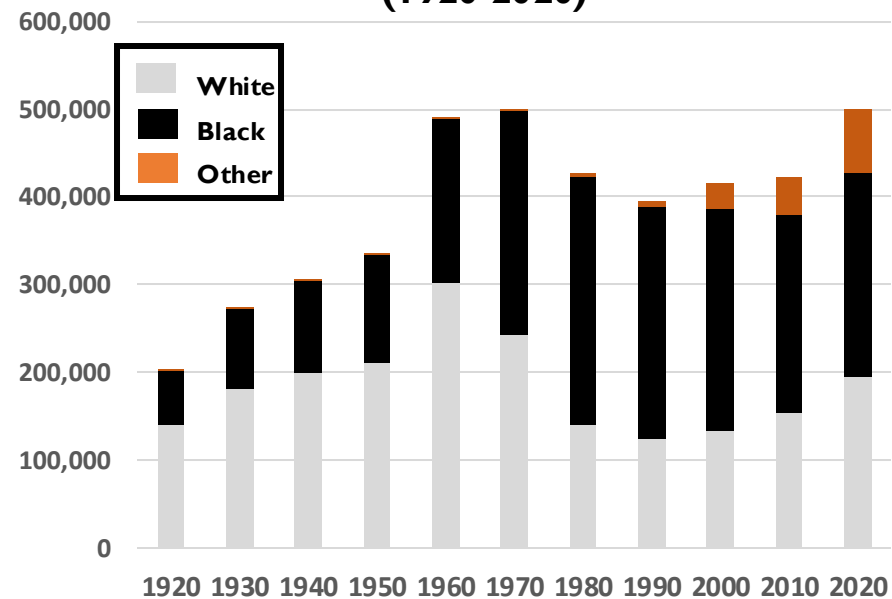
- Efforts to desegregate schools were resisted by the White governing authorities through cuts in funding and other efforts to inhibit it
- As late as 1962 governments **were taking explicit actions to prevent Black families from moving into White neighborhoods**

Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. ordered the construction of a wooden roadblock across Peyton Road in southwest Atlanta in December of 1962



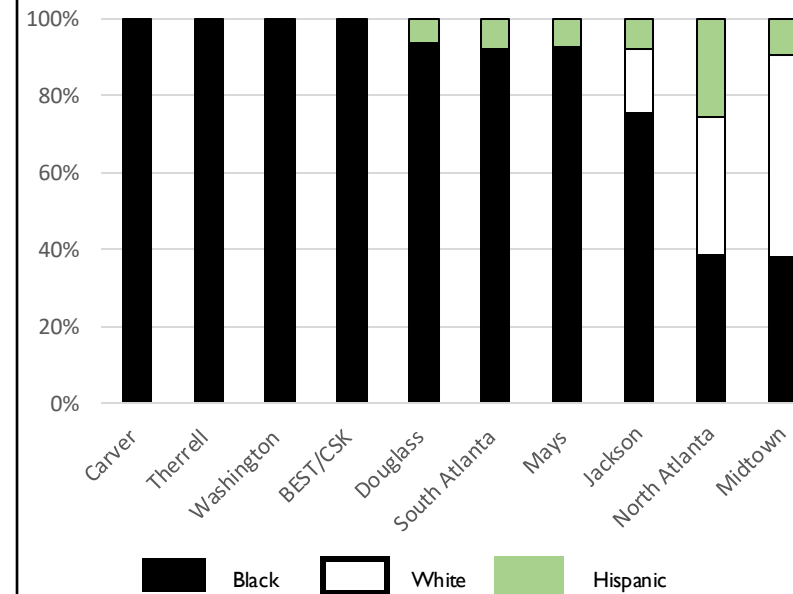
- Beginning in the 1960s, the population of the city contracted, propelled primarily by the phenomenon of “**White flight**” as the region became increasing suburbanized and Federal housing policies incentivized the relocation of White families to the suburbs

Racial Composition of City of Atlanta (1920-2020)



- Policies and practices – “steering” by real estate agents and how school attendance zones are drawn for example – promote the continued segregation of the Atlanta
- **7 of the 10 public high schools have not a single White student**

Racial Composition of the Ten APS High Schools in 2022



The consequence is that racial equity gaps in Atlanta are among the largest in the country

Racial Equity Gaps in Atlanta

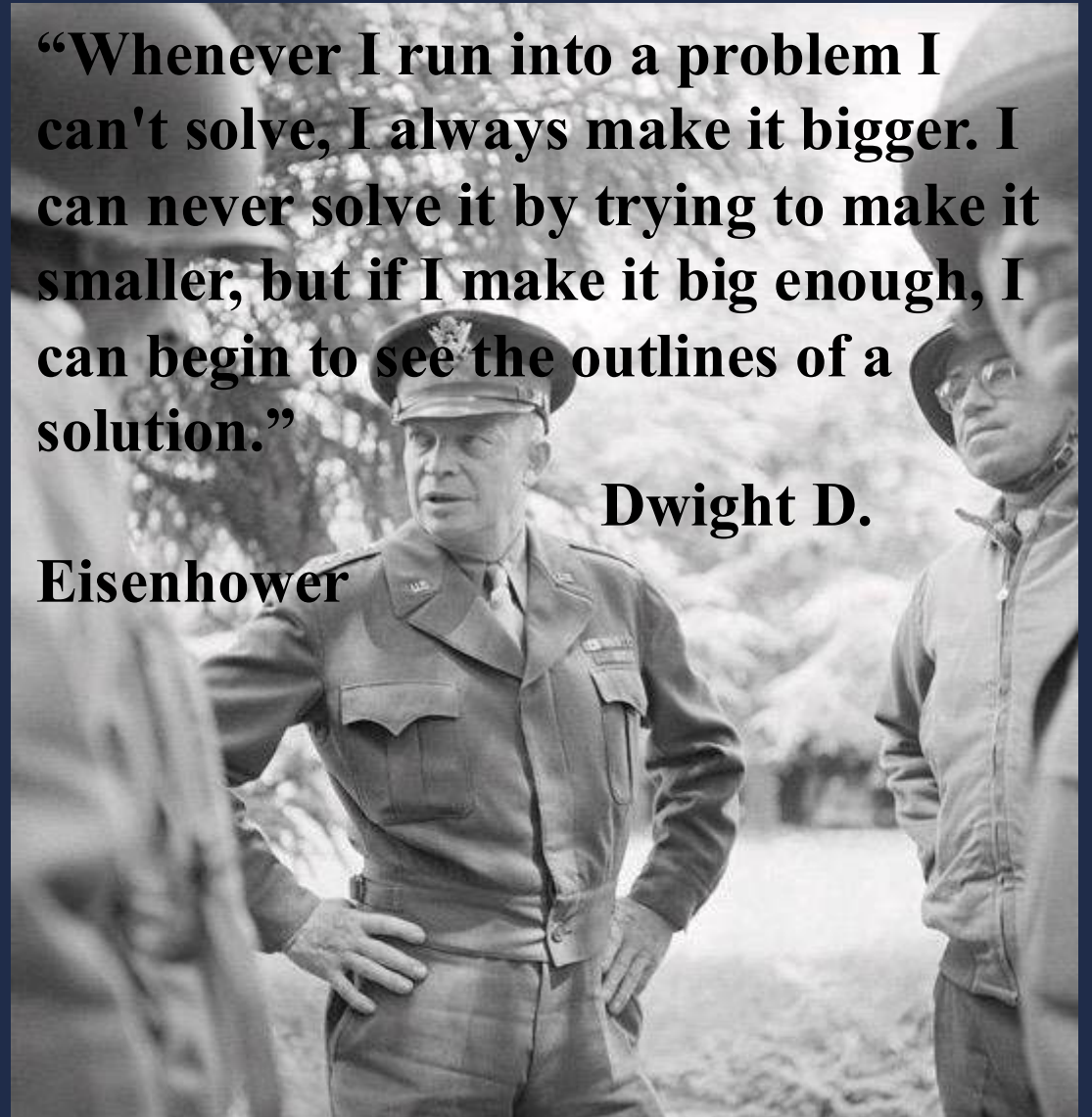
Measure	Black	White
% Low-Weight Births in Black and White Neighborhoods	20.1%	5.2%
% Access to Early Learning in Black and White Neighborhoods	32%	81%
Elementary School Mobility Rates in Black and White Neighborhoods	29%	6%
4 th Grade English/Language Arts Proficiency	21%	81%
% with High School Diploma	85%	98%
Median Home Value in Black and White Neighborhoods	\$293K	\$429K
Lead Exposure Risk (0-10 Scale) in Black and White Neighborhoods	8	2
Violent Crime Rate in Black and White Neighborhoods (crimes/100,000 residents)	112	15
% Occupied Housing Units in Black and White Neighborhoods	78%	92%
% of Population Below Poverty in Black and White Neighborhoods	44%	3%
% with Access to Fresh Food in Black and White Neighborhoods	25%	90%
% with Access to Banking Services in Black and White Neighborhoods	17%	92%
Median Household Income in Black and White Neighborhoods	\$35,000	\$115,000
Median Household Wealth	\$5,000	\$238,000
% Housing Cost Burdened in Black and White Neighborhoods	47%	23%
Life Expectancy in Black and White Neighborhoods	73	81

The Eisenhower Principle applies

- The problem of persistent racial equity gaps in health, education, public safety and economic mobility is a **complex one**
 - No material progress despite a half of a century of effort
- The traditional approach – borrowed from the natural sciences – has been to **break down the problem into its component parts** and address those parts **individually**
 - A panoply of programs and services in health, education, criminal justice, social services, poverty relief, and economic development
- But if we instead “**make the problem bigger**”, the contours of a solution begins to reveal itself

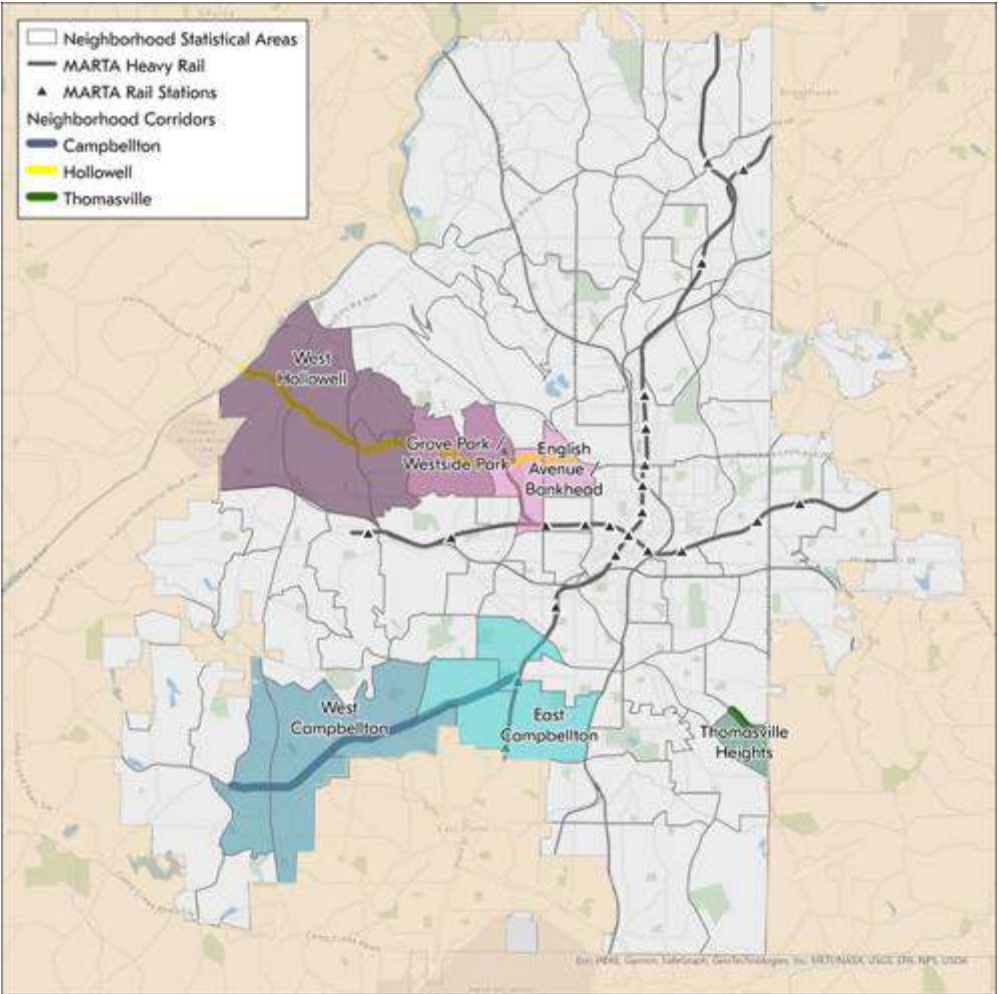
“Whenever I run into a problem I can't solve, I always make it bigger. I can never solve it by trying to make it smaller, but if I make it big enough, I can begin to see the outlines of a solution.”

**Dwight D.
Eisenhower**

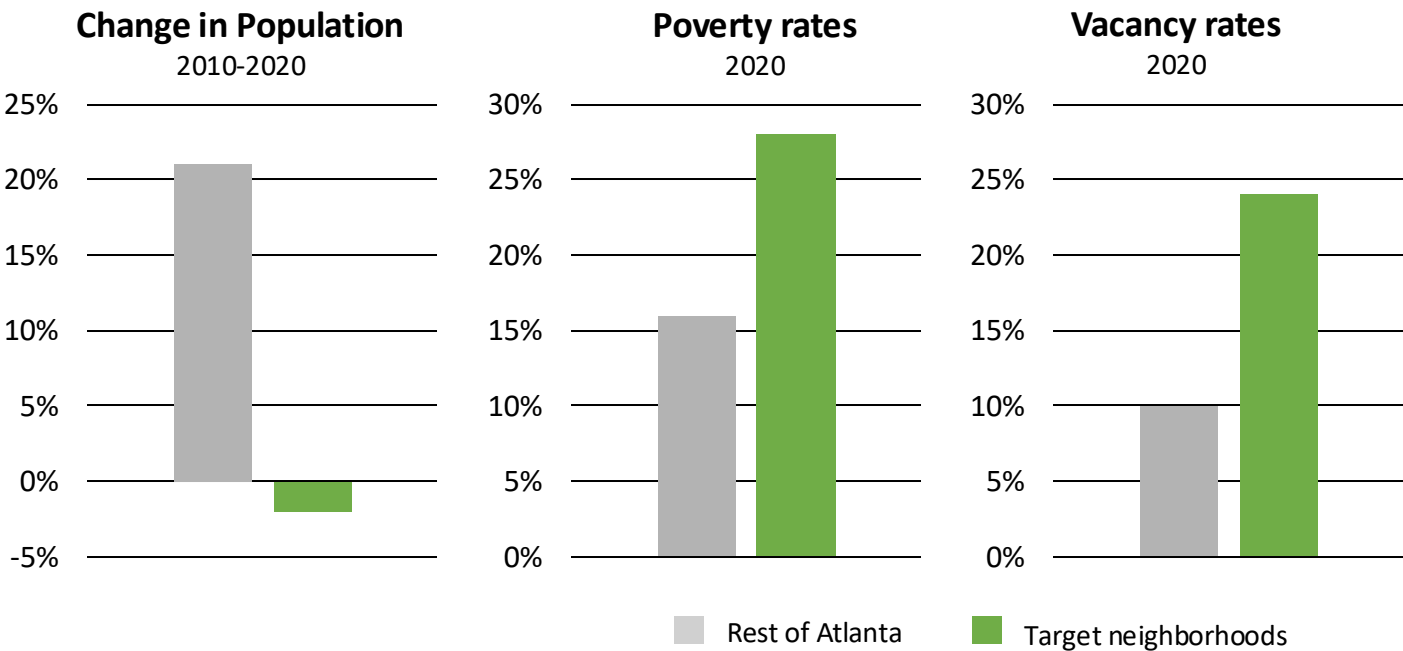


My role in the Mayor's Office is to develop and implement neighborhood revitalization strategies

Target Neighborhoods



The target neighborhoods have **nearly 70K residents, but with declining populations and high poverty rates**



Chosen because they **transect the most distressed regions of the city and yet have significant public and private assets** that can be leveraged as part of a transformation strategy

To be an effective policy advisor, you need to master several skills

- **Defining** the problem accurately
- Selecting the most appropriate **conceptual model** to solve that problem
- Performing **the analysis** that the conceptual model requires
- **Evaluating the outcomes** of the analysis to determine the optimal policy solution
- **Building a persuasive case** for the adoption of that solution and communicating it effectively to stakeholders



An effective policy advisor is always asking “why?”

- **Why** did we pick that goal?
- **Why** is it more important than these other ones?
- **Why** are we assuming ...?
- **Why** are we limiting ourselves in how we achieve this goal?



The conventional wisdom is usually wrong

The class is organized around four questions

Why the City?

2 The Impulse to Urbanize and Why Cities Create Value

3 The Kind of Problem the City Is

4 Emergence and the City as a Complex Adaptive System

What's Not Working?

5 Crime, Policing and the Heuristics Trap

6 The Root Causes of Urban Outcomes

7 Project Team Discovery Phase Readouts

What is the Solution?

8 The Role of the Built Environment in Generating Urban Outcomes

9 The Physical Legacy of Racism

10 Housing Markets and the Role of Government in Making Cities Accessible

How Should We Implement It?

11 Project Team Strategic Investments Options Phase Readouts

12 Intervening to Catalyze Preferred Emergent Urban Outcomes

13 Urban Change, Gentrification and the Evolution of Cities

14 Final Team Presentations

Each class session will be organized around four sections

- 2:00pm: Getting settled/connecting
- 2:05pm: *Section One*: Introduction to class theme and summary of the readings
- 2:40pm: *Section Two*: Conversation with guest speaker, facilitated Q&A
- 3:30pm: BREAK
- 3:45pm: *Section Three*: Student Presentations and Discussion of an Urban Issue
- 4:30pm: *Section Four*: Discussion and Integrative Response

Student performance will be evaluated based on a combination of contributions

- **Weekly Commentaries (30%)** - Submit a short (1- or 2-paragraph) written commentary from the readings for each week. Graded on a three point scale. A response scoring a (3) will have at least one key insight that you have learned from each of the assigned readings and at least one question that you would like to discuss or get clarity on in class. A response scoring a (1) will merely demonstrate that the assignments have been read
- **One-time Presentation (20%)** – Small student teams will make a brief presentation to the class and facilitate a conversation about how a policy analyst should go about advising a mayor on an assigned public policy problem
- **Semester-Long Project (30%)** - Each team will be assigned a neighborhood in Atlanta and will build a strategy for how to improve its health and close racial equity gaps. Three presentations will be made over the course of the semester
- **Class Participation and Attendance (15%)** – Class presence and participation points are given to encourage your active participation and discussion. You will be rewarded with a perfect score if you come to all classes and actively contribute to the class discussion during lectures and during conversations with guest speakers. Your contributions should offer different and unique, but relevant, perspectives, move the discussion and analysis forward and build on the comments of others
- **Peer Review (5%)** - For the semester-long project, each team member will provide a review of each of their teammates' performance based on the following criteria:
 - Provided material and substantive thought leadership
 - Delivered their contributions in a timely and equitable fashion
 - Demonstrated willingness to work as a part of a team towards a shared goal

The weekly presentations should be short and to the point

- Teams of two students each
- Presentations will be four slides long
- Format:
 - **Slide One** – Definition of the issue. What is the problem that needs to be solved?
 - **Slide Two** – Conceptual approach. What is the best approach to developing a policy recommendation?
 - **Slide Three** – Fact base. What key facts do we need to know in order to effectively apply the conceptual approach?
 - **Slide Four** – Policy Recommendation. What policy do you advise the Mayor to adopt?

Issues To Be Addressed

1. Should the City invest in “the Stitch”?
2. Should the City invest in fixed-rail transit on the BeltLine?
3. Should the City create a guaranteed income program?
4. Should the City pedestrianize Peachtree Street downtown?
5. Should the City build infill MARTA stations?
6. How should the City deal with homeless encampments?
7. Should the City support intercity high speed rail?
8. Should the City execute the TrailsATL Plan?

The one-time presentations are a chance to work and think like a team

One Time Presentation Assignments and Schedule

Urban Policy Class								
Assignments Fall 2025								
One-Time Team Projects	<i>Should the City invest in "the Stitch"?</i>	<i>Should the City invest in fixed-rail transit on the BeltLine?</i>	<i>Should the City create a guaranteed income program?</i>	<i>Should the city pedestrianize Peachtree Street downtown?</i>	<i>Should the city build infill MARTA stations?</i>	<i>Should the City execute the TrailsATL Plan?</i>	<i>Should the city support intercity high speed rail?</i>	<i>How should the city deal with homeless encampments?</i>
Date	9/5	9/12	9/19	9/26	10/10	10/17	10/24	11/7
Pranav Batchu								
Audrey Elizabeth Ferguson-Brown								
Merritt Elizabeth Hornbuckle								
Ashna Jain								
Kieran Bowles Kelly								
Lauren Soyeon Kim								
Tanish Potula								
Isabella Njeri Simon								
Giavanna Destiny Stockton								
Adit Shetty								
Abraham Ankamah								
Xavier Benjamin Fitten								
Yangho Kim								
Aniis Lester								
Kelvin Graham Matthews								
Julia Tracy								

Semester-long project will be to develop a strategy to improve outcomes in a specific neighborhoods

- **Policy Question:** How can the City eliminate racial inequities in [Neighborhood]?
- Apply the lessons and learnings from the class sessions
- Neighborhoods
 - Bankhead
 - Dixie Hills
 - Carey Park
 - Southwest
 - Venetian Hills
 - Oakland City
 - Center Hill
 - Mozley Park

Methodology



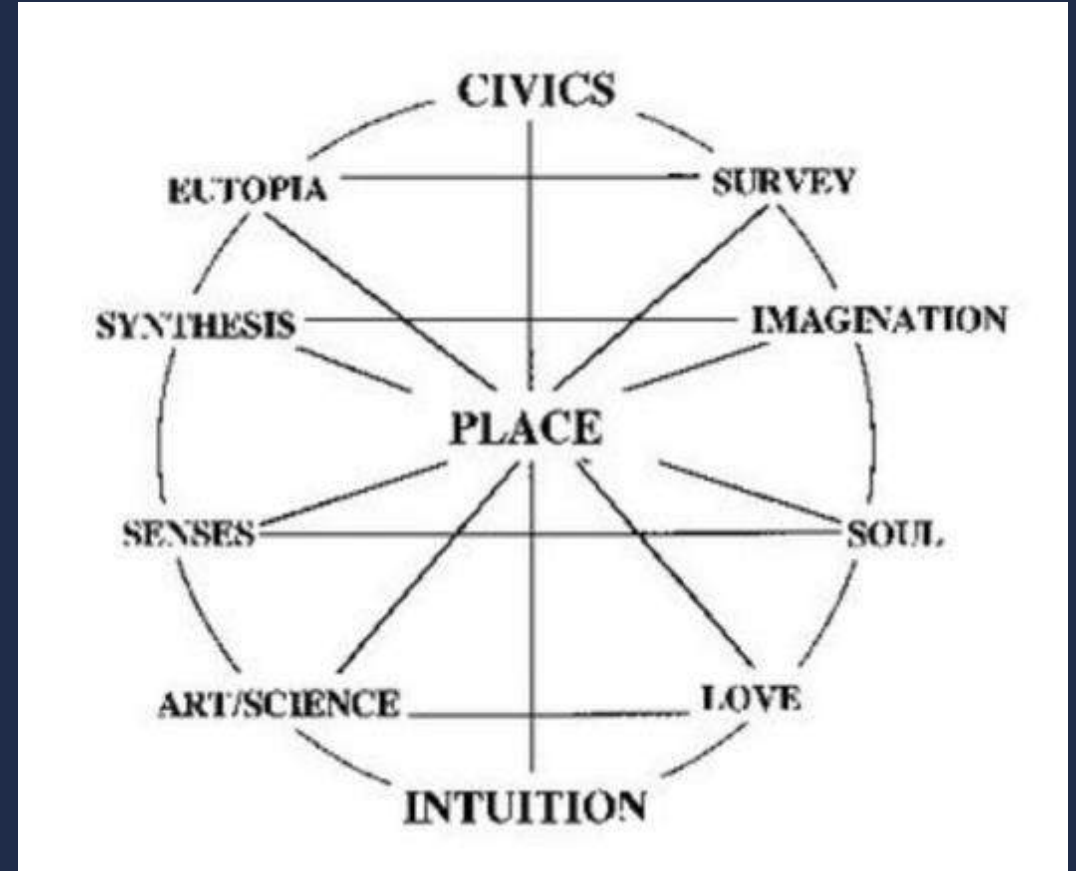
There are lots of resources to leverage

- City of Atlanta [Neighborhood Change Report](#)
 - Use the relevant Neighborhood Statistical Area (NSA)
- Neighborhood Nexus
 - Use City of Atlanta [Data Dashboard](#)
- City of Atlanta Department of City Planning [LCI Reports](#)

Introduction to Major Class Themes

Our focus will be on “place” and its role in promoting human flourishing

- Patrick Geddes wrote Cities in Evolution in 1915 where he argued that the city is the place where **humanity best expresses itself** on all dimensions
- The city is an **object of scientific interest**; its dynamics can be understood and underlying principles revealed
- The goal is not a Utopia but a Eutopia: **realizing the full potential of what urban existence can offer**



The class operates at the interstices of multiple domains

Urban Planning

- Cities generate value (Childe, Mumford)
- Supported by network economics (Arthur)
- Reliant on urban planning approaches (Alexander, Jacobs)
- Subject to panarchic cycles (Gunderson and Holling)

"Built on steel, Pittsburgh now thrives on culture"

New York Times

Community Development

- Health (RWJF, MacArthur Foundation)
- Public Safety (Sharkey, Clear)
- Economic Mobility (Wilson, Chetty)
- Education (Hanauer)

"Attempts to change places and social environments rather than people might deliver better results"

Robert Sampson

Race Studies

- Neighborhood effects (Wilson, Sampson)
- Public policy role in creating segregated neighborhoods of deep distress (Rothstein)

"We will know our work is done when our neighborhoods are no longer expressions of injustice"

Bryan Stephenson

Human Development

- Sources of Toxic Stress and Childhood Development (Shonkoff)

"Epigenetic changes can be transferred across generations, thereby underscoring the circumstances in which children are raised"

National Scientific Council
on the Developing Child

Complexity Science & Cities

- City is a problem of "organized complexity" (Jacobs)
- Quantitative Theory of Cities (West)
- Hunting root causes (Byrne)

"Cities that remain incipiently connected will typically underperform"

Luis Bettencourt

Big take-aways

- How we **define a problem** dictates the available solutions
 - This is where we make our most consequential mistakes!
- We **treat complex problems like they are complicated problems**
 - It's all about causality!
- Conventional thinking is almost **always wrong**
 - We rely too heavily on our tendency to “think fast”!

The Syllabus contains the information you will need to be successful in this class

- Course Website and Management Tools
- Course Requirements and Grading
- Expectations and Guidelines
- Campus Resources

PowerPoint Presentation Training

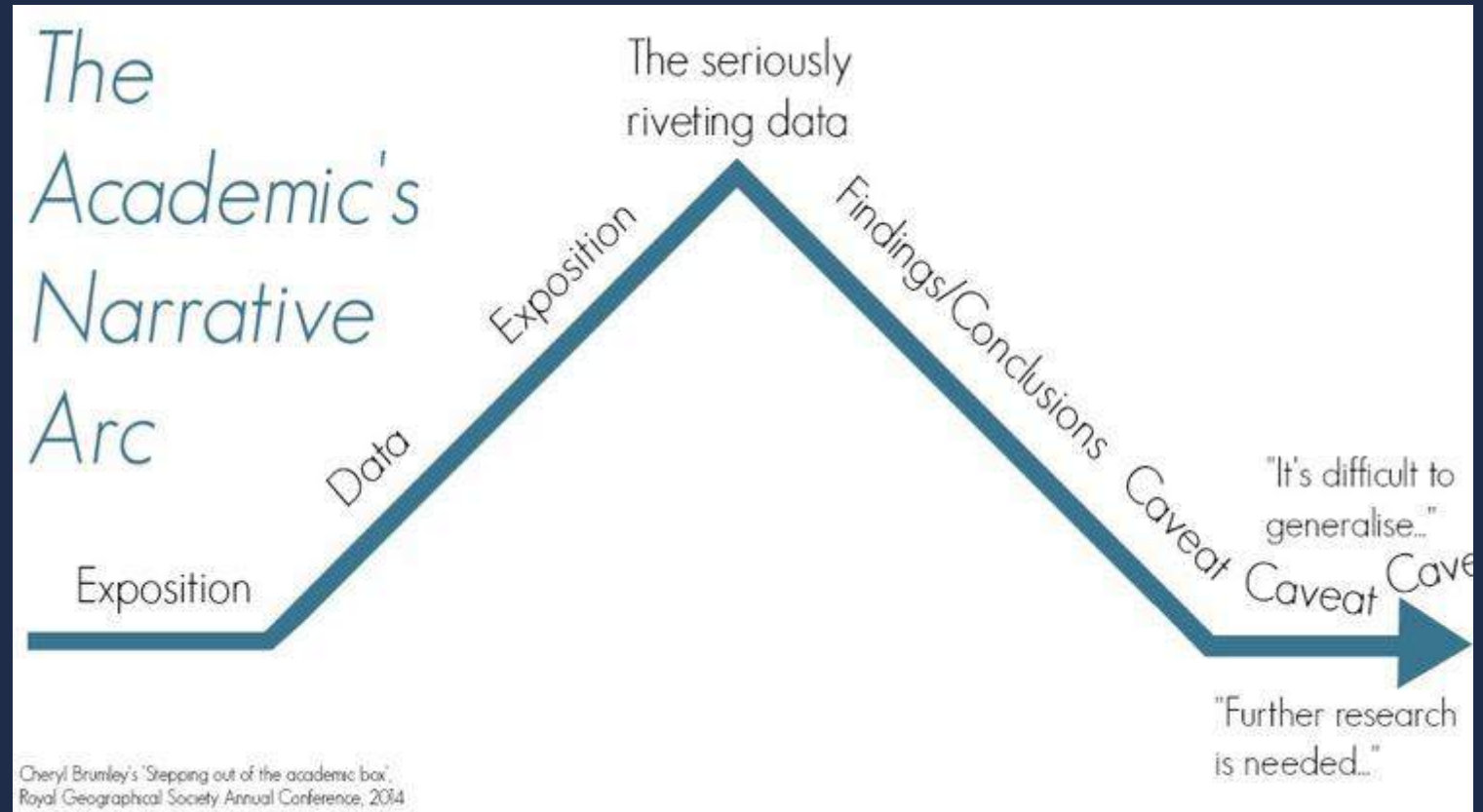
The goal of this exercise is to standardize our approach to developing presentations

- Agree on the key principals for using PowerPoint as a communication tool
- Make it easier and more efficient to work together on presentations by standardizing format expectations
- Learn to love PowerPoint!



A presentation is a “story” used to persuade

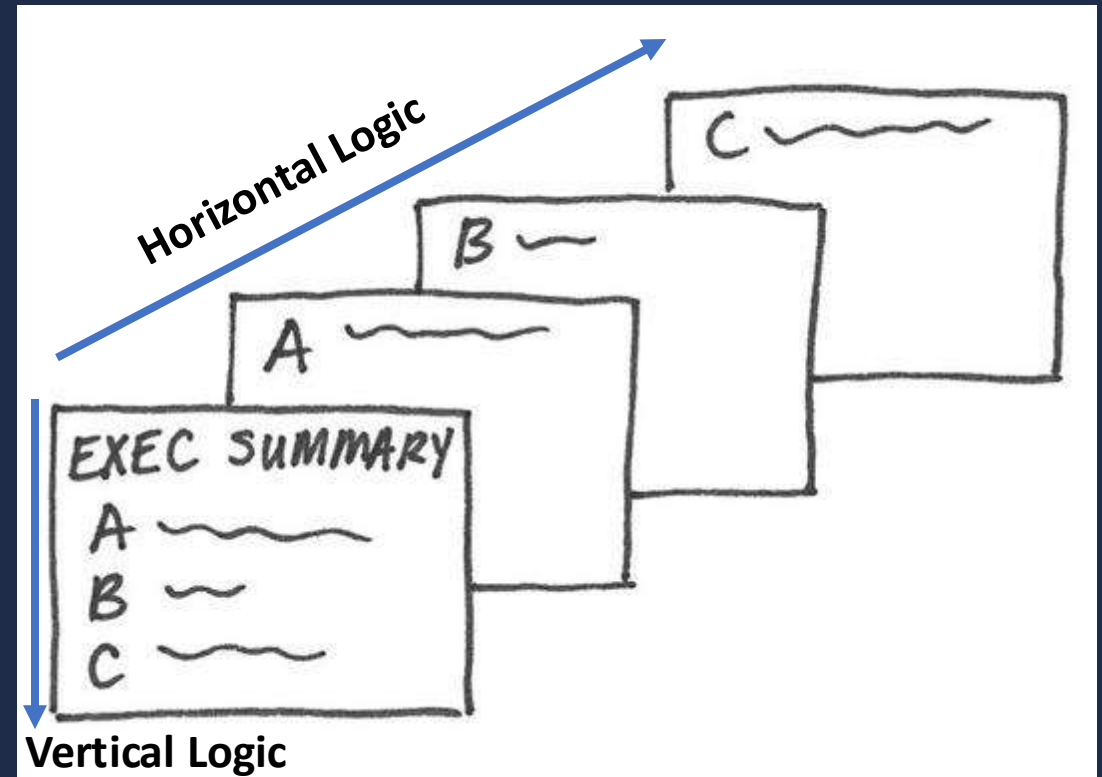
- Should have a narrative “arc”
- Should be **logical**
- Should be **convincing**
- Policy advisors are in the business of persuading audiences
 - City leadership
 - Community stakeholders
 - Partners
 - General public



We tell this story using horizontal and vertical logic

- Horizontal logic **propels the story forward**
 - Each slide follows the previous slide in a logical way and preserves the arc of the narrative
- Vertical logic **provides the justification** for the argument being made in the horizontal story
 - Provides rationale using data, facts and analysis

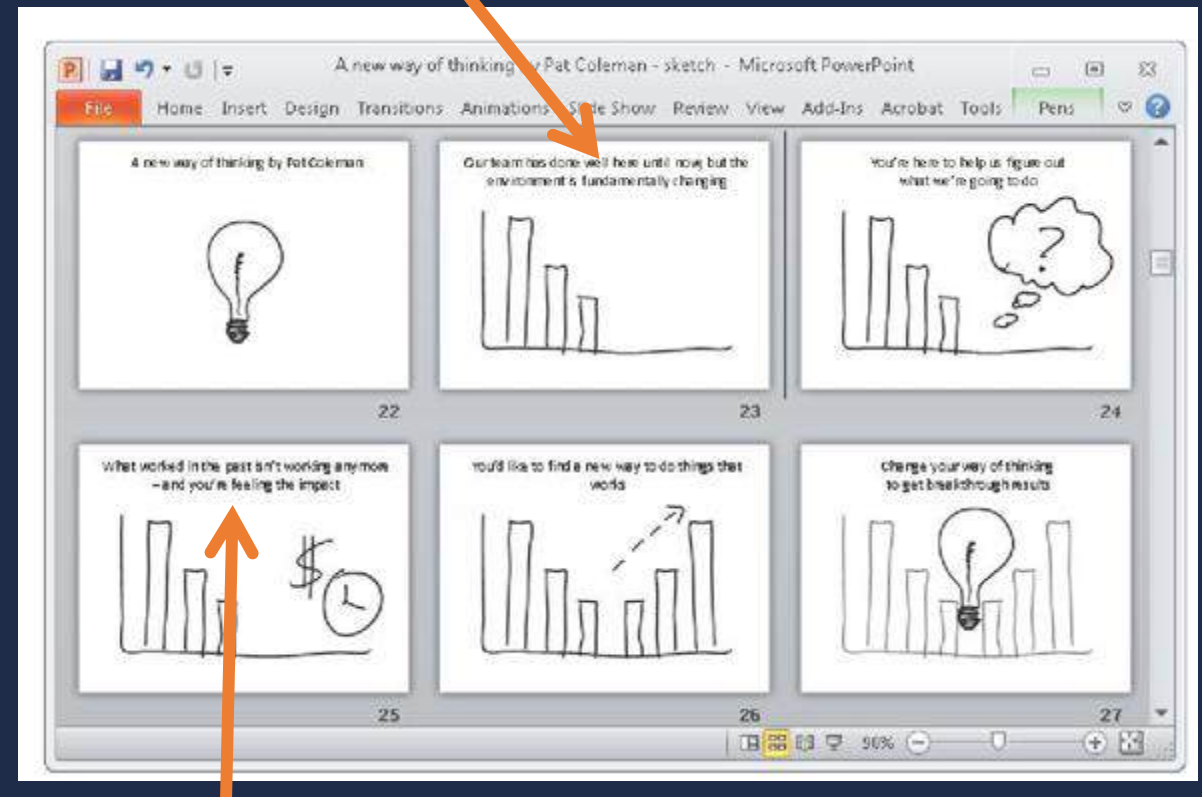
Horizontal and Vertical Logic



Horizontal logic ensures that you are telling a complete, compelling story

- Tells a **compelling narrative** directed at the specific audience
- Demonstrates **strong deductive reasoning** and finishes with next steps
- You should be able to read **nothing but the slide headers** and get the full understanding of the case being made

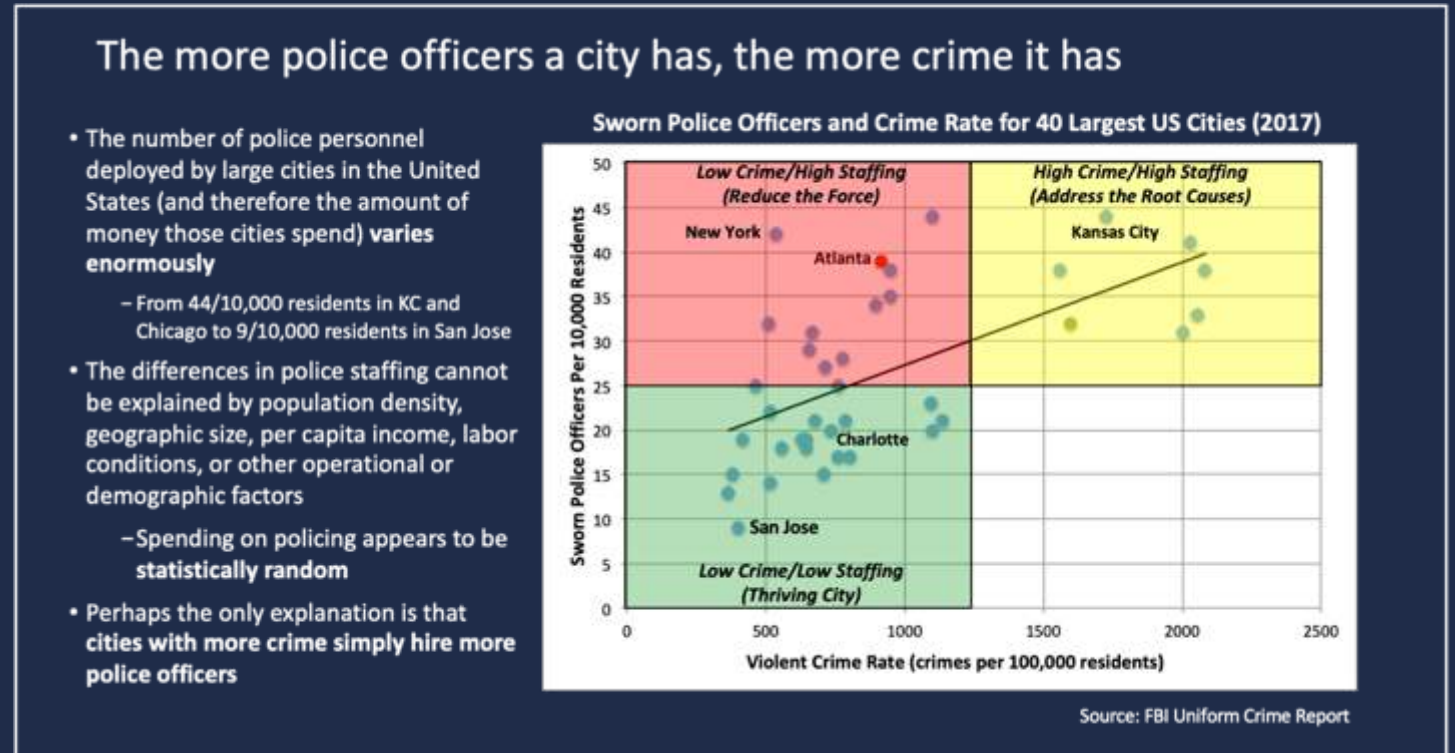
The headers of your presentation equate to the first lines of paragraphs in a book



Use complete sentences in headers, not fragments or titles

Vertical logic means that all information on a given slide supports the point made in the header

- Use **three to four points** to justify the point in the header
- Use **data or graphics** that support one or more of the points
- Don't include any **extraneous or unrelated information**

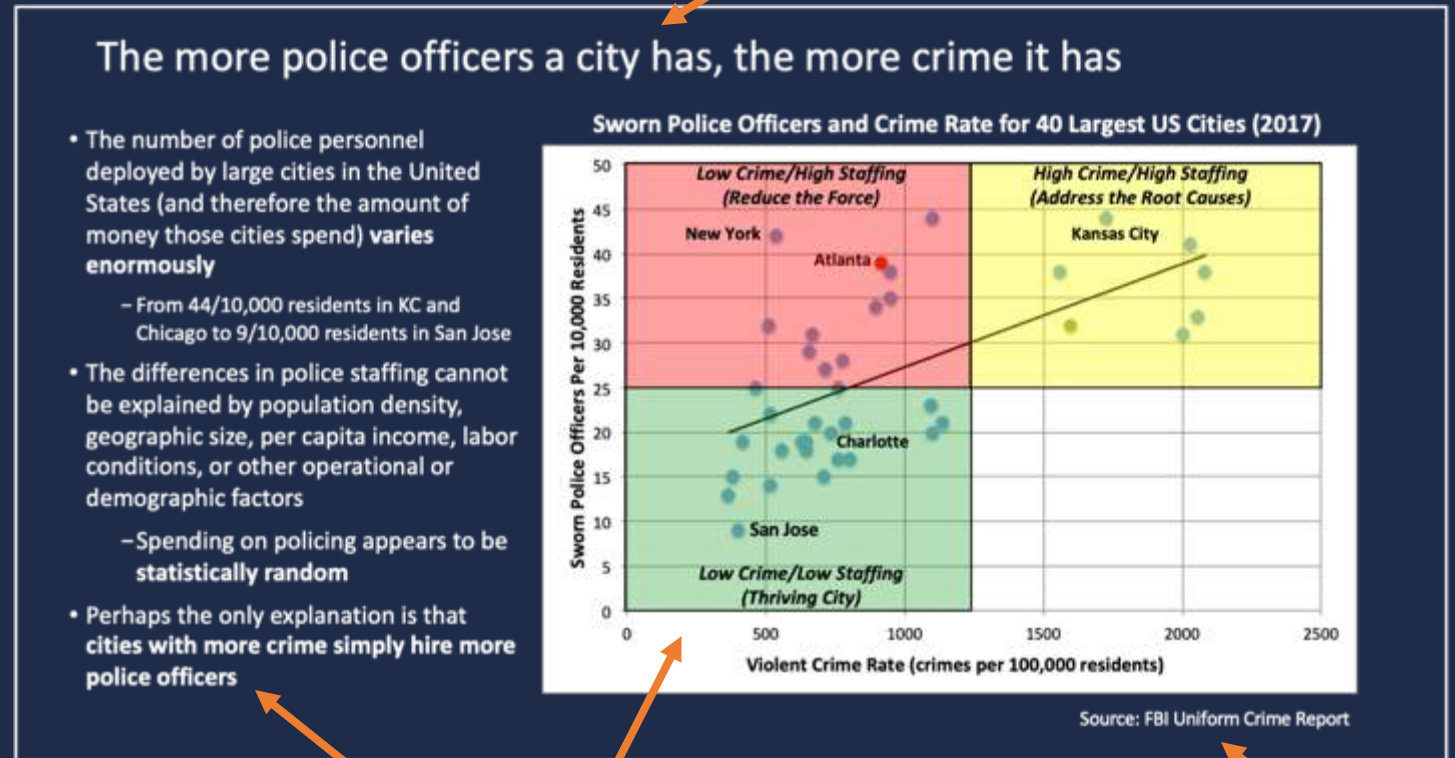


What I said:

- There is a positive correlation between the number of police officers a city has and its crime rate
- Policing capacity also varies by huge amounts; a four-fold difference in the largest US cities
- Cities with high police numbers and high crime rates need to address root causes of crime; those with high police numbers and low crime rates should reduce the size of their forces

Bear in mind some basic rules

- Headers should be **full sentences**
- Periods are not needed unless they are used to separate two sentences within the same bullet; **minimize use of punctuation in general**
- Graphics/data should directly **support major point** of the slide
- Provide sources
- Have someone else check your work!



Full sentence

No period

Chart directly supports the point of the slide

Sourced

Presentations should be simple and easy on the eyes

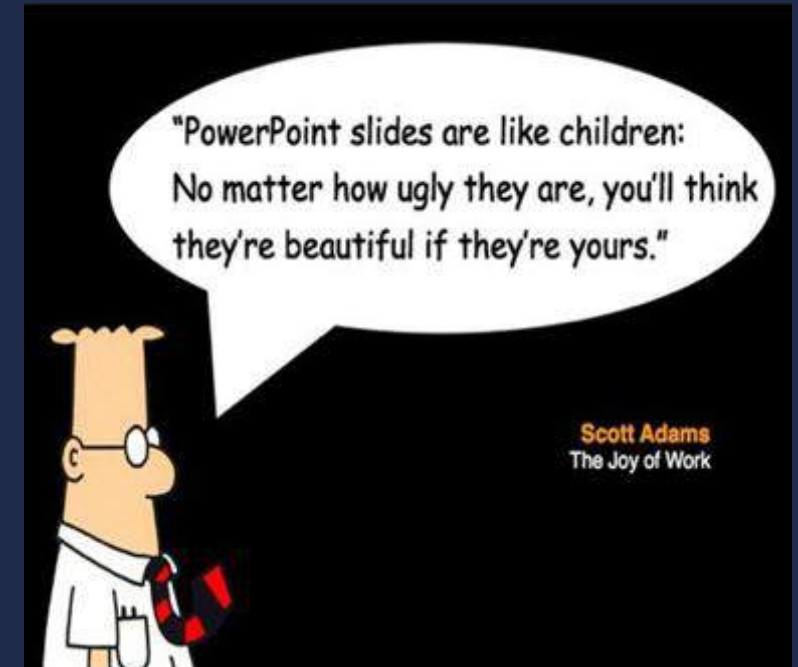
- Use a standard template and stick with standard fonts
 - Use bold or italics only when you are trying to draw attention to a **specific important point**
 - Limit punctuation; periods not needed
- Try to use a visual on every slide; animation is ok but only if you need to build an argument
 - No need for added shapes or colors; keep it simple; **less is more**

Crappy Slide



Presentations should be fast-paced

- When planning a presentation, assume you will spend 2-3 minutes on each slide (and that's all you should spend!)
- **Do not read your slides!!!**
 - the points you make verbally should amplify, not repeat, what is on the slide
- And don't get wedded to your slides!



Take Away!

For more go to Jeff Kavanaugh, "The Pyramid Principle: How To Craft Coherent Explanations"
<https://jeffkavanaugh.net/pyramid-principle-craft-coherent-explanations/>

Any questions?