

What Does It Mean to be an Urban Conservative? *A Symposium*



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Peter Bell, William A. Blazar, Barry Casselman,
Larry Colson, Roger Conant, Andrew J. Cowin,
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Introduction by Mitch Pearlstein



Center of the American Experiment is a nonpartisan, tax-exempt, public policy and educational institution that brings conservative and free market ideas to bear on the hardest problems facing Minnesota and the nation.

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN URBAN CONSERVATIVE?

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Introduction

Mitch Pearlstein
Founder & President

I had never given any thought to what it means to be an “urban” conservative—as opposed to a “paleo,” “neo,” “social,” “mainstreet,” or some other kind of conservative—until my long-time friend and colleague Peter Bell suggested the novel combination as grist for an American Experiment symposium. Yes, I proudly handed out literature for one of my all-time heroes, Bill Buckley, when he ran for mayor of New York City in 1965 (I was 17 at the time). But he won only 13.4 percent of the vote, and I’ve dwelled on other things since.

In making the case for the topic and location, Peter argued persuasively that the “conservative movement in our country is entering an important period of introspection, reviewing important questions of principle and policy,” begging a powerfully pivotal question: “Can a conservative governing coalition be built in this country that’s almost exclusively suburban and rural?” Not since the days of Jack Kemp’s public service, he noted, has the matter been seriously considered.

Questions of this sort would be key even if conservatives had enjoyed stunning success during the 2006 election cycle (we didn’t), and even if prospects for 2008 were terrific (they’re not necessarily).

This symposium is the latest in a long line of lower-case catholic and well-received American Experiment anthologies on a wide range of issues, including most recently last May, *Should Medicare be Means Tested?* Others have included, *The Supremes Belt Out a New Hit: School Choice in Minnesota after Cleveland*” in 2002; *The Bush Doctrine: A Preemptive Path to*

Peace? Or a Recipe for Perpetual War? in 2003; and a collection that addressed a number of themes implicit in this current effort: *Heart and Soul: A Symposium on Aim and Tone in American Conservatism*, released on our tenth anniversary in 2000.

This package is also one of the first projects in a year-long series of American Experiment activities aimed at rethinking and re-energizing conservatism—partially prompted by a certain political convention to be held in St. Paul next summer. Though, I’m quick to emphasize, as is the case with everything the Center does, this project is wholly nonpartisan, featuring 40 writers of various party stripes and ideological denominations, from Minnesota and across the nation. Among questions they pondered are the following:

- Should we even bother thinking about something conceived as urban conservatism (as opposed to other basic kinds) to begin with?
- If you were to design a philosophy of urban conservatism, what would it contain? What would it not contain?
- Do you believe it’s possible to build and maintain a sufficiently potent and long-term conservative movement in the United States without more than token support in major cities and other urban areas?
- What about the same question in regards to Minnesota? Is it possible to build and maintain a sufficiently potent and long-term conservative movement here with hardly any support in Minneapolis and St. Paul and most inner-ring suburbs? In considering this question and the one immediately above, you may want to take

into account various demographic changes well underway across the country, especially significant increases in minority populations.

- And by the way, how do you define conservatism?

Participants were urged to focus on just one or two questions rather than the full slate—or to come up with entirely different questions of their own. Given such latitude, it's no surprise that our more than three dozen writers pursued matters from nearly three dozen different angles. Here's a sampling and sense of what they had to say, starting with a number of skeptics.

Several writers disparage the very idea of a specific “urban” conservatism. Larry Colson, for example, contends that it's “merely a euphemism for ‘big government conservative’” and is used only to “obfuscate the fact that it's just middle-of-the-road liberalism.”

Jake Haulk is similarly unimpressed, as he writes that “amalgamations” like urban conservatism are “eventually indistinguishable from modern-day liberalism.”

And with a bit of sardonic whimsy, Roger Magnuson suggests there's something “deliciously oxymoronic” about the very existence of urban conservatives, “sort of on the order of ‘what's a nice guy like you doing in a place like this?’”

Then there is Denny Schulstad, who, during his more than two decades on the Minneapolis City Council, was usually the lone Republican-endorsed official in the entire city who held any of the 33 jobs determined by elections. On deciding not to seek reelection in 1997, the number of elected Republicans dropped precipitously, all the way to zero, where it remains. “While in the past,” he writes, “I was called an endangered species, I'm now called a dinosaur (totally extinct).”

While Schulstad concludes that the “battle between liberals and conservatives has moved to the suburbs,” having been lost in big major cities, Roger Conant, in an especially “fowl” mood, makes the case that it's been lost there, too. “Ornithologists,” he notes, “have argued over whether there was one type of dodo bird, or whether there were two distinct types: the regular dodo bird and the ‘white’ dodo bird. I, for one, am prepared to suggest it doesn't matter, since the dodo bird went extinct in the 17th century.” Likewise, he laments, “One could debate the merits of the urban dodo—oops, conservative, but that equally doesn't matter, since conservatives, as defined by the likes of Hayek, Goldwater, and Friedman” have become extinct, replaced by “big government conservatives” espousing “rapidly growing centralized government, big deficits, and government suppression of individual freedoms.”

Biting and clawing as these criticisms are, most writers take different tacks, with many stressing that unless conservatism makes inroads in great cities, it will fail nationally. Getting right to the point, David Sturrock warns: “Building conservative electoral and governing coalitions without the ‘urbs’ won't be possible for much longer, given liberalism's continuing inroads, politically and culturally, in America's ‘red’ states and counties.” Major urban centers, he writes, “are the most influential places in America, notwithstanding the rise of the office park culture,” and this “urban dominance” likely will continue “in the realms of ideas, high (and low) culture, finance, medicine, and communications.” This means, Sturrock concludes, that “conservatism must remain a force in urban life if it's going to have any influence in these arenas.”

How exactly might conservatives do this? Several writers argue that men and women on the right must do sizably better in making their ideas—as well as themselves—more attractive when it comes to a range of social and cultural issues and sensibilities. Too often, Dennis O'Brien writes, conservatives have become “social scolds, expressing political solutions with a heightened sense of morality and an insistence

that their political answers have to be accepted on moral as well as political grounds. But because few people want to be governed by those who scold, conservatives have allowed themselves to become politically irrelevant.”

Lou Wangberg argues not dissimilarly: “In the beginning, being conservative was not about social issues.” Rather, “it was about government playing the least possible role in people’s lives.... When you advocate government restriction or intrusion into private lives, that isn’t conservative; it’s liberal.”

Regardless of whether one believes such strictures are on target, a central question remains: How should conservatives govern? John Hood is copious in his modest conception. Urban conservatives, he writes,

... shouldn’t seek to turn downtowns into subsidized Disney parks and sports megaplexes, or pine for that brief, shining moment when most Americans lived in apartments and commuted by streetcars. Instead, urban conservatives ought to focus on bread-and-butter issues that really matter to the daily lives of urban voters: crime, crumbling infrastructure, abysmal schools, and social decay. Many of the public policies best suited to these problems aren’t exciting. They are basic and conservative in a “small c” sense. Streets need to be maintained at an economical cost. Cities need to slim their payrolls and reform their compensation policies. Criminals need to be incapacitated, if not deterred. Some cities need substantial improvements in their water and sewer systems.

To the list, Hood adds school choice.

In addressing why cities need conservative policies and approaches, several contributors recall hometown experiences. Drawing on his family’s old neighborhood in Detroit’s Lower East Side, Greg Kaza argues that “recognition of the role of voluntary religious organizations and their faith-based initiatives” constitutes a keynote

difference “between liberal opinion and urban conservatism,” with urban conservatives “welcoming them,” as opposed to urban liberals, who “seek to undermine them with government programs.” Such religiously imbued activities, he writes, “whether private schools or social welfare programs, have always played a crucial role in Detroit.” He notes that the very neighborhoods that gave his old city “strength for much of the 20th century were built around churches and synagogues.”

Andrew Cowin grew up in New York in the 1960s and ‘70s, an era of “welfare and crime and of gigantic social experiments that backfired.” Anyone, he contends, “who lived through that time and didn’t become a conservative wasn’t paying attention.”

While most writers are right of center, as is invariably the case with American Experiment symposia, several men and women—all good friends—are not. I have no hesitation in saying the package would be even stronger if it had more such contrarian voices. Dane Smith, for instance, writes that conservatives,

... have hurt themselves with sustained resistance to even modest increases in public investment for vital, economy-building assets like public education and mass transit. The United States has the lowest taxes and the lowest level of investment in human capital among the industrialized democracies, and Minnesota as a state is becoming merely average on both measures. Cities, in particular, can feel this disinvestment and the “no new taxes” mentality behind it.

In order for conservatives “to be taken seriously in the cities,” Smith, president of Growth & Justice, Minnesota’s self-described “progressive” think tank, urges them to “do more than ‘frame’ things differently or put a smiley face on their agenda.” Rather, he says, “They need to say things differently and also back up their words with money.”

Finally, some pieces don't fall neatly into any of the above categories, but they're terrifically insightful nonetheless, as witness this sample of passages, starting with Michael Barone's concentrated paragraph on how "conservatives developed a thoroughgoing critique" of Great Society liberalism:

Think tanks like the Manhattan Institute in New York and foundations like the Bradley Foundation in Milwaukee worked to understand and improve the cities in which they operated. Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* in 1984 paved the way for welfare reform, first undertaken seriously by Governor Tommy Thompson in Wisconsin in 1987. George Kelling and James Q. Wilson's article, "Broken Windows," in 1982 paved the way for effective crime control, first undertaken seriously by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in New York in 1994. These successes resonated nationally, and similar reforms were undertaken in many states and cities. The federal government reformed welfare in 1996. The result: welfare dependency and crime were cut approximately in half in a decade, constituting the major public policy successes of the 1990s.

"The idea of conservatism," Wilfred McClay recounts, "far from being anti-urban, has always been bound up in the history of great cities." He notes,

When Russell Kirk wrote *The Roots of American Order*, he chose to build his account around the central cities of the history of the West: Athens, Jerusalem, Rome, and Philadelphia. Each embodied a foundational stage in the development of American liberty and order. Man is made for cities, and the civilization that conservatives wish to conserve is rooted in them. After all, the Book of Revelation aims at the creation of the New Jerusalem—not the New Tara Plantation or the New Grover's Corner.

With apologies to Bill McClay, one of my favorite intellectual historians, some folks might find his allusion to Athens and her sister cities a little too cerebral for their taste. For them, Nathaniel Zylstra has just the telling lesson and cartoon for you:

Urban conservatives think that the animated television show *South Park*—a show based on the adventures of four foul-mouthed fourth graders—is good for the conservative movement because it consistently and forcefully (albeit vulgarly) skewers the sacred tenets of American liberalism. Rural conservatives think that *South Park* is disgusting.

My enormous thanks to all 40 writers, most of whom are not cited above for reasons of space. I'm equally grateful to Kent Kaiser for a beautiful job of copy editing—and his frequent e-mails during the exercise declaring that *What Does It Mean to be an Urban Conservative?* was shaping up as one of the Center's most imaginative and enlightening symposia yet. He has been proven correct.

And as with everything American Experiment does, I welcome your comments.

January 2008

Refreshing the Tree of Conservatism

By Randy Ahlm

Liberals must be dancing in the streets over the alleged confusion of conservatives. According to many pundits, we conservatives appear flummoxed over the meaning of true conservatism, unable to find galvanizing leaders, much less to create any new right wing conspiracies. Jacob Weisberg of *slate.com* wrote that the "conservative movement is not just reeling and dejected ... it has reached a terminal point." As evidence of the split among conservatives, the media have assigned various

labels such as neo-cons, originalists, Religious Right, and the newest label, urban conservatives. So has the conservative movement lost its way, and, if so, what has led to this?

Let's start by reviewing recent history. The country has been trending conservative since Richard Nixon won the presidency in 1968. Republicans have controlled the White House for 70 percent of the past 40 years and Congress for 85 percent of the past 12 years. After the 2004 elections, Michael Barone proclaimed the United States a "51-percent nation." Then the Republicans were routed in the election of 2006. Conservatives have spent the last year deep in an abyss, assigning blame and struggling to understand.

Conservatives began to look back over the last couple of years with disappointment. Runaway government spending, amnesty for illegal immigrants, and expansion of Medicare have been cited as policies straying from core conservative positions. This disillusionment has led many to retrench around their core values. Many conservatives have been engaging in debate about who the true conservative leaders will be. It's become the dominating issue in the Republican presidential campaign.

Thus we must ask ourselves, do we still base our conservative beliefs on the words and deeds of some of the great leaders of the conservative movement such as William F. Buckley, Barry Goldwater, and Ronald Reagan? Or have the changing times led to a new brand of conservatism modeled by George W. Bush, the compassionate conservative, or Rudy Giuliani, an urban conservative?

The great leaders of the conservative movement traditionally believed in individual freedom, personal accountability, limited government, free markets, and a strong military. The new generation believes in the same core principles but tends to be more activist, believing that most problems can be solved with creative policies that sometimes include a significant role for government. Is this a conflict of belief or a

conflict of differing tactics? The answer requires substantive debate based on facts and core values. These types of debates have happened before and often led to great outcomes. Lowering taxes is a prime example. It's become so mainstream that liberals don't use the phrase "tax increase" anymore. They use terms like "investment" instead. Welfare reform and Second Amendment rights are other great examples of the conservative movement asserting its principles in public policy and successfully implementing conservative solutions.

There will likely be future scenarios when elections are lost or leaders make policy decisions not deemed conservative. Some of our current conservative leaders will fade away, and new ones will ascend. Conservatives should not panic in these instances. Instead, they should stay true to their core beliefs and avoid getting wrapped up in false labels that serve only to weaken the movement.

I'm reminded of Thomas Jefferson's quotation, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." Though I don't advocate bloodshed, refreshing the "tree of conservatism" nevertheless would be healthy and would enable the conservative movement to thrive again for the long term.

Randy Ahlm is a member of American Experiment's board of directors.

Build Conservative Ties and Endure the Liberal Fad

By King Banaian

Modern-day liberalism has always found its successes in the cities. In 2000, Al Gore won nearly every county that contained a major city. Pollsters consistently show that liberal and Democratic ideas are most favored in urban areas. This puts supporters of an urban conservatism at a distinct disadvantage; they are selling a product to a market that is unreceptive. To understand

how to build urban conservatism means to understand why this is true.

In a larger electorate there is little cost to being irrational. I assume that the conservative movement has rational policies to offer, such as opposition to public funding for sports stadia as wasteful, or support for school choice as providing hope to poor children. The problems with candidates pursuing these views are two-fold. First, economics and political science teach that one's vote is unlikely to flip the outcome of an election or referendum towards one's preferred goal. As one pundit noted, when I purchase toothpaste, my preference of an unusual brand is expressed by purchasing that brand, and I receive what I bought. If I vote, my expression of preference does not necessarily provide me what I voted for, and often I would get what I wanted even if I did not vote at all. That allows me to vote for very irrational policies, if in so doing I can derive some other benefit.

Sometimes I vote for third party candidates to be part of a third party "club." More attractive to most people is to be part of a winning coalition. Putting the right bumper sticker on your car gets righteous nods from others around you: "Yes, he's one of us." A lawn sign supporting the upcoming school levy lets your neighbors know you're a good person, just like them. In a rural election, your vote is more likely to flip the outcome, giving you greater incentive to learn whether candidate X or Y would increase your happiness. In a city, you can be "a good person" without having to worry whether your vote will harm your happiness.

This line of thought is reinforced by media that sell to the righteous group because that is their market. As the group of irrational voters grows, the benefits of being connected to it increase, just like any other network. Serving these voters will inspire political entrepreneurs to offer irrational policies. How one arrives at this point is not very clear, but in my view not important. What is important is that once the irrational voter group achieves a majority, it is a stable majority. In that

world, an urban conservatism has a very uphill course to run.

How, then, should one run that course? It must start with creating groups that can provide the same kinds of benefits as membership in the majority group.

To expand those groups, urban conservatives would want, for example, to go to school board meetings and talk to parents who are frustrated with the failure of public education. They would want to go to municipal transit authority meetings and to those never-ending hearings about building a Vikings stadium. A good investment club could be a way to enter into long-term groupings with people who share conservative values. Evangelical churches in urban areas have proven to be groups that create club goods for their members.

These ideas will start small, and they will take time, but they build the conservative ties that will endure the liberal fad.

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Strongest Weapons are Ideas, Not Votes

By Michael Barone

Willie Sutton, when asked why he robbed banks, said it was because that's where they keep the money. An urban conservative, when asked why he was concerned about cities, could say it is because that's where the shortcomings of liberalism are most apparent.

A century ago it was not apparent that cities would become the heartland—and the experimental proving ground—for American liberalism. William Jennings Bryan appealed to the embattled farmers of Kansas and the silver miners of Nevada; his opponent William McKinley carried the big cities of the Northeast

and the Great Lakes. The poor in America were concentrated in the almost entirely rural south; the Socialist Party in 1908 made its strongest showing in Oklahoma.

Yet by the mid-20th century it was the cities that led the way toward the welfare state. In New York City, in particular, Tammany boss Charles Murphy understood the appeal of the social democratic policies of Al Smith and Robert Wagner to immigrants' offspring. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal started off by aiding farmers but increasingly aimed its policies at the big cities; in the close elections of 1940 and 1944, FDR carried the south and the big cities of the north but ran well behind his opponents practically everywhere else. The vast migration of blacks from the south to the north over the generation from 1940 to 1965 created a new constituency for the welfare state and liberal policies—the only real constituency for Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.

The intention was to create a kind of heaven in central cities. The result was something closer to hell. Liberal welfare policies and lax crime control resulted in the tripling, roughly, of welfare dependency and crime in the decade 1965-75, with continuing high rates for 20 years more. Liberal education policies, supported by teachers unions and education schools, resulted in the ruination of central city public schools. Central city residents who could get out did get out, and the suburbs boomed, with homeowners accumulating wealth as their housing values boomed. Meanwhile, housing values in central cities outside a few gentrified areas stagnated.

In response, urban conservatives developed a thoroughgoing critique of urban liberalism. Think tanks like the Manhattan Institute in New York and foundations like the Bradley Foundation in Milwaukee worked to understand and improve the cities in which they operated. Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* in 1984 paved the way for welfare reform, first undertaken seriously by Governor Tommy Thompson in Wisconsin in 1987. George Kelling and James Q. Wilson's article, "Broken Windows," in 1982

paved the way for effective crime control, first undertaken seriously by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in New York in 1994. These successes resonated nationally, and similar reforms were undertaken in many states and cities. The federal government reformed welfare in 1996. The result: welfare dependency and crime were cut approximately in half in a decade, constituting the major public policy successes of the 1990s.

Education reform has proven to be more difficult. Milton Friedman proposed school vouchers in the 1950s, but the idea had little appeal, as most parents found what they considered to be satisfactory schools in the suburbs. Yet thanks to the Bradley Foundation and Tommy Thompson, vouchers were pioneered successfully in Milwaukee. Other forms of school choice emerged, most notably charter schools, and organizations like the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) schools showed that children from even the most disadvantaged neighborhoods could learn successfully. The institutional heft of the teacher unions and education schools has made progress difficult but at least a way forward has been shown.

The electoral constituency for urban conservatism remains small. Black voters, a majority in some central cities (though a declining one in others, like Washington), continue to support liberal candidates. Immigrant voters, too, tend to lean left, though more are finding homes in the suburbs than in the central cities; Latinos and Asians tend to shun high-crime black neighborhoods. Gentrification has produced a growing number of voters in many central cities, including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington, who are single, gay, or have enough money to afford private schools. These voters approve, retrospectively at least, of the welfare reform and crime control policies of the 1990s. Still, they typically cast their votes on lifestyle issues and favor candidates who take liberal stands on issues like abortion and gay rights. They are willing to pay high taxes to enjoy the amenities of city life.

This leaves urban conservatives, electorally, an embattled minority on their home turf. Their strongest weapons are not votes but ideas. The critical lessons they teach are that markets work and morals matter. Those are the lessons of the tremendous success of the welfare and crime control reforms of the 1990s and of the limited success of school choice initiatives. They are lessons that will have to be continually taught, because memories fade.

Michael Barone is a senior writer for U.S. News & World Report and a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (www.aei.org). His newest book is Our First Revolution: The Remarkable British Uprising that Inspired America's Founding Fathers.

Not Since Jack Kemp

By Peter Bell

Whenever a political movement is facing declining public support, it enters into a period of introspection and reviews important questions of principle and policy. It is quite likely the conservative movement in this country is in the early stages of this process today. One question that's likely to be asked in this process is, "Can a conservative governing coalition be built on an exclusively suburban and rural base?"

In many urban areas today, the second most popular political party is the Green Party, rather than the Republican Party. Jack Kemp was perhaps the last major national conservative political figure to attempt to build a conservative beachhead in urban America. The question above is taking on increased importance, given the significant demographic shift we are experiencing in this country. This shift results from immigration and high birth rates in many minority communities, and it is changing the complexion of the country. Accompanying this change is a miniature urban renewal. Cities once thought to be urban wastelands are seeing large pockets of prosperity and even net population growth.

Given these facts, a fundamental question comes to mind: How do urban conservatives differ from their rural and suburban counterparts? I would offer the following observations.

First, urban conservatives are more likely to be individuals of color. Many consider themselves to be Democrats but have become disillusioned by the failure of government programs to bring about long-lasting positive change. These urban conservatives are often hesitant to identify with their suburban and rural counterparts for fear of being marginalized in their communities.

They may also be conflicted on a wide range of issues having to do with race. For example, they may question many aspects of affirmative action while at the same time having benefited from it personally. They may also see examples of racism in their day-to-day lives but are greatly troubled by how many in the minority community use race as an all purpose excuse for personal failings. These internal conflicts often inhibit their open embrace of the conservative movement.

Urban conservatives, like conservatives worldwide, tend to be fiscally conservative and question a government approach or program for every problem. They understand and appreciate the power of culture to shape and control behavior in both positive and negative ways. They interact on a daily basis with individuals whose dysfunction is caused or heightened by their home environment and a culture that devalues education, delayed gratification, and personal responsibility. They know that many troubled individuals have never had a positive sense of self based on strong values and clear goals, which are indispensable to success. Throughout history these essential attributes were instilled in individuals via their families, communities, and religious institutions. Urban conservatives are highly skeptical of the ability of government programs to replicate the effectiveness of these important cultural institutions. Simply put, rebuilding and strengthening these institutions should be the goal

of society, rather than increasing funding of government social programs.

Urban conservatives tend to be more supportive of immigration than other conservatives. While arguments about secure borders and national sovereignty are compelling they are balanced by the unquestioned impact immigrant populations have had in revitalizing deeply depressed urban neighborhoods. Streets that were once controlled by drug dealers and prostitutes have often been rejuvenated with restaurants, grocery stores, and other small retail establishments.

Urban conservatives perhaps feel most passionately about issues pertaining to education. They experience up close the failure of our K-12 educational system to prepare urban youth to compete in a world economy. They are very comfortable taking on the teacher unions and education professionals on issues such as charter schools, vouchers, merit pay, curriculum, and testing. They accept the reality that disadvantaged kids quite simply have to work harder to overcome the realities of their environment.

In terms of our nation's infrastructure, urban conservatives are more likely to support mass transit than their suburban counterparts. They see mobility as second only to education as a key to a better life. They are also more comfortable with the housing density required to make transit a viable option.

Finally, urban conservatives are very concerned with crime and generally support aggressive law enforcement. They are also supportive of tougher prison sentences. This support is tempered, however, by their concern about the large number of men who are locked out of civil society as a result of criminal histories. They are likely, for example, to question the wisdom of denying a college loan to a person who has a drug arrest in his history.

In summary, urban conservatives have much in common with their suburban and rural

counterparts but may put emphasis on different parts of the conservative agenda.

Peter Bell is chairman of the Metropolitan Council in Minnesota (www.metrocouncil.org) and a former chairman of the board of American Experiment.

One Initiative per Problem Is Not Enough

By William A. Blazar

As an urban conservative, I approach city life and the policies that shape it using two basic assumptions: first, people should take responsibility for their own well-being and that of the community; second, to the greatest extent possible, choices should not be limited by law.

- *Take care of yourself.* Get an education. Learn a skill. Get a job. Care for your family. Attend to your property. Do these things by choice. Whether your decisions to do so are motivated by instinct or by what you observe among your neighbors is irrelevant. The key thing is for me and my urban neighbors to achieve these ends via choices we make for ourselves.
- *Take care of your community.* How we take care of ourselves sets an example for others, especially our neighbors. Our individual decisions mold the community. These decisions go well beyond whether we choose to pick up the trash, cut our grass, or paint our houses. They also include how actively we care for our dependents; what schools we choose for our children; the contributions of time and money we make to our community's social infrastructure; whether or not and how we vote, and countless other decisions.

Choices should not be limited by law. There will be no sense of responsibility (individual or

collective) if we are too quick to substitute laws for individual decision making. The more decisions we make, the better we'll do. Maximizing individual choices may not be the most direct or pleasing route to creating sustainable communities, but it is certainly the surest.

This all sounds pretty lofty. It may be, but it's also quite practical. Living in close quarters defines urban life. That my neighbors to the north and south are only 12 feet away, and that within a two-mile radius there are over 100,000 people, mean we all have to get along reasonably well. We can try to legislate that directly, or we can adopt policies that make civility a function of individual decisions. No legal code will ever cover all aspects of human behavior, and no bureaucracy could ever be big enough or efficient enough to administer such a system. As such, the only alternative is to do everything we can to encourage individuals to take responsibility for themselves and their community.

I have a hierarchical paradigm for solving personal and community problems. Not surprisingly, I rely on my own resources when it comes to personal problems. As to community problems, I look to private sector initiatives aimed at the public good. I typically don't think that one initiative per problem is good enough; I want to see and encourage competing solutions. This requires public policies that focus on results and reporting as opposed to prescribed solutions.

St. Paul, I believe, does not plow residential alleys. Instead, it calls on property owners to remove the snow in a timely fashion. By contrast, Minneapolis plows the alleys. I'd argue that the former does more to build community than the latter. Property owners not only have to accept their responsibility, but also come up with a means of meeting it. In the process, they invest in their community much more so than Minneapolitans who simply wait for the plow that never seems to arrive soon enough. Mundane? Perhaps. Community building has to start somewhere.

What happens when people don't have the resources they need to take care of themselves and by extension, their dependents and community? That's where all of us who have resources must pitch in. We do that by supporting and contributing to leaders and organizations that make capacity building their highest priority. This is the test I apply to both private and public sector leaders and organizations. I want them both to use my resources to build the independence and decision-making capacity of any of my fellow urbanites who lack either or both. I contribute time and money and vote accordingly.

Leaders and organizations that meet my test are hard to find. That may explain why urban living is more challenging than ever. Too many responsibilities and decisions have been given over to others. Yet the lives of urbanites are more intertwined than ever. Rather than searching for a leader or waiting for one to emerge, my choice is to live in the city, follow my precepts, and encourage everyone I can to do the same.

William A. Blazar is senior vice president of public affairs and business development for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce (www.mnchamber.com).

Choices Ahead

By Barry Casselman

The notion of "urban conservatism" almost seems to be a contradiction in terms these days. That's because the conservative political party in America, the Republican Party, has adopted many policies and values that simply don't fit into the contemporary American urban setting.

Forty or more years ago, this was not true. Then, there were numerous Republican mayors and city councilors across the nation, and not just in conservative regions. In those days, abortion, integration, gay rights, illegal immigration, homelessness, mass urban transportation, and

medical care for the poor were not issues at the center of the political stage.

For the most part, the social/economic conservative Republican strategy worked. In the past 60 years, GOP presidents have been elected nine times in 14 elections. Following the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, conservative economic principles have become the standard operating ideology of U.S. public policy.

American cities have also, albeit more slowly, adopted many conservative economic principles. It's in social policy where urban America has diverged from Republican establishment politics and created a schism in the party, which has marginalized the presence and impact of the GOP in local urban politics.

Each party has its own right and left wings, and there has been a potent "moderate" wing of the Republican Party since the 1940s. Beginning with Wendell Willkie and continuing with Harold Stassen, Arthur Vandenberg, Earl Warren, Nelson Rockefeller, Margaret Chase Smith, William Scranton, George Romney, Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, Tom Ridge, and Arlen Specter, among many others, this wing of the party has generally stood for conservative economic ideas while embracing moderate social policies.

The Republican moderate and right wings fought with each other in the decades when the party was out of power in Washington, but after the election of Ronald Reagan, the conservative wing came to dominate as it does today. Yet this wing has almost zero appeal to large numbers of voters in the urban centers of the northeast, mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and west coast regions. It has nevertheless been possible for GOP strategists to construct a strategy for winning control of the White House and the Congress, as long as they could patch together a "solid" South along with the Southwest, the Far West, and Midwestern states such as Ohio, Indiana, Kansas, Iowa, the Dakotas, and Nebraska.

The latter strategy, however, has relied on making inroads among conservative union members,

black, Hispanic, Catholic, and Jewish voters, many of whom live in large cities and usually vote Democratic. Although socially conservative policies do not necessarily turn away all of these voters, Republicans have pursued other policies, particularly anti-immigration policies, which have made their gains among Hispanics, for example, temporary. Also turning away from their own party, libertarian Republicans who want government "out of the bedroom" have been dismayed by traditional rural and suburban intolerance of sexual minority groups.

As rural and suburban Americans have become increasingly concerned about the war in Iraq, budget deficits, higher government spending, and employment security, the patchwork majorities fashioned by GOP strategists in the recent past have begun to dissolve.

Lacking a coherent ideology and workable solutions to national problems, not to mention providing weak leaders, liberals and Democrats so far have failed to capitalize on these recent divisions in conservatism and political weaknesses in the Republican Party. Yet it would be burying one's head in the political sand not to observe the recent resurgence of the American Left and the opportunities now presented to liberals and Democrats.

It's my contention that the longer conservatives and Republicans remain preoccupied with ideas and attitudes that do not directly deal with the nation's real problems, like health care, social security, national security, care for seniors, and education, the more rapidly their recent opportunity to fashion a long-term governing majority will fade.

There may be relatively fewer urban Republicans today, but the dynamics of American electoral politics probably require that conservatives pay attention to the lessons of urban compassion, tolerance, and compromise and expand their shrunken base in the cities.

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Just Middle-of-the-Road Liberalism

By Larry Colson

Unless you've been taking a Rip Van Winkle-sized nap, you're aware that Republicans have taken a beating, at least as measured by recent election results. Rather than take an honest look at what went wrong in recent elections, many Republican officeholders, strategists, and talking heads have instead chosen to place the blame on those who least deserve it—the conservatives. I've had quite enough of the “win at all costs” pundits and politicians who have decreed that the conservative message no longer resonates with voters. Nothing could be further from reality. To paraphrase the British writer G.K. Chesterton, conservatism has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.

In an endless drive to balkanize the electorate, we now find ourselves discussing the urban conservative. The literal meaning is innocuous enough: I'll choose to define it as those city dwellers who typically affiliate with or vote for the Republican Party. However, the underlying principles that tend to be associated with urban conservatism lead me to categorize it as an oxymoron of the highest order. It's not that those who live and/or work in urban areas cannot be called conservatives, as I've met many. But just as we inherently understand the difference between someone who describes himself racially or ethnically as an “X-American” versus simply “an American who happens to be X,” there is a stark contrast between those referred to as urban conservatives and those who are conservatives who happen to live in an urban area. In short, there's little that is truly conservative about urban conservatives.

Granted, there is disagreement on the exact definition of conservative, often leading to vigorous deliberation among those of us on the Right. Yet even as the debate rages, there are common underlying tenets. Among the more sacrosanct are the related interests of smaller government and sound fiscal policies.

Conservatives generally dislike government, and while they readily acknowledge that government is necessary for a functioning society, they retain a healthy distrust for an institution whose insatiable appetite for money is eclipsed only by its appetite for power, and whose goals seem counterintuitive to the concepts of individual liberty upon which our great country was founded.

People who describe themselves as urban conservatives are different. Undoubtedly urged on by their “unique” urban worldview, injected with a dose of elitism and we-know-betterism, their solutions regularly end up with government being a critical player. Consciously or unconsciously, they often provide justification by disguising wants as needs and private/special interest items as greater public goods. Unlike the liberal approach where the market is included only out of necessity for the sales pitch, urban conservatives believe in free markets and thus include this belief upfront and in important ways. Still, rather than take a step back and consider how properly to apply core conservative and market-oriented principles, they accept a level of government involvement that has been on the rapid incline since the days of Franklin Roosevelt. They embrace government without really realizing that their actions are accretive to the Left's plodding but persistent path toward socialism.

Imagine that you heard someone described with adjectives such as “stadium-building,” “theatre-funding,” “gasoline-taxing,” and “light rail-advocating.” These words are typically associated with liberals, yet all are advocated in some fashion by urban conservatives.

Consequently, it is my contention that the phrase “urban conservative” is merely a euphemism for “big government conservative,” the latter having

the distinction of being logically inconsistent and anathema to real conservatives. Thus, “urban conservative” is an expression, while certainly descriptive of one political viewpoint, used only to obfuscate the fact that it’s just middle-of-the-road liberalism.

The Republican Party truly does need those people who describe themselves as urban conservatives, just as it needs the members of all the other hyphenated-conservative subgroups. It needs their votes. What it doesn’t need is more of their conservative-when-convenient, liberal-when-useful policies.

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Welcome to the World of the Dodo Bird

By Roger Conant

Let us briefly reflect upon the dodo bird. Ornithologists have argued over whether there was only one type of dodo bird, or whether there were two distinct types: the regular dodo bird and the “white” dodo. I for one am prepared to suggest it doesn’t matter, since the dodo went extinct in the 17th century.

Similarly, one could debate the merits of the urban dodo—oops, conservative—versus the rural conservative, but that equally doesn’t matter, since conservatives, as defined by the likes of Hayek, Goldwater, and Friedman became extinct in the very early 21st century (in 2002, to be exact), replaced by, in Fred Barnes’s terminology, “big government conservatives” who espouse rapidly growing centralized government, big deficits, and government suppression of individual freedoms.

Indeed, since the 1950s we’ve been led by only one real conservative, Bill Clinton. He believed in reducing government expenditures, controlling welfare, and encouraging trade. Under his

regime, government grew at a rate of 1.5 percent a year, a record low among presidents since Jimmy Carter. (George W. Bush is number two in government growth at 4.9 percent a year.) Our most liberal presidents have been John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson and, the most liberal of them all, George W. Bush. (Sure, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson grew government by a slightly greater percentage, 5.7 percent a year, compared to George W. Bush’s 4.9 percent, but Bush grew government much more in absolute terms because he started with a bigger base.)

There has certainly been a major surrender by what used to be conservatives. At one time, we debated whether we should socialize the health care sector of our economy. The major debate today revolves around the degree to which the private sector should be allowed to have any (albeit highly regulated) role in the world of socialized medicine, not over whether the health-related 14 percent of our economy should be socialized at all. Does anybody seriously believe that the recent debate over the federal State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is anything other than a disagreement over the pace at which we socialize medicine?

We think of ourselves as living in a capitalistic society. Wrong: these days, a majority of us live off government largesse, a growth that accelerated during the term of Republican President Dwight Eisenhower.

What about issues? In a recent *Wall Street Journal/NBC News* poll, although the majority of Republicans characterized themselves as conservatives, nearly 60 percent of them thought trade is bad for the economy—a view in direct opposition of that held by most conservative economists.

Is there any hope for the resurgence of conservatism? Not really. We have gotten used to big, intrusive government. There are now vast constituencies that will fight hard to resist a return to conservative theories.

Welcome, fellow conservatives, to the world of the dodo bird.

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New York Taught Me All I Need to Know About Urban Policy

By Andrew J. Cowin

I grew up in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s, an era of welfare and crime and of gigantic social experiments that backfired.

Anybody who lived through that time and didn't become a conservative wasn't paying attention.

The era started with Mayor Robert Wagner, who governed by the motto "human needs are greater than budgetary needs." In other words, a lack of money wouldn't prevent him from spending what he deemed necessary to achieve his goals. Although Wagner didn't raise taxes to achieve the unaffordable, he did borrow recklessly, believing that "a bad loan is better than a good tax."

It was the next mayor, John Lindsay, who instituted an income tax. Still, he didn't do away with the reckless borrowing, nor did he cut spending. Instead he proposed annual double-digit increases above Wagner's budgets while insisting that his budgets had been "cut to the bone."

A little more than a decade later, New York faced bankruptcy.

This wasn't the city's biggest problem. Crime was. New York averaged around three murders a day in the 1970s and was beset by a criminal justice system epitomized by Judge Bruce Wright, whose sympathy for violent criminals got him the nickname "Cut 'em Loose Bruce."

During that era, liberals wanted to fight crime by attacking its root causes—which, they believed, were poverty and lack of education. This kind of

"crime fighting" was extremely expensive, added hundreds of thousands of women and children to the welfare rolls, and included welfare payments to able-bodied men who didn't want to work. On the education-as-crime-fighting front, a Lindsay administration official noted that criminals rarely went to college and that people who went to college rarely turned into criminals. The obvious solution became "open enrollment." Anybody with a high school degree (which wasn't hard to receive in New York, thanks to social promotion) could go to a city-run college. This dragged down quality and added tremendously to costs while doing nothing to curb the rising crime rate.

Meanwhile, the public labor unions demanded very generous wages and retirement benefits and periodically paralyzed the city with strikes. Lindsay gave in, granting expensive concessions. Taxes went up but didn't cover costs. The city had to borrow money for day-to-day expenses such as salaries. Eventually bankers got worried and threatened to stop lending, which almost sent the city into bankruptcy.

While the 1960s and 1970s were unhappy times for most workers, parents, and children, they were a heyday for drug dealers, who roamed freely, and pornographers, who controlled much of the area around Times Square.

What did I learn from this that might be useful to conservatives?

First, crime is the biggest problem. It used to be said—and turned out to be true—that "if New York solves its crime problem, everything else will fall into place." Sure enough, when Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton refocused the city's resources to fight the true "root causes" of crime—that is, criminals—New York metamorphosed from an extremely dangerous place into one of the safest big cities in the world. Since then, more than a million people have moved into the city, transforming burned out and crime-riddled areas into safe, family neighborhoods and turning formerly marginal

neighborhoods into upscale residential areas with tourist attractions.

Second, taxes should be kept low. Not only is this the fair thing to do for working people, but it's also practical. Lindsay raised taxes, but the descent towards bankruptcy accelerated along with spending.

Third, public labor unions are the largest obstacle to urban financial security. Giving in to union demands was a main cause of New York's near default. Interestingly, when the city could no longer pay its bills, a financial overseer was appointed and told the unions to choose between making concessions and putting the city into receivership—a move that would have allowed New York to renegotiate its contracts. The unions cooperated, and services became more affordable.

Fourth, a high quality of life should be preserved. When Rudy Giuliani became mayor, one aspect of his war on crime was to target prostitutes, drug dealers, drunks, drug addicts, vandals, gang members, and even squeegee pests—those who made life miserable for everyone else. When the scoundrels were taken off the streets, New York became a much more pleasant place to live.

I believe that on these four issues—crime, taxes, public labor unions, and quality of life—a large majority of people are conservative. The question is, how can reforms be accomplished?

Perhaps the key is leadership—at least that's what the experience from New York would suggest. In New York, a decline was spurred on by dismal liberal leaders while a renaissance was achieved by a determined conservative mayor who had accurately diagnosed the city's problems.

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An Untidy Range of Conflicting Views

By Kimberly R. Crockett

“Urban conservatives” are probably just as varied in their views and hard to peg as so-called soccer moms or other categories of voters. Urban conservatives may feel like they are consigned to the edge of the party tent to a greater degree than traditionalists, but no one feels fully represented by our political parties. We conservatives all chafe at least a little with the Republican Party platform, but something tips us in favor of being conservative rather than liberal. Something makes us vote more often, if not always, for Republicans. What is that tipping point? In other words, what does it mean to be a conservative?

Libertarians and traditionalists coexist because of a shared commitment to liberty, even if they disagree on what liberty means or on the best way to protect it. We don't put signs in our yards that say “Happy to Pay for a Better Minnesota,” but the reason is not because we are stingy or cheap, but because we believe in a constitutional government of limited powers. We recognize that the individual, the family, and other traditional institutions are the building blocks of civilization; when government grows beyond its authority, it undermines those blocks.

A great collection of essays entitled *What is Conservatism?* was published in 1964 by the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists. The book was edited by Frank S. Meyer from *National Review*. Contributors included Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley, Jr. Meyer believed that the libertarian commitment to freedom for the individual and the traditionalist commitment to virtue and order were complementary and interdependent.

(T)he belief in virtue as the end of men's being implicitly recognizes the necessity of freedom to choose that end; otherwise, virtue could be no more than a conditioned tropism. And the raising of order to the rank of an end overshadowing and subordinating the individual person would make of order not

what the traditionalist conservative means by it, but the rule of totalitarian authority, inhuman and subhuman.

Meyer was not theorizing from an ivory tower. He and his wife spent many years inside the Communist Party; they witnessed the brutal dictatorship of the so-called proletariat firsthand and eventually fled for their lives. Meyer treasured his personal freedom and fought the allure of collectivist thought. He started his adult life as an atheist who believed in an all-powerful state and ended it as a man of faith and a sentinel against state power. He had the freedom to make that journey and he wanted all of us to have that same freedom.

What is the state's proper role in creating virtuous, law-abiding citizens? How much power should the state have over our daily, private lives? I think there is wide spread agreement that to be conservative or libertarian means one is a fiscal conservative. At the same time, conservatives do not consistently describe themselves as social conservatives. One need only look to the 2008 Republican presidential field to see that variety. We conservatives often part ways on the details that affect private life. Even conservatives who live faithfully by traditional values do not necessarily trust the state to define and enforce morality.

Religious traditionalists have held the floor in recent years because they took on the tough fight against an aggressive, left-wing takeover of our national government and daily life. Social issues like abortion energized the party and arguably still help sustain our national movement. James Dobson's announcement that he will only support a pro-life presidential candidate points to the perennial dilemma of the conservative movement. Dr. Dobson is taking a principled stand. Yet if he takes a chunk of voters with him and the Republicans lose in 2008, a Democratic administration will ascend and assert its power to appoint federal judges that will influence American jurisprudence for decades. We could get more of the flippant jurisprudence that gave us *Roe v. Wade* rather than continuing the slow

but steady progress we have made with judges who understand that their role is to obey the rule of law rather than to legislate.

I think this symposium points to the untidy range of conflicting views held by conservatives and to the practical problems of trying to govern a free and independent people. The United States is the City on the Hill, but it is not Heaven on Earth. If you imagine a world without liberals, conservatives would still find plenty of things to fight about. The good news is that liberals give us conservatives a rallying point and distract us from our differences.

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Urban Conservative, Thy Name was Rudy Giuliani

By Jim Dueholm

Urban conservatives are defined by space and, if they are governing conservatives, by political expediency and the demands of governance. The urban environment frames the issues and influences the positions.

This is true even of issues on which there is apparent agreement between city dwellers and country folks. Rural people in crime-free areas may see crime as a symptom of cultural or moral erosion; for New York City residents, it affects quality of life. On many issues, however, there is clear divergence between the city and country views. I have gone door knocking for northern Wisconsin political candidates, where it is apparent that any support for gun control is the kiss of death. Urban conservatives are likely to be indifferent to gun control or supportive of it.

Or take gay rights. City dwellers mingle with gays in their everyday lives, breeding a tolerance that may be lacking in rural areas, and gays have political clout in the city that they generally don't have in the country.

Opposition to abortion doesn't begin outside the city limits, but it tends to be stronger in rural than in urban areas. Christian conservatives constitute a large portion of the pro-life contingency, and they are more likely to be found outside the city. Besides, rural dwellers, not beset by many of the problems that afflict city dwellers, have more political time and inclination to focus on cultural issues than their city cousins.

The immigration issue does not break neatly along geographic lines. Immigrants, both legal and illegal, are needed in both the city and the country, so there is support in both places, but it also creates resentments and dislocations in both places. Still, the problems are different in cities, or at least in big cities, than they are in the country. As Rudy Giuliani has said, when he was mayor he recognized that illegal immigrants were important cogs in the city's economy, and he wouldn't consume city resources on enforcing laws to dislodge them. The real problem was criminal illegal immigrants; if they committed crimes, he wanted them off the streets and out of the country.

As Giuliani seeks national office, his positions as a governing urban conservative can easily be branded as opportunistic and hypocritical. He is often asked to explain how he can square his opposition to the comprehensive immigration bill with his mayoral support of immigrants. Or how he, as a champion of gun control, can appeal to rural Second Amendment rights enthusiasts. Or how his continuing support of abortion rights jibes with his dedication to appointing strict constructionist judges.

We wouldn't ask these questions of Democrats. If a rural Wisconsin congressman became president, we would expect that he might adopt a more nuanced position on farm supports, or at least recognize that there were competing claims. If that congressman became a gun control supporter, the only sounds we would hear from liberals would be the staccato of clapping hands. He could not have been elected if he had been prolife, but he might change or at least massage his position on other cultural issues. The fact is,

as Giuliani says, being president of the United States is different from being mayor of New York. Gun control becomes more complicated. Abortion involves not only a "woman's right to choose," but also the proper role of the Supreme Court. On immigration, because the president can take action that the mayor cannot, the rubber meets the road. On welfare, the outstretched hands of the city are balanced by a different, national constituency's resistance to handouts.

In Giuliani, we can see urban conservatism in action and also see how conservatism tends to be transformed as it wanders down country roads.

Jim Dueholm is a retired partner in the Minneapolis-based law firm of Faegre & Benson.

“Temperamental,” not “Creedal” Urban Conservatives

By Dave Durenberger

“We're no longer running as a party to eliminate government, but we haven't been coherent about how we want to use it.” Finally someone said it: former Congressional Budget Office director and current John McCain adviser Douglas Holtz-Eakin.

I can tell a conservative by the way he speaks to the role of government and the responsibilities of state and national government in a federal system. When I see nearly all members of Congress “earmarking” appropriations, I know the conservatives have lost. When I see the party of free markets subsidizing specific industries, and specific companies in competitive industries, on every tax bill that passes Congress, I know we've lost. When I see a Republican president withhold his veto from extravagant spending, I know conservatives have lost. When I see Republicans disclaiming national efforts to reform the current institutions of health care production and financing as socialized medicine, I despair of ever seeing a conservative again. When I see national elections decided by evangelical Christian litmus

tests, I believe Republicans will never get back to their roots.

David Brooks distinguishes “creedal” conservatives, like those represented by today’s evangelical Christians, from “temperamental” urban conservatives like me. In a recent column Brooks wrote,

Over the past few decades, the Republican Party has championed a series of reforms designed to devolve power to the individual, through tax cuts, private pensions, and medical accounts. The temperamental conservative does not see a nation composed of individuals who should be given maximum liberty to make choices. Instead, the individual is a part of a social organism and thrives only within the...community and nation that precede choice.

In the U.S. Senate, I succeeded Ed Muskie of Maine as chair of the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations and kept the debate on relative federal-state government roles alive until I departed the committee and it died in 1985. While on the subcommittee, I championed outcome-based education, charter schools, tuition tax credits, federal revenue sharing with the states, block grants, and devolution of the federal gas tax to the states. Also in the Senate, I was part of a bipartisan effort to reduce the marginal income tax rate to 25 percent by broadening the base on which the tax was imposed. I introduced the first consumer choice health plan, was the Senate author of President Reagan’s New Federalism initiative in 1982 and his Medicare Catastrophic Act in 1988. I introduced and passed the Economic Equity Act to eliminate legislative discrimination against women’s earnings, authored a voting rights act for the disabled and was the Republican author of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Almost every environmental act passed in the 1980s was influenced by my conservatism, including acid rain emissions trading, “best available control technology” health standards, and the removal of lead from gasoline. These are the sorts of

priorities that inspire and motivate temperamental, urban conservatives.

In 1981, I laid out eight principles for assuring consumer choice in health care which have always guided me in determining what government roles will foster true choice. In a 1984 speech to national associations of local government, I laid out ten purposes for a national government, from national defense and security, to interstate commerce and income security. Any conservative without a stake in losing some federal government largesse could apply this philosophy to the federal government and find a lot of resources left over for state and local government. This is the sort of exercise that inspires and motivates a temperamental, urban conservative.

Temperamental urban conservatives like me thrive on diversity and social cohesion. It’s all around us—in our neighborhoods, our restaurants, our small businesses, our churches, and our transportation and public safety systems. We are all very close to each other and interdependent. As temperamental urban conservatives, we gladly pay a lot for the amenities of the city—the sights, sounds, smells, and, yes, the conveniences it brings to our lives.

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Compare the Entrepreneurial Spirits

By Devin C. Foley

With 48.5 percent of Minnesota’s population living in urban areas and 31 percent of the state’s population living in Ramsey and Hennepin counties alone, the conservative movement as it stands in the state is unsustainable without making significant progress in convincing urban dwellers of the merits of conservative and free market ideas.

That said, is there a unique set of conservative ideas for the urbanite that may be termed urban conservatism? Simply put, no.

While conservatism has never been a rigid ideology, it has at its core the belief that human nature is fallen, unchanging, and often motivated by self-interest. No matter how much science, technology, and thinking progress, or how dense the population becomes, we are still battling the same vices and celebrating the same virtues as we did when man first began writing on these ideas eons ago.

Through the ages, governments have been challenged to order society in ways that elevate virtue and restrain vice. The American Experiment in self-government has succeeded admirably at this task. The Founders recognized that the dark side of human nature lies in self-interest in the pursuit of vices such as pride, greed, and power. Rather than attempt to change or ignore human nature, they constructed our government and market-based economy to harness the energy of self-interest in all its forms for the benefit of both the individual and the greater good.

In today's urban environment, some people argue that things are now different because knowledge of the sciences has increased and the population is more dense and diverse. Thus, they argue, government's role should change from the original, limited conception developed by the Founders. This thinking has gained strength over the last century in Minnesota as individuals have moved to urban environments and become less able to provide for themselves services and amenities such as streets, water, sewers, and fire and police protection. These Minnesota city dwellers therefore have come to see city, county, state, and federal government as the first responders to societal problems.

Yet can conservatives really expect urbanites to reconsider government's lead role in areas like bridges, roads, or even mass transit, let alone education and health and human services? I have no doubt it will be hard, but conservatives are not

without concrete and convincing examples to demonstrate how private initiative, motivated by self-interest, can deliver infrastructure services now offered only by government. Even more convincing, it can be demonstrated that the private sector can do it better.

In fact, urban Minnesotans need look no further than their own history. As the Twin Cities took shape from the mid-1800s, public-private partnerships led the way in infrastructure development. Back in those early days, the process was market driven as businesses provided the capital for projects and then coordinated with local and federal governments to accomplish the infrastructure projects in profitable ways. Here are a few examples of self-interest in pursuit of profit benefiting the greater good:

- In 1855, the Father Louis Hennepin Bridge in Minneapolis was the first permanent bridge across the Mississippi *at any point*. It was financed and built by private entrepreneurs organized as the Mississippi Bridge Company. It was a toll bridge.
- In 1883, the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis was completed to carry the Great Northern Railway. Still standing and used today, it was financed entirely by St. Paul captain of industry James J. Hill.
- One year earlier, Minneapolis had the first hydroelectric station in North America. It was privately funded and partially owned by businessman Charles Loring and supplied the electricity necessary to power what became the Twin City Rapid Transit Company.
- The Twin City Rapid Transit Company operated the trolley car system in Minneapolis and St. Paul until 1954 after winning an initial 50-year contract with the city of Minneapolis in 1875. By 1954, there were 400 miles of track and 700 street cars. Almost anywhere in

Minneapolis, a trolley stop was no more than 400 yards away.

Contrast the entrepreneurial spirit that drove these projects with current thinking about government's role or even "duty" in regard to a few of the Twin Cities' current high-profile infrastructure projects, such as reconstructing the I-35W bridge and increasing the presence of light rail. Clearly, conservatives are challenged to start presenting real alternatives that can challenge current urban thinking and approaches to infrastructure.

For the conservative movement to succeed in Minnesota, conservatives must take advantage of every opportunity to remind urban dwellers of the importance of self-interest properly harnessed and then use local, historical examples of success and failure to present alternatives to the "government as first responder" impulse. As urbanites begin to connect human nature with a conservative understanding of the role of government and see success with infrastructure projects, progress will be made in applying conservative truths to other areas of public policy, including education, health, and other human services. No matter how dense and diverse Minnesota's urban settings become, as long as human nature remains unchanged, conservative ideas will continue to be relevant and applicable.

Devin C. Foley is director of development for Center of the American Experiment.

Keeping Liberals and Others on Their Intellectual Toes

By Arvonne Fraser

Since the breed "urban conservative" is on the political endangered species list, a quick look at a few past examples might be instructive. As a liberal, I believe that urban conservatives—and some rural ones as well—are important contributors to our political health. To function well, democracies require political balance, respect among colleagues, and belief that

participation in government and politics should be seen as a noble endeavor.

Walter Robb, a Republican and longtime 13th Ward alderman in Minneapolis, is an old favorite of mine. A consummate white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant and an observant man, he led the fight to make garbage collection a city responsibility. Gladys Brooks, another Republican city council member, was passionate about civil rights and served on the Governor's Human Rights Commission. Walter Rokenstein, an intelligent lawyer and ten-year Minneapolis councilman, chaired the Environmental Quality Policy Committee of the National League of Cities. My husband, when mayor of Minneapolis, often remarked on "Rocky's" thought-provoking analysis of particular city issues.

In Washington, some of our favorite congressional colleagues were moderate Republicans. Rep. F. Bradford Morse's interest in foreign affairs later led him later to become the successful director of the United Nations Development Program. Rep. John Heinz of Pennsylvania was deeply interested and informed about education, health, and welfare, housing, mass transportation, and environmental issues. Later, as a U.S. Senator, he chaired a special senate committee on aging and was in favor of extending Medicare.

Leaders such as these kept liberals and others on their intellectual toes. The public benefited. Issues, not partisan politics, informed public discourse. The keys were respect for the role of government in democratic societies and respect for differing views. While as a nation we have become more tolerant in matters of race and gender, we seem to have become less tolerant politically, focusing on ideology, not on the issues at hand.

Ideologies and ideologues have their places. They expand the political parameters, for better or worse. But for non-authoritarian governments to function well, especially in systems such as ours with only two major parties, informed debate revolves around the political center.

Ultraconservatives, who disdain government and abhor taxes, have pulled political discourse off center, leading to the near extinction of urban conservatives. Recently, a young classmate in a writing workshop questioned my use of the term “liberal Republican.” To her, it was a contradiction in terms. In her 20s, she didn’t believe there could be such a being.

Successful urban conservatives look ahead as well as back. To be successful politically, urban conservatives must recognize, for example, that municipal garbage systems are necessary and costly. And true conservatives are fiscally responsible. They become tax experts, not tax avoiders. As American cities became manufacturing centers, eventually pollution had to be dealt with, as Senator Heinz understood. Al Quie, a rural conservative, understood that public education was essential and worth the money. He understood Minnesota and the nation’s future depended on an educated populace.

Today’s successful urban conservatives understand that roads, bridges, and mass transit are all part of the transportation package, and that metro areas flourish or die as one body. Cities become denser, suburbs less white, and mothers work and vote. Childcare, land use, housing, and public education all demand attention, as do the costs of health care and retirement.

Although I will probably never vote for an urban conservative, I do hope the breed propagates and moves off the endangered species list.

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Immigration and Sexual Politics are Key

By Paul J. Gessing

Who are the “urban conservatives?” In some respects, answering this question is difficult because the term “conservative” has lost so much

of its meaning. At *dictionary.com*, a conservative is defined as someone “disposed to preserve existing conditions, institutions, etc., or to restore traditional ones, and to limit change.” This is a sensible definition, and in the United States, at least since socialists and others took over the term “liberal,” conservatives have largely been united in attempting to preserve the Founding Fathers’ vision of limited government and a constitutional republic.

So what is an “urban conservative?” That definition is open to interpretation. In modern society, one can find all kinds of people with varying philosophical orientations in America’s cities. Arguably, one of the great strengths of America is the ability of individuals with radically different points of view to live side by side in harmony—at least until the topic of politics comes up.

That said, simply being a conservative and living in an urban area does not make one a prototype for the urban conservative. It is more complex than that. As Americans move ever more towards cities and suburbs—both of which are more urban than rural—the importance of determining exactly what the term “urban conservative” might mean takes on greater relevance.

Among the issues on which urban conservatives are likely to differ from their rural counterparts, in both experience and philosophy, are immigration and sexual politics.

While immigrants often work in agricultural sectors and in rural areas, they tend to put down roots and have the greatest cultural impact in urban areas. For some conservatives, this cultural diversity is seen as a threat. After all, immigrants often bring with them strange cultural norms and languages and have an economic impact that is often viewed as negative. Urban conservatives are a cosmopolitan bunch. While they have justifiable concerns about immigrants, they know that a vast majority of immigrants wish to become part of the social fabric of this country. While urban conservatives understand that most immigrants come to the United States to work

and make a better life for their families, they understand that reducing or eliminating welfare programs for immigrants should be considered. After all, it takes work to become an American.

The other issue that defines an urban conservative is likely to be sexual politics. Unlike their rural cousins, urban conservatives likely know many gays personally and even consider them friends. While urban conservatives are unlikely to buy into the homosexual agenda of gay marriage and other “rights,” these conservatives are also unlikely to view their gay neighbors in a negative light. They might also support civil unions for gays. Also, because city dwellers are more likely to get married and have children later in life, they might support abortion.

Clearly, urban conservatives will have their own viewpoints and perspectives. The topics mentioned here represent only the tip of the iceberg but summarize some of the major departures from broader conservative orthodoxy.

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Eventually Indistinguishable from Modern-Day Liberalism?

By Jake Haulk

In a trivial sense, any conservative living in an urban area is an urban conservative. And, as those of us who profess to be conservative know, there are many strands of conservatism, with some groups holding views that are anathema to those of other strands. It’s a big tent in terms of ideological tenets. In this tent we find classical liberals, libertarians, social conservatives, fiscal conservatives, economic conservatives, neoconservatives, paleoconservatives, people who just like to be called conservative, as well as some folks whose philosophy reflects aspects of two or more of the identifiable strands. “Eclectic

conservatives,” perhaps? Undoubtedly, there are some of each of these in any sizable urban area.

Yet in a larger, non-trivial sense, is there, in fact, an identifiable “urban” conservatism: a branch of the conservative tree that shares enough of the root stock to be meaningfully described as conservative? I would argue there is not. It seems unlikely that conservatism can be geographically based, although it’s true that many conservatives do decide where to live to some extent on geography. Moreover, it can be argued that to a large degree, the intensity of one’s beliefs about the role and actions of government will play a role in where one lives.

Clearly, in a major urban center, residents will have to confront many more governance, political, and societal issues than residents in the backcountry—and not just more issues but more intense issues. That necessarily means that living in such a world requires tolerance, forbearance, and willingness to ignore a lot of what goes on.

If one is truly conservative and holds strongly to traditional values, distrusts big government, and prefers slow, gradual, and orderly change, the urban environment of the 21st century would be a nightmare. Then again, some religious conservatives might look upon the dens of iniquity as fertile ground to plow. Likewise, libertarians with their live-and-let-live approach might be comfortable with the social setting, but one must wonder how they feel about the ineluctable deepening and broadening of the power of government.

What would urban conservatism entail that is not reflected in one of the branches of conservatism mentioned earlier? It has been suggested that such a conservative would hold a more favorable view of illegal immigrants. Yet some neocons have long held that view. It has been suggested that urban conservatives would care more about the state of education. This idea is nonsense; several traditional conservative groups, including the Heritage Foundation, many state think tanks like Center of the American Experiment, and the

Institute for Justice have labored to bring real reforms to education.

Trying to come up with examples of how an “urban conservatism” might be different from “conservatism” is not a fruitful approach. Even with existing branches of conservatism there will be large differences in the answers to some questions. An urban conservatism, if it exists, is merely an amalgamation of other strands, picking and choosing to suit the situations—not a new ideologically identifiable branch of conservatism. That said, people who are attracted by the idea of “urban conservatism” should beware: over time a pattern of always choosing the least conservative tenets of each branch will create an amalgam indistinguishable from modern-day liberalism.

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A Cautious Agenda

By John Hood

It’s become a cliché to observe that the root word of civilization is city. But I’m a country boy, so I derive some perverse enjoyment from citing this particular cliché. Big cities are the natural creation of human ingenuity and commerce. Because we (properly) associate cities with capitalism and innovation, it pains me to observe that the growth of cities seems, in America at least, to have also played a role in reducing human freedom and expanding government.

While writing a book a few years ago on the intersection of investment and politics, I noticed an unmistakable historical trend: as urban America grew, the constituency for limited government shrank. You can see the pattern in the 40 years from 1880 to 1920, when increased agricultural productivity led many unemployed farming families to leave rural areas for cities. As a percentage of the U.S. population, urban residents went from one-quarter to a majority during this period. While most improved their

own situations, particularly over time, the social and political consequences were significant. Essentially, America changed from being a nation of owners of capital—homes, small businesses (usually farms), and infrastructure (wells, mills, etc.)—to a nation of renters, employees, and buyers of water, energy, and other necessities. In other words, we became buyers from big institutions, increasingly from governments. Partly as a consequence, the Progressive movement arose and did great damage to the American constitutional order.

In the old conflict of visions between Jeffersonian agrarianism and Hamiltonian urbanism, modern conservatives typically side with Hamilton. On economic grounds, they’re right. But Jefferson wasn’t making an economic forecast. He was concerned about the survival of self-reliance and self-government. He was right to be concerned.

Fortunately, America’s urbanizing trend began to modify even in the 1920s, and the reverse trend towards the suburbs intensified after World War II. While government did play a role, too many conservatives have bought the conspiracy line about a “sprawl lobby” of highway and homebuilding interests who used interstates and subsidized mortgages to depopulate the cities. That’s nonsense. It was actually the introduction of electricity and mass transit in the early 20th century that turned pedestrians into long-distance travelers and allowed workers to start moving out of city cores. By the 1920s, the automobile and financial innovations in banking were just expanding the boundaries of what was possible for families who already felt a natural desire to exercise more control over their lives and acquire more space in which to live them. Government didn’t create the parade. It largely followed along behind (often causing problems upon its arrival).

The result was not an end to cities—they remain attractive places to work and play for many and to live and shop for some. But any conservatism that joins the Left to declare war on suburbia and the middle-class virtues they nourish—automobility and homeownership and the middle-class virtues they nourish—is conservatism at war

with itself. It will fail, both in political and policy terms.

Urban conservatism shouldn't be about social engineering. It shouldn't seek to turn downtowns into subsidized Disney parks and sports megaplexes, or pine for that brief, shining moment when most Americans lived in apartments and commuted by streetcars. Instead, urban conservatives ought to focus on bread-and-butter issues that really matter to urban voters in daily life: crime, crumbling infrastructure, abysmal schools, and social decay. Many of the public policies best suited to these problems aren't exciting. They are basic and conservative in a "small c" sense. Streets need to be maintained at an economical cost. Cities need to slim their payrolls and reform their compensation policies. Criminals need at least to be incapacitated, if not deterred. Some cities need substantial improvements in their water and sewer systems.

Admittedly, school choice is more of a revolutionary idea, and experience shows that it is most likely to come gradually, through pilot programs and intermediate steps such as charter schools, than in a fell swoop. In the meantime in education, urban conservatives ought to be talking about discipline, reading instruction that really works, and incentive pay to induce good math and science teachers to take on difficult assignments in inner-city schools.

Urban conservatives need to promise voters the effective delivery of core governmental services, starting with public safety. No bread and circuses. No monorails. Sometimes, like-minded voters will take them up on the offer. And when they don't, it will often be because such voters have themselves decamped to the suburbs and no longer exist in the city.

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Never Forget Kirk

By Sarah Janecek

Two-colored geography now dominates our politics. Conservatives live in the "red" parts of the country—the suburbs, the exurbs and rural areas. Liberals live on "blue" turf—the urban areas and first-tier suburbs.

"Urban" conservatives are the lonely red souls living in deep blue precincts.

To understand the urban conservative, there's no better place to start than Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*. Kirk thought it was best to use the word conservative as an adjective rather than as a noun. He further stated that the term was self-defined.

Crucial to understanding the Kirkian meaning of the word conservative is that the word does not imply a religion or "the clutch of ideology." Instead of a laundry list of specific positions (like today's Republican Party platform), Kirk concluded there were certain conservative principles that have endured over time and upon which conservatives agree.

These ten principles, summarized by Kirk, can be found on the Russell Kirk Center Web site, www.kirkcenter.org:

- The conservative believes that there exists an enduring moral order.
- The conservative adheres to custom, convention, and continuity.
- Conservatives believe in what may be called the principle of prescription. Conservatives sense that modern people are dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, able to see farther than their ancestors only because of the great stature of those who have preceded us in time.
- Conservatives are guided by their principle of prudence.

- Conservatives pay attention to the principle of variety. They feel affection for the proliferating intricacy of long-established social institutions and modes of life, as distinguished from the narrowing uniformity and deadening egalitarianism of radical systems. For the preservation of a healthy diversity in any civilization, there must survive orders and classes, differences in material condition, and many sorts of inequality.
- Conservatives are chastened by their principle of imperfectability. Human nature suffers irremediably from certain grave faults, the conservatives know. Man being imperfect, no perfect social order ever can be created.
- Conservatives are persuaded that freedom and property are closely linked. Separate property from private possession, and Leviathan becomes master of all. Upon the foundation of private property, great civilizations are built.
- Conservatives uphold voluntary community, quite as they oppose involuntary collectivism.
- The conservative perceives the need for prudent restraints upon power and upon human passions.
- The thinking conservative understands that permanence and change must be recognized and reconciled in a vigorous society. The conservative is not opposed to social improvement, although he doubts whether there is any such force as a mystical Progress, with a Roman P, at work in the world.

To understand the urban conservative, two other rubrics are in order. First, David Brooks suggested there are two broad groups of conservatives—attitudinal and creedal. By attitudinal he meant the Burkean view of a reverence for tradition and a suspicion for utopian

radical change. This describes urban conservatives. Creedal conservatives, on the other hand, have a series of creedal beliefs that either include or exclude a person from the conservative fold. Suburban and rural conservatives seem to lean more to this creedal pole. It must be noted, however, that the two are not mutually exclusive. Having conservative views implies both an attitudinal and creedal approach in reasoning.

The second rubric that differentiates conservatives geographically is how they actually weigh and advocate opinions. The Greek poet Archilochus wrote, “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” Sir Isaiah Berlin, whose life spanned most of the 20th century, developed this idea even further. He saw hedgehogs as having a central vision of reality into which they fit everything and foxes having a sense of reality that do not permit them to possess a grand sense of everything. Urban conservatives are surely more the fox than the hedgehog, while rural conservatives are surely more the hedgehog than the fox.

Defining the urban conservative’s politics now becomes easy. Urban conservatives have a basic underlying conservative attitude with few to no creedal requirements. This means they are politically more flexible and usually not enamored of single-issue advocacy. On specific issues, for example, urban conservatives aren’t particularly upset with undocumented workers; they favor school choice and vouchers but support public schools; they are open to mass transit (depending on usefulness and cost); they aren’t particularly worried about gay marriage but want marriage as tradition to be preserved; and they want the criminal justice system to work but question why our prisons are filled with African-American inmates.

Urban conservatives see that differences in opinion are just that—opinion differences. When it comes to a solution those opinions by necessity must meld and change to make workable compromises possible.

Maybe the term, “urban conservative” could be key to understanding the emerging electorate whose members in recent polls increasingly portray themselves as “independents,” even though they are truly Kirkian conservatives.

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On the Verge of a Renaissance

By Kate Johansen

Minnesota conservatism is on the verge of renaissance. As the state becomes increasingly urban, demographic shifts will shape the landscape of Minnesota’s politics as well as its terrain. Minnesota conservatives should respond to these changes by translating their policies and rhetoric into a politics that resonates with urban residents, thereby building the best possible foundation on which to rest the long-term future of the state’s conservative movement.

Urbanization in Minnesota is a reality. The Twin Cities area accounts for 60 percent of the state’s population. Minnesota’s urban center is expanding both naturally and at the expense of rural communities. An aging rural population (about 40 percent of residents are over 65) as well as the exodus of young adults from greater Minnesota to the Twin Cities suggest that the urban shift will continue. Additionally, suburban voters are increasingly affected by issues traditionally associated with urban living, such as public transportation and assisting immigrant populations. The rise of these urban-oriented issues in the key suburban electorate underscores the importance of conservatives developing urban outreach.

Minnesota political movements ignore these changes at their own peril. After all, you can’t govern if you don’t win, and you can’t win unless you persuade the most voters that you are right. That means talking to citizens about their issues in ways that resonate with them, a feat that will require attunement to urban realities.

How should Minnesota conservatives reach out to an increasingly urban electorate? They should start, in true renaissance fashion, by rediscovering the past. Mid-20th century conservatives routinely won election in regions defined by cities; the urban-dominated northeast, for example, consistently elected fiscal conservatives. Similar leaders, like former U.S. Senators Rudy Boschwitz and David Durenberger, won statewide election in Minnesota. These conservatives were successful because they adhered to three principles with which urban voters identify: creativity, pragmatism, and tolerance.

At its heart, creativity is the conservative alternative to the liberal conviction that government is the best, if not the only, solution to social problems. More than any other issue, mid-20th century conservatives were united by a belief in limited government. Today, liberal cities offer the best examples of government’s inability to solve every social ill; thus, urban areas are ripe for a limited government message. Some conservatives have neglected this principle, not because of an ideological shift but as a byproduct of undivided government control. By returning to limited government ideals, conservatives will connect with urban voters who have witnessed the failures and futilities of turning to government first and always.

A renewed commitment to pragmatism is also fundamental to urban conservatism. While limiting government is important, so too is recognizing that urban areas create novel challenges that merit government attention. For example, conservatives in urban areas have long recognized the need for mass transit. Urban conservatives may also support the improvement of failing schools through voucher programs or assisting addicted populations through faith-based initiatives. These programs are deeply pragmatic; they show that urban conservatives are results-oriented and support government partnership in private policies and programs that are proven to work.

Finally, urban conservatives must revive the political tolerance of their historical counterparts. Urban areas concentrate diverse populations, often diluting the dominance of traditional Judeo-Christian values. As a result, many urban conservatives skew moderate or libertarian. Still, an urban conservative movement is not intended to shift conservative ideology leftward. After all, it profits a movement little to sell its soul for the whole world, but for Uptown?

Instead, urban conservatism embraces all forms of conservatism, reaffirming a big tent mentality. Fiscal conservatives, social conservatives, moderates, and libertarians all have a place in urban conservatism; the movement honors both the social and intellectual diversity that characterizes urban life. By gathering all strains of conservatism together, urban conservatives will also be better able to reach out to diverse groups with targeted messages, showing that conservatism holds something for everyone.

Minnesota's evolving demographics make it an ideal place for an urban conservative renaissance. The state's changing composition requires ideological transformation for conservatives to remain politically viable. More importantly, urban conservatism will expand and invigorate a new conservative base, an important development for conservatives who aspire not only to build a city on a hill but also to govern it.

Kate Johansen is a law student and a 2003 Truman Scholar.

Urban Conservative or Realist?

By Barbara Johnson

I don't consider myself an urban conservative; I think I'm more of a realist.

As I read the daily newspaper and answer my phone calls and e-mails, the latest stories of teenagers shooting one another and shooting innocent bystanders dominate the conversations. In every case, I can just visualize the rest of the

story: the shooter was born to a teenage mother and an absent father; has had poor school attendance and many contacts with the police; and has made several court appearances. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of government assistance have probably been spent on the shooter's family, to little avail.

There is no program or intervention that can mitigate the effects of a teenager having a baby. When this tragedy happens in our community, as it does 750 times each year in Minneapolis, we are all harmed. People who believe in government intervention will explain that the solution to the dilemma is to send a nurse for home visits, to pay the mother to bring her child to the doctor for proper immunizations, to enroll the child in an early childhood program, and so on. In my experience and opinion, the chances of this intervention making a dent in eventual outcomes are remote at best. Still, I do believe that the services are important—though the most important and cost-effective intervention is preventing teen pregnancy, period.

I represent constituents who are affected by federally subsidized housing that is over-concentrated in their neighborhoods. They are live in the areas disproportionately inhabited by sex offenders and probationers. On average, their public schools perform poorly. When they ask how they are supposed to deal with these issues, they are reassured that there are programs in place to deal with the various problems associated with overconcentration. They don't believe it, and neither do I.

An urban conservative has a healthy respect for the tax dollar. If we raise taxes, I want the dollars to be spent for services that improve the safety of our neighborhoods. Public safety is the Number One responsibility of local government. It's tough always to produce this outcome as one of 13 city council votes, which is what I am. It is always a pleasure when common sense prevails.

As a realist, I am sure that I am seen as a cynic. But as George Bernard Shaw stated, "The power

of accurate observation is commonly called cynicism by those who do not have it.”

Barbara Johnson is president of the Minneapolis City Council.

Urban Conservatism in Detroit

By Greg Kaza

The neighborhood on Detroit’s Lower East Side is anchored by St. Hyacinth Catholic Church, a parish which welcomed several generations of immigrants to America and where Polish is still spoken. My late father lived in this neighborhood with three brothers after returning from service in World War II. The ethnic neighborhood where he lived is largely abandoned today as the result of government actions embraced by liberals who claimed Detroit as their “model city” in the 1960s. The liberal interpretation was flawed. Manufacturing and population had already peaked in Detroit in the 1950s, and “urban renewal” and a city income tax in the 1960s undermined the vibrant neighborhoods one still finds in metropolises like Chicago or New York. The 1967 Riot, which I observed firsthand as a boy, did not kill Detroit. The policy seeds were already sown, and decades later the harvest is reaped as the wild grass fights through the concrete, searching for light.

This is not to argue that we should refuse to engage those who question conservative policy solutions or the need for an urban conservatism. We must engage them, and the process must be sincere enough to lead us together through neighborhoods in Detroit and other urban cities. It was such processes that led to successful urban conservative experiments like tax-free renaissance zones, expanded charter schools, and faith-based initiatives. Detroit is a better place because of these policies, which have been opposed at times by liberals, socialists, and even some conservatives and libertarians. These latter groups have sometimes argued against “picking urban winners and losers” or have contended that urban policy is unnecessary because suburban

and rural voters constitute a majority. The first claim ignores that urban conservatism is market based, and markets pick winners and losers. The second reduces policy to majoritarianism.

We must define urban conservatism as a market-based order that recognizes both voluntary organizations and the Judeo-Christian tradition as necessary foundations for a non-anarchic urban order. This order is based on private property, the rule of law, and non-arbitrary government regulation. It is also entrepreneurial and thus relies on legal immigration to expand and grow. This process can still be seen in Southwest Detroit, including in the St. Anne Church area, where primarily Spanish is spoken. The St. Anne neighborhood symbolizes immigration’s role in urban conservatism in several ways. The church is a stone’s throw from the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest border crossing between the United States and Canada. If there is an immigration policy consensus, it is that some level of legal immigration is desirable.

There is one important difference between liberal opinion and urban conservatism, which is crystallized in the person of Father Gabriel Richard, an émigré priest who fled the French Revolution. This line of demarcation is the recognition of the role of voluntary religious organizations and their faith-based initiatives: urban conservatives welcome them; liberals seek to undermine them with government programs. These initiatives, whether private schools or social welfare programs, have always played a crucial role in Detroit, where immigrants rely on them. The neighborhoods that gave Detroit its strength for much of the 20th century were built around churches and synagogues. They served not only immigrants laboring in automobile and steel plants but also non-natives who launched, without government subsidies, successful storefront enterprises. The urban conservative philosophy might be stated as, *speramus meliora; resurget cineribus*. These were the words, in Latin, spoken by Richard after fleeing the Reign of Terror and setting foot in Detroit. These four words, also Detroit’s motto, translate as, “We

hope for better things; it will arise from the ashes.”

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Diversity as a Means, Not an End

By Sean Kershaw

This symposium has started an essential discussion, not just because it recognizes what may be a “fact” (that many people in urban communities may be candidates for a new conservative expansion, if only the conservative movement would expand the tent a little bit), but also because our political discourse needs this type of conversation. Perhaps this symposium also features a label with which I can identify. I don’t disagree with anything in its introduction.

The issues highlighted by this symposium—education, crime, immigration, transit—are the right issues, so to speak, that any urban citizen would prioritize. Yet I think it is more important to address a key philosophical point that I believe an “urban conservative” would stand for: the proper role of diversity in our democracy. In many ways, it is diversity that most characterizes the urban experience, and diversity lies at the heart of the political dynamics of many of these key urban issues like education, immigration, and crime.

I believe an “urban conservative” should see diversity by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on as a means to an end, not as an end unto itself. Diversity in urban communities, and in democracy itself, is to me like diversity in most ecosystems—a necessary part of a healthy system.

Appreciation for diversity must be accompanied by a commitment to a common vision or a common goal: strong families, good jobs,

successful schools. Too often the left fixates on “celebrating diversity” without realizing that without a shared set of democratic values and goals, diversity becomes a barrier to addressing policy issues, not a resource. At my most cynical, I think that urban liberals are more interested in their school children being exposed to diverse cultures than they are whether students in these diverse cultures are learning anything. At my most optimistic, I’ve come to realize that my own household and my own experiences only highlight the “common good” that’s created by a diverse group of citizens working toward a common goal.

Basically, I think an urban conservative would replace the ubiquitous “celebrate diversity” bumper sticker with one that reads “celebrate common ground.” We’ll all be better for it, and the conservative movement might tap into a new source of energy and growth.

Sean Kershaw is executive director of the Citizens League (www.citizensleague.org).

Urban Realities Validate Conservatism

By Roger Magnuson

The idea of an urban conservative has a deliciously oxymoronic quality to it, like the idea of an urban cowboy—sort of on the order of “what’s a nice guy like you doing in a place like this?”

Equally intriguing is the whole idea of political philosophy organized by area code. Do policy ideas get transmogrified when loaded on SUVs in the Burkean countryside and driven across the borders of America’s interstate beltways?

My expectation is that the fundamental policy orientation of urban conservatives is validated, not modified, by experience in the city.

While pragmatism and popular culture have a gravitational pull on principles of all kinds, there is no reason that there ought to be, as a principled

matter, any distinctively urban brand of conservatism. If anything, the realities of urban life should cause the urban conservative to drift into pathology departments in schools of public health. By examining the diseased tissue of our urban areas firsthand, the urban conservative has, from his knowledge of political science, a keener ability to diagnose the social diseases one sees around the city today.

Let's consider four examples.

- A realistic view of human nature. The crime problem of cities shows the need for enforcement of laws based on realism rather than sentiment.
- The importance of family. The liberal notion of family as a merely nominal category with many good alternatives is hard to reconcile with the social pathologies that come from fatherless children and mothers without husbands and children deracinated and impoverished by divorce.
- The law of unintended consequences of government “solutions.” The urban exhibits are endless. But where is there a better example of sincerely motivated government initiatives leaving an entire population shipwrecked than the social wreckage left behind by the welfare system?
- The free market and its benefits. The astounding failures of public education in the urban areas—which appear, incredibly enough, to exacerbate the disparity between rich and poor, majority and minority student, plus the Berlin-style walls that keeps the underclass from leaving these prisons—are powerful examples of the inefficiencies of public monopolies.

In short, urban conservatives have little reason to modify their conservative principles to accommodate the special realities of modern

urban life. Instead, with the pathologist's smock and cap in place, they should be inclined to use the results from their urban laboratory to validate the principles of their special “science.”

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Cities as Conservators

Wilfred M. McClay

As Americans, we sometimes have a hard time reconciling the way we think with the way we live. In particular, our fierce attachment to ideals of individualism, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and closeness to nature do not always seem, for many of us, to comport well with the conditions of modern urban life. Perhaps that is because America, as historian Richard Hofstadter quipped, is a nation that was *born* in the country and has *moved* to the city. Or to put it another way, altering a famous saying about the British Empire, we became an urban civilization in a fit of absence of mind.

Europeans see their great cities as centerpieces of their civilizations and draw on nature to soften their urbanism in the classic pattern of *rus in urbe*. Not so Americans, who resist seeing urban life *per se* as a worthy ideal, instead preferring to represent America by its natural beauty—the Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountains, redwood forests, and Gulf Stream waters. Americans embrace suburban living as a next-best approximation to country living, a form of *urbs in rure* which promises the conveniences of city life without the disadvantages.

This American resistance to an urban identity goes back to the very beginnings of American history. Consider these words of Dr. Benjamin Rush, in an 1800 letter to his friend Thomas Jefferson: “I consider [cities] in the same light that I do abscesses on the human body, viz., as reservoirs of all the impurities of a community.”

Yet there has long been something misguided about this anti-urban disposition. In fact, American conservatives should be particularly intent on overturning it.

First, we should set aside the notion that conservatism is a static philosophy of landed elites and fixed social hierarchies. The idea of conservatism, far from being anti-urban, has always been bound up in the history of great cities. When Russell Kirk wrote *The Roots of American Order*, he chose to build his account around the central *cities* of the history of the West: Athens, Jerusalem, Rome, London, and Philadelphia. Each embodied a foundational stage in the development of American liberty and order. Man is made for cities, and the civilization that conservatives wish to conserve is rooted in them. After all, the Book of Revelation aims at the creation of the New Jerusalem—not the New Tara Plantation or the New Grover’s Corners.

On a more immediate level, while we have often been taught to think of our American cities as hothouses of creative destruction and ceaseless dynamism and as holding pens for atomized and anonymous mass men, our actual experience of cities tells us something different. Every great city is really a collection of strong neighborhoods, in each of which there is far less anomie than may appear to an outsider. A great city is much more likely to carry forward the material traces of the past, and the memories those traces evoke, than is almost any American suburb or small town.

No one should read suburbia-bashing into these remarks. I grew up in a very agreeable suburb of Baltimore and have abiding affection for the place. Still, my earliest memories are of urban scenes: toddling across a busy Cincinnati intersection while clutching the hand of my big sister, gawking at the gorgeous lobby of the Palmer House in Chicago and hearing about the famous people who had stayed there, catching a glimpse of the Lincoln Memorial and the National Gallery in Washington, or seeing the Empire State Building. These are all scenes I can still experience today. Memories flood back

when I see them. They serve as threads of continuity in my life and in the life of my nation. Yet my beloved hometown, and even the house that I grew up in, have been transformed almost (but not quite) beyond recognition. Which setting is more conducive to a genuinely conservative outlook? It is not an obvious call.

Indeed, it’s complicated in my own case by the fact that my interest in conservatism and my interest in cities arrived together. On a Fourth of July holiday during my undergraduate years I visited a college friend who lived on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. This friend suggested that we might want to meet up with his Uncle Henry, who was, he explained, very knowledgeable about the architecture and history of lower Manhattan. We could wander around with Uncle Henry for a while, eat someplace together, and end our day at the Battery for the fireworks. Well, it turned out that Uncle Henry was Henry Hope Reed, a man of ebullient energy and infectious curiosity and the founder of an organization called Classical America, which has fought valiantly to reverse the seemingly inexorable trend toward anti-traditional and anti-monumental modernist assumptions about the built environment.

Uncle Henry made an enormous impression on me. I had never before heard such an intelligent and cultivated man skewer the platitudes of high modernism with such convincing flair. What impressed me most about Uncle Henry was his passionate love of New York City, which was revealed in the six hours or so that I spent walking around lower Manhattan with him. It seemed that there was literally no building on our informal tour whose history he did not know and could not relate instantly in thick and loving detail. It was like hearing the *Song of Songs* translated into a catalogue of urban delights. Moreover, you had the sense in his company that you were strolling through the chambers of time itself, coming into communion with the spirits of the past. It crossed my mind that this experience would only be possible in a city like New York.

I again thought of Uncle Henry when I arrived in

Rome this past January to take a post as a Fulbright professor. In that most fascinating of cities, the achievements of humankind over 25 centuries have been accumulated and recorded, though as a largely haphazard and undifferentiated collection riddled with serendipities and self-contradictions—which is to say, just as the past actually manifests itself to us. Rome does not tell one story, or five, or even a hundred, but an infinite number, and it is up to you simply to jump into it and begin sorting it out for yourself. The personal and the world historical sometimes come into vivid and unpredictable contact. “In Rome,” wrote the philosopher George Santayana, who spent his final years in the Eternal City, “I feel nearer to my own past, and to the whole past and future of the world, than I should in any cemetery or in any museum of relics.”

Rome is unique, the conservator of an almost unfathomable share of human history. Yet every great city makes possible a similar experience, one that forms the core of any authentic conservatism. For conservatism is not merely an attachment to certain abstract principles. It is also an attachment to tangible things and, through them, to the past out of which they, and we, have emerged. Cities are, and remain, the chief places where that vital connection is conserved and cultivated.

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Urban Conservatives Will Always Define “Conservatism” Differently

By Tom Neuville

What explains the philosophical difference between urban conservatives and rural/suburban conservatives? Is it possible for conservatives to create an urban majority in the future?

The answer to the first question is environment.

The second question is more challenging to answer.

Conservatism has as many definitions. From its Latin origin, the term “conserve” means “to keep, guard, or preserve.” Conservatives will have different values and goals than liberals, which are reflective of the culture in which they live. In a sense, conservatism is a relative approach to political thought, which varies with the traditions and culture of each person’s community. I have often heard that a Southern Democrat is more conservative than a Minnesota Republican.

In America, conservatives may be described differently, based upon their personal experiences, traditions, religious beliefs, education, employment, and places of residence. Rural conservatives more often reflect a culture of homogeneous social and religious tradition in their political thinking. Urban conservatives are often described as economic conservatives. They share a core belief in limited government and self-reliance but are not influenced as much by social and religious traditions in their communities, which tend to be more diverse.

Generally, conservatives favor gradual change and religious and social stability. Edmund Burke argued that tradition is a sound foundation for political governance because it draws upon the wisdom of generations and the “test of time.” This view suggests that existing values and institutions that have undergone the “correcting influence of past experience” ought to be respected. In contrast, liberalism is a philosophy that is often based upon untested wisdom or on the wisdom of a single generation.

Even today, these philosophies reasonably describe the term “conservative.” In our religious and cultural tradition, conservatives believe that human beings are innately flawed and need God’s help to live good lives. Conservatives support longstanding traditions like faith in God, marriage, ethical protection of life, self-reliance, private charity, hard work, less government regulation, and personal responsibility. These values apply, whether a person lives on a farm or

in the inner city. Liberals tend to believe that humans are innately good and that society or other external factors cause people to become flawed. Hence, governmental power can be utilized to apply external forces to “correct” the factors that cause crime, poverty, or injustice.

Conservatives differ in the application of their core values based upon their respective environments. Urban conservatives live in environments with greater diversity, higher crime rates, more poverty, and increased population density. People in rural communities connect more often with neighbors in schools, churches, and grocery stores. They know their neighbors on the other side of town, whereas urban residents may not know their neighbors across the street.

Urban conservatives will always define “conservatism” differently than rural or suburban conservatives. Given the demographics of urban Minnesota, a conservative majority in Minneapolis or St. Paul is unlikely to materialize for many years. Still, conservatives will make political progress in our urban cities when they are willing to invest time in the urban environment and better understand how conservative principles can best be applied effectively in that environment. Examples include parental school choice and criminal justice reform. Both issues require application of traditional conservative values, family support, private charity, hard work, personal responsibility, and accountability. All conservatives can support such reforms in our state and country.

Tom Neuville is a former member of the Minnesota Senate from Northfield.

Urban Conservative Agenda: Freedom

By Grover G. Norquist

It is important to have a conservative urban agenda, and the good news is that it *is* possible to enact it.

One could, in theory, win presidential elections and control the U.S. House and Senate while losing the urban vote overwhelmingly. We tested the limits of this theory in 2000 and 2004.

Still, there is no reason to abandon the cities to become the political version of *Escape From New York*.

To begin, we should not make the same mistake Democrats make when they think about economic status. Liberals believe that Americans are permanently and rigidly divided into two economic classes, the rich and the poor. Liberals look at income quintiles in America without realizing that the person who is low income in his 20s, higher income in his 50s, and low income again in his retirement years is, in fact, the same person. Similarly, many Americans are born and grow up in rural or suburban areas, move to the big city for college or early career experience, and then move back to the suburbs or exurbs to rear a new generation of little Republicans. Immigrants who move first to big cities often move to the suburbs as they advance economically. The children of today’s now-urban immigrants will be raising their own children in suburbs.

The bottom line: America is not a static society—not in terms of income or location.

There is obviously a solid conservative agenda for cities. It includes school choice, toughness on crime, lower taxes, less corruption, transparency in government spending, roads that are paved all the way across, and tort reform.

The Reagan center-right agenda is as important for cities as for suburbs, yet we have seen over the years that this agenda will not be enacted by mayors and city councilors who owe their elections and campaign contributions to unionized government workers and recipients of government contracts. City governments as presently constructed are unlikely to reform themselves.

Luckily, there is an obvious and achievable solution.

In the children's game of *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, a pair of scissors cuts paper, paper covers rock, and rock breaks scissors. In American politics, states trump cities. A Republican legislature and governor can bring school choice to a Democratic city. A Republican state government can bring the Second Amendment to citizens in cities with statewide concealed-carry laws. States can limit the ability of cities to raise taxes and to spend.

The federal government can help, too, by refusing to spend federal tax dollars on big city political machines. Corrupt big-city Democratic political machines are fed by earmarks. Federal and state funds flowing into cities confuse urban citizens into thinking big government costs less than it really does. This is why folks in cities think so much government is "free." Defunded at the state and federal levels, big city political machines can be defeated in elections by a taxpaying electorate that understands it will be paying the bills for any big government ideas that Democrats propose in their cities.

There is an urban conservative agenda: freedom. It can be imposed from above and then maintained from below.

Grover G. Norquist is president of Americans for Tax Reform (www.atr.org).

Abandon Moralizing and Put Shoulders to the Wheel

By J. Dennis O'Brien

To a large extent, urban conservatives are not part of our urban culture, and I think I know at least a few reasons why.

While it is possible to be urban and a conservative, it must also be noted that too often conservatives have become isolated from urban culture, and some of this isolation is self-imposed. That is to say, conservatives too often

have become social scolds, expressing political solutions with a heightened sense of morality and an insistence that their political answers have to be accepted on moral as well as political grounds. Because few people want to be governed by those who scold, conservatives have allowed themselves to become politically irrelevant. This is not to say that the Left does not often assume a heightened sense of morality, and leftists are certainly capable of being social scolds, but it is the conservatives' exclusionary attitudes that are the problem for those of who are conservative.

Governing requires compromise. If all political views are expressed as moral imperatives, compromise becomes impossible. By expressing our political views in moral terms, sometimes with an uncompromising and scolding attitude, we conservatives have allowed ourselves to become isolated to the detriment of the body politic.

We all know there are conservative principles that could shape and guide Minnesota's urban center's political discourse. Yet we allow our urban elites to continue centralizing, regulating, and redistributing. We must not allow this to continue. Yet for conservative principles to become effective in political discourse, we need to change, and we need to become culturally relevant.

It is a false dichotomy to say conservatives resist change. We all know that in this world we either grow and change or die. We don't get to stay the same. The question becomes whether we can grow and change with effective conservative principles, or whether we will grow and change on the Left's cultural and political agenda. To my way of thinking, freedom, justice, individual empowerment, the power of education, and an emphasis on market-based solutions are the appropriate ways for individuals and our society to grow and change.

Remember, it was only a few years ago that creative conservative theory was in ascendance and the Left was reactionary. The Left was opposed to welfare reform and doing its best to

ignore the celebration of the collapse of socialism/communism in the world. We now see the Left backtracking on free trade and plotting to ensure the future through socialized medicine and other big government solutions. The question is whether we conservatives can take effective advantage of the Left's political blindness and learn from our mistakes so that we can govern effectively with compassion, securing justice, and fairness for all.

It may be that for now the Left is firmly in control of our urban culture and can continue to produce failed ideas, but our communities need our help to direct our culture in ways we know work for all. This is our opportunity. Can we, in a spirit of moderation, tolerance, and respect for differences among individuals, begin to participate in the forums and gatherings of those who are genuinely concerned? Can we, with modesty and respect for individuals, ask whether markets might be more effective than government programs? Are we doing all we can to emphasize individual responsibility as opposed to dysfunctional group dynamics? Great problems create magnificent opportunities, and we have an abundance of opportunities to participate, volunteer, guide, and direct a new political dialog.

We should thank our friends on the Left for their passion, concern, and dedication. But we should also point out to community leaders that most of their political solutions have failed our central cities. To our colleagues on the Right, we can ask that they abandon their moralizing and put a "shoulder to the wheel" so that together we can create a new political dynamic dedicated to improving our central cities.

Dennis O'Brien is an attorney in Minneapolis.

From Endangered to Extinct

By Denny Schulstad

During the majority of my more than two decades on the Minneapolis City Council, I was the only one of the 33 people holding elective public

office in the city who was Republican endorsed. My colleagues thought of me as a conservative from the Dark Ages. At the same time, Republicans around the state wondered if I was a closet liberal—how else, they wondered, could I keep winning with huge majorities, when "real conservatives" kept going down in flames? The truth was probably someplace in the middle.

I'm a Republican because I believe in government providing only what we can't provide for ourselves. That includes, among many other things, strong national defense, transportation systems, public safety, education, health standards, infrastructure, and rules to preserve the quality of life we enjoy. I believe that many social and economic problems should be addressed by individuals, through private actions and charitable contributions. My pet peeve is observing certain very wealthy liberals who call on government to solve all problems with public money while giving an insignificant percentage of their personal wealth to charity.

While in office, I was very tight with the public checkbook. I strongly supported public service departments, including fire, police, public works, and sanitation. I opposed extravagant funding of many nice-to-have-if-you-can-afford-it programs. As a result, I was the champion of the public safety employees and their federations. I also favored most building projects in downtown Minneapolis because they created many jobs and built a strong tax base for the city. Those buildings, and their resulting property taxes, are the golden egg for the city and provide the funds for many of the neighborhood programs. Many of the labor unions that traditionally endorsed only Democrats worked for my reelection bids. I entered each election season with the endorsement of the Republican Party (in a heavily DFL ward) and the strong support and endorsement of almost every labor organization. No wonder my opponents were frustrated and found me a hard target.

Conservative, liberal, urban, rural, Republican, Democrat, Independent, fiscal conservative, social liberal, compassionate conservative: these

are labels that the media love to put on people, but the lines are blurry. I'm of the opinion that there should never be a straight "party line" vote in any legislative body, with the exception of electing leadership. How is it possible that any issue would be favored by 100 percent of the elected officials in one party with many constituencies and opposed by 100 percent of the representatives of the other party, also with many constituencies? Blame it on party loyalty or party discipline, but it is one of the major obstacles facing government today. The huge success of U.S. Representative Jim Ramstad and the universal respect for him has been a result of his representing his constituents rather than blindly following one party.

While in office, I was liberal on some environmental issues and very conservative on most fiscal issues. I was at once a Republican (therefore a conservative) and labor endorsed (therefore a liberal). I was at once from the big city (must be a liberal) but opposed affirmative action, believing everyone should be treated equally (must be a conservative).

At the time, there was one issue that was truly "urban conservative:" crime and sentencing. It is now catching on with rural and liberal constituencies. Today we read in the papers about criminals being arrested dozens of times, yet remaining on the streets and committing more crimes. I've seen someone steal a car or break into a home and be back home that evening, laughing at the police officer who made the arrest. We often read about the person who brutally raped or murdered an innocent victim being on the street after numerous previous felony convictions and asking: Why this person is not in prison?

Minnesota ranks 49th of the 50 states in the rate of incarceration (how many people are in prison in relation to the population). Only North Dakota (with the fewest crimes) ranks lower. Yet we rank second (behind only Alaska) in the amount of money spent on each inmate per day. Minnesota has the well deserved, but not

enviable, reputation of giving the shortest sentences and having the nicest facilities.

Some years ago, when I was on the city council, the head of the Chicago police told us he could name 15 to 20 of his worst felons now living (and probably committing crimes) in Minneapolis. When asked why, he said, "Our felons can count to three and, in Illinois, after three convictions, we add 20 years to the sentence." Career criminals understand that the cost of doing business is time in prison, so they gravitate toward states like Minnesota, with shorter sentences and better facilities.

I led a coalition of urban leaders (some were liberals) to the capitol in St. Paul to change the policies and laws in Minnesota to discourage criminals from moving here. We ran into solid opposition from rural lawmakers: "Criminals don't live in our areas. This is a big city issue." Also from conservative lawmakers: "It costs too much to build and run additional prisons." As well as from liberal lawmakers: "We should spend money on social programs to prevent crime." Consequently, no policies were substantially changed. We still attract criminals from around the nation and still rank at the bottom in the rate of incarceration.

When I assumed a larger role in the Air Force, I chose to leave the city council. To nobody's surprise, I was replaced by a Democrat. While in the past I was called an endangered species, I'm now called a dinosaur (totally extinct). There will be no more Republican-endorsed office holders in Minneapolis (they can't even make it past the primary and into the general election race). Now the battle between liberals and conservatives has moved to the suburbs; the battle has been lost in the major cities.

Denny Schulstad was a 22-year member of the Minneapolis City Council. He is also a retired Air Force brigadier general.

Challenging Everything Urban Governments Do

By Lyall A. Schwarzkopf

Urban centers are very different from suburbs, rural cities, small towns, and townships. People live close to one another, move frequently, and don't know their neighbors. People are more impersonal. Most poor urban people live in older housing, rental housing, or subsidized housing. Social services are centered in urban centers to help people in poverty. People of many ethnic backgrounds and races live close to one another. There are different cultures that clash at times. Schools teach English to new immigrants and try to close educational gaps between white and non-white children. Crime is more impersonal, and there is more of it. With more people, more urban governmental services are needed.

I believe an urban conservative philosophy must include the following principles.

- Respect for equal rights, equal justice, and equal opportunity for all people must be fostered, regardless of race, creed, sex, age and disability.
- Free enterprise and individual initiative should be encouraged constantly while building and improving urban centers.
- Governments must be fiscally responsible in their operations and the services that they provide to the people.
- Governments should provide only those services that cannot or will not be performed by individuals or organizations.
- The most responsible and responsive government is the government that is closest to the people.
- Government working with the governed should develop new and innovative ideas to meet changing times.

As with any principles, these are not absolutes.

Because urban centers are always changing, it is important that government adapts. One of the first things needed in urban government is to challenge everything that urban government does. All government structures, programs, and services not needed today should be discontinued or changed to meet today's true needs.

"Best practices" that had been adopted in other urban centers should be considered. Best practices are one way to bring about innovative ideas to delivering needed services. Incentive systems should be established to encourage department heads in government to save money in their budgets. Taxes, fees, and other revenue in an urban center should never be wasted.

Budgets should not be based on what was spent last year plus inflation. Instead, budgets should be based on the goals established by city councils for the real needs of people. Demographics should be one of many measures used in determining needs.

Services delivered by urban governments should be first class. People have more respect for government and are willing to work with government if they receive a dollar's worth of services for a dollar's worth of taxes or fees.

As new programs or services are suggested, their need should be thoroughly reviewed. If there is a demonstrated program or service need, then private individuals and organizations should be given the opportunity to provide it. If individuals or organizations cannot meet the need, then government should see if it can do so. All programs and services should have sunset dates so that city councils and mayors have the opportunity to review the need for them and to make changes or delete them.

Government employees should be rewarded with pay and benefits comparable to private sector employees. Government employees should have goals they are expected to meet. Employees not meeting goals should be given added training to

help them meet goals in the future. If employees do not meet goals after added training, they should be replaced. Employees doing exceptional work above the goals should be rewarded.

People in urban centers should be treated with respect. Compliments and complaints by people living in the urban center should be heard and reviewed periodically. If governmental needs are changing, they should be reviewed and changes should be made. All people should be treated equally under the law. People who commit crimes—even nuisance crimes—should be prosecuted aggressively. Citizens and noncitizens need to be safe in the urban center, not only on the street and at work but also at home.

Urban officials must always be thinking ahead 10 to 20 years. They must ask the question: “What will the urban center look like a decade and two from now?” They must set goals to attain the kind of urban center they want in the future.

Urban centers are always competing with other urban centers. Using conservative principles as a blueprint will ensure the building of a strong, vibrant urban center and will provide a better living for all people for the future.

Lyall A. Schwarzkopf served as Minneapolis city clerk and coordinator, as a Minnesota state legislator, and as chief of staff for Gov. Arne Carlson.

It’s All about Kids

By Chuck Slocum

My conception of urban conservatism emphasizes being alert to the tough circumstances in which too many kids are growing up. It means being alert to the essential importance of one-on-one relationships between adult mentors and kids. And it means being alert to the pivotal difference each of us can make. In this day and age, virtually every kid could use another friend.

The research is undeniable that the presence of even just one nonfamily adult can make a huge difference for a young person. It may be through contact organized by a church, nonprofit organization, or workplace, or it may be through an encounter during a crisis in a child’s life. But one adult can serve a child by offering love, encouragement, and advice.

A decade ago, my wife and I felt the calling to become mentors. We are empty nesters who truly enjoy the company of younger people. Our home is kid friendly, with plenty of books and board games, a porch suitable for entertaining and a backyard that features a trampoline. We frequent sport and theatre events with large groups of youth, using discounted or donated tickets.

We have a long, active list of addresses and phone numbers of our young friends. Setting time aside every week, we participate in organized mentoring programs and have established less-formal relationships with youngsters whose parents are welcoming.

As a couple, our shared goal is to donate about 1,000 hours a year of volunteer time and a significant amount of money to support the well-being of kids. For part of every year, we host live-in foreign exchange students, which keeps us connected with the school system.

Research has shown that children’s positive and extended experiences—preferably when they’re 10 to 14 years old and for at least a year or two—with caring adult mentors can dramatically reduce the likelihood of illegal drug and alcohol use, school and classroom truancy, and physically violent interactions with family and friends.

Consequently, we strive to work with young people who come from demographic groups that are more likely to suffer depression, run away from home, drop out of school, become teenage parents, or enter the criminal justice system.

Adults interested in giving mentoring a try should be aware that immediate feed back is not always

evident, as “thank you” does not appear to be a part of many young people’s vocabularies.

With the passage of time, though, things sometimes change, as the following anecdotal examples demonstrate.

- A Father’s Day call from a young Taiwanese woman who lived with us nearly a decade ago meant a lot.
- A boy from Crystal who has never seen his Egyptian father spoke eloquently to us about what our 16-year friendship meant to him.
- A Twin Cities teen we came to know through a faith-based program—she never knew her birth parents—made the cheerleading squad and asked for our help on college applications.
- A former guest “son” from Chile wanted to work and save for college while living once again at our home in the United States.
- Two inner-city siblings we’ve known for nearly a decade had amazing responses as they took their first ride in a passenger jet, flying to Atlanta with us for a weekend in honor of a first-in-the-family high school graduation.
- In a telephone call from Australia, a former Minnesotan and new mother we’ve known nearly all her life asked permission to name her newborn son after our deceased son.
- Calls, cards, e-mails, and holiday greetings arrive regularly from young people who apparently know that we care for them.

As mentors, whether as urban conservatives or not, we are the better for it, no doubt.

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Group (www.willistongroup.com), a management consulting organization. He was named “Mentor of the Year” by mentoryouth.com for his work with Life Coaches (www.lifecoaches.org).

City Mouse and Country Mouse

By Dane Smith

It was in a most appropriate place that I found my first book by Ayn Rand, the objectivist libertarian and unapologetic apostle of egoism and capitalism. She remains a key influence on anti-government, anti-collectivist fiscal conservatism, and her ideas were a dominant influence on me for at least a decade in my youth.

As an 18-year-old, I found the underlined and dog-eared book *Atlas Shrugged* in a pile of junk left in a long-abandoned logging complex on a remote and uninhabited island in Alaska’s Prince William Sound, about as far from urban America as one could get. I grew up in Alaska and was working at the time for the U.S. Forest Service. I learned from fellow forest service rangers that the timber operation had been hacked out of the wilderness by a solitary man of heroic proportions. I could see from what he left behind that he must have fancied himself another John Galt, the lonely hero in Rand’s novel.

Galt, Rand, and, presumably, the unknown logger had contempt for cities and crowds, and more fundamentally, the very idea that throngs or masses or “mobs” of mediocre people ought to have any democratic control over the fortunes, or conduct, or individual aspirations of the heroic capitalist masters of the universe.

That was 40 years ago. Since then I’ve spent enough time in every region of the nation to have a feeling for how important geography is in shaping philosophy, culture, and politics. Spending 30 of those years reporting and writing about politics and government for newspapers has added even more map consciousness to my thinking. Urban America is progressive and communitarian, while rural (and to a lesser extent

suburban and exurban) America is conservative and individualistic. Where you are has a lot to do with who you are, and this has been a fact of mankind going back to ancient Greece and Aesop's story about the country mouse and the city mouse.

Lots of ironies and paradoxes abound in the generalizations about these different kinds of mice.

There is, of course, a fairly direct correlation between population density and ideological and cultural differences. Even in conservative states, the densely populated inner urban cores vote overwhelmingly Democratic. Even in liberal states, rural folk tend to vote Republican.

Alaska is long behind me, and I now live near the geographic center of one of America's larger metropolitan centers. I have evolved from libertarian to progressive and now am the leader of a Minnesota-based think tank that advocates for ample public investment. We favor restoring higher state income tax rates to pay for investments in education, transportation, and health care. The great jurist and writer Oliver Wendell Holmes said that taxes are the price we pay for civilization, and I think Minnesota ought to become a little more civilized. Progressive groups like mine tend to draw support from urban populations. One of our challenges is finding and persuading more people in Greater Minnesota to see things the way we do.

But to the charge at hand: here are a couple of pieces of advice for conservatives who want to make inroads in urban America and Minnesota. I'm sincere in hoping that you conservatives succeed. Your side and my side need to work together and make friends on each other's turf in order to move forward. I realize that some of this advice boils down to "Don't be so conservative." So be it.

Cities are disproportionately nonwhite and immigrant. Consequently, ill-concealed attempts by the Right to stoke resentment of immigrants in recent elections was a huge, long-term tactical

mistake. Almost 25 years ago, at the 1984 Republican convention in Dallas, I asked a very influential and intelligent Minnesota conservative what he thought Ronald Reagan's biggest shortcoming was. He quickly responded that it was the inability of the Great Communicator to communicate with African-Americans and other racial minorities. He was right, and in a nation that is fast becoming much more colorful, this ongoing failure eventually will be lethal for conservatives.

More important, I think, conservatives have hurt themselves with sustained resistance to even modest increases in public investment for vital, economy-building assets like public education and mass transit. The United States has the lowest taxes and the lowest level of investment in human capital among the industrialized democracies, and Minnesota as a state is becoming merely average on both measures. Cities, in particular, can feel this disinvestment and the "no new taxes" mentality behind it. Conservatives need to understand that putting real and substantial new tax dollars, for example, into helping students achieve and decongesting cities is a sound strategy.

In other words, conservatives who want to be taken seriously in the cities need to do more than "frame" things differently or put a smiley face on their agenda. They need to say things differently and also back up their words with money.

Dane Smith is president of Growth & Justice (www.growthandjustice.org).

Maximum Flexibility and Swift Accountability

By Samuel R. Staley

Cities, by their nature, are dynamic and diverse. They exist because of their ability to tap into the creative energies of individuals, regardless of their political, economic, or cultural stripes. At their best, they build bridges across personal and cultural divides and release a wave of

productivity that raises the quality of life and standard of living for city and non-city dwellers alike.

Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, St. Louis, and other cities achieved this during America's industrial revolution. Silicon Valley and Los Angeles tapped into this during the information technology economic revolution. New York continues to reinvent itself as a global financial services powerhouse.

Thus, cities seem to be the antithesis of "conservative," at least as classically defined. Conservative traditionally means to resist change, to preserve existing conditions or institutions, or to restore traditional ones.

Yet if cities adopted this conservative approach as an overarching vision for the future, they would die. Indeed, many people would argue that many cities have died. When cities do die, they first die economically, as they fail to adjust to the economic transformations that drive productivity and job growth. Then, they die socially and culturally. Ultimately, they die politically (unless they are bailed out by other, thriving cities).

This begs the question, what does it mean to be an urban conservative? Is the term itself an oxymoron? I don't think so. The key is to give the term "conservative" a contemporary twist.

In American politics, the conservative philosophy has tended to embrace people who believe in limited government. This doesn't necessarily imply that life or the economy should stay the same. Quite the contrary: limiting government to its traditional role of protecting individual freedoms and liberties has the effect of releasing the creative energies of the individuals who constitute the broader community. Government, in the American context, empowers individuals by constraining government's power to limit individual initiative.

Moreover, a constrained role for government does not necessarily imply a constrained role for broader cultural institutions that involve citizens

in civic life. Individual action through government represents one means for public involvement. Churches, neighborhood associations, community groups, or simple neighborly camaraderie are all forms of social engagement that make up the broader civic life.

Indeed, sociologists, economists, and other social scientists increasingly recognize the role of nongovernmental "mediating institutions" in holding a community together. These institutions may be even more important in cities where they serve as the "glue" that holds the diversity of urban communities together.

An urban conservative, in this context, recognizes that cities themselves are what F.A. Hayek called spontaneous orders—products of human action, if not of human design. These spontaneous orders depend on an environment that both allows for tapping into the creative energy of individuals and also for providing the stability of culture and rule of law that constrain the excesses of "unbridled" individualism.

Human action is most constructive when it serves a higher social purpose, and social institutions like cities and market economies combine maximum flexibility for experimentation with swift accountability for failures. These are social institutions most likely to ensure that good ideas thrive while bad ones flounder and disappear.

So, in the end, what is an "urban" conservative?

An urban conservative is someone who:

- Recognizes the twin values of entrepreneurship and cultural accountability.
- Is tolerant by nature.
- Is willing to let ideas percolate while trusting the mediating institutions of the larger society to reign in the excesses of individualism and discipline destructive behavior through the rule of law.

- Recognizes that civilization is a “messy” place, but trusts that broader social institutions, including religion and spirituality, provide guidance through the dynamism of cities.
- And recognizes the distinction between government and governance and the fact that governing through nongovernmental institutions is often the most effective option.

In short, urban conservatives recognize both the limits and potential of cities and that “rugged individualism” is a concept whose time has passed. He or she embraces the power of individual creativity but recognizes the broader social context in which it occurs.

Samuel R. Staley is director of urban and land use policy at the Reason Foundation (www.reason.org).

Mugged by Reality

By David Strom

One of the all-time great political jokes is that a neoconservative is a liberal who has been mugged by reality.

Such muggings, needless to say, often take place in contemporary American cities. Irving Kristol, Normon Podhoretz, and Ben Wattenberg all started their careers as towering figures of the Left, but as they watched America’s cities become enervated and decline into shells of their former selves, they abandoned liberal orthodoxy.

What distinguishes urban conservatives most from their suburban brethren is their sense that civilization is much more fragile than it seems. The placid streets and casual sense of security that suburbs breed—and which should be the birthright of us all—are notably absent in most American cities today.

To be a city dweller today is to endure crime and to encounter daily the economic inequalities that exist nowhere as starkly as within any major urban metropolis. To live in a major American city is to witness firsthand the fragility of civilization and its need for constant reinforcement.

Perhaps that is why urban conservatives are simultaneously more and less friendly to government institutions than their suburban counterparts.

Among urban conservatives you will find a visceral loathing of government programs such as welfare, “urban development,” public housing, and all the tools in the liberals’ backpack for revitalizing cities.

On the other hand, urban conservatives have perhaps a greater appreciation of the judicious use of the most basic government function—the maintenance of order through the application of force. It is no surprise that it was the Manhattan Institute—based in the once ungovernable New York City—that helped promote and implement the “broken windows” philosophy of policing and helped spearhead the tax and regulatory reductions that allowed Rudy Giuliani to revitalize New York City.

Living in Manhattan, they had learned the hard way that massive bureaucracies and urban redevelopment programs—big, paternalistic government—didn’t work. Yet they also learned that without the proper attention to the coercive elements of government, especially policing, civilization itself begins to break down.

What makes urban conservatives distinct, I would argue, is that they distrust the “soft power” of government—the ability to help those in need—more than most, and appreciate the “hard” power of government—the necessity of maintaining order—more than most.

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“A Mixture of Missouri Morals and Connecticut Culture”

By David E. Sturrock

What distinguishes urban conservatives from their suburban and small town cousins? Are these merely differences of taste and style? Perhaps this was Mark Twain’s point when he reflected that life had shaped him into a “mixture of Missouri morals and Connecticut culture.” For Twain, this was not a political commentary but a meditation on the contrasting influences of his boyhood in Hannibal and adulthood in Hartford. Sir Kenneth Clark made the same point more generally when he described the eternal differences and the enduring (if rarely recognized) dependency between provincials and metropolitans.

Borrowing from Clark, *National Review*’s John Derbyshire confesses to being a “metropolitan” conservative, a species of greater sophistication but weaker conviction than conservatives dwelling beyond the city limits. Indeed, this softness, most apparent on hot-button social issues, guarantees that “authentic” conservatives can be found only “out there in the provinces.”

At least since the New Deal, urban conservatism has been chiefly identified as an economic creed, usually with strong class overtones. In Peter Arno’s famous *New Yorker* cartoon, a group of well-turned out New Yorkers bid their neighbors to “come along; we’re going to the Trans-Lux to hiss Roosevelt” (during the newsreels). These denizens of Manhattan’s Upper East Side saw FDR as a traitor to his class, an animus he heartily reciprocated, calling them “economic royalists.”

Urban living poses the sternest test for conservative convictions, in part because kindred spirits are so hard to come by. To live in most major American cities outside of the Sunbelt is to drift upon a boundless sea of liberal values, lifestyles, institutions, and politics.

Yet conservatives cannot afford to write off urban America. Building conservative electoral and governing coalitions without support from the “urbs” won’t be possible for much longer, given liberalism’s continuing inroads, politically and culturally, in American’s “red” states and counties. The major urban centers are the most influential places in America, notwithstanding the rise of the office park culture. This urban dominance is likely to continue in the realms of ideas, high (and low) culture, finance, medicine, and communications, which means conservatism must remain a force in urban life if it’s going to have any influence in these arenas.

Also, the major cities and their inner suburbs are the primary settling zones for immigrants, who account for nearly all of America’s (and Minnesota’s) recent population growth. If conservative ideas and leaders don’t build a following among these newer Americans, then conservatism’s influence in American life is destined to recede.

How, then, can conservatism compete, and win, in Urban America in the 21st century?

- By aggressively promoting small businesses and home ownership, which are critical engines of upward mobility for immigrants.
- By building on the Giuliani-Bloomberg template of cultural conservatism: cracking down on crime, keeping streets clean and windows unbroken, cutting taxes, moving the poor from welfare to work, and giving the productive sectors of society confidence that their contributions to the city are appreciated, both now and in the future.

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Location, Location, Location

David G. Tuerck

To consider what it means to be an “urban” conservative, it’s necessary to ask what distinguishes a conservative of this variety from any other. There are already plenty of varieties to consider—social conservatives, neoconservatives, libertarians, and so on. How, we may ask, does it benefit the lexicon to add this new one?

We can attempt an answer by recognizing that *location* choices are similar in important respects to choices we make in the marketplace for ordinary products. Urbanites differ from other Americans insofar as they are willing to pay for amenities that only cities can offer. New York City, that most urban of all locations, offers an endless list of amenities: symphony, opera, museums, Broadway shows, jazz clubs, churches, sporting events, lectures—you name it. People who live or work in New York City pay for these amenities by putting up with the congestion, taxes and general mayhem that go with living or working there.

To be sure, people don’t live or work in cities merely because of the amenities they provide. Some people, who would prefer the suburbs or the country, simply have no choice. Yet as we transition to a service economy and as electronic communication makes location less and less important a consideration for running a business, it’s the amenities that cities provide that will increasingly explain the attraction they hold for people.

So what is an urban conservative? Quite simply, it’s someone who is willing to pay for the amenities offered by a city and who happens also to be conservative. The mere fact that one enjoys world class opera or sports does not bear at all on one’s ideological orientation. It bears merely on the sacrifices, in the form of suburban or rural comforts, that one is willing to make in order to enjoy these amenities.

Yet there are aspects of the urban culture that can prove challenging and troubling to a conservative.

Consider what it means to be an urban social conservative. Probably, as some argue, there is a greater concentration of gays in the “creative class” that makes up the art scene in a big city. The prominence of the gay lifestyle in cities like San Francisco is troubling to social conservatives. Social conservatives are appalled that Massachusetts now permits same-sex marriages.

Neoconservatives likewise feel uncomfortable with the anti-war sentiment that is dominant in cities like Boston, New York, and San Francisco.

Libertarians oppose the government subsidies that go to support the arts, sports stadiums, and rapid transit in the cities.

Is it philosophically possible, then, for an individual to be both conservative and happily ensconced in the city? The answer is yes, provided that he understands and acts upon a theorem handed down many years ago by economist Charles Tiebout. According to the Tiebout theorem, the ability to “vote with one’s feet” is the key to unraveling the otherwise knotty problem of providing “public goods” (including concert halls and sports stadiums) without coercing the support of people who don’t necessarily benefit from their provision.

If government subsidies are necessary in order to make the amenities offered by a locality economically viable, then the simple answer is for the locality to finance the subsidies out of local taxes. As long as the cost of subsidizing some amenity is borne by local taxpayers, even the most hardcore libertarian could feel comfortable supporting the taxes and enjoying the amenity. If not, he could vote with his feet and move to a different locality that neither imposes the taxes nor provides the amenity.

If the urban conservative doesn’t want the Metropolitan Opera badly enough to pay New York City taxes, he can move to Nashville, where

the Grand Ole Opry gets along fine without government subsidies. It's necessary only that New Yorkers pay for the Met and that Tennesseans do not. Similarly, social conservatives or neoconservatives can readily move from Boston to, say, Houston, where the ideological climate is more to their liking, provided only that Houston isn't compelled to become like Boston in terms of its social and ideological mores.

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No Distinctly Urban Conservatives; Only Distinctly Urban Issues

By Jim Van Houten

One writer recently observed that he believed there are at least five differences in the political attitudes of urban and suburban conservatives. If he is correct, it raises the question of cause and effect. There seem to be two possibilities. The first is that conservatives who find themselves in urban areas become more liberal because of their residential experience. The second is that those conservatives who already hold these more liberal views are more likely to find the tradeoffs for urban life attractive and seek an urban residence.

This difference in cause and effect is important. If, on the one hand, location changes attitude, then there is a need for conservative politicians to develop separate tactics to overcome the urban influence on attitudes toward national issues. On the other hand, if urban residence is selected in consideration of already-held attitudes, then the same tactics used successfully to influence suburban conservatives should be successful in urban areas.

The good, or perhaps bad, news is that a quick review of the available literature shows a void of clarifying research on the topic of cause and effect. On national issues there appears to be no

research that is conclusive on whether we need separate tactics for urban conservatives. I believe that the second cause and effect is the most likely. I believe that urban residence is selected in consideration of already-held views.

A few years ago, for example, I traveled around the Twin Cities as a speaker for the annual United Way campaign. A frequent question received from suburban audiences was, why was it appropriate for such a large part of suburban fund-raising to go to agencies with a primarily inner-city clientele? The stock answer (and correct answer, I believe) was that costs were reduced by providing these services on a larger scale at central locations and that service was also improved. It was also common knowledge, and often mentioned, that this centralization benefited suburban communities by encouraging those needing these services to live closer to the urban service agencies.

In considering the residence decisions of people in this group, it seems unlikely to me that their political attitudes were changed by the location of the welfare services. It also seems reasonable that a conservative choosing to live where there are travel economies and more theater is unlikely to have his political attitudes changed by the fact that these advantages are in a city instead of a suburb.

All of the above is not to say that there is nothing to be done. If my view is correct, it implies a political strategy with two parts. I suggest the following:

- On national or society-wide issues, conservatives in urban locations should be addressed by the same messages developed to motivate the conservative base. If this is not already being done, focus groups to define these messages should include a proper weighting of conservatives living in urban districts.
- On state or local issues, conservatives in urban locations should be considered a target audience with special tactics

developed for them. The willingness of these voters to accept the urban tradeoffs does not mean that the actions of overwhelmingly liberal city governments and agencies do not trouble them. In the eyes of many, their only hope for fair treatment lies within state or national legislation that limits the regulatory and wealth-transfer options of metropolitan governments. State political parties should identify these needs and create party platforms that address the concerns most troubling to conservative urban residents.

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It Takes Creativity

By Lou Wangberg

What does it take to be an urban conservative? The same thing it takes to be any kind of conservative. The principles first enunciated by Edmund Burke over 200 years ago still apply. What are some of those principles? *Merriam Webster's* short definition reads like this:

A disposition in politics to preserve what is established; a political philosophy based on tradition and social stability, stressing established institutions, and preferring gradual development to abrupt change; *specifically* such a philosophy calling for lower taxes, limited government regulation of business and investing, a strong national defense, and individual financial responsibility for personal needs (as retirement income or health-care coverage); the tendency to prefer an existing or traditional situation to change.

I don't see anything in there about "urban."

Certainly the implication of this symposium topic is that one applies the ideas of conservatism to an urban setting in some special way, but that does not mean the principles change, only the location where they are applied. Urban environments are complicated and fast moving. The issues that must be confronted are at times staggering. All readers know of the problems of race, ethnicity, poverty, unemployment, pollution, transportation, crime, and so on. Most of these matters resist simple solutions. It takes creativity to apply conservatism in an urban environment.

I have lived half my life in urban environments. I am well aware of the brittle nature of leadership where many people have lost the will to solve their own problems, if they ever had it the first place. It is essential to provide assistance in such a way that we do not institutionalize dependence. Providing a "way out" and a "way up" requires some investment of tax dollars but not in permanent assistance. The investments can take many forms, the most important of which is education. These investments work best when we understand the special needs that arise out of the varied urban settings that exist. In that sense, urban conservatism does depart from the traditional definition. Conservatism serves best when it is flexible and supportive instead of intrusive.

Having said all that, I have trouble with the definition of conservatism that has emerged in America today. In some very significant ways, I'm uncomfortable calling myself a conservative. It isn't that I've changed; there are people who are in fact liberals who have changed the definition of the word conservative, and their redefinition of it no longer fits what I believe. Let me explain.

In the beginning, being a conservative was not about social issues. It was about government playing the least possible role in people's lives. The definition given above did not say anything about urban matters, and it did not say anything about social issues, either. When you advocate government restriction or intrusion into private lives, that isn't conservative; it's liberal.

Specifically, I believe it is wrong to lump matters of abortion, the death penalty, and gay issues under the umbrella of conservatism. Social activists have taken over the conservative label, squeezing out true conservatives. These social activists' ideas about political behavior diminished the individuality of people who seek to control their own lives to the greatest possible extent.

My views were shaped long ago by many factors but in particular by the 1960 seminal work of Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*. I still believe in what Barry Goldwater wrote 47 years ago:

Every man, for his individual good and for the good of his society, is responsible for his *own* development. The choices that govern his life are choices that *he* must make: they cannot be made by any other human being, or by a collectivity of human beings....The conscience of the Conservative is pricked by *anyone* who would debase the dignity of the individual human being. Today, therefore, he is at odds with dictators who rule by terror, and equally with those gentler collectivists who ask our permission to play God with the human race. . . .The Conservative's first concern will always be: *Are we maximizing freedom?*

The traditional conservative approach would be to emphasize "rugged individualism." As ideal as that might seem, it doesn't work. Urban environments demand solutions. The requirement is to have a longer view of society. A genuine conservative will see that investment is superior to control. In the end, everyone who is a genuine conservative wins.

Lou Wangberg, a former Minnesota lieutenant governor, currently teaches in Florida at both the doctoral and high school levels.

If . . .

By Craig Westover

To paraphrase British poet Rudyard Kipling, "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you...if you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too...you are an urban conservative, my son."

Urban conservatism, distinguished from rural or suburban conservatism, is simply living by conservative principles in a different environment. The menu of issues offered the urban conservative is distinct fare from that of his rural and suburban counterparts. Each reviews his menu with a common appetite for individual liberty, limited government and a faith in the free market.

So while people all about him are losing their heads over "crises" in immigration, education, health care, transportation, crime and social issues like same-sex marriage and abortion law—and blaming conservatives for all their ills—the urban conservative keeps counsel in his principles. That brings us back to Mr. Kipling.

First, "keeping your head" for the urban conservative means never letting an appetizing or unappetizing issue put him off his taste for individual liberty, limited government and faith in the free market. The principles and reasoning used to reach a position, not exclusively the position itself, are what define a "conservative."

Second, the urban conservative trusts his faith in individual liberty, limited government, and the free market, but he also makes allowances for others' doubts. Besides resisting the ineffective and costly big government, collective approach to making policy, the urban conservative understands there are real problems to be solved. Therein lies the conservative challenge.

Conservatives, urban and otherwise, cannot build a governing coalition without a plan to govern and without specific policy ideas that address

everyday concerns of individuals with an urban gestalt.

Like it or not, for better or for worse, the majority of urban denizens have been domesticated to think in terms of government solutions. Free market philosophy is received in the problem-plagued urban environment like hamburger at a vegetarian restaurant.

Interesting thing about vegetarians, however: they love food that looks like meat—vegetarian hot dogs, vegetarian hamburgers, and tofu turkey. (I have yet to meet a fellow carnivore who'd rather a thick, juicy porterhouse steak looked like a carrot.) The point is this: marketing conservatism is like marketing vegetarian hamburgers—packaging is important.

Creating an urban conservative governing coalition requires packaging free-market mechanisms into definable policies, proposals, and, ultimately, legislation that effectively address the everyday concerns of people living in an urban environment.

Conservatives must excite the people about a “public education policy” that encourages free-market options like charter schools, private school vouchers, tuition tax credits, and home education. They must propose legislation that promotes public and private transportation options that actually move individuals from where they are to where they want to go.

Conservatives must offer health care programs that open access to choice among insurance companies and physicians and that put health care decisions in the hands of patients and doctors. When confronting social issues, conservatives must remember that in a society founded on individual liberty and limited government, one sometimes is obligated to defend the rights of others to engage in activities one finds morally reprehensible.

Mr. Kipling might advise the urban conservative, “Dream without making dreams your master, think without making thoughts your aim.” The

urban conservative must never lose the dream of individual liberty, but he also must accept that in the domesticated sustainable urban environment, liberty is not a dream shared by all. The urban conservative cannot afford to be philosophically smug; he must subject his beliefs to policy.

Resisting the temptation to compromise a policy-driven conservative agenda based on individual liberty, limited government, and a faith in the free market is a challenge, but if you appreciate the necessity, you are an urban conservative, my son.

Craig Westover is a contributing columnist to the St. Paul Pioneer Press opinion page and a senior policy fellow at the Minnesota Free Market Institute (www.mnfmi.org).

Something New, Something Nice

By Stephen B. Young

To be an “urban” conservative is not to be some other kind of conservative. So what taxonomy of conservatives should be nominated for analysis as needing to be distinguished as “urban?”

The point of the distinction seems to be taking policy stances that demand more human intervention in social and economic affairs in order to reach outcomes that appear to be better and more worth our time and money.

Conservatives, strictly construed, say, “Leave it alone! Hands Off! Don’t Mess!” Their position is that God, natural laws, or market forces will dispose justice.

There are Tory conservatives, who like traditional social orders, hierarchy, and disciplined submission before their betters.

There are libertarian conservatives who bow before the market gods and eschew government. They want low taxes for reasons of economic growth and efficiency.

There are the Calvinist conservatives who constitute the religious right or the purely social conservatives.

There are the Calvinist Darwinian conservatives who blend Calvinist propriety with economic Darwinism. These conservatives provide the core of today's Republican Party. They want low taxes on the grounds that our property is a moral bounty won through risk and sacrifice, and that to take it is to violate moral laws rewarding those who excel in character.

Then there are the "neocons," who aren't really conservatives at all but rather avatars of force and power to defeat their enemies and reform conditions. Their desire is change, not conservation of a natural order.

I have argued before at American Experiment events and in the Center's publications that most of what is attractive and compelling about conservative principles was once, in the early and mid 19th century, called liberalism. It is the liberalism of John Locke, Adam Smith, the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and the writings of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

This is my kind of conservatism, and what a boon it has been to humankind.

In the 1930s, when the Republican Party evinced Calvinist Darwinian conservatism, the progressive left in the New Deal stole the label "liberal" to denominate itself.

In the 1960s the revived movement to oppose progressive-left government interventions wrongly adopted the name "conservative" and left the name "liberal" with the left.

In American culture since the Revolution, being liberal has been a good thing. It bespeaks good character, independence of mind, attention to civic duties, and maturity of judgment. When today's conservatives abandoned it, they isolated themselves from majority status. They

established a powerful psychological barrier between themselves and many American moderates—those who do not like the left but who don't see themselves as conservative. These moderates, or centrists, are the swing voters who determine electoral outcomes. They often see themselves intuitively more as old-fashioned honest and upright Americans—in other words, as liberals of the Washington/Lincoln ilk.

To my mind the mainstream conservatives interacting reciprocally with the progressive left have led our country to a political dead end—to gridlock, childish partisanship, and a paucity of leadership.

Who between the two poles of left and right can win over the middle will dominate our institutions of political power.

The liberal core of good conservatism can make for a majority coalition. I think the notion of an urban conservatism seeking engagement with social and economic realities is a signpost on the road to such a majority.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness cannot happen without some proper action on the part of government. The purposes of the Constitution cannot be realized without good governance at work.

We should be thinking of what we need to provide for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness on the part of all our people and use that to define our cause.

Stephen B. Young is global executive director of Caux Round Table (www.cauxroundtable.org).

South Park as Rorschach

By Nathaniel Zylstra

I grew up in a small town in one of the most conservative areas of the country. In the 2004 election, President Bush received 86 percent of the votes in my home county. Today I live in the

heart of Minneapolis, one of the most reliably liberal cities in America. In my current precinct, John Kerry received 86 percent of the 2004 presidential votes. Consequently, I have some insight into the difference between urban and rural conservatives.

To illustrate: urban conservatives think that the animated television show *South Park*—a show based on the adventures of four foul-mouthed fourth graders—is good for the conservative movement because it consistently and forcefully (albeit vulgarly) skewers the sacred tenets of American liberalism. Rural conservatives think that *South Park* is disgusting.

In other words, and in a more overall sense, the major difference is that urban conservatives tend to be more cosmopolitan in taste and attitude. Conservatives are not terribly different from liberals in this regard. City dwellers generally are more cosmopolitan than residents of suburbs and the countryside, but that does not really provide much political insight.

Instead of classifying species of conservatism defined by geography, by demographics, or even by particular policy preferences, we should define conservatism as a set of principles. Those principles include defending liberty, emphasizing the free market over government control, respecting local authority and divided government, and honoring traditions and institutions.

These principles should guide our positions on issues, regardless of our locale. Many issues—e.g., the war in Iraq, health care, immigration, global warming, abortion—are not local issues. Where we live may well affect the relative priority we assign these issues, and may bring different issues to the fore. For example, crime and mass transit are likely to be more important to city dwellers than to others. Still, the same conservative principles should apply to all these issues. If those principles are correct, they should

lead us to better solutions for urban problems than government-centered liberal proposals do.

Nevertheless, a political party may be able to win elections by emphasizing issues that are priorities only to suburban voters and ignoring those more important to people in cities. That is to say, narrowing a political movement's appeal to limited voting blocs may win a few elections. Yet that is no way to create a long-term governing coalition. Conservatives must propose solutions to issues uniquely confronting our cities. A party that cedes issues that are a priority for large segments of the populace will lose the moral authority necessary to establish its leadership and sooner or later will find itself out of power.

For example, while health care may not be an issue that affects urbanites more than rural dwellers, it is the kind of issue that conservatives have often ignored in order to emphasize issues that appeal to a more narrow base. But in the long run, conservatives need to propose health care solutions and will not be able simply to block liberal proposals for government-run health care. If conservatives do not propose market-based, patient-centered health care proposals, Americans will look to others, like Hillary Clinton, who are providing serious, if flawed, proposals.

Can conservatives build a long-term coalition without developing support in the cities? No. Any political movement must have broad-based appeal to be effective. Conservatives must—for moral and practical reasons—speak to the issues facing each of us, whether we live in the city or in the country. This is not a matter of defining a new, “urban” conservative but rather a matter of applying the same principles to all of the issues confronting our state and country.

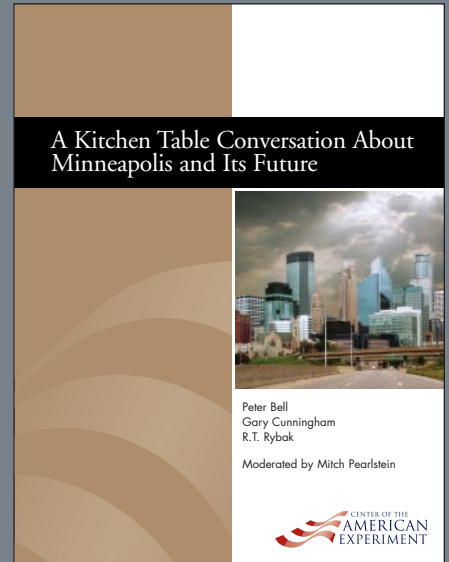
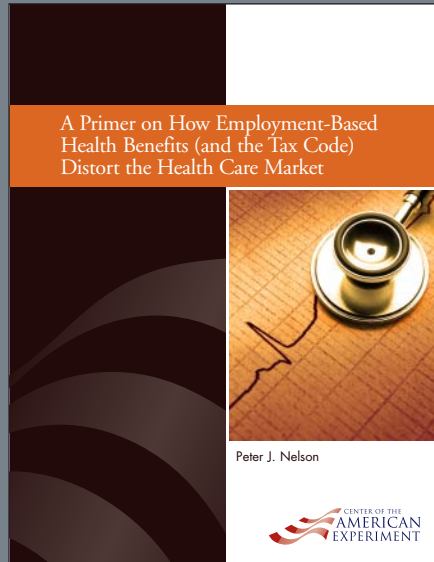
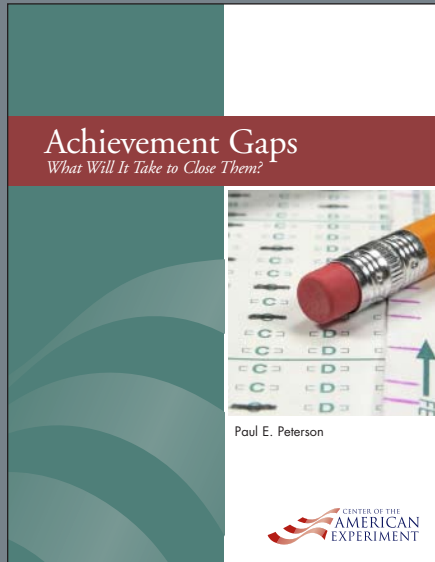
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