

## The Intentional City

by Mike Whitehead



This morning I took a good look at a place I would *really* like to live in.

This city is crisscrossed with bike and walking paths; its sidewalks are full of young kids playing safely. The air is clean and the people are friendly. There are no cardboard villages – everyone has a place to call home. Neighborhoods are diverse and cared for. My teenage daughter would be safe walking through town with her friends, and my kids could go to school without fear.

The high school graduation rate is 90 percent. The crime rate – virtually non-existent. Voter turnout is high, and it is common for adjacent neighborhoods to work together. This city has many cultures, many religions, many skin colors, many native tongues – but they all speak one language: the language of intention.

I visit this city every morning before I head off to work. It is Charlotte 2027 – a vision of the city that I purposely commit to creating every day. And I am not alone.

Pockets of us are waking up, no longer satisfied with just heading to work and hoping that someday we can afford to live somewhere safe, peaceful and

## Personification of Place

Mark Peres, Editor

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*HOG Butcher for the World,  
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,  
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;  
Stormy, husky, brawling,  
City of the Big Shoulders:*

So begins "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg. The poem is the first in a series of fifty-five that appeared in his book *Chicago Poems*, published in 1916, that personified the city, giving voice to its landscape, and defining Chicago ever since. In muscular free verse, the poems celebrate the fierce and laughing industrial terrain of the city. Sandburg speaks of the city as "a tall bold slugger," and how "by night the skyscraper looms in the smoke and the stars and has a soul."

Sandburg's meditations on his city of "lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning," have become part of city lore, giving Chicagoans an origin myth and guidebook on how to behave. Every Chicagoan worth his or her salt weathers the cold and leans into the wind. Every Chicagoan gives nod to grit, toughness and sinewy strength. Sandburg's elegies are in a long tradition of citizens giving personality to place. We see in the city a face and intent. We see in it identity as unique as our own. We speak of its disposition, struggles and achievements, giving cities characteristics of humanity.

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*"In each of us there is a will and a way to make our ideals real."*



*"The most important decision we can make is the one to be intentional toward a positive future."*

## The Intentional City, *continued from page 1*

beautiful. We are starting to realize that if we don't make sound decisions and take the right actions now – those places aren't going to be around much longer.

But here is the good news: if we do the right things now, in a couple of decades we won't have to move anywhere to find our ideal home. We can have it all right here.

Recently Crossroads Charlotte presented a group of scenarios that consider the city's character in 2015. Groups asking vital questions about our future have started to grow, multiply and take root all over the city, providing avenues for each of us to make a difference. Granted, our to-do list is long. The environment. Violence. Failing kids. Corruption. Racial and cultural tension. But these things don't take place in a vacuum. They are the cumulative effects of everyday choices made by everyday people; as a result we can change them by changing our choices.


At Whitehead Associates, we see transformations that demonstrate that people really want to wake up, and to be a part of a positive future. We witness dramatic proof that in each of us there is a will and a way to make our ideals real. This is no less true in Charlotte, but what we need to achieve it is a bold declaration of a new reality and the teamwork to put its systems in place. We must make intentional decisions with acute awareness. We create the world we live in; it is this moment that counts.

Look around you. Listen. Be aware of the words you are choosing, the people who surround you, what you spend your time doing. Are these choices reflecting who you want to be as an individual? Are they clearly demonstrating an effort to create a positive future for yourself and the people around you?

If not, you're not alone. Many of us go through periods of sleepwalking, believing our choices limited, our voices unimportant, or that the small, choreographed movements of our days too important for us to be bothered with big questions. As a result, we have been bumping into each other, awakening for brief periods to scratch our heads in a crisis, only to roll back over to sleep when the dust clears.

The decision to wake up, and the commitment to living in a state of 'awakeness' requires sacrifice. It costs time and effort, it can be complex and sometimes uncomfortable, but most potently, it involves an insistence upon shedding old habits, old beliefs, and old perspectives. It is asking every moment of every day, "What can I do?" It is the small but intentional choices like these that create dramatic change.

The most important decision we can make is the one to be intentional toward a positive future. Only then will the vision we are striving for attain the power and purpose to make the dream a reality.

My dream for Charlotte 2027 is 'An Intentional City.' I challenge you to consider your own vision. I intend to see you there. 



*"In all these instances,  
the city lives."*



### Personification of Place, *continued from page 1*

The ancient Greeks believed that every place has its own "Tyche" or "consciousness of place" given form in a city-god or goddess. The Tyche of a city was its presiding deity and focus of civic loyalty. During the Hellenistic era, Tyche was tangible to the common touch, impressed on local coins with turreted crown, symbolizing the walls of the city and local feelings of security, welfare and happiness. The cult of the city-god or goddess brought pride of place to the polis. Capturing the complexity of local pride, Tyche was connected with both Nemesis and Agathos Daimon – the vexing and good spirits of interpersonal exchange. Tyche were of different age, gender, temperament and dress, reflecting the different personality of city-states. In medieval art, Tyche were depicted carrying cornucopias, a ship's rudder, and a wheel of fortune, presiding over the entire course of local fate.

We see personification of place again in Rudyard Kipling's "The Song of the Cities," in which the British imperialist has 19th century Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Halifax and other cities speak of their own qualities as tribute to the British realm. Cape Town dreams a dream of one land under empire "From Lion's Head to Line." With no sense of irony, each city is its own person, singing lyrics of colonial aspiration and acclaim, all finding glory as individual subjects of Queen Victoria.

We personify what we are in relationship with and we are connected to where we live as much as any other aspect of our lives. Place determines who we know and what we do, and therefore, to a large extent, who we are.

Hundreds of popular songs are sung today about the cities we live in, from Randy Newman's "Baltimore" to Bruce Springsteen's "Streets of Philadelphia." In "L.A. Woman," The Doors personify the city of angels and embrace her in dark magical tension,

*I see your hair is burnin'; Hills are filled with fire  
If they say I never loved you; You know they are a liar  
Drivin' down your freeways; Midnight alleys roam  
Cops in cars, the topless bars; Never saw a woman so alone, so alone*

We can imagine Jim Morrison in the night and heat of Sunset Boulevard, and imagine ourselves too in love with the searing, yearning embrace of Los Angeles. We can imagine the flirtation of Hollywood, the beckoning of Santa Monica, the lies of Brentwood. We can imagine the city as nubile starlet, reigning star, and aged movie queen ready for her all-too-strange and harrowing close-up.

In all these instances, the city lives. It breathes, hurts, and offers salve. It churns, congests, and absorbs our confidences upon its warm asphalt skin. It asks for toil, seduces desire, and in the words of Radiohead, leaves us let down.

Therein is the angst and promise of place – mirroring our imperfections and all that we are. ⚡

## Situational Community

Aaron Houck, Columnist



Charlotteans talk a lot about community. We agonize over studies showing low rates of trust among citizens, join initiatives dedicated to discussions of community, and urge ourselves to be more community-minded. But is all this talk effective for real community building? Consider the following famous psychology experiment.

In the early 1970s, psychologists recruited students at Princeton Theological Seminary to give a speech. Half were instructed to discuss the parable of the Good Samaritan. The others were given an unrelated topic. After some preparation time, the students were sent off to give their speeches. Some students were told they were late; others were told they had just enough time to get to their destination; and the rest were told that they would be early. While en route, each student encountered a moaning person slumped against a doorway. The real intent of the experiment was to see how the students reacted to this person in need.

What did the psychologists find? Not surprisingly, how hurried a student was mattered significantly: 63% of students in no rush stopped to help, 45% of students with some time pressure stopped, and only 10% of those who were late stopped. But, interestingly enough, whether the student's speech topic was the Good Samaritan or the other topic had no effect on whether the student stopped to give aid.

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## Whitewashed Speech

Decker Ngongang, Columnist



The controversy surrounding Don Imus touched off many water cooler conversations. A common theme among many was the role of censorship in our society; not the beeping out of curse words, but the regulation of slang language, and how it has pushed us further down a slippery slope.

Many of us agreed that Don Imus' statements were horrible and offensive, but many of us are having a hard time seeing the social benefit of the abrasive censorship that followed. Censorship will never solve the problems of this country. In fact, using these misstatements to insight conversation is the only way we can enact the social change we hope to see. Instead, we prefer to shut out opposing voices, showing our fear of healthy tension and insecurity of having to talk through the many "ism's" that proliferate our culture.

Early last month, Al Sharpton seemingly single handedly shut down Don Imus. With the help of the black oligarchy, Sharpton was able to stifle the \$20 million machine that "was" Don Imus. In the media frenzy and the subsequent removal of Don Imus, the world was put on notice that Al Sharpton is a powerful force in the "race censorship" game. I call it a game because in our quick trigger censorship of racial insensitivity, it leaves no resolution, but simply a winner and

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## Situational Community, *continued from page 4*


These findings show that, as much as we like to think we're in control of our own destiny, it's our *situation* – as opposed to our disposition – that really drives our actions. Talking about community won't cause us to act in a community-friendly manner any more than thinking about the Good Samaritan caused those seminarians to offer assistance to someone in need. Our task instead is to identify situational factors to improve our communities' connections.

The physical space we occupy is the "situation" with perhaps the most significant impact for social interactions. Sitting alone in a car on the interstate offers fewer and less intimate exchanges than walking on a busy sidewalk. Similarly, it is easier to chat with neighbors and passers-by if you have a front porch and a small yard.

Sprawling development – with large-lot subdivisions feeding into arterial roads that divide homes from shops and businesses – does not promote community. Better design can be found in some of Charlotte's older "streetcar" suburbs like Dilworth and Elizabeth, along the main streets of towns like Matthews and Davidson, and in new traditional neighborhood developments such as Baxter in Fort Mill and Vermillion in Huntersville. These places have better connectivity, wider sidewalks, people-scaled streetscapes, and mixed uses – physical characteristics that bring people together. Using these sorts of design features, we can put ourselves in the situation to be a better community.

This call for different patterns of land use will prompt criticism. For instance, some will charge that it's impossible without "social engineering." The implicit assumption behind this critique is that spread-out development is a natural, free-market outcome. Yet throughout the twentieth century (and still today), policies such as Euclidean zoning (requiring separation of uses), interstate highway development, and federal mortgage insurance engineered our physical environment to require car-dominated, socially isolating spaces.

Another argument against better design is that traditional "streetcar" and neo-traditional neighborhoods are unaffordable. Obviously there's much to praise about a neighborhood like Dilworth – it's one of the region's most expensive places to live! But these high prices suggest there's unmet demand for such spaces. The policies favoring conventional suburban development remain in effect, and – along with permitting issues facing infill development in older neighborhoods – frustrate attempts by developers to design and build projects more sensitive to community. The problem of high prices is really an issue of homebuyers' having too little choice.

Misguided land-use policies have produced "situations" that hinder the creation of strong communities. Fortunately, significant progress is being made as the city develops the 2030 plan (with its centers, corridors, and wedges), neighborhoods' Small Area Plans, and the Transportation Action Plan. For those truly interested in building community, changing the situation of our physical environment must be a high priority. Otherwise, we run the risk of being like the Princeton students – so preoccupied with thoughts about community building that we miss a chance to stop and chat with a neighbor. 

*"The physical space we occupy is the 'situation' with perhaps the most significant impact for social interactions."*



*"In the fight for power over the national conversation, we end up not having one at all."*



## Whitewashed Speech, *continued from page 4*

loser (e.g., Sharpton and Imus).

Like a round of poker, the mainstream media saw the masterful public execution of Don Imus' career and seemed to say "we will see your Don Imus and raise you a hip-hop." In my 25 years of living as a "hip-hop baby," I have never seen such a coordinated attack on a genre of music as we have seen on hip-hop following Don Imus' removal.


Don Imus isn't the first person to make a racist comment in America. The elements of racism that prevent the advancement of minorities are rooted in silent ignorance and in strategic manipulation that require thoughtful discussion of topics and research into the motives driving community decisions.

Conversely, to heap on hip-hop the weight of determining social mores is a cheap ploy. The degradation of women has been a longstanding part of our society. Elizabeth Cady Stanton battled it in 1848 and women today still fight for respect. To heap the responsibility of "respecting women" on hip-hop is an easy scapegoat for a nation that is yet to have the conversation about our perpetuation and marketing of our isms.

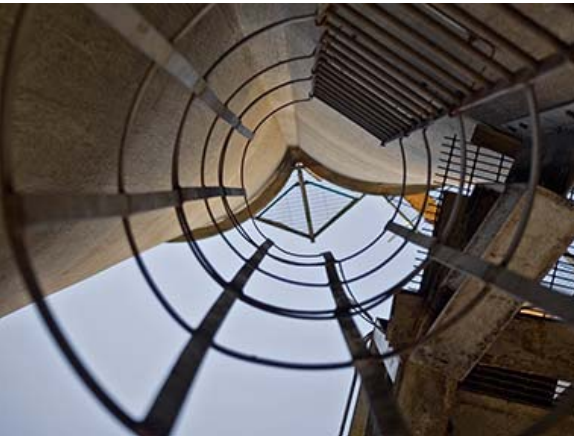
The issues around sexism, racism, poverty and social justice will never be satisfied when the discussion about them is limited to CNN, FOX NEWS or talk radio. We must also address the many ills of our society in platforms like this magazine and in conversations in our homes and at work. Engaging in excessive censorship without laying the foundation for the exchange of ideas will have us running in circles.

In order for this society to mature past our many struggles, we must tackle these issues. Sometimes that means engaging the very person or issue that we find offensive. I didn't want Don Imus fired, not because I agreed with his statements, but because I knew his quick removal would rob him and our society of the conversation of the many manifestations of racism. In the rush to pass judgment, we failed to discuss that racism and sexism are manifested more so in subliminal subversive acts than in episodes of someone using an epithet or crude slang term.

In the fight for power over the national conversation, we end up not having one at all. The issues and topics that effect the livelihood of millions gets lost in power plays designed solely to score political points for one person over another. I never realized how important conversations were until I stopped having them. We need to slow down how quickly we censor speech, even if we find it deeply offensive. Is the punishment of censorship really worth it if all we do is perpetuate the problem?

As for Charlotte, conversations and the outlets that support conversations must continue. Only through candid interaction on the job, moments of courtesy and intentionally constructive conversations, can we make the difference in the growth of this "community." 

*"Nothing was better than a grilled cheese sandwich and French fries after a long morning of shopping."*



*"Public television is still where you go when you want TV worth watching."*

## Uptown Girl

*Shannon Polson, Columnist*



My love affair with downtown started when I was a little girl. Most Saturdays, four generations of women in my family would pile into our yellow Ford wagon, complete with faux wood paneling, and head for Charlotte's shopping mecca – the downtown department stores. For a five year old, the only destination that seems remotely close is your back yard. So this was a journey. If my Grandmother Baker was driving, we were in for a treat. She would zip down 10th Street and pick up speed right before Davidson Street. Our car would fly over the road as we hit the peak of the hill. Squeals would resonate from the back seat as my sister and I held on.

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## Q & A with Elsie Garner by Jennifer Garner



*Elsie Garner is president and CEO of WTVI Community Television. She came to Charlotte in 2003 from WEDU in Tampa, Florida, where she had served as Interim President for a year and COO for over ten years. Previously, she was Assistant General Manager from 1982-1991, Production Manager in 1982, and Human Resources Coordinator from 1978 to 1982. Elsie has a BA from the University of South Florida and certificates in Nonprofit Management from the University of Wisconsin and the CPB Advanced Strategic Management from Temple University. She is a member of the Board of Directors of Charlotte Downtown Rotary, Leadership Charlotte Class 26, the Charlotte Chamber Board of Advisors, the United Way Marketing committee, and the Urban League of Central Carolinas Board of Directors. A native of Peru, she is married, has four adult children, and seven grandchildren.*

**Mecklenburg County is reviewing its funding of WTVI. Many people assert that taxes should pay for vital services and that public TV is hardly a core necessity. Why should WTVI receive tax dollars?**

Several reasons. One is simply the concept of the public good. Citizens expect the government to provide public roads and transportation, public utilities, public schools, public libraries and public television. Of all the industrialized countries, the United States spends the least on its public television system – a little less than a dollar a year per citizen. On the other hand, governments both local and national, subsidize entire industries to the tune of billions of dollars. Why not spend just a bit of that on a medium that reaches 98% of the population, free of charge, and does so much to raise the quality of life of citizens.

**Public TV once offered unique content. Today we have cable TV and a proliferation of similar content provided by the market. What case can**

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## Uptown Girl, *continued from page 7*

Some of the details are fuzzy – details a young girl needn't concern herself with. I don't remember where we parked, if it cost anything, how far we had to walk. But I remember walking into Belk and feeling delighted. A five year old that excited about shopping? Not exactly. The excitement was for the lunch counter that was perched high above the sales floor. Nothing was better than a grilled cheese sandwich and French fries after a long morning of shopping. It was a great day if a swivel stool was vacant and I could watch the cook expertly craft my white bread, cheese, and butter into a culinary masterpiece.

Years passed and the stores closed. The Saturday crowds headed to Eastland Mall and SouthPark Mall. But I still held a fondness for downtown. On days my mom would pick up my dad from work, my sister and I would tag along. He worked in an older downtown building, then an elegant tower of office space. As we waited, still in the same yellow wagon, at the loading dock, we would watch for the rats that would dart in and out of the dumpster area. We weren't that interested in the rats, but we did think it was funny when a finely dressed lady in heels would walk along a path that only a few seconds earlier had been traipsed upon by a rodent.

When we thought we had a little extra time (no cell phones then to communicate delays), my sister and I would head across the street to the flag turret at Marshall Park. It was our castle in the city. We were princesses when we looked out to the vast expanse of Marshall Park. It appeared as a flowering haven amongst the buildings. But not to last. My mom would honk the horn and we would head for home.

Pass many years and a name change – Uptown. During visits home from college, I would schedule lunches with my dad. My favorite lunch spots were Spratt's in Founders Hall and a cafeteria style restaurant in the BB&T building. The downtown crowd looked so distinguished and important. I couldn't wait to graduate and take the corporate world by storm. That was the year the resettlement of downtown/uptown began. 400 North Church, the five story condo building at Church and 5th, was the first building that got my attention. It looked so cosmopolitan – and it had a price tag to match. After college I chose a more affordable option and rented a 500 square foot studio at Gateway Place. Downtown living lived up to my day dreaming. I loved every minute of it – walking to work, walking to restaurants, being in the center of the universe.

With so many changes taking place – high rise condo towers being announced every week, a baseball stadium – I wonder what downtown will *feel* like, what the soul of the city will be in five years. Will downtown be a place for everyone? Will all races, ages, and social classes be welcome? Will they feel welcome? With Charlotte becoming more diverse each year, I trust that city leaders and developers will factor in all populations as they form the landscape. My biggest fear would be a center city that attracts only a small portion of this city's great people. But maybe it's not up to city leaders and developers. We all must take ownership of our city and of the responsibility to share the resources of Charlotte with everyone. 

### Haiku Poetry

*One Charlotte announced  
Trump Tower considered  
Due diligence divide*

**Q&A with Elsie Garner, *continued from page 9***

**you make that WTVI offers something so unique that local government should continue to subsidize it?**

At issue here is the financial model. Public television is not set up to be a commercial enterprise; we are prohibited from selling advertising and allowing any funder to exert editorial control. Many cable specialty channels have left their original purpose and become “lowest-common denominator” programming in order to make a buck. A & E used to be ballet and drama, now it’s “Dog the Bounty Hunter.” The most popular genre in cable is professional wrestling. Public television is still where you go when you want TV worth watching.


**Instead of the overhead of a TV station, couldn’t you leverage the Internet at far less cost and still fulfill your mission?**

Our FCC license says we have to provide a free, over-the-air broadcast. However, we do use the Internet, pod casting, town hall meetings, cable and satellite, as well as broadcasts to get our message across. And the message is simple: COMMUNITY. TELEVISION. We are a community-building institution that uses the awesome power of the media to distribute our services.

**If WTVI were to receive all the money that it wanted, what would you do with it?**

We would produce more local programs, promote more local programs, and provide more local services around those programs. We aspire to be “extreme Charlotte.” I see public television as the electronic version of the old town square. That was the place people gathered to exchange ideas, hear the latest news, spend time with friends. In the virtual world, public television can still be the place to convene the community, where information is provided that gives context to our civilization, where we can participate in the civic life of the city, where we can gain an appreciation of the history of our place, where we can meet people we might not otherwise access in the course of daily life, and where the megaphone gets handed to people who might not have a voice. Charlotte is a city that is unique in the United States today – a sometimes quirky past, a willingness to challenge old ways of doing things, always looking at the horizon for the next great thing. WTVI wants to be alongside with a camera to document that trip!

**What would you like to share about WTVI that citizens of the region may not know?**

We produce twice the local programming that public TV stations in our budget range usually do. We have an award-winning staff. We have the granddaddy of all local literacy programs, Ready to Learn, that has been named twice by the U.S. Dept of Education as one of the best five in the country. That residents here take an enormous pride in their community institutions including WTVI. That we treat viewers as citizens rather than consumers. 

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