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<div align="center">Project 5 - *Synthesis of the City*</div>

Cities are quite an interesting topic. By themselves, they take up very little space in relativity with the Earth. In essence, though, cities have become one of the most important parts of the world both economically and culturally. Something, or someone, then, must designate these mounds of land with high rises significant. What makes a city this way? How does it succeed? Within relatively simple explanations, historians could tell you that a city is successful based on its location and placement. Resources and population are centric to the success of a economic hub. At first glance, cities are safe havens in almost four million square miles of United States. Jobs, entertainment, eateries, and residences are plentiful. Why, then, do these hotspots not exist *everywhere?* Surely we do not see New Yorks' and Chicagos' popping up each decade. Therefore, there must be a deeper essence in the design and art of these locations. A combination of cause and effect, design and implementation, and leading and following.

Throughout this semester, I have mainly written about topics pertaining to the industrial and civil design of a city (in some manner). From the public transportation system to the importance of having a centralized district in a distinct neighborhood, the true essence of a city environment has always fascinated me. Coming from a suburban area, I can only notice the stark contrasts between living in the heart of a city and driving through the quiet roads of the valleys. Pittsburgh, therefore, is a perfect analytical subject - a medium sized urban center with the

characteristics of a large city yet small enough to explore (walking across downtown is relatively easy), ponder, tear up and investigate. Before I decided to survey the city in person, I decided to come up with a semi-conclusive hypothesis by researching online. Utilizing sources like *Wikipedia* and *Google Maps,* I began looking at the structure of cities. Quickly, efficiency was the first attribute of a urban area that must be met for success. Since space is so limited, we tend to build vertically. Multiple vertical towers creates efficient upward space that can be utilized for living, working, or any purpose deemed fit by the owner. Economically, high rise buildings are very lucrative and truly multimodal. The per square foot value of a building increases exponentially with height, leading to very expensive top-floor apartments, penthouses, office spaces and communication centers. Additionally, the capabilities for raw advertising are immense with skyscrapers. Building names and endorsements cost millions of dollars, and everyone in the city sees it. Clusters of tall buildings tend to evoke natural euphoria in humans; therefore, by building these towers, businessmen profit while drawing tourists to explore the beautiful skylines and resulting activities. From here, then, I came up with my second attribute: money. The world revolves around money, and most of it flows through cities. Financial centers like New York and London earn their reputation for hosting stock exchanges and housing a large amount of banking centers. The flow of money results in a flow of jobs. To have a successful city, therefore, there must be interest. This interest usually comes in the form of work, which comes from the movement of money. Why, then, would large businesses choose to headquarter their large towers together, often in the close proximity of their competitors? Simple psychology tells us the answer: human nature. It is within the bounds of humanity to be competitive. When Bank A builds their 500 foot skyscraper in New York, Bank B follows by building a 700 foot

building two blocks down. Slowly, large companies began building and competing for a finite amount of space. As the space fills, valuation of the area and property begin to rise. Therefore, cities began to thrive, and downtowns are born. Eventually, the area begins forming a defined skyline, structure, and the flow of money begins. The flow attracts job seekers and the city begins to grow and thrive. In the United States, we often forget about the design of these cities. Most urban areas are completely developed and new skyscrapers are only mentioned if they break a record. Before primary observations, I was able to "semi" conclude - or hypothesize - that a city succeeds with the following four attributes: efficient use of space, the transport of money, accessibility, and population.

From detailed observation of Downtown Pittsburgh, it became evident that organization is key to having a successful city. By intersecting and alternating one way streets, traffic can essentially be controlled by the reduction of lights and addition of straight lanes with a directed, one direction flow of traffic. In a suburban environment, space is ample, so traffic can flow more freely. The sheer quantity of traffic in a city calls for strict regulations on lights and the sync in cities can make or break the movement and flow of vehicles. For example, in Oakland, all of the street lights on Fifth and Forbes Ave. are in sync, allowing for traffic to freely flow without buildup (very minimal, even during rush hour). In some parts of the city, I observed lights that were out of sync and the traffic buildup was immense. Simple engineering and design philosophies are exaggerated immensely in city environments as space and numbers are not proportional. *Everything* is exaggerated in a city - the essence of a location with a large amount of people in a small area with all-things-important tends to attract a lot of wanted and unwanted

attention. Observing the city helped me realize that organization is key to maintaining a successful urban environment.

My observations came to a close. I hypothesized and maintained my characteristics for the proper design of a city. For my substantiations to have any claims, however, I looked at third party sources, hoping to keep unbiased. Looking at my prior surveyed research on the intersection of East Carson and 18th Street, I realized that many people utilized the area for working, entertainment, and residency. I also noticed that the utilization of a central district was key to maintaining a successful neighborhood. To many, the easy access to public transportation coupled with the easy access to parking (adjacent parking lots located on 18th Street) and commodities (Rite Aid, CVS) plus various eateries and bars make the area simply convenient. While flowing through the data I had collected earlier, I realized that convenience is another key factor in the art of a functional city. Without the convenience of essentially everything within a few mile radius, the city would really be rendered a "suburb with tall buildings." Fortunately, though, there exists no real city *without* convenience. My prior research had led me to discover one of the most important parts of a city, and I was convinced that I had fully digested all the elemental artifacts that make urban environments flourish.

In order to be conclusive with my data, I had to dive into expert analysis. Personal observations, surveys, researching *Wikipedia* and other websites were all reasonable sources, but was there something that I was missing? Urban design is a very complex and undermined field. Many people do not partake in it because it is truly a niche. Today, urban design commonly refers to the design of tall skyscrapers or the architectural work. I was more interested in the overall picture; the design of the city as a whole. While researching, I found an article in

particular that analyzed successful urban tactics for a proper city. The paper, written in 2010 by Zachary Schunn, mentioned how cities contribute positively to our culture. The architecture itself - parks, fountains, museums, etc. that are often found in cities helps define our personal habitats. From reading the article, I realized what I was missing. *Culture* is needed to define a proper city. Every city has its own culture and various subcultures ranging from the behaviors and rituals of the residents to the food and the commonalities between activities. Every city has some culture. Whether it be large or small, these traditions define the city and arguably make it justify its name. When we say "I want to visit Chicago," do we want to visit Chicago just for shopping at the traditional chain retailers and to simply view the skyline, or do we want more? It took me a lot of thought, but I realized that we travel to experience the cultures of others - other people, other cities, and the subcultures that exist in-between.

Synthesizing a city is difficult to do. There is no recipe, no set toolbox. From my observations, research through websites, personal interviews/surveys, and dwelling on others' work, I realized that a city is a plethora of traditional and unique sources. There are certain "dry" characteristics that have to stand: organization, population, proper structure, flow of money/job potential, accessibility and efficiency. Beyond that, however, there are an infinite amount of possibilities to expand from. I am not qualified to define these possibilities, as is anyone else. It is the choice of the residents, the fluctuation of time that defines a city. When I first chose this topic, I expected to write about the analytics of a city. Upon further research, I cannot synthesize it completely. As in chemistry, a simple molecular change alters compounds completely. There is no set standard that makes Pittsburgh *Pittsburgh* and New York *New York*. It is by this beauty that cities continue to grow, thrive, and expand upon their unique characteristics.

Sources used for this project included primary research from the following articles on Wikipedia:

-- Urban design

-- New York

-- Pittsburgh

-- Chicago

http://maps.google.com/   (structure of a city, layout, size, street direction, etc.)

Project 3, 4   [deep reflections on them :)]

Interview data from Project 3, Survey data from Project 3

Abstracts from Project 4

Article about urban design: http://www.urbancincy.com/2010/11/successful-urban-design-sets-stage-for-successful-cities/

Citation - Schunn, Zachary. *UrbanCincy*. N.p.. Web. 12 Dec 2012. <http://www.urbancincy.com/2010/11/successful-urban-design-sets-stage-for-successful-cities/>.