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**Their Environment, Their Voice: Planning as a Way to Engage Youth in Their  
Communities**

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by

**Evelyn Rose Mitchell**

**Report**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May, 2018**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this report to my former mentor, Donald Rodgers. You taught me that my opinion matters and that my voice has legitimacy and power. You believed in me when I did not believe in myself and for that I am forever grateful. Even though you are no longer here, you are still impacting my life every single day.

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to Elizabeth Mueller and Edna Ledesma for providing me with an immense amount of support through this process. I would also like to thank all of my friends and family who supported me throughout the duration of this report. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge all of the youth who are pushing past those who believe they do not have the ability to express their opinions and fight for what they believe in.

## Abstract

# **Their Environment, Their Voice: Planning as a Way to Engage Youth in Their Communities**

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In order for change to occur, it is important for youth to take part in issues in their community which can have direct impacts on youth themselves. Youth are great sources of information and have a unique way of viewing their surroundings and environments in ways adults simply cannot. However, because children are not considered adults, their voices and opinions carry less agency. This Professional Report argues that planning can be used as a tool children can use to be more involved and active in their community as well as their communities' decision-making processes. Planning has the potential for "...effective youth development practices [that can] engage youth in active roles, viewing them as community resources rather than as passive recipients of services" (Campbell, Lamming, et. al., 2008). To support this argument, a case study method is used to analyze three different organizations that use planning in different ways to engage youth in their built environment. The case studies will be assessed using four qualitative indicators - *training methods and curriculum, youth engagement, diversity of projects, and environment* - and by looking at the different organizations through the Positive Youth Development Framework to determine whether the structure of the programs are truly encouraging youth to be involved in the community and the extent of their involvement. The purpose of this report is 1) to illustrate the value of involving youth and viewing them as an important part of their community and 2) to understand strategies regarded as successful currently being used by a set of planning programs for youth that might be replicated.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1. Youth in the United States**

The current social and political climate of the United States is one of polarized views and policies that often do not serve the best interests of marginalized groups (Roche, Tucker, et al., 2004). Therefore, it is especially important now for citizens to know how to advocate for themselves and issues impacting their communities. For this to happen, citizens – especially those with almost no agency or whose opinions carry little weight – must have the ability to engage effectively in their communities.

One of the most disenfranchised groups in the United States is youth (Carlson, 2004). In a country where freedom and individual rights are core values, we have done little to guarantee human rights specifically to children. In this regard, we are unique: the United States is the only country in the world which has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNCRC (“Human Rights Indicators”). This convention “...supports protections for children from forced labor, child marriage, deprivation of a legal identity, and grants both able-bodied and disabled children the right to health care, education and freedom of expression” (Attiah, 2014).

Article 12 of the UNCRC is important because it guarantees freedom of expression. This section of the UNRC advocates that youth have a platform for voicing their opinions and being involved in democratic processes. Article 12 of this document, more specifically, goes into detail describing what freedom of expression or the rights to freedom of expression, should look like for children:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. 2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law (“Conventions on the Rights of the Child,” 2018).

Resistance to ratifying the UNCRC centers on unfounded fears that the treaty would overturn parental rights, when in fact it acknowledges parental rights in numerous places in the document (Drake and Corrarino, 2015). Given the United States’ position regarding the UNCRC, it should be no surprise that there is a belief and stereotype in this country that individuals under the age of 18 do not have enough “life experience” or knowledge to be involved and take part in citywide issues.

Youth are growing up in an era where the world is changing very rapidly. From healthcare access to gun violence, policies regarding these issues impact children. The emergence of the “#neveragain” movement, which promotes gun control and is largely organized and carried out by high school students following the recent tragic mass school shooting in Parkland, Florida, is one example of civic engagement by youth and built upon the platform created by previous movements, like youth in Black Lives Matter (Levinson, 2018). Therefore, it is important that youth in America not only know how to advocate for themselves but have spaces and platforms where their voices and opinions carry weight and power. Youth should know how to participate in their communities to bring about change.

As Cindy Carlson writes in her article, “Youth with Influence: The Youth Planner Initiative in Hampton, Virginia,” it is important for youth to have a platform where their voices can be heard in order for youth to be involved in their communities and viewed as key stakeholders. More specifically “...plans that are put into place now will influence the entire community but for the most part will affect the youth of today who will be tomorrow’s adults” (Carlson, p. 215, 2005). Not only will today’s youth soon be adults, but they will also be tomorrow’s voters (2005).

This report starts from the premise that planning is a vehicle for building the capacity of children to be more involved and active in their communities and in decision-making processes impacting their environments. Children are excellent sources of information and have unique ways of viewing their surroundings and environments in ways adults simply cannot. Planning has the potential for “...effective youth development practices [that can] engage youth in active roles, viewing them as community resources rather than as passive recipients of services” (Campbell, Lamming, et. al., 2008). Planning offers a platform for youth to learn how to be directly involved in their communities through different training methods and skill development.

James Rojas, an urban planner, artist, and activist based in Los Angeles, believes that planners should connect with the public and bring them into the process (Mankad, 2015). With his work rooted in public and civic engagement, Rojas believes “...everyone is a planner...everyone has a relationship to the city, and uses it in certain ways” (D’ignazio, 2012). As planners “...it’s our job to get people’s ideas to the surface” (D’ignazio, 2012). If everyone’s a planner, then it follows that children are as well. As previously stated, youth are often overlooked and not considered as essential much less influential in community decision making

processes. However, planning has the potential to train and educate youth about the functions of a city, the role of planning in city development, and the very important roles youth can take in planning to be a part of community and citywide decisions. Most importantly, planning can empower youth to make the changes they, as well as their communities, believe need to be made.

In this report, the main research question asks *“How can planning be used as a mechanism for youth to become more involved in their communities?”* Using a case study approach, I address the following sub-questions: 1) How do youth become involved in planning? 2) What kinds of training systems are in place to teach youth about planning? and 3) What kinds of systems have been developed in order to support integrating youth in planning? Then, extracting lessons from these case studies, I want to know 4) How can we replicate the level of community engagement, if significant, in other programs and contexts? 5) How can these programs be implemented in different cities? and 6) How (if at all) do these programs teach youth to critically reflect on the built environment around them?

## **2. Planning As a Tool For Youth**

Why focus on planning as a vehicle for fostering youth engagement? Planning can be defined as an intervention with the purpose and focus to change the historical course of events (Fainstein and Campbell, 2012). The role of planners in the United States has shifted over time. The field of planning has broadened to include regional planners, city planners, transportation planners, environmental planners, as well as a host of other planning fields. Planning used to be an “expert-driven” profession, but it has broadened to include many other disciplines, as well as the increased involvement of community members in citywide discussions, plans, and other

processes. As the purview of planning has broadened, and the relationship among different issues have become acknowledged as important to solving urban problems, the need to understand the complexity of urban problems and perspectives have risen (Kafol and Denac, 2010).

Planning has been and is still a predominately white dominated field. There are more women entering into planning, but it is still very racially homogenous. With initiatives such as the diversity and inclusion initiative that is being implemented in many businesses and organizations, conversations surrounding the importance of racial diversity have started to occur (Williams, 2017). Certain companies that implement the diversity and inclusion initiative may use it as a way to check off a box, but there are other companies that truly believe professions need to be more inclusive. Planning in particular is a profession that needs to be racially diverse and can benefit from its homogeneity. By diversifying this profession and adding a broader range of voices to the field of planning, the conversations of “how we build stronger, healthier and more vibrant communities” (Williams, 2017) will be stronger and more impactful. The historical of planning policies has created racialized and segregated spaces and places within this country through processes such as redlining, refusal of giving people of color loans for home ownership, and other practices. Through organizations like the ones in this report, planning can begin to not only racially diversify amongst the profession, but teach youth about how planning had a hand in segregation and begin to break the systematic racism that was created and has been perpetuated in this country.

The planner’s role is to “...ask questions about the outputs of actions and to pose problem statements in evaluative frameworks...to see social processes as the links tying open systems into large and interconnected networks of systems, such that outputs from one become

inputs to others” (Rittel and Webber, 1973). More simply, it is the process of analyzing a problem or a system that is not working and coming up with solutions through the process of working with different stakeholders in order to understand the systematic, environmental, and societal effects of said problem.

Planning has the potential to teach youth to think critically about their surroundings: What are systems that are working? What are systems that are not? Are neighborhoods safe? How can we better our community, neighborhood, or city? Youth have unique perspectives on their surroundings that can benefit the world around them (Carlson, 2004). For example, Naomi Wadler, an 11 year old black female, was able to stand in front of thousands if not millions of individuals during the March for Our Lives rally on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and force Americans to listen to her list names of young black youth who were killed due to gun violence. This very young girl was able to eloquently proclaim to those listening that, in her opinion, American citizens that look like her, do not matter to the American eye: that their deaths are not mentioned, their lives are not celebrated like their white counterparts, but are simply statistics (Nirrapil, 2018). She is able to internalize and understand her role and the power she can have in changing the dialogue on gun violence to this specific population. This is a unique example, in that most youth may not have this platform or the public speaking skills to convey their message as eloquently as Naomi Wadler. However, training and support through planning, for example, can give youth the tools to be able to engage with their communities, clearly articulate their concerns, know the avenues and channels to go through to begin to create change, as well as have a platform through organizations, like those mentioned in this report, to put into practice what they have learned.

### **3. Methods**

To understand the ways in which planning can provide opportunities for engaging youth in their communities, this research used case study research methods. The process of comparing and contrasting case studies is beneficial for this report because it gives different examples of how planning can be used to engage youth in their communities. Using a case study method allows for an in-depth exploration of topics within real-world settings (Crowe, Cresswell, et al., 2011). The case studies focus on the work of three different organizations that use planning as a mechanism to teach youth how to become more involved in their community, cities, and neighborhoods. Case study one focuses on the Hampton Youth Commission in Hampton, Virginia. Case study two looks at Michael Ford's Hip-Hop Youth Architecture Camps and after-school programs, which are located in various urban cities across the United States, and case study three is based on planning methods embedded in school curriculum. The third case study will look at the Semester Schools Network, specifically CITYTerm, and the Ethical Culture Fieldston School program, City Semester, which are both based in New York City. This report used primary and secondary data. The primary data included interviews with key informants. The secondary data analyzed were essays, op-eds, journal articles, radio interviews, and resources used in training sessions.

The case studies in this report were chosen because of their common theme of using planning to teach youth about community engagement, the built environment, and the different ways in which each organization integrates planning into their training or curriculum. The Hampton Youth Commission was chosen as a case study for this report because of its "outlier" view point in having a strong intrinsic belief that youth have the power and knowledge to be as

involved in their community as adults. There are many other Youth Commissions in the country, but the Hampton Youth Commission is one of the first.

The Hip-Hop Architecture camp was included because of its focus on bringing attention to the world and profession of planning, design and architecture to disenfranchised communities and youth of color. The different design professions, historically, are predominately white (Williams, 2017). This particular program is unique in that its goal is to diversify the field racially, exposing youth of color to planning, design, and architecture, as well as to show youth, through its training and curriculum, that these fields are interdisciplinary. The camps are special because of their focus on representation: to show brown and black children that there are people who look like them within this profession and that they have the power to create change on their own through planning and design practices. The last case study was chosen because incorporating planning methods and practices into an already established system—schools—is a unique yet surprisingly rare way to start teaching youth about their built environment from an early age.

By using a case study approach, this report will show the potential for youth to be involved in their communities through planning and explore strategies currently being used by programs, highlighting aspects that might be useful for planners and youth engagement programs with a focus on planning. Each case study is similar in that it is focused in an urban setting. However, as mentioned above, the case studies differ based on how planning is being taught to youth through one or more of the following strategies: hiring youth as urban planners through city government; viewing design, architecture and planning through as an interdisciplinary lens; and teaching planning through a school curriculum.

Multiple methods were used in order to answer the research question: First, a literature review was conducted focusing on youth community engagement and involvement and the implementation of the case study method. In order to analyze the successfulness of each program, four qualitative indicators, *training methods and curriculum, youth engagement, diversity of projects, and environment*, were used to analyze each program and organization. Qualitative indicators are defined as “...people’s judgments or perceptions about a subject...” and “...are used in establishing baselines, monitoring, and evaluation” (Patton, p. 45, 1996). The purpose of developing a set of indicators was to “...provide a simple and reliable means to reflect the changes connected to an intervention” (Patton, p. 44, 1996). For the purpose of answering the research question, it is necessary to use a set of qualitative indicators in order to similarly evaluate each organization within the three case studies.

The qualitative indicators were incorporated into the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework (Figure 1) which was also used while conducting the analysis. The PYD is a framework that was established in the 1990’s by the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, a group of 20 federal departments and agencies, that support youth to determine ways in which youth perceive “their ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as act upon those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes “ (YouthPower, “Positive Youth Development Framework”, 2018 and National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, 2007). This framework is also used to assess youth civic engagement approaches that can have both positive benefits for youth themselves as well as the environments in which they live (Schusler, Davis-Manigaulte, et al. 2017). Under the umbrella of the PYD framework, there are four domains – **assets, agency,**

**contribution**, and **enabling environment** – that are used to help evaluate youth programs’ development and implementation. Each domain has program features and concepts, which, in the context of this report, can be similar to the qualitative indicators. *Training methods and curriculum, youth engagement, diversity of projects, and environment* will be housed under the domains in the same space as the program features and concepts. The program feature *skill building*, for example, is used to help evaluate a program’s assets and agency. Skill building is used to assess whether youth are developing a certain level of agency and the skills or assets necessary to become more involved in their community settings (YouthPower, “PYD Framework with Program Features,” 2018).

The qualitative indicator *training methods and curriculum* will be housed under the domain *assets and agency*; *youth engagement* and *diversity of projects* will be under the domain *contribution*; and *environment* will be under the domain, *enabling environment*.

The intent of the qualitative indicators used is to review these organizations first by determining the differences between each organization and the ways in which they incorporate planning in their civic and community engagement training for youth (Patton 1996). The theory behind the PYD framework argues that if skills, unique perspective, positive energy, and youth initiatives are cultivated through various asset-based and skill-building approaches, youth can become more engaged and productive members of society (Russ and Krasney, 2017, p. 4).

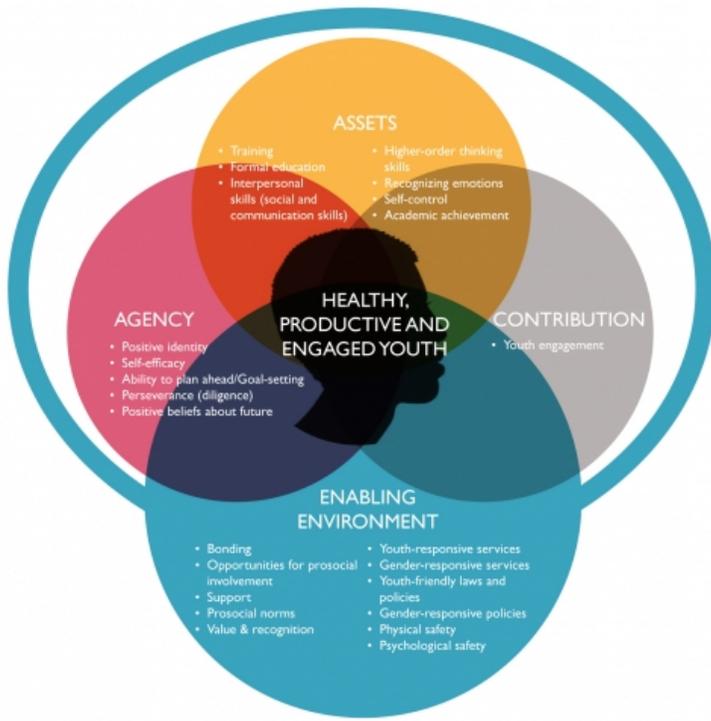


Figure 1: Source: Youth Power, “Positive Youth Development Framework,” 2018

## 4. Case Studies

### 4.1 Hampton’s Youth Planner Commission

The purpose of analyzing this case study is to learn more about the organization's structure, how the training curriculum and methods were created and sustained over time, as well as the level of involvement youth are able to have within the city and planning department. The city of Hampton, Virginia formed the Hampton’s Youth Commission in 1997. The city began by recruiting twenty-five students to be a part of the Youth Commission as well as employing two youth to work fifteen hours a week as city planners (Carlson, p. 214, 2005). The Youth Planners employed in these positions have a wide range of responsibilities from working on different city policies, and attending weekly adult staff meetings, to hosting focus groups, and charrettes. The Youth Commissioners and Youth Planners also have to undergo extensive training and education in order to understand how city government works, but also to learn how to, “...assume their

new role as partner” with their adult colleagues. The Youth Commission’s overall goal is to, “...affect city policy in the areas of youth leadership, civic preparedness, youth activities, and encouraging [the] young adult community (Hampton.gov) ” within Hampton, VA.

#### **4.2 The Hip-Hop Architecture Camp**

Michael Ford is an architect, designer and professor who created a design firm, BrandNu Design, based in Madison, WI. Through Ford’s personal experiences as a black male designer and architect and his professional experiences navigating this profession, he developed the idea to introduce youth of color to the planning, design, and architecture professions (Gordon, 2017). One main theme of the Hip-Hop Architecture Camps is representation. Through different methods, Michael Ford and other camp staff and volunteers - artists, planners, designers, architects, educators - teach youth about historical planning policies that led to disenfranchised communities, particularly low-income communities and communities of color, through hip-hop lyrics. From there, youth are taught a variety of technical skills in order to complete projects during the camp (Sisson, 2017). I seek to understand how youth of color engage with these professions and the extent to which hip-hop is used in these camps.

#### **4.3 Curriculum Based Approaches for Youth Engagement and Planning**

The analysis will look at how the Ethical Culture Fieldston School (ECFS), in the Bronx, NY, and CITY Term, a semester “abroad” program within the Semester Schools Network, has incorporated an interdisciplinary approach to the framework of their courses, as well as the extent to which youth engage with their surroundings. This case study reviews and analyzes two

curriculum-based programs: City Semester, a course offered through the ECFS and CITYTerm, in New York City, through the Semester Schools Network.

CITYTerm is a program where high school youth from public and private schools can apply to study “abroad” for a semester in New York City and learn through an experience-based learning pedagogical approach. Youth are required to take core class but their classes involve fieldwork, interviews, and other learning techniques to make them learn about their built environment through doing (CITYTerm, 2018 and Fuller, 2015).

City Semester is a semester-long high school program for high school juniors that is incorporated into the curriculum at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, a private high school in the Bronx, NY. This particular program is interesting because it is used across a wide breadth of subjects. Instead of viewing the built environment through the lens of History or Sociology, City Semester teaches students how to use both lenses at the same time in their studies (Berg, 2012).

The projects created during this semester-long program are based within their community – in their surrounding neighborhoods: “Students spend at least two days a week outside of school, doing research, exploring neighborhoods, interviewing residents, working with community organizations, collecting data, presenting in the field, and speaking to policymakers” (ECFS).

Teachers are recruited from a wide range of disciplines: history, ethics, language, theater, literature, film, photography, and music (Berg, 2012). Meyers also recruits journalists and other professionals to facilitate sessions for the students. This directly reflects the field of planning. Berg (2012) argues that planning is a profession that requires multidisciplinary training because planners must contend with a multitude of environmental, societal, and political factors in their

work. In order to work on issues in a manner that generates the best possible outcomes, an urban planner should look at the task at hand through a multidisciplinary approach.

## **Chapter 2: Hampton Youth Planner Commission**

In 1992, the City of Hampton, VA developed the Coalition for Youth which led to the creation of the Hampton Youth Commission in 1997 (Carlson, 2005). The Coalition for Youth was prompted by a plan to build a teen center, which was decided by city council and other city officials. This plan was brought to a teen neighborhood group, Aberdeen Leadership. The youth who were members of Aberdeen Leadership were able to share their opinions of the teen center: what they liked, what they did not like, and what could be improved. Based on the youths' ability to communicate their opinions to adults, the Director of Planning during that time argued that youth should be involved in city-wide decision making policies, especially those that directly impact youths themselves: if planning and development is occurring for a particular group then that group should be part of the decision making process (Carlson, 2004). This led to the creation of the Youth Commission, as well as hiring two Youth Planners, which will be discussed later in this case study.

Hampton believed that disinvested youth without the tools and knowledge to become engaged in their communities was a problem (Carlson, 2007). In 1997, when the Hampton Youth Commission was being established, Alternatives, Inc., a local non-profit focused on youth development (Carlson, 2004), was hired to assist in the development of the Youth Commission. Alternatives, Inc. is still involved in the Youth Commission. They create training programs and materials to ensure youth have the skills necessary to implement planning methods effectively, as well as train adults on how to work with youth and view them as professional equals (Carlson, 2004).

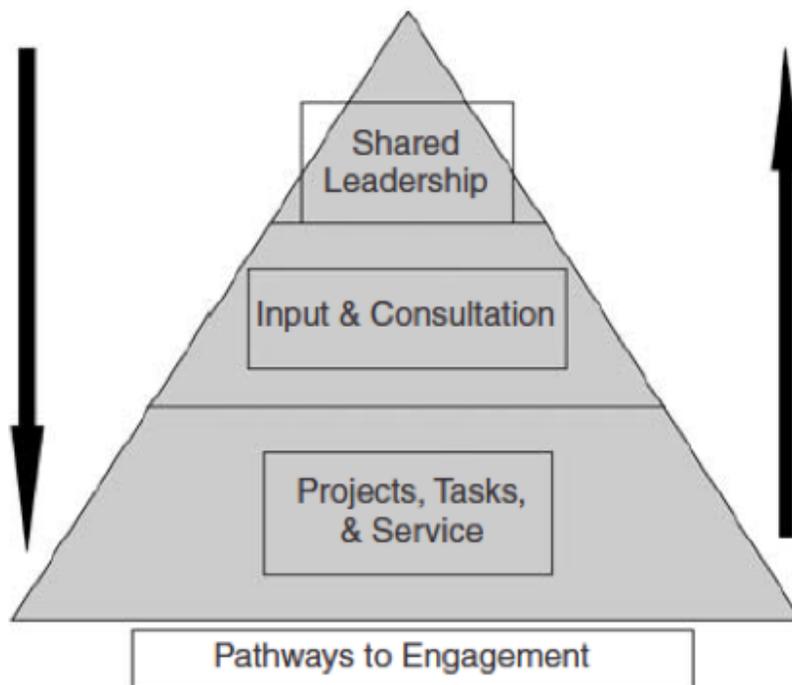
## 1. The Pyramid of Civic Youth Engagement Model

The planning department, along with Alternatives, Inc., created a *Triangle Model* of civic engagement (Figure 2) that is now called the *Pyramid of Civic Youth Engagement* (Hampton Community Development Department, 2017). In the early days of the Hampton Youth Coalition, the *Triangle Model* consisted of three different levels: the base, *Projects, Tasks and Services*, the center, *Input and Consultation*, and the top, *Shared Leadership Projects*. *Tasks and Services* is described as a way to involve a large number of youth in the community in different capacities. Engagement methods here include short-term hands on volunteer opportunities that require minimal skill levels and training (Carlson, 2004). This stage was viewed as a great way to get youth involved and invested in civic engagement at a young age (Carlson, 2004).

The middle of the triangle, *Input and Consultation*, is focused on giving youth voices the same amount of weight as their adult colleagues on advisory boards. Advisory positions can be both short or long terms. This level of the triangle has less youth involvement due to the incorporation of leadership opportunities being introduced in this portion of the model. The different advisory positions require more skills than *Projects, Tasks, and Services*. Those skills are listening, presentation, and analysis of issues. The projects youth can be involved in at this level are focus groups, as well as assisting in data analysis and program development (Carlson, p. 96, 2004).

At the very top of the pyramid is *Shared Leadership*, which incorporates fewer youth but requires more skill and training than the other two levels. This level is where the greatest potential for impact on community change happens due to closer and more frequent shoulder-to-shoulder work with adults (Carlson, 2004, p. 96). Due to the increased intensity within the

*Shared Leadership* tier, youth at this level are required to have a higher level of skill, commitment, and focus within policy and strategic planning. Most of the youth are board members, paid employees (i.e., Youth Planners), or lobbyists and activists. The thought behind this model is that it creates more opportunities for youth to be involved and find something that interests them (Carlson, 2004).



**Figure 2: Source: Cindy Carlson, “The Hampton Experience as a New Model for Youth Civic Engagement,” 2004**

Figure 3 shows different examples of youth civic engagement within the different tiers in the Triangle Model.

Projects, Tasks, and Service	Input and Consultation	Shared Leadership
Community service projects within a variety of school and community-based clubs and organizations Curriculum-based service learning in school and after-school settings Youth-to-youth mentoring Youth Speakers Bureau Neighborhood Youth Engagement Teams Hearts to Hands—school/parent/community service projects Youth-led volunteer projects Youth website design and maintenance Youth activism grants Teen event planning Red Cross youth prepared to assist in emergencies KidsVoting Project	Superintendent’s Student Advisory Group Principal’s Student Advisory Groups (all secondary schools) Recreation Department Youth Advisory Groups (community centers, teen activities council) Alternatives, Inc. Youth Advisory Board Mayor’s Committee on People with Disabilities (student advisors) Community “speakouts”/ youth public forums Youth Task Force for School Investment Panel Volunteer Center Youth Advisory Council Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board Developmental Assets Mobilization youth team	Youth-Community-Oriented Policing Effort (neighborhood & school-based partnerships) Youth Planners (2 high school-age youth work in city planning department) Hampton Youth Commission (all-youth policy level board) Citizens’ Unity Commission (youth voting members) Neighborhood Commission (youth voting members) Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (youth voting members) Youth & adult training/consulting teams Youth philanthropy Teen center design and planning committee Youth Component of 2010 Community Plan (youth responsible for community planning)

**Figure 3: Source: Cindy Carlson, “The Hampton Experience as a New Model for Youth Civic Engagement,” 2004**

Due to changes made in the training programs and skill sets required to ensure that youth are successful, the pyramid has shifted to include another level, *Representation*, which is situated right below *Shared Leadership* as the second tier (Figure 4). *Representation* is the level at which youth are beginning to represent their school and their city through different committees. More

youth can be engaged at this level, but the commitment is less intense than the top tier, *Shared Leadership* (Hampton Community Development Department, 2017). The broad base at the bottom of the pyramid represents the increased opportunities available for youth to participate in volunteering and community engagement. As the pyramid narrows, the available opportunities to be involved in the community decline because activities become more focused on leadership positions and require more training and skill development (Hampton Community Development Department, 2017).

## The Pyramid of Youth Civic Engagement



Figure 4: Source: Hampton Community Development Department, “Youth Civic Engagement ,“ 2017

## **2. Roles of Adults in Training**

The belief system of this program is based on the work of William Lofquist (Carlson, 2004). He created the Spectrum of Attitudes Theory, which describes different attitudes that can affect the behaviors of one group toward another (Carlson, 2004). The city planning department and Alternatives, Inc. believed that one hurdle they would have to overcome or continue to work through is the relationship between youth and adults: youth having the courage and skills to convey their points to adults, and adults showing respect for youth.

There are three different attitudes included in the Spectrum of Attitudes Theory: Object, Recipient, and Resource. Object attitude is a perspective adults can adopt that insinuates that they know what is best for youth and that they have the right “to determine the circumstances under which these youth function”(Carlson, p. 94, 2004). Recipient attitude is the belief that youth have something to learn from adults but that the adults cannot learn from youth. The attitude that the Hampton Youth Commission has implemented into their program is the Resource attitude because of its belief that adults can learn from youth and vice versa. This component of his theory states that “...young people bring something of value to a situation...and that will enhance the adult’s efforts” (Carlson, p. 94, 2004). This belief requires a shift in adults’ attitudes and perceptions of youth, away from the viewing them as not being competent or having the experience to speak on matters of comprehensive plans or policy decisions, for example (Carlson, 2004). The diagram in Figure 5 exemplifies Lofquist’s Spectrum of Attitudes Theory.

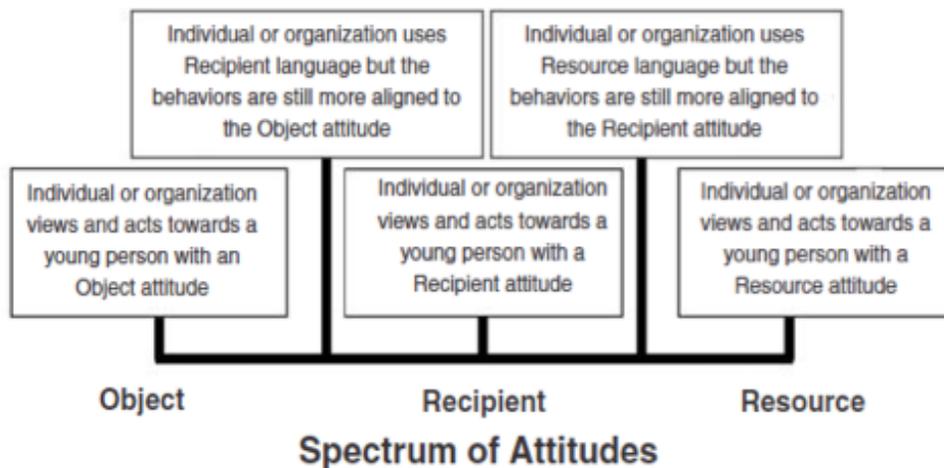


Figure 5: Source: Cindy Carlson, “The Hampton Experience as a New Model for Youth Civic Engagement,” 2004

### 3. Structure of Different Youth Engagement Positions and Recruitment Methods

#### 3a. Youth Commission

The Hampton Youth Commission is housed under the Planning and Zoning Division within the city’s Planning Department, which is housed under the Community Development Department. The Youth Commission is comprised of 25 high school students, drawn to represent all of the high schools in Hampton, VA. The twenty-five Youth Commissioners are required to work on the commission through the school year--from September to May. Hampton recruits students from public high schools, private schools, and homeschool programs. The representation of students who attend private school and homeschool programs on the Youth Commission is much lower even though the recruitment process is the same (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018). In order to be a part of the Youth Commission, you have to be recommended, go through an application process and undergo interviews (Hampton

Community Development Department, 2017). The 25 students who are a part of the Youth Commission are unpaid. Within the Youth Commission, there is a lead executive team that consists of one chair, one vice chair, one secretary, and one media chair. Also under the Youth Commission, are four committees, and each committee also has a chair and vice chair (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018).

The Youth Commission as a whole is required to meet the first three Mondays of the month. The executive team is required to have an additional meeting to discuss upcoming agendas, debrief previous meetings, and discuss upcoming events in order to prepare and keep themselves organized. They also present their progress to the adult planners. In addition to the Youth Commission, the planning department also hires two Youth Planners, which are paid positions.

### **3b. Youth Planners**

The Youth Planner positions are long term, which means that the Youth Planners who are hired--one junior planner and one senior planner--are on staff for two years. According to Tolu Ibikunle, Senior City Planner and Staff Director for the Hampton Youth Commission, many of the same expectations placed on adult planners are also placed on youth planners. Youth are also given many of the same privileges: keys to the office, parking passes, badges. Youth are expected to serve as staff support to the Hampton Youth Commission and work on different projects such as certain components of master plans, civic engagement processes, or other events being hosted. (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018). These roles are very fluid depending on the time and what is happening within the city.

#### **4. Training**

The training process for youth involved in the Youth Commission and for those hired as Youth Planners, is ongoing. The planning department hosts a retreat for the entire Youth Commission in the beginning of the academic year. The retreat is two days long and incorporates training, team-bonding activities, brainstorming strategies, and participants discuss, as a group, their goals and what they want to work on and accomplish for that academic year. While speaking with Director Ibikunle, she made sure to express how important it was to have ongoing trainings to develop and strengthen the youths' skills and to ensure they feel confident implementing using these new skills. She also emphasized that the ongoing trainings were geared towards specific events the Youth Commissioners and Youth Planners were hosting or participating in. The training consists of facilitation skills, knowing how to work with flip charts, recording meeting minutes, public speaking, how to create an effective power point presentation, as well as other skills the department deems important and necessary. At the time of the interview with Ibikunle, the Youth Commission and Planners were preparing for a candidate forum, and they were being trained on how to run a meeting. Ibikunle mentioned that skills geared towards knowing how to run community meetings and focus groups were very important as the planning department of Hampton hosts many community engagement events. The most important skill is communication. Different trainings on communication are conducted for youth every month (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, May 30, 2018).

#### **5. Planning as a Civic Engagement Tool and Skillset**

The way in which this program is structured gives many youth several opportunities to be

involved in community and civic engagement through planning. When asked why she thought planning skills were important for youth to learn, Director Ibikunle emphasized that these skills are not only important but critical:

...it teaches them that you have a voice and you should choose your voice to express whatever opinions you have for the betterment of your community. If you see something, say something. And not just that, try to be part of creating the solution to whatever the problem is. And when I watch them through the years that's what I think the overarching theme is. If we don't allow our youth to be involved in planning processes and planning and civic engagement, when they become adults they don't understand the inner workings of government (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018).

She continued to explain that urban planning also gives youth the tools and the ability to know that if they are having a problem—for example, with a school board--as youth and later, when they become adults, they will know how to advocate for themselves, how to speak and convey their main points, and will know exactly who and which channels to go through (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018).

The organization used to conduct post-testing and exit interviews in order to track youths' continued involvement, or lack thereof, in community issues. They have not conducted exit interviews or post-testing in a few years, as was learned through the interview with Ibikunle but she did not explain why this practice has not continued. Carlson reported that the youth believed they were able to develop the skills necessary to effectively be involved in community and to create change (Carlson, 2004, p. 104). However, the youth also “expressed disappointment when their college environment or new community does not afford the same

opportunities” (Carlson, p. 104, 2004).

There are many former Youth Commissioners and Planners that are still involved in their community as adults. Some alumni work in Youth Commissions in other city governments; one former Youth Commissioner has become a local politician; Another alumni is a lawyer as a result of her experience on the Youth Commission; and a more recent graduate of the Hampton Youth Commission is currently a college student who is actively involved in his school government due to his time as a youth commissioner and later a youth planner (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018).

## **6. Analysis**

In this section, the analysis will illustrate how the Hampton Youth Commission was or was not able to use planning as a way to allow students to become more involved and engaged in their community. This will be achieved by reviewing the Youth Commission through the lens of the following indicators: *training methods and curriculum, youth engagement, diversity among projects, and environment* and by critiquing the data based on the Positive Youth Development frameworks domains and program features (concepts).

### **6a. Domain 1 & 2: Assets and Agency**

Under the heading *skill building*, Hampton’s different *training methods and curriculum* will be assessed. Through the research conducted by interviewing Tolu Ibikunle, Senior City Planner and Staff Coordinator for the Hampton Youth Commission, and through secondary research, it was found that the Youth Commission is actively involved in the youth’s training and

developmental process throughout his or her time on the commission or when serving as a junior and senior youth planner. The Youth Commissioners and Youth Planners take part in a retreat at the beginning of their terms to introduce and learn different skills and to interact with Youth Commissioners and Youth Planners who are currently in their second (last) year in the program (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018).

Youth Planners are given different training throughout their time on the commission than their Youth Commissioner colleagues. The skills taught to the Youth Planners are usually dependent on the upcoming events they will be involved in, however youth undergo training consistently, typically about once a month. One typical training is focused on communication. Communication in its different forms is a very powerful and critical skill that youth, especially working in planning and city government, need to acquire to not only be successful but to feel successful: to acquire the stage of agency. The city of Hampton strongly believes that planning is a critical tool and skill youth must learn in order to understand how their city government works, especially if they are trying to create change or bring their problems or potential solutions to their local government. Youth need to be able to properly convey their point and know who to bring their issues and concerns to. This year, the planning department has brought in “directors from the economic development department, someone from the budget office, someone come and explain what the CIP is, and most adults don’t understand those things. They are really given tools in their planning tool box to understand how their government works” (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018).

Youth in the Youth Commission are able to learn different planning skills and strategies while being given numerous opportunities to practice their learned skills in real-life situations.

The training provided for youth through the Community Development Department has been shown to not only teach youth skills necessary for their position within the Hampton Youth Commission, but also life skills they can implement throughout their life in various situations.

### **6b. Domain 3: Contribution**

The *diversity of projects* indicator can support youth engagement by giving youth a spectrum of projects to be a part of which, in theory, could entice more youth to be involved in their community if there is a topic of interest to them. PYD looks to determine whether there are different ways in which youth can become involved in their community (Youth Power, “PYD Framework with Program Features,” 2018).

The Pyramid of Youth Civic Engagement (Figure 4) describes different levels at which youth can be engaged in their community and what their involvement could look like: short-term involvement with minimal training but fewer leadership opportunities or long-term involvement with significantly more training and higher levels of responsibilities and commitment (Hampton Community Development Department, 2017). In support of this model, Figure 3 gives a list of projects and tasks youth can be involved in depending where they fall in the Pyramid of Youth Civic Engagement triangle.

During the youth retreat in the beginning of the Youth Commissioners term, there is a presentation of the different ways youth can be involved. Similar to what was described above, twenty-five youth are “hired” (unpaid) to serve on the youth commission with various positions available. Every two years, they recruit twenty-five new youth commissioners. Every one year

the city hires a junior youth planner and a senior youth planner. This is another way in which youth can be involved in the program, and therefore become more engaged in the community.

Based on research conducted, the training methods and structure of the Hampton Youth Commission allow for a variety of ways for youth participants (and their broader communities) to be involved or engaged (Carlson, 2004). Some could argue that there are too many groups or factions that could potentially dilute the youths' opinions and weight of their voice, but based on the longevity of the Youth Initiative (in its twenty-first year) that argument could be strongly contested.

#### **6c. Domain 4: Enabling Environment**

The criteria for the program feature, *positive norms, expectations, and perceptions*, will be met if youth are provided an increased amount of responsibility and independence and are allowed to grow and take on new roles and responsibilities (YouthPower.org, "PYD Framework with Program Features," 2018). This program feature can be viewed as a culmination of the other two concepts or features analyzed: *safe space* and *healthy relationships and bonding*. Based on the PYD framework, the Hampton Youth Commission has created an environment conducive to youth success and growth and created the necessary training programs and opportunities to practice what they learned in their training to become productive and engaged youth.

The Hampton Youth Commission believes in creating safe spaces in which youths' voices and opinions carry the same amount of weight as the adult planners they work with. Healthy relationships and opportunities for bonding are also key components necessary for youth to be successful and effective (Carlson, 2004). Youth will not be able to learn planning

strategies, understand responsibility, and adopt the skills needed to implement planning into their work without having a trusting relationship with the adult staff. At the same time, it is crucial that adults have the training to build youth and adult relationships in order for adults to see youth as their peers (Carlson, 2004). This also requires a significant cultural shift towards the way adults view youth. Schulser, Davis-Manigaulte et al. assert that “adults can experience tensions in sharing decision-making power” and that “navigating these tensions is essential to ensuring genuine opportunity for youths’ participation and positive development” (p. 172, 2017).

The Hampton Youth Commission not only trains youth on planning methods and tools, but also trains adults on how to work with youth as well as learning how to build relationships with youth. The adults within the planning department are the youths’ colleagues, but also their mentors and teachers. While I was unable to learn how adult participants viewed these efforts, the view of the Staff Coordinator, Ibikunle, is that everyone is working towards a common goal of supporting youth throughout their development process.

The main strengths of this program lie in the training curriculum and methods created for the Youth Commissioners and Youth Planners. Youth within the Hampton Youth Commission are taught a broad range of planning skills necessary to be successful in their current positions. The training model of this program is also structured in a way that youth are able to carry what they have learned into other areas of their lives: school, college, future jobs. The trust in youth to be able to make decisions that affect the city and different communities is another strength that is strongly present throughout the research and case study review in this report. One weakness of this program is the removal of the post-testing and exit interviews of Hampton Youth Commission alumni. Ibikunle was able to list a number of alumni who positively benefited from

the program and incorporated what they learned in their college experiences as well as it leading them to work for other Youth Commissions, to join politics, and other professions that work for communities. However, the information gathered on the alumni mentioned in this case study was based on whom she met during the Hampton Youth Commissions 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event in 2017 (T. Ibikunle, Personal Interview, March 30, 2018).

## **Chapter 3: The Hip-Hop Architecture Camp**

### **1. History Behind the Hip-Hop Architecture Camps**

Michael Ford, also known as the hip-hop architect, is a designer, architect, and professor at Madison College in Wisconsin (Mock, 2017). He is a Detroit native who founded a design and architect firm, BrandNu Design, which focuses on community engagement, pre-development strategies, and capital campaigns for new developments (BrandNu Design, 2018). While writing his master's thesis at the University of Detroit Mercy, he decided to change his topic to explore the intersectionality between architecture and hip-hop after a study abroad experience in Warsaw, Poland (Gordon, 2017). This change is significant because it shows a shift in the ways in which design and planning is being viewed and interpreted. Currently, conversations are being had as to re-defining the role of planning and the importance of including discussions of inclusivity within the field, incorporating more community engagement into design practices, as well as the lack of recognition of women, for example, and their contributions to planning and design (Chan, 2018).

During his time abroad, Ford and his friend spent every night at hip-hop clubs in Warsaw and realized through discussions with individuals at the clubs how far hip-hop has come and how many barriers it has broken through (Gordon, 2017). There are many elements that hip-hop has influenced, but Ford wanted to look for the next element it could influence. One frequent discussion he had with individuals he met at the clubs in Warsaw centered on Eminem's 8-mile soundtrack. The movie and soundtrack had been released around or during his study abroad experience. People would ask about the buildings and different places and spaces within Detroit mentioned in the lyrics of Eminem's songs. He began to notice the connection between lyrics in

hop-hop music and the built environment and wanted to go more in depth in that exploration via his thesis back home (Gordon, 2017).

Ford believes that hip-hop focuses on the creation and identity of places and spaces and more often than not on poorly designed and underfunded spaces “that are cut off from the rest of the city through bad urban planning and structural racism” (Sisson, 2017). Architecture, in Ford’s usage, is a way to view the intersection of culture, the built environment, hip-hop, space and place, and architecture, design, and planning (Sisson, 2017).

The Hip-Hop architecture camps and afterschool programs began in 2017. Michael Ford created Hip-Hop Architecture Camps with the purpose of not only dissecting lyrics in songs and showing the intimate relationship between the lyrics and the built environment and architectural constructs but to also bring the world of design, hip-hop, architecture, and planning to low income youth of color who might not have access to these professions (Mock, 2017). The architecture camps are a space where youth are introduced to these professions and the issues that are at the epicenter of the lyrics the students are dissecting. Youth are taught that change can happen not only through learning about creative place making, but that they are capable of bringing about that change (Sizemore, 2017).

The camps address the lack of diversity within the design and planning professions and highlight the impacts youth of color could have if they were to enter into these professions (Mock, 2017). Hip-hop has the ability to meet youth where they are and can also be viewed as a tool to connect these youth culturally so they can develop tools to critique, analyze, and reflect on their surroundings critically.

## **2. Description of the Hip-Hop Architecture Camps and After-School Programs**

The camps are located in large cities, such as Los Angeles, CA, Houston and Austin, TX, Detroit, MI, Atlanta, GA, and several others. Some of the camps are during the summer, like the camp hosted in 2017 in Detroit, which was one week long in August and lasted from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Other camps are designed as afterschool programs, like the camp in Richmond, CA that went through December of 2017 to March 2018 and was hosted by the Richmond College Prep Charter School. This afterschool camp was only open to the College Prep students because it was hosted at their school and the after school program began directly after school ended. The camps are free and are for youth ranging in ages from 10 to 17 years of age. The camps are focused on creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking. Throughout the camps the students are paired with mentors (architects, urban planners, designers, hip-hop artists, and community activists) in order to reflect on their own built environment and include the tools they were taught throughout the camp - digital models, physical designs, and a hip-hop track to summarize the creation and narrative behind their designs (HipHopArchitecture.com, “Hip Hop Architecture Camp,” 2018).

The Hip-Hop Architecture Camp has several partnerships and sponsors: universities, K-12 campuses, The Universal Hip Hop Museum, which Ford is the lead architect for, as well as Autodesk, and the sites at which these camps are hosted (HipHopArchitecture.com, “2017 Hip Hop Architecture Camp Locations,” 2018). Autodesk provides access to a combination of architecture, engineering and construction software programs. The youth at the camps use the Tinkercad software program, primarily because of the low learning curve. Tinkercad is a web-

based program, which is particularly significant because it allows the youth to continue using this program after their camp or afterschool program has ended (Sizemore 2017).

### **3. Foundation of the Camps and After-School Programs**

The curriculum for the camps is based on the Hip-Hop Architecture Lecture tour, which is currently ongoing. The lecture series discusses the role and impact of architect and planners such as Le Corbusier and Robert Moses, “in creating environments which necessitated the birth of hip-hop culture” (BrandNu Design, 2018). Specifically, it discusses how Le Corbusier viewed his plan and tower-in-the-park concept as a way to bring democracy and equality to the built environment. Corbusier’s high tower design was never constructed due to the city of Paris viewing his plans and designs as crazy (Sisson, 2017). Moses took the tall buildings and density components of Corbusier’s plans and turned it into a slum clearance urban renewal process. He took the high tower density plans of Corbusier without implementing the park designs Corbusier believed would be beneficial for the people who would be occupying those spaces. Moses used Le Corbusier’s plans as a tool to remove and create an erasure method of black and brown communities (Sisson, 2017). While his presentation of this history may be debated, the point is to engage participants in discussion of the power that design and planning can have to create exclusive and racialized spaces.

During his lecture, he and his DJ use samples of hip-hop songs and discuss their lyrics to show how planning and architecture systematically created separate spaces for poor African American communities which has directly created a system of inequality and inequity between these communities and the rest of the United States (BrandNu Design, 2018). In an interview

with Wisconsin Public Radio, Ford gave an example of how he connects hip-hop lyrics to the built environment:

The Breaks by Curtis Blue. The breaks describes some of the everyday living in some of these environments and how the environment or how architecture is not just bricks and mortar. It's not just bricks and mortar it's the incubator of culture, and the architecture is where all of our social interactions happen. Line for line, he goes over some of the urban realities of urban renewal. When I say literally every line, I mean every line (Gordon, 2017).

When Ford was receiving his master's degree in architecture, it quickly became apparent to him that there was a lack of diversity amongst his fellow students and professors within his department, as well as within the architect field:

Right now architecture is not a profession that is sought out by many people of color, because traditionally the profession has had a bad effect in our communities.

I hope it's not just me, but other designers and architects, that have the same passion to get people of color involved, but not just us. People like Ice Cube or Pharrell, Serena Williams who is into interior design to look at those icons as individuals that can inspire the next generation to begin to create their own spaces (Gordon, 2017).

#### 4. Curriculum and Camp Projects

Throughout the students learning experience, they are taught how to read tape measures and scales, sketching and drawing techniques, and 3D and physical model-making (Jones, 2017). The first project of the camp is known as the Ice Breaker Project. This assignment is broken into three different phases. During the first phase, youth are taught how to capture the mash up and remixing styles in hip-hop culture (Sizemore, 2017). During the second and third phase of the Ice Breaker Project, the students use lyrical dexterity analysis to find patterns in the syllables and rhythms in song and turn those patterns into two-dimensional graphs. They then turn use the two-dimensional graphs to map three-dimensional skylines (Sizemore, 2017).



**Figure 6:** Source: Samra Habib, “Face the Music,” January 13, 2018

The youth’s biggest project is to build their dream city block. This project changes depending on the city in which the camp or after school program is being hosted. This project was inspired by Scarface’s song, “My Block” which describes his experience living in

the Southside of Houston, TX (Genuis.com, 2018). The students create their ideal city blocks for the city they live in. They are able to design buildings that solve problems and meet the needs of their communities (Sizemore, 2017). This project is a culmination of learning how to use programs like Tinkercad, learning basic architect, planning, and design principles; how to dissect and critically analyze lyrics; as well as critical and self-reflecting skills to analyze their built environment. For example, in a camp hosted in Detroit, the project focused on the town of Highland Park, which is an area that consists of about 11,000 residents with a majority black population. Almost half the residents are below the poverty level. The Highland Park Community High School was subject to school closure in 2015, which meant that the students who attended that high school were displaced and had to commute and attend high school in Detroit (Sizemore, 2017). All of the students are also required to create a music video based on what they learned during the camp towards the end of their experience: they can be in the video, help write the lyrics, or be a part of the design and filming process.

The camps have planners, designers, architects, hip-hop musicians, and other professionals who not only volunteer as full time staff, but also come to speak to the kids regarding their experiences within the context of the camp theme. This really shows the intersectionality between design and planning, art, activism, music, and a plethora of other disciplines (Sizemore, 2017).



**Figure 7: Jackie Sizemore, “The Beats And Rhymes Of Hip-Hop Are Changing How We Design Our Cities,” August 2, 2017**

## **5. Analysis**

This particular program is unique in the sense that it is introducing the field of planning and design to low-income youth and youth of color in American urban cities. These camps are not only about teaching youth about planning, design, and architecture, but they also teach youth how to critically reflect on their built environments through the analysis of hip-hop lyrics, learning how to write their own hip-hop lyrics through their experience with the built environment, while learning how disenfranchised and disinvested spaces, primarily spaces where black and brown individuals were forced to live, came to be, and how these youth can create change through planning and design. It was not mentioned in the interviews and articles that

were read whether community engagement was a method taught and practiced at these camps. The Hip-Hop Architecture camps are powerful because they are focused on representation: showing black and brown students the power of planning and design, and that they have the abilities to create change through these processes.

### **5a. Domain 1 & 2: Assets and Agency.**

The PYD program feature of *skill building* focuses on ensuring youth develop life skills through activities that they can be used in community settings. Because Michael Ford is basing his camps and after-school programs in design, planning, and architecture, he is ensuring that youth have the technical skills to create solutions and to re-imagine their built environment; he is also giving them the critical and self-reflective skills to analyze their surroundings on a micro and macro level. This is done through the dissection of lyrics, which discuss the violence, poverty, and simply poor conditions many black American citizens were forced to live in due to historic racialized planning policies, which in many places exist informally.

Through the skill building program feature, the qualitative indicator, *training methods and curriculum*, will be reviewed. Coupled with the technical and critical thinking skills taught to youth through the duration of these camps, they are also taught through application. Youth are given projects to implement each planning and design skill taught: learning how to measure, sketch, draw, and use design software. Through secondary research, it seems as though youth are given the skills necessary to complete these projects through an interdisciplinary approach. Based on the limited data and information found, it is hard to accurately assess whether the *training methods and curriculum* are effective at teaching youth how to become engaged in

their community through planning. However, the camps are able to assign youth professionally, racially, and culturally diverse mentors, which allows youth to learn how to view their built environment through different lenses--such a multidisciplinary approach is an important skill to have when designing and planning with and for communities.

One can argue, based on the information given, that youth are taught that communities are very different given historical contexts, planning policies, and other factors. The training is effective in the sense that it is teaching youth about their own personal built environment and how they can change it in different ways. More information regarding the curriculum would need to be accessed in order to adequately assess how planning is being implemented in the camps *training methods and curriculum* as a way to engage youth in their communities. Based on available information, online articles, pre-recorded and transcribed interviews, it can be argued that it is giving youth the skills needed to work in different built environments, learn about those communities, and create designs based on the critical and technical skills taught by these camps. Under the PYD framework, the training and skill building is creating engaged youth, however, the piece that cannot be confirmed is the extent to which planning is a part of that engagement process.

### **5b. Domain 3: Contribution**

The second qualitative indicator used to evaluate these programs is *youth engagement*: a qualitative indicator for this report but also a PYD program feature or concept under the domain, contribution. Through this program feature, the indicator *diversity of projects* will also be analyzed. Within the PYD framework, *youth engagement* focuses on allowing youth to engage in the community in different ways: giving youth multiple ways to express their

involvement, creating opportunities for youth in decision-making processes, as well as supporting youth leadership.

The Hip-Hop Architecture Camp engages youth in the projects and skill sets taught to them, however, based on the limited data available, it cannot be stated whether youth are able to engage and contribute to the extent that is described in the Positive Youth Development framework.

Based on the descriptions given about the different projects youth must complete, youth are given a space to work on projects that allows them to effectively use the skills they are learning. The final project where they are instructed to build their dream block allows students to use all of the skills and methods they were taught. The specific planning skills and methods utilized in this particular project were not found. This was a limitation while researching and analyzing this case study.

#### **5c. Domain 4: Enabling Environment**

Based on the space analysis for this case study, it seems as though youth are given a *safe space*, a PYD program feature and concept, to practice what they have learned, as well as opportunities to think creatively and collaboratively through the camps multi-disciplinary training approach. It also seems as though that youth are emotionally supported in a way where it can be assumed that youth feel safe and comfortable to voice their own opinions while thinking and reflecting in a critical manner. There is an *environment* conducive to learning in ways where youth are supported and the concept of *belonging and membership*, another program feature under PYD, exists and is carried through the camps and after school program. The Hip-Hop

Architecture Camps are accomplishing the goal of a conducive learning *environment*, a qualitative indicator for this report. A representative or alumni of this camp would need to be interviewed to determine whether it is successful under the PYD framework.

The strengths of this program are many: representation, bringing these professions to a population of people in the United States who may never have learned about planning, design, and architecture, and the interdisciplinary training used to teach youth about their built environment. Unknown is the extent to which community engagement, a crucial piece of planning, was taught to youth. However, this would be additional information that is needed in order to fully assess the implementation of planning in this program.

## **Chapter 4: Curriculum Based Approaches for Youth Engagement and Planning**

### **1. The Semester Schools Network and CITYTerm**

The Semester Schools Network is a group of schools and programs that offer experiential based learning experiences for high school juniors and seniors. The purpose of this network is to challenge youth “academically, to expand their views of the world, to help them understand themselves as learners [and] to teach them the value of participating in communities” (SemesterSchools.net, “About,” 2018). SSN was inspired from a course created in the 1960’s, called Inventing Gotham, which focused on learning through the built environment. The course was interdisciplinary in focus, combining History and Literature and incorporating student-led historical tours around New York City (City Semester, “History of City Semester,” 2018). As this particular course gained popularity and continued to evolve, other disciplines were brought into the mix, such as public policy. Teachers and leaders involved wanted the course to be rooted in real-world problems, as well as to allow students to learn problem-solving and solution based methods through policy. This led to the creation of the Semester Schools Network City Semester, as well as the City Semester course at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in the Bronx, NY.

SSN has a partnership with a number of K-12 schools in the United States. Most of the schools on that list are college preparatory schools, private schools, or boarding schools. However, they do state that they accept applications from both public and private K-12 institutions.

CITYTerm, a program within the Semester Schools Network, is located in New York City and is a 16-week intensive multidisciplinary experience-based program. CITYTerm is

affiliated with The Masters School, which allows students to earn their accreditation (CityTerm, “About,” 2018). Students within this program are required to take honors level courses in History, English, and courses centered on the urban environment in New York. Their coursework is directly linked to what is happening in the city. Students are frequently in the “field” conducting research in New York City, and speaking with directors, architects, designers, and urban planners (CITYTerm, “About Us,” 2018). After the development of the Semester Schools Network, Andrew Meyers, an academic who created the Inventing Gotham course, brought this framework to the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in the Bronx, NY (ECFS, “History of City Semester,” 2018).

## **2. City Semester**

The Ethical Culture Fieldston School (ECFS, “About ECFS,” 2018) is located in the Riverdale neighborhood of Bronx, New York in between the Hudson River and the Van Cortlandt Park (Anderson, 2012). ECFS is a private school that has been in existence for more than 135 years (“ECFS, “About ECFS,” 2018). They have approximately 1,700 students with a faculty consisting of 300-400 teachers. The school believes in order to truly teach students and engage them in the learning process, using an experiential and interdisciplinary lens and collaborative based pedagogical approach, youth will be able to connect what they learn inside the classroom to what is happening around them outside of the classroom (Anderson, 2012). City Semester was created in order to bring experiential learning and interdisciplinary studies to ECFS youth.

City Semester is for high school juniors and seniors. It is a semester long program in which students are given real-world problems situated within their own built environment and are taught by teachers from across school disciplines: math, science, history, English, film, ethics, and other courses. The program has between fifteen to twenty-five students and seven to ten teachers during the duration of the course. The number is dependent on the semester. Each week the course combines classwork and two days of fieldwork, which is centered on a specific question or theme. The students, as well as teachers, learn about the Bronx as well as the larger built environment they inhabit--from the city to the world. Youth learn about how they shape the built environment and how they are shaped by the built environment (CitySemester, "From the Teachers," 2018). A goal of this course is to encourage youth or hope that youth can find new passions and develop new skills and make connections they can use throughout their life (CitySemester, "From the Teachers," 2018).

City Semester is organized into six units based on four interconnected courses. The four academic courses are *Settlement of the city*, which teaches students the background and history of New York and the Bronx, *Nature and the City*, which explores the ecological landscape of the community, *Writing the City*, which focuses on urban literature and writing as a way to analyze and critique the city, as well as *Culture of the City*, which focuses on different languages and immigrant cultures, *Solidarity with the City*, and *Arts in the City* (CitySemester, "Syllabi," 2018). Within each core academic course, there is a field work component which directly correlates to the topic of the course as well as ensuring that it ties in all subjects involved. The fieldwork component of *Solidarity with the City*, for example is designed around activism and leadership opportunities. The students engage with different community groups, learn through design,

planning practices, on-site investigations of proposed developments, and interactions with policy makers and other professional experts (CitySemester, “Courses,” 2018). There are six thematic units where youth are given the opportunities to take what they learned in their core courses and their fieldwork and apply it to the project within those specific units.

### **3. Analysis**

Within these programs, planning is not as explicit a focus as in the other two case studies. However, planning is thematically present throughout the work conducted as reviewed through curriculum, syllabi, and program descriptions. Youth are taught how to interact with their built environment and view their city through an interdisciplinary approach. Youth are also taught technical and community engagement skills such as designing and running charrettes and conducting interviews, while learning about their urban landscape.

#### **3a. Domain 1 & 2: Assets and Agency.**

The program feature that will be analyzed under these domains is *skill building* which will help assess the qualitative indicator, *training methods and curriculum*. As stated in previous chapters, an organization is on the path to building engaged youth if skill building (developing life skills that can be applied in other facets of their lives) has been included in the structure of their organization. There is limited information available regarding the details of the curriculum. However, I was able to access descriptions of the different courses students are required to take, and evidence of the emphasis placed on multi-disciplinary learning, as well as

the importance of field work in learning in applying what youth learn in the classroom to real-life scenarios outside the walls of ECFS.

### **3b. Domain 3: Contribution**

This domain focuses on the program feature *youth engagement and contribution*. This program feature includes the qualitative indicator, *youth engagement*, which is used in this report to assess the involvement and opportunities created for youth. Youth engagement and contribution cannot be adequately analyzed due to the limited descriptions available of the different ways youth can be involved in the community. There is also not enough information to explain leadership opportunities for both the SSN and City Semester.

### **3c. Domain 4: Enabling Environment**

There is not enough information given to assess the extent to which environment is conducive to growth and learning in SSN and City Semester. Therefore, the program features under this domain cannot be effectively analyzed.

The strengths of this program are the interdisciplinary and experiential learning methodology applied in the teaching and learning experience of the City Semester youth and staff. A limitation of this report is the lack of information accessible without conducting interviews. Additional information, training models, curriculum outlines, interviews, would be needed in order to accurately assess this program and its implementation of planning into the Semester Schools Network and City Semester and the level of community engagement enacted throughout the youths involvement with these programs.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **1. Findings**

Each of the three programs analyzed in this report are very different, but also similar in some aspects. The most important similarity between each organization is the use of planning as a way to engage youth in their communities. Some used explicit planning methods more so than others. The programs discussed are very unique in the ways they view and implement planning as an interdisciplinary profession. Behind the purpose of each organization, is the core belief that youth have the power and ability to create change and to be involved in conversations and decision making processes that not only impact them but also impact others in the environment in which they live. This was found to be more present in all three case studies, the Hampton Youth Commission and the Hip-Hop Architecture Camps and the after-school programs.

The Hip-Hop Architecture Camps and the Hampton Youth Commission believe that youth already have a tool box to positively impact their community, but that youth need the necessary tools and skills that can be used in their work throughout the duration of their program and in other areas of their lives as they continue to grow. It is important to emphasize that these findings are not the end of the discussion but the beginning. More research and analysis regarding youth, planning, empowerment, and engagement needs to happen to further explore how planning programs can support youth.

#### **1a. Comparing and Contrasting the Case Studies**

Each case study organization includes planning differently depending on the goal of their organization. The purpose of the work of each organization is to expand the table to include

youth in the discussions regarding their surroundings and decisions that directly and indirectly impact them (Carlson, 2004). All three organizations believe in experiential learning and the importance of interdisciplinary studies as the best methods for students to develop skill sets that can be applied outside of these programs.

Experiential learning can be viewed as the incorporation of active and participatory learning in teaching and learning processes. It can be seen when youth switch their role from being a passive listener to an active respondent (Hawtrey, 2007). Youth, in this case, are not only learning from their instructors or co-workers, but they are learning from the built physical structures around them, through conversations with their neighbors, and by exploring their surroundings.

The Hampton Youth Commission applies this method in several ways. The main example in which this can be seen is through the interconnectedness of the initial trainings, and continuous trainings; being given the responsibility to host and facilitate community engagement meetings; and their interactions with adults. Youth in this program are consistently being coached on the different skills they need to have in order to be engaged and active citizen and are given opportunities to implement and practice those skills. The Hip-Hop Architecture Camps also applies this method by stating that there is a relationship between music, design, planning, art and many other fields. The skills taught throughout this camp (i.e. the critical thinking skills taught to dissect lyrics within hip-hop songs and technical skills such as drawing and learning design software) give youth the ability to critique their built environment and view their surroundings in different ways that they might not have been able to before. The Semester Schools Network and City Semester believe in incorporating planning into curriculum: designing

the courses in ways to show the importance of intersectionality between subjects as well as exploring the physical landscape and meeting with different stakeholders.

The differences between the programs lie in in the 1) mission, values, and specific goals, 2) the youth population being served, 3) the structure behind their training or curriculum, and 4) the ability for youth to participate. For example, the architecture camps' main goal is to introduce the fields of design and planning to youth of color and give them the tools to “rebuild,” in a sense, the damage and systematic structures created from racist and segregationist planning policies.

Another example is the accessibility of these planning programs: whether the programs cannot accept any more youth or are not financially feasible. The Hip-Hop Architecture Camp and the Hampton Youth Commission are both free, however the Hampton Youth Commission, for example, requires youth to undergo an application and interview process to be involved. The Hip-Hop Architecture Camps also require an application process: prospective participants provide a set of required information and a short essay. These two organizations are similar in that they are free. To be a part of the Semester Schools Network or City Semester, youth must have access to a significant amount of money to attend these programs. The tuition to attend City TERM, a semester school that is a part of the Semester Schools Network, is \$32,650 (CityTerm, “Tuition,” 2018). In order to attend the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, the tuition for students who attend the high school is \$48, 645. Thus, youth cannot participate in the City Semester course unless they are enrolled at ECFS and can pay close to \$50,000 a year (ECFS, “Tuition and Feeds,” 2018).

## **1b. Planning Lessons Extracted from Case Studies**

In order to learn how to strengthen programs, feedback from participants must be a part of the programs. From the information gathered, it seems as though the only organization in this report that conducted feedback from youth is the Hampton Youth Commission. However, they have not conducted post-testing or exit interviews in a few years. Each program should have a baseline entrance survey or questionnaire assessing what youth already know and what they want to learn, as well as an exit survey to determine if there has been any growth throughout the duration of the program. This could be an easy way to assess if the youth's knowledge and skillsets have increased. It is also a simple way for the organizations to pin point what they need to work on to achieve their mission and reach their goals.

For more long-term programs, like the Hampton Youth Commission, focus groups for both the Youth Commissioners and Youth Planners should be hosted every three months or so to receive the youths' opinions on the structure of the organization, the training they are receiving, what they have learned, and any other opinions or beliefs the youth want to share with the adult staff and those in charge of the Youth Commission.

The level of engagement with community members and a diverse range of stakeholders should occur in order for students to learn how to interact with people they are working with and for. While youth in the Hampton Youth Commission conduct community engagement events, details regarding the type of community engagement events were not gathered. Similarly, we do not know if the youth that attend the Hip-Hop Architecture Camps interact with community members during the camps and after-school programs. It can be inferred that they have to interact with the physical landscape in order to accomplish their projects, but it cannot be stated

for sure the extent to which they interact with the residents in those areas. The Semester Schools Network and City Semester both incorporate fieldwork and interaction with different stakeholders, but details regarding that part of the programs were not accessible. An important component to planning is learning how to engage with the communities. Without developing the skill sets necessary to be engaged with different communities, the projects conducted for specific neighborhoods could be more detrimental to that environment than helpful.

The Hip-Hop Architecture Camps are already held in multiple cities throughout the country. The Hampton Youth Commission is an exemplary model of Youth Commission structures, but it was found that there are already many other Youth Commissions in cities like Palo Alto and Anaheim, CA, Dallas and Arlington, TX, Livonia, MI and other cities across the United States. After additional research is conducted on the Semester Schools Network and City Semester, the curriculum and training used could be modified and integrated into schools across the country. This way youth who do not have the financial means to enroll in the Ethical Culture Fieldston School or programs within the Semester Schools Network to have access to planning based curriculum.

## **2. Limitations**

There were several limitations of this study. Time was the most significant limitation found for completing an in-depth diagnosis of all three case studies. More interviews need to be conducted in order to fill information gaps in each case study. For example, interviews from current youth in each program would have given first hand points of view as to what youth, the client of these programs, are learning and whether the goals of each program are being met.

Interviews from staff would have allowed input into the specifics of the trainings, curriculum, and details that were unable to be found. Access to alumni would have shed light on whether these programs and the skills taught were carried into other parts of the youth's lives.

The initial proposal of this report included a workshop design. The intention of the workshop was to teach high school seniors about planning so they could formulate their own opinions about planning throughout the workshop and could engage in conversations and a problem solving activity. Then, there would be a focus group after the workshop to see what they learned and lessons would be extracted based on what the students' responses. Below is a general format for the workshop:

**Day 1: Workshop - Teach**

- **Objective:** Students will discuss their environment, and values they think are important to incorporate when building cities, neighborhoods, and communities.

**Day 2: Workshop 2 - Form Opinions**

- **Objective:** Students begin developing their own opinions about what neighborhoods and cities need. This will be done through a brief whole group discussion. A problem solving activity will be introduced in which students will answer the following questions: How can you decide what you need in your community? What is an ideal community?

**Day 3: Workshop**

- **Objective:** The third workshop will be a continuation for Workshop 2

**Day 4: Focus Group**

- **Objective:** Gather student's opinions on the three-day workshop.

**\*\*Each workshop and focus group will range from 1 hour to an hour and a half. \*\***

Incorporating a workshop into this report would have strongly contributed to this report because input from youth would have been received: you would know directly from youth, the focus of this report, what strategies would be useful in order to engage youth in their communities. It is also important to note that the qualitative indicators used, although important to this study, are not the only qualitative indicators that could have been used or can be used in further research.

### **3. Recommendations**

Recommendations suggested based on this study are additional interviews from youth currently involved in these programs or other planning based youth engagement programs, alumni of said programs, as well as staff and faculty. Implementing a method to track alumni from each program could reveal the extent to which youth were able to carry the skills they learned into different components of their lives. Based on the design alone, the Hampton Youth Commission and the Hip-Hop Architecture Camps seem to have a more structured training curriculum that teaches youth how to be involved in their communities, and more specifically focusing on the Hampton Youth Commission, giving them multiple opportunities to implement those skills learned into different community engagement processes, interacting with a multitude of stakeholders, as well as learning how to reflect on how the built environment not only impacts them, but their neighbors as well. These two programs are also the most inclusive, based on my analysis. Both organizations do not require tuition or fees and they appeal to a broad range of youth, particularly youth that may not have opportunities to be as civically engaged as the youth in these programs.

The curriculum-based approach has the potential to reach an ever broader spectrum of youth than the other two programs, however, the structure of the Semester Schools Network and City Semester are available to only a small subset of youth.

However, what I believe is most important is a change in the way adults and our society view youth. There needs to be a shift towards viewing youth as resources. Youth already have the unique perspectives that adults do not have, but with effective training in planning and belief in youths' abilities to be important and valued members of the community, real change can happen in this country.

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