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Article in *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* · April 2017

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### **Article information:**

To cite this document:

Kelly L. Patterson, Molly Ranahan, Robert M. Silverman, Li Yin, (2017) "Community benefits agreements (CBAs): a typology for shrinking cities", International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 37 Issue: 3/4, pp. 231-247, doi: 10.1108/IJSSP-01-2016-0003

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# Community benefits agreements (CBAs): a typology for shrinking cities

Community  
benefits  
agreements

231

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Received 7 January 2016  
Revised 3 April 2016  
Accepted 4 April 2016

## Abstract

**Purpose** – Community benefits agreements (CBAs) redistribute the benefits of new development to distressed communities and historically disenfranchised groups. They allow coalitions of labor and grassroots organizations to negotiate for concessions in the development process. Yet, CBAs are a relatively new tool used in planning and local economic development, and specification about their content and scope is evolving. Some of the earliest CBAs were negotiated in cities experiencing an influx of new growth and investment. However, less is known about the scope of CBA negotiations in shrinking cities where economic development is relatively anemic. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper offers an extension to the existing literature through an exploratory analysis of the scope of CBAs in the ten fastest shrinking cities in the USA between 2000 and 2010. The analysis is organized in three parts. First, the authors present a CBA typology that differentiates among CBAs negotiated with developers in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Second, the authors compare neighborhood conditions in shrinking cities with CBAs to those without negotiated agreements. Finally, the authors discuss critical cases where CBA negotiations have occurred in shrinking cities.

**Findings** – Grassroots coalitions have more leverage when negotiating for concessions with private sector developers vs developers from the public and nonprofit sectors. The added leverage is attributed to the high profile and limited public benefits associated with projects pursued by private sector developers. Moreover, shrinking cities face additional obstacles when negotiating CBAs. The authors concluded that cities with the highest levels of physical distress are the least likely to negotiate and adopt CBAs.

**Originality/value** – This paper contributes to the literature by focusing on CBAs in shrinking cities. It also highlights nuisances in CBA negotiations with developers from the private, public and nonprofit sectors. Although the analysis focused on the US context, the inclusion of these perspectives in the CBA typology provides researchers in other institutional settings with a common framework for comparative analysis.

**Keywords** Community benefits agreements, Grassroots organizations, Shrinking cities

**Paper type** Research paper

## Shrinking cities, developer characteristics and the scope of community benefits agreements (CBAs)

### *CBAs in shrinking cities*

CBAs emerged in the late 1990s and are new tools used to achieve equitable outcomes from local economic development projects (Wolf-Powers, 2010). Unlike other linked development agreements negotiated between municipalities and developers during a project's approval process, CBAs are negotiated directly between coalitions of community-based groups and developers before a proposed project is approved by local government. CBAs are also distinct because they guarantee long-term benefits to residents of inner-city neighborhoods impacted by development and they include enforcement mechanisms (Gross, 2005; Marcelllo, 2007; Lowe and Morton, 2008; Dobbie, 2009). In essence, these agreements are a contractual mechanism to ensure that some of the benefits of development are redistributed to historically disempowered groups.

CBAs allow grassroots interests to directly negotiate for concessions at the onset of the development process (Parks and Warren, 2009; Patterson and Silverman, 2014).



These concessions include amenities like: affordable housing, improvements to schools and community facilities, public parks, enhanced public access to new development areas, and other design elements that enrich the quality of life for residents. In addition to physical redevelopment, CBAs allow grassroots interests to negotiate for set-asides related to procurement. Negotiated agreements include provisions for set-asides for minority and local procurement agreements directly related to construction projects, as well as agreements to contract with vendors for services that support the ongoing operation of a completed project. Finally, CBAs create pipelines for education and workforce development in distressed communities by allocating resources to local education and training organizations for the development of human capital.

The theoretical justification for CBAs is rooted in the literature on neighborhood-based planning. At the heart of the rationale for the adoption of CBAs is the argument forwarded by Logan and Molotch (1987) which identifies competing interests in the urban development process. They divide these interests into two general groupings, those who pursue development to enhance profits or economic exchange values and those who favor forms of development that enhance the quality of life or use values of neighborhoods for their residents. Others have described similar distinctions between economic and neighborhood interests in the development process. For instance, Peterman (2000) drew from this framework to outline a rationale for neighborhood-based planning focused on enhancing the scope of public participation and grassroots action in the local community development process. This approach was rooted in arguments made by others like Kotler (1983) and Poindexter (1996) who identified public engagement at the neighborhood level as the foundation of local self-governance and decision-making. Since its articulation, this framework has been used as a justification for expanding the role of residents and other grassroots interests in the urban development process. A more recent examples of this is found in the emergent literature on CBAs. In that example, Cain (2014) directly links the rationale for CBAs to this theoretical framework in her analysis of Pittsburgh.

Although a relatively new innovation, the emergence of CBAs has been documented in a growing body of literature. In her meta-analysis of past CBAs in the USA, Wolf-Powers (2010) identified 27 negotiated agreements that were in existence in 2009 and an additional nine being negotiated. Her findings indicated that CBA activity tended to cluster in Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City and other areas where growth and redevelopment was occurring. To a lesser extent, she identified CBA activity in shrinking cities such as New Haven and Pittsburgh. In addition to meta-analysis, there have been a number of case studies of CBAs in cities such as: Chicago, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York City, Pittsburgh, San Diego and San Jose (Salkin and Lavine, 2007/2008; Baxamusa, 2008; Lowe and Morton, 2008; Dobbie, 2009; Gregory, 2013; Saito and Truong, 2014). Existing literature suggests that the CBA model for negotiating linked development agreements may have broad applications across the country. However, past research on CBAs has been heavily weighted toward agreements surrounding high-profile projects that were successfully negotiated. These agreements have also been reached in cities where development is robust and developers have substantial resources to commit to projects.

To address these gaps, our analysis focuses on CBA negotiations in places where they are less likely to succeed. This framework was adopted to assess the degree to which this model for negotiating linked development agreements is relevant to places where development options are more limited and developers face greater resource constraints. Thus, our analysis is focused on CBA activity in the ten fastest shrinking cities in the USA between 2000 and 2010.

#### *The CBA typology*

In addition to exploring CBA activity in shrinking cities, our analysis considers the characteristics of developers. To some extent, past studies did not differentiate between the

institutional contexts developers were embedded in and thus, treated all developers alike. In contrast, we propose a typology for CBAs based on whether developers are located in the private, public or nonprofit sectors. We argue that the ability of community-based coalitions to negotiate CBAs is structured by the sector developers are positioned in. This is because different types of developers face dissimilar regulatory, tax and fiscal environments. In addition, the sector developers are in structures how they interact with local government and the degree to which government has authority to enforce CBAs.

By considering the sectoral position of developers, our research adds an institutional perspective to the analysis of CBAs. We differentiate between the institutional contexts that developers are embedded in when negotiating CBAs and focus on the degree to which a developer's sector frames the scope of CBA negotiations. Although this has not been the central emphasis of past studies, insights can be gleaned from the literature. For instance, the importance of a developer's sector is central to the CBA negotiation process since:

[A]ll development projects require a wide range of governmental permit approvals, such as building permits, re-zoning and environmental impact statements. Permit approvals almost always have some kind of public approval process, as do most development subsidies. For many projects, the degree of community support or opposition will determine whether the developer will receive the requested approvals and subsidies (Gross, 2005, p. 10).

This suggests that motivations to negotiate CBAs differ for developers based on the sector of the economy where they are located. For instance, private sector developers are subject to the broadest scope of regulations at the local level and are incentivized to offer concessions to government and community-based groups in order to win support for proposed development projects. In addition to land-use regulations, private developers also seek other subsidies from local government such as tax incentives, fiscal support, infrastructure improvement around development sites and land dedications.

In contrast, public authorities face less regulatory oversight by local government. For example, school districts and state agencies are often exempt from many local land-use regulations and have their own taxing authority. Thus, there is less motivation for them to negotiate CBAs since they are not as dependent on local government to approve project elements related to land-use or subsidies. Often, public authorities can also draw from regional or state resources due to their independent taxing authority, which decouples them from local control. Likewise, nonprofit developers are insulated from public deliberations surrounding the development process. As tax exempt private organizations, nonprofits are not required to publically disclose many details of their planning and decision-making processes. In some instances, nonprofit developers (e.g. state affiliated universities and hospitals) are exempt from local land-use regulations and have revenue sources and capital budgets that are independent of local government. Their tax exempt status also represents a substantial public subsidy which is spread across local, regional and state constituencies. The lack of local regulatory authority also constrains the ability of local government to enforce agreements with public and nonprofit developers.

Another factor that influences the degree to which pressures exist for developers to negotiate CBAs is the characteristics of a proposed project and their perceived public benefits. Although there are some overlapping traits across sectors, contrasts still exist. Many public sector projects focus on development to promote commercial enterprises that have fewer innate public benefits associated with them. Examples from the literature include projects focusing on: sports arena and stadium construction, the development of tourism and entertainment districts, the expansion of hotels and convention centers, and related mixed-used development (Baxamusa, 2008; Lowe and Morton, 2008; Sze, 2009; Wolf-Powers, 2010; MacDonald, 2011; Saito and Truong, 2014; Marantz, 2015). Projects that are largely commercial in nature attract greater public scrutiny, which prompt coalitions of

community groups to push for negotiated CBAs and linkages that redistribute some of the benefits of private development in a more equitable manner.

In contrast to private sector led commercial ventures, more direct public benefits are often attributed to development projects pursued by public authorities and nonprofit organizations. However, there are distinctions to be made between the two. Projects pursued by public authorities often entail large-scale capital improvements such as citywide school reconstruction projects and transportation projects. By nature, these types of projects spread benefits and negative externalities unevenly across neighborhoods. For instance, decisions about school construction and closures have uneven impacts on neighborhoods, and result in calls for negotiated CBAs to promote more equitable outcomes.

Likewise, transportation and infrastructure improvements result in similar demands from communities negatively impacted by development. The CBA negotiated in response to the proposed Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) expansion project represents a clear case of using linkages to address such inequalities (Baxamusa, 2008; Lowe and Morton, 2008). Neighborhoods impacted by increased traffic, noise and pollution due to the LAX expansion were targeted for employment, workforce development and other benefits. The benefits and externalities that accrue from nonprofit led projects tend to be more concentrated near a development site. However, the equity goals of CBA negotiations are similar. Some examples of nonprofit led projects that have spurred CBA negotiations include the Columbia University expansion project and the Yale-New Haven CBA linked to a hospital expansion project (Salkin and Lavine, 2007/2008; Gregory, 2013). In both cases, CBA negotiations centered on linkages designed to mediate employment, housing and other negative externalities.

Finally, the place-based nature of developers from different sectors can influence the degree to which pressure exists to negotiate a CBA. Private developers are often perceived as foot loose, and willing to relocate their businesses to cities and regions offering tax incentives and other cost savings. This perception is particularly strong in shrinking cities that experienced job losses during the period of deindustrialization in the decades following the Second World War. The prospects of benefits from private development are short-term in nature, which increases pressures for CBA negotiations. Coalitions of community groups and local government attempt to negotiate linkages with private developers in order to guarantee that incentives offered to them result in community benefits. In contrast, there is less pressure to negotiate CBAs with public authorities and nonprofit developers due to their place-based nature. Both types of developers are relatively permanent fixtures of local economies and unable to move their physical facilities as easily as private firms. Pressures for CBAs are lessened further when the place-based nature of public and nonprofit developers is coupled with the perceived public benefits they bring to communities.

Table I presents a typology which organizes the characteristics of CBAs in relation to a developer's sector. The typology considers four categories of characteristics associated with a CBA's: the negotiation process, developer status, negotiated benefits and enforcement. We argue that each category of characteristics is shaped by the sector a developer is in.

The typology can be used to predict the outcomes of CBA negotiations. It can also be used as a tool by coalitions of community groups and local governments to develop strategies to negotiate linkages with developers. In some cases, knowing the relationship between a developer's sector and pressures to negotiate a CBA may enhance the leverage of community coalitions and local government. However, this knowledge may also lead groups to pursue other paths, outside of CBA negotiations, to address negative externalities of proposed development. Those paths may entail legislative initiatives, legal challenges, grassroots mobilization and other tools to influence agenda setting and public policy.

We argue that the CBA typology is particularly useful to community groups and local governments in shrinking cities, since the long-term decline and fiscal constraints experienced in these places limits their ability to negotiate linked development agreements. In the next

**Table I.**  
The Community  
benefits agreement  
(CBA) typology

Likelihood of a CBA characteristic being present	Developers' sector		
	Private corporation	Public authority	Nonprofit organization
<i>The negotiation process</i>			
CBA's are negotiated between a coalition of community groups and a developer	High	High	Low
Community groups coordinate their strategy and negotiate together	High	High	Low
CBA negotiations are mediated by local government	High	Medium	Low
CBA's are finalized before a project is approved and/or subsidies are awarded to a developer by local government	High	Medium	Low
<i>Developers status</i>			
Place-based (geographically immobile)	Low	High	High
Subject to local land-use ordinance and controls	High	Low	Medium
Tax exempt	Low	High	High
<i>Nature of negotiated benefits</i>			
Negotiated benefits are site-specific to a development project	High	Medium	Medium
Negotiated benefits include a mixture of physical, social, educational and economic components	Low	High	Medium
<i>CBA enforcement</i>			
Agreements are legally binding	Medium	High	Low
Agreements are enforced by community coalition members and developers	Medium	High	Low
Agreements are enforced by local government	Medium	High	Low

section we describe the methods used in our analysis, then we present the results of our analysis. In the results section, we examine how local context sets the parameters for CBA negotiations in shrinking cities. It is within these parameters that community coalitions and local governments attempt to negotiate CBAs with private, public and nonprofit developers.

Our analysis suggests that there may be limited potential for widespread application of the CBA model. In part, negotiating linked development agreements may be more difficult in cities faced with decline and starved for investment. This situation may be compounded by the types of developers engaged in urban revitalization. Subsequently, we argue that community-based coalitions and local governments have less leverage when negotiating linked development agreements with nonprofit developers since they are more insulated from local taxing authority, land-use ordinances and other regulatory structures. This finding has particular relevance to shrinking cities where nonprofit developers like hospitals and universities are the principal drivers of urban revitalization.

## Methods

This paper uses a mixed-methods approach to examine existing and proposed CBAs in the ten fastest shrinking cities in the USA between 2000 and 2010. The analysis is based on secondary data sources collected between 2013 and 2015. We adopted a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative analysis with comparative case study research in order to gain a more rounded view of the CBA negotiation process in shrinking cities. In many respects, this methodology mirrors the analytic approach adopted by Molotch *et al.* (2000) in their analysis of urban development processes in the Southern California. Our analysis focuses on the ten fastest shrinking cities in the USA between 2000 and 2010 (Frey, 2012). These cities include: Cleveland, OH; Youngstown, OH; Dayton, OH; Cincinnati, OH; Toledo, OH; New Orleans, LA; Detroit, MI; Birmingham, AL; Buffalo, NY; and Pittsburgh, PA[1].

To facilitate the search for secondary data used in our analysis, we identified key experts in each of the ten cities knowledgeable about community development efforts and neighborhood redevelopment practices. These experts included local scholars engaged in research and local practitioners who had worked on applied projects. They helped to identify local existing and proposed CBAs, related initiatives led by large anchor institutions (i.e. hospitals and universities), and individuals and organizations that could provide additional materials related to these agreements. We also contacted staff of regional agencies and municipal departments (e.g. planning and economic development), and education and medical anchor institutions. Additionally, we conducted literature searches for relevant scholarly publications, media coverage and published reports by anchor institutions.

At the end of the secondary data collection process, we identified eight CBAs or similar linked development agreements in the cities examined. These eight agreements were clustered in five of the ten cities. The eight agreements formed the basis for our case study analysis. Information about the development and community reactions to those agreements was drawn from public records, newspaper articles and local media coverage. The main sources of secondary data examined included public records, plans, reports and websites from anchor institutions and community organizations detailing the objectives and progress of proposed and implemented neighborhood-based initiatives.

The case studies that formed the core of our analysis were supplemented with other secondary source data in order to contextualize our findings. These data came from the 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS). Census tract data ( $n = 1,228$ ) were used to approximate neighborhood boundaries in the ten shrinking cities that were examined. Aggregate housing and population characteristics in the cities are summarized to provide baseline measures of disadvantaged communities that CBAs are designed to benefit. This part of the analysis was used to contextualize the case studies.

The analysis of ACS data focused on identifying neighborhood characteristics in cities that are correlated with the adoption of CBAs. Logistic regression was used to identify neighborhood correlates with the existence of a CBA in a particular city. The dependent variable for the logistic regression analysis was a dummy variable which measured whether a CBA was adopted in a city. The results from this analysis add context to the case studies examined in this paper, since they highlight how housing and socio-economic characteristics are related to the likelihood that a CBA is adopted.

## Results

### *Neighborhood conditions in shrinking cities with and without CBA activity*

In part, local context sets the parameters for CBA negotiations. Estimates from the 2008-2012 ACS were used to examine the local context of the ten fastest shrinking cities in the USA between 2000 and 2010. These data are summarized in Table II. Census tract data ( $n = 1,228$ ) were used to approximate neighborhood boundaries in the ten cities and citywide averages for these geographies are reported in Table II. Variables were included in Table II that capture housing and population characteristics relevant to CBA negotiations. The housing and population characteristics reported in Table II were selected to provide baseline measures of disadvantaged communities that CBAs are designed to benefit.

Regardless of their levels of CBA activity, all of the cities exhibited: relatively low incomes, large populations of historically disadvantaged groups, acute poverty, high levels of income inequality, relatively low homeownership rates and property values, and high rates of property vacancy. In order to better understand the relationship between these variables and the adoption of CBAs in shrinking cities, we reduced the data using principal component factor analysis and then used the factors extracted from that analysis in a logistic regression model measuring the correlation between local context and CBA adoption.



	No CBA activity				Some CBA activity				CBA agreement(s) adopted	
	Birmingham, AL	Dayton, OH	New Orleans, LA	Toledo, OH	Youngstown, OH	Buffalo, NY	Detroit, MI	Cincinnati, OH	Cleveland, OH	Pittsburgh, PA
<i>Population</i>	225,757	167,424	341,406	298,032	67,093	259,160	721,459	304,783	398,157	306,430
Percentage population change 2000-2010 <sup>a</sup>	-12.6	-14.8	-29.1	-8.4	-18.3	-10.7	-22.2	-10.4	-17.2	-8.6
Percentage black	71.4	45.6	60.6	32.5	47.4	39.4	83.4	43.6	57.4	30.3
Median household income (\$)	32,763	30,614	40,250	33,969	25,690	31,313	27,610	36,014	26,757	40,601
Percentage below poverty	29.1	33.9	28.8	29.6	36.2	30.9	39.3	31.5	35.8	24.0
GINI index	0.44	0.45	0.47	0.44	0.44	0.47	0.47	0.49	0.46	0.48
<i>Housing units</i>	115,540	84,829	186,987	143,394	33,640	134,391	363,010	167,632	214,584	157,228
Percentage owner occupied	51.8	50.3	46.5	54.7	60.0	42.1	51.9	39.2	44.1	49.8
Median value (\$)	111,070	81,483	208,198	85,726	41,658	85,152	62,621	143,606	80,005	112,519
Percentage vacant	19.4	20.8	23.2	15.4	20.5	17.6	29.4	22.0	22.6	15.4
Percent vacant "other"	49.7	57.4	54.3	45.4	52.0	61.1	58.8	45.1	59.0	54.3

**Sources:** US Census, American Community Survey 2012 5 year estimates; <sup>a</sup>Frey (2012)

**Table II.**  
2012 Population and housing  
characteristics of the  
ten fastest shrinking  
cities 2000-2010 by the  
level of CBA activity

Three underlying components were extracted after subjecting the ACS variables to principal component factor analysis. These components are summarized in Table III. The first component explained 31 percent of the variance in the variables modeled. This component, RELATIVE WEALTH, functioned as a measure of shared variance based on median household income and owner occupancy in a city's census tracts. The second component explained 24.2 percent of the variance in the variables modeled. This component, HOUSING ABANDONMENT, functioned as a measure of shared variance based on property classified as "other vacant" in a city's census tracts[2]. The third component explained 16 percent of the variance in the variables modeled. This component, INCOME INEQUALITY, functioned as a measure of shared variance based on The GINI index in a city's census tracts.

The extracted factors were entered into a logistic regression model determine if correlations existed between them and the existence of a CBA in a city. The dependent variable for the logistic regression analysis was a dummy variable which measured whether a CBA was adopted in a city where a census tract was located. The results from the logistic regression analysis are presented in Table IV. The model  $\chi^2$  for this test was statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the Nagelkerke's  $R^2$  indicated that there would be a 4.2 percent improvement in predicting if a city had adopted a CBA when the value of the HOUSING ABANDONMENT factor was taken into consideration. The odds ratio associated with that factor indicates that cities with the highest score on that factor were 0.680 times less likely to have adopted a CBA agreement.

These findings are instructive, since they suggest that the most physically distressed shrinking cities are the least likely to have negotiated CBAs. Still, CBAs were adopted in some distressed cities. In the next section we examine cases where CBAs were discussed and adopted in shrinking cities to gain insights into how a developer's sector influenced outcomes of negotiations for linkage agreements.

*Case studies*

CBA negotiations took place in five of the ten cities we examined. CBAs were adopted in three of those cities. A total of eight examples of CBA negotiations were identified.

**Table III.**  
Principal component factor analysis

Components extracted	Percent of variance accounted for by component	Eigenvalue
RELATIVE WEALTH	31.0	2.9
HOUSING ABANDONMENT	24.2	1.9
INCOME INEQUALITY	16.0	1.3

**Note:** Principal component factor analysis of variables ( $n = 8$ ) measuring census tract characteristics in the ten fastest shrinking cities 2000-2010

**Table IV.**  
Logistic regression results for CBA adoption in the ten fastest shrinking cities 2000-2010

Variable name	$\beta$	SE of $\beta$	Odds ratio
CONSTANT	-0.693***	0.063***	0.500***
RELATIVE WEALTH	-0.380	0.067	0.922
HOUSING ABANDONMENT	-0.380***	0.067***	0.684***
INCOME INEQUALITY	-0.004	0.085	1.004

-2 Log likelihood = 1472.38  
Degrees of freedom = 3  
Model  $\chi^2 = 36.18$ \*\*\*  
Nagelkerke's  $R^2 = 0.042$   
**Note:** \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

The developers involved in the negotiations included: three nonprofits, three public authorities and two private sector developers. Four negotiations led to the adoption of a CBA. These cases included agreements reached with: one nonprofit, two public authorities and one private sector developer. These cases are summarized in Table V.

*CBAs negotiated without adopting an agreement*

In four of the cases examined, negotiations related to anchor-based projects were initiated but formal CBAs were not adopted. It is instructive to examine these cases because they highlight how a developer's sector influences the outcome of negotiations for community benefits. One of these cases involved a private developer. Two of these cases involved developers from the nonprofit sector. The third case involved an ongoing public sector initiative to adopt a local CBA ordinance in Detroit. These three cases illustrate aspects of the CBA typology discussed earlier in this paper and represent counter examples to the CBAs that were successfully negotiated in other cities.

*The canal side CBA.* One of the cases identified was the short lived Canal Side CBA initiative in Buffalo, NY. It is instructive because it highlights the difficulties in reaching a CBA in a city that is experiencing economic contraction. In 2004, the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) announced that Bass Pro would build a 250,000 square foot store to anchor Buffalo's canal side development project. The proposed project involved public investments of \$154 million to leverage Bass Pro's \$140 million investment (Partnership for the Public Good, 2010). In addition to public investments, land was to be dedicated to assemble the site for the Bass Pro store. In 2007, the ESDC established a subsidiary called the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) and charged it with the task of revitalizing Buffalo's waterfront. The ECHDC's state-appointed governing board was given sole authority to negotiate with developers for the canal side project. The Bass Pro component of the project went through several design iterations during the six-year period that the developer negotiated with the ESDC and ECHDC. As time passed, media accounts reflected skepticism about the benefits the project would bring to the community and whether the project would come to fruition.

One of the criticisms of the project was that it was negotiated in relative secrecy between the ECHDC and the developer with few opportunities for public input in the process. In 2008, a coalition of community-based groups began to organize and lobby for the creation of a

Cities	Project	Developer's sector	Negotiation/ agreement date(s)
<i>CBA negotiations without agreements</i>			
Buffalo, NY	The Canal Side CBA	Private	2010
	University at Buffalo (UB) and St. John Baptist Church Economic Opportunity Panel Report, "Opening Opportunity Around UBs Growing Downtown Presence"	Nonprofit	2011-2013
Detroit, MI	Henry Ford Health System Community Letter of Understanding	Nonprofit	2014
	Detroit Community Development Ordinance	Public	2014
<i>CBA agreement(s) adopted</i>			
Cleveland, OH	University Hospitals Vision 2010 PLA	Nonprofit	2007
	Cleveland School Construction CBA	Public	2013
Cincinnati, OH	Cincinnati School Construction CBA	Public	2010
Pittsburgh, PA	Hill District CBA	Private	2008

**Note:** <sup>a</sup>No CBA activities were identified in: Birmingham, AL; Dayton, OH; New Orleans, LA; Toledo, OH; or Youngstown, OH

**Table V.**  
Community benefits agreements (CBAs) identified in the ten fastest shrinking cities 2000-2010<sup>a</sup>

Canal Side CBA (Kaslovsky, 2008; Reynolds, 2010). The CBA was intended to link community benefits to the canal side project. After six years of negotiations between the ECHDC and the developer the coalition of community groups advocating for a CBA reached an important milestone. In March 2010, the Buffalo Common Council passed a resolution supporting a negotiated CBA with Bass Pro for the canal side project. The resolution was backed up by the Common Council's commitment to not transfer 13 acres of city-owned property to the ECHDC or the developer until a CBA was in place. Three months after the resolution was passed, Bass Pro withdrew its proposal to build a store to anchor the canal side project (Quigley, 2010).

*The University at Buffalo (UB) and St. John Baptist Church Economic opportunity panel report.* The UB Economic Opportunity Panel (EOP) report grew out of negotiations between the university and a local faith-based organization for the purchase of a subsidized housing development. In 2010, UB signed a memorandum of understanding with St. John Baptist Church to purchase the McCarley Gardens Apartments, a low-income subsidized housing development owned by the Church (Silverman *et al.*, 2014). The university intended to redevelop the site where the apartments were located as part of a larger expansion plan for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC). A condition of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) was that the EOP would be formed to make recommendations that would, "result in more widely available economic opportunity to residents of McCarley Gardens and to others in the community" (EOP, 2013).

In 2013 the EOP released a report that outlined its recommendations for linkages between BNMC expansion and benefits to the surrounding community. The recommendations that grew out of the EOP report lacked many of the characteristics of a full-fledged CBA. The negotiating process that produced the report was highly insulated. The deliberations of the EOP were heavily dominated by representatives from anchor institutions, state and local government officials who were sympathetic to the interests of the BNMC, large nonprofits and local construction firms (Silverman *et al.*, 2014). Opportunities for broader community engagement were limited in the negotiating process and local government did not assume a mediating role in it. The lack of broad-based community input and local government mediation in the process was reflected in the final recommendations made in the EOP report.

The EOP recommended that UB take the lead in implementing programs and initiatives to promote economic opportunities to residents impacted by BNMC expansion. Recommended activities to be pursued by the developer included a general list of: workforce development programs, local hiring initiatives, procurement from minority and women owned businesses, and a continuation of existing outreach efforts with residents related to the development process. The report did not identify an implementation strategy for the recommended activities or benchmarks to be used in their evaluation. In fact, there were no binding agreements that followed the report to guarantee that any of the recommended activities would be implemented.

The insulated manner in which the EOP deliberated produced a backlash from grassroots interests in the community. In anticipation of the EOP report, residents of the neighborhood adjacent to the BNMC requested that the Buffalo Common Council place a moratorium on the development of replacement housing for residents displaced by the proposed purchase of McCarley Gardens until a formal linked development agreement was reached (Silverman *et al.*, 2014). In response, the Common Council approved a 2013 resolution to create a City sponsored neighborhood advisory council that would increase resident input in the neighborhood revitalization process associated with BNMC expansion. This created the potential for future engagement between residents, the city and anchor institutions focusing on formalizing a CBA.

Following the release of the EOP report and the City's resolution to create a community advisory panel to engage in future negotiations with the BNMC, the university announced that it would delay the purchase of McCarley Gardens for at least four years (UB Reporter, 2013). That decision resulted in the expiration of the MOU and the disbanding of the EOP, ending negotiations for a CBA.

*Henry Ford health system community letter of understanding.* In 2014, the Henry Ford Health System (HFHS) signed a letter of understanding with the West Grand Boulevard Collaborative Community Coalition (WGBC3) in order to facilitate the expansion of its hospital campus in Detroit, MI. The agreement was reached after almost a decade of disputes between the HFHS and WGBC3 over negative impacts that the expansion project was having on the surrounding community (Vidal, 2014). However, distrust between the community and the hospital dated back to the period following the 1967 Detroit riots and was perpetuated by recurrent complaints about air pollution, traffic, noise and other externalities that the community absorbed. In addition to these issues, the planned expansion of the HFHS and its purchasing of property adjacent to its hospital campus prompted community groups to mobilize.

In 2004 the WGBC3 was formed to pressure HFHS for greater transparency and community input in its expansion planning process. These efforts came to a head in 2010 when the HFHS formally unveiled its preliminary expansion plans. WGBC3 made multiple requests to HFHS for information about future development plans, and after two years of unresponsiveness the organization formally requested that the hospital negotiate a CBA with the community (WGBC3, 2014). In 2012, the Detroit City Council added pressure to HFHS by deferring a vote on tax abatements for its proposed expansion projects and passing a resolution calling for a CBA with WGBC3. During negotiations that followed, HFHS refused to sign a CBA, but agreed to the language of a letter of understanding. The WGBC3 viewed this as a critical step, noting that, "[t]he document we signed May 16, 2014, is far from a CBA, but it is acknowledgment of our community's right as taxpaying citizens to be true partners in the development of our community." Although falling short of a binding CBA, the letter of understanding established a framework for future negotiations with the HFHS. It created a structure for sharing project information with the community, it identified a list of negative externalities to address as hospital expansion took place, it made provisions for local employment initiatives, and it committed HFHS to supporting community development efforts in the neighborhood surrounding its campus.

*Detroit's proposed community benefits ordinance.* The experiences in Buffalo, Detroit and other cities are symptomatic of the challenges community-based coalitions face when trying to negotiate CBAs on a project-by-project basis. In many cases grassroots coalitions become involved in the negotiation process after critical decisions are made and they lack access to key decision-makers. Efforts to forge CBAs are often dependent on support from local government, as was the case in Buffalo and Detroit where local councils passed resolutions and took other actions to support community groups. However, developers still have the upper hand in the negotiating process, since they can delay negotiations until conditions are more favorable to their development goals, or they can simply walk away from a project entirely.

Recognizing this dilemma, the Detroit City Council proposed a community benefits ordinance in 2014. The proposed ordinance would require all large-scale projects in the city involving significant public investments, tax relief or land dedications to include CBAs. The agreements would require developers to address residential displacement, include provisions for local employment and contracting, address negative externalities caused by development, and improve housing and community amenities. The agreements would also be subject to monitoring, evaluation and enforcement by the City.

The business community's response to the proposed ordinance was immediate and negative. For example, a 2014 article in the Detroit News quoted the CEO of the Detroit Economic Growth Corp. saying that, "[t]he quickest way to undo all we have done to create a positive environment for new investment and to abruptly stop the economic momentum we have built over the last five years is to pass a Community Benefits Ordinance – in any form, or by any name" (Ferretti, 2014). More telling, Republican members of the Michigan state legislature proposed their own Anti-CBA bill to block the Detroit City Council from adopting the proposed ordinance. At the time of writing this paper, the debate over the proposed ordinance and the bill to ban CBAs in the state of Michigan were ongoing.

#### *CBA agreements adopted*

In four of the cases examined formal CBAs were adopted. These cases add to our understanding of how a developer's sector influences the outcome of negotiations for community benefits. The first case presented involved a nonprofit developer. Among the other cases, two involved developers from the public sector and one involved private developers. These four cases illustrate aspects of the CBA typology discussed earlier in this paper.

*University hospitals vision 2010 project labor agreement (PLA).* In 2007 a PLA was created between the Cleveland University Hospitals (UH) and the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council (CBCTC). The PLA provided for a 20 percent local hiring target for construction projects, women and minority procurement set-asides, and workforce development programs linked to a \$1 billion hospital expansion project (Figueroa *et al.*, 2011; Lujan *et al.*, 2013). The City of Cleveland was designated as a third party beneficiary of the agreement, and tasked with monitoring and enforcing the provisions of the PLA. During the construction phase of the UH expansion, the PLA met its hiring goals and procurement targets. The ability to implement the workforce development program was more complicated, since student graduation rates from a pre-apprenticeship program which was run through a local public high school did not produce a sufficient number of workers. As a result, an agreement between the CBCTC and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District was reached for a districtwide approach to training and placing students in the construction trades.

The PLA became the framework for the City of Cleveland's model CBA that was proposed in 2013. The model CBA included provisions for future construction projects to include local hiring provisions, set-asides for minority procurement and workforce development programs run through public schools and community colleges (City of Cleveland, 2013a). The CBCTC and other trade organizations, advocacy groups, the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the Cuyahoga Community College and the City signed a MOU agreeing to adopt linked development agreements based on the model CBA for future construction projects. The MOU was later endorsed by local hospitals, Case Western Reserve University and public authorities. When the MOU for the model CBA was announced the chief administrative officer for the UH was quoted saying:

We are very proud to have been a part of this effort led by Mayor Jackson. We acted throughout in an advisory capacity given our experience in connection with our Vision 2010 strategic plan where we contractually incorporated goals for the utilization of minority and female business enterprises, voluntarily complying with the City's goals for resident employment. We remain committed to, and are fully supportive of, this innovative agreement (City of Cleveland, 2013b).

The PLA and the model CBA that grew out of it were important, since they reflected the willingness of developers to enter into enforceable agreements to link community benefits with new construction projects. However, they were focused on labor, procurement and workforce development issues. This can be contrasted with broader CBAs that also provide for housing, business development, social services and other components of comprehensive

neighborhood revitalization. Moreover, the Cleveland model primarily focused on the building trades and linkages that occurred during the construction phase of projects. Linkages to longer-term, sustainable benefits with broader commitments by developers were not a central focus of these agreements.

*Cleveland and Cincinnati school construction CBAs.* By signing the MOU for the City's model CBA, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District committed to linking targets for local hiring and minority procurement to its future school construction projects. Subsequently, the CBA's provisions were frequently cited in local election materials used by the school district to encourage voters to approve ballot measures for new school construction projects. The inclusion of CBA provisions in Cleveland's future school construction projects represented a shift toward increased efforts to target capital spending on schools and increase economic spillovers for local workers and businesses.

However, Cleveland was not the first school district to adopt this approach. In 2010, the Cincinnati Public Schools unanimously adopted a resolution to include a similar CBA as part of its facilities master plan. The CBA provided for local hiring and workforce development efforts to increase the representation of minorities in the building trades. The CBA was the result of advocacy from School Board members, a local faith-based coalition, civil rights organizations and labor organizations.

These school construction CBAs are noteworthy for two reasons. First, they represented an agreement in principle to include linkages to new development before specific projects were identified. In Cincinnati, the School Board resolved to include CBAs in all capital projects linked to the district's master plan. In Cleveland, the City's model CBA was adopted for future development projects. Second, as public sector bodies, the agreements were binding to subcontractors who bid on school construction projects and the School Boards were in a position to monitor and enforce the subcontractor's performance on those contracts.

*The Hill District CBA.* The Hill District CBA was negotiated with the Pittsburgh Penguins in order to build a new NHL hockey arena in Pittsburgh's Hill District. The district represents a collection of neighborhoods located between downtown Pittsburgh and the city's Oakland area where the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Carnegie Mellon University and other anchor institutions are located. The Penguins proposed to construct a new \$321 million hockey arena across the street from their existing facility which would largely be paid for with public funding (Cain, 2014). In the initial proposal the benefits of the new development were also contained within the footprint of the new stadium with few spilling over into the surrounding community.

Community groups argued that the Hill District had been in a state of decline for decades and that the benefits from public subsidies for the proposed arena should have a broader impact. The Hill District was made up of a group of racially segregated black neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, unemployment, rental property and vacancy (Cain, 2014). After decades of population decline and disinvestment, the Hill District was beginning to revitalize. These increased residents' concerns about future gentrification and displacement. A grassroots coalition composed of local social justice groups, organized labor, local businesses, elected officials, local foundations and advocacy organizations was formed to press for a negotiated CBA. Their calls led to a process where the community-based coalition negotiated a CBA with the Penguins. Representatives from state, county and local government, and relevant public authorities meditated the negotiations.

The Hill District CBA was adopted in 2008 and it included nonbinding statements of principles as well as guaranteed concessions (One Hill Neighborhood Coalition, 2008; Dobbie, 2009; Cain, 2014). The CBA included statements of principles adopted for living wage jobs, union employment and local hiring of low-income residents. The City and County also committed \$150,000 for two years targeting residents for first source job placement

related to stadium construction. The CBA required that a plan for minority contracting and set-asides be developed. The Penguins and the Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) each committed \$1 million to support the construction of a grocery store in the Hills District. The URA also funded a two-year community master planning process for the Hill District. The master plan generated from that process was intended to establish a framework for future development. The Penguins also agreed to help community groups raise up to \$6 million over a 12-year period for projects related to local community and economic development, social services, youth development, mental health and recreation.

As the first CBA negotiated in Pittsburgh, the Hills District CBA was a milestone. In addition to the concessions included in the agreement, it was significant because it institutionalized several practices. From the onset, a community-based coalition was engaged in the arena planning process and this legitimized the role of public engagement in the urban revitalization process. The role of citizen input was further institutionalized through the community master planning process. The coalition had a key role in project implementation and monitoring. The developer also agreed to provide quarterly reports to the coalition on progress toward meeting the conditions of the CBA.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

In this paper we proposed a typology for CBA adoption in shrinking cities that takes a developer's sector into consideration. Although tentative, our findings suggest that negotiating linked development agreements in shrinking cities is a daunting task, particularly in the most distressed cities. Our initial analysis suggested that shrinking cities with the highest levels of physical distress were the least likely to negotiate and adopt CBAs. The case study analysis adds to our understanding of the relationship between a developer's sector and the chances that a CBA will be adopted.

In places where CBAs were negotiated but not adopted, developers preferred development planning processes that were insulated from public input. They resisted calls for the inclusion of linkages that included targeted levels of community benefits and performance requirements. If developers could not avoid CBAs in their development planning they would delay implementation or simply walk away from projects. There was also less public sector advocacy for CBAs in places where they were not adopted. For instance, advocacy for CBAs came late in the project planning processes in Buffalo and Detroit, and there were often cleavages in the public sector about the need for CBAs. The ECHDC and the Buffalo Common Council were at odds over the need for the proposed Canal Side CBA. In the case of Detroit's CBA ordinance, the Detroit City Council faced strong opposition from the Michigan State Legislature.

In contrast, CBA negotiations were successful in places where: the need for linkages was introduced early in the project planning process, public input and advocacy was more influential, and the public sector was more engaged in negotiating for development concessions. The cases examined in Cleveland, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh provided evidence for the presence of these conditions and their contribution to CBA success. It is particularly noteworthy that steps were taken to institutionalize CBAs in the local development negotiation process in all three cities. For instance, the endorsement of Cleveland's model CBA by local foundations, anchor institutions, and public authorities set the foundation for future agreements and created an institutional culture where negotiated linkages were routinized.

This is a critical step that advocates for CBAs should give currency to. The existence of a locally endorsed model CBA or a community benefits ordinance can set the parameters for future negotiations and relieve community-based organizations of the need to start from scratch with each newly proposed project. In essence, a model CBA or ordinance puts the framework and coalition for a CBA in place before new projects are introduced. As a result, developers are more likely to consider them part of the formal planning process.



In addition to issues associated with the institutionalization of CBAs at the local level, advocates for CBAs should also remain cognizant of how changing institutional arrangements at the state and national levels impact efforts to negotiate with developers. For example, Farzana *et al.* (2013) identified how new national policies incentivize developers to enter into CBAs. They point out that:

[T]he Affordable Care Act of 2010[s] community health needs assessment requirements and recent IRS changes to Form 990 Schedule H instructions allow hospitals to list initiatives such as economic development and community support as community-building activities. Achieving a positive score on community benefit reporting is important to the ability of a hospital to maintain its nonprofit status with the IRS (Farzana *et al.*, 2013, p. 6).

Similarly, nonprofit and private sector developers' participation in other public programs like low-income housing tax credits and new market tax credits may create space for community-based coalitions to negotiate for CBAs. For shrinking cities, the institutionalization of incentives to negotiate development linkages at the local, state and national levels may be a particularly important tool to counteract the influence of groups that argue against CBAs.

Acknowledging that this analysis is exploratory in nature, we encourage scholars to expand on inquiry into how institutional arrangements and the long-term trajectories of growth and contraction affect the CBA negotiation process. Our analysis applied mixed-methods to gain insights into various dimensions of these broad structural influences. There remains a need for further analysis at the micro-level. In particular, research based on systematic qualitative interviews with key stakeholders would improve our understanding of the how concerns about urban decline and perceptions of sectoral actors influence the CBA negotiation process. Our findings suggest that such inquiry would be fruitful.

### Acknowledgment

Work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under a grant (H21662CA) with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author(s) and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government. Additional funding for this publication came from a research grant from the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy at the University at Buffalo.

### Notes

1. These ten cities are examined more systematically in the analysis for our 2013 HUD Sustainable Cities Research Grant.
2. The "other vacant" category within the census classification of vacant units identifies vacant housing units that were not for sale, rent or used for seasonal recreational or other purposes. We use this category as a proxy for housing units that were permanently vacant or abandoned following the method described by Silverman *et al.* (2013).

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