Abstract

Near North Minneapolis's "Beale Street:" An Intersectional Community-Centered Approach to Advocacy and the Path to Restore 6th Avenue North

In Minnesota, transportation advocacy historically has been led by a small community of mainly white, affluent climate activists. Guided by their own privilege and focused on garnering power, these groups have often erased, excluded, and supplanted the needs of those most damaged by past and present land use and infrastructure development. This oversight has generated capital investments that mainly address the wants and needs of a wealthy and comfortable few.

This essay visualizes and articulates a very different strategy, which I call an "Integrated Community-Centered Investment Approach" to transportation advocacy. This approach creates power through public awareness and class solidarity through outside organizing. It homes in on facilitating, informing, and building the collective will and courage necessary to push the system and secure outcomes for the poor and working-class people that are consistently excluded by transportation policy and infrastructure.

It starts with formulating and developing an idea to deploy a program at the intersection of policy and historical research; the public distillation and dissemination of critical information; community canvassing and programing; and participatory consent, momentum, and action. We then leverage that energy to secure successful outcomes so that communities can reclaim spaces, reconnect with one another, and restore their economic and cultural vibrancy.

This essay relies on the historical research, community engagement, mapping, surveys, interviews, and events conducted by the Our Streets Minneapolis advocacy program, with the support of many academic and community partners, for the Bring Back 6th campaign. This effort to repair the injustices done to the near north community to construct Olson Memorial Highway informs the story of the individuals and communities that represent the pillars and successes of our movements and that best embody the transportation system's spectrum of intersectional racial and economic harms.