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Sacred Suburbia: when American Evangelicalism and New Urbanism Meet

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Being a dissertation submitted to the faculty of The Built Environment as part of the requirements for the award of ***MPlan City Planning*** at University College London:

I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that ideas, data, and images, as well as direct quotations, drawn from elsewhere are identified and referenced.

Signature: 

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Abstract

Although a significant cultural and political force in the United States, especially in the suburbs, the role of Evangelical Christians in shaping the built environment has been overlooked in planning literature. This research presents an initial attempt to understand this relationship in the absence of scholarly literature on this topic. Focusing on a case study in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus, this dissertation investigates a mixed-use development led by an Evangelical denomination, a rare occurrence.

Following a thorough literature review that contextualizes the different forces at play in this development, the researcher undertook semi-structured interviews with key figures involved in the development to better understand the dynamics and motivations involved in this project. These interviews were coded and analyzed to arrive at distinct themes, which inform the structure of the discussion.

Ultimately, this research finds that collaboration between Evangelical leaders and planning practitioners in this case is due to market incentives; the use of a New Urbanist-inspired typology is due to these market incentives. Ultimately, the Evangelical leaders were more influenced by the market and the opinions of planning professionals than theological or ideological principles, and therefore planners have opportunity to catalyze on the profitability motive when partnering with religious groups. This research may have wide implications for both planning academia and practice, and hopefully spur greater consideration of the role that Evangelical Christians, along with other religious groups, may play in development.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation research was prompted by an article from my hometown newspaper published in March 2021. It was titled "Evangelical Christian denomination behind proposed $200 million development in Columbus suburb" (Warren, 2021). Although new development being proposed is not unusual in this rapidly growing city, this headline struck me as extraordinary, primarily due to its religious aspect. It is unusual that an evangelical church develops land for wider community use – most are inward looking organizations that cater their built environment to their own congregants (Wilford, 2012; Mulder and Jonason, 2017). There are documented cases of Mainline and Black Protestant churches developing their land for low-income housing and other charitable purposes, but very few examples of Evangelical churches doing so (Owens, 2000; Lin, 2004; Shook, 2012). In addition, the proposal for the redevelopment was very intriguing, as the proposal calls for a mixed-use, walkable campus with shops and cafes, influenced by the principles of New Urbanism, in contrast to the usual suburban church typology that consists of a sprawling, self-contained building surrounded by a sea of parking.

This unique case piqued my curiosity and led me to think more generally about the relationship between evangelical Christianity and planning, a topic I hadn't seen discussed much in the literature. Religion is a powerful force in many people's lives, and influences all aspects of their lifestyles, including the way they build. However, in the planning literature, this influence has been grossly overlooked, especially the influence of Evangelicals. This struck me as large oversight within academia because Evangelicals are a massive political and social force in the United States. Evangelicalism upholds a very rigorous application of faith to daily life; thus, the way evangelicals interact with the built environment may be influenced by their religious views and holds consequences for planners and the wider public.

In a time when suburbs are reinventing themselves and retrofitting (Sweeney and Hanlon, 2016), evangelicals may present an overlooked factor in this process. Thus, the question emerges – how does evangelical Christianity relate to and participate in the process of

suburban retrofitting in the form of New Urbanism? And subsequently, how do planners and evangelical leaders interact and relate to each other in this process?

This dissertation will attempt to contribute to the meagre literature about religion in planning and address the lack of discussion about evangelicalism specifically. To overview all the ways in which evangelicalism relates to planning is a massive undertaking that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Thus, the scope of this dissertation is narrowed to a single case study, through which the interaction between New Urbanism and Evangelical Christianity will be explored and will draw out implications for planners to consider.

This research is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To further explore the connection between planning and Evangelical Christianity religion in shaping the built environment in the United States, specifically suburbia.
2. To examine how the planning system interacts with Evangelicals participating in the development of the built environment through a case study of Evangelism participating in the shaping of the built environment through the method of suburban retrofitting as promoted by the New Urbanist movement
3. To draw out implications for planners in the United States and the capacity to engage with religious groups in future suburban development.

In the following sections, I will present an overview of the literature relating to this topic, explain the methodology employed to undertake this research, and present the findings. The findings are structured by themes derived from the data itself: the motivations driving the Alliance to undertake this development, the motivations driving the City of Reynoldsburg to work with an Evangelical Christian group, the convergence of these motivations in reaching an agreement, the emerging masterplan, the relationship between the Alliance and the wider community, and the working dynamics between the Alliance and the City of Reynoldsburg. I end with a discussion of the findings and their implications for planning practitioners and academics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Evaluating the relationship between Evangelical Christianity and New Urbanism requires an understanding of the following fields of study: how planners interact with religious groups, the role of Evangelicalism in the United States, the study of suburbanization in the United States, and subsequently, suburban retrofitting in the form of New Urbanism. These sections contextualize the various dynamics involved in this case study and are synthesized in the final section discussing the relationship of evangelicalism to the built environment. This literature review seeks to provide a critical understanding of these fields of study to inform the investigation of the relationship between Evangelicalism and New Urbanist suburban retrofitting.

I. Religion and Planning

The United States continues to be a place where religion matters. It is the most religious of all wealthy western democracies, with Christianity remaining the dominant religion (Fahmy, 2018). However, there is a real dearth of writing and research that considers how Christianity, the dominant religion in the United States, interacts with planning. Most of the writing on Christianity and urbanism has come from theologians (Augustine, 2014; University of Pretoria and de Beer, 2018; Smith, 2019) and religious studies (Wilford, 2012), not from urban theorists. The urban studies literature that does address Christianity in planning mostly focuses on more progressive, mainline forms of Christianity that tend to be more active in regard to social justice issues (Owens, 2000; Lin, 2004; Shook, 2012). There is little engagement with Evangelical Christianity and its relationship to the built environment from planning academics despite its cultural relevance and influence in the United States.

This is in part due to the prevailing assumption that planning is a secular endeavor operating in a secular society. But contrary to predictions put forth in the middle of the 20th century, religion has not receded from public life (Cox, 2013). And, contrary to modern assumptions, planning is not a completely secular endeavor (Manouchehrifar, 2018). The emergence of post-secularization theory has pointed out the continuing importance of religion

in the public sphere in secular societies and questioned the assumption that religion is irrelevant to planning (Knott, 2010; Olson *et al.*, 2012; Manouchehrifar and Forester, 2021). Post-secular theory posits cities as a place where different identities and beliefs converge, interact and contest each other (Beaumont and Baker, 2011). More recently, global immigration flows have brought more visibility to religion in urban spaces (Dwyer, Tse and Ley, 2016; Garnett and Harris, 2016); however, this suggests an assumption that new religious immigrants are 're-introducing' religion back into secular Western societies, which is not entirely the case for the United States.

Much of the conversation around religion and planning has occurred within the literature around public participation in planning. The conversation around public participation began to emerge due to the excesses of top-down modernist planning, in which members of the public had very little say. The most influential voice in the early years was Arnstein, who developed the ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969), which is still widely used to this day. Prominent debates within this topic are about methods and models of public engagement (Faludi, 1973; McDonald, 1989; Healey, 1992; Innes, 1995), effectiveness of public participation (Conrad *et al.*, 2011) and policy around public participation (Brownill and Bradley, 2017).

It is within this framework that much of the conversation around religion and planning has occurred. However, most of the literature approaches public participation in a top-down way, the question being: how can planners better engage the public, especially underrepresented minority groups? This is often when religion is considered within public participation, stemming from concern of how to engage religious, especially ethnic minority religious, groups (Gale, 2008; Owens, 2010) or how to plan for places of worship (Dwyer, Tse and Ley, 2016). There is a small amount of literature that investigates how religious groups participate in planning (Warf and Winsberg, 2010; Wilford, 2012; Dwyer, Tse and Ley, 2016). However, Greed (2016) argues that religious groups are often ignored and even discriminated compared to other identity groups, perhaps due to the unpopularity of their beliefs or the secular bias of the planners.

There is a real lack of engagement with how religion relates to planning, especially outside of ethno-religious minority groups. Religion is deemed 'ultra vires' or outside the scope

of planning because it is seen as social rather than spatial (Greed, 2005). This overlooks the massive influence that religion has on people's daily lives, on their principles and values, which are often expressed spatially in urban spaces. It has been shown that religion does have a spatial element (Hopkins, Kong and Olson, 2012). Religion is one of the most powerful forces shaping lifestyles for religious people, and to understand their motivations requires engagement with the religion itself, rather than reducing it to just another social identity or category, Holloway (2011) argues. Thus, this dissertation will delve into evangelicalism and draw on evangelical theology to understand the movement's relationship with the built environment.

II. Evangelicalism in the United States

As one of the largest and most consistent voting blocs in American politics, Evangelicals are often at the center of political coverage, although it is often unclear how the term is defined exactly. A somewhat fluid term, it describes a diverse, decentralized, and evolving movement that encompasses many denominations. It is both a religious, political, and socio-economic moniker; and is used in different ways depending on the context and the writer.

As a religious movement, Evangelicalism emerged from the Revivalist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries in the English-speaking world (Noll, 2001). Theologically, the term evangelical does not delineate a specific denomination or church type; rather, it refers to a flexible and diverse movement bound together by a few core beliefs. As such, it is difficult to define what an Evangelical is exactly because they can look very different in their worship practices and theological teachings.

According to British historian David Bebbington, the four key elements of evangelicalism are: conversionism, that is belief that a person must have a 'born again' conversion experience in order to be saved; biblicism, which is belief in the Bible as the ultimate religious authority; activism, a conviction that Christians must actively share their faith; and crucicentrism, which is a focus on Jesus's death on the cross as redemption for the sins of mankind (Bebbington, 1989). This definition, written in the late 1980s, is perhaps the most widely accepted definition among

evangelicals themselves. Evangelicals are so called due to their emphasis on evangelism, that is, proselytizing, and focusing on a person's individual relationship with God (Mulder, 2015).

However, the term has moved away from its strictly religious meaning and is filled with political, social and racial connotation. In current times, the usage of the term "evangelical" is often synonymous with conservative, culturally Christian and pro-American values, and is one of the most cohesive and influential voting blocs in the United States (The Economist, 2021). White evangelicals make up 44% of registered voters in the United States and so are a very influential key demographic (Smith, 2020). The modern construction of the Evangelical as a political force heralds back to the 1980s and the formation of the Moral Majority led by Jerry Falwell; it is at this point in history evangelicalism became interlocked with the Republican party (Banwart, 2013). Politically, evangelicals are known for their strong anti-abortion stance, traditional family values, and concern for religious liberty; they are regarded as 'the base' of the Republican Party (Brint and Abrutyn, 2010).

In a particularly striking anecdote, the Pew Research Center found that white Americans who were strong Trump supporters and did *not* identify as evangelicals in 2016 were more likely to start identifying as evangelicals in 2020 (Smith, 2021). The same study found that Trump garnered more votes from self-identified Evangelicals in 2020 than in 2016, with his overall vote share among white evangelicals increasing from 77% to 84%. The overwhelming support for Trump among evangelicals is evidence of the intertwining of evangelicalism and right-wing politics. However, this is not unusual and is a similar share of evangelical votes for the Republican candidate in the past five elections, showing that white evangelicals have long been mobilized by conservative partisanship (Smith, 2020).

Tellingly, Black Protestants, who share many of the same theological beliefs, are not usually referred to as evangelicals in the political sense due to their different social and cultural values (Noll, 2001). Therefore, the term 'evangelical' can be inferred to mean 'white evangelical' in the political sense. This difference became glaringly obvious during the 2020 election: whereas 84% of white evangelicals voted for Trump, only 9% of black protestants voted for Trump (Smith, 2020).

In this dissertation, I will use the term 'evangelical' not as a purely theological term, but with its political and sociological connotations. 'Evangelical' will be used to refer to the dominant white evangelical subculture as described above. In the following sections, I examine how this evangelical subculture is primarily a suburban religion, beginning with a discussion contextualizing American suburbia.

III. American Suburbia

The United States is a majority suburban country; fifty-two percent of Americans live in a suburb (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Much has been written upon the topic of suburbanization, both in academic and in popular works. This includes the study of the development of the suburbs as we know them today, critiques of suburbanization and calls to rethink ways of interacting and studying the suburban (Keil, 2017) and subsequently, the question of the future of suburbia, in particular, suburban retrofitting (Lang and LeFurgy, 2007; Grant *et al.*, 2013). In the United States, The New Urbanist movement leads the debate in suburban retrofitting, with many prominent voices advocating a return to traditional urban principles of mixed-uses, moderate density and walkability (Jacobs, 1961; Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, 2000; Dunham-Jones and Williamson, 2008). This field of literature will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section.

Grant (2009) suggests that planners are caught in a conundrum – they are trained in 'best practice' urbanist principles such as mixed uses and walkability but often practice in an environment where the traditional suburban landscape is still highly valued and desired. Despite planners' intentions, and the adoption of New Urbanist rhetoric in policy, the outcome of development in the US is most often still low-density, single-use and car dependent (Al-Hindi and Till, 2001; Grant, 2009).

Although suburbs have long existed in a way, in the form of settlements on the outskirts of larger cities and towns, the modern version of the American suburb, complete with big-box stores, mass-produced single-family homes and wide arterial roads, emerged after World War II. Catalyzed by increased car-ownership, the cultural fetishization of home ownership, and federal mortgage programs, sprawling suburbs quickly became ingrained in the American

lifestyle (Jackson, 1985). Currently, more Americans live in suburbs than in city centers or rural areas; the United States is a predominantly suburban nation (Hayden, 2003; Talen, 2005). The ravenous appetite for land driven by the low-density typology has resulted in sprawl, meaning that suburban growth usually happens on the outskirts on greenfield land, resulting in large, spread-out metropolitan areas (Fishman, 1993). The manufactured nature of much of suburban development, without regard to local contexts and nature, has led to the rise of terms such as "placelessness" and "nonplace" (Webber, 1964; Rutheiser, 1997; Arefi, 2004); Kunstler (1993) calls this "the Geography of Nowhere."

Importantly, the suburban lifestyle is associated with a set of cultural and socio-economic values and behaviors. Hayden (2003) uses the term 'sitcom suburbia' to describe the stereotype of the typical suburban home as a nuclear family with stay-at-home mom and commuter dad. There is political segregation of suburbs from their center city (Bourne, 1996), with suburbs generally more conservative politically than city centers (Parker *et al.*, 2018).

A large factor in explaining this homogeneity is the historic legacy of racism in the creation of the suburbs. Most suburbs in the post-WWII period excluded people of color from purchasing homes in the developments (Glotzer, 2020); Redlining and discriminatory federal mortgage lending policy further constructed to segregating the city in the twentieth century (J. Hernandez, 2009; Aaronson, Hartley and Mazumder, 2021). The marketing of suburbs as safe family environments led to a mass exodus of whites from the city centers in the mid twentieth century, deemed 'white flight' (Frey, 1979).

It has been suggested that suburbia, more than any other phenomenon, epitomizes American culture and values (Jackson, 1985). Perhaps no building typology has been more maligned than that of American suburbia, from all angles, including aesthetic, cultural and socio-economic. Some challenge this characterization of suburbs as homogenous and inactive (Bourne, 1996), and recognize it as a traditional American typology, and question the strong antagonism to such a strong tradition (Vanderbeek and Irazabal, 2007). Suburbs in reality are more than complex and nuanced than their stereotypes and are more diverse and dynamic than commonly represented (Grant, 2009).

Suburbs are not static and do change and evolve in response to cultural and economic forces. Within the past few decades, there has been a 'suburbanization' of poverty; as wealthier and whiter residents move back into city centers, poorer and minority residents are displaced and pushed out towards the suburbs (Frey, Milken Institute and University of Michigan Population Studies Center, 2001; Howell and Timberlake, 2014; Hochstenbach and Musterd, 2021). This presents challenges around accessibility and equity, as poorer populations are less likely to own personal vehicles and a single-family home. Suburban councils have been adopting other methods of development, such as New Urbanism, which is discussed in the next section, introducing some change to the traditional suburban form, although that change has been quite slow.

IV. New Urbanism

The roots of the New Urbanist Movement hearken back to Jane Jacobs and her ground-breaking work, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1961). The New Urbanist movement started to come together in the 1970s and 1980s; it is not a monolithic movement and does not have a formal leader (Ellis, 2002). However, there are some figures that have been more influential within the movement, notably, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberg and Andres Duany, and Peter Calthorpe, prominently advocating for neo-traditional neighborhood design and transit orientated development, respectively (Calthorpe, 1993; Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, 2000). The movement is guided by the Congress for New Urbanism, which enshrined the principles of the movement within its charter:

> neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice (Congress for the New Urbanism, 1999).

New Urbanism is arguably one of the most influential ideas within American planning in the past half century (Vanderbeek and Irazabal, 2007). It arose directly in response to the twentieth century's dominant form of development, that of car-oriented and single-zoned development. There is strong participation of practitioners in the New Urbanism movement, with many resources emerging from architects and planners in the form of blogs, podcasts, books, and proposals. Vanderbeek and Irazabal (2007) argue that the New Urbanist movement is ironically a continuation of the Modernist movement despite its advocacy of traditional urban values, due to it bringing together prominent groups of built environment professionals to develop a manifesto and the way in which it seeks to implement sweeping changes in the face of previous types of development. Similarly to the Modernist movement, the New Urbanist movement holds that a 'superior' design paradigm is the answer to a host of environmental, economic and social issues (Vanderbeek and Irazabal, 2007).

The New Urbanist movement has been successful at influencing built environment professionals, with many educational institutions adopting many of their ideals in their curricula, influencing the next generation of practitioners. However, despite this ideological influence, the implementation of New Urbanist principles into practice has been restricted; weak political commitment and market pressures limit planners' abilities to enforce these principles, and the pattern of suburban sprawl continues to proliferate (Grant, 2009).

In addition, New Urbanism has been the subject of much academic critique and debate. Among these are that it defines normative cultural and architectural values (Al-Hindi and Staddon, 1997); is overly idealistic in promoting community-focused types of development in the face of American individualism (Grant, 2009); has an overly optimistic belief in spatial determinism (Al-Hindi and Staddon, 1997; Vanderbeek and Irazabal, 2007); the traditional values that it draws from are largely invented and mythologized (Till, 1993; Zimmerman, 2001); it sometimes aligns itself with neo-conservative and libertarian values and figures (Vanderbeek and Irazabal, 2007).

One of the most prominent criticisms is that it has largely failed to deliver upon promises of social equity (Till, 1993). Grant (2006) writes that New Urbanism claims of diversity and equity "may offer little more than rhetoric that masks practices that increase disparity".

Most New Urbanist developments cater to middle-and upper- class tastes and interests, in the process excluding other classes (Till, 1993). Functionally, New Urbanist towns are often exclusionary, continuing the pattern of class and race segregation as traditional suburbs do, epitomized by the prototypic New Urbanist development of Seaside, FL (Al-Hindi and Staddon, 1997). Despite the New Urbanist belief that 'good' design should be a public good, in practice 'good' design is only for those who can afford it.

Another significant critique of the movement is that it has been unsuccessful in changing suburban tastes and propelling large-scale transformation of the built environment. In many instances, New Urbanist principles are diluted and have capitulated to the same suburban tastes that the movement originally denounced (Al-Hindi and Staddon, 1997; Zimmerman, 2001); developers retain the most marketable elements of the movement (aesthetic) while ignoring the more difficult and challenging principles like social equity and mass public transportation (Vanderbeek and Irazabal, 2007). New Urbanist developments are often built on greenfield land, unattached to a public transportation system, and within the same car-oriented transportation system that produces conventional suburbs (Marshall, 1996). Often these developments are not truly mixed-use, and residents still have to drive to a suburban strip mall to buy daily necessities (Marshall, 1996). The principles of the movement have been co-opted by corporate interests, often featuring in 'lifestyle centers' that seek to emulate traditional main streets, but that are filled with the same chains as traditional malls (Gillem, 2009).

Despite the many criticisms it faces, New Urbanism is an influential and well-known movement that has garnered much support over the past few decades and made its imprint on American planning culture. Its principles continue to be the inspiration for most suburban retrofit projects in the country, including the case study investigated in this dissertation. Evangelical Christianity is strongly related with suburbia but has had limited interaction with suburban retrofitting; in the following section, I will explore this relationship.

V. American Evangelicalism and the Built Environment

The story of evangelicalism is intertwined with suburbia. Theologically and practically, American evangelicalism is centered around the suburbs, as I will overview here.

Davison (2013) claims that evangelicalism was instrumental in influencing the elevation of suburbs through their emphasis on virtue and moral segregation from vice, creating the cult of the private Home popularized in the Victorian era. In Anglo-Saxon societies, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, evangelicals led the exodus from city centers and to the suburbs (Davison, 2013). In evangelical theology, cities were often vilified as epicenters of vice and impurity; they are a concrete representation of humanity's fall from grace and into sin (Smith, 2019). As evangelical churches were not tied to specific geographic locations or parishes such as Catholic churches, they followed their congregants to the suburbs during the period of white flight from city centers (Miller, 2017). Evangelical theology's emphasis on spiritual self-fulfillment and betterment over social justice and community meant they had little ties to a specific geographic place, rendering them mobile to follow their congregants (Mulder, 2015).

Protestant values lead to a glorification of the private home over public life (Vanderbeek and Irazabal, 2007); the suburban lifestyle fits well with the view of home life which evangelicals uphold as the ideal, in which men are the spiritual heads of the home, and the wives are their helpers entrusted with the day-to-day management of the home (Davison, 2013). A suburban lifestyle historically meant that men were breadwinners who worked during day, while women stayed at home with the children, each functioning in their own separate sphere; this fit perfectly with the evangelical understanding of home and family.

In the United States, the flight from the negative qualities associated with the city center had another factor: race. The mass exodus of white residents to the suburbs in the mid-twentieth century also meant the mass exodus of white congregations from the city center. Emerson and Smith (2000) argue that in many cases, evangelical churches were active participants in facilitating white flight and racial segregation, due to evangelicalism's inability to address fundamental and structural stratifications. This spatial segregation resulted in de facto segregated churches, in which white evangelicals and black evangelicals were most likely to attend services where the majority of worshippers were the same race as them (Sahgal and Smith, 2009). The consequent insularity is a factor in the differing political and sociological views of white and black protestants; for example, white conservative protestants have

difficulty seeing race or lack of diversity in many churches as a problem (Emerson and Smith, 2000). In line with their individualized views of salvation, white evangelicals are likely to believe that racism is the result of individual prejudice and less likely to see systemic and institutional factors as contributing to racism (Emerson and Smith, 2000).

A third of all white evangelicals live in suburbs, and these suburban evangelicals are among the most devout: 56% of them attend church at least once a week, nearly five points higher than rural evangelicals (Burge, 2019). The fastest growing evangelical churches in the country are located in the suburbs of major metropolitan regions (Wilford, 2012); three in five of them have grown in the past five years compared to three in five churches overall that have shrunk (Roozen, 2015).

Wilford (2012) argues that it is precisely their suburban nature that makes them successful: in the 'religious free market,' evangelical megachurches are able to precisely identify their target audience, aided by the increased socio-economic stratification of suburbia, and to market to them effectively; the post-suburban megachurch is able to reconfigure its local environment in ways that infuse the secular geographies of the suburbs with spiritual significance (Wilcox, 1989).

The prototypical suburban church is a megachurch. Megachurches are defined as a Protestant church with 2,000 or more people in weekly attendance (Thuma, 2010). Their church buildings typically resemble the big-box retail buildings around them, with nondescript features and a sea of parking (Mulder and Jonason, 2017). These large buildings function as a blank canvas for church activities, and can be reconfigured to host events or performances to draw people in (Wilford, 2012). Donald Miller (1999) described the typical evangelical church (referred to here as 'the new paradigm church') as follows:

> The typical new paradigm church meets in a converted warehouse, a rented school auditorium, or a leased space in a shopping mall. These meeting places boast no religious symbols, no stained glass, and no religious statuary. Folding chairs are more common than pews. At the front is a stage, often portable, which is bare except for sound equipment, a simple podium, and sometimes a few plants. People come to

> worship in casual clothes they might wear to the mall or a movie. On a warm day, they might wear shorts and a polo shirt. The clergy are indistinguishable from the audience by dress (pp. 13).

Suburban megachurches use sophisticated marketing strategies to appeal to their largely white, middle-class, suburban consumers, such as high-quality production, contemporary music, and therapeutic and easily applicable sermons on relevant topics such as purpose, satisfaction and community (Wilcox, 1989). Twitchell (2007) argues that in the past half century, much of evangelical Christianity has become commodified, packaged, and marketed like a product, and that religions functions as a market, in which the most relevant churches win.

Due to the spiritualized and individualized nature of American evangelism, in which the focus on personal salvation and personal relationship with God overlooks the tangible realities of the modern world, there is little discussion about the built environment within the faith. As stated above, most sermons are about personal fulfillment and self-growth, rather than the interaction with tangible material realities such as buildings. Compounded with anti-urban sentiment, this results in a largely suburban religious culture, even if a church location is geographically urban. When evangelicals do write or talk about cities, they talk about them as 'mission-fields,' as excellent opportunities for proselytizing due to their critical mass, instead of appreciating them for all of their other unique qualities (Jacobsen, 2003).

Although there are Christian theologians who write about the built environment (Jacobsen, 2003), the average American evangelical is fairly unaware of church history and theology. Evangelical historian Mark Noll (1994) famously wrote, "The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind." In his seminal work, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, he critiques the anti-intellectualism that characterizes much of evangelical Christianity and the lack of knowledge about their own tradition and history. Evangelical Christians have some of the lowest educational attainment out of all other religious groups in the U.S., with less than 20% earning a bachelor's degree on average (Murphy, 2016)

So, we can infer most evangelicals are not reading urban theology and thinking through the implications of their construction projects on the overall urban fabric.

However, this does not mean all evangelicals are anti-intellectual and anti-urban; there are thoughtful evangelical leaders and thinkers who engage with the city. Timothy Keller, a prominent evangelical pastor, is based in New York City and is a prominent advocate for Christian engagement with cities and the greater culture. He wrote *Center Church* (Keller, 2012) about engaging cities thoughtfully from a Christian perspective and seeking their flourishing. Peter Jacobsen (2003), also a pastor, wrote *Sidewalks in the Kingdom*, the most explicit undertaking about the relationship between Christianity and New Urbanism. In it, he details how the values and principles of the New Urbanist movement align with Christian teachings. Despite these small glimmers of an urban renaissance within evangelicalism, for the moment it remains a dominantly suburban movement.

To sum up, Evangelicalism has been a significant cultural force in the United States, especially in the suburbs, where it has flourished. Evangelical churches have employed suburban typologies to their ends effectively along with marketing strategies to attract suburban residents. Despite the way that the configuration of suburbia has served them, most Evangelicals fail to draw a link between the built environment and their faith.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I. Research Approach: Case Study

The research approach for this dissertation is a qualitative case study. The case study seeks to explore a contemporary event within its real-word context, to draw out implications to explain a broader social phenomenon, to illuminate the *how* behind an event (Yin, 2003). Gerring (2004) (proposes the following definition of the case study methodology: "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units (pp. 342)." In the instance of this dissertation, the single unit investigated is the Christian Missionary Alliance denomination, which represents evangelicalism as the larger class of similar units.

This method allowed me to explore in-depth the development project that caught my interest, and to understand the social, religious, and economic motivations associated with it. The case study approach also allowed me to investigate the broader phenomena and trends that the case study is part of and draw out implications. Yin (2003) writes that the more questions one seeks to explain, the more a case study is relevant. In my case, I had multiple questions I was interested in exploring; thus, a case study was the most suitable method for my research.

II. Methods

Preliminary data collection came from secondary data, by reading academic and non-academic literature and media articles to establish the background and context for the case study, to draw wider reflections and implications for planning, and to gather information about the case study itself. This involved looking for any other similar projects or precedents for my case study, news articles and press releases regarding this specific development; this informed my primary data collection and helped me identify potential interviewees and formulate questions for the interviews. This also involved a thorough and critical reading of the City of Reynoldsburg's Comprehensive Plan, which was informative of the planning policies around the site and of the City's vision and motivations.

The bulk of my data was from primary collection in the form of interviews. I interviewed five key figures involved in this development project at the highest levels, including the president of the denomination; three of the interviewees were CMA staff working at its national office on the relocation, one interviewee was a planning official at the City of Reynoldsburg, and one was a planning consultant hired by the denomination. For the sake of anonymity, they are referred to here as Alliance Official 1, 2, and 3, Planner A, and Consultant A.

The interviews were semi-structured and relaxed, allowing a natural conversation and leaving room to follow new threads and insights that arose during the interviews. A semi-structured is conducted with one person at a time, and uses a blend of open and closed questions, that may be accompanied by follow up questions such as *why* or *how* (Adams, 2015). Although I came to each interview with a short list of pre-formulated questions, I often diverged from my questions because of something new that I had learned from the interviewee, gleaning more in-depth insights this way. Each interviewee had a unique perspective and experience to share, thus the questions were not the exact same for each interview.

One site visit was carried out to understand the geographical context of the site and to view if any progress has been carried out in building out the development. This site visit resulted in visual data collection in the form of photographs.

In addition to the interviews and site visits, I had the opportunity to attend a virtual information session led by the president of the denomination, where he gave updates to church members who had expressed interest and support for the project and the vision behind it. This session was very informative and productive, allowing me to see how the leadership was framing and thinking about this project, and helping me to understand more of their motivations.

III. Interpretation of Data

Data analysis consisted of various types of analysis, as I used multiple methods of data collection. The underpinning approach of my analysis is of grounded theory, starting outside of

any specific theory (C. A. Hernandez, 2009). This consisted of an inductive strategy that began with deeply understanding the data itself. Instead of starting with a theory and imposing that upon the data, this approach seeks to understand real-world events and decisions and derive conclusions from them. This approach was useful to this case study due to the large gap in literature and urban theory about this topic.

To analyze the data, the interviews were transcribed and reviewed to cross-corroborate testimonies. Analysis took the form of qualitative coding, using this method to identify trends and patterns in the data. I read each interview closely, taking notes about the content and tone of the interviews, and drawing out implications, as Schmidt (2004) suggests. This was combined with data from secondary sources, such as news articles and planning documents. I used the data itself to inform the structure of the analysis, using themes drawn out from the interviews to organize the findings.

IV. Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of my research is the nature of evangelicalism as a fluid, diverse and ever-shifting movement. Almost everything said of evangelicalism here is to some degree a generalization, as there are always exceptions and outliers to the broader movement. No single evangelical entity can entirely represent the entire scope and breadth of evangelicalism. The Christian Missionary Alliance cannot perfectly represent every single evangelical denomination or church, as it is in some ways an outlier in evangelicalism, although in many other ways it is a very typically evangelical body. Therefore, the implications drawn out here may not be applicable to every single evangelical entity or aspect.

Another limitation is the lack of diversity in the interviewees. Due to the limited time frame for this dissertation, I was able to conduct a very limited number of interviews, so I restricted my interviews to figures involved in the project at the highest levels; all were white men in positions of authority. I was not able to interview community members or a larger variety of staff members due to time constraints, therefore the data reflects only a specific type of life experience.

Another limitation of the data collected is the short timeframe of this dissertation. The data collected is all that is available at the time of writing this dissertation; the length of the construction project is much longer than the duration of this dissertation, therefore it is not possible to follow the construction throughout its progress. As of the time of writing, construction has not started on this development, so all I was able to investigate were the motivations, vision, and plans driving the development. There were not tangible buildings to see and experience, little impact on the built environment so far, and the full scope of the impact of this development on the community is impossible to measure at this stage.

V. Ethical Considerations

Generally, there is little ethical risk involved in this case study. The interviewees were not part of a vulnerable or at-risk group and consisted of religious and government officials acting in a formal capacity. The research did not involve human subjects as participants.

To ensure that my research follows ethical guidelines, I implemented the following ethical methods. Firstly, I gained informed consent from all persons who may be a part of my case, by informing them of the nature of my research and the background information associated with my study. Consent was solicited for any recordings taken during interviews and any quotations used within the dissertation. Interviewees have their identities protected in the dissertation and are not named. In consideration of the global COVID pandemic, reasonable protections were taken to decrease any risk of transmission of the disease, meaning that all interviews occurred remotely through an online platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Interviews were conducted privately, in a private room away from other people through a secure encrypted platform.

There are some ethical considerations regarding the general topic of the dissertation. As the topic is about a specific religious group that plays a key, but often contentious, role in society and culture, I took precautions to be objective and impartial. This means representing people and their words honestly, in the correct context, and avoiding stereotyping and any type of offensive or derogatory terms.

I must disclose that I come from an Evangelical background, so I have ingrained assumptions and experiences that may influenced my investigation. I was required to challenge my assumptions and be reflexive of any bias I may bring to the dissertation. I refrained from voicing any personal opinions or interpretations and relied on the data itself to guide my analysis. In interviews, I refrained from disclosing my religious affiliation and background to the interviewees to prevent influencing their responses.

Chapter 4: Results

I. Description of the Case

"Evangelical Christian denomination behind proposed $200 million development in Columbus suburb," was the title of the article that spurred this dissertation (Warren, 2021). The denomination behind this project is the Christian Missionary Alliance, henceforth referred to as The Alliance, in accordance with the interviewees' preferences. As a rare example of an Evangelical Christian denomination partaking in a suburban retrofitting project, this development serves as the case study for this dissertation for the purpose of exploring the motivations and relational dynamics involved in the project, for both the religious leaders and the planning practitioners.

The Alliance had acquired a site in Reynoldsburg, Ohio for the purpose of relocating its national headquarters from its current location in Colorado Springs, and planned to serve as the master developer for the project (Warren, 2021). The site sits at the corner of Brice Road and East Main Street, a busy intersection, and was formerly the location of a big-box Kmart, which has been demolished by the CMA already (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: The Site before development (author's own, 2021)

The vision for the development, titled Alliance Place, is a mixed-use development containing office buildings, a conference center, a hotel, retail, and some apartments. As of spring 2022, the Alliance had acquired most of the site and was in the process of negotiating the sale of the final parcel of land. There had been several iterations of the master plan, but it was constantly changing and had not been finalized yet.

Some common themes emerged throughout the discussions with the stakeholders involved in the project, which are used to organize the following sections: the motivations driving the Alliance to undertake this development, the motivations driving the City of Reynoldsburg to work with an Evangelical Christian group, the convergence of these motivations in reaching an agreement, the emerging masterplan, the relationship between the Alliance and the wider community, and the working dynamics between the Alliance and the City of Reynoldsburg. All these themes will be interrogated critically, informed by the literature review undertaken earlier.

II. The Alliance: Seeking Greater Engagement with the Wider Culture

The Christian Missionary Alliance was founded in the United States in 1881 and now consists of two thousand churches in the US, and many other churches internationally (Christian Missionary Alliance, 2002). The American branch of the denomination includes almost 500,000 members (The Christian Missionary Alliance, 2021). From its founding, the Alliance has been very evangelism focused, sending missionaries overseas and focusing on outreach to marginalized groups in the U.S; today, they support 8,000 missionaries in 80 countries (Christian Missionary Alliance, 2002). The U.S. headquarters is not only the headquarters for their American churches, but for Christian Missionary Alliance churches all over the world. Although previously located in Colorado Springs in a typical suburban business park, after internal reflection on the way they were officing, the leadership decided to change the way their headquarters operated.

In interviewing the Alliance officials leading the project, the same set of motivations were mentioned as the reasons for relocating their headquarters. Firstly, the leadership wanted to be more engaged with the wider community. The president of the denomination explained,

> Here we are, an organization that oversees community engagement kind of work all over the world. Yet our staff, as we came to the office, for decades, wasn't engaging with the community, by virtue of buying a building in a business park and putting our staff inside and locking the door 40 hours a week. And one of my leadership principles is *who are we becoming* by what we're repeatedly doing? If any individual or organization does the same things over and over and over again, it shapes who we are over the course of time . So asking, who are we becoming over the course of time, by never engaging with the broader community? Well, we were becoming isolated and insular (personal communication, May 20, 2022).

This suggests that the standard suburban typology of an isolated building surrounded by a sea of parking, which was the typology for most evangelical organizations, was no longer working for their purposes; he implied that this typology had resulted in the Alliance, and evangelicals in general, becoming disengaged from the wider community. "…We have just been content to build our own buildings and isolate ourselves," he said, but at a leadership retreat they decided that they "were not content being isolated from the community" (personal communication, May 20, 2022). He said that he didn't know any evangelical organization that offices any differently than they did, echoing scholars critiques of Evangelical churches as inward-facing suburban buildings surrounded by parking (Wilford, 2012; Mulder and Jonason, 2017). Although this typology had been successful in targeting and attracting suburban residents to a religious product (Twitchell, 2007; Wilford, 2012), the Alliance officials interviewed felt that this typology was not conducive to genuine interactions and to encountering those who were not part of their sphere of influence.

Secondly, the denomination wanted to be in a place with greater racial diversity to better reflect the membership of their denomination. They recognized that their national office staff hasn't always reflected the diversity of the wider denomination, and that it was tricky

sometimes to hire that diversity in Colorado Springs, according to Alliance Official 2 in an informative presentation to some church members. Although figures about the demographics of the denomination nationally were not available online, interviews with the Alliance officials suggested that there were many ethnic churches within the denomination, and information online said that over thirty-eight different languages were spoken throughout Alliance churches (The Christian Missionary Alliance, 2021). Colorado Springs is seventy-seven percent white, which is an overwhelming majority, limiting the potential to engage with other population groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). This points to the wider issues that evangelicals have with diversity; for many churches and denominations, their present locations in majority white areas have been the result of white flight in the mid-twentieth century (Emerson and Smith, 2000). Although the Alliance contains diversity within its denomination, its leadership is disproportionally white; every official I interviewed was a white male. However, they were reflective and aware of this issue, and this was a key factor in the relocation.

Thirdly and fourthly, the leadership wanted to be in a location with greater geographical proximity to its congregations and with a lower cost of living. Colorado Springs was not very close to most of the Alliance churches, and had a very small airport with limited flights, meaning it was hard for church members, especially international members, to travel to the headquarters. In addition, Colorado is one of the most expensive states to buy a house, so the Alliance was having a hard time paying their young staff enough to afford to live in Colorado Springs.

These motivations developed a list of criteria to guide their site selection for a new headquarters: a Top 100 airport, greater racial diversity, lower cost of living, and greater geographical proximity to their congregations. This set of criteria developed a list of seventeen potential cities across the United States and was then further narrowed down to three cities: Cleveland, Columbus, and Indianapolis. The site selection process consisted of over ninety different site visits concentrated in four trips, and ultimately the leadership settled on the site in Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

III. Reynoldsburg: Metropolitan Competition as an Incentive for Suburban Retrofitting

Reynoldsburg, Ohio is a suburb east of the capital of Ohio, Columbus (Fig. 2), with a population of about 41,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). Reynoldsburg is a working class area, with a median income of about $65,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). It is ethnically and racially diverse, with 41% of the residents nonwhite, and with large pockets of immigrant communities, such as Ethiopian and Nepali-Bhutanese (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). The City of Reynoldsburg has grown by 14% in the past decade, reflecting a larger trend across the metropolitan area of Columbus, which is one of the fastest growing regions in the country (Bush and Ferenchik, 2020). The greater Columbus region is expected to grow by one million people by 2050, with the growth in the suburbs outpacing that of the center city (Frank-Collins, 2021).This extraordinary growth sets the stage for competition among the various municipalities of the region against each other, for new residents and new investment; in a globalized neo-liberal age, cities are pitted against each other in a zero-sum game for investment and resources (Rondinelli, Johnson and Kasarda, 1998). Reynoldsburg typically does not warrant mention in rankings of best suburbs or neighborhoods in Columbus, eclipsed by wealthier and more prosperous suburbs such as Dublin, Upper Arlington, and New Albany (Scott, 2020; Columbus Underground, 2021; Guyton, 2022).

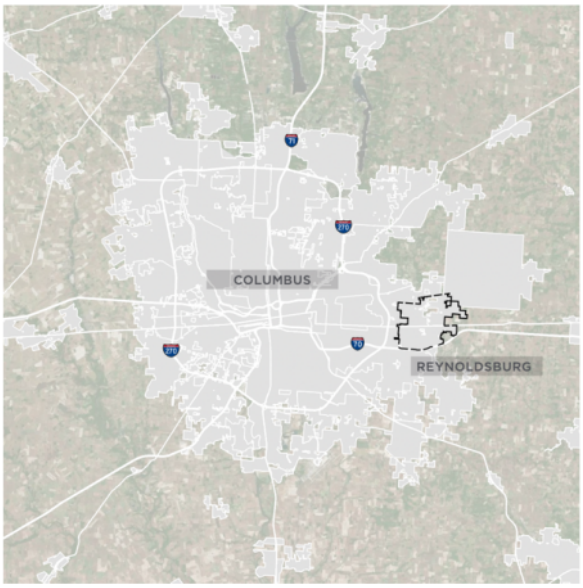

Fig. 2: Map of Reynoldsburg and the Columbus Metropolitan Region (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018)

Reynoldsburg is a typically suburban area, characterized by single-family homes, big-box retail, low-density, and car-orientated infrastructure. 83% of people drive alone to work, and the average household owns two cars (Deloitte, 2021). In an initiative called LinkUS, the mid-Ohio region is planning for higher-capacity transit in the form of Bus Rapid Transit along five corridors throughout Columbus, one of them being the Main Street Corridor, which runs next to the Alliance site (LinkUS, 2022). Reynoldsburg hopes to capitalize on the faster public transportation links to downtown Columbus and is trying to encourage Transit-Orientated Development around the site (Warren, 2019).

In 2018, the City of Reynoldsburg undertook the first revision of its zoning code in fifty years, and released the first Comprehensive Plan for the City, in conjunction with the planning consultancy that Consultant A works for (Gerfen, 2021).The rezoning process simplified the zoning code from a multitude of very specific zones to just nine general zones, such as High-Density Mixed Use, Community Commercial and Suburban Residential (Fig. 3). Consultant A cited “new urbanism, form-based code stuff” as a precedent (personal communication, May 24, 2022), establishing that New Urbanism was a starting point for the Comprehensive Plan.

The subsequent plan goals, informed by public engagement, rated promoting diverse housing options as the top priority for the City, followed by diversifying land-uses to create economic resiliency and promote distinct character (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018). The Plan cited that a majority of Ohioans expressed desire to live in a walkable neighborhood, and identified major commercial corridors, such as Brice Road and East Main Street, as the best opportunities for developing new residential districts (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018). However, despite the language around improving walkability and densifying throughout the plan, the City overwhelmingly remains zoned for Suburban Residential, which “…should largely consist of single-family homes situated on medium-sized lots” (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 37). Walkability is discussed as ensuring each street has well-kept sidewalks and street trees, rather than ensuring daily amenities are within a walkable distance, as urbanists would define it (Dovey and Pafka, 2020).

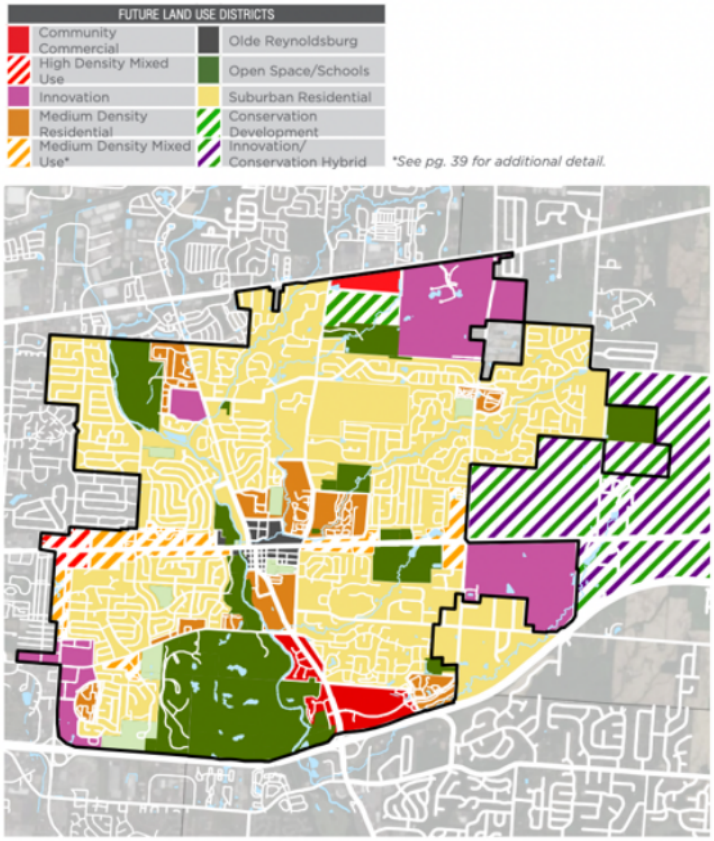

Fig. 3: City of Reynoldsburg Future Land Use Map (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 36)

The Comprehensive Plan frequently mentions other towns in the region, drawing comparisons between the best-performing towns and Reynoldsburg. It often references case studies of other successful developments or policies across the region, suggesting a competition across the region for attracting growth, and a desire to imitate the most successful areas. Suburbs across the central Ohio region are densifying and incorporating mixed-use principles into new development in order to attract retirees and young professionals, acknowledging that these demographics may not desire or be in a position to own a single-family home, and that consumer preferences have changed to desire 'experiences' (Sweeney and Hanlon, 2016). Many of these suburbs have developed new 'urban neighborhoods; or 'lifestyle centers' that incorporate New Urbanism principles such as mixed-uses or walkability; however, they remain isolated from the urban fabric and replete with global chains; Gillem

(2009) critiques these types of developments as 'hyperreal manifestations of the American main street.' Some examples repeatedly referenced in the Reynoldsburg Comprehensive Plan are Easton Town Center (Fig. 4), a very successful 'lifestyle center' modeled on a traditional historic town, and Bridge Park (Fig. 5), an 'urban destination,' both in wealthy suburbs of Columbus.

Fig. 4: Easton Town Center (Weiker, 2021)

Fig. 5: Bridge Park, Dublin (Bridge Park, 2020)

The Comprehensive Plan identified vacant buildings, like the vacant Kmart that was previously on the site, as an issue, along with an ill-defined City identity and lack of a strong town center (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018). In a survey conducted by the City, over half of residents surveyed said that the City should focus on redeveloping existing properties as its first or second priority, suggesting that residents wanted a fresh vision for old spaces (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018).

The Comprehensive Plan recognized that the site in question, the former Kmart, was 'unlikely to return to its original use as a big-box retail site,' and that 'successful big-box stores in Central Ohio now locate in clusters, such as Polaris and Easton' (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 28). One of the key recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan is to "Transform obsolete commercial areas into vibrant residential and commercial destinations," recognizing that "Reynoldsburg has a retail footprint that is largely auto-oriented and does not fit the needs of a 21st century economy" (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 35; City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 28). The Plan understands that modern day consumers are seeking an 'experience' when shopping, and that successful retail centers must provide an 'experience' to be successful, as consumers can fulfill their necessities through online shopping.

The Comprehensive Plan and the City of Reynoldsburg's actions paint a story of a city falling behind, of a city stuck in the post-war suburban typology with outdated housing and retail stock. This outdated typology is now hindering Reynoldsburg in attracting investment and meeting the needs and desires of its residents; consequently, Reynoldsburg is underperforming regionally. The frequent references to other suburbs in the region suggest an innate competitiveness and a desire to emulate these more successful places and be seen as their equal.

A section of the Comprehensive Plan is dedicated to 'branding.' The Plan explicitly states, "The City of Reynoldsburg is competing against communities across Central Ohio, each of whom are actively shaping their own identity in a unique way" and thus must create its own unique and distinct identity to be competitive (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 78). City branding is increasingly used as a marketing tool to position cities in the competitive arena for

finite sources whether investment, visitors or residents, on both global and regional scales (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2007). Ironically, the Plan points to other communities in the region as examples to emulate in creating a 'unique' brand. It recommends incorporating aspects into development such as 'walkability' and 'mixed-use,' principles ultimately drawn from the New Urbanist movement.

Consultant A, who was hired to help with the Comprehensive Plan, made this explicitly clear when he said,

> These kind of first / second ring, suburban communities that have these these deteriorating and obsolete commercial centers, right, the dollar generals of the world, the Kmart of the world, the strip malls, they don't work anymore. And so it's essentially repositioning those places to be successful in the market (personal communication, May 24, 2022).

He implied that the classic suburban typology isn't successful in the market anymore, and it is competition that is driving the City of Reynoldsburg to incorporate some new typologies.

Despite all the references to the principles of the New Urbanism movement, fundamentally, however, the Comprehensive Plan does not envision the radical reframing of the city in line with New Urbanist principles; the reality of suburban life stays the same. Most people remain in single-family homes and drive everywhere they need to go. Non-residential uses largely remain segregated from residential, and the city retains low-density land-use. The Mobility section of the Comprehensive Plan contains nothing about reducing car-use or improving public transportation, although it does make some provision for improving cycling conditions along streets (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018). Most of the ways in which New Urbanist principles are recommended application are aesthetic. Teaford (1997) demonstrates how even as suburbs may change in typology, their residents retain preference for the homogeneity of suburban life and anti-urban bias. Creating a 'mixed-use' lifestyle and destination center satisfies suburbanites' desire for some aspects of urban life, without challenging the pattern of single-family sprawl. The key desire implied in the Comprehensive Plan is to make Reynoldsburg

into a destination, modeled after successful developments in the metropolitan region; the site relevant to this case study is seen as the key to achieving this ambition.

IV. When Evangelicals and Planners Meet: Two Converging Stories

The Reynoldsburg Comprehensive Plan 2018 went so far as to identify the former Kmart site as a Focus Area and to propose a mock redevelopment concept for the site (Fig. 6). The vision is to "transform (the site) into dynamic entryway into the city" (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 92). The proposal envisions a dense and mixed-use development, featuring buildings as tall as seven stories in some parts (Fig. 5) (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 92). The site is located at the intersection where the future station of the planned BRT will be, connecting Reynoldsburg with downtown Columbus. Consultant A acknowledged that the site will be a strategic location for the BRT, saying that the goal was to implement transit-oriented development on the site.

Fig. 6 Redevelopment concept for the Site by the City of Reynoldsburg (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018)

The site had been sitting vacant and neglected for years, and had attracted some negative activity, such as drug trafficking and overnight stays by long-haul truckers. There had

been little interest in the site from developers, apart from a fast-food chain who wanted to build a restaurant on the corner and a storage company who wanted to fill the empty big box structure with storage units. The City's planning team did not want these types of uses on this site at one of the city's main intersections, thus prohibited these types of uses on the site in the rezoning process.

The site was rezoned specifically to be mixed-use and denser. In the rezoning process, it was designated as 'High-Density Mixed Use,' the only site in Reynoldsburg to be zoned as such. The Comprehensive Plan sets out the requirements for this zone: "Future development in High-Density Mixed-Use Districts should be four to five stories with high-quality architecture, minimal setbacks, and pedestrian-friendly site design. Building facades and entrances should be oriented to the street with parking accessible from the rear or side of the building" (City of Reynoldsburg, 2018, pp. 40). The Plan defines high-density as fifteen to fifty residential units per acre.

Although there were multiple organizations who had viewed the property and expressed interest, they had all passed on the site for various reasons. There was little success in attracting the right type of development to the site until the Alliance came along. When the Alliance's interest in the site became known, the City of Reynoldsburg endeavored to secure the sale of the site with vociferous energy.

When the Alliance first visited the site, the City's former development director, who had led the rezoning and plan-making process, was there to meet them. This had a great impact on the Alliance relocation committee and was one of the factors in choosing this specific site. Alliance Official 1 told me they had visited ninety sites, and the city only showed up three out of the ninety visits. Alliance Official 2 said, "Their head of economic development was so forward thinking and really helped seal the deal for the city," and if he hadn't been there, "I don't think we would've chosen Reynoldsburg because Reynoldsburg was not like cool looking" (personal communication, May 12, 2022).

At that initial meeting, the development director at the time presented the mock proposal for the site and inspired the Alliance leadership with the possibility of what the site could be. "It was hard to conceive of that Kmart turning into anything, you know, but they had

a vision already mapped out, they had already done round of work, brainstorming with architects and developers of like, here's what this could look like for you," said Alliance Official 2 (personal communication, May 12, 2022).

The Alliance wasn't originally planning on doing anything so ambitious; originally, they were thinking along the lines of taking an existing office building and opening the ground floor to the public. But, as every Alliance official interviewed testified, the City of Reynoldsburg was instrumental to dreaming bigger and to imagining what the site could potentially become, and in convincing the leadership to pursue this project. The site was already zoned and primed to become something more ambitious than the Alliance had planned. Alliance Official 2 stated, "I think the city having a really big dream was super helpful for us. I think if they would have had a very small dream, we would have pushed them the other direction, it's easier to rein back in the energy, If the dream is there" (personal communication, May 12, 2022). Without the city having an ambitious vision, nothing ambitious would've happened on the site.

Alliance Official 1 explained, "Here's where it became kind of a hand and glove relationship. They already had the glove, the structure, we've already zoned this… what we need a living hand to come in here and build this and operate this" (personal communication, May 20, 2022). The zoning requirements on the site were fundamental to facilitating the type of development that the City wanted to see, but the City needed to secure the right partner for the project.

The initiative shown by the City of Reynoldsburg in envisioning a possible masterplan and then meeting with the Alliance on their visit to pitch the vision was what sealed the sale of the property and the Alliance's commitment to the vision. The initiative shown by the City's development director going above and beyond to court the Alliance to buy in to the vision, shows that he was very eager for this project to go forward and to find any partner willing to do this. As the site had been standing empty for years with little activity but was key to the City's plan to become a destination, he was keen to sell it and had limited options, even willing to work with an unconventional partner such as an Evangelical Christian denomination. "It's a fascinating example of proactivity and planning to rescue a city from its lowest common denominators," Alliance Official 1 praised (personal communication, May 20, 2022). In a

competitive urban age, urban managers must be entrepreneurial if their cities are to compete successfully (van den Berg and Braun, 1999); the City of Reynoldsburg's development director showed great entrepreneurship in bringing the Alliance in as a partner and convincing them to align with his vision for the development, a vision they took forward in developing the masterplan.

V. Alliance Place: An Analysis of the Emerging Masterplan

Fig. 7: The Christian Missionary Alliance's latest masterplan for Alliance Place (Christian Missionary Alliance, 2022)

The Christian Missionary Alliance kindly shared with me the latest iteration of their master plan (Fig. 7). The emerging masterplan consists of a multi-use event center and office at the center of the development, surrounded by a small hotel, parking garage, restaurants, and some residences. The keystone building will contain the event center, breakout and meeting rooms, a large atrium with a coffee shop, offices for Alliance staff, the denomination's archives, and some retail spaces in front.

The masterplan is being developed by the same architecture consulting firm who had been contracted by the City in developing the Comprehensive Plan and reforming the zoning

code and had helped create the initial mock concept for the site. Consultant A, who was interviewed, had collaborated with the City of Reynoldsburg frequently and brought continuity to the project. Consultant A listed the following design principles for the masterplan: outward-focused, sustainable and mixed-use.

As community engagement is one of the Alliance's primary principles and motivations, the design aims to be welcoming to the public. Most of the buildings in the new development will not be solely for the CMA's use but will be open to the public. A phrase that came up in every single interview was 'the city's living room': the desire was to make the project an accessible and welcome public gathering space. To that end, the centerpiece of the project, the event center/office building is intended to flow between the interior and the exterior, with a public plaza outside and a large coffee shop and atrium inside.

However, the Alliance did not initially set out to develop a mixed-use property. "To clarify, (we) didn't start out by saying we need a mixed-use facility. We started out saying we need to engage the community. And we realized very soon, this is the best way to do it," said Alliance Official 1. This realization came about due to the guidance and suggestion of the City of Reynoldsburg planning department.

Another important value for the Alliance was for the site to be 'sustainable.' Alliance Official 1 named 'creation care' as an important value for the church, and recognized that, "For us as evangelical Christians who have not always done well at leading the way on things that have to do with environmental sensitivity, we felt we could do better, at how we office and how that impacts the planet. So, we hope that this will be a LEED rated building" (personal communication, May 20, 2022). Although LEED certification is awarded to buildings that achieve certain sustainable benchmarks, there is disagreement on whether LEED buildings are in fact more energy efficient (Amiri, Ottelin and Sorvari, 2019; Greer *et al.*, 2019). The certification has been criticized for being a form of 'greenwashing' and a marketing ploy (Bowen and Aragon-Correa, 2014; Matisoff, Noonan and Mazzolini, 2014). Although the Alliance leaders acknowledged the past failures of Evangelicalism in relation to climate change action, and expressed genuine concern for the environment, their approach to environmental

sustainability relied on the highly visible and obvious method of LEED certification, without considering other metrics and actions, such as decreasing car use.

The term "mixed-use" was mentioned very frequently by interviewees as the leading design principle for the site. Alliance's project manager for the project, Alliance Official 3, used 'mixed-use' about fifteen times in the span of twenty minutes, even to describe things that weren't specifically mixed-use, such as building aesthetics and materials. It became clear that the term 'mixed-use' was being used as a metonymy for all the design principles associated with New Urbanism and was a way for the Alliance officials to distinguish their project as different from the typical development.

Although the project being mixed-use was constantly mentioned and reinforced, in reality, only the central building is truly mixed-use. The rest of the site, although containing different uses within it, maintains segregation of uses. Restaurants are on one side of the site, and residences are on another. Mixed-use itself was heralded as the goal, with interviewees saying that the mixed-use vision for the site was being embraced, by which they meant that there would be various uses on the site, such as the event center, retail, and residential. The interviewees did not go further than this to discuss what the implications of mixed uses were. As Grant (2002) writes, 'mixed-use' has become an oft-repeated mantra in contemporary planning, with few questioning its premises or clarifying its meaning.

The masterplan is notably less dense than the initial concept put together by the City of Reynoldsburg, with much more surface area dedicated to parking and lower heights overall. The mock proposal envisioned heights of up to seven floors high, but the tallest building in the Alliance proposal is only four floors high. Each building is surrounded by parking spaces, with streets separating the different parts of the site. Although 'walkability' is in theory a guiding principle for the site, from looking at the plan, the automobile appears to take precedence.

One of the largest structures on the site is the parking garage, which would contain about three hundred and fifty parking spaces. Consultant A said he had "…push pretty hard on the parking discussion… we gotta build a parking structure here or its going to be a giant surface parking lot" (personal communication, May 24, 2022). City of Reynoldsburg Planner A echoed these remarks and said, "… the only way the site works is if you have a dense site where

you have a structured parking, otherwise, you'd be replacing a sea of parking with a sea of parking" (personal communication, May 3, 2022). Implicit in this conversation is the fact that large amounts of parking spaces are still needed. The fact that a giant parking garage is necessary to make this development possible shows that this project is not changing the status quo in suburban Reynoldsburg. Although the site is in principle 'mixed-use' and 'dense,' it is ultimately car-orientated. There was no mention by any of the interviewees about attempting to reduce car dependency in Reynoldsburg. Driving will be how everyone visits the site, and it will be a 'destination' rather than a lifestyle for people.

The practicing planners interviewed, Planner A and Consultant A, both frequently brought up the projected public transportation improvements next to the site in the form of a BRT corridor. Consultant A described the project as 'Transit-Orientated Development,' saying that it is being design in a way to facilitate a transit hub on the BRT. Planner A also talked about how Reynoldsburg would benefit from faster transit connections to the regional city center of Columbus, and how this site would serve the bus station. However, none of the Alliance Officials brought up public transportation and BRT, except for one as an afterthought at the end of the interview. Alliance Official 3 said that they're 'BRT friendly,' but said the slated BRT was not a consideration in why they picked this site. The differing attitudes towards public transportation were an illustration of the different approaches that the religious leaders and built environment professionals were taking towards the design. This also shows that for the Alliance officials, public transportation was not an objective or a consideration in any way, undermining the concept of the project as Transit-Orientated Development.

From the interviews, it was clear that for the religious leaders, the design was not shaped by prior knowledge or understanding of New Urbanist principles or theological principles. Although there are writings about how Christian teachings align with New Urbanist principles (Jacobsen, 2003), the Alliance leadership was not driven by this kind of theological understanding of the typology. Alliance Official 1 admitted, "I'm embarrassed to say, I haven't read a single article, I haven't seen a single case study, I have done zero academic work" (personal communication, May 20, 2022). Alliance Official 3 echoed this statement and said, "We've done very little in terms of looking at other places" (personal communication, May 20,

2022). In the design and master planning process, the Alliance relied on their architect and consultant to produce designs, which the Alliance officials then provided feedback on.

The masterplan was shaped mainly by market-led principles. Consultant A, who is the lead architect developing the masterplan, revealed that "…a lot of the work that we do is really embracing the market and letting the market kind of do what it wants to do to shape place, but doing it in a way that we have certain controls and parameters that are going to create great places" (personal communication, May 24, 2022).

Alliance Official 3 explained that their design concept was informed by market studies. They had hired a consultant to conduct some market studies to understand what was needed on the site, and they saw a strong demand for housing and restaurants. Speaking about the market consultant, he said: "He has really helped us confirm the validity from just a business demand perspective that what we're doing can be successful, and now and now we've got to design it in a way…. we've used him to speak into our design, for example, the location of the what's called inline retail" (personal communication, May 20, 2022).

Alliance Official 1 said that one of the primary reasons for pursuing a mixed-use development was to:

> ….Give the financial sustainability for the whole, by land leases for restaurants, by rental from apartments, by the lease rates from the retail. Because one of my goals is to take all the building costs, the maintenance and ongoing operations costs of our office, out of the budget that has to be paid for by donors, because we're 100% donor supported… So in that sense, technically, we're trying to turn a profit, but it's not for individual benefit. It's for greater missional advance (personal communication, May 20, 2022).

In being the landowner and the developer and leasing out the amenities on the property, the Alliance is counting on that income to be enough for the operation of its national office. Profitability was an important objective of the development; it had to be financially viable for the Alliance.

In short, the masterplan falls short of New Urbanist ideals proclaimed by the planners and the Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, the Evangelical leaders seemed largely ignorant of

most built environment principles, relying largely on the guidance of the planning practitioners to shape the design. The design was shaped by other, more pragmatic, forces: a genuine desire for more community engagement by the Alliance, an inspiring vision for the site and mixed-use zoning requirements by the City of Reynoldsburg, and a desire to be financially solvent by the Alliance leaders. The Alliance leadership had proved themselves to have a shrewd understanding of market-dynamics, which were largely driving the masterplan. They grasped the changing dynamic of consumer preferences towards more mixed-use, urban experiences and the profitability of developing such a place.

VI. Community Satisfaction Secured through Public Benefit

Seeing as community engagement was one of the primary principles behind this project for the Alliance, building good relations with the local community in Reynoldsburg is key. In interviews, each Alliance Official was very vocal about their desire to meaningfully engage with and serve the community. "I guess the key piece is the starting point is not just like, what do we think would be cool, but what does the city want and need?" said Alliance Official 2 (personal communication, May 12, 2021). Through focus groups and conversations with the community, they were attempting to gauge how they could best serve the community through this project.

The Alliance's community engagement efforts included volunteering at community organizations, hiring locally, and conducting focus groups. Since arriving in Columbus, they had hired forty new staff members from the local community, twenty-two being non-white. In addition, The Alliance conducted focus groups with local stakeholders to hear about their hopes and fears about the development and incorporated some of the insight into the design. Alliance Official 2 cited every focus group as expressing the desire for a coffee shop or other type of 'third space' to socialize, thus they are incorporating a large coffee house into the development.

The Alliance officials did not give off the impression of trying to use this project and a mixed-use typology to try to attract people for the sake of converting them, according to their own words and to the non-religious interviewees. Alliance Official 3 explained that a big part of this project is "…just so that we can serve the community, not necessarily so that those people

show up and become members of our church" (personal communication, May 20, 2022). In contrast to Wilcox (1989) who posits that suburban churches are well-honed, sophisticated marketed strategies to attract middle-class, suburban religious consumers and compete in the religious market, the CMA did not appear to be using this project to market themselves and expand their denominational base.

The secular people involved with the development also supported this statement. Planner A said, "Never once has (Alliance Official 3) who's running this for Alliance, never once has he, you know, proselytized to me, asked me about my religious views or anything like that. He's an extremely sweet, very nice guy, as they all are. But, you know, they're more on the like, how can we help how can we you know, have people just chat and connect, which is different than you know, a lot of other religious organizations I've met with or worked with," who he felt were much more focused on declaring their beliefs (personal communication, May 3, 2022).

The Alliance officials acknowledged that being evangelical Christians, some people might have negative perceptions of or associations with evangelicalism. He said some people in the community "…really thought we were going to be bigots that came in and really tried to restrict people's rights and that kind of stuff. And so, we did have some resistance early, like in social media and stuff" (personal communication, May 12, 2022). However, he said that the negative feedback has since faded away, and there's been a lot of positive attention from the community about the new development.

From the City's perspective, planner A said, "So the community is excited just to see investment and new things…people are excited if they could get, you know, a new restaurant and new spaces and a coffee shop and things like that. And then all the other stuff is kind of a bonus" (personal communication, May 3, 2022). In a community that has been left behind in some ways and is not considered a 'cool' destination or place to live, with many outdated properties, any new development is welcomed, no matter who is behind the development. In community focus groups, Alliance Official 2 said that he heard, "most of the time that people just say, the worst thing you could do is nothing. Because even if it's like conservative Christians, it's still going to be better than running drugs off that property" (personal communication, May 12, 2022).

Alliance Official 2 acknowledged the danger of gentrification, and said that “In general, you'd never want to just gentrify a community, hoping that you're making it better.” Although the project isn’t displacing anyone directly, since it is vacant, there is a danger of making the place feel inaccessible and inflating house values in the area. He said to mitigate gentrification, they were concentrating on making the place feel accessible to lower and middle lower income folks. “it's very intentional, even who we partner with in terms of restaurants, how we brand the thing and how it feels on the ground,” he said. In addition, the project would provide some affordable housing, although a relatively low amount.

Overall, the Alliance leadership expressed a genuine desire to engage the local community and were employing the mixed-use typology for this purpose. Although there was some initial skepticism about an Evangelical denomination acting as a developer, the resistance has faded away as the public became of the new amenities that would appear at Alliance Place. Ultimately, the community valued new amenities and investment over political and religious alignment with the developers, a stance shared by the officials of the City of Reynoldsburg.

VII. Collaboration Driven by Congruent Objectives

For the City of Reynoldsburg, it was a political risk to collaborate with an evangelical group, showing that the need and desire to develop the site outweighed the risk of associating with a politically unfavorable group. For the wider Reynoldsburg community, as well, it seems as though the desire for new development and new amenities outweighed the negative associations with evangelicals. This may have to do with the Alliance’s more subtle approach to faith which made it easier to overlook the religious association. Planner A said, “I think that's probably has something to do with the fact that the alliance isn't, you know, going around, at least to my knowledge, like don't try and knock on everybody's door and asking them to, you know, convert or things like that. I think that's why there's a lot of community interest, but not as much on maybe the religious aspects” (personal communication, May 3, 2022).

Alliance Official 2 acknowledged “It was a risk for them (the City) to work with a Christian group like us… it's a risk because on the front end for them, that they were gonna get labeled as like, this narrow conservative, because it's a Democratic mayor, you know, and we

acknowledge, I was like, You guys sure you want to do this? Because we know we're evangelical Christian organization. Like, we know what that means in our society right now. And they're like, No, we can do it" (personal communication, May 12, 2022). The City of Reynoldsburg, although led by Democratic leadership was willing to set aside politics to work with a more conservative group. A factor leading to collaboration may be that Ohio is a politically mixed state, a "purple state" that is neither decisively Republican or Democrat, meaning Ohio residents are used to having differing political views from their neighbors. However, this may not be the case in other parts of the country where the negative perception of evangelicals would negate any possibility of working with them, and where there are other developer options.

The Alliance had developed a mixed-use project before, a building in Salem, Oregon, that contained public space on the ground floor. The City of Salem, faced with blight in the area and little developer interest in the site in question, eagerly worked with the Salem Alliance church to facilitate development on that site. However, in the years since, the development had received a lot of negative social media attention, according to Alliance Official 3, due to the Church's conservative stance on sexuality.

As an attempt to mitigate this, the Alliance had decided to limit some religious activities on the site, such as weddings and worship services. Because the religious activities on the site will mostly be administrative, as this will be the national headquarters, rather than worship-related, that makes the site less explicitly religious and may alleviate some concerns of collaborating with a religious group. Alliance Official 2 said, "…because this isn't technically a church, and we're okay with whoever coming in and off the property and not being really tightly controlled, it's a little bit easier for the city to stomach" (personal communication, May 12, 2022).

Both the religious and non-religious officials involved described a mutually friendly working relationship, meeting each other regularly and engaging in open dialogue. The City and the Alliance meet every few weeks, and the City provides feedback on the emerging masterplan. Planner A explained that the City has indirect power to influence the masterplan by offering some funding to make this a public-private partnership. The City is eager to see this

development happen, and so had already helped the Alliance secure a grant from Jobs Ohio, the state's economic development board to help with the demolishment of the vacant Kmart building. Alliance Official 2 said, "They've removed a lot of roadblocks from for us. I think they're so open to what we're doing." Planner A said, "I'm very open about here are the resources we have here, the resources we don't have, I literally will hand them, you know, we've done financial analysis, I literally printed it out and handed it to them in the meeting."

Of course, the City of Reynoldsburg is not removing roadblocks to simply be charitable to the Alliance, but for their own ends. Both the City and the Alliance acknowledged that although they were pursuing this project for different motivations, they had the same goals, which is what drove the positive relationship and collaboration. Alliance Official 2 said, "The City has said, look, the reasons that we're doing, the things that we're doing, might start from a different place. In other words, your starting point is a Christian understanding of the world and Jesus's heart for people, they haven't articulated like this, but they've been able to say, our starting points may be different, but our outcomes are the same" (personal communication, May 12, 2022).

Reynoldsburg officials wanted to see the site developed and to attract more investment to the city. Planner A said, "I want density, I want this to be good for the city. It's a good, it's a good catalyst for redevelopment. So this will help activate this whole corridor will be great" (personal communication, May 3, 2022). He acknowledged that the Alliance had religious motivations behind the development but was not bothered by that association if the project was a net benefit to the City. He said, "If everybody gets something out of it, that helps them that's legitimately a win for everyone, because you know, They're not doing this just to be altruistic. They want to have a good headquarters, they want to have a steady stream of income to help pay for their operations. I'm sure they want to have people come in and learn more about the Alliance and join their mission, which is all fine. But and I want to you know, have this area redeveloped have other redevelopments come off of it, and I want their income tax. Well, all of our incentives are aligned. And so if we succeed, we'll both succeed" (personal communication, May 3, 2022).

To sum up, the differing incentives that drive the City of Reynoldsburg and the Christian Missionary Alliance were not an impediment to collaboration, because they desired similar outcomes. Although working with a Conservative Christian group may present a political risk, Reynoldsburg was very eager for the site to be developed and that outweighed all the risk. This risk is also minimized by the fact that the Alliance's activities on the site won't be explicitly religious, secularizing the space to a degree.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research had three objectives: to further explore the connection between planning and Evangelical Christianity religion in shaping suburbia in the United States, to examine how the planning system interacts with Evangelicals participating in the shaping of the built environment through the method of suburban retrofitting as promoted by the New Urbanist movement, and to draw out implications for planners in the United States and the capacity to engage with religious groups in future suburban development. The research revealed a few key takeaways in attempting to understand how Evangelical Christian leaders interact with secular planners and how their beliefs shape the design of a suburban retrofit project and many implications for planners to consider.

Firstly, *the Evangelical leaders are more influenced by the market and the opinions of planning professionals than theological or ideological principles*. The Alliance originally did not set out to do a large-scale mixed-use of project but were persuaded by the City's vision for the site. In developing the design, the religious leaders were relying on the planners and consultants and market signals to generate proposals, rather than looking to case studies or academic and theological literature. The Alliance leaders professed themselves to be mostly ignorant of built environment principles, allowing the planning practitioners strong influence in shaping the outcome of the development. The City of Reynoldsburg was the key driver in making this project happen, persuading the Alliance to adopt its vision for the site.

Evangelical Christianity is ever-shifting and remarkably responsive to the market, always reinventing itself to stay relevant to religious consumers (Monahan, 2008). This may perhaps be an early example of the latest iteration of evangelical Christianity in its attempt to stay relevant. As suburban tastes change to desire more 'urban' experiences, Evangelicals may increasingly look to employ New Urbanist tactics to appeal to these new tastes.

Consultant A commended the Alliance leaders for being 'savvy' in understanding market forces and the development process. In a way, this is in line with historic trends of American Evangelicals being market-driven, especially in understanding the religious market and advertising their religious product effectively (Wilcox, 1989; Twitchell, 2007; Wilford,

2012). Historically, Evangelicals have been effective and sophisticated adopters of media and technology, have built successful business empires, and have wielded extraordinary cultural influence (Monahan, 2008; Frazier-Crawford Boerl and Perkins, 2011; Brown, 2012). It is not unimaginable that an Evangelical organization may branch out into real estate development and be successful in this realm.

This focus on the market is what helped facilitate collaboration between the Alliance and the City of Reynoldsburg; Because the design wasn't explicitly faith based, and religious activities on the site were limited, this allowed the City to collaborate with the Alliance more easily and decrease the political risk present. If religious leaders aren't thinking about space primarily theologically, but more pragmatically, this secularizes the space and provides opportunity for secular planners to collaborate with them One of the key lessons to emerge from this research is that *planners can catalyze on the profitability motive in order to partner with religious groups in achieving their vision for the City*.

The City of Reynoldsburg is competing in another type of market, that of the competition between cities in the region. The need to compete with other suburbs in the region, by securing new investment and new amenities, is what drove the City of Reynoldsburg to work with such an unconventional and potentially risky group, such as an Evangelical denomination. This points to the implication that there are untapped, unexpected development partners for city leaders who have difficulty attracting conventional developers. Furthermore, planners should not discount the role of religious groups in shaping the built environment and may consider partnering with them.

Furthermore, the research revealed that *New Urbanist typology was employed for the purpose of competing in the market by both the planners and Evangelical leaders*. In a region where Reynoldsburg is perceived as 'falling behind,' the way to become more competitive regionally is understood as emulating the more successful towns, which have to some degree developed mixed-use places. Both the City of Reynoldsburg and the Alliance had profit motives and viewed a mixed-use development as an effective way to succeed in the market.

Reading through the Comprehensive Plan made clear that the City's planners were not employing New Urbanist principles as a way to reform the City. The objectives were not about

reducing car use, genuinely densifying, or introducing mixed-uses into all neighborhoods. Much of the City retains the status quo as low-density suburban sprawl. Instead, the language associated with New Urbanism was employed as a marketing tactic for a few sites meant to become 'destinations' and catalyze investment and development in the City, specifically Alliance Place. Sweeney and Hanlon, writing about another suburb of Columbus, argue that New Urbanization in suburbs is 'influenced by their desire to remain competitive in a highly fragmented metropolis' (Sweeney and Hanlon, 2016) This argument also applies to the City of Reynoldsburg, especially since it is part of that same metropolis. The interviews with Reynoldsburg planners and a thorough reading of the City's Comprehensive Plan illustrated that their primary concern was being competitive within the wider region, rather than addressing climate change or inequity or other such issues.

In practice, New Urbanist ideals fall short of the principles set out in the Charter (Zimmerman, 2001; Hayden, 2003; Trudeau, 2018) In general, in the region of central Ohio, New Urbanism has been employed to ultimately repackage urban sprawl and to maintain suburban comforts and tastes (Hayden, 2003; Trudeau, 2018). These principles are in general only applied to 'special' projects which aim to become destinations, rather than being integrated in typical residential neighborhoods. This is evidenced in Reynoldsburg's Comprehensive Plan, which leaves the majority of City zoned for Suburban Residential. Thus, aesthetic quick-fixes such as incorporating some mixed-use typologies into one development, have limited scope and do not result in an overall reformation of the suburban lifestyle. Creating a 'mixed-use' lifestyle and destination center satisfies suburbanites' desire for some aspects of urban life, without challenging the pattern of single-family sprawl. Understanding this provides some insight on the future development of suburbia.

This research told two converging stories: that of a City looking to compete regionally and that of an Evangelical denomination looking to be more engaged with the wider population and to be more financially sustainable. They both found their answer in New Urbanism principles, modified for suburban tastes. Although both approaching the development of Alliance Place with different motivations, their similar objectives facilitated collaboration and relationship between the two entities.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As a significant cultural force within the United States, especially in the suburbs, Evangelical Christians may potentially play a large role in suburban retrofitting. However, the relationship of Evangelical Christians to the built environment and to the planning system in the U.S. has been under-researched in urban studies literature and overlooked by planning practitioners. This research may have wide implications for both planning academia and practice, and hopefully spur greater consideration of the role that Evangelical Christians, along with other religious groups, may play in development.

This research shows that Evangelical groups may be very willing development partners for cities, as they tend to approach development from a pragmatic and market-driven perspective, rather than a religious perspective. Planners can catalyze on this profitability motive to persuade religious groups to partner with them in achieving their aims for cities. This research has also shown that New Urbanist principles are employed with different purposes and motivations by different groups; for the Evangelical leaders, it is seen as a better method of engaging the community, while for the planners, it is seen as a marketing strategy in the competitive arena between localities.

Currently, there is little discussion of Evangelical Christianity in planning literature. As a group that can take an active role in the development of place, as proved here in this dissertation, the exclusion of Evangelicalism from planning literature is a vast oversight. This research presents just one initial case study in this topic; this topic would benefit from further research and discussion in planning literature.

As this dissertation was constrained by time, funding and location, there is room to expand and improve upon this research. One inherent weakness of this research is that it is just one case study and may not be representative or applicable to all Evangelical Christian groups. Further research may such as a more large-scale surveys of evangelicals and the built environments or investigate other ways evangelicals shape place outside of suburban retrofitting. This topic has the potential to integrate other methodologies, such as community

surveys, focus groups with various types of Evangelical leaders, and analysis of quantitative data, such as financial incentives involved in such developments.

This research may have wide implications for the future development of suburbs; retrofitting suburbia may require the cooperation of many various demographic groups. This case study may be helpful to planners as they seek to implement their visions and strategies for suburban retrofitting; city officials may use this research to identify potential development partners or as they navigate relationships with Evangelical Christians and potentially other religious groups. Evangelical Christians, and perhaps other religious groups, can play an important role in shaping the built environment, the question for planners is how to harness this potential effectively and foster successful collaboration.

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Appendix I

Interview Solicitation Email Template

Dear ____,

My name is Roza Momot; I am a graduate student at UCL in London, UK. Originally I am from Columbus, OH and I am writing my masters dissertation based on the case study of the CMA-led development at Brice Road and E Main Street. Through this case study, I will be exploring the interaction between Evangelical Christians in the US and the New Urbanist movement.

I am writing to request an interview with you for research purposes, as you are heavily involved with this project. I feel your insight will be very valuable as I move forward with my research.

I would be happy to arrange the interview date and time according to your schedule, in order to facilitate your participation. Since I am based in London at the moment, the interview will have to be online (zoom or teams). The interview itself would take approximately 1-1.5 hours and would be recorded to facilitate later transcription.

Please let me know whether you would be available for an interview regarding this development. I am glad to supply any additional information that you require; includes information about me and my research, the questions for the interview and formal guidelines on how the data obtained from the interview will be processed.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Many thanks,

Roza Momot
Postgraduate student at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London

Appendix II

Interview Questions

For the Alliance officials:

What capacity are you involved in the project in?

Could you tell me where your motivation comes from? How did this vision develop?

Did you specifically set out to build a mixed-use headquarters?

The CMA had done some similar previous developments, such as in Salem, how did those come about?

Talk about the location search, what were your criteria, how did you settle upon Reynoldsburg?

I read that the agreed upon design is less dense than previous master plans called for, could you talk about why that is?

What has the design process iteration been like?

What kind of precedents/ case studies are you drawing from? What has been your informing your vision?

How has working with the city been? How has that interaction and relationship played out?

How are you engaging with the community?

What has been the community response to your project?

For the planners:

What capacity are you involved in the project?

Was the city searching out someone to develop the site specifically or did the church approach the city?

What were the zoning policies applying to the site?

Can you talk a bit about the masterplan (city)/ planning policies in regards to this site?

What is the vision/hope for Reynoldsburg, and how is this project contributing to that?

Has there been concessions design wise from either side? I read that the agreed upon design is less dense than previous master plans called for, could you talk about why that is?

What do you think this project is contributing to Reynoldsburg? Why is this seen as a positive? --- how is the city leveraging this development to support their goals?

What has the community's response been to the project?

Have you interacted with any of the faith elements of the project?

How has it been working with religious leaders and what is that relationship like? Anything that planners should keep in mind when engaging religious groups?

Any concerns about the project, if you feel comfortable sharing?

What has the design process been like?

What kind of precedents/ case studies are you drawing from?

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM
FIELD / LOCATION WORK

The Approved Code of Practice - Management of Fieldwork should be referred to when completing this form
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/estates/safetynet/guidance/fieldwork/acop.pdf

DEPARTMENT/SECTION **BARTLETT SCHOOL OF PLANNING – MPLAN CITY PLANNING**

LOCATION(S) **LONDON, UK/ REYNOLDSBURG, OH, USA**

PERSONS COVERED BY THE RISK ASSESSMENT **Rozaliya Momot**

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK

Fieldwork for this dissertation will consist of secondary data collection and remote interviews, which will be conducted from London, UK. There will also be one or two site visits to the site in Reynoldsburg, OH to collect photographic data and assess the geographical context of the site.

Consider, in turn, each hazard (white on black). If **NO** hazard exists select **NO** and move to next hazard section.
If a hazard does exist select **YES** and assess the risks that could arise from that hazard in the risk assessment box.
Where risks are identified that are not adequately controlled they must be brought to the attention of your Departmental Management who should put temporary control measures in place or stop the work. Detail such risks in the final section.

ENVIRONMENT	**The environment always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this hazard**
e.g. location, climate, terrain, neighbourhood, in outside organizations, pollution, animals.	Examples of risk: adverse weather, illness, hypothermia, assault, getting lost. Is the risk high / medium / low ? **Low risk.** Interviews will be conducted remotely from campus or from my residence in London. The site visits will be conducted when I am visiting home. The site is about a 20 minute drive from my home in Ohio, and is in a familiar neighbourhood, so there is little chance of me getting lost. The climate is one that I have grown up in, so I have appropriate clothing for all possible types of weather and I know how to handle any adverse weather. The site visits will be very short, as I will just have to get out of the car to take a few photographs and will get right back into the car after I am done, so

	there is little risk of illness or hypothermia due to exposure to cold. There is a risk of coming across an aggressive or unsafe person on the site. If I am at all concerned for my safety, due to the presence of threatening persons or extreme weather, I will stay in the car and take photographs from there.

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**
yes	work abroad incorporates Foreign Office advice
yes	participants have been trained and given all necessary information
	only accredited centres are used for rural field work
yes	participants will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the specified environment
	trained leaders accompany the trip
yes	refuge is available
	work in outside organisations is subject to their having satisfactory H&S procedures in place
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

EMERGENCIES	**Where emergencies may arise use space below to identify and assess any risks**
e.g. fire, accidents	Examples of risk: loss of property, loss of life There is a risk associated with driving to the site, as an accident may occur unexpectedly, at any time. I will follow all traffic rules and practice safe driving behaviour at all times in order to minimize any risk of a car crash.

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**
	participants have registered with LOCATE at http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/
	fire fighting equipment is carried on the trip and participants know how to use it
yes	contact numbers for emergency services are known to all participants
yes	participants have means of contacting emergency services
yes	participants have been trained and given all necessary information
	a plan for rescue has been formulated, all parties understand the procedure
	the plan for rescue /emergency has a reciprocal element
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

FIELDWORK	**1**	May 2010

EQUIPMENT	Is equipment used?	YES	If 'No' move to next hazard If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks
e.g. clothing, outboard motors.	Examples of risk: inappropriate, failure, insufficient training to use or repair, injury. Is the risk high / medium / low ? **Low risk**		

Equipment will consist of clothing, camera, and a phone. There is a risk of my phone dying while out in the field, leaving me with no way to contact emergency services or family. Thus, I will make sure my phone is fully charged before heading out. I will ensure I am dressed properly and comfortably for the weather by checking the weather forecast that day. I will fully charge my camera before heading out as well, and use a lens cap and a safety strap to prevent the camera from falling unto my foot and injuring me.

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk
	the departmental written Arrangement for equipment is followed
	participants have been provided with any necessary equipment appropriate for the work
yes	all equipment has been inspected, before issue, by a competent person
yes	all users have been advised of correct use
	special equipment is only issued to persons trained in its use by a competent person
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

LONE WORKING	Is lone working a possibility?	YES	If 'No' move to next hazard If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks
e.g. alone or in isolation *lone interviews.*	Examples of risk: difficult to summon help. Is the risk high / medium / low? **Low risk**		

I will conduct site visits alone, so there is some risk associated with that. I will practice cautious and defensive behaviour when out and alone on the site. I will share my location with an emergency contact and will alert them of my itinerary before I leave for the site. I will conduct all site visits during day light for my own safety.

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk
yes	the departmental written Arrangement for lone/out of hours working for field work is followed
	lone or isolated working is not allowed
	location, route and expected time of return of lone workers is logged daily before work commences
yes	all workers have the means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency, e.g. phone, flare, whistle
yes	all workers are fully familiar with emergency procedures
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

Conduct fieldwork during daylight

ILL HEALTH	The possibility of ill health always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this Hazard.
e.g. accident, illness, personal attack, special personal considerations or vulnerabilities.	Examples of risk: injury, asthma, allergies. Is the risk high / medium / low? **Low risk** I do not have allergies or asthma. There is a risk of me developing a migraine which may impair my ability to drive or carry out the site visit successfully. I will always keep necessary medication on me to treat a migraine or headache if it occurs. There is a small risk of a car crash or personal attack at the site. The precautions described above will be taken to decrease these risks. I will keep a first aid kit in the car to treat any small injuries that may occur. There is a risk of mental health illness associated with the stress and anxiety of undertaking such a monumental project. I will place boundaries to prevent myself from overworking by giving myself clear working hours, practicing self-care by exercising and resting when I need to, and speaking with a qualified mental health counsellor if I need professional help.
CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**
Yes	an appropriate number of trained first-aiders and first aid kits are present on the field trip
yes	all participants have had the necessary inoculations/ carry appropriate prophylactics
yes	participants have been advised of the physical demands of the trip and are deemed to be physically suited
	participants have been adequate advice on harmful plants, animals and substances they may encounter
yes	participants who require medication have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs
yes	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented: Practicing self-care and speaking to a counsellor

TRANSPORT	Will transport be required	NO		Move to next hazard
		YES	YES	Use space below to identify and assess any risks
e.g. hired vehicles	Examples of risk: accidents arising from lack of maintenance, suitability or training Is the risk high / medium / low? **Low risk**			

	I will be driving my own personal vehicle that I have all proper documentation and insurance for. I am comfortable driving this vehicle and familiar with how to operate it. I have 7 years of driving experience and a safe driving record. The drive to the site is a mere 20 minutes from my residence, so there is little risk of fatigue.

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**
	only public transport will be used
	the vehicle will be hired from a reputable supplier
yes	transport must be properly maintained in compliance with relevant national regulations
yes	drivers comply with UCL Policy on Drivers http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/college_drivers.php
yes	drivers have been trained and hold the appropriate licence
	there will be more than one driver to prevent driver/operator fatigue, and there will be adequate rest periods
yes	sufficient spare parts carried to meet foreseeable emergencies
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC	**Will people be dealing with public**	**YES**	**If 'No' move to next hazard** **If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks**
e.g. interviews, observing	Examples of risk: personal attack, causing offence, being misinterpreted. Is the risk high / medium / low? Low risk of meeting people at the site, as of now it consists of an abandoned building with a vast parking lot that people rarely enter. There is very low traffic to the site, but of course there is a chance that someone else could be at the site for an unexpected reason. In this case, all precautions will be taken to ensure a safe interaction with any other persons present at the site. All interviews will be conducted remotely, so there is little physical risk. However, there is risk of causing offence or being misinterpreted by the interviewees or by the interviewer, as we will be discussing contentious topics such as development and religion. I will take all possible measures to engage in a civil and constructive dialogue with respectful language.		

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

yes	all participants are trained in interviewing techniques
	interviews are contracted out to a third party
	advice and support from local groups has been sought
yes	participants do not wear clothes that might cause offence or attract unwanted attention
yes	interviews are conducted at neutral locations or where neither party could be at risk
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

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WORKING ON OR NEAR WATER	**Will people work on or near water?**	**NO**	**If 'No' move to next hazard** **If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks**
e.g. rivers, marshland, sea.	Examples of risk: drowning, malaria, hepatitis A, parasites. Is the risk high / medium / low?		

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**
	lone working on or near water will not be allowed
	coastguard information is understood; all work takes place outside those times when tides could prove a threat
	all participants are competent swimmers
	participants always wear adequate protective equipment, e.g. buoyancy aids, wellingtons
	boat is operated by a competent person
	all boats are equipped with an alternative means of propulsion e.g. oars
	participants have received any appropriate inoculations
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

MANUAL HANDLING (MH)	Do MH activities take place?	NO	If 'No' move to next hazard If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks
e.g. lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy equipment, physical unsuitability for the task.	Examples of risk: strain, cuts, broken bones. Is the risk high / medium / low?		

CONTROL MEASURES	Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk
	the departmental written Arrangement for MH is followed
	the supervisor has attended a MH risk assessment course
	all tasks are within reasonable limits, persons physically unsuited to the MH task are prohibited from such activities
	all persons performing MH tasks are adequately trained
	equipment components will be assembled on site
	any MH task outside the competence of staff will be done by contractors
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

SUBSTANCES	**Will participants work with substances**	**NO**	**If 'No' move to next hazard** **If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks**
e.g. plants, chemical, biohazard, waste	Examples of risk: ill health - poisoning, infection, illness, burns, cuts. Is the risk high / medium / low?		

CONTROL MEASURES	**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**
	the departmental written Arrangements for dealing with hazardous substances and waste are followed
	all participants are given information, training and protective equipment for hazardous substances they may encounter
	participants who have allergies have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs
	waste is disposed of in a responsible manner
	suitable containers are provided for hazardous waste
	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

OTHER HAZARDS	**Have you identified any other hazards?**	**NO**	**If 'No' move to next section** **If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks**
i.e. any other hazards must be noted and assessed here.	Hazard: Risk: is the risk		

CONTROL MEASURES	**Give details of control measures in place to control the identified risks**

Have you identified any risks that are not adequately controlled?	**NO**	**NO**	**Move to Declaration**
	YES		**Use space below to identify the risk and what action was taken**

Is this project subject to the UCL requirements on the ethics of Non-NHS Human Research?	NO
If yes, please state your Project ID Number	

For more information, please refer to: http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/

DECLARATION The work will be reassessed whenever there is a significant change and at least annually. Those participating in the work have read the assessment.

Select the appropriate statement:

x	I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that there is no significant residual risk
	I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above

Rozaliya Momot

NAME OF SUPERVISOR Yasminah Beebeejaun

FIELDWORK 5 May 2010

This is the 2020/21 Moodle Snapshot and Late Summer Assessment

Your 2 response(s)

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Respondent: **Rozaliya Momot** Submitted on: Sunday, 12 September 2021, 11:03 PM

Ethical Clearance Pro Forma

It is important for you to include all relevant information about your research in this form, so that your supervisor can give you the best advice on how to proceed with your research.

You are advised to read though the relevant sections of UCL's Research Integrity guidance to learn more about your ethical obligations.

Please ensure to save a copy of your completed questionnaire BEFORE hitting 'submit' (you will not be able to access it later).

Submission Details

1 * Please select your programme of study.

MPlan City Planning : MPlan City Planning

2 * Please indicate the type of research work you are doing.

- [ ] Dissertation in Planning (MSc)
- [x] Dissertation in City Planning (MPlan)
- [ ] Major Research Project

3 * Please provide the current working title of your research.

God and New Urbanism: a Case Study in Evangelicals' Role in Suburban Retrofitting

4 * Please select your supervisor from the drop-down list.

Beebeejaun, Yasminah : Beebeejaun, Yasminah

Research Details

5 * Please indicate here which data collection methods you expect to use. Tick all that apply.

- [x] Interviews
- [ ] Focus Groups
- [ ] Questionnaires (including oral questions)
- [ ] Action research
- [ ] Observation / participant observation
- [ ] Documentary analysis (including use of personal records)
- [x] Audio-visual recordings (including photographs)
- [ ] Collection/use of sensor or locational data
- [ ] Controlled trial
- [ ] Intervention study (including changing environments)
- [ ] Systematic review
- [x] Secondary data analysis
- [ ] Advisory/consultation groups

6 * Please indicate where your research will take place.

UK and overseas : UK and overseas

7 * Does your project involve the recruitment of participants?

'Participants' means human participants and their data (including sensor/locational data and observational notes/images.)

○ Yes ◉ No

Appropriate Safeguard, Data Storage and Security

8 * Will your research involve the collection and/or use of personal data?

Personal data is data which relates to a living individual who can be identified from that data or from the data and other information that is either currently held, or will be held by the data controller (you, as the researcher).

This includes:

- Any expression of opinion about the individual and any intentions of the data controller or any other person toward the individual.
- Sensor, location or visual data which may reveal information that enables the identification of a face, address etc. (some postcodes cover only one property).
- Combinations of data which may reveal identifiable data, such as names, email/postal addresses, date of birth, ethnicity, descriptions of health diagnosis or conditions, computer IP address (of relating to a device with a single user).

○ Yes ◉ No

9 * Is your research using or collecting:

- special category data as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation*, and/or
- data which might be considered sensitive in some countries, cultures or contexts?

*Examples of special category data are data:

- which reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership;
- concerning health (the physical or mental health of a person, including the provision of health care services);
- concerning sex life or sexual orientation;
- genetic or biometric data processed to uniquely identify a natural person.

○ Yes ◉ No

10 * Do you confirm that all personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018)?

○ Yes
○ No
◉ I will not be working with any personal data

11 * I confirm that:

☑ The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
☑ I will continue to reflect on, and update these ethical considerations in consultation with my supervisor.

You **MUST** download a copy of your responses to submit with your proposal, and for your own reference.
To do this, use the print screen function of your web browser, and print to PDF in order to save.

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« »

Dissertation_Momot

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

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