



Malcolm Gladwell Remarks to the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore Annual Meeting

Meyerhoff Symphony Hall
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Thank you very much. It's a real honor to be asked to speak to you all this evening.

I confess to feeling a little bit guilty whenever I come to Baltimore because, as those of you who read my first book **The Tipping Point** know, that book begins with a story of the syphilis epidemic in Baltimore in the early 1990s and every time I

see someone reading that book I think this is not the kind of publicity any city will want. So I take it from my invitation tonight that I have been forgiven by the city of Baltimore for my transgressions. I promise you that next time I write of the syphilis epidemic I will look for somewhere else - like Frederick, or Bethesda, or Capital Hill - to use as my case study.

I want to start by telling you a story that I tell in my book **Outliers**. It's a story about a town in Italy called Roseto in the Apne foothills, which are about 100 miles south of Rome, and it's one of those classic Italian medieval mountain villages. It's got a square with a church - Our lady of Mount Carmel - and a bunch of stone houses up the hillside. The people who lived there worked in the marble quarries up in the hills and they also worked as tenant farmers down in the valley.

It was this very sort of hard, miserable existence that people lived for many many hundreds of years. And then in the 1800s, 1882, a group of people from Roseto heard about this place called America and decided that they would go and check it out. So they took the boat from Naples over to New York and they spent their first night on the floor of an Italian restaurant on Mulberry Street in Manhattan. They made their way 100 miles west of New York to Bangor Pennsylvania, on the edge of eastern Pennsylvania, where there was a marble quarry, just like there was at home.

They began to work there and they loved this new life they'd made for themselves and so they sent word back to Roseto in Italy - to all of their friends, and family, and neighbors that they should really come and join them. And one by one, pretty much the whole village



picked up and came to America, and went 100 miles west of Manhattan to this little place in eastern Pennsylvania.

And then, finally, there were so many of them that they got together and they bought some land on a hillside - just like the hillside back in Italy - and they built themselves little stone houses with slate roofs - just like back home - and they had a town square and they put a church there called Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

In the beginning, they called their town New Italy, but after a while they realized that since it looked exactly like the place back home and since they were all from this place back home that they called Roseto - they should call it Roseto. And so this town called Roseto sprang up in the foothills of eastern Pennsylvania. And it was an Italian town. They all spoke Italian in the same dialect as they did back home.

They all knew each other from back home in Italy and it would have perhaps remained unknown and all but forgotten except for a guy named Stewart Wolf. Back in the 1950s Stewart Wolf was a physician. He was at a medical conference in that area and he's talking to a doctor who served the town Roseto. And the doctor told him, "You know,

the strangest thing in this town where I work is that no one ever has a heart attack.” Wolf hears this, this is the 50s and heart attacks, they’re epidemic in America. It’s absolutely unheard of. It’s incredible to hear of a place where there are no heart attacks.

So Wolf says, “Can I come and check this out?” And the guy says, “Sure.” So Wolf comes with a whole team of epidemiologists and he sets up shop in Roseto and he takes over the town hall. He calls in all the people of the town and he gives them a medical exam, an EKG, takes their blood pressure, looks at their medical history, looks over the town records, looks at all the obituaries, and on and on. He discovers, low and behold, it’s true! Nobody dies of a heart attack in Roseto. The death rate for heart attacks - which in America as a whole in the 50s for those under 65 was some astronomical figure - it’s zero in Roseto. For those over 65, their death rate from heart disease is half of the American average.

And by the way, as they were looking at causes of death they realized there also was no suicide in Roseto, no homicide in Roseto, no mental illness, no ulcers, no drug abuse, no alcoholism, nothing. People were dying of old age and that’s it.



So Wolf is actually naturally really curious about this and he starts this sort of investigation into what is going on in this little town. And his first thought is that it must be their diet. Right? They come from Italy, we’ve heard about the famous Mediterranean diet - fish and olive oil and fresh vegetables - so he starts to study what they eat and he discovers that they couldn’t have overstuffed more. They’re not even eating you

know, healthy pizza back home in Italy, they were eating piled on sausage and bacon , and they’re using lard instead of olive oil, and he realizes many of them are obese and, by the way, they’re chain smokers, and none of them exercise.

So that’s not it. And then he thinks, well it must be genetic, it must be some genetic gene that sets these people apart from everybody else. So he decides a good way to test this would be to find other people who had emigrated from that part of Italy and see whether they live forever too. And so he checks those other places in America and he discovers other people from that same region in Italy. He looks at their health records and he realizes no, they’re just as unhealthy as normal Americans - it’s not genes.

And he thinks well, maybe it’s something in the water in eastern Pennsylvania. So then he goes to all the surrounding towns which are a lot similar, a lot like Roseto. They’re full of immigrants from Europe who’ve been there for you know, roughly a generation, who are middle-working class people. If it’s something that’s particular to this part of

the country, then he should see a general pattern. He doesn't. You don't live in Roseto. You don't live forever.

He's really puzzled. So he goes back to Roseto and he starts to walk around and he begins to notice that this town was different from other towns. It had this church which was the center of all of this community life. And there was a dynamic young priest who had taken over, called Father Domisco and he had convinced the town to build parks, and a convent, and a public school. And he had set up something like 22 different civic organizations, and he had encouraged the town to plant trees, and shrubs, and flowers, and make the place beautiful.

And the main thoroughfare of this town was full of cafes or restaurants and little mom-and-pop stores. And he watched how the kids would play together in the parks, and the people would sit on their front porches and talk to each other, and how they would grow wine in their backyards and make homemade wine and share it with each other. And he realized he'd stumbled on a place where the sense of community was so strong, and so powerful, and so supportive, that it enabled people who lived there to effectively deal with the stress of modern life and live a kind of magical life. They had created community bonds that were so extraordinary that they were able to overcome the pattern of illness and mortality in American life.

What he realized in other words, was that place mattered. Not in some kind of abstract sense, but that the kind of environment you create for yourself makes a real and tangible difference in your level of happiness, health, and satisfaction.

PLACE MATTERS: The kind of environment you create for yourself makes a real and tangible difference in your level of happiness, health, and satisfaction.

-Malcolm Gladwell

Now, why'd I tell you that story? You're not Roseto. You can't be Roseto. You don't want to be Roseto. Right? You're Baltimore. You're a very very different place. But I think that it's a very relevant story for all of you because all of you are here tonight because you too believe in the importance of place. I'm guessing virtually everyone here tonight is in some way responsible for arguing on behalf of Downtown Baltimore. For making the case that this community - the neighborhood

around where we are right now - matters. And not matters in some sort of trivial historical sense, but matters in a very real sense - that it makes a difference for the people who choose to live here and for the broader community of which Downtown Baltimore is a part.

You're here because you are charged with the responsibility of arguing on behalf of the rebuilding and the revitalization of this particular city.

And I don't need to tell you that that is not an easy task. Right? We don't live in Holland or Germany or some other country where the livelihood of cities is taken very seriously, where the health of cities is on the national agenda. We live in a society and a country that's largely indifferent to the fate of our older cities in many cases. So the question is: can we look at the example of Roseto and learn something of value that will help all of us in making the case for a place like Baltimore?

And I think you can. I think there are a couple lessons in that story of Roseto that could be really useful to all of you as you go out and carry this argument about the importance of this city to the rest of the world.

So what I want to do is look back at the story of Roseto and try and pull out some lessons. The first lesson is about density. It's sort of an obvious point but I think it's important to start with it because it's one of those arguments about urban life that is so obvious that we easily forget it and overlook it.

The most striking thing about Roseto - if you ever visited - is what it looks like. This is not a typical suburban community where houses are on large lots and set back from the street with big spacious lawns. This is an urban village. This is houses cheek-by-jowl right next to the street. This is a community that's all squashed in together. This is a place that when you sit on one porch, you are right next to the porch of your neighbor. This is a town where you can walk from one end to another in a matter of minutes.

And that is a powerful reason why that community was as supportive and as strong as it was. Its layout had a lot to do with its magic. This is what we talked about how it's supported. I'm not saying it was supported in some kind of intangible, emotional or psychological way, what we're saying is it was supported because when you went out onto the streets of Roseto, you literally physically interacted, bumped into your neighbors. When you went down the street to the bakery you saw someone who you saw everyday. When you sat on your front porch and somebody walked by the sidewalk they were a few feet away from you and they could stop and they could talk to you.

The bonds that held that community together were tangible and physical and they were a function of the way that particular community was constructed. Had Roseto been laid out like most suburbs - and it's a suburb - had it been laid out like the typical American suburb, there would be no way it would have that same magical effect. Right? Once you set people back from the street, once you hide them behind hedges, once you put them in houses that are distance from each other, they no longer have that kind of extraordinary, powerful, everyday physical interaction.

This was of course the great point of Jane Jacobs in her classic **The Death and Life of Great American Cities**. When she was writing about what made the west village in Manhattan such an extraordinary neighborhood she kept coming back again and again

and again to its density. To the fact that it was crowded. To the fact that its sidewalks were jammed with people. And she has that wonderful quotable point that without that kind of active sidewalk life, without that frequent serendipitous interactions that happen when people are squashed together, she said there is no public acquaintanceship, no foundation of public trust, no cross connection with the necessary people, and no practice or ease in applying the most ordinary techniques of city public life at public levels. She was situating the health of that community in the life on its sidewalks. Well it's this same factor about cities that makes them such ideal breeding grounds for creativity and innovation.

When we think about creativity we think of it usually in its individual dimension. . . as the thing that goes on in someone's head. But we often overlook the fact that creativity also has a very real physical dimension. It is a thing that goes on among a group of people who are in close proximity.

When you look at that history of creativity and innovation, what you see is it is always invariably clustered in tightly connected physical spaces. The historian Raymond Tallis once wrote this enormous exhausted study in intellectual movements over the last 2,000 years. And he was able to find only three intellectual movements in the last 2,000 years that took place in a network that was founded and sustained by one person working alone. And that was a Dallas metaphysician in the first century, an Arabic philosopher in the 14th century, a Zen philosopher in the 15th century. That's it! Everybody else was part of a movement.

And by movement he didn't mean a loose collection of people who wrote each other letters and got together once a year at conventions. He meant people who lived in the exact same community, who had dinner together a couple nights a week, who bumped into each other on the sidewalk. There are so many examples it's almost pointless to try and go over them.

You know, we always think about Freud as being the father of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis was actually born in the meetings that Freud would have in the early 1800s in his waiting room in his offices in Vienna. And he would get together with Wilhelm Stockel, Max Kahane, Alfred Adler, Rudolph Reitler. He had a little room - not much larger than some little corner of this stage - and they would talk, and they would drink coffee or whatever they drank in Vienna, and that's where psychoanalysis was born, in that interaction of a group of likeminded people in close physical proximity.

Think of the birth of French impressionism at the turn of the last century. You know, Pizarro and Degas meet in art school, and then Pizarro meets Monet and Cezanne at the Suisse Academy, and Manet meets Degas at the Louvre, and Monet befriends Renoir at a studio. And then Renoir meets Pizarro and Cezanne at some other thing, and then they would all get together at a café and drink every afternoon. Every single famous

name from that era in impressionist painting were friends. And not just friends - friends who hung out everyday at the same bar.

A couple years ago, I read that book about the history of *Saturday Night Live*. I realize it's almost blasphemous to talk about *Saturday Night Live* in the same breath as psychoanalysis and French impressionism. But I mean, here was a kind of pivotal moment in the history of modern comedy and popular culture.

And what do you realize when you read the history of *Saturday Night Live*? Exactly the same thing. Right? Exactly the same phenomenon. A group of people living on top of each other. In fact Lorne Michaels who creates the show, was married to a woman named Rosie Shuster. Rosie Shuster, while she was married to Lorne Michaels, was having an affair with Dan Aykroyd, who was simultaneously going out with Laraine Newman. Remember all these names from *Saturday Night Live*? And had previously gone out with Gilda Radner, who he met at Second City at the same time as he met John Belushi who started the *National Lampoon Radio Hour* along with Bill Murray, who also dated Gilda Radner.

And why were they so interconnected? Because they all were living on top of each other. Belushi spent almost all of his entire time at *Saturday Night Live* sleeping on all of those people's couches. Gilda Radner slept on the couch of Jane Curtin, and Laraine Newman lived at Radner's house. Everybody hung out during the day at the *Saturday Night Live* offices in Rockefeller center on the 17th floor - which is this little cramped space they would all crowd into - and they got there on Monday morning and they would work until 2 a.m. every night. And then they would do the show on Saturday night and then they would all go to the Blues Bar in Downtown Manhattan. And they would basically do drugs and drink all night and then they would close it up at around 10 or 11 in the morning on Sunday. And then the next Monday, the next day they would start over again.

They didn't hang out together because they were creative. They were creative because they hung out together. That's a really important distinction. You might say, well it's different today. Today we have the internet; we have all kinds of tools that would allow us to interact remotely. We've got Twitter right? We don't need to have this same kind of physical proximity. I don't know how many of you saw the story in the *New York Times* a couple weeks ago, it was about an office building in San Francisco, a somewhat nondescript office building, and it's the hottest office building in the entire city.

Every software social media startup wants to rent space there. Why? Because Twitter's in it. And all of the people who are in social media want to be in physical proximity with Twitter. They want to bump into the Twitter guys in the elevator, they want to go and chat with them over lunch in the cafeteria, they want to walk down the street and get

off the bus with them and be able to share with them, and brainstorm with them, and partake of that same kind of magic.

Can you see the irony in this? That people who spend their lives working on tools to connect people remotely are obsessed with the need to connect with people intimately. Well there's a paradox here, and the paradox is that as we get successful, we start to do things that compromise the reasons why we got successful. What happens to *Saturday Night Live* as it becomes a real hit and as it starts to make an enormous amount of money and as all of those people that I mentioned become famous? Well, they no longer sleep on each others couches. They get their own massive houses off in the suburbs, the really huge apartments on the Upper West Side.

And what happens to those startups that really want to be in the same building as Twitter? Well when they make it, when they make it big, they leave that building and they go and they build their own building off somewhere all by themselves. And why do they do that? Because they forget about the magic of that proximity and they fall back on this illusion that creativity is all something that happens up in their heads. They forget that creativity has to have a physical dimension to be real.

Why am I going on and on about this? Because this neighborhood that we're in . . . because Downtown Baltimore *is* that physical dimension.

This particular environment - with all of these buildings all crammed in together and all these strange and eclectic uses and all these people from all kinds of different walks of life bumping into each other on the sidewalk - is more than a real estate asset. It's more than a cool looking part of town. It's more than an extraordinary collection of historical buildings. It is a very real intellectual asset for this community.

PLACE MATTERS:

Downtown Baltimore is more than a real estate asset, or a cool looking part of town. It's a very real intellectual asset for the community.

-Malcolm Gladwell

It is the kind of space where creativity takes place. There is a kind of energy and potential here that is not possible in communities outside of the Downtown. So that's lesson number 1. . . that when we make the argument for why this particular community is worth investing in, and

worth revitalizing, and worth rebuilding, make that argument using this very real tangible point about creativity. Don't express it as simply a kind of act of preservation. Talk about it as an intellectual asset that can help lift the creative innovative fortunes of the entire region.

So that's lesson number 1. (There are only 2 lessons. I'm not going to start listing lessons -your heart will sink. . . lesson number 7. . .)

I came here and I lived in Brooklin in part of Ontario that's home to the Mennonites, to the versions of the Amish. Very traditional Mennonites have famously long religious services. And the thing they really pride themselves on are the funerals. And at the funeral you know how many pastors are going to speak because they all sit in the front of the room. So if you walk in and you see two pastors there will be two people speaking, and if you see three there will be three. If you see five you're supposed to turn around.

Anyway, back to Roseto. There's a second element to that story about that community that matters. And that is that if you look at what made that town so remarkable, it was all what the economist would say are public goods. It was not private goods. What sets that town apart are not the kinds of things that the residents of that community bought for themselves. It wasn't special because everybody in that town had a flat screen TV and a three car garage and a swimming pool. It wasn't special because everyone in that town had a bank account and they were able to purchase the best of everything. In fact, the people in that town were very poor.

What made that town special were the things that the people of that town purchased as a group. Their public goods: Their park, the trees and the flowers and the shrubs on the streets, the church, the civic organizations. All of those elements of community that were collective. It's those things that made that particular town special.

Now, one of the main puzzles in my mind of this society is that as we get wealthier and wealthier, we have grown more and more attached to private goods, to the importance of the things that we can buy for ourselves, and less and less attached to public goods - to the importance of the goods that can only be bought collectively. And that seems to me backwards. As we get wealthier the opposite should happen. We should be more and more interested in the things that can be bought collectively.

I thought of this when I saw that thing in the paper about the private equity king Steve Schwarzman. One of the wealthiest men in the country, he made about a billion dollars last year. He was very upset about the fact that currently, if you're in the private equity business like him, you only pay 15% tax because your income is treated like capital gains. There was some movement in congress to make people like him pay the same taxes as the rest of us and he was very upset about this.

He compared this movement to making him pay normal taxes to either a Kristallnacht or the Nazi invasion of Poland. I forget which one. Which struck me as one of the most tasteless analogies ever to be made on Wall Street. (And by the way, the bar for tasteless analogies on Wall Street is very high.)

The point about that observation or analogy is not simply that it's tasteless, is that it's irrational. If you make one billion dollars a year and have done so for the last 10 years, there are no more private goods you can buy. You're out of private goods. The only thing that will make your life better at that point are public goods, are the kinds of things you can't buy all by yourself.

The only thing that's going to improve his quality of his life is, you know, less time from his mansion on the Upper East Side to the private airport at wherever. Cleaner air in St. Barts at holiday time. Or when he flies over Central Park in his helicopter, a gleaming expanse glowing below him. These are the things that may make his life better. And they're all things that he can't buy all by himself. If he were rational, he'd be in favor of paying more taxes because that's the only way things are going to look up at this point in his personal life.

Well, this is in some lesser sense, true of lots of us. Our politicians talk sometimes about this as if the only things we care about are private goods. As if the only things that will make our lives better are giving us more means to buy the things we want. And they gloss over the fact that for many of us, the most important things that can improve our lives are public goods, the things that only can be bought collectively.

What is the thing in New York City - the development in that community - that has done more to enhance the lives of its citizens over the last 25 years than anything else? Who's the single greatest contributor to the quality of life of New Yorkers? It's a public good. What was that public good? The decline in the crimery. The decline in crimery in New York is such an astonishing and overwhelming and unbelievable thing. It's worth pausing

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for a moment. Do you know that compared to the early 1990s, New York City's murder rate is now 18% of what it was in 1990? The robbery is 16% of what it was. The rape rate is ¼ of what it was. And the rate of auto theft is 6% of what it was 20 years ago. That's not a decline. That is a stupefying transformation. That's Guinness book of world records level of transformation.

To give you a sense of this, a generation ago when people discussed the great cities of the world - Sydney, Toronto, Paris, London, New York - New York was always over here in terms of its crime, and the others were always over here. And New York was just a great outlier on the scale. Now, when we look at levels of crime, New York is either at the bottom or only the murder rate is higher than its counterparts around the world. Every other rate of crime is either in the middle or at the bottom. That's incredible. Right? Now, how did this happen? How did that transformation come about?

Well the short answer is that the citizens of America, and the citizens in particular of New York City and New York State, bought that. They bought that quality of life increase with their tax money. One of the things they did in the 1990s is the state and the city got together with money from the federal government and they hired 9,000 police officers. If you put 9,000 additional cops on the street and you deploy them intelligently you can do an awful lot to bring down crime rate. That's a public good. Right? No individual can hire 9,000 police officers all by themselves. But you can do that if you get together as a community and decide that's a priority.

The other reason for crime drop in New York we now think is lead. We realize, looking back now, a lot of genealogists have come to the conclusion that there was lead in gasoline up until 1974. And so that meant there was more lead in the air. This was particularly crucial in dense urban areas where there were lots of cars. And the number of cars steadily increased through the 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s until by the 70s, kids growing up in densely populated areas were suffering from relatively acute levels of lead poisoning. Right? And what does lead poisoning do? Well we know what the behavioral influences of it are: impulsivity, aggression, lower IQ. The exact same kind of things that would lead to violence that would lead to criminality. We were poisoning a generation.

And then what happens in 1974? The Clean Air Act was passed and lead was removed from gasoline. And so for the first time you have a generation of kids growing up in cities like New York who aren't being poisoned by lead. And what happens 18 years after the Clean Air Act is passed? The crime rate falls. And not just falls a little, falls a lot. In fact this is quite fascinating. If you look anywhere in the world you will see natural decreases in crime rates 18 years after lead was removed from gasoline.

Now think about that. That's a public good. That is something we did collectively as a society. And it wasn't easy. The battle over lead and gasoline can go back into the 60s and 70s - was this huge drawn out fight to the death between environmental advocates and private industry. On the one side, private industry ranked it in terms of a private good - this will cost us and our customers money. And on the other side, the environmentalists said no, this is something that ought to be thought of as a public good. They had no idea this would have this affect on crime rates. They simply said this is the kind of thing we would like to invest in as a society, cleaner air. And what happened? Well it brought about a generation later one of the most remarkable transformations in urban life that the world has ever seen. And it magically improved the welfare, the health, and the happiness of every one of the eight million people in New York City.

We aren't nearly aggressive enough it strikes me, about making an argument for public goods. We're shy about it every time we have an opportunity to stand up and say this is something we ought to do collectively. We blush and we stammer and we look away and we fall back in the position of saying well no, maybe its better if we just talk about private goods. That'll go over well.

But if you asked Americans what would really make their lives better, most of the things on the list are public goods. But what would really make your life better? Well I'd love to be able to get home to my family half an hour earlier each night so I can spend more time with my kids. I'd love if traffic wasn't so bad. How do you fix traffic? Public good - can't do it by yourself. I'd love it if my kids could play outside and not have to worry about them. Public good. I'd love it if I could take my kids to school and not worry about the quality of their education. Public good. These are the things that really matter and that resonate with Americans and yet we don't talk about them in the same way.



Let me just lay this idea of public goods in one more way. One of the things that Canadians like me are always astonished by in this country – it's a great country - is the American obsession with the private university education. We don't have private schools in Canada. So you come down here and all of a sudden everyone tells you Harvard's number one, Yale's number two, Stanford's number three. And your first questions of course are, how do you decide? How do you know? The notion of ranking institutions in different places, that look different, that do different things, that educate different people, is an astonishing one to an outsider.

If you look at how those rankings are formed, the *US News* ranking, the most famous of them, uses things like money spent on student, salaries paid to faculty, selectivity of college, average SAT score of incoming freshmen class. What are those criteria? They're private good criteria. They're assessing the quality of the college in terms of the prestige and glamour that you buy by getting admitted.

You don't have to rank colleges that way if you don't want to. If you wanted to you could rank colleges using public good criteria. In fact, I've always been amused by the fact that the *Washington Monthly* every year puts out its own rankings, and its rankings are public good rankings. And it says for example, well, we would like to rank colleges

according to three public good criteria. The first one is how effectively does the college address inequality in this country? How good a job do they do with finding able kids from lowest income categories? What percentage of their student population is on health aid for example? Or other things like that. How effectively do they graduate kids once they've entered? And then it looks at research focus. How much money is spent on productive research as opposed to marketing or fancy notebooks? From there it looks at service. How good of a job does the college do at inculcating the notion of public service into its student population? What percentage of kids go into Teach For America, or Peace Corps, ROTC? I could name all of these things. They rank all of these things and then they come up with their ranking.

Well here's the funny thing about their ranking: when you rank universities to public goods criteria the list changes. So there's a bunch of schools you thought were great suddenly become mediocre. For example, here's the top 10 under the public goods criteria.



UC San Diego's number 1, Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford, Texas, UC Davis, Michigan, Syracuse, Harvard, College of William and Mary - that's your top 10. And then the top 20 are South Carolina State, Rutgers, Texas A & M, Yale 33, Penn 34, Brown is 63, and Columbia is 67th.

Now that's kind of shocking. We don't normally think about Rutgers and South Carolina State as being superior schools to Yale or Columbia or Penn. But that's just because we love the private goods definitions. We don't have to be, we can choose as a society if we want to rank schools on their public contributions. Right now, think about what the implications are of our obsession with private goods. We have a system where universities are incentivized to compete with one another along these lines of combining private prestige goods. So what do they do with all of their money? Well they spend an awful amount of time building fancy dormitories, with the result of the cost of higher education in this country rising faster than the pace of inflation and faster than growth in family income every year for the past 25 years or more, to a point where it's become an increasingly unaffordable option for many people who really want to go to college.

Now wouldn't we be better off if our colleges competed on how effective they were in reaching out to underserved communities, on how effectively they could perform their

research mission, on how effectively they could inculcate a service messaging to their kids? Guess we would be better off. Right? We would be infinitely better off. But that would require us to start talking openly and seriously about our desire and need for public goods.

It should be obvious to you why I've been going on and on about public goods. Because this organization, right here, the one that brought you here tonight, is a public goods organization. It exists to do the kinds of things that can only be done collectively. That's what The Partnership is all about. It's about buying things you can only buy as a group - a very very powerful idea. And it's powerful because the great opportunity of the great potential of Downtown Baltimore is at the public goods side of the measure, not the private goods.

PLACE MATTERS: This organization is a public goods organization. It exists to do the kinds of things that can only be done collectively. That's what The Partnership is all about.

-Malcolm Gladwell

You can't compete with some wealthy suburb on private goods. You'll never be able to have houses for people with three car garages, and lawns that back onto the country club. That's not going to happen. But where is the potential here? It's in the kinds of things that happen once you step out of your house and onto the street. It's about the life and community that can be created out there and in the public space. Culture, diversity, and excitement, and the beautiful brand of glorious chaos of a city, and architectural beauty, and all of

those things that exist in the public space and not the private.

And all of those things are incredibly powerful drivers of human inspiration and human happiness. I think your challenge is to remind the world of that. To make that case firmly, loudly, strongly, that public goods are things that the city of Baltimore should care about.

One of the things that makes me so optimistic about the power of this argument is that youngest generation, now coming out of high schools and colleges. When you talk to people in that generation you realize that they have made this transformation, this transmission in their minds. One of the effects of the recession, one of the unexpectedly good effects of the recession, is it has tempered people's love affair with the manic acquisition of more private goods. And that generation sees that the things that will make my life meaningful are things that we do together as a society.

And one of the wonderful unexpected effects at the same time is that of the extraordinary explosion of technology of which that generation is a part of. They have learned from the get go in a powerful and intuitive way about the value of sharing, and collaboration, and community. Their definition of what innovation and creativity is

very much along the lines of what we were talking about before. They see, in this immediate way, that innovation and creativity have a physical dimension. That they are here in the communities, and the spaces and the environments that we build.

I think there is a real hunger out there for these kinds of arguments and it is incumbent on all of you to make them.

You know I went back to Roseto not long ago and it isn't the same. Your drive through Downtown does not in any way resemble the magical town that Stewart Wolf discovered 50 years ago. There's big bullet proof walls along those little stores. There's no longer flowers in all of the public spaces. You don't see people crowding the sidewalks and bumping into each other. The church is half empty. And if you look at the health statistics of that town, they're now the same as everywhere else.

They had something very special there and they lost it. And they lost it because they didn't continue to invest in the kinds of things that made them special. And that is a powerful lesson for all of us. The kinds of institutions and environments that will set this community apart from others are things that need to be nurtured, things that need to be protected, things that need to be fought for.

And so, I urge all of you when you make this argument on behalf of your city to do so with a little feeling and force. And don't be afraid to point to the Roseto of long ago and say, this is the kind of community we're fighting for.

Thank you.