

Milwaukee—The Great American City

The cover story in this issue of the *Marquette Lawyer* is a collection, actually, with two key parts: an essay by Harvard Professor Robert J. Sampson on the importance of neighborhoods, especially as gleaned from his path-breaking research concerning Chicago (pages 8–21), and an article about the effort, led by Marquette University President Michael R. Lovell, to enhance this university's neighborhood, the near west side of Milwaukee (pages 22–28). Let me offer a connection.

A recollection will help. In inviting Professor Sampson to the Law School to deliver the Robert F. Boden Lecture (upon which his essay in this issue

is based), I immediately caught the allusion in the title of his landmark book, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (2012). The opening phrase comes from Norman Mailer's book, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968). The second half of Mailer's book—the part discussing the Democratic national convention in 1968—focuses on Chicago. It begins thus: “Chicago is the great American city.”



When I first read the book in the 1970s as a teenager—and as a Chicagooan—I interpreted this to mean that Chicago was the *greatest* American city. And, indeed, Mailer distinguished Chicago from various other cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Kansas City, among others. Yet, looking back, I realize that I may have missed the point—or at least a truth that bears emphasis here.

Milwaukee was not among the cities that Mailer distinguished—and, for the fundamental point, Rob Sampson has enabled me to recognize that Milwaukee, too, is the great American city. I have long known it to be *a* great city. Since my wife, Anne, and I moved here in 1997, in order that I might join the faculty of Marquette University Law School, we have embraced Milwaukee—and Milwaukee us. It is a big-league city in the literal sense (and, mercifully, we Chicago White Sox partisans can make common cause with fans of the Milwaukee Brewers against the Chicago Cubs). Yet it is big-league more figuratively also. The sports teams, the cultural amenities, the transportation challenges and opportunities, the extraordinary waterfront, the racial and cultural diversity, the neighborhoods with their

historic ethnic traditions and new immigrant dynamism, and more yet—Milwaukee has what one would expect in a great American city.

And Milwaukee, like Chicago today and of Mailer's portrait, has tremendous challenges. These two cities share this characteristic with many other American cities. Milwaukee is up to these challenges. In this magazine, the focus is on the work of Marquette University under the leadership of President Lovell in the Near West Side Partners, Inc. This is a robust effort to enhance our remarkable neighborhood. Part of the robustness is in the partnerships with other institutional residents of the neighborhood: Harley-Davidson, Inc., MillerCoors, Aurora Health Care, and the Potawatomi community. But the key partnerships will be with residents: students, families, workers, the unemployed or underemployed, professionals—the extraordinary mix of residents who call Milwaukee's near west side their home.

All of this (together with much more) warrants the appellation of “Great American City” not just for Chicago but also for Milwaukee. I believe the future to be very promising. To look back for a moment, Mailer was a bit premature—indeed, wrong—when he maintained in his book that downtown Chicago of almost a half-century ago was “in death like the center of every other American city.” Surely, no one would offer such a grim description today of downtown Milwaukee, which has a vibrant business economy, a dynamic social scene, booming construction, and an increasing number of residents. Looking forward, Sampson's research provides a basis for more general optimism: Many distressed urban neighborhoods have great historic strengths, and with the insights of academics and the leadership of engaged citizens, these neighborhoods, too, can be enhanced.

We at Marquette University Law School look forward to continuing to be part of all of this. A great American city unquestionably requires a great law school. In our case, this includes our unusual public policy initiative, a reflection on which—by Mike Gousha, distinguished fellow in law and public policy—closes out the cover package (pages 30–31). In all events, we warmly invite you to read the cover stories and the other articles in this issue of the *Marquette Lawyer* magazine.

Joseph D. Kearney
Dean and Professor of Law