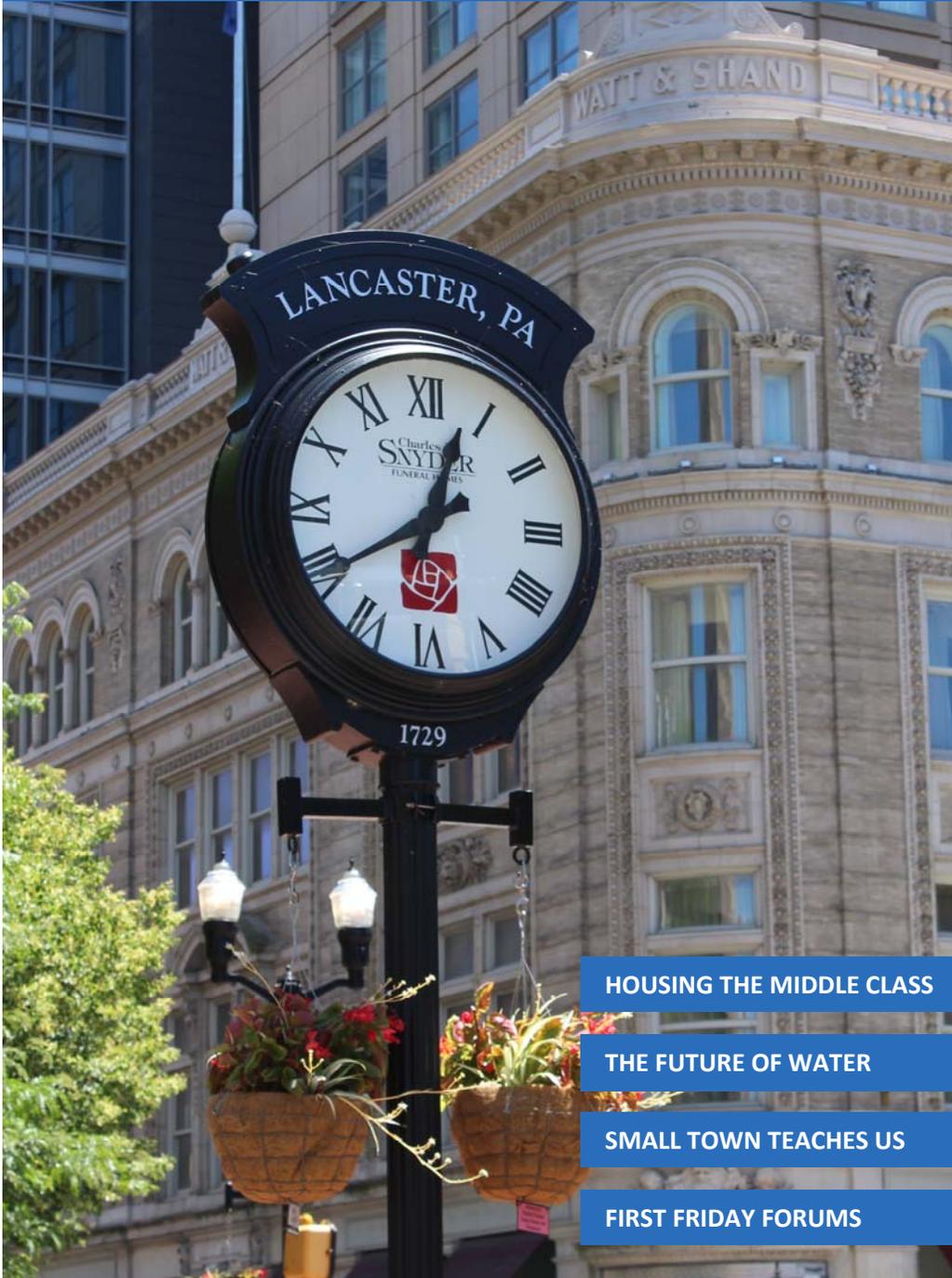


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Hourglass Quarterly



HOUSING THE MIDDLE CLASS

THE FUTURE OF WATER

SMALL TOWN TEACHES US

FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

SMALL TOWN TEACHES US

Thomas Friedman on Willmar, MN

Excerpts from an Op-Ed by Thomas L. Friedman, "President Trump, Come to Willmar," appearing in the NYTimes on May 14, 2019.

Since I've been visiting towns around America for the past two years, I decided to go back to Willmar, Minnesota to see how it had changed in a decade. I started my tour at Willmar High School, where the principal, Paul Schmitz, began by showing me a big stainless steel world map hanging in the lobby, with pins representing all the different places the students hail from. That map has pins from some 30 countries across Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the rest of the world.



The cliché about America today is that we're a country divided between two coasts. That's not what I've found. America is actually a checkerboard of towns and cities — some rising from the bottom up and others collapsing from the top down. I've been trying to understand why some communities rise and others fall.

The answers to three questions make all the difference: 1) Is your town hungry for workers to fill open jobs? 2) Can your town embrace

the new immigrants ready to do those jobs, immigrants who may come not just from Latin America, but also from nonwhite and non-Christian nations of Africa or Asia? And 3) Does your town have a critical mass of "leaders without authority"?

These are business leaders, educators, philanthropists, and social entrepreneurs ready to lead their community toward inclusion and problem-solving. These leaders without authority check their party politics at the door and focus only on what works. They also network together into what I call "complex adaptive coalitions" to spearhead both economic and societal change.

Schmitz, the Willmar principal, will be the first to tell you that his school and town are still a work in progress, but progress there is. "Sustainable democracy in the world depends on the United States being a beacon of democracy, and that depends on how well we manage democracy in a pluralistic society. And that depends on healthy public schools, because the only shared experience we have any longer in America is through public education. Where else in this country do you have Christians and Muslims and atheists, wealthy and poor kids, from all over the world, sharing in the great American experiment? It's not perfect. But it works." **H**