What can we learn from urban plans that never happened? Alan Lessoff’s presentation will offer an overview of an ongoing exhibition, digital history, and publishing project on the theme of failed urban plans or development proposals and unbuilt buildings in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. Beyond allowing people to imagine what might have been, examinations of unrealized plans offers a vivid way to discuss how people at different periods perceived their city and its problems and debated the direction it should take. One learns an enormous amount about the range of interests and perspectives present in any city at different periods by examining what some people proposed and others blocked, what the public debated and decided not to do, and what was attempted without success. Lessoff’s team has undertaken what is likely the first Unbuilt City project to examine a medium-sized community as opposed to a large, prominent city such as Chicago or Los Angeles. It helps us gain a better sense of how major lines of urban thought took shape in a smaller, nonmetropolitan place.

Lessoff’s talk will take place on November 8 at 7:30 PM in Bracken Library Room 104. It is co-sponsored by the Center for Middletown Studies and the Urban Planning Department. Please direct any questions about the event to jconnoll@bsu.edu.