

The Battle of Gentrification vs. Centrifiction: The role of nonprofits

William Towey

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Ruth Bernstein

Charles Williams

Jane Compson

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William Towey

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Abstract

The Battle of Gentrification vs. Centrifigation: The role of nonprofits

William Towey

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Assistant Professor Dr. Ruth Bernstein
Social and Historical Studies,
division of School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences

This paper examines how local government, community based organizations, nonprofits, and grassroots advocacy groups can build community engagement, raise-up and prioritize the historical neighborhood, and champion the value proposition for residents who face gentrification. Using a case study in Tacoma, Washington, this paper examines how nonprofit organizations, local government, and private developers attempt to serve what are often two conflicting forces — economic development and community stabilization. Using four primary themes of review (Urban Gentrification, Public Policy, Nonprofit Response, and Community Response) this paper examines how local government, institutions, and nonprofits utilize policy, programs, outreach, engagement, CDCs, land trusts, etc. to mitigate the negative impacts of gentrification. As gentrification has become increasingly integrated into a competitive cityscape

of economic development, this paper asks if a practice of ‘centrificalion’ within community can curtail gentrification as a form of economic eminent domain.

Keywords: gentrification, centrificalion, nonprofit management, community action, urban renewal, displacement

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From the office of the Mayor to a volunteer community nonprofit, and from the desk of a developer with projects valued in the tens of millions to a pastor with a small church full of compassionate love, the people of Tacoma opened their hearts and minds to share the experiences of their community— the wins, the draws, and the losses — while holding up a level of caring, hope, and faith in their collective future that is truly inspiring.

1. Introduction

“In the Hilltop area of Tacoma the cost of a one bedroom apartment increased 18% in 2016. Most people's income did not match that increase.

I am often reminded of the juxtaposition of an emerging wealthy and healthy element of my local neighborhood that exists in deep contrast with the historically low-income residents or those who remain outside of the system and are homeless on the streets. As I return home from picking up a healthy vegetarian lunch ‘to-go’ from a nearby vegan-style deli I see some of my new ‘neighbors’ taking advantage of a break in the cold rainy ‘almost-spring’ weather of the Pacific Northwest to casually reconstruct their homeless shelter on a nearby vacant lot. The materials used by developers who are building brand new townhouse-style apartments and expensive condominiums two blocks from here are much different than the tattered cast-off tarps, sticks, and rope that the group of disheveled homeless men are working with as they do their best to ‘develop’ a residence in the foundational remains of a recently razed home.

In one of the first areas of the City of Tacoma to be developed in the early 1900s, there remain barely more than 100 of the 1,000+ original homes that once covered the southwest downtown hillside.¹ New construction of condominiums, mixed-use developments, and market rate apartments is taking place with increasing frequency near the route of the soon to be built downtown Tacoma Link light rail extension as gentrification arrives in this run-down part of the city with a historical reputation for gang violence and entrenched intergenerational poverty.

¹ City of Tacoma. “South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS.” Accessed March 21, 2017.

In the book *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the revanchist city*, author Neil Smith has a section titled, “Is Gentrification a Dirty Word?” Gentrification he notes “can be used to impart a critical inflection on radically different experiences.”² Van Weesep also describes the “winners and losers” reality of gentrification that contests its meaning.³ Smith observes that “gentrification today is ubiquitous in the central and inner cities of the advanced capitalist world” and it continues to be a central concern for residents of formerly underserved and under-resourced areas of many cities that begin to experience new, often very rapid, economic development.⁴ For some stakeholders gentrification represents a boon of economic opportunity, growth, development, increased tax revenue, and profits. For others, gentrification can have a much different meaning and outcome. This research examines how the negative effects of gentrification, that center in displacement, loss of community identity, and economic development that often does not benefit existing community (directly or indirectly), can be mitigated by nonprofit Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and local government. This type of aggregated and coordinated response to gentrification through community action has been referred to as “centrifcation” by Rev. Toney Montgomery of the Tacoma Ministerial Alliance. It is an intriguing turn of phrase that inspired this work.

The primary question this research examines, first in a general way and then through a case study of the Hilltop area of the city of Tacoma, is the role and practices of local government, CBOs, nonprofits, and advocacy groups to build community engagement, raise-up and prioritize the historical neighborhood, and champion the value proposition for residents in the face of gentrification. The investigation centers in how community nonprofit organizations,

² Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier : Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1996.30.

³ Van Weesep, Jan. "Gentrification as a Research Frontier." *Progress in Human Geography* 18, no. 1 (1994): 74-83. 75.

⁴ Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier : Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1996.38.

local government, and private developers are attempting to successfully serve what are often two conflicting forces — economic development and community stabilization. This paper examines, using four primary themes of review, how local government and community nonprofits are operating programs, outreach, engagement, and other services geared toward addressing the impacts of gentrification and how this guides the outcomes of future development.⁵ The four themes are:

- Urban Gentrification
- Public Policy
- Nonprofit Response
- Community Response

While there are many of examples of how urban redevelopment and gentrification have negatively impacted poorer residents who ultimately become displaced, there are also examples of how gentrification has occurred in conjunction with activities that benefit and uplift the historical residents of an area⁶. These positive outcomes often rely on meaningful broad-based community participation that links residents to an upside benefit as a result of their sustainable participation in the economic development that drives gentrification.⁷ This research will contribute to the discourse around the topic of urban gentrification by offering an examination of a relevant and interesting case study that incorporates many elements of current theory and practice.

⁵ Denzin, Norman K., and Lincoln, Yvonna S. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Handbook of Qualitative Research Paperback Edition ; Vol. 3. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998. 38.

⁶ See Hyra, Derek. "The Back-to-the-city Movement: Neighbourhood Redevelopment and Processes of Political and Cultural Displacement." *Urban Studies* 52, no. 10 (2015): 1753-773.; Brown-Saracino, Japonica. *The Gentrification debates: a reader*. Routledge, 2013.; Lees, Loretta., Slater, Tom, and Wyly, Elvin K. *The Gentrification Reader*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2010.

⁷ See Brown-Saracino, Japonica. *The Gentrification debates: a reader*. Routledge, 2013.; Lees, Loretta. "Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance?" *Urban Studies* 45, no. 12 (2008): 2449-470.; Mulroy, Ea. "Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Environment to Guide Management and Community Practice: An Organization-in-environment Approach." *Administration In Social Work* 28, no. 1 (2004): 77-96.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Paradigms

In the book titled *The Gentrification Debates* author Japonica Brown-Saracino notes four main areas of discussion within gentrification literature — “1) how to define and recognize Gentrification, 2) how, where, and when it occurs, 3) Gentrifiers’ characteristics and motivations for engaging in the process, and 4) Gentrification’s outcomes and consequences.”⁸ These categories offer a way of organizing discussion and thinking about the topic of gentrification. Over many decades there has been much work on the topic of gentrification by social scientists that have approached the question from two primary theoretical paradigms.

In the book *The New Urban Renewal* by Derek Hyra he outlines the two classic paradigms.⁹ The first, Human Ecology, explains gentrification as a process of natural selection and individual preferences. This early model doesn't account for economic and political realities that limit choices. The second, Political Economy, offers a way to explore gentrification as a systemic result of the way market economy and political decision-making intersect. The engine of economic growth acts as a propellant for community and property development, speculation, and the market based economic activities that undergird them.¹⁰ In this structure power resides within the political and economic apparatus which dictates outcomes that shape and frame winners and losers within the process of neighborhood and urban development.¹¹ Hyra also introduces a third, “Global Perspective” that considers the impact of globalization on the modern city — a notable point for this project given the proximity and impact of the city of Seattle

⁸ Brown-Saracino, Japonica. *The gentrification debates: a reader*. Routledge, 2013.

⁹ Hyra, Derek S. *The New Urban Renewal : The Economic Transformation of Harlem and Bronzeville*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 17-20.

¹⁰ Logan, John R., and Molotch, Harvey Luskin. *Urban Fortunes : The Political Economy of Place*. 20th Anniversary Ed., with a New Pref. ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

¹¹ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. 259-263.; Van Weesep, Jan. "Gentrification as a Research Frontier." *Progress in Human Geography* 18, no. 1 (1994): 74-83. 76.

relative to Tacoma.¹² While the Global Perspective remains rooted in a theory of political economy, Hyra acknowledges “that the relationship metropolitan regions have with the global economy determines urban community growth.”¹³ Van Weesep also places the topic broadly into the same two key paradigms, Ecology vs. Political Economy observing that:

On the one side we see those who support the thesis that gentrification is a result of freedom of choice, the 'human agency approach'. They find themselves pitted against those who consider 'social structures' to be the ultimate cause of change, even though the latter may concede that human activities form an intermediate explanation.¹⁴

Smith also notes the conflict “between those stressing culture and individual choice, consumption and consumer demand on the one side and others emphasizing the importance of capital, class and the impetus of shifts in the structure of social production.”¹⁵

Tacoma is located in Pierce County which topped the national list of growing counties in 2016, and the tightening marketplace in neighboring King County, where Seattle is located, represents an alert to the impact of globalization.¹⁶ Seattle’s important place in the global economy, due to the presence of a significant number of massive multinational corporations like Boeing, Microsoft, Amazon, Starbucks and others, means that neighboring Tacoma is also impacted.¹⁷ This case study of the Hilltop area is centered in the political economy approach. While noting that the larger context of globalization is significantly influencing the Seattle

¹² Ranney, David C. *Global Decisions, Local Collisions : Urban Life in the New World Order*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003. 216.

¹³ Hyra, Derek S. *The New Urban Renewal : The Economic Transformation of Harlem and Bronzeville*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 19.

¹⁴ Van Weesep, Jan. "Gentrification as a Research Frontier." *Progress in Human Geography* 18, no. 1 (1994): 74-83. 75.

¹⁵ Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier : Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1996. 30.

¹⁶ Martin, Kate. “Tacoma apartment rents see steep rise in 2016, data show.” *The News Tribune*, January 7, 2017. *The News Tribune*. Accessed 5/29/16.

¹⁷ Levine, Myron A. *Urban Politics : Cities and Suburbs in a Global Age*. Ninth Edition. ed. New York: Routledge, 2015.

market, the indirect impact of these forces in Tacoma remains mediated primarily by local and regional political and economic resources.

Historically, several waves of gentrification have been identified and are described by Hackworth and Smith. The first wave in the 1970s involved isolated small scale projects localized in scope and impact. The second wave in the 1980s commonly occurred in disinvested areas of cities and was characterized by displacement of existing residents and emerging neighborhood conflicts. The third wave began at the turn of the millennium as gentrification became linked to large-scale capital — integrated into coordinated private/public policy as a mechanism for the collective redevelopment of entire neighborhood or districts.

Smith proposes a modern theory of gentrification that transcends historical theory based on an “emphasis on consumer preferences” that is rooted in culture and economics.¹⁸ He argues for a modern theory of gentrification as a “structural product of the land and housing markets” describing a “back to the city movement,” but one “of capital rather than people.”¹⁹ Based on the following literature review this theory is investigated through research using a case study of the Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma.

2.2 Urban Gentrification

Gentrification is typically defined as “the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents.”²⁰ Introducing the topic of gentrification from an interdisciplinary standpoint, Hall states:

¹⁸ Smith, Neil. "Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People." In *The Gentrification Debates*, 71-86. Taylor and Francis, 2013. 72.

¹⁹ *ibid.* 83.

²⁰ "Gentrification." Merriam-Webster.com.

Shifts in America's socioeconomic geography have been documented since the 1960s, showing the reversal of White flight and a reshaping of a Nation through 2050.

Evidenced is the splaying divide between underprivileged citizens and those of the wealthier stratum. As state and local governments continue to scale back social services that impact health and well-being, how will disenfranchised groups fair in this expanding market-driven Global Society? Who will have unfettered civilian access and who will have their rights boldly compromised? Under the interminable doctrine of manifest destiny, whose welfare and security will matter most as we progress through the second decade of this century and beyond?²¹

As Hall notes, the theoretical and philosophical aspects of globalization and neoliberal doctrine ultimately collide jarringly in the day-to-day lives of those who exist on the fringes of our society. It is worth noting at this stage that in the Hilltop area of downtown Tacoma gentrification is already underway. After many decades of post-redlining disinvestment, increasing blight, and speculative property acquisitions that slowly churn inexpensive homes first into cheap rentals and then into vacant land, the historical residents of this area — African Americans, immigrants, and lower income residents — are seeing their neighborhood transformed in a way that seems to be accelerating much more quickly than their ability to respond.

Social scientist Ruth Adele Glass coined the term ‘Gentrification’ in 1964 during her work in London and “she believed that the purpose of sociological research was to influence government policy and bring about social change.”²² Glass noted that “Once this process of gentrification starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class

²¹ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014.1.

²² “Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.”

occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed.”²³ While many definitions of gentrification center in the technical aspects of urban studies such as planning and design, economic development, and market response, the theme of social impact always takes primacy when the topic of gentrification is viewed from the perspective of those upon whom it is inflicted. For the existing residents of formerly disinvested and struggling neighborhoods that undergo gentrification the experience can be summed up in one word — displacement.

Within this framework of social impact a basic definition to act as a starting point might be, “Gentrification - the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the Central City into middle-class residential or commercial use.”²⁴ However, this basic interpretation captures little of the human effect and impact upon people who are the historical residents of the particular neighborhood being transformed. It does little to implicate questions of class, race, or predatory elements of gentrification. A more elaborate understanding might expand our scope of discussion:

Gentrification, to put it bluntly and simply, involves both the exploitation of the economic value of real estate and the treatment of local residents as objects rather than the subjects of upgrading. Even though population movement is a common feature of cities, gentrification is specifically the replacement of a less affluent group by a wealthy or social group — a definition which relates gentrification to class.²⁵

This is an important recognition of how gentrification connects to a class-based reality of displacement.

²³ Glass, Ruth. *London : Aspects of Change*. Centre for Urban Studies Report ; No. 3. London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1964. xxiv.

²⁴ Lees, Loretta. "Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance?" *Urban Studies* 45, no. 12 (2008): 2449-470. 2449.

²⁵ Berg, Smith, Breznik, Uitermark, Reinders. *Houses in transformation: Interventions in European Gentrification*. nai010 publishers, 2008. 9.

A narrative of social good

A common narrative around gentrification is one that frames it as a form of community engagement and commitment to neighborhood transformation. It links the idea of a potential personal economic reward with the notion of contributing a form of social good.²⁶ For the gentrifier, this may perhaps be viewed as a risk-taking social enterprise whereby the middle-class can help the poor. A common anecdotal vision of gentrification is that of run-down warehouses being turned into artists' lofts inhabited by bohemian hipsters who risk life and limb to locate themselves within a run-down working-class neighborhood.²⁷ Beauregard notes an ideology of "urban pioneers" who are keen to help restore an "undesirable neighborhood into a place for good living."²⁸ This storyline is a useful mechanism that supports the normative integration of gentrification into the framework of a city's economic development efforts.²⁹

Gentrification as an economic development strategy

As modern cities increasingly find themselves competing with their neighbors for economic development opportunities, transit-oriented development, and desirable employers and jobs, they utilize a narrative of urban redevelopment and gentrification as part of their economic development planning. Smith argues that underneath this superficial layer there exists a complex and chaotic process and that "gentrification must be theorized as part of the organic totality of the social formation," noting the importance of attending to "the conjuncture of production, reproduction, and consumption" when thinking of the larger implications of the process of

²⁶ Beauregard, Robert A. "The chaos and complexity of Gentrification." *Gentrification of the City* (1986): 35-55.

²⁷ Hackworth, Jason, and Neil Smith. "The Changing State of Gentrification." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 92, no. 4 (2001): 464-77.

²⁸ Beauregard, Robert A. "The chaos and complexity of Gentrification." *Gentrification of the City* (1986): 35-55. 37.

²⁹ Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier : Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1996. 30.

gentrification.³⁰ Smith speaks for a deeper understanding that perhaps goes beyond what might be seen as a spurious veneer of a simplistic supply-side market driven theory.

Mulroy's work encounters gentrification from the perspective of Social Work, concisely noting that, "Gentrified neighborhoods, however, tended to displace and disperse many local very-low income residents and furthered their downward mobility in search of rental housing they could afford."³¹ This displacement of those who are least able to contribute economically to the newly gentrified neighborhood seems to undergird, either explicitly, or implicitly, the post facto reality of class-based gentrification. The somewhat organic and marginal process that originated a historical view of gentrification is increasingly overshadowed by a "hegemonic new-build economic development strategy" that links private and public partnerships with the goal of downtown revitalization or the creation of nearby urban centers and confirms that gentrification exists today as a form of neo-colonialism formatted directly into the mainstream process of neoliberal capitalism and urban development.³² This framework of urban gentrification seems to closely align with what is happening in the Hilltop area of Tacoma.

2.3 Public Policy

The role of public policy in the field of gentrification took on new meaning during the 1990s. At the same time, new scholarship focused on the "effects of Gentrification rather than its causes."³³ Discussion of causes may center in themes of demand and supply-side explanations

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Mulroy, Ea. "Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Environment to Guide Management and Community Practice: An Organization-in-environment Approach." *Administration In Social Work* 28, no. 1 (2004). 77-96. 78.

³² Lees, Loretta., Slater, Tom, and Wyly, Elvin K. *The Gentrification Reader*. London ; New York: Routledge, (2010). XIV.

³³ Van Weesep, Jan. "Gentrification as a Research Frontier." *Progress in Human Geography* 18, no. 1 (1994): 74-83. 75.

that note the attractions of revitalized urban centers for Millennials.³⁴ While the effect may be that “gentrification partly reduces inner-city poverty by removing minority and low-wage earners from the urban core.”³⁵ The process of gentrification has become more systematic in part because “the state is investing in the process more directly than in the past” notes DeSena.³⁶ Hackworth and Smith observed that “local governments, state level agencies, and federal administrations are assisting gentrification more assertively than during the 1980s.”³⁷ The focus on effects rather than causes directly impacted public policy as Lees et al explain:

Shifting the focus from cause to effect revealed a remarkably broad, deep, and significant change that was underway: more and more elected officials, bureaucrats, consultants, lobbyists, and all other actors involved in shaping public policy, began to devise programmes to encourage gentrification.³⁸

Referred to as the third wave of gentrification by Hackworth and Smith, the coordinated efforts of public policy and municipal investment are teamed with large-scale private capital as “large developers rework entire neighbourhoods, often with state support.”³⁹

Mulroy notes that the social goals of these changes were deliberate and that, “The return of upper- and middle-income people to the central city was an explicit public policy and an economic development goal of gentrification.”⁴⁰ This is echoed by Newman and Ashton who claim that, “The local state is a key player in this process, seeking to organize the community

³⁴ Brown-Saracino, Japonica. *The gentrification debates: a reader*. Routledge, 2013.

³⁵ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. 2.

³⁶ *ibid.* 259.

³⁷ Hackworth, Jason, and Neil Smith. "The Changing State of Gentrification." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 92, no. 4 (2001) 464-77. 465.

³⁸ Lees, Loretta., Slater, Tom, and Wyly, Elvin K. *The Gentrification Reader*. London ; New York: Routledge, (2010). 447.

³⁹ Hackworth, Jason, and Neil Smith. "The Changing State of Gentrification." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 92, no. 4 (2001). 464-77. 467.

⁴⁰ Mulroy, Ea. "Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Environment to Guide Management and Community Practice: An Organization-in-environment Approach." *Administration In Social Work* 28, no. 1 (2004). 84.

development sector and neighborhood political constituencies,” and that it accomplishes this “through its control over discretionary funds, access to land, and ability to provide linkages to resources from county, state, and federal governments.”⁴¹ They go on to note that recently “the generalization of gentrification has incorporated the desire to use mixed-income development to end concentrated poverty into the imagination of local political leaders and policymakers envisioning alternative futures for their cities,” and that the “changing discourse of gentrification, revitalization, and poverty provides legitimacy for local governments seeking to revitalize their cities and reduce their responsibilities towards the poor.”⁴² It is perhaps worth examining the efficacy of such claims.

A narrative of social good to justify policy

The underlying economic incentive that is always a part of the gentrification debate is often reframed as a social good. The harsh realities of displacement for many existing residents is often glossed over by what some see as cynical claims of societal benefits in the form of increasingly diverse neighborhoods that enable the transfer of social capital and opportunity from new middle-class residents to the existing low-income and poor residents.⁴³ It is a claim that may seem to position a low income lifestyle as undesirable, non-contributing, and lacking value.

The often-touted goals of community diversity and social integration that municipalities offer as a benefit of gentrification may present well in theory, however, the practice is more uncertain in its outcomes. DeSena notes that, “There is little socializing between long-term residents and newcomers, and there are clashes between these groups over public practices, such

⁴¹ Newman, Kathe, and Philip Ashton. "Neoliberal Urban Policy and New Paths of Neighborhood Change in the American Inner City." *Environment and Planning A* 36, no. 7 (2004): 1151-172. 1152.

⁴² *ibid.* 1154.

⁴³ *ibid.* 1154.

as barbecues in the park and drinking on the corner.”⁴⁴ Wyly and Hammel state that “contemporary gentrification, therefore, has become mutually constituted with housing policy” and “has altered the environment in which policy makers seek to revitalize the concentrations of poverty inscribed by several generations of public housing policy.”⁴⁵ The narrative of ‘positive gentrification’ as a public policy approach to affordable housing bears examination.

Lees notes that gentrification is “increasingly promoted in policy circles both in Europe and North America on the assumption that it will lead to less segregated and more sustainable communities.”⁴⁶ This idea may be popular with municipalities which are keen to redevelop blighted areas of their cities in partnership with profit motivated private developers and Lees observes that:

There is a poor evidence base for this policy [and] the literature tells us, despite the new middle classes’ desire for diversity and difference they tend to self-segregate and, far from being tolerant, gentrification is part of an aggressive, revanchist ideology designed to retake the inner city for the middle classes.⁴⁷

Hyra also questions these policies:

I see what I call "diversity segregation" as a central challenge in burgeoning mixed-income, mixed-race neighborhoods. In diversity segregation, racially and economically disparate people live next to each other, but not alongside each other. So-called "diverse" communities often remain internally segregated because meaningful interactions across

⁴⁴ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. 261.

⁴⁵ Wyly, Elvin K., and Daniel J. Hammel. "Islands of Decay in Seas of Renewal: Housing Policy and the Resurgence of Gentrification." *Housing Policy Debate* 10, no. 4 (1999): 711-71. 768.

⁴⁶ Lees, Loretta. "Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance?" *Urban Studies* 45, no. 12 (2008): 2449-470. 2549.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* 2549.

income and class have failed to materialize. As long as such divides exist, the benefits of mixed-income communities won't be equitably felt.⁴⁸

Lees concludes that:

Social mix policies also destroy, in my mind, their moral authority (see Blomley, 2004) because they socially construct the middle class or middle-income groups as a natural category in contrast to a demonised working class or low-income groups (and this is done spatially). They push the idea that we all should somehow be/become middle class and that we all want to be middle class. They are about social engineering (social cleansing) and all the problematic connotations that go with that. They forge a relationship between property and proprietary, owner-occupiers are well behaved and 'normal', whilst social tenants are problematic and abnormal—they are 'othered'.⁴⁹

It is this 'othering' that perhaps connects most deeply to the claims of neo-colonialism as an implicit component of gentrification and calls into question the process of policy analysis and formation that must be a part any equitable gentrification goal.

Equitable policy options rooted in community

Ludell argues for policy strategies that link affordable housing initiatives to “cross cutting [multi-agency]” policy approaches in order to create a context of interdisciplinary solutions and diversity of solutions. This approach supports Beauregard’s claim that gentrification is rooted in a chaotic and complex systemic problem evidenced, as Mulroy points out, in a myriad of socially driven responses best viewed through the lens of process rather than outcome.⁵⁰ An example of

⁴⁸ Hyra, Derek | Op-Ed. "3 Things Cities and HUD Can Do to Stop Gentrification That Segregates." *Next City.org* (Philadelphia), June 30, 2015.

⁴⁹ Lees, Loretta. "Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance?" *Urban Studies* 45, no. 12 (2008): 2449-470. 2563.

⁵⁰ Lubell, Jeffrey. "Preserving and Expanding Affordability in Neighborhoods Experiencing Rising Rents and Property Values." *Cityscape* 18, no. 3 (2016): 131-46. 146.

how equitable housing exists naturally is described by Newman and Wyly within a framework of “informal housing markets” that capitalize social capital and community goodwill to allow vulnerable tenants (disabled, fixed-income seniors, etc.) to remain in landlord relationships that act to maintain an unstructured form of rent control.⁵¹ However, they note that from a landlord's perspective, as gentrification accelerates “it’s one thing to lose \$300 a month, another thing to lose \$600 a month.”⁵² Clearly there are limits to the extent that informal markets and goodwill can sustain effective intervention.

There is potential to link these sort of inherent elements of community-driven social capital using policies described by Ludell such as rent stabilization, shared equity homeownership, and “preserving unsubsidized but affordable housing,” to mission-driven ownership models that “enable participating nonprofit organizations to purchase decent-quality, market-rate affordable properties for the purposes of maintaining them as affordable over time.”⁵³ Connecting policy ideas that undergird equitable outcomes to more than just the building of new mixed-income housing developments is an additional element of discussion when addressing decolonization and othering. Similar to Mulroy’s articulation of both vertical and horizontal forces acting within the community landscape, Hyra also evidences this thinking, noting that “city and federal officials must go beyond affordable housing efforts and stimulate meaningful social interactions among new and long-term residents to weave a new social fabric of integration in these vibrant, transitioning neighborhoods.”⁵⁴ Mulroy agrees, observing that

⁵¹ Newman, Kathe, and Elvin Wyly. "The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City." *Urban Studies* 43, no. 1 (2006): 23-57. 49.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ Lubell, Jeffrey. "Preserving and Expanding Affordability in Neighborhoods Experiencing Rising Rents and Property Values." *Cityscape* 18, no. 3 (2016): 131-46. 135.

⁵⁴ Hyra, Derek | Op-Ed. "3 Things Cities and HUD Can Do to Stop Gentrification That Segregates." *Next City.org* (Philadelphia), June 30, 2015.

“The social environment and the physical environment are tightly linked and intertwined.”⁵⁵

However, it is worth noting again that physical co-location alone does not provide a solution to community diversity and social integration. Effective policy in this area also requires strong efforts to connect the interpersonal elements of human relationships that undergird the true social capital of robust and healthy community.⁵⁶

As this discussion highlights, the role of public policy plays an increasingly important role in the way that gentrification is understood by some and experienced by others. The failure to properly engage existing community in housing solutions that also provide viable social context often results in a negative outcome for participants in mixed-income solutions. It also highlights the need for further research into what successful efforts at social integration would look like.

2.4 Nonprofit Response

Against this background of change and economic development, the work of municipal and nonprofit community-based organizations takes on increasing importance for those who see the potential and hope of prosperity while also recognizing the relentless pressure of economic displacement for others.⁵⁷ As Fraser and Kick observe, “Nonprofits have long been involved in managing neighborhood affairs, including the provision of social services, production of housing, and neighborhood redevelopment.”⁵⁸ They expand on this relative to gentrification, noting that, “Whether their activities are framed as neighborhood stabilization, redevelopment, or

⁵⁵ Mulroy, Ea. "Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Environment to Guide Management and Community Practice: An Organization-in-environment Approach." *Administration In Social Work* 28, no. 1 (2004). 79.

⁵⁶ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. 261.

⁵⁷ Hyra, Derek. "The Back-to-the-city Movement: Neighbourhood Redevelopment and Processes of Political and Cultural Displacement." *Urban Studies* 52, no. 10 (2015).

⁵⁸ Fraser, James C, and Edward L Kick. "Governing Urban Restructuring with City-Building Nonprofits." *Environment and Planning A* 46, no. 6 (2014): 1445-461.1448.

revitalization, the work that city-building nonprofits do in orchestrating urban restructuring is substantial.”⁵⁹

The goal of most communities who experience gentrification is to mitigate the inevitable physical, economic, and ultimately cultural displacement.⁶⁰ There are some key opportunities and barriers to this outcome for local nonprofits and community based organizations.

Community Development Corporations and Land Trusts

One of the most effective ways that local community can mitigate the negative consequences of gentrification is by maintaining access to low income and affordable housing stocks. Community nonprofit agencies can play a crucial role in how this takes place. Newman and Ashton argue that, “Revitalization that focuses on drawing in higher-income residents and on increasing homeownership has the effect of targeting benefits away from those with very low incomes.”⁶¹ Therefore, finding mechanisms that support low income housing is crucial to avoiding displacement.

This can be accomplished by community action through the implementation of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Land Trusts that divert housing stock away from the private market rate owner/developer and link developments to land and property made available by local government, faith communities, and other nonprofit organizations.

CDCs assume the risks of organizing finance, of gaining regulatory approvals, of marketing units, and of prequalifying mortgage applicants. In addition, many of the

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 1449.

⁶⁰ Lees, Loretta. "Gentrification and Social Mixing: Towards an Inclusive Urban Renaissance?" *Urban Studies* 45, no. 12 (2008): 2449-470. 2563.

⁶¹ Newman, Kathe, and Phillip Ashton. "Neoliberal Urban Policy and New Paths of Neighborhood Change in the American Inner City." *Environment and Planning A* 36, no. 7 (2004): 1151-172. 1171.

CDCs rely on for-profit developers to carry out the actual construction on a turnkey basis in return for a small development fee.⁶²

The opportunity to support community driven efforts to create affordable housing is linked to city and housing authority partnerships that utilize a variety of policy programs, such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program, New Markets Tax Credit programs, Community Development Block Grant program, HOME, project-based Section 8 programs, tax increment financing programs, inclusionary zones, and housing trust funds.⁶³

The mechanism of rallying community support around affordable housing as a way to mitigate gentrification can be effective, as demonstrated in Greenpoint, New York. DeSena documents the role of community action in the successful efforts to change zoning laws to support higher levels of affordable housing, “The community’s slogan and chant, ‘40% GUARANTEE’ of affordable housing in development, evolved from this collective.”⁶⁴ The collective of nonprofit stakeholder organizations ranged from churches, unions, working-class residents and local politicians who together represented “a power that the Mayor [of New York] and his commissioners had not foreseen.”⁶⁵

CDC’s and Land Trusts also offer ways for nonprofits to take on specific projects such as local community centers and senior housing projects. One interesting strategy leverages market realities as “nonprofit community development corporations acquire foreclosed properties in

⁶² Newman, Kathe, and Phillip Ashton. "Neoliberal Urban Policy and New Paths of Neighborhood Change in the American Inner City." *Environment and Planning A* 36, no. 7 (2004): 1151-172.1163.

⁶³ Lubell, Jeffrey. "Preserving and Expanding Affordability in Neighborhoods Experiencing Rising Rents and Property Values." *Cityscape* 18, no. 3 (2016): 131-46. 131.

⁶⁴ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. 267.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 267.

troubled neighborhoods and redevelop them to maintain stability.”⁶⁶ However, in other examples small nonprofits have formed CDCs or similar entities that have struggled because of a loss of funding or a lack of management experience and expertise.⁶⁷ These examples highlight the challenges faced by smaller, well-intentioned, nonprofits. Additionally, local nonprofit development activity can take the form of very large entities with significant resources, experience, and expertise like local housing authorities or regional foundations and charities.

Changing Strategies for Nonprofits

In many cities “the political landscape has changed surrounding accountability and funding.”⁶⁸ A central element in this pressure results from increasing demand for limited funding resources and a desire to maximize benefit. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, an influential nonprofit research partner, describes how their Center for Working Families strategy is, “Providing a coordinated set of services to help low-income individuals and families get jobs, strengthen their finances and move up the economic ladder.”⁶⁹ The direct focus on integrated service delivery and continuum of service models is increasing the capacity of nonprofits to address the pressures of gentrification. Weinshenker investigated the increasing levels of integration and coordination among nonprofits in Vancouver, B.C. noting:

Non-profit organizations have developed a form of social cohesion based on the 'niche' that each organization has carved out for itself within the neighbourhood's increasingly competitive social service environment. The study also revealed an increasing reliance on

⁶⁶ Bayram, Armagan, and Senay Solak. "Decision Modeling for Foreclosed Property Acquisition by Community Development Corporations in the United States." *International Transactions in Operational Research* 21, no. 3 (2014): 501-24. 509.

⁶⁷ Oliver, Gordon. "Gentrification Threatens Community Development Groups." *Planning* 66, no. 8 (August 2000): 29.

⁶⁸ Ravenhorst Meerman, Judi, and Mackenzi Huyser. "Organizational Strategy in a Gentrifying Neighborhood." *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, 2014. 448-58. 456.

⁶⁹ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Center for Working Families*. 2017.

formal and informal coalitions among the non-profit organizations as a means of coordinating their diverse strategies and visions.”⁷⁰

Interestingly this increased level of inter-agency collaborations between nonprofits may also be extending into what Marwell and McInerney describe as “mixed-form markets.”⁷¹ These are markets in which “for-profit, nonprofit, and government providers coexist” and leave nonprofits increasingly “more dependent on revenue generation to meet their operational costs.”⁷²

In addition to the traditional work of community nonprofits around financial, employment, and housing supports, there seems to be a growing integration of activity between nonprofit agencies themselves and other community partners that is more structured and formalized.

Impact of grassroots nonprofits

Formal and informal nonprofit activity is often situated within the framework of a grassroots movements and volunteer organizations. Hyra notes that “some gentrifying areas once dominated by low-income minorities demonstrate an association between the movement of upper-income people and a loss of minority political representation.”⁷³ By holding firmly to these sources of neighborhood and local political power historical residents are more likely to impact local policy and neighborhood outcomes. This approach is evident in new social movements, notes Clarence Stone:

⁷⁰ Weinshenker, Allan. *The Emergence of New Strategies and Alliances among Community-based Non-profit Organizations in a Gentrifying Inner-city Neighbourhood: A Case Study of Non-profit Organizations in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*, 2009, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

⁷¹ Marwell, Nicole. "The Nonprofit/For-Profit Continuum: Theorizing the Dynamics of Mixed-Form Markets." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2005): 7-28.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Hyra, Derek. "Commentary: Causes and Consequences of Gentrification and the Future of Equitable Development Policy." *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 18, no. 3 (2016). 172.

For the lower class, where disinvestment and abandonment in housing were once an overarching threat, now we see the rise of a movement claiming a “right to the city” to counter the threat of displacement... locally based coalitions have achieved some remarkable concession and community benefits agreements... pressure from community and labor-based organizations, several cities have enacted living-wage ordinances.⁷⁴

Increasingly we have seen a resurgence in community based nonprofits’ ability to mobilize residents, often through new social media platforms, provided the topics achieve a certain level of broad appeal and urgency.

2.5 Community Response

An important area of research regarding the topic of gentrification is how local communities organize themselves in ways that can influence and shape the implementation of large-scale economic development within their neighborhoods. Unlike other social issues such as police shootings or environmental concerns that drive responsive community protest, gentrification rarely elicits the same sort of cohesive response. Forming local neighborhood groups and civic institutions that undergird the sustainable creation of social capital are critical to successful community development.⁷⁵ While fair housing practices and equal rights were certainly mainstay topics of the civil rights era movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and recent examples of economic injustice, persistent institutional/structural racism, and the killing of people of color by police have seen the rise of the new movements like Occupy and Black Lives

⁷⁴ Stone, Clarence N. "Reflections on Regime Politics." *Urban Affairs Review* 51, no. 1 (2015): 101-37. 112.

⁷⁵ Green, Gary P., and Haines, Anna. *Asset Building & Community Development*. Thousand Oaks, Calif. Sage Publications, 2002. 153.

Matter, there are still few examples of any substantive modern-day protest movement specific to the processes of gentrification.

Perhaps it is because of its distributed and incremental nature that only in extreme cases does the topic generate robust protest or civil disobedience.⁷⁶ Heckworth and Smith note that since the early 1990s “Effective resistance to gentrification has declined as the working class is continually displaced from the inner city.”⁷⁷ However there may be a number of interrelated elements that impact the decline in community protest, response, and organization.

Barriers to community response

The role of community groups and the shape of their protests have shifted in response to decades of neoliberalism. Lees, Slater, and Wiley note the changing nature of urban social movements over the last 40 years that have more recently found these movements repositioned as entities that provide community programming and other services rather than protest and resistance due to the decline of local state funding and other pressures of neoliberalism such as rising inequality of wealth and stagnant wages.⁷⁸ Mayer examines how deep changes in economic policy, neoliberalism, poorly funded governmental capacities and systemic changes in the criminal justice system have all had a dramatic impact the collective ability of a community to resist:

New urban, social and labor market policies had not only the effect of ‘activating’ large parts of the urban underclass into (downgraded) labor markets, but they also impacted many (former) social movement organizations, which increasingly reproduce themselves

⁷⁶ Lees, Loretta., Slater, Tom, and Wyly, Elvin K. *The Gentrification Reader*. London ; New York: Routledge, (2010). 525.

⁷⁷ Hackworth, Jason, and Neil Smith. "The Changing State of Gentrification." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 92, no. 4 (2001). 468.

⁷⁸ Lees, Loretta., Slater, Tom, and Wyly, Elvin K. *The Gentrification Reader*. London ; New York: Routledge, (2010). 525.

by implementing local social and employment programs or community development—and are seen by many as doing a better job at ‘combating social exclusion’ than any competing (private or state) agency could.⁷⁹

Additionally, the communities that are often most impacted by the forces of gentrification are also those communities most likely to be subjected to “a brutal new authoritarianism in urban spaces of the neoliberal penal state which squashes protest almost before it has a chance to make its presence felt.”⁸⁰ The militarization of police during recent years has changed the face of access to public space and community protest in dramatic ways that often reframe (and marketize via media production) social unrest in terms of property rights rather than social or civil rights.⁸¹

In the discussion of public space and how people connect with democracy through their opportunity to protest and create policy change, Watkins notes that “beyond the obvious segregation of people by race and class, the power politics of public space aims to limit, redefine, and disempower citizen participation.”⁸² In the case of gentrification this reality presents as a problematic that is resolved by the dislocation of those who do not fit the desired economic profile that supports urban redevelopment. Hall expands on this observation by discussing the outcomes of gentrification and the barriers created that prevent the urban poor and minorities from participating in the newly updated and gentrified areas, noting that, “Gentrification partly reduces inner-city poverty by removing minority and low wage earners from the urban core, rather than equalizing the distribution of social wealth.”⁸³ Hall’s analysis engages with the neoliberal dynamic of increasing economic inequality and the ever-growing wealth gap—one

⁷⁹ Mayer, Margit. "The ‘Right to the City’ in the Context of Shifting Mottos of Urban Social Movements." *City* 13, no. 2-3 (2009): 362-74. 365.

⁸⁰ Wacquant, Loic J. D. *Punishing the Poor : The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity. Politics, History, and Culture*. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2009. 49.

⁸¹ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. xvi.

⁸² *ibid.* xv.

⁸³ *ibid.* 2.

that is hyper-extended when viewed through the lens of race.⁸⁴ Watkins notes that “The growing economic and social inequality spells danger for the ruling class, making authoritarianism a necessity for them. The ruling class cannot continue to allow the growing number of propertyless to make decisions that affect their wealth and privileges.”⁸⁵ These realities stymie the ability of a community to confront gentrification directly and CBOs are finding themselves positioned, or perhaps more accurately co-opted, into working as partners to help facilitate the process in ways that reduce the negative impacts upon their constituents rather than prevent them.

Opportunities for Community Response

An area of opportunity for communities that hope to strengthen and enable their ability to remain viable in the face of gentrification while avoiding displacement lies within existing community, civic, and local government political power.

Mulroy’s work investigates the impact of horizontal and vertical ties within the area of community development and neighborhood stabilization. Utilizing the example of gentrification she notes the role of “external forces that may work to decrease the strength of local horizontal ties as vertical ties to distant but influential and powerful sources increase.”⁸⁶ Lees et al note that “In nearly every community experiencing gentrification, there is an enormous but latent reservoir of hidden resistance.”⁸⁷ The opportunity for community resistance to gentrification is located in the strengthening of the horizontal ties that have existed historically and can be built upon to

⁸⁴ Sullivan, Laura, Tatjana Meschede, Lars Dietrich, and Thomas Shapiro. "The Racial Wealth Gap." *Institute for Assets and Social Policy*, Brandeis University. DEMOS (2015).

⁸⁵ Hall, Horace R., Robinson, Cynthia Cole, and Kohli, Amor. *Uprooting Urban America : Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race, Class and Gentrification*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. xvi.

⁸⁶ Mulroy, Ea. "Theoretical Perspectives on the Social Environment to Guide Management and Community Practice: An Organization-in-environment Approach." *Administration In Social Work* 28, no. 1 (2004). 86.

⁸⁷ Lees, Loretta., Slater, Tom, and Wyly, Elvin K. *The Gentrification Reader*. London ; New York: Routledge, (2010). 526.

form robust and engaged forms of civic advocacy and pressure that shape the process of gentrification.

Echoing the importance of strengthening existing neighborhood and community bonds, Curley notes that in creating social capital “what were most important for feelings of trust, shared norms and values among residents were neighborhood institutions and facilities, followed by place attachment and safety” and that less important was a “particular neighborhood demographic mix or certain individual or household characteristics.”⁸⁸ This represents a crucial way that existing communities achieve centrification through not only social capital but also in terms of political capital. Hyra notes that “Fostering micro-level interaction and political equity can help low-and moderate-income residents benefit from the new urban renewal” while reinforcing the importance of historical resident’s capacity to maintain their civic leadership role.⁸⁹ However, he warns that “longtime residents who remain amid the gentrification have experienced political and cultural displacement as more affluent newcomers take over civic associations and institutional leadership positions.”⁹⁰ The opportunity to face adversity, together as a community, can act as a catalyst agent for action and effective community centrification by drawing upon these historical parallels.

Creating and framing community messaging

In another example, neighborhood response centers on community identity and ethnicity rather than affordable housing. The power of community action demonstrated how small numbers of activated community members could swing the pendulum of gentrification — in one way or another. In this case, one group of residents were supportive of gentrification while

⁸⁸ Curley, Alexandra M. "RELOCATING THE POOR: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD RESOURCES." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2010): 79-103. 95.

⁸⁹ Hyra, Derek | Op-Ed. "3 Things Cities and HUD Can Do to Stop Gentrification That Segregates." *Next City.org* (Philadelphia), June 30, 2015.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

another emerged to counter that thrust. Kasinitz notes that, “Boerum Hill shows not only that neighborhoods are socially constructed, but also that this process may be dominated by a small minority of active residents who come to control the resources of definition-making.”⁹¹ This example demonstrates that small numbers of actively engaged community members can create noteworthy results.

Another consideration for successful community action is related to how the message and narrative of that action is framed. As June Lee Gin notes:

West Oakland movement was better able to get core objectives of affordable housing and equitable development into media coverage because it was less controversial. Poor people’s movements face a paradox. Frames that amplify the grievances of the discontented masses are more likely to alienate movement outsiders and cost the movement the support of elites and the general public. Frames that resonate better with mainstream values are more likely to secure elite support and win public opinion, but may not be sufficiently challenging to stimulate grassroots protest against material conditions.⁹²

Having a message that connects effectively with the mechanisms that undergird effective outcomes may be contingent on forces outside of the local community. This type of multi-layered connection may be a crucial element for success.

⁹¹ Kasinitz, Philip. "The Gentrification of “Boerum Hill”: Neighborhood Change and Conflicts over Definitions." *Qualitative Sociology* 11, no. 3 (1988): 163-82.

⁹² Gin, June, and Taylor, Dorceta E. “*We’re Here and We’re Not Leaving*”: *Framing, Political History, and Community Response to Gentrification in the San Francisco Bay Area*, 2007, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. xii.

Leveraging existing structures of community capacity

Another factor in effective community response is the nature and form of existing structures of community capacity. Leslie Martin, in a study of community response to gentrification in Atlanta, notes:

Mobilization was more likely to occur in neighborhoods in which long-time residents had a pre-existing organization or dense social networks. Inter-organizational competition between new and long-time residents, or among factions of longtime residents, served to keep all parties highly mobilized, but hampered the effectiveness of mobilization. Organizations with external legitimacy gained support from external allies, and thus were more likely to be effective in protecting the neighborhood from the negative effects of gentrification.⁹³

This example highlights the importance of how community response is structured in ways that effectively leverage capabilities internally and externally.

Understanding how community action can be effective should also be viewed in conjunction with the capacity, flexibility, and willingness of local government to activate public policy that supports and enables equitable outcomes for existing residents in areas that are experiencing gentrification.⁹⁴ In this context the ability of neighborhood community to contest and connect successfully with local government is impacted directly by the goals and beliefs of a political leadership that can be influenced by structured community systems and groups.

What seems clear is that effective community response to the negative aspects of gentrification can be activated through a range of channels that bind a sense of community into action. Those forces potentially include housing, ethnicity, better jobs and economic

⁹³ Martin, Leslie, and Rubinson, Richard. *Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood. Mobilizing in Response to Gentrification in Atlanta*, 2003, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. Abstract.

⁹⁴ Howell, Shea. "Mayor's Reality." *Michigan Citizen* (Highland Park, Mich.). November 09, 2014.

development, historical place-making, political goals of equity and inclusion, community identity, and religion.

2.5 Key Research Questions

Noting how the preceding review frames some of the processes and outcomes for neighborhoods that experience gentrification, there are two key research questions that lend themselves to examination and connect to my investigation and assessment of the revitalization of the Hilltop area of Tacoma:

- In Tacoma, how successful have stakeholders been in their efforts to coordinate development of the Hilltop area while managing the impact of gentrification?
- How can the negative effects of gentrification that center in displacement, loss of community identity, and economic development that often does not benefit existing community (directly or indirectly), be mitigated by nonprofit Community Based Organizations (CBO's) and local government?

3. Research Design and Methods

In an effort to answer the preceding research questions, primary and secondary sources of data are utilized in an interdisciplinary approach centered on a case study of the Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma, Washington.⁹⁵ The primary data are a series of 16 semi-structured personal interviews with key stakeholders that took place during April, May, and June of 2017⁹⁶. Secondary data took the form of historical review/analysis of census/ACS data, reports, maps, and plans.⁹⁷ The research was designed to include theory, practice, and case study in pursuit of a better understanding of the key question of how community can mitigate the negative effects of gentrification and provide insight into some best practices and policies that undergird this mitigation. The research also provides, in an anecdotal individual example, an opportunity to engage with some of the larger questions of gentrification through the lens of local experiences. My analysis uses a multi-layered approach that recognizes both the internal elements of neighborhood and community based organizations, local political power, and external regional and federal factors.⁹⁸

By interviewing a series of community stakeholders in a semi-structured method it is possible to see the problem from a variety of perspectives.⁹⁹ Kitchin and Tate note that semi-structured methods are “one of the most commonly used qualitative methods.”¹⁰⁰ For this case study the participants were selected because they are “knowledgeable about the topic and expert

⁹⁵ Denzin, Norman K., and Lincoln, Yvonna S. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Handbook of Qualitative Research Paperback Edition ; Vol. 3. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998. 36.

⁹⁶ *ibid.* 37.

⁹⁷ Kitchin, Rob., and Tate, Nicholas J. *Conducting Research in Human Geography : Theory, Methodology and Practice*. Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2000. 60.

⁹⁸ Lagendijk, Arnoud, Rianne Van Melik, Freek De Haan, Huib Ernste, Huub Ploegmakers, and Serap Kayasu. "Comparative Approaches to Gentrification: A Research Framework." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 105, no. 3 (2014): 358-65.

⁹⁹ Rubin, Herbert J., and Rubin, Irene. *Qualitative Interviewing : The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Kitchin, Rob., and Tate, Nicholas J. *Conducting Research in Human Geography : Theory, Methodology and Practice*. Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2000. 213.

by virtue of involvement and specific life events able to reflect and provide detailed experiential information about the area under investigation.”¹⁰¹

The interview participants were identified through their public or professional capacity relative to the social and economic policies, programs, services, and development within the Hilltop area over the past ten years. They were chosen because of their ability to offer a variety of perspectives and experiential knowledge of the historical goals, practices, processes, and understandings of the outcomes that have emerged and those that are anticipated.

The semi-structured interviews were scheduled in advance, usually lasting between 30 minutes to an hour, recorded and transcribed, and took place away from the day-to-day activities of the participants.¹⁰² Additionally, my own experience and knowledge of the Hilltop area was an active part of the interview process. Holstein and Gubrium note that, “The interviewer's background knowledge can sometimes be an invaluable resource for assisting respondents to explore and describe their circumstances, actions, and feelings.”¹⁰³ A key feature of the semi-structured interview method is that they are “organized around a set of predetermined questions and other questions emerge from dialogue.”¹⁰⁴ The table below provides an overview of the how the interview participants are located within community structure.

¹⁰¹ DiCicco-Bloom, Barbara, and Benjamin F Crabtree. "The Qualitative Research Interview." *Medical Education* 40, no. 4 (2006): 314-21. 319.

¹⁰² Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design : Choosing among Five Approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007.118-20 ; Fontana, A., and J. H. Frey. "The Interviews: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Texts." IN Denzin, NK & Lincoln, YS (Eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks." (2003).

¹⁰³ Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. *Qualitative Research Methods: The active interview* : SAGE Publications Ltd (1995). 46.

¹⁰⁴ DiCicco-Bloom, Barbara, and Benjamin F Crabtree. "The Qualitative Research Interview." *Medical Education* 40, no. 4 (2006): 314-21. 319.

Table 1 - Interview Participants

Name	Nonprofit Executive	Politician	City Staff / Planner	Developer	Community Leader	Faith Leader	Gender / Race ¹⁰⁵
Flemister			X				F/AA
Foster				X			M/W
Grossman		X		X			M/W
Jumper			X				F/AA
Klein	X				X		M/W
Lisicich	X				X		F/W
Mirra	X			X			M/W
Montgomery	X				X	X	M/AA
Mosesly	X				X		M/AA
Munce			X				M/W
Nelson					X	X	M/AA
Noguera			X	X			M/W
Ponepinto	X						F/AA
Steele				X		X	M/AA
Strickland		X					F/AA
Walker-Lee	X	X			X		F/W

The research also includes historical analysis and review of a variety of secondary data sources that provide interesting and important insight into the current and historical demographic, economic, and physical landscape of the Hilltop area, examples of which are included Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁵ Note: M/F = Male/Female. AA/W = African American/White.

Case Study — The Hilltop neighborhood in Tacoma, WA

Over the past several years the City of Tacoma faced important decisions as the Hilltop area has been targeted for redevelopment. The City has been eager to encourage redevelopment in this area and worked diligently to update and streamline planning codes and provide alluring incentives to spur investment. More recently, the City, in partnership with nonprofits and CBO's, has been very deliberate and thoughtful about how development could take place while avoiding most of the negative aspects of gentrification. The Hilltop area is slated to receive over five hundred million dollars of new investment in the next five to seven years in the form of a new Tacoma Link light rail extension, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) focused residential apartments/condominiums, and large scale mixed-use developments. Situated adjacent to the core downtown area of the City of Tacoma, the Hilltop is positioned at the crest of a fairly steep hillside; and with beautiful views of the mountains and Puget Sound there are big plans for the coming decade. With this growth comes gentrification.

In 2016 rents in the Hilltop area increased between 16-18%.¹⁰⁶ For the first time in many decades several new apartment buildings have been built, new businesses in refurbished old brick buildings have opened, and large-scale city-sponsored private-public developments are taking place. Gentrification is not only driving notable increases in rent but also limiting availability as market demand collides with historically declining supply.

In the past year or two, as this surge of gentrification has become apparent, new businesses that would never have existed on the hilltop a few years ago are opening with increasing frequency. They cater to middle-class millennials and other new residents who enjoy

¹⁰⁶Martin, Kate. "Tacoma apartment rents see steep rise in 2016, data show." *The News Tribune*, January 7, 2017. *The News Tribune*. accessed 5/29/16.; Kathy McCormick. Tacoma Housing Authority. "Introductory remarks." Councilmember Blocker community event, Tacoma, WA. March 16, 2017.

an increasingly urban setting replete with coffee shops, bars, restaurants, and close access to transit centers, the downtown core, and the nearby 6th Avenue District.

For many years the City of Tacoma has been viewing the Hilltop with eager anticipation as the opportunity to redevelop the area into a vibrant tax producing expansion of the downtown core emerged from a hope to a reality. The City worked to bring several important projects to the Hilltop area including large-scale mixed-use projects, a new Health Care Center, and most importantly, an extension of the light rail service that links Tacoma to the entire Puget Sound region transit system. Increasingly, Tacoma serves as a bedroom community for the larger city of Seattle that has experienced intense pressure on housing pricing and continues to drive Transit Oriented Development in its neighboring communities—and Tacoma is no exception to this.¹⁰⁷ The new light rail link promises to connect the Hilltop area to downtown Seattle, and the myriad of high paying jobs there, in less than half the time it often takes to drive. In addition, two of the region's largest hospitals are separated by one mile on the Hilltop's main street—Martin Luther King Jr. Way. All of this has combined recently to overcome the historical and negative aspects of the Hilltop and leave it poised to become a hotspot of gentrification within the city of Tacoma and the south Puget Sound area.

The Hilltop represents a useful opportunity to understand the current process of gentrification within a representative mid-sized American city. Tacoma offers a comparable social profile of the modern American distribution of race, and other social science measures. It provides an excellent case study of how key themes of community engagement, equity, and public policy can engage with the process of gentrification. It describes the efforts to do so in a way that also benefits the existing community of the Hilltop, allowing it to participate

¹⁰⁷ Puget Sound Regional Council, "Transit-Oriented Development (Growing Transit Communities)." Accessed March 26, 2017.

economically and not become socially or physically displaced. It also tells the story of how city policy can inadvertently facilitate the re-centering of an entire group of people from their traditional neighborhood.

In 2015, Marilyn Strickland, the Mayor of the City of Tacoma, was broadly supported by local political leadership as she led the City Council in adopting an Equity and Empowerment Initiative for the City of Tacoma that centered key themes of modern progressive policy into the framework of city operations. This sort of policy ideology has supported a strong emphasis on efforts to mitigate the potential negative effects of gentrification on the Hilltop area. While in some respects there is a strong argument that the large amount of vacant land currently available within the area acts as a buffer for some of the more egregious and immediate impacts of gentrification there is also a clear reality check, based on rising rents and displacement, that more efforts must be engaged.

Residents and stakeholders argue that these efforts must not only guide development in a thoughtful and equitable manner, but more importantly they must engage deeply with the work of achieving the necessary frameworks that will effectively connect existing residents to the opportunity presented by expanding economic development. They seek to do this, for example, through workforce training and project labor agreements that ensure local workers participate in the new construction projects taking place. They also desire linkages to support services, culturally relevant resources, and education that enable the development of a professional/living-wage workforce from within existing community. They hope their efforts will coordinate development of the Hilltop area while mitigating the negative impacts of gentrification.

The following analysis of data and personal interviews research the impact and effectiveness of these goals within the Hilltop area relative to the current literature and discourse on gentrification and urban redevelopment.

4. FINDINGS — Case Study: The Hilltop of Tacoma

4.1 Urban Gentrification

Community revitalization as a driver of gentrification

The Tacoma Hilltop area was once a bustling and active neighborhood corridor lined with retail businesses and activity. Closely linked to the adjacent downtown area, the Hilltop's thriving business district was, like the downtown core, severely impacted by the development of the Tacoma mall in the 1960's. The *Tacoma News Tribune* notes that, "When it opened on Oct. 13, 1965, the mall gave Tacoma the latest must-have in shopping and simultaneously shifted the city's retail core away from downtown."¹⁰⁸ For the Hilltop area this began an era of almost fifty years of trying to recover its economic core against a background of increasing decline, disinvestment, a gang related crime wave in the 90s, and the recent great recession in 2007. As Lauren Walker-Lee, a local community leader notes:

I've been doing a lot of work in the Hilltop for the past twenty six years and since I've been here — whether it's been called the Hilltop Business District, the "K" Street Business District, or the Upper Tacoma Business District — everyone, consistently across all income levels and ethnic backgrounds, has wanted to get the Hilltop Business District to return to what it was in the Fifties. And in the last 10 years things started to really finally happen.

The goal of a resurgent economic business district is echoed by Pastor Steele of Allen AME, "My parishioners have long-standing residency in the Hilltop going back four and five generations and they have a big interest in business, goods, and services" adding in discussion of the future, "They want the changes to hearken back to the days in which they remember of

¹⁰⁸ Sailor, Craig. "Tacoma Mall: 50 years of retail reinvention" *The News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA) October, 10, 2015. Accessed 5/21/2017.

streets like Martin Luther King, which at that time was K St., was a vibrant boulevard that many of the African Americans owned businesses on.” This vision of economic resurgence is still a driving force today as described by Ricardo Noguera, director of economic development at the City of Tacoma:

In September 2012 the Hilltop, or Martin Luther King corridor, was pretty desolate. There was very little happening. So to serve as a catalyst, to really turn it into the neighborhood business district that it should be, where folks in the community and could patronize businesses, walk down the street, get a cup of coffee, restaurants and so forth, I used the Tacoma Community Redevelopment Authority [a public corporation].¹⁰⁹

It is important to note that for much of the Hilltop community there has been a long-term concerted effort to create a revitalization of economic development and growth. What is clear today is that revitalization, in the form of urban gentrification, has at last arrived in the Hilltop.

4.2 Public Policy

After the great recession in 2007/8 decimated the housing market — disproportionately impacting low income homeowners — by 2010 there were certainly dozens, perhaps even hundreds of houses repossessed, for sale, or abandoned in the Hilltop area.¹¹⁰ It was at this time that gentrification began to take root in the Hilltop and it was undergirded by a variety of public policies and other coordinated city, state, and federally funded projects. None was more important than the prospect of an extension of the Tacoma Link light rail to the Hilltop area — highlighting the role of public policy and investment in driving economic development and gentrification.

¹⁰⁹ City of Tacoma. “Boards and Commissions”. Accessed 5/23/17.

¹¹⁰ Robinson, Mildred. “The Current Economic Situation and Its Impact on Gender, Race, and Class: The Legacy of Raced (and Gendered) Employment.” *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice* 14, no. 2 (2011): 431-68.

Walker-Lee was on the City Council in 2008 when she first engaged with the head of Sound Transit and explained her thinking at the time:¹¹¹

We wanted the light rail to be extended up to the Hilltop. It was a long process of the conversation of how to get that up to the Hilltop rather than going to the white neighborhoods in the North End and how to honor the diverse low-income neighborhood and make sure they get amenities.

The Tacoma Link light rail extension anchors the efforts to spur an urban renewal of the Hilltop. Strickland notes, “I think the biggest catalyst is the anticipation of bringing light rail down the [Hilltop] corridor because that is a large fixed public investment, and I think people are anticipating what's possible.” The prospect of the Link light rail extension is a key factor in driving a narrative that economic revitalization and gentrification is imminent for the Hilltop. The idea itself was a shared vision that to some degree motivated an entire transformation — demonstrating the power that can be accessed when an idea captures the imagination and inspires an entire community. And as that idea increasingly turned into a reality it became a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts.

Gentrification as a municipal economic development strategy

The City of Tacoma’s economic development and planning departments were also a key part of the surge of activity to revitalize the Hilltop Area. Noguera detailed his investment into the Hilltop in the past 5 years as he worked to be a “catalyst” and turn around a “vacancy rate along MLK of about 70% and the Rite -Aid [building] that’s been closed for over 10 years.” The City invested in five key properties that had the potential to reshape the future of Hilltop for decades to come. He describes his approach as a “mixed-income” strategy, “not all property is

¹¹¹ Note: Sound Transit is the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, a public transit agency serving the Seattle metropolitan area.

going to be market rate and not every property is going to be affordable.” One of the properties subsequently sold to a private developer, is in the permitting stage now and will create 250 units of market rate housing that will complement the work of the Tacoma Housing Authority that provides lower income developments. Noguera admits it’s a tough strategy at times:

It's a delicate balancing act to be honest. Some folks feel that when you revitalize in the area you are actually fueling gentrification so what you have to do continuously is work with your affordable housing partners and work with market rate developers so you get that balance.

In his mind the best mix is 60% market rate and 40% affordable. Strickland also notes the importance of a balanced approach, and draws out another important truth about affordable housing:

We have to find a way to make sure that we're not pushing people out who've been in the community for a long time but, with a caveat too; a community or neighborhood should not be considered affordable because people think it's run down and dangerous. Hilltop can have nice things too.

Noguera also understands the challenge of small business development, “What I'm attempting to do along the corridor is do a balance of both market rate and affordable... and more importantly add new retail space.” There is virtually no modern retail space along the current MLK corridor and Noguera notes that “the [existing] spaces are antiquated, and for businesses to come in and be successful they need to make major improvements which small businesses [can’t afford].” The new market rate development “adds 20,000 square feet of retail space for small businesses” and “also serves to address the issue of getting some market-rate [retail] activity. Finding the right balance is a moving target for Noguera:

You want to create an environment where you don't have to rely on public subsidies to redevelop in the area. Once the market starts coming, as it has in Tacoma, you have to be prepared to control some real estate so that you can bring in your affordable housing partners and I think we are effectively doing that in the Hilltop.

Clearly the direct efforts of the City of Tacoma policy to invest into the Hilltop area have been a driving factor of economic development and gentrification.

The impact of city planning policy and regional growth

In any discussion of gentrification the topic of affordable housing is a central one and it is one the planning department of the City of Tacoma wrestles with all the time.

However, urban planners can at times seem a bit more sanguine about the reality of economic development, urban growth, and gentrification. What is very clear though is that planning regulations and zoning have a great impact on how development takes place. Ian Munce, a special projects planner at the City of Tacoma, observed that while “bringing the Tacoma Link [light rail] up to the Hilltop area was a game changer,” connecting the growth of the Hilltop to the larger forces of regional development is also an important consideration noting:

Tacoma is growing again, part of it is displacement from Seattle but we're actually growing. One of the big issues with Vision 20/40¹¹² is trying to have growth occur around transit centers and regional growth centers and so they want concentrated growth around transit and so they actually try to steer population and require cities to plan for a certain amount of growth — our planning goal over the next 20 years is to go to 280,000 [from 200K now]. We are now growing at about 2% [per year] and so we're seeing some of the effects of that [policy].

¹¹² Puget Sound Regional Council. “VISION 2040.” Accessed 5/29/17.

He goes on to explain that “The whole Regional strategy about having people live close to where they work and taking transit really applies to the Hilltop. The challenge is how do we make sure that at least some of that benefit flows to the existing residents?” Munce understands the profound challenges that go hand in hand with rents that begin rising in the double digits (%) each year and how they are connected to these bigger regional issues noting that, “The market forces are so huge it’s difficult to see how to turn it around, we can do some things around the edges.” The scale of the regional forces impacting the Hilltop cannot be overstated. In 2016 Pierce County was ranked #1 in the nation in terms of percentage of new residents.¹¹³ As these new residents move to Tacoma they are creating a tremendous pressure on housing costs that has already created significant amounts of relocation and displacement for former Hilltop residents.¹¹⁴

One premise of the regional transportation and transit oriented development goals Munce describes is that you will have “more money available for rent or ownership if you can use transit” to lower your transportation costs. The idea of linking affordable housing with transit is a key element of the regional plan that is impacting the Hilltop. What is evident is that local zoning and planning decisions are impacted by regional forces.

Public zoning policy, unintended consequences, and displacement

The City of Tacoma planning department began responding to the Puget Sound Regional Council’s goals for transit oriented development about ten years ago with their initial round of subarea plans and designation of Regional Growth Centers.¹¹⁵ Significant ‘up-zoning’ was implemented to enable what was hoped would be innovative higher density development. One of

¹¹³ Balk, Gene. “New residents pour in: Pierce County see nation’s biggest jump in movers” *Seattle Times*. Accessed 5/29/16.

¹¹⁴ See Chart 1 in Chapter 6. Secondary Data.

¹¹⁵ City of Tacoma. “Downtown Tacoma - Regional Growth Center.” Accessed 5/16/17.

the first areas that were quickly redeveloped has become known as the “West Mall” part of Tacoma.

Investors were quick to build low cost apartments and row houses in an area with no public parks and few other amenities other than being close to the Tacoma Mall and its accompanying modest bus transit station. Located less than two miles from the center of Hilltop, and largely built during the great recession, West Mall was the first new development of affordable, accessible housing available to residents of what was an increasingly disinvested and foreclosure laden Hilltop housing market. A large number of the African American community of Hilltop found themselves relocating to West Mall. As Reverend Montgomery, president of the Tacoma Ministerial Alliance notes, “The largest population of ethnic minorities today is West Mall. They got those apartment complexes over there — you know — that's why they got the police over there — it's new projects.” One might wonder if modern regional policy and outsourced private development is the new format of old-style HUD housing projects. Between 2010 and 2015 fully 35% of the African American population of the Hilltop area relocated and West Mall was a major factor in this startling shift in population.¹¹⁶

David Foster, an architect and developer, has been involved in several stylish and innovative projects in Seattle and recently the Tacoma market. His attraction to developing in the Hilltop centered in two areas, “Advantageous zoning, you can get good value from a property” and “frankly land values were low — I couldn't believe how cheap.” Zoning in the Hilltop and adjacent downtown area is guided by subarea plans that offer developers a unified zoning system and desirable incentives to include 20% affordable housing at 80% of AMI (area median income). As Foster explains, “The multi-family tax exemption was 8 years without the affordable and 12 years with affordable. I did the math and the twelve year option gave the better

¹¹⁶ See Chart 1 in Chapter 6. Secondary Data.

return.” Foster’s new fourplex is an attractive addition to the Hilltop housing stock. However, in discussing the West Mall example he notes that, “Things can go horribly wrong when there is a free for all and there is no structure around the idea. Cheap construction, and after a couple seasons the place is a mess — slumlord heaven.” Since the West Mall area was first zoned there have been some key improvements to the planning code, but the example of West Mall is informative with regard to the impact of good planning. Foster argues that, “With some planning around it, it could have worked — some new urbanist ideas, proper community amenities in place — it could have been an interesting ground-breaking project.” However, he goes on to observe that without the proper guidance and oversight planning codes can become “opportunistic not opportunities.” The mishap and lost opportunity represented by the West Mall example highlights the potential and pitfalls of planning policy and its implementation.

4.3 Nonprofit Response

Nonprofits in collaboration

The traditional nonprofit community has also been deeply engaged in these core questions of community building that are at the heart of centrification. Sound Outreach is a local agency that is participating in a variety of innovative new approaches to their work. Executive Director Jeff Klein discusses the need for programs and services that go beyond the provision of affordable housing because, as rents rise, even reduced rental rates may be beyond the reach of many existing residents noting that, “All the job training programs in the area are for \$11 to \$14 an hour jobs and that’s not going to cut it with rising rents. So we’re focused on higher wage training.” Sound Outreach has a series of programs that link residents to living-wage jobs in the areas of construction trade unions, healthcare, maritime and similar careers that offer a fairly

quick path to \$20 per hour plus employment options to support their strategy of increasing income levels to combat displacement. Strickland also notes the multifaceted and complex nature of affordable housing:

The conversation about affordable housing is about so much more than what you pay for rent. How are we providing ladders of opportunity to prepare people to move up the wage progression scale? The conversation is about access to family wage jobs, reliable public transportation that doesn't require a two-car household, and having access to amenities. We can't address affordable housing without looking very critically at those issues as well.

Sound Outreach approaches some of these concerns by offering a wide range of traditional financial empowerment services in the areas of tax preparation, personal finances, second chance banking, and strategies for homeownership. They are developing intriguing new micro-lending programs in partnership with local banks and credit unions that alter the landscape of institutional lending practices. Sound Outreach is also the anchor agency in an innovative new project called the Hilltop Center for Strong Families (CSF) that changes how nonprofits work together to provide services to residents.

Recently announced by United Way of Pierce County, the work of the Center for Strong Families model is centered on three main pillars — Earn it, Keep it, Grow it. “The key is the bundling of all three components, said Dona Ponepinto, CEO and President of United Way of Pierce County, “It’s so much more than a transaction, its sitting down and helping families realize their hopes and dreams.”¹¹⁷ Ponepinto describes the collaborative impact of the model:

¹¹⁷ The Suburban Times. “Washington State’s First Center for Strong Families Kicks-off in Pierce County” Accessed 5/23/17.

The Centers for Strong Families is part of a national network. What we want to do here in Pierce County is create our own network of trusted community organizations that are delivering services to individuals in a very seamless way which is the cornerstone of the project.

For Klein it's an exciting new model:

The idea is to bundle the financial, employment, and benefits together. The job is not enough. You need to know what to do with increased wages, and financial counseling is not enough if you don't have a job. You combine the higher wages with the financial counseling and have better outcomes. People save more money. Credit scores go up. People start to earn more money. So that's the idea of the CSF — bundling services together.

Sound Outreach are opening their offices to co-location with other agencies to provide a one-stop wrap-around suite of services that de-silo and connect typically separate diverse services providers, such as the Housing Authority, Tacoma Urban League, Harborstone Credit Union, and others to create an intriguing mix of capacity, outcome, and impact. Klein partially describes how:

All [Tacoma Housing Authority] section 8 voucher recipients [will] come through this location — our offices — for their intake... and during the intake process if they need some support there can be a warm hand-off [to] other agencies like the Tacoma Urban League. Harborstone credit union will be placing two loan officers in the space as well as an ATM and we'll have sort of a cashless financial center.

These increased collaborations are focused strategies that enhance and support the human and social capital of community. They demonstrate remarkably advanced levels of the kind of

integrated and sustained activities that are needed to go beyond historical systems of social support traditionally associated with underserved areas that experience intergenerational poverty. Ponepinto addresses the importance of the collaborative partnering between agencies, “The hard part for some people to understand is because it is not a program — yes services are involved — but what's more important is what's happening behind the scenes.” This ability to integrate multiple agencies into a shared vision and model is crucial, and at times difficult, for the participating agencies because the change in model “is philosophical in many ways” says Ponepinto, adding, “it really takes an entrepreneurial executive director that sees how this is better in the long run for clients — you’re going deeper with clients, you’re building relationships with clients.”

Corey Mosesly, a community leader and nonprofit executive, also discusses the importance of this evolving nonprofit model noting that historically “the tendency was to provide products and services that are related to basic needs and things that are designed to help people cope with poverty rather than services to help people get out of poverty.” He then makes the connection to creating a different kind of change:

There's a role for funders to play to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

There's a role that nonprofits play in how they package their services to not only serve those that are most in need but [also] the full spectrum [of ongoing services] to help people move forward.

These integrated partner-driven service platforms in the nonprofit world offer solutions that are broader in scope and more likely to enable recipients to interrupt the cycle of poverty — an outcome that is critical for those experiencing gentrification. Nonprofit agencies, funders, and community groups increasingly find themselves working in collaborations that knit together a

cohesive fabric of wide-ranging resources and social capital that engage much more effectively with community. They also create much more meaningful, durable, and impactful outcomes.

Nonprofit partnerships with public economic development

The City of Tacoma planning department has been working closely with Sound Transit to address community concerns around the implications, both positive and negative, of the Tacoma Link light rail extension to the Hilltop. Sound Transit brings decades of experience and expertise to this massive multi-year project that includes extensive community outreach and engagement around design and planning. In addition to the typical activities for this type of project, the City was awarded a \$2 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning that they matched with \$500,000 to create the Hilltop Links to Opportunity project.¹¹⁸

The project calls for very deliberate engagement with local nonprofits and community representing a truly incremental consideration and investment into the “effort to improve social and economic opportunity through planning for multimodal mobility and economic development in communities along the Tacoma LINK Light Rail Expansion corridor.”¹¹⁹ The grant provides for streetscape design and engineering work as well as a series of additional community outreach and engagement efforts that link and support locally sourced workers to project labor agreements — an effort that goes well beyond the usual scope of hiring activity. Additionally, the City was successful in leveraging another grant into the project, the Federal Transit Administration/Smart Growth America Technical Assistance grant. The award provides access to consultants with expertise in economic development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development. These technical assistance services enhance and add more depth to issues related to, but not covered by

¹¹⁸ City of Tacoma. “Hilltop Links to Opportunity” Accessed 5/21/17.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

the Links to Opportunity Project such as neighborhood stabilization, job growth, and market studies for business and real estate growth. Both of these efforts represent a significant commitment to the goal of mitigating the impact of gentrification on the Hilltop while working to meaningfully include nonprofits and community at every step of the process.

Nonprofit development gone wrong

For some Hilltop nonprofits the goal of economic stability and community redevelopment resulted in large property projects which did not go well. Kevin Grossman, a local private developer and candidate for City Council elections, discussed how previous efforts by nonprofit organizations had left the Hilltop “essentially an area that looks like Beirut. It was terrible.” As he explains:

I was a little surprised to learn that a lot of the blight up here [Hilltop] was actually caused by a development authority that was supposed to rehab stuff. Properties were acquired and demolition completed before there was actually funding for the development of the end building — which is not good practice.

These problems were perhaps rooted in more than poor business acumen. Walker-Lee noted that “there was a lot of crazy stuff that happened during that time.” An article in the *Tacoma News Tribune* from November 2010 discussing a state audit of the Martin Luther King Housing Development Association describes, “A disturbing picture of mismanagement bordering on wrongdoing – if not actually crossing the line into deliberate misappropriation of public funds.”¹²⁰ The article also mentions the impact of the great recession of 2007 as a factor. For the Hilltop of Tacoma the great recession represented a nadir of decline and economic distress.

¹²⁰ Tucker, Cheryl. “MLK nonprofit and state agency look bad in audit” *The News Tribune*. November, 25, 2010. Accessed 5/21/17.

For some developers the opportunity to link action, policy and housing in ways that mitigate displacement seems clear. Grossman offers an interestingly nuanced view, “Gentrification is basically when people that have been here — that aren’t in a hardship situation — get squeezed out by the increasing demand in the market area.” Decoupling hardship from the equation is perhaps a useful approach in terms of connecting to the deeper impact of dislocation. Grossman adds:

What I get frustrated with, from a policy standpoint is gentrification is not a puzzle.

When private development starts happening and when you have a light rail decision like bringing the light rail up MLK, property values are going to go up — it's not rocket science. But the City — however you want to define that — likes to talk about social equity and about how worried they are about gentrification but I don't see any money going into it. Instead they're putting money into things like the Valhalla project which is 80% market rate and costs \$7 million bucks for 26 studio units. It's insane. It makes no financial sense.

For private developers like Grossman, public developers like Michael Mirra, executive director of the Tacoma Housing Authority, City planners like Lauren Flemister, and nonprofit leaders like Walker-Lee, the question of how public funds are made available is central to the entire question of gentrification. For Grossman, the story of the Valhalla Hall building is instrumental. Given its checkered history it’s a useful example to review in more detail.

In March of 2010, the Tacoma Daily Index published a story detailing the renovation plans for Valhalla Hall.¹²¹ The story explains how Allen Renaissance, a non-profit development

¹²¹ Matthews, Todd. “Fund-raising continues for Valhalla Hall renovation.” *Tacoma Daily Index*. March 11, 2010. Accessed 5/21/17.

arm of the Allen AME church, raised \$3.1 million toward the \$7.4 million capital project and hoped to open a community center there.

The organization also received a \$385,000 loan from the Tacoma Community Redevelopment Authority. It also received \$1 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, \$780,000 from the Washington State Youth Recreational Facilities Program, \$740,625 from Washington State's Community, Trade and Economic Development Department, \$144,000 through the City of Tacoma's design grant program, and \$107,000 from the Allen AME Church.

In 2014, a church representative told *The News Tribune* that "The project ran out of money."¹²² Tax records show that Allen Renaissance paid \$706,500 for the building in August of 2006, and that it was purchased by the Tacoma Community Redevelopment Authority in a foreclosure sale from a trustee for \$305,080 in January of 2014.¹²³ During the subsequent years, plans to restore the building were found to be impractical and in early 2017 it was torn down as part of a \$7.1 million plan to develop 26 studio units (9 affordable) above retail space. Noguera views the Valhalla as an example of the City attempting to save a building that was languishing. While it's fair to say that the ultimate price tag is much higher than planned, it is still a valuable exercise to consider alternative uses of such a considerable sum.

Grossman wonders what else could have been done with \$7 million dollars and offers an alternate use:

Some people on the hilltop have been renting for 20 or 25 years. And that sort of begs the question of why? The answer to that question seems to be lack of savings for a down payment and lack of credit capacity. So you can do some credit enhancement and down

¹²² Maynard, Steve. "Tacoma's Allen A.M.E. Church celebrates 125 years of doing good." *The News Tribune*. October 18, 2014. Accessed 5/21/17.

¹²³ Pierce County. "Assessor-Treasurer - Recent Sales Activity for 2012220040." Accessed 5/21/17.

payment assistance so that they can buy their home. At say \$35,000 per family two hundred families could have been helped [to buy a home]. And instead what we have is a 26 unit, overpriced, poorly designed studio building only 20% of which are designated as affordable (at 80% of AMI) which isn't really affordable by the Housing Authority standard which is probably closer to 50%. So only 5 units are at that price the other 21 are full market rate.¹²⁴ And they're [the City] using our limited tax resources to produce that. It is not okay. It's easy to say how terrible gentrification is but show me the money or be quiet.

Brendan Nelson is the board President of the Hilltop Action Coalition and Director of Children's Youth and Family Ministry at Peace Lutheran Church. A Hilltop resident all his life, Brendan is part of a new generation of leaders. Brendan, who recently purchased a home on the Hilltop, talks about his parent's experience:

My parents rented a home in the Hilltop for over 25 years and never really understood what they could do to own their own home. No one educated them. No one presented them with any options or pathways to homeownership. This is an example of one of the things I am working to change.

For residents like Brendan, the story of Valhalla Hall may well be illuminating and irritating — it certainly calls into question the goals and effectiveness of nonprofit agencies' ability to act as a property developer, as well as the City's funding and economic development choices relative to the questions of equity in housing and meaningful action to prevent displacement by gentrification in the Hilltop. This review of nonprofit property development and the role of city funding highlight the opportunity for approaches that are more effective.

¹²⁴ Note: City officials indicate that 9 units are designated affordable at 80% of AMI.

Finding new methods of nonprofit development

Finding ways to utilize planning code to mitigate the effect of displacement, and enable existing residents to not only remain in place but also thrive is one of the things that Flemister works on at the City of Tacoma. She is working on an In-fill program that allows residents to build Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Detached Accessory Dwelling Units (DADU's). The program not only serves to increase housing density but also offers other key values that Flemister explains:

People should be thinking about what they can do. One of those things is taking advantage of the market. Building an accessory dwelling unit and then finding somebody of your choice to rent — either the main house or the accessory dwelling unit — and you stay in your property and continue to own your property. Or working on a community land trust which is wealth building and stabilizes properties and you don't need a lot of contiguous properties to do. It's kind of an obvious thing and property values are still low enough that land could be collected, and it creates opportunities for wealth building either because rents are low or you can have income if you allow someone to buy the house.

With the right partnerships in community these things can be done.

The City of Tacoma planning department is taking innovative direct action with their residential In-fill program which has the support of developers like Foster. He notes that, "The historical qualities of the Hilltop are actually already there, its beat up a lot, but it's all there" and that "Hilltop is only just beginning." For him the idea of In-fill housing is both functionally advantageous but also architecturally and socially interesting. For Foster, it is an "Intriguing idea that makes an affordable type [of housing for people] in a neighborhood that they wouldn't think about moving to." He argues that it brings multiple benefits, "Supplemental income to the

principal family, an affordable unit (maybe closer to work, better for environment) for someone who wouldn't be able to live here, it also increases the sense of community — increased social interaction benefits both parties.” Foster notes that this early phase of gentrification represents significant opportunity and risk relative to the coming phases where creatives may in turn be displaced by more hegemonic corporate power:

Hilltop is in the first phase —creative people coming in who see an opportunity, who are actually contributing, not displacing, like Red Elm [a new coffee shop] in an old building fixed up, community meeting place, good thing for all, multiply that and it's great. But the next phase is when corporations come in and impact the soul. It is where the response of the community can become really interesting and really important. For example, how the City, how the public institutions respond to the profit-making — and the profit-making motive and activities — of the corporations that come in. The ones that chase out the mom and pop stores. The chains start moving in and the investment in the welfare of the community gets lost.

Foster also sees the crucial need for coordinated master planning, not just at the design/build level of the built environment but also at the level of social planning and community engagement development. Foster believes that a nonprofit land trust could take advantage of these opportunities to re-center the economic opportunity of development away from larger developers toward community. Understanding how to connect interesting new policy opportunities with meaningful action in community is an important question for everyone involved.

Public nonprofits in housing and development

Tacoma Housing Authority (THA), led by Michael Mirra, is the main provider of affordable housing solutions in the Hilltop. However, this is also linked to a neighborhood revitalization and development goal. Mirra explains:

The Hilltop is a preoccupation right now. Tacoma is the housing bargain of the west coast. Hilltop is the housing bargain in Tacoma. And after decades of disappointed hopes we think the Hilltop is about to blossom. It's getting light rail line down its spine. Large-scale private investment is coming in. Rents are rising really fast. We feel a mixture of excitement and apprehension, excitement that this investment is starting to come. We've been wishing for it for 20 years and, in fact, we've been counting on our investments in the Hilltop as a spur to investment. As real estate developers our job is to bring investment dollars into neighborhoods that need it and to embolden other people to invest.

However, the THA is also acutely conscious of the opportunity and responsibility it has to serve more than just the market forces. Mirra notes that their “job is to spur the development of Hilltop but deflect its ark in equitable directions so that when the Hilltop prospers there is room in it for everybody.” This vision of an equitable palette of residents is an alluring one. However, enabling residents with a lower income to live in a newly gentrified Hilltop is one thing but as Tanisha Jumper, who leads the City's Vision 2025 project, notes, “We do a lot of work to allow people to stay in the neighborhood [however] they can't actually afford to enjoy all the amenities — I haven't found any place where they figured out how to do it where it makes sense for [low income residents] to stay.” This conundrum of how existing residents are able to remain a viable

and active part of the newly gentrified neighborhood remains a perplexing and difficult challenge.

4.4 Community Response

Gentrification as “economic eminent domain”

“I believe that gentrification is occurring on the Hilltop based upon race” says Pastor Steele of the Allen AME Church. Given the level of displacement (over 35%) experienced by the African American community on the Hilltop since 2010, his claim is hard to deny.¹²⁵ Steele has a way of bringing facts into the reality of our consciousness that is direct, meaningful, and memorable. He goes on to explain that “Displacement is a constant conversation with the Pastor in the black community” and adds, “The longest standing, the most lucrative entities in the black community, is the church — you have to realize that it is in many respects the black man’s country club.” Understanding equity within a diverse community perhaps requires, at its core, an ability to transcend one’s current understanding in order to gain a glimpse of someone else’s. The reality of the disproportionate impact on race in gentrifying housing markets is also noted by Mirra, of the Tacoma Housing Authority:

In a country where families of color, disabled persons, families with children, are more likely to be poor the market will sift them out. The data showing this is happening to the racial makeup of the Hilltop is what’s happened to Capitol Hill in Seattle, areas of Portland. HUD data shows that it’s not just market forces at work here but it’s the persistence of illegal unlawful racial discrimination.

¹²⁵ Note: See Chart 1. Section 6. Secondary Data.

When reviewing the negative consequences of gentrification, the unavoidable common element is that of displacement — and that displacement comes in many forms — social, political, physical, economic, spiritual, cultural, and emotional.

Reverend Montgomery has an interesting understanding of gentrification — “My understanding of gentrification, is almost a concept of economic eminent domain.” He goes on to elaborate:

What you have is the taxing structures, the land use policy and ordinances that are generated by the city and government agencies that essentially moves people, historic people, out of their properties, out of their investments, out of their heritage. And because the properties have now become so valuable because of the movement of business development, of governmental desires to use these properties differently, then the people who were once occupiers or owners are forced out.

Understanding how this displacement is experienced by historically underserved communities perhaps requires an ability to grasp a view of life that is not hegemonic. As Pastor Steele explains, “The problem with gentrification also for our folks from our perspective is not just the displacement of the people as it relates to residency — it is the displacement of access.” It is not simply the framework of housing, or an economic ability to keep par with affordability, it is a shifting of the cultural fabric that alters the landscape of existence for some communities, as he explains in terms of businesses, “We're finding that our businesses that we depend on close down and they reorganize only to fit those [new residents] that the city and the other agencies want to attract rather than those that are here.” As the tipping point of gentrification arrives, the socio-economic experience of residents is also displaced.

Reverend Montgomery needs no explicative theoretical model to describe the reality of the experience:

And so gentrification is when you have the government, the private sector, the public sector, they see these properties, they come in, they develop, they bring in the business interests, they bring in the improvement economically, and they improve the infrastructure. And those people who are less mobile when it comes to their abilities to improve their conditions — you know, their job mobility, their economic mobility — those who can't move up quickly are moved out. And you're left with a community of people who are the economically upwardly mobile. They are part of this system of upward mobility — gentrification. Economic eminent domain.

Pastor Steele also describes what the experience is like, “We feel that the gentrification goes beyond just displacing certain ethnic groups. It's almost like you are also going to just take away our access to anything that we use, anything that we need.” Again Pastor Steele manages to make his point in a way that is both startling and cogent when he notes that, “This is probably the only street in America named Martin Luther King Jr. that almost no blacks own any property on it.” It is a point that provides a startling insight into the reality of displacement for the African American community in the Hilltop. What stands out is that within the Hilltop community there is a distinct difference of opinion about what economic development and gentrification mean and look like.

Finding the balance in centrification

There are many technical ways in which a community can gather its resources and organize itself in order to mitigate the negative consequences of gentrification, many of which

have been reviewed in the literature and discussed in these interviews. However, it seems the conversation most often reverts to one of balance.

Time and again, the goal is to somehow find a way to lessen what appears to be an inevitable outcome. As Mirra commented, “The pain of gentrification is a slow bleeding” and it is the longitudinal characteristics of gentrification that represent both the greatest challenge and opportunity. Clay’s description of the stages of gentrification are similar to those of others that note the transition from a first stage neighborhood comprised of interesting potential being invested in by creatives and locals into second stage where people are buying up real estate because the change has begun.¹²⁶ Noguera noted the very recent investment in Hilltop by local developer Fred Roberson. He describes how “You have to set the table so the folks like David Foster or Fred Roberson come and buy the land or the buildings to invest in.” Grossman also noted the recent purchase of three significant properties by Roberson observing that while Roberson was not an early investor in the Hilltop, when he did choose to act he did so decisively, quickly paying full asking price. Investors like Roberson are responding to the ‘setting of the table,’ and are also acting as catalysts for local businesses. In speaking with two of the occupants of Roberson's new buildings they describe an investor/landlord who is keen to support their business and willing to invest with them in their success. Similarly, Foster described how someday investment will become more corporatized and less personal as the neighborhood evolves but today there is still plenty of time for local stakeholders to take action. It is the fundamental nature of this action that represents the greatest opportunity. It is an idea that is at the heart of the notion of centrification.

¹²⁶ Clay, Phillip. "Managing the Urban Reinvestment Process [the Dislocation of Lower-income Households by Middle-income Households in Connection with Private Reinvestment in Older City Neighborhoods]." *Journal of Housing* 36 (1979): 453-58.

I first heard the word centrification in a conversation with Reverend Montgomery while discussing financial capability within the African American community. Over time we've spoken about the topic at length. As a Pastor, he most often describes it from within a spiritual paradigm that is fundamentally anchored in the shared spirit of community. He says, "The whole concept is that on the front end we labor to invest in the people" adding, "let's make it a central motivation to improve the condition of everybody and not displace, but build up." Of course for many people these things may seem easier said than done. For Montgomery, the process hinges on one key element — that of a shared narrative of inclusion for all residents:

So the idea then is firstly making sure that we get the narrative right. Make sure that everyone now is a stakeholder. A stakeholder is not just defined as a landowner or someone who is making a certain amount of money. A stakeholder is a person by birth. And now that you understand that you have a stake in this community — now you can become an investor. Let's use your stakeholder status. Once people realize that they have status then they will start to respond in kind based upon "I have status and I'm going to be accountable because status demands accountability." But as long as you write me off and hold me in disdain then I know that I can't be accountable to you.

Interestingly, this is not too fundamentally dissimilar to the responses of other stakeholders I asked about the idea of centrification. Grossman observed that, "If people can articulate what it is they mean by mitigating gentrification then you have a road map to take some action and invest some money." The key success factor in this analysis might be that of finding the right road map.

Figuring out what that map might look like seems elusive. Jumper notes that the problem centers in "How do we develop without displacing people, and trying to develop strategies that

support that goal.” She observes that, “The responses to gentrification within the literature are not really there because most cities don't deal with it until it has already happened, or it is already so far down the road they can't stop what's getting ready to happen.” From her experience, “The real answer to the question is public-private partnerships. There has to be a will [from community]. This is not something that government can fix on its own.” Connecting with a similar theme of aggregated cohesive response, Walker-Lee agrees that, “In your centrification ideal, it is keeping all the key players from government to nonprofit to disparate voices all together working on the same issues.”

Enabling the vision of centrification

The Tacoma Housing Authority has been very proactive in efforts on the Hilltop. They have purchased a number of properties that leave them, as Noguera noted, “Land rich and cash poor.” Mirra explains these investments as central to their core goals for building more than housing:

The world knows how to design and run rental assistance programs. The world doesn't know nearly as much about the next part of our job, which your question [centrification] elicits. How do you do all that work? How do you spend the housing dollar, not just to house someone, but get two other things done. First, if they can work to help them prosper and succeed, not just as tenants but as our mission statement contemplates, as parents, students, wage-earners, and builders of assets. We want them to come to us and have a transforming experience and a temporary one. We want this certainly for grown-ups but emphatically for children, as we do not wish them to need our housing when they grow up. This explains our investment in public schools because we count educational success as an important part of that transformation. And secondly, how do you spend this

housing dollar to help our communities succeed so they become places, as our mission statement contemplates, that low-income people experience that are safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive, and just. And the world doesn't know how to do that.

What is clear is that THA is working on ways to bring new capacities to this key question of centrification, of building up the people who are an often forgotten and underserved part of the intergenerational social capital of our community. This is particularly clear in their award winning McCarver Housing project that has integrated housing supports and parent/student school participation to help transform an elementary school in which classrooms were experiencing single year student turnover rates in excess of 100%.¹²⁷

THA has had notable success in implementing some of the core characteristics of centrification within one of its own community developments. Salishan is a 200-acre planned neighborhood on the eastside of Tacoma.¹²⁸ Mirra notes its unique characteristics:

Salishan is the region's most diverse community according to factors that in the rest of the market are segregating factors. At Salishan they are integrating factors, homeowner, renter, income, language, national origin, ethnicity, race, ability and disability. And the challenge and charm of Salishan is the nation's challenge, which is to help people live across those lines. The private market will not do that.

The THA has purchased a variety of properties along the Hilltop corridor that it hopes will be key opportunities to continue and extend their core mission of building attractive low and mixed

¹²⁷ How Housing Matters. "Tacoma Housing Authority's Impact on Education." January 31, 2015. Accessed 5/21/17.

¹²⁸ Driscoll, Matt. "Final home sales at Salishan mark milestone for Tacoma's East Side." *The News Tribune*. June 1, 2016. Accessed 5/21/17.

income community housing.¹²⁹ Mirra hopes that this investment will be a platform upon which diverse community experiences will take root and flourish in the Hilltop.

Existing community resources and groups

Every Saturday morning for over forty years, the Tacoma City Association of Colored Women's Club has hosted a gathering of the group known as The Black Collective. Formed during the civil rights era this group provides a gathering place for the leadership and members of the African American community to connect, learn and share information, formulate positions, and coordinate advocacy. It is one the most important elements of the local black community and wields significant influence in a variety of matters.

The Black Collective is just one of several long-lasting neighborhood groups and organizations that have been a part of the fabric of the Hilltop community for decades. Another is the Hilltop Action Coalition (HAC), a community nonprofit formed in the 1990's in response to gang violence. Today HAC remains at the center of Hilltop community, acting as the self-described 'communications Anchor' for the Hilltop, hosting a variety of regular meetings and engagement activities. HAC also publishes a community newspaper of some note.

The Hilltop Business Association can trace its roots back to the 1950's when it was known as the 'K' St. Boosters. With its historic roots as a part of the city that wave after wave of immigrants first called their home, Hilltop has a history of community engagement and action. Mosesly, who is involved in all three of these groups, notes their importance. They play "a really significant role... to be able to have the same kind of common language and know what is going on and what opportunities are available" in community. He sees opportunity for improvement in how the City relates to the Hilltop, noting that "the Hilltop area should probably be its own

¹²⁹Note: See Image 10 in Chapter 6. Secondary Data.

neighborhood council as opposed to being shared with two other neighborhood councils” because “the Hilltop has their own distinct neighborhood, they have their own distinct needs, and they have a distinct cultural significance.” He goes on to share that in his opinion there are a number of very active community groups within the Hilltop area that could collectively have a large impact on the way that gentrification plays out in their community, should they choose to act in a coordinated manner. Creating the platform and capacity for shared community vision and action is a theme that has percolated to the top of nearly all of the interviews.

Master planning and community management

For Mirra at THA, the problem of a master planner, or multi-layered community designer, is a fundamental philosophical and practical one that his organization has been grappling with for years. It is also a key element of the argument for centrification — the strengthening of social formation and community bonds into action. The ability to form those relationships, and to live in neighborhoods that foster them, is the central activity of the master planner function described by Michael Mirra:

So the first job of the master planner function is to convene the neighborhood and fashion that vision. The second job is to keep those voices convened and keep that vision continually refreshed. And do it in a way that is an authentic expression of the neighborhoods views. The next job of the master planning function is to scour the world looking for those investors and developers, who can come here and invest in a way congenial to that mission, to that vision, and to ensure then a warm welcome, and to be alert for the wrong kinds of investments and developers and ensure them an unfriendly welcome.

Connecting the placeholder idea of a master planner role with the philosophy of centrification resonates deeply with many of the stakeholders interviewed. Foster comments on the topic, “I do lean in favor of that approach. There has to be an element of community planning and that element has to come from experts,” adding that, “community involvement is good, however, I think that the participation of people who know how to plan is really important and I think that history shows that it works.” Munce, from the City observes, “You're still going to have to deal with the problem that creating an attractive community attracts more people and rents go up. So much of this is getting grassroots buy-in from the stakeholders and then getting public support both from the City, the housing authority and others.” Munce links this to the idea of centrification and the role of a master community planner saying, “The best answer I can give you is taking a concerted effort with all of the players to actually develop a concerted strategy — that people are working in concert.” What is worth noting at this point is that the kind of master plan being contemplated isn't a new consultant's report or technical subarea plan. It is about a plan of practice, one that is integrated with community physically, economically, socially, and politically.

This is part of the struggle for Mirra at THA who wonders how such community leadership could be formed. He asks “Is THA too institutional to be an authentic voice of the community?” He recalls a working group that reported back to the City and called for specific actions — “We strongly recommend a local housing trust fund, a contingent loan agreement, and regulatory measures to make it easier for these nonprofits” — however he worried that even if these suggestions were implemented, without linking them to a broader system of engagement they wouldn't be effective. Flemister noted the City's new Anchor Institution Program that works to more closely develop opportunities for local community to participate with major employers;

again, this is a somewhat siloed activity that isn't linked to a broader, more tightly defined, socio-economic plan. For Walker-Lee it is about the singularity of a purpose and mission that is rooted in "people caring about the community" and how to activate that caring into meaningful action. Assuming that the premise of centrification hinges on community leadership and the "shared narrative of inclusion" that Rev. Montgomery describes, I asked him where that leadership would come from and what form would it take. Who will lead the fight against this "economic eminent domain" of gentrification?

He responded sagely, "Cream always rises to the top. The situation itself will bring forward the people who can lead."

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This exploration of the question of gentrification vs. centrification exposes some of the opportunities and challenges faced by communities who struggle with the complexities of urban gentrification and how to navigate a balanced path between its winners and losers. Because of the implicit framework of often opposing viewpoints, much of the activity that undergirds gentrification can potentially be viewed as good or bad.¹³⁰ Also, because gentrification occurs over years and not months, there is a variation of perspective relative to its timeline that, to some degree, is being constantly recalibrated. In review of the Hilltop case study, three questions emerge regarding gentrification vs. centrification. What has already been done? What is the potential for centrification? And what things could be done in the future?

What has already been done in the Hilltop?

Urban Gentrification is occurring and the City's efforts to spur investment and development have clearly been successful, with examples such as the Tacoma Link light rail extension route and multiple large-scale, mixed-use developments in process. Incentives to include an affordable housing component within private and public developer's projects have yielded results. Investments have been made by the City and the Housing Authority for future developments that will incorporate affordable housing. Of course the dichotomy of that conversation centers in how one defines affordable housing. The reality is that it is still quite early in terms of market tightening and gentrification for the Hilltop area and yet, over one third of the existing African American community has been displaced already. In this respect, efforts have not been as successful as many would have hoped. However, a great deal of effort has already been made by various stakeholders, including:

¹³⁰ Newman, Kathe, and Elvin Wyly. "The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City." *Urban Studies* 43, no. 1 (2006): 23-57. 56.

- Substantial investment in over 500 new affordable housing units built by the Tacoma Housing Authority and other institutional nonprofits during the past 5 years.
- Substantial investment in land/property by the Tacoma Housing Authority, Nonprofits, and the City of Tacoma to ensure a platform for future development of affordable housing stock.
- City of Tacoma public policy goals of equity and empowerment that articulate the importance of supporting existing residents in equitable ways.
- City of Tacoma subarea plan and planning/code incentives, and tax-credits, that support private development of new affordable housing units, property tax reductions for seniors, and new programs such as In-fill that promote informal community based private development.
- Nonprofit programs that support informal/equitable rental housing capacity.
- Formation of CDCs by smaller non-institutional nonprofit organizations (that have experienced mixed outcomes).
- A significant displacement of community from the Hilltop has already occurred that is centered in both race and class.
- Creation, by the City of Tacoma, of the Hilltop Links to Opportunity program that utilizes 2.5 million dollars of federal, state, and city funding to provide additional community supports during the coming years.
- Creation, by City of Tacoma, of the Hilltop Engagement Committee comprised of key Hilltop community stakeholders to provide an ongoing platform for partnership and equitable, community-informed policies and practices.

- A series of reports, community engagement, and mapping efforts over the past 5 years, by the City, Tacoma Housing Authority and others, to review the landscape, formulate informed policy, and define future opportunities and practice.

What is the potential for 'centrificalion' in the Hilltop?

Stakeholders have invested a great deal of time, energy, and capital into managing and guiding the activity of economic development in the Hilltop. Larger nonprofits and community institutions have been active during the entire process, however, grassroots community response naturally lags behind those initial activities. The potential for a 'centrificalion' community response still exists for the Hilltop area. Interestingly, many of the attributes and elements that would support this response are already in place within the Hilltop. The historical experiences of the neighborhood have created them. There is a dense collaborative network of nonprofit and community organizations with a long history of successful projects. However, relative to gentrification, it is not clear that there is enough of a broadly-based collective motivation for action within community.

Priscilla Lisicich has been the executive director of Safe Streets, a local Tacoma grassroots nonprofit, for over 25 years. Her experience in binding diverse groups of neighborhood residents into collective action is extensive. Lisicich explained how three essential elements must be present for a successful outcome — neighborhood inclusivity, a shared vision/mission, and most crucially, a shared threat/motive. The implicit bifurcation of the winner-loser framework of gentrification may act as an impediment to the shared sense of threat needed to bind and sustain a truly robust sense of urgency within community. The complex and multifaceted nature and narrative of gentrification may hinder the development of a shared

vision/mission. However, key elements that support the creation of a robust instantiation of centrification include:

- Activation of a shared narrative around a collective community response to gentrification that describes a mission and vision that is fully inclusive and able to navigate disparate understandings and viewpoints.
- Authentic, community-validated, leadership that enables a ‘master community planner/director’ function — described (in one way or another) as a key success factor by nearly all those who were interviewed.
- An ability to remain engaged with the work for many years, even decades.

What future actions might mitigate gentrification in the Hilltop?

One of the key questions of this work was to explore to what degree the notion of centrification would undergird community action that mitigates the negative consequences of gentrification. To this end, the findings indicate that it is the shared vision and narrative, an all-encompassing sense of inclusion and cooperative action, which defines an understanding of centrification, and upon such a platform a variety of potential activities that would mitigate gentrification have been highlighted:

- Create and sustain collaborative community capacity for organized political pressure to impact policy, funding, and actively advocate on specific issues like displacement, neighborhood services and amenities, a unified Hilltop Neighborhood Council, etc.
- Articulate and advocate specific numbers and goals for affordable housing in terms of the number and types of units and the level of affordability (e.g. 3 bedroom units or 25/50/80% of AMI).

- Advocate for implementation of the federal low-income housing tax credit and/or local real estate excise taxes to support increased capacity for affordable housing.
- Support informal and equitable housing markets through a community support program that helps people participate successfully in the residential housing In-fill program. Link this activity to the narrative of mixed-income community building as an alternative use of public funding.
- Create a housing down payment assistance program that enables existing Hilltop residents to become homeowners instead of renters by leveraging funds that are currently directed toward new mixed-income community developments (i.e. expand and extend an understanding of what mixed-income development looks like).
- Develop and manage a capacity to partner with anchor institutions to create a community land trust that leverages the In-fill program and other opportunities.
- Develop expertise and capacity in partnership with anchor institutions to help existing nonprofits and community groups effectively develop their existing holdings.
- Continue to increase nonprofit collaboration and expansion of services beyond basic needs into a broader range of supports that enable lower-income residents to participate fully, and sustainably, in the Hilltop community.
- Engage with nonprofits in ways that link their community building efforts to local activities in construction, entrepreneurship, retail and services that integrate existing residents into a model of economic participation.
- Engage fully with, and hold accountable, city and state efforts that bring funding and opportunities. Ensure that they are maximized and linked to specific outcomes, relative to

equity and empowerment, which mitigate displacement so that the people who live on the Hilltop are demographically representative of the city as a whole.

Concluding thoughts and comments

The role of nonprofits is central to many of the symptoms of gentrification. However, their ability to keep pace with the changes in the marketplace is often quite limited. Similar to residents who suddenly face large increases in their rent, nonprofits are not seeing a commensurate increase in their capacity to provide resources. For nonprofits whose services are tied to housing or income supports, there is little room to maneuver. It is the scale and scope of gentrification that makes it such a wicked problem for nonprofits.¹³¹ Many of the primary options for action are daunting and require a level of expertise, experience, and capacity that is beyond the reach of most nonprofits. This is the case with CDC's, Land Trusts or large scale property developments where there are also substantive risks associated with these ventures. However, just as the shifting landscape of nonprofit practice calls for increasingly collaborative partnerships, the same model may represent opportunity for action in the face of gentrification, particularly if it is effectively engaged within the framework of an emerging centrification of grassroots community support and participation.

In recent years, the level of visible homelessness, people camped on city streets, vacant lots, or in their cars has become a hot topic for the City of Tacoma, particularly in the downtown/Hilltop area. In May 2017, Mayor Strickland declared a state of public health emergency in order to activate new responses to the problem. She proposed new policies and services to mitigate the homelessness crisis — a crisis suffered by those experiencing the ultimate level of displacement. She noted that “the city will use local authority to waive certain

¹³¹ Camillus, John C. "Strategy as a Wicked Problem." *Harvard Business Review* 86, no. 5 (2008): 98.

regulations that will help it move faster on the second phase of the plan: finding sites for and creating temporary housing.”¹³² Clearing and cleaning up the makeshift homeless camps is a cycle I’ve watched repeatedly for many years on the vacant lots of the Hilltop. However, it is slowly coming to an end, not because of temporary housing or increasing public services, but as a result of gentrification. Increasingly, the empty lots where people created their homes are being fenced and developed.

At the beginning of this paper I described new ‘neighbors’ developing their own housing after the home they had rented rooms in for many years was sold. Their state disability income places them at less than 20% of AMI, well below anything available on the market. The wait list for subsidized Housing Authority units is counted in years, not weeks. After a few months, their camp was cleared in preparation for a new building project. In the current system, these former long-term residents became fleeting transients in a matter of weeks — and the only stakes they were left holding were the ones for their tarps. Perhaps the promise of centrification will offer them a path toward a revised status, one that is validated by their mere existence, one that confirms them as a community stakeholder. However, it is not simply the very poorest who are struggling to remain in their neighborhood.

A colleague and coworker is a mid-level professional who loves her work at a local nonprofit that has served the community for over 50 years. Since graduating from community college, she has been saving to buy a home for 7 years. As a single mother who went back to school to forge a better life, her ability to save is relatively low given her nonprofit sector income (and student loan debt that is equivalent to a down payment on a house). What she pays for rent has more than doubled in the past five years. In the past three years, she has been forced to move

¹³² Tacoma might sue opioid makers as part of battle against homelessness. *The News Tribune*, May 10, 2017.

three times because the home she rented has been placed on the market for sale. As Hilltop housing stock continues to rapidly increase in value, three things continue to happen; rents are skyrocketing, rental homes are sold to wealthier owner-occupiers, and existing residents are displaced. The gentrification that is reshaping our urban landscape is a form of “economic eminent domain,” said Reverend Montgomery. It is a claim that is hard to argue with.

These are two personal stories of the harsh reality of gentrification. And as discouraging as they are, they are representative of the kind of threat and motive that is needed to create a unified community response. The kind of response that is needed to undergird a theory of gentrification. It is the lived experience of neighbors, friends, and other residents that creates the reality of community — which then informs and powers its movements and actions. As the market continues to tighten in the Hilltop area, the pressure for action will intensify. The opportunity for gentrification will become ripe. The ideal community construct of gentrification is not a static document like a subarea plan or a community initiative. It is a vibrant and living articulation of a shared vision that is evolving and fluid, anchored by the common understanding and participation of community. The great challenge for the Hilltop is to find out to what degree community can be activated into a collective response of gentrification, and if leadership can emerge to enact and sustain it.

6. Secondary Data

The following graphics provide a review of the population history of the African American community within the City of Tacoma. They offer an interesting exploration of how community was activated, sustained, and how now, even with the legacy remaining, it is being reshaped.

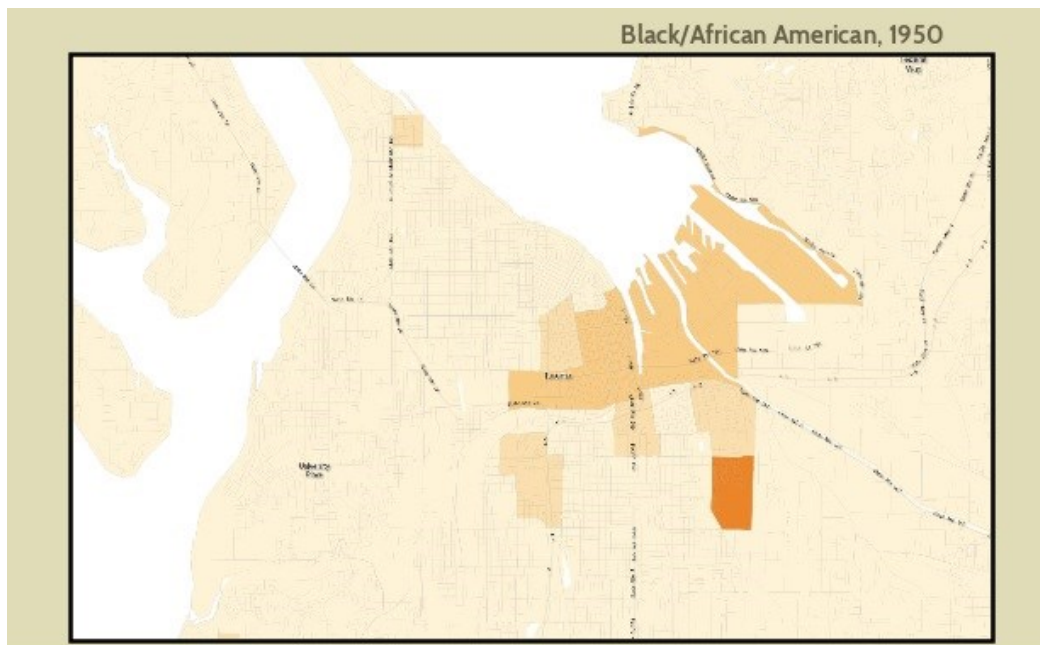


Image 1 - 1950 Initial population density of post-war African American community in Tacoma.¹³³

¹³³ www.socialexplorer.com. Accessed 4/10/17

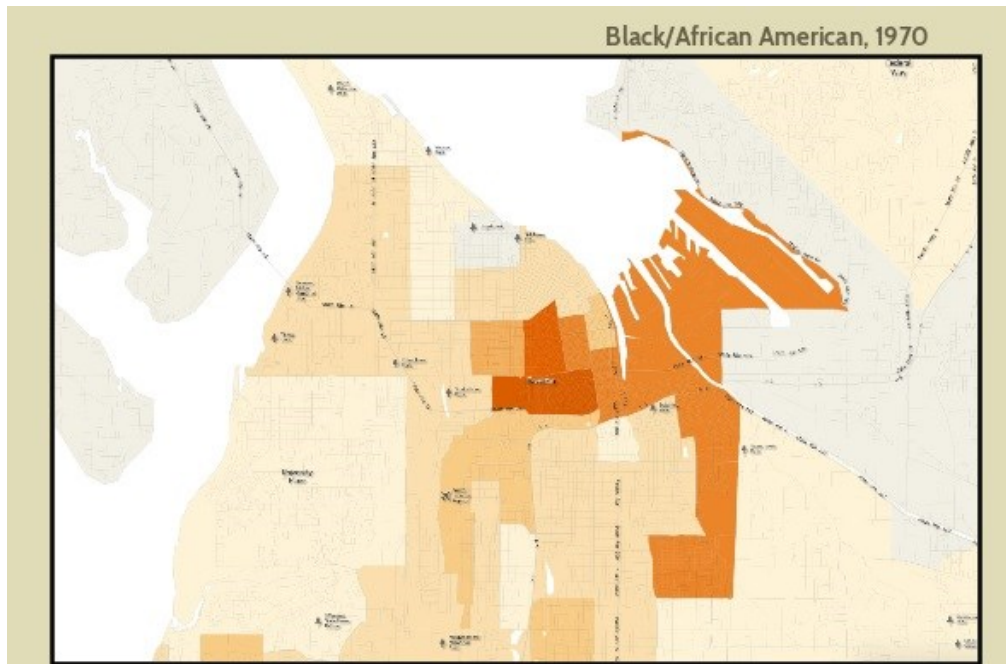


Image 2 - 1970 Hilltop clearly established as African American population center.¹³⁴

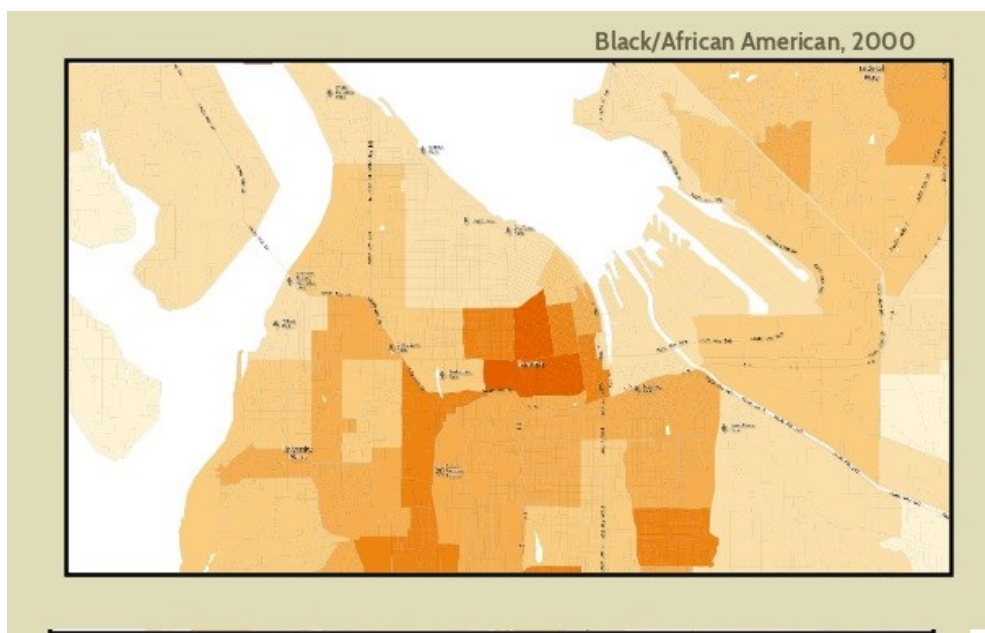


Image 3 - 2000 Increasing density in other areas - Hilltop has highest density/population.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ ibid

¹³⁵ ibid

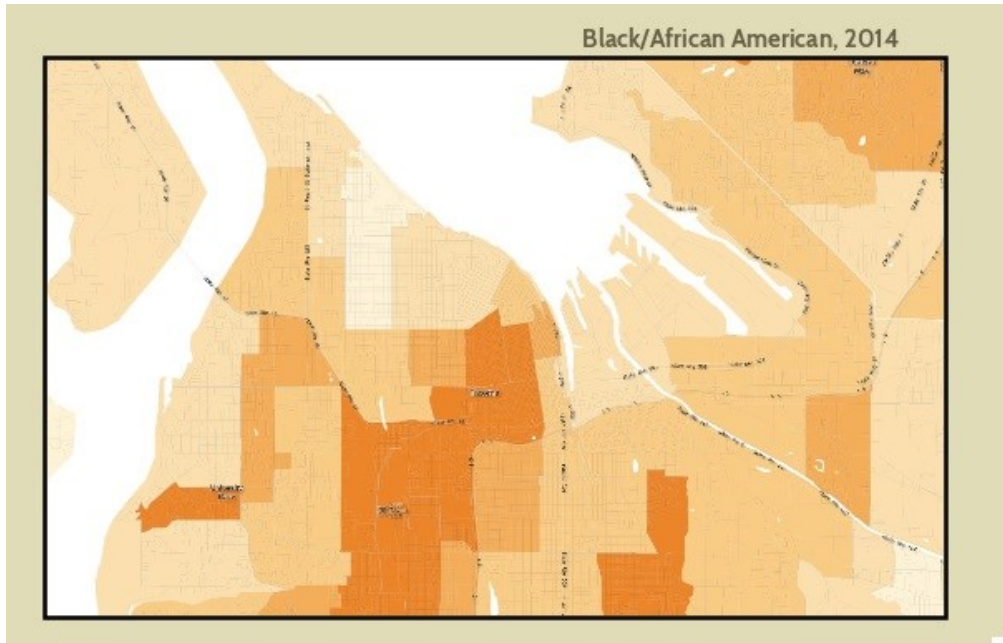


Image 4 - 2014 West Mall area is now most densely populated area with major shift out of Hilltop area.¹³⁶

Displacement of African American Community 2010 - 2015

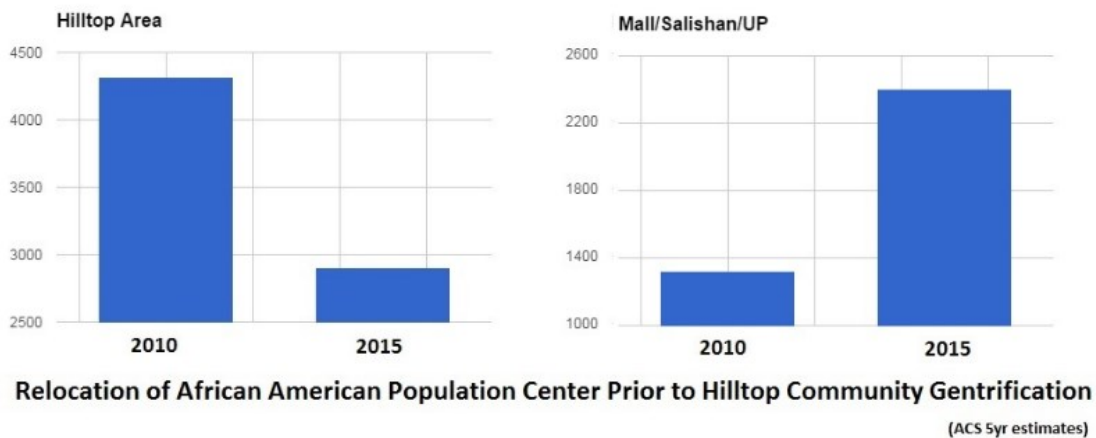


Chart 1 (above) shows the social impact within the African American community as the Hilltop area of Tacoma has been impacted by housing policy.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *ibid*

¹³⁷ ACS 5 year data - Accessed via Social Explorer 4/2/17



Image 6 - Example of West Mall density that occurred as a result of initial attempts by the City of Tacoma to adjust planning regulations to increase density as part of the Puget Sound Regional Council plans.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Screen Capture - Google maps. Accessed 4/27/17



Image 7 - This graphic highlights the regional growth centers identified as part of the Puget Sound Regional Council goals that impact the Hilltop area.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Tacoma Housing Authority. "Housing Hilltop Discovery Report." Summer, 2016. Accessed 5/22/16.

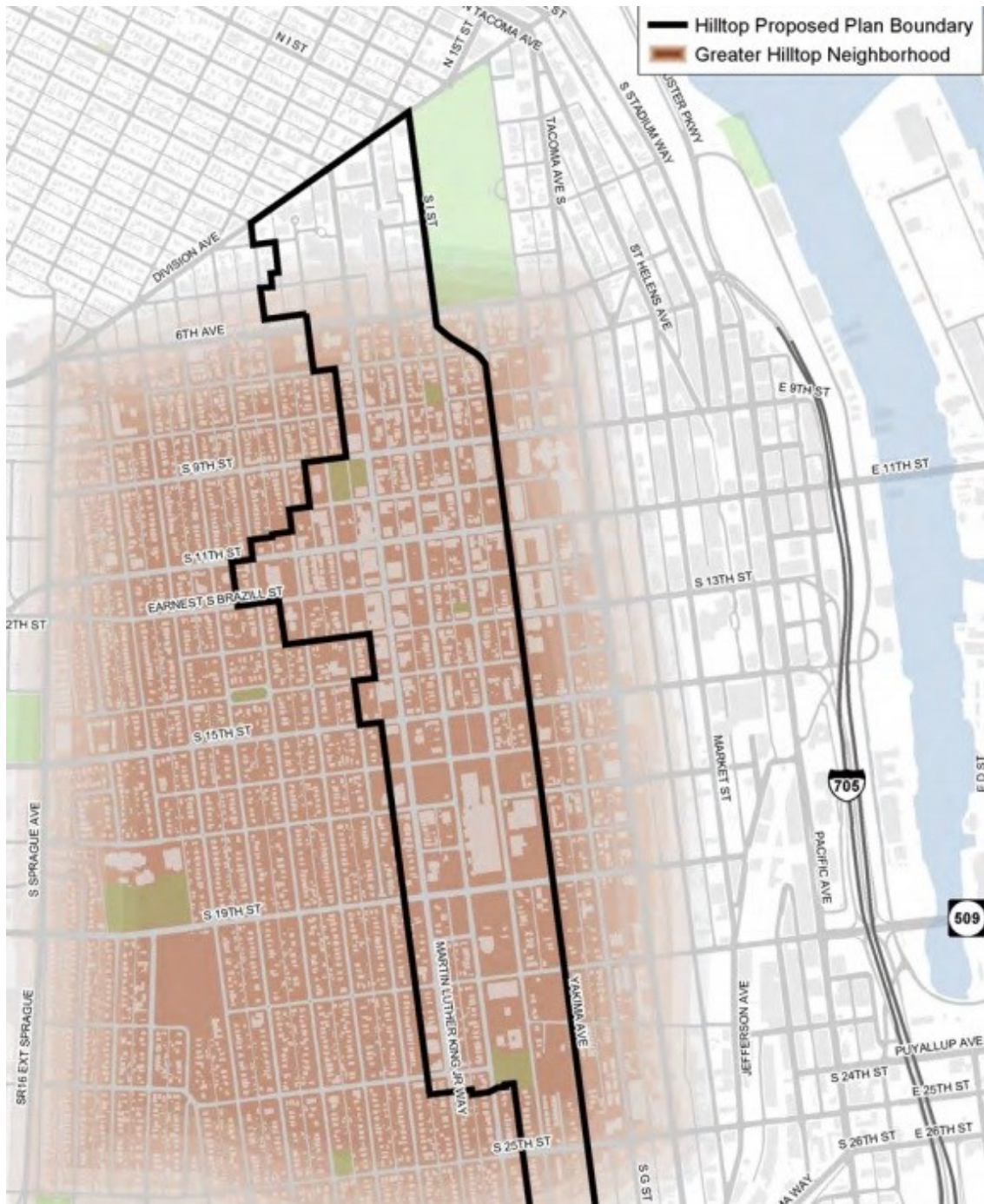


Image 8 - The Hilltop area west of downtown Tacoma. The proposed plan boundary contains some of the most attractive (for developers) planning/zoning policy, purposely designed to spur development and investment.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*

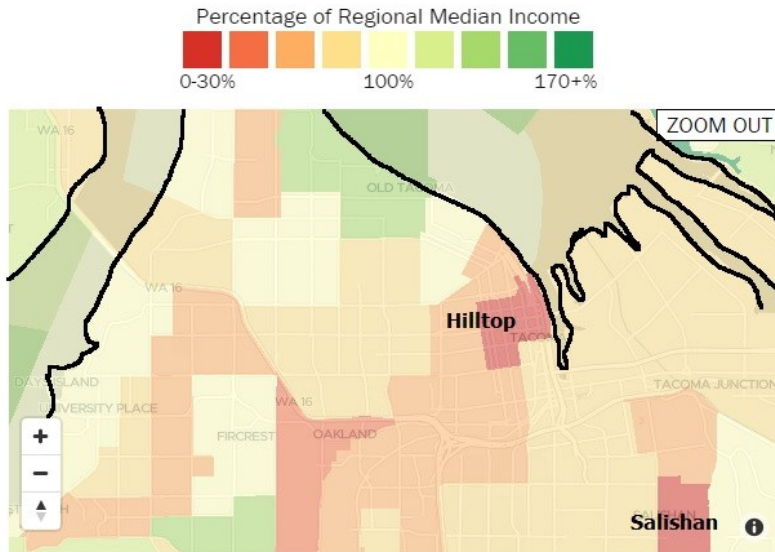


Image 9 - Graphic derived from Time Magazine Article demonstrating the reality of economic districting in Tacoma. These areas map directly with historic redline maps in the area.¹⁴¹

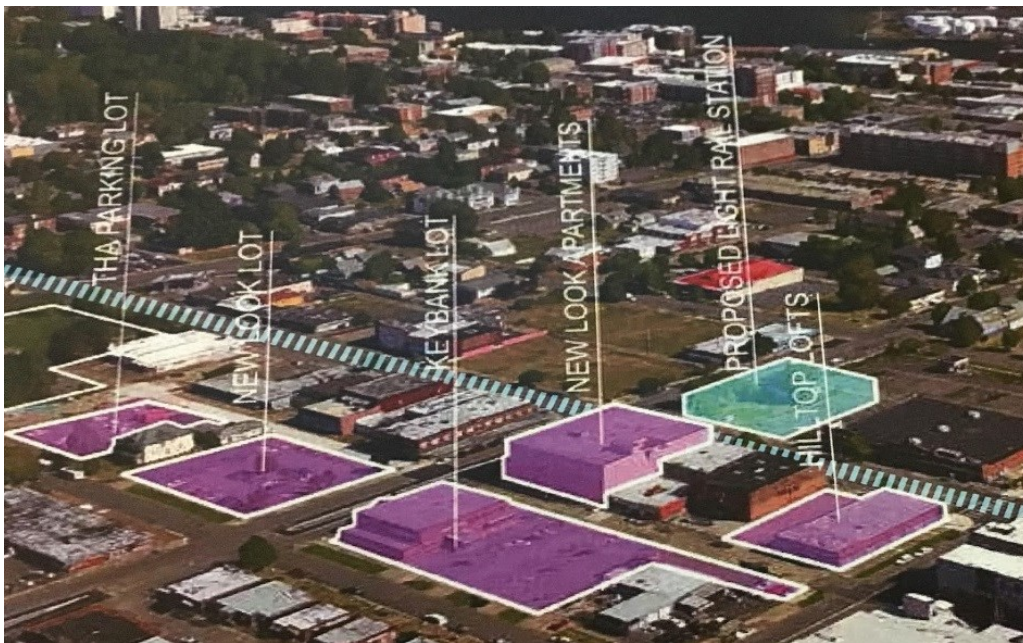


Image 10 – Tacoma Housing Authority planned sites.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Wilson, Charles. “These Are the Most Economically Segregated Cities in America.” *Time*. April 18, 2017. Accessed 4/28/17.; Historical Tacoma redline maps are on display at the Tacoma Urban League offices.

¹⁴² Tacoma Housing Authority. “Housing Hilltop Discovery Report.” Summer, 2016. Accessed 5/22/16.

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8. Appendix

Stakeholder Interview Bio's.

Lauren Flemister, Senior Planner, City of Tacoma

Lauren Flemister is an urban planner and designer focused on downtown revitalization and the strategic development of a stronger spatial, visual, and cultural identity within an urban context. Her previous work with HOK, United Nations-Habitat, the City of Austin, the City of Auburn, and the Environmental Defense Fund concerned itself with how cities change and function over time through the lens of development and infrastructure. Her current career interests include how urban design has the ability to change neighborhoods and the role of cities in deterring gentrification. Lauren has her Masters of Architecture, Masters of Urban Planning, and Masters of Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from Princeton University.

David Foster, Architect/Developer, Seattle/Tacoma Area

David Foster studied architecture at the University of Applied Sciences in Frankfurt, Germany, taking a professional degree there in 1987. He completed a Master's degree in Architecture at the University of Washington in 1990. He also holds a Bachelors in Business and Management from the University of Maryland. David Foster Architects has been designing award-winning projects since 1996.

Kevin Grossman, Developer, Tacoma Area

Kevin has invested in multifamily and mixed multi-family-over-retail projects in Tacoma, Edmonds and Seattle. He has completed "BuiltGreen4" townhomes in Fremont, was part of a team getting a permit-ready project for apartments over retail in Edmonds and completed

multiple acquisition/turnaround projects in Tacoma, including a historic rehab of the Kellogg Sicker Pochert project, a key revitalization project of the Hilltop neighborhood

Tanisha Jumper, Tacoma 2025 Program Manager, City of Tacoma

Tanisha is program manager for Tacoma 2025 — Tacoma's Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is intended to set the course and guide where the City of Tacoma (as both a local government organization and a community) is going over the next 10 years, and to help the City direct its efforts and resources toward a clearly defined vision for its future that reflects community desires, current and future trends, and bolsters the City's unique position within the region. It will include benchmarks or milestones that measure the City's progress towards its clearly defined vision. And it will be a "living document" and it will undergo periodic review and adjustment to reflect progress towards achievement of goals and/or modifications of goals.

Jeff Klein, Executive Director, Sound Outreach

Jeff wants to make a positive difference in people's lives, and has spent more than two decades working on just that. In January of 2015, he jumped at the opportunity to lead Sound Outreach, believing that connecting people to benefits and resources that grow assets and help people manage their own lives better is what keeps folks from needing a food bank in the first place. "We're helping people lead more dignified, sustainable lives. I'm interested in anything we can do to help create a more just and equitable community." Sound Outreach compassionately guides people through the complex array of resources needed to achieve sustainable, independent living.

Priscilla Lisicich, Executive Director, Safe Streets

Priscilla is a member of Safe Streets' founding team and has overseen Safe Streets development, direction, and fiscal health since 1993. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Puget Sound and Arizona State University, respectively; her doctoral degree is

from the University of Michigan. Prior to Safe Streets, Lisicich worked in higher education and community education. She has served as chair of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse for two administrations. In 2001, Gov. Gary Locke appointed Lisicich to the Governor's Methamphetamine Coordinating committee as a founder of the Washington State Meth Initiative. She has extensive experience in the development of legislation related to drug-related criminal justice issues and prevention. In addition to her work with Safe Streets, Lisicich is director of the Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention.

Michael Mirra, Executive Director, Tacoma Housing Authority

Michael Mirra is the executive director of the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) in Tacoma, Wash. He has served in that position since 2004. Previously, he served as THA's general counsel beginning in 2002. Before joining THA, Michael practiced law for about 22 years with Columbia Legal Services in Washington State and for 2 years before that for legal services in Tennessee. His areas of practice included fair housing, the Washington State growth management act, landlord-tenant law, the homelessness of children, the intersection of child welfare and homelessness, and nonprofit governance. Michael graduated from Vanderbilt Law School and the University of Chicago.

Rev. Toney Montgomery, President, Tacoma Ministerial Alliance

The Tacoma Ministerial Alliance is a coalition of Pastors from predominately African American churches and community partners working collaboratively to address the most pressing needs of the African American community in Tacoma/Pierce County. The non-profit organization has served citizens for more than 40 years.

Corey Mosesly, Community Stabilization Manager, United Way of Pierce County.

Corey has over 10 years' experience working in both the non-profit and government sector. He has worked with organizations on a broad range of issues, including education, housing, and workforce development. He currently serves on the City of Tacoma's Human Service Commission and Vision 2025 Advisory Committee; as well as, the American Leadership Forum Program Committee and the Puyallup Watershed Initiative.

Ian Munce, Special Assistant to the Director, City of Tacoma

Ian is the Special Assistant to the Director for Planning and Development Services. He is a long standing AICP member and a member of the Washington State Bar. He has a graduate diploma in Town and Country Planning from Kingston Polytechnic London and a Master's in Business Administration from Western Washington University. Previous positions held include Planner with the London Boroughs of Islington and Wandsworth, Executive Director of the Skagit Council of Governments, and Planning Director and City Attorney for the City of Anacortes, Washington.

Brendan Nelson, President, Hilltop Action Coalition

Hilltop Action Coalition is a community-based coalition and 501(c)3 nonprofit that is working to mobilize and empower diverse individuals, families, businesses and other public and community organizations to build a safe, clean, healthy resilient and united community. Brendan A. Nelson has more than 13 years of experience working for the Tacoma Public Schools, Non-Profit organizations and Peace Lutheran Church.

Ricardo Noguera, Community and Economic Development Executive, City of Tacoma

Ricardo Noguera hails from Brooklyn, N.Y., where he completed his undergraduate work before moving out to the west coast to pursue a master's degree in city and regional planning from the University of California Berkeley. Noguera has more than 22 years of experience in the

community and economic development field, serving both as a project manager and for the past 14 years as a department head. His diverse experience includes roles in various San Francisco Bay Area communities, Los Angeles, South Florida and, prior to coming to Tacoma, Wash. in September 2012, five years in the Central Valley community of Visalia, Calif.

Pastor Anthony Steele, Allen AME Church, Tacoma

Pastor Anthony Steele was born in Los Angeles, California, and has been preaching for 25 years. He has been a Senior Pastor in the AME Church all across the nation. A leader in community building, Steele is a pastor with the gift of preaching, teaching, and civic leadership. Allen AME Church is Tacoma's oldest African American church serving community for over 128 years.

Marilyn Strickland, Mayor, City of Tacoma

Mayor Strickland was sworn in as Mayor of Tacoma in January 2010, and previously served as a city council member. Mayor Strickland's pro-growth agenda focuses on creating family-wage jobs by improving education and workforce training, promoting entrepreneurship, investing in transportation and attracting international investment. Prior to elected office, she worked in both the private and public sectors. Mayor Strickland's regional and national board leadership includes Sound Transit, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Democratic Mayors Association. Strickland has appeared on Meet the Press, National Public Radio and is a trustee with the Urban Land Institute. She has been recognized by the National League of Cities Women in Municipal Government for outstanding local leadership and was recognized as the 2015 Washington Trade Hero by the Washington Council on International Trade.

Lauren Walker-Lee, Director, Fair Housing Center of Washington

Lauren Walker-Lee has lived in the Hilltop neighborhood since 1990. She served on the Tacoma City Council from 2008-2015, as Deputy Mayor in 2011, and as executive director of the Fair

Housing Center of Washington since 1995. Her professional life has been filled with advocacy work to include organizing low- income tenants in London, England, leading long term care legislative initiatives in Boston, Massachusetts, and doing block-by-block organizing with the Hilltop Action Coalition in the early 1990s.