

*Why Delridge?*

Narratives of Neighborhood Fragility  
and Economic Liability in Seattle

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## Introduction

Galena White didn't speak up. Or couldn't. Either way, her thoughts were not heard in the meeting of the North Delridge Community Forum on October 11th, 2011. Yet hers was a voice that had a unique value to the conversation happening at Youngstown Cultural Arts Center in the Delridge neighborhood of West Seattle. The meeting was the culmination of weeks of anger, fear, and uncertainty that arose in the neighborhood surrounding the placement of a new supportive housing facility for the homeless and mentally ill of Seattle by the non-profit organization Downtown Emergency Services Center (DESC) in Delridge. Over 150 community residents attended the meeting, packing into a small auditorium to express their concerns over the facility, the organization, the impact on the neighborhood, and most prominently, the potential residents of 5444 Delridge Way SW. A packed room with over 150 angry, defensive, and frightened people produced the traditional responses associated with neighborhood-level NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard), exemplified by one neighbors comment, "How do we stop this from actually being built here? We are a fragile area ... let's not make it worse." (West Seattle Blog 2011). At one point the facilitator asked a representative from City of Seattle comment on what it was like have people with mental illness living in the area. It was then that Galena White realized that most of the people in the room were afraid of her—that the uncertainty in that packed auditorium was a result of bodies like her own.

Her experience at the Delridge Neighborhood Forum prompted to Galena to write an opinion piece for West Seattle's neighborhood blog, West Seattle Blog, in which she wrote passionately about her own experience as a mentally-ill, previously homeless individual who found support through a housing program and eventually moved into an apartment in Delridge, funded by a national low-income housing program. In her piece, she addressed the response to the DESC facility that she saw during the meeting, "Diversity is not just cultural, physical, or spiritual. Rights and kindness are not just for those who act the way you're used to...residents at the meeting, in their fear, shared a similar question; "Why Delridge? We're trying to make this a better place. Don't drag us down when we're getting on our feet." The story of Galena White and the meeting of the Delridge Community Forum is one that elucidates the material and discursive contradictions that have played out in the neighborhood with the proposal of the DESC facility. Within this single meeting, both neighbors and the community organizations navigate a very contradictory discursive landscape in creating a vision for the future of Delridge.

The work of shaping that vision for a neighborhood is most evident when it is disrupted and the proposed DESC supportive housing site has manifested itself as one such a disruption. The moment of interference is one in which we are given a glimpse into how neighborhood organizations work discursively to justify social exclusion of poor, unstable bodies, to maintain a vision of the neighborhood as growth-oriented and worthy of investment. It is precisely this vision of Delridge as a community on the rise that is vital for local NGOs to be able to secure capital investment and city funds. In the case of the DESC site in Delridge, the construction of a vision for the future of Delridge is one that is fraught with contradiction—the neighborhood is ‘unstable’ & ‘fragile’ and at the same time that it portrays itself as stable enough for economic investment; it prides itself on its diversity yet limits that diversity to skin color; organizations stress the economic threat that the new, impoverished residents will have yet they avoid speaking directly about the physical ones.

The scope of this paper is to understand the nature of those contradictions—how they work discursively to produce a geographic imaginary of Delridge that molds itself to the ontology and epistemology of urbanism under neoliberalism while still subject to the ‘*actually existing neoliberalisms*’ across geographic scales of the City of Seattle and Delridge neighborhood. Drawing from Brenner and Theodore, we work here to examine the *process* enacted through though neoliberalism and ‘their multifarious institutional forms, their developmental tendencies, their diverse sociopolitical effects, and their multiple contradictions’ (Brenner & Theodore 2005). We argue that an examination of these inherent contradictions and the ways in which neighborhood-level organizations navigate the politics, discourse, and economics of those contradictions offers a critical insight into the ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ produced in neighborhoods. To do this, we will draw on both our empirical research in the Delridge area and literature on relational poverty studies and neoliberal urbanism theory in order to understand the interplay of vision, disruption, othering, and identity. We will first briefly describe our methodologies before moving into a discussion of our theoretical framework through a review of relevant literature. We will conclude with a discussion of our analysis of neighborhood contradictions within the Delridge neighborhood response to the DESC facility.

### **Methodologies**

The research methodologies we used during the research process are divided into three distinct yet interconnected components: first, archival research; second, participant observation; and,

finally, a geovisualization exercise using grounded theory. Each of these research components broadened our empirical findings and added depth and complexity to our final analytical component. This portion of our paper outlines the methodologies we used with each of the three research components, as well as briefly discuss some of our findings.

The archival component of our research began our study of the production of social, political and economic difference in the Delridge neighborhood through by examining key actors within the community and the historical context of urban renewal projects in the neighborhood. The availability of archival documents, particularly around urban renewal projects, allowed us to frame the key Delridge community actors within a history of neighborhood-based neoliberal urban governance, described by Brenner & Theodore (2002b) as ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’. Key neighborhood actors included the North Delridge Neighborhood Council (NDNC); Delridge Neighborhood Development Association (DNDA); and the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC). The 1999 Delridge Neighborhood Plan, which is a product of the neighborhood specific policies in the 1994 "Toward a Sustainable Seattle" City Plan, provided us with empirical evidence on the creation of ‘actually existing neoliberal’ policies at the level of the city and the neighborhood. These archival artifacts allowed us to historicize the creation and maintenance of the narrative of Delridge as an economically emergent neighborhood experiencing something of a *renaissance* (West Seattle Blog 2011). The 2005 UW Visioning Delridge Report on development within Delridge and the 2012 NDNC Brandon Node Visioning Session Report echoed this discourse of economic investment and development. The rhetoric of the neighborhood opposition to the DESC facility has centered on the economic fragility of the neighborhood itself and the fears of community members that the DESC site would discourage economic investment and development in the neighborhood. Our initial archival research helped us frame the ways in which ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ influenced neighborhood discourse and policy enactments around the production of difference & social exclusion in Delridge. Our participant observation research helped add a layer of on-the-ground experience to this analysis.

For the participant observation component of our neighborhood project, we attended a number of community meetings in order to understand the ways in which key community actors discursively framed the Delridge neighborhood and the proposed DESC site. The meetings we went to included: the April 9th, 2012 meeting of the North Delridge Neighborhood Council (NDNC) at the Delridge branch of the Seattle Public Libraries; the April 12th, 2012 meeting of the Delridge Supportive Housing Advisory Committee at the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center; the April 18th,

2012 Delridge District Council Meeting at the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center; and a YouTube video of the March 27th, 2012 Delridge Supportive Housing Advisory Committee meeting posted on the West Seattle Blog. After attending each of these meetings summarizing our field note reports, we were able to identify two distinct yet interconnected themes: first, community resentment and fear regarding the economics of DESC's siting strategies and; second, the ways in which this DESC siting disrupts the community's visioning of the Brandon Node as a space of economic investment and development in Delridge. These two themes are situated within the larger structural narratives of neighborhood economic investment and othering discourses touched upon in the archival component of this work.

The final research component of our neighborhood project was a geovisualization that was a product of the theories of grounded visualization (Knigge & Cope 2006). The goal for this component was to successfully see the context and content of our Delridge neighborhood research through the iterative processes of spatial visualization and critical analysis. Our work on the geovisualization element of this project forced us to reexamine much of the archival and field research that we had already conducted using a more refined lens informed by the theories of grounded visualization. Using Prezi allowed us to create a dynamic, collaborative learning space centered on our interpretation and vision of this project. By incorporating our empirical findings and archival documents into our geovisualizaion, we created a space of collaborative learning and discovery for our viewers.

These three components of our neighborhood project have each contributed to our identification and inquiry into the material and discursive contradictions of the Delridge neighborhood response to the proposed DESC facility and its disruption of the community created narrative of Delridge as a space of economic development and progress. The analysis portion of the paper will explore these themes using the data gathered in these three previous portions through the following theoretical framework.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Our paper investigates neoliberal urban restructuring through an 'on the ground' case study of a particular struggle within the Delridge community of Seattle. We examine the oppositional strategies deployed by community members and organizations of the Delridge neighborhood in opposition to the proposed DESC housing facility in the Brandon Node. This literature review

outlines the theoretical framework through which we interpret our empirical findings in Delridge, combining the theories of *neoliberal urban governance* and *relational poverty knowledge* to illustrate the necessity of bringing both of these theoretical perspectives to bear on the study of the politics of community development. An examination of these theories and the interplay between the two illuminate the role of neoliberalism as a modality of urban governance, as a framework that “...powerfully structures the parameters for the governance of contemporary urban development” (Brenner & Theodore 2005).

Since the rise of the neoliberal ideology in the 1980s, the primacy of capitalist processes of accumulation and its associated regulatory measures have been lauded as the key to progress from the global scale to the local (Harvey 2005). Neoliberal ideology, policy and governance all differ in mission and scope yet, as Wendy Larner (2000) writes “...the term ‘neo-liberalism’ denotes new forms of political-economic governance premised on the extension of market relationships.” The ideology of neoliberalism “...rests on the belief that open, competitive and ‘unregulated’ markets, liberated from state interference and the actions of social collectivities, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development” (Brenner et al. 2005). However, the global imposition of neoliberalism has been both geographically and socially uneven and its institutional forms and sociopolitical consequences have varied significantly across spatial scale (Peck 2001; Brenner & Theodore 2002b). Within the systematic imposition of neoliberal ideology, cities have become sites where entrepreneurial discourses of neoliberal urban policy focused on the need for ‘reinvestment, revitalization, and rejuvenation’ are mobilized. Indeed, as Brenner (2009) writes “...cities have become increasingly central to the reproduction, mutation and continual reconstitution of neoliberalism itself during the last two decades.” There is a blatant disconnect between the neoliberal ideology described above and the everyday political operations that signify the process of *neoliberalization* within the city (Moody 1997). Brenner & Theodore (2002a) name this process of neoliberalization ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ and emphasize that this concept is articulated through “...historically and geographically specific strategies of institutional transformation and ideological rearticulation.”

Our empirical analysis of the Delridge community response to the proposed DESC housing facility hinges upon this concept of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ and seeks to illuminate the geographic spaces of complexity and contestation that are the product of neoliberal orthodoxy put into practice at the neighborhood level. As Brenner et al. (2005) write, “...the destructive and creative moments of institutional change within ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ are intimately, inextricably

interconnected in practice.” The work of neighborhood level NGOs fits into the neoliberal framework that powerfully structures the parameters for the governance of contemporary urban development. Within these parameters, the work of these neighborhood level NGOs is often confronted with the impossibilities of neoliberal urbanism and the contradictions of the neoliberal urban ideal (Martin 2011; Brenner & Theodore 2005). The narratives deployed to facilitate the mobilization of social, economic and political policies of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ often find themselves fraught with contradiction as the contextual embeddedness of actual neoliberalism comes into conflict with the orthodox ideology (Peck 2003; Brenner et al. 2005). Through the devolution of government under the neoliberal city, neighborhood based NGOs become the bastions both of orthodox neoliberal ideology and the complex, contradictory realities of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ (Brenner & Theodore 2002b). Within the day-to-day realities of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’, policies of social exclusion, which reproduce current structural inequalities, are often framed using rhetoric of economic development and neighborhood investment. Indeed, as Lai (2012) writes, “...in making these erasures, redevelopment imagineers were well aware of the presence of communities of color in the neighborhood...thus [these communities] were pathologized along with their shared neighborhood.” The exclusion of undesirable, impoverished bodies using the rhetoric of neoliberal urban governance is fraught with contradiction and complexity. Poverty politics and embeddedness of inequality in the social fabric of society will be examined in more depth using the theoretical framework of relational poverty knowledge.

From our conceptual framework of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ and the inherent complexities and contradictions of this process, we turn to the theory of relational poverty to examine the social production of systems of poverty, which we can then bring to bear on the Delridge neighborhood’s response to the DESC facility. The relational frame of poverty examines how deprivation persists in relation to wider social, political, economic and cultural institutions, structures and processes. This conceptual framework for understanding poverty stands in stark contrast to the residual understanding of poverty that looks at impoverishment as a question of worthiness and seeks to categorize and construct the impoverished as a distinct, separate class of people judged without a firm understanding of the power asymmetries which produced the paradigm in which they live their lives (Brock, Cornwall & Gaveta 2001). The cyclical and historical nature of a relational understanding of poverty illustrates how the upward redistribution of resources and the systemic rollback of welfare systems result in deepening inequality from the global to the local. In short, this paper “...treat[s] poverty as a political, economic, and ideological effect of

capitalist processes and...as a function of power" (Goode & Maskovsky 2001). By treating poverty as a process, we acknowledge that inequity is shaped by the histories of a place and, without a keen understanding of these histories; there cannot be successful attempts to combat the entrenched power asymmetries. A relational understanding of poverty emphasizes the interdependence of individuals and the embeddedness of their thinking and acting in social relations, rather than autonomous and rational actions (Williams 2010). Through an examination of the Delridge neighborhood with the relational poverty framework, we see interplay between ‘actually existing neoliberal’ policies of urban governance and the social production of poverty and inequality.

The theories of *neoliberal urban governance* and *relational poverty knowledge* form the ontological and epistemological framework for understanding the complex interactions happening in the Seattle neighborhood of Delridge around the community opposition to the proposed DESC housing facility. This housing facility has been sited in a node of activity marked for economic development and business investment. The devolution of the role of state within the neoliberal city places the burden of governance on neighborhood level NGOs and, with this burden, come the inherent complexities and contradictions of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms.’

### Analysis

In the case of Delridge, the proposal of the DESC facility provides us a localized case study of the process of neoliberalization—the specific spatiality and temporality of one neighborhood in West Seattle as community members, local NGOs, and local government struggle to navigate “the complex, confusing, and often highly contradictory implications of this ongoing neoliberalization of urban political-economic space” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Within each component of our methods, contradictions emerge—from community meetings, to local media, to individual residents’ reactions, we can see persistent tensions within the process of navigating the complexities in the role of neighborhood organizations as they take on more political and economic responsibility with the devolution of government under the neoliberal city. The analysis that follows will trace a linear path through the embedded neoliberalism in the neighborhood visioning process, how that vision is complicit in the social construction of embodied economic liability, and finally how the embodiment of economic liability serves as a neoliberal justification for the social exclusion of othered bodies.

### **Embedded Neoliberalism in Visioning**

Within Delridge, devolution of government to the local-level has produced a number of community organizations that now play a key role in encouraging the economic development of the neighborhood. Notable among these is the Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association who played an instrumental role in shaping the language of the Delridge Neighborhood Plan. Central to the plan was the creation of “concentrated nodes of activity”—the most important of which was identified as Brandon Node—a strip along Delridge Way SW that has been targeted for development in the form of a retail center. Brandon Node has emerged as a spatial linchpin of economic development in Delridge through a number of visioning documents produced by neighborhood NGOs and local government. It is outlined in the Neighborhood Plan as one of three “concentrated nodes of activity”, and is similarly identified in a report compiled by the Department of Urban Design and Planning at University of Washington in partnership with the Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association entitled *Visualize Delridge* as a “space of opportunity” (UW 2005). The report concludes in the economic development section that, “creating retail opportunities in the Brandon node is a critical component to developing a vibrant Delridge community. With the recent growth and development along Delridge Way, business owners and community members are increasingly optimistic about business growth” (UW 2005). Here, we can see the reification of the community as growth-oriented, or in the words of one community member as “going through...a *renaissance*”, within the language of the very documents that produce materiality in the neighborhood [emphasis added] (Matt McBride 2011).

The Brandon Node has, however, become a space of contention within Delridge since DESC purchased a parcel of land on which they plan to build their new supportive housing facility for the homeless. It is precisely because the supportive housing site disrupts the vision of Brandon Node that local NGOs have reacted strongly to DESC’s facility and, as the community struggles to mold itself to the neoliberal ideology written into the visioning documents, it faces the inherent contradictions within the ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ in Delridge. One of the most prominent among these tensions is that within the framework outlined in the Neighborhood Plan, itself both a material product of and discursive center point of neoliberal ideology in Delridge, the neighborhood must construct ‘nodes of activity’ yet lacks the characteristics that make an area attractive to investors, having low population density, low traffic counts, high minority population, and low median household income (Diane Lupke & Associates 2011). This tension plays out within our empirical research as the neighborhood struggles for a grocery store option. Since economic

disinvestment in the neighborhood began in the 1960s, the area has lacked direct access to a full-service grocery store, and was recently declared a “food desert” by United States Department of Agriculture, with 43.7% of the people living in the tract with low access, defined in terms of income and proximity to grocery stores (USDA 2012). These community fears around disinvestment and lack of grocery store options pushed the North Delridge Neighborhood Council to commission a report from an economic development consultant on the viability of a full-service grocery store in the area which concluded, “current incomes, population density, traffic counts, and proximity to alternatives do not support location of a standard supermarket within the Delridge area” (Diane Lupke & Associates 2011). Delridge’s struggle for a supermarket is but one of the many tensions arising in the neighborhood from the discrepancy between the vision for the future created through documents of embedded neoliberalism and the actuality of the area in terms of demographics, geography, and history.

### **The Social Construction of Economic Liability**

The protection of the vision outlined in the Neighborhood Plan has been a key point in neighbors’ arguments against the facility, “[we] have been struggling—[we] don’t have time to shoulder additional stuff because we have our hands full--This is a very precious piece [of land]. The Delridge Neighborhood Plan did not account for taking up three parcels--15,000 sq ft of real estate--with this kind of project!” (DESC Talk Part 3: 2011). This reaction speaks to the community’s adoption of the neoliberal ideology laid in the Neighborhood Plan as the most efficient method of community development. It also begins to flesh out a broader narrative in the neighborhood that has emerged as a key point of defense—that the neighborhood is too “fragile” and “unstable” to take on 66 poor bodies. Across community forums, we can see the construction of this narrative. The West Seattle Herald has reported on neighborhood ‘instability’, saying, “There was a shared sentiment amongst many in the room that Delridge is on the up-and-up...There was a shared fear that the DESC project could set the community back in achieving that goal. ‘You are harming one community in an attempt to help another,’ one Delridge resident stated” (Swenson 2011). We can see this running sentiment mirrored in our observations at the April 12th meeting with one Advisory Committee member remarking that, “the community is in a fragile state of economic development” and again in a Q&A session with DESC’s Executive Director, Bob Hobson, “We’re not stable! We’ve been bustin’ our asses for thirty years trying to stabilize and we still ain’t there” (DESC Talk

Part 3: 2011). Though this narrative we can see the social construction of the residents of 5444 Delridge Way as both economic liability economic disincentive. Within these reactions, the emphasis on a geographic imaginary of Delridge as ‘fragile’ is a narrative that works discursively to situate the threat of economic disincentive on the bodies of the residents of 5444 Delridge Way, and is encapsulated by one community leader’s comment at a Q&A session with DESC’s executive director, Bob Hobson, “...what you are building means [less] likelihood of bringing the institutions we need to thrive...[those institutions] are not going to react well to the presence of your facility.”

A study from New York University’s Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, however, provides a quantitative analysis that stands in stark contrast to the claims of neighbors that the facility would lower the value of the neighborhood. After an 18-year period across 123 supportive housing sites in New York City, the researchers concluded “the evidence refutes the frequent assertions by opponents of proposed developments that supportive housing has a sustained negative impact on neighboring property values” (NYU 2006). While this study is case-specific to New York, it nonetheless provides a counterpoint to narratives of devaluing that have been used by neighbors and neighborhood organizations, summed up by one neighborhood leader in Delridge like this: “you can’t tell us that it won’t have a negative impact immediately on our neighborhood and then also want us to shoulder the burden...” (DESC Talk Part 3, 2011). This narrative of fragility is not isolated to Delridge, but instead has played a role in several neighborhood reactions to DESC facilities across the City of Seattle. When a supportive housing site was proposed in Columbia City area of Rainier Valley, a historically low income, high minority neighborhood, the Rainier Chamber of Commerce argued to the city that “Columbia City and Hillman city are *fragile* areas after decades of disinvestment and that the project would not help neighbors still in a *delicate state of transition*” (Young 2006, emphasis added). A business owner in the neighborhood agreed, “basically it’s still a developing neighborhood...[the DESC site could] stunt the natural flow of business southward from Columbia City” (Young 2006). This type of economic effect was also a fear for residents and business owners around DESC’s 1811 Eastlake facility, specifically targeted at housing late-stage, chronic alcoholics, and was summed up by one developer in the Eastlake neighborhood like this: “[Street alcoholics] make the city less desirable...If there's something a mile away of equal value, unequivocally there's an advantage to not living next to a facility” (Murakami 2007).

These narratives of fragility across the city are deployed as a means of constructing DESC housing facilities, and the poor, mentally-ill bodies inside, as an economic liability--one that “fragile” neighborhoods “in a state of transition” cannot afford to risk, despite the fact that, in the case of

Delridge, the supportive housing site is likely to have little effect on the value of the neighborhood and, indeed, has actively incentivizing neighborhood investment through a retail space. These reactions speak to the spatio-temporal specificity of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ in both Seattle and Delridge. The construction of economic liability has been fundamental to the political strategies of neighborhood organizations resisting DESC supportive housing efforts and moves beyond the traditional NIMBY politics that typically center around outside others as physically and socially out of place. Instead, the social construction of the residents of 5444 Delridge Way as an economic liability becomes the method through which neighborhood organizations justify the exclusion of a social other without taking about bodies—a method that is tailored to Seattle’s specific political climate of political correctness and progressiveness (Carr et. al. 2009; Greer et. al. 2007).

### **The Neoliberal Excuse**

It is this justification that has proven the point of contradiction within the site reaction, and within the complexities of those contradictions we can see the local-level navigation of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ in Delridge and how that manifests itself as an economic excuse for social exclusion and erasure of homeless bodies. In several cases within remarks made by community members, we can see the lines between the economic justification and social exclusion blurred. At one meeting a resident spoke up during the section for open comments, “[w]e support your mission, but our community is going to be immediately impacted [economically] by this change,” immediately followed with, “[w]hat are these people doing during the day? ... What are your residents doing to work, to earn, to have the privilege of a roof over their head?” (West Seattle Blog 2011). This quote brings to the forefront the interplay between the veiled social construction of economic threat and the more blatant placement of blame on resident who become morally at fault for their own poverty and must earn a place in the community through integration into the formal economy. The quote above speaks to the discursive construction of the tenants of the DESC facility as undeserving of housing if they do not reform and become a productive member of society. Katz (1990) discusses these two discursive categories—the deserving and the undeserving poor—at length through questioning the underlying assumptions of these easy dichotomies to examine the political work that they do by situating the culpability of a person’s poverty or illness entirely upon their own moral behavior. He draws connections between this shift in blame and the ideological shift to neoliberal market triumphalism of the 1970s (Katz 1990). Drawing on the quotes above we can see the social

construction of the DESC facility tenants as undeserving, state dependent, and unable or unwilling to reform to a system where one must pay for housing through hard work.

We argue that this residual frame, and the production of an individualized moral failing that accompanies it, has provided the ontological underpinning for arguments in the neighborhood around economic fragility and liability. These narratives that focus on the perceived economic threat of the DESC facility allow Delridge NGOs to circle around the type of blatant othering exercised in more traditional NIMBYism, circling around the residualist frame without ever needing to explicitly label it as such - in short, a means through which local NGOs can talk about excluding bodies without ever talking about excluding bodies. It is here that the theoretical frames of neoliberal urban governance and relational poverty knowledge come together - at a nexus of the ways in which homelessness and poverty are framed and constructed within the highly contradictory nature of 'actually existing neoliberalisms' in the Delridge neighborhood and, more broadly, the Seattle region.

### **Conclusion**

The scope of our work has been to examine the impossible contradictions of 'actually existing neoliberalisms' at the level of the city and neighborhood. We examined the economic, social and political work these contradictions do within neighborhood level NGOs to produce a geographic imaginary of Delridge that molds itself into the larger urban neoliberal framework propagated by the City of Seattle and the neighborhood response to the disruption of this geographic imaginary. We have outlined the methodologies used to gather our empirical evidence for this paper: archival research, participant observation, and a geovisualization exercise that allowed us to ground our data in the image of the neighborhood itself. In addition, we presented a brief literature review that illustrated our theoretical framing for this project. By tying the theories of 'actually existing neoliberalisms' to relational poverty knowledge, we sought to illustrate the interconnections between the production of neoliberalism at the neighborhood level and the social production of impoverishment and the politics of social exclusion, erasure and othering that are a product of such power hierarchies. The analysis that followed traced a linear path from notions of embedded neoliberalism within the neighborhood visioning process to the complicity of that vision in the social construction of embodied economic fragility and liability, before ending with an examination of the ways in which the construction of the DESC site as a space of economic liability serves as a neoliberal justification for the social exclusion of homeless bodies.

We argue that this research makes a contribution to the conversation of urban geography and community development through our emphasis on the necessity of bringing relational poverty knowledge to bear on the neighborhood level understanding of community development politics. The case study of Delridge shows the interpretive potential of integrating relational poverty studies into a neoliberal analytic frame. Our theoretical framework of *'actually existing neoliberalisms'* and *relational poverty knowledge* and the resulting analysis allows us to see the interplay between narratives of social exclusion couched in an oppositional rhetoric of economic fragility and instability. This dialogue of economic fragility and liability results in the continued othering and pathologizing of the poor while, simultaneously, shifting the conversation away from the impoverished bodies themselves and back to the narrative of neoliberal ideal of economic investment and community development. The work of these two nested theoretical frames in the actuality of the Delridge neighborhood is a discursive opposition that allows community members and NGOs to speak about the exclusion of impoverished and othered bodies without ever explicitly speaking about the bodies themselves and, in this erasure, reproducing systems of inequality and exclusion.

We close by taking you back to story of Galena White and the October 11th, 2012 North Delridge Community Forum at the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center. The exclusionary tone of that meeting and the ways in which homeless, mentally-ill bodies were framed as economic liability brings out the *doing* of social exclusion in Delridge—how the community visions and reifies its future, how geographic imaginaries of the homeless are constructed to disrupt that vision, and how the community justifies its social exclusion within the specific political climate of Seattle. Galena White is herself an embodied contradiction. She was once homeless, she is mentally ill, and state dependent, but she is simultaneously a member of the Delridge community, a co-founder of the Delridge Produce Cooperative, working to bring fresh produce to the area in response to a community need. And she wrote her opinion piece for the West Seattle Blog, which Bill Hobson identified as a turning point for the oppositional attitudes of the community (Stolte, 2011). She brought attention of the neighborhood the inconsistency of their exclusion and forced an alternate understanding of the DESC supportive housing site. In our research, we draw inspiration from Galena White - it is the highlighting of the contradictions within the neoliberal city, the study and exposure of them, that allows for an ontology and epistemology that is not founded on exclusion, but rather one of social connectivity. To the oft repeated community member question 'Why Delridge?' Galena White offered this response: "A few residents at the meeting, in their fear, shared a similar question; 'Why Delridge? We're trying to make this a better place. Don't drag us down

when we're getting on our feet.' My response to that (if I could say it to everyone who has doubts) would be, "We dream of making Delridge a better place – and if we can make it one where the disabled are treated with generosity and kindness, we will have succeeded."