

Exploring the Impact of Mixed-Income/Mixed Use Redevelopments in Building Community Cohesion at  
Seattle's Yesler Terrace

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**Abstract**

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How do you build community? Is it the building, services, and amenities that we build into communities? Or is it the people, who use buildings, services, and amenities in communities to have experienced, and build relationships with one another. Mixed-income/mixed-use communities play a unique role in providing housing and amenities to a variety of individuals, and potentially fostering a sense of community cohesion. Yesler Terrace, a new mixed-income/mixed-use community in development, created a timely opportunity to characterize the current level and features of community cohesion in preliminary stages of redevelopment at this site. Community cohesion and neighborhood harmony can affect the health of individuals and the community as a whole.

This evaluation was completed in three parts: site observations and analysis; focus groups conducted with Seattle Housing Authority residents; and one-on-one interviews conducted with market-rate residents living at the Batik building. Results reveal that SHA and market-rate residents enjoy the new spaces but yearn for more interaction within the community. SHA residents reported little connection with the perceived wealthier market-rate community. Market-rate residents wanted to engage with SHA residents but didn't want to seem like they are taking over the community. Both communities primarily

used their local spaces and did not share communal areas as often as they would like. All Yesler Terrace resident saw an opportunity to foster space that builds organic relationships. There is limited, but generally supportive evidence of overall community cohesion at this early stage of redevelopment at Yesler Terrace, plus promising expressions of a desire for greater cohesion.

SHA can explore at different procedural, conceptual and methodological recommendations to deepen the agencies understanding of cohesion at Yesler Terrace. Partnering with market-rate leaders, SHA can implement changes that will foster an environment open to all residents. For example, lobbies across the community can be activated and used as community spaces, welcoming to all in the community. SHA can discover its evolving role in building community at Yesler Terrace.

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# Executive Summary

How do you build community? Is it the building, services, and amenities that we build into communities? Or is it the people, who use buildings, services, and amenities in communities to have experienced, and build relationships with one another. Mixed-income/mixed-use communities play a unique role in providing housing and amenities to a variety of individuals, and potentially fostering a sense of community cohesion. Yesler Terrace, a new mixed-income/mixed-use community in development, created a timely opportunity to characterize the current level and features of community cohesion in preliminary stages of redevelopment at this site. Community cohesion and neighborhood harmony can affect the health of individuals and the community as a whole.

This evaluation was completed in three parts: site observations and analysis; focus groups conducted with Seattle Housing Authority residents; and one-on-one interviews conducted with market-rate residents living at the Batik building. Results reveal that SHA and market-rate residents enjoy the new spaces but yearn for more interaction within the community. SHA residents reported little connection with the perceived wealthier market-rate community. Market-rate residents wanted to engage with SHA residents but didn't want to seem like they are taking over the community. Both communities primarily used their local spaces and did not share communal areas as often as they would like. All Yesler Terrace resident saw an opportunity to foster space that builds organic relationships. There is limited, but generally supportive evidence of overall community cohesion at this early stage of redevelopment at Yesler Terrace, plus promising expressions of a desire for greater cohesion.

SHA can explore at different procedural, conceptual and methodological recommendations to deepen the agencies understanding of cohesion at Yesler Terrace. Partnering with market-rate leaders, SHA can implement changes that will foster an environment open to all residents. For example, lobbies across the community can be activated and used as community spaces, welcoming to all in the community. SHA can discover its evolving role in building community at Yesler Terrace.

# Introduction

Housing developments play a critical role in creating the Seattle community. Seattle Housing Authority is an important stakeholder in developing housing communities for many low-income residents in the area. Now with the redevelopment of the Yesler Terrace community, Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), looks to build a mixed-income/mixed-use community, capable of housing more than 3000 residents. This mixed community is designed to build community cohesion with a “common vision and sense of belonging”(Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007). Using strategic, creative and tactile placemaking techniques, the Yesler Terrace development will re-envision the neighborhood, providing many amenities and services that the existing low-income community wanted. However, will the design principles themselves enable residents to build connections with one another, particularly between SHA and wealthier market-rate residents? The Yesler Terrace development is an opportune site to explore whether and how mixed-income and mixed-use developments build community cohesion and neighborhood harmony.

Yesler Terrace is a historic neighborhood within the city of Seattle. As one of the first federal housing developments in 1940s, Yesler Terrace continues to be a unique neighborhood destined to challenge our understanding of the effects of housing development on communities. The housing stock from the '40s stood for more than 60 years. However, normal use and a lack of public investment left the community dilapidated, with many housing units in need of upgrades and repairs. Yesler Terrace is now being redeveloped by a partnership with SHA, federal grants and programs like HOPE VI, and private developers. This redevelopment project replaces all the previous stock of 561 Seattle Housing units at Yesler Terrace while increasing density through mixed-income commercial and residential development. With all SHA tenants having the opportunity to stay within their community, this project will provide much-needed infrastructure upgrades while diminishing the threat of displacement. In total the redevelopment project will provide 3000+ units to Yesler Terrace, including about 1100 low-income units for SHA residents, with commercial and community spaces available to all. At the completion of the redevelopment project in the 2020s, Yesler Terrace will be one of the densest neighborhoods in Seattle (Marcut, Adina, 2017).

This study begins to explore whether and how the goals of mixed-income developments, including building community cohesion, are being realized at a large scale mixed-income, mixed-use development. The Yesler Terrace site presents some unique design and programming decisions that were made to foster a greater sense of community, amplifying placemaking techniques through the

development. A community of 561 garden townhome units will be redeveloped to have multiple multi-story apartment homes with over 3000+ units in the community. The residents will represent a mix of income brackets from housing voucher recipients to those who are paying market-rate leasing prices. The project is in the middle of its development and has begun to lease market-rate homes in addition to subsidized low-income homes. Now is an opportune time to see if residents have the same perception of benefits as policymakers who designed and implemented the redevelopment.

## Background

Since the 1990's public-policy makers have partnered with private developers to support the development of mixed-use/mixed-income communities as a means of community revitalization and an answer to poverty (J. Fraser and Nelson 2008). However, although research has found that mixed-income re-developments do revitalize communities and provide economic gain to many, they continue to marginalize and displace marginalized communities based on race and lower economic status. Fraser and colleagues found that the goals of a mixed-income/mixed-use development and function of the public-private partnership may lead to different outcomes than anticipated (J. C. Fraser, Chaskin, and Bazuin 2013)(J. Fraser and Nelson 2008). They suggest that a place-based model focused on neighborhood revitalization may not align with the goals and strengths of the existing community. Rather a place-based model that looks to align the goals of residents might further the sense of cohesion.

This common vision and sense of belonging that Frazer and colleagues describe are core tenets of building community cohesion. Mark Joseph and colleagues state that the place-based model of mixed-income development provides four goals for community cohesion articulated by policymakers. These include 1) building social networks through the shared experiences of the residents in the community, 2) providing social control which would motivate lower-income residents to seek opportunities and skills of the higher income communities, 3) behavioral control, which assumes the presence of higher income communities would lead to role modeling of behaviors deemed good in society and 4) political economy of place, that would generate higher market demand for the higher income residents in the community(Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007). These goals may not be achieved by all in the community.

## **Mixed-Income/Mixed Use Developments**

The term mixed-income developments encompass a variety of building types and development plans across the nation (J. Fraser and Nelson 2008)(Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007). The overarching purpose is to design a community where mixed-income residents want to live, work and play together in a more densely populated area, although strategies and designs on achieving that goal differ widely.

Some forms of mixed-income/mixed-use developments are one single building with multiple uses in that building. These include a mixture of residential homes, community spaces, and commercial spaces. Like other mixed-income developments, homes may range in price, including some designated for low-income residents while others are leased at a market value price. Most standalone mixed-income buildings have fewer lower income units, than a larger redeveloped site may have

Other mixed-income/mixed-use developments may include multiple buildings arranged along a block, single street facade or larger redevelopment area. These mixed-income/mixed-use planned communities are designed to have multiple uses throughout the space and promote the use of shared spaces across the community. Some buildings may be specifically designed for housing only, while others are a mix of commercial and residential spaces. Amenities, like community centers and parks, can be planned as a destination or shared spaces for all community members to enjoy. Additional amenities, like rooftop gardens and private terraces, may be tailored to each building's residents. Ideally, residents are incentivized to use shared spaces in the building, simply because of the proximity and convenience to one's home. Transportation routes and paths are planned to promote movement and use of shared spaces.

Additionally, mixed-use communities can have multiple design elements, which may differ between developments. Some may have multi-story high rise buildings, while others have smaller townhome and garden home design. The differences in housing designs attract a mixture of residents. A single couple's lifestyle may fit more with a smaller high-rise apartment, while a growing family may want a townhome style with access to the street and green spaces. Yesler Terrace is a planned community with a mixture of all these elements.

## **Community Cohesion and Neighbor Harmony**

As Mark Joseph and colleagues explained, building social networks through shared experiences with other residents in the community is one goal for mixed-income/mixed-use developments(Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007). Community events and programming that use shared spaces become

opportunities for residents to share experiences, building social networks with one another. By using the spaces some residents may be inspired to lead an event themselves, using the agency they have as a resident to forge stronger connections within their own community. Some examples could be community potlucks, shared celebrations and holidays, or National Night Out Against Crime events.

For example, Ben Wheeler, the HOPE VI coordinator at Yesler Terrace, works with a team of community organizers and residents developing programming that will activate community spaces throughout the site. Events like Vietnamese teatime, senior sit and exercise, Eritrean lunch, and Juneteenth Celebration are opportunities for residents to create or maintain relationships with each other.

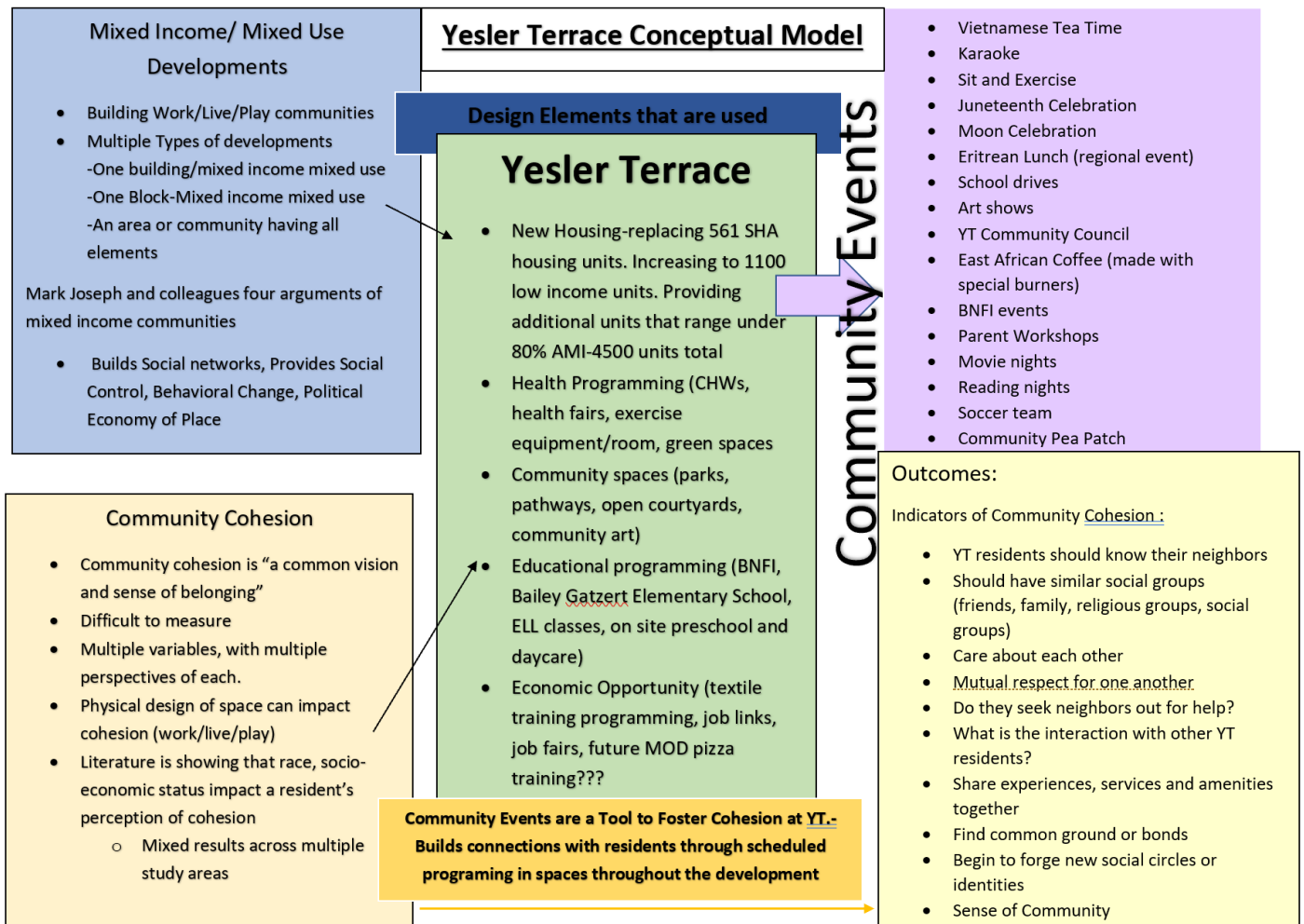
Mark Joseph and colleagues explain that community cohesion can be expressed in many ways. Communities with strong cohesion have a shared community identity (Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007). These communities have good mutually beneficial community agreements. There is a balance of resident-driven programming from both the subsidized housing community and all levels of the mixed-income market-rate residential community. The entire community participates in local community events and activities, interacting and engaging with one another. A simple “hello” from neighbors can be a beginning to new friendships between neighbors. The community comes together to solve problems and identify the strengths of the community when implementing solutions.

My capstone project examined whether similar indicators of community cohesion exist at the Yesler Terrace redevelopment site, in the early stages of the redevelopment and occupancy of the community.

## Methods

I developed a conceptual model at the beginning of the project (Figure 1) to illustrate potential relationships between mixed-income/ mixed-use development and community cohesion at the Yesler Terrace site.

Figure 1: Yesler Terrace Conceptual model describing paths to Community Cohesion Indicators



The study used a cross-sectional qualitative research approach, with a natural setting design. Data were collected through three major parts plus contextual preparation. The approach I followed has been outlined by John Creswell’s *Research Design* (Creswell 2014). These include:

- Contextual Preparation- Published public documents about the redevelopment site, including prior focus groups and community council meetings.
- Visuals- Pictures of the redevelopment site.
- Data Collection- Field notes were gathered on the activities at the Yesler Terrace redevelopment site. These notes were gathered through multiple site observations at various locations throughout the 32-acre redevelopment. Observations were taken on a variety of days and times to observe any differences in traffic patterns and use of the space.

- Focus Groups- SHA residents were recruited from any of the SHA owned buildings on site, which include Hoi Mai Gardens, Kebero Court, Raven Terrace for focus groups.
- Individual interviews- Market-rate residents were recruited from the Batik building, the only market-rate building that had occupancy at the time of this project, for one-on-one interviews. All four buildings for focus groups and interviews are located on the 32-acre redevelopment site for the Yesler Redevelopment project.

This project did not require human subjects review. The focus groups were part of a study conducted by Public Health Seattle King County (PHSKC) and the Seattle Housing Authority. Human subject review for the focus groups was conducted by PHSKC. The student investigator and faculty advisors determined that the present project did not require human subjects review, because it was a site-specific project, consistent with usual SHA business practice, non-intrusive methodology and did not meet University of Washington criteria to be defined as research.

Procedures were developed to protect the identity of all participants. All recruiting information was stored securely and destroyed after the end of the project. All recruits who participated in one-on-one interviews were told a brief description of the project, and how their participation in the interview was to be used. Each participant was specifically told, "Your name and any identifiable information will be deleted from my final report." When coding the one-on-one interviews, identifiable information was omitted, and each interview was assigned a number. All identifiable information and notes for one-on-one participants were deleted at the end of this project.

## Document Review

The document review helped guide my general understanding of mixed-income sites and the multiple factors that relate to building community cohesion. Documents conducted as a literature review that informed the project and methods I used for data collection and analysis.

## Visuals

Free-form observations of the site were used to characterize the use of the site based on Lynch's approach(Lynch 1960). Pictures were taken and some are included in this report to showcase specific features of the development.

## Site Observations

Site observations were conducted over a period of four months during the course of the project. Specific observational points were identified using the design of the redevelopment zone. These observational points varied across the site, enabling me to explore the use of communal spaces outside of the residential homes. Observations were done over multiple days and times to track any use by community members. For instance, the coffee shop may be used more in the morning, however, the Yesler hill climb may be used more during lunch hours.

Kevin Lynch introduces elements of a city's built environment that help people move and function in that space (Lynch 1960). These elements include:

- *Districts*-are the medium to small sized communities that have some identifiable markers or community boundaries. For instance, Manhattan is a district in New York. For the purpose of this project, the 32-acre re-development of Yesler Terrace was considered the district.
- *Paths*- are channels where people and things move. These could include streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads, and streetcars.
- *Nodes*-are specific points or primary junction where people can enter or exit the community. Major intersections or places for large community gatherings points can be considered different nodes.
- *Edges*- represents a boundary or the edge of an identifiable community. Some edges are natural barriers like coastlines, shorelines, or mountains. Others can be created barriers that are identifiable markers that separate a community. Highway and interstates are examples of some created edges.
- *Landmarks*-are identifiable buildings, signs, or areas that have an identifiable difference from the other structures in the area. Some landmarks can be large and seen from multiple places in a city, like the space needle. While other landmarks can smaller and commonly known to a community, like a local bodega or corner store.

Using these markers of a city, I identified multiple paths, nodes, and landmarks to observe. My observations were compiled over a course of 4 months. The map of the Yesler development (Figure 2) outlines specific sites of importance. My observations were to see if paths, node, and landmark were being used at the redevelopment site. I recorded observations as free-form notes and later compiled them for analysis.

Figure 2: Redevelopment Plan for the entire Yesler Terrace site. source: [https://www.seattlehousing.org/sites/default/files/Brochure\\_Redevelopment\\_of\\_Yesler\\_Terrace.pdf](https://www.seattlehousing.org/sites/default/files/Brochure_Redevelopment_of_Yesler_Terrace.pdf)



## Focus Groups

I helped conduct focus groups that were organized as part of a separate, ongoing study at Yesler Terrace, by Public Health of Seattle/King County's ongoing study funded Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. I was able to partner with them as our studies had very similar objectives. This reduced imposition on the resident community and duplication of investigative efforts.

As a part of a longitudinal study, PHSKC conducted focus groups with SHA residents recruited from Hoi Mai Gardens, Kebero Court or Raven Terrace, SHA owned properties at Yesler Terrace. Seven focus groups were conducted over a course of two days. A table shows the date, language group and the number of participants for each focus group. Multiple focus groups were held on the same day and time. I was the notetaker for the English-speaking focus groups. I was partnered with a facilitator who

Language Group	2/21/2019	2/28/2019
	# of Participants	# of Participants
English	3	1
Somali	9	7
Vietnamese	23	12
Tigrinya/Amharic	7	0

*Table 1: Focus Group Conducted with SHA residents' participants over two days*

asked the questions outlined by the research team. They were also allowed to ask any follow-up questions to clarify the responses from the participants.

The focus groups were more structured than one-on-one interviews. Participants were asked questions from a structured list of questions developed by the research team. Each focus group was asked all of the following questions:

- Has redevelopment made Yesler Terrace a better place to live?
- In what ways has the redevelopment changed how you talk to or do things with your neighbors?
- In what ways has it changed how often you get together with people?
- Has redevelopment made it harder or easier to connect with neighbors?
- What programs or activities at Yesler have been important in helping you connect with residents?
- Has redevelopment changed the way you are able to take care of your health and your families' health?
- It seems Yesler residents are visiting the Emergency Department more over the past few years. Do you have ideas about why this may be the case?
- What programs, activities or other things at Yesler Terrace have been most important in helping you take care of your families' health
- What do you know about the families that have left Yesler Terrace? Do they hope to stay where they are now or do they hope to move back to Yesler Terrace?

Notes were transcribed for each focus group, including translation services for those that did not speak English. Non-English-speaking groups had a facilitator and notetaker that spoke the language of that group and English. The notetaker was able to listen in the language of the group and transcribe

notes in English for the research team. Participant responses were reviewed to see if there were any common responses within the focus groups.

## One-on-One Interviews

Informal one-on-one interviews were conducted with Batik residents (market-rate building).

Participants were recruited through one of two ways:

1. Some residents were in contact with Seattle Housing Authority staff about other community organizing events. These participants were interested in sharing their experience and wanted to participate in this research project. All participants are residents of the Batik building and self-selected to participate in the one-on-one interviews. No volunteers were excluded.
2. Some residents were recruited from Tougo, a new local coffee shop that opened in a new commercial space at the Yesler site. As I conducted multiple days of observations at the coffee shop I was able to identify individuals who were frequent customers. I engaged with these customers and began to build rapport. After explaining the scope of my work in the community, some customers asked to participate and share their experiences as Batik residents in the community.

These interviews used overarching questions, and more probing questions as warranted.

Overarching questions included:

- Why did you decide to move to the Batik Building?
- What is your experience of the Yesler Terrace community?
- What community spaces, amenities, or events have you participated in or use?
- How do you interact with people in your community?
- What made you want to live in the Yesler Community?

I had planned on completing 15 one-on-one interviews, but time limitations of the project forced me to stop at 11 interviews. Each interview took longer than scheduled, and participants were all eager to share their experience. I had estimated each one-on-one interview to take 60-90 minutes, however, all interviews exceeded two hours, which is a noteworthy limitation that will be discussed later. At around the 8<sup>th</sup> one-on-one interview, I was no longer hearing substantially new or different information from respondents.

After each interviewee was recruited, I scheduled coffee at a time that was convenient for them. Some residents were able to meet at Tougo Coffee; however, some meetings were outside business hours for the coffee shop, so we met at another café in the area. Participants were asked the questions from the list provided previously. I chose to not use an audio recorder. Some individuals can become uncomfortable when talking about their community to a stranger. The addition of an instrument like a microphone might have hindered the interviewee from being candid in their response. I did take notes of each conversation. I paused during the interview to clarify my understanding of the interviewee's response while taking notes. I took quotes of interesting things they said and repeated the quotes back to make sure I transcribed the correct statement. These notes were used during the data analysis.

## Data Analysis

### Site Observations

For this analysis, rather than delineating each observation area as a path, node or landmark, I explored how my observations show different elements of a city within the Yesler site, aligning with the elements explored by Lynch.

### Focus Groups

Responses were recorded on a focus group questionnaire. Those questionnaires used a fixed list of questions. The PHSKC study was developed with a different framework and goals, including but not limited to the characterization of cohesion with SHA residents at Yesler Terrace. Each focus group was asked the same questions. I reviewed the responses of each focus group to see if there were any recurring responses, particularly relevant to community cohesion. These recurring responses became themes that emerged from the focus group respondents. I was also able to identify individual responses that were not reflective of the group. These were recorded in the notes by each notetaker. Identifying information was omitted, but a note was made if a statement was made by one person and not reflective of the entire focus group.

### One-on-One Interviews

As described before, Mark Joseph and colleagues (2007) explain that community cohesion can be expressed in many ways. Communities with strong cohesion have a shared community identity. These communities have mutually beneficial community agreements. Using their work as a model, Mark

Joseph and colleagues partnered with Yesler Terrace leadership to identify ten key indicators to characterize community cohesion at the Yesler Terrace site. These indicators are:

- residents know their neighbor's
- residents have similar social groups.  
(friends, family, religious groups, social groups).
- residents care about each other.
- residents have mutual respect for one another.
- residents seek other neighbors out for help.
- residents have interactions with other YT residents.
- residents share experiences, services, and amenities together.
- residents find common ground or bonds.
- residents begin to forge new social circles or identities.
- residents have a shared sense of community.

Using these ten indicators, I created an excel spreadsheet where I identified responses from each one-on-one interview that showed a supportive or non-supportive association with each indicator. These responses were compiled to identify the number of interviewees who made one or more supportive or non-supportive statement for each indicator. For the scope of this project, I decided beforehand that at least five indicators should have sufficient “supportive” associations (and relatively fewer or “non-supportive” findings) from the interview responses to determine that the redevelopment has or is building community cohesion.

These data analysis tools allowed me to report and visualize the qualitative responses in a semi-quantitative way. However, the number of supportive or non-supportive associations to an indicator was only a portion of the analysis. The richness of the responses from each interview provided important qualitative data.

# Results

## Site Observation

It's important to recognize that Yesler Terrace development is still an active construction site. Many of the planned paths, nodes and landmarks are not open and are still under construction on the site. For this analysis, rather than delineating each observation area as a path, node or landmark, I explored how my observations show different elements of a city at the Yesler site, aligning with the elements explored by Lynch.

## Multiple Transportation Modes

The development of the site brought multiple different transportation changes to the community. Larger arterial roads, like Yesler Way, and Broadway were always key transportation paths within the community: Yesler Way connecting the downtown corridor to the community, and Broadway leading to cultural and social amenities.

Yesler Way has now been developed to be a central path, with streetcar and bus stations along with it. The streetcar station on Yesler Way has become a landmark for gathering as well as a node or entrance to the community. The development of the streetcar brought new circulation patterns around the community, including a streetcar route through Jackson, Yesler, and Broadway. This route connects the downtown, international districts, Yesler community and Broadway amenities under one route. This access has created greater use and visibility on Yesler Way as an arterial path for the community, as pedestrians wait for the streetcar.

Bike lanes were completed during the 4-month observation period. These have provided safer routes within the community. I observed more bike rentals being used and parked within the community after the opening of the bike lanes than before.

The Yesler hill climb has provided a unique path, node, and landmark to the community. Jackson and Yesler previously were parallel streets that were not connected; however, a partnership with many stakeholders created an opportunity to connect these streets and provide safe access to the international district. A hill climb of steps and ADA accessible ramps were created to connect Jackson Street with the Yesler Terrace

Development. This hill climb became an important aspect of

the design of the entire redevelopment site and was continued through the site leading to the entrance of Harborview Medical Center. This has now become a pedestrian arterial path, used by residents and Harborview patrons as well.



*Figure 3: Yesler hill climb leading to the Yesler Terrace Community, Photo source: Jonathan Joseph*

## Multiple Housing Options and Designs



*Figure 4: A mix of spaces at the Yesler Terrace Development. Retail spaces with apartments above are built parallel to Yesler Way. Townhomes with outside entrances and stoops line Broadway. Photo Source: Jonathan Joseph*

The design and variety of housing designs is a key potential factor for building community at Yesler Terrace. The variety of housing options provides opportunities for a variety of families to move into the community. Townhomes with smaller private entrances and green spaces can be a better option for larger families, while larger apartment buildings with multiple units and more amenities within a building can be a better option for some. Similarly, the design of the site allows a variety of access to different spaces. For instance, if someone lives in a townhouse at Hoi Mai, they are much closer to Yesler Park than a family renting an apartment at Raven Terrace. The same park becomes a community amenity harder to access for Raven Terrace residents who must cross Yesler Way to get to the park.

Design elements were brought up during the focus groups and one-on-one interviews. This will be discussed further in the Results section.

## Recreation and Green Spaces

Recreation and green spaces evolved over the course of my observations. Yesler Terrace Park, a



Figure 5: Yesler Terrace Park, Photo Source: Jonathan Joseph

large park within the development, recently opened and is a common destination for many around the community. At the beginning of my observations, some residents were still living in older housing stock from the 1940s. My observations showed the difference between the previous residents and the newer community. Although the park had become a central green space for many new residents,

those who previously occupied older 1940's units used their private courtyard more often. The park was a key for families and those who want to be outside, but the private courtyards allowed families to build a private yard where residents could plant and tend their own private green spaces. Some residents explained that the private yards made their houses feel like private single-family homes. They had a yard and garden like other homeowners do. This feature is not present in the redeveloped units.

Yesler Park is a central green space landmark intended to supplement the loss of private courtyard space. Yesler Park is a large area, allowing for multiple activities and opportunities for engagement. Soccer fields highlighting community artwork are used by many. The climbing toys and slides work with the topography of the hill. This provides an activity space for children, while not obstructing views from this park. Bike lanes and paths wind through and around the park, leading visitors to experience more parts of the Yesler Community. Many respondents in the focus groups and interviews stated that they enjoy the park often.

My observations around the newer built pea patch area showed limited use by community members, although many of my observations were outside the growing season.

## Preserving the Culture and History of Yesler Terrace

Seattle Housing Authority and its partners took specific care during the development to preserve and celebrate the cultures of the Yesler Terrace community. The Epstein Opportunity Center preserved the historical smokestack as an architectural landmark within the community. The remodeled building now hosts spaces for employment skills and networking opportunities, educational rooms, and daycare facilities.

Wayfinding markers have special icons, related to the culture of the community. The naming of the individual buildings celebrates the cultural heritage of the many communities that comprise Yesler Terrace. Art, inspired by community members' experience, is found throughout the site. A statue of a maternal mother figure welcomes people to the community. A unique floral bouquet structure reminds the community of special cultural bonds with nature. These art pieces are unique identifying landmarks of the community.



Figure 6: A floral sculpture at Yesler Terrace. The experience of SHA residents informed the design of this sculpture. Photo Source: Jonathan Joseph

## Focus Groups with SHA Residents

*Across all focus groups, SHA residents liked the redevelopment of the community, although there are some reported shortcomings to the development.*

The perceptions of safety have increased in the community. SHA residents liked the updates to the homes, including most amenities and community spaces that were built. Improvements in transportation routes, such as the Yesler hill climb and streetcar have provided a valuable means of access to the community.

*Respondents stated that although the development helped keep families and extended families together, it has become somewhat difficult to visit one another.*

For example, the newer development now requires a security key card to get into a building as well as any specific floor. Previously, residents were able to walk to anyone's home on site, although the

openness of the previous site led to safety concerns for many of the residents as well. One respondent stated, “It was never [closed with security cards] like this before. We would feel free to knock on our neighbors’ doors, and now we can’t even imagine doing that...to borrow a cup of sugar.” Many residents see the security key card as an unnecessary nuisance that may hinder the interaction between residents.

*Respondents believed that some residents living in one building may have more interaction between them than other residents living in another building.*

One respondent said, “People at Kebero Court talk to each other, we don’t do that at Raven Terrace.” Most respondents saw more opportunities for interaction. Some suggested ways that were not centered around an ethnic holiday or group. Some respondents would like to see community rooms used for activities like puzzles, or crafts rather than a programmed event.

*Respondents liked the community events and programming.*

A focus group participant said, “Boon [the name of the event] Coffee Socials that Winta Yohannes throws. We really love that she brings us all together with all the craziness going on.” Respondents stated that with the help of community health workers, through NeighborCare, the residents have more activities, and programming tailored to the needs of the SHA community. Focus group respondents enjoyed events like the Vietnamese Teatime, Eritrean Shared Meals, Juneteenth Celebration, Lunar New Year, Boon Coffee (African coffee time), karaoke, chair aerobics, tutoring and SAT prep help, and block parties.

*Some respondents stated that the newer developments look “institutional.”*

They felt that there was a lot of white walls, little color, and little art. They remarked that you feel like you are walking into a subsidized housing unit when someone walks into the SHA building lobby. This feeling may have been amplified with some of the finishes now installed in the market-rate buildings. Finishes in market-rate lobbies may be perceived as higher-end and add to the impression of institutional design elements in the SHA buildings.

# One-on-One Interviews with Market-Rate Residents

The framework of the interview process allowed for each respondent to have both supportive and non-supportive associations with each indicator. This is a limitation that will be discussed later.

Table 2 shows the number of interviewees who reported one or more supportive or non-supportive responses related to each of the ten indicators.

Some indicators have similar responses from market-rate Batik resident interviewees and so have been combined for this review (interviewee, respondent, and participant will be used interchangeably to reference market-rate Batik residents who were interviewed). As I completed the coding process it became apparent that some statements that had an association to one indicator consistently had a similar association to another indicator as well. Four pairs of indicators that had similar associated statements were grouped together. Initially, I was going to look for five of ten indicators to have a majority or relative majority of supportive associations as an overall metric of community cohesion. After combining the four pairs indicators, I decided that seeing half of the resultant six indicators with a supportive association would determine evidence of cohesion at Yesler Terrace.

# of Respondents n=11		
Indicator	Supportive	Non-Supportive
Know Neighbor	9	4
Interactions w/ YT residents	9	6
Similar social groups	5	8
Forge new social circle at YT	5	9
Care about each other	10	2
Mutual respect	8	2
Seek neighbors for help	1	10
Share experiences together	8	6
Common ground or bonds	9	6
Shared sense of community	10	5

Table 4: Supportive and Non-supportive Association to each of the Ten Indicators of Community Cohesion made by Interviewees from the Batik Building

# of Respondents n=11		
Indicator	Supportive	Non-Supportive
Know Neighbor		
Interactions w/ YT residents	9	5
Similar social groups		
Forge new social circle at YT	5	8
Care about each other		
Mutual respect	9	2
Seek neighbors for help	1	10
Share experiences together	8	6
Common ground or bonds		
Shared sense of community	9	5

Table 5: Supportive and Non-supportive Association to Combined Indicators of Community Cohesion made by Interviewees from the Batik Building

### *Yesler Terrace residents know their neighbors*

#### *Yesler Terrace residents have interactions with other YT residents. COMBINED INDICATOR*

**Supportive:** Most respondents had positive outlooks about knowing their neighbors. A few respondents spoke about the close relationships they had developed. One respondent knew a neighbor felt comfortable in their relationship and asked the neighbor to watch their pet and house while on vacation. To return the favor, that neighbor was able to watch their children while the parents were out. This respondent spoke to the close bond he had formed with this neighbor. “We know each other and are starting to build good bonds.”

Many respondents were very happy to have Night Out Against Crime in the community. Although this is a national night, some commented that it was not something they heard about in an apartment complex. Even Batik residents who did not live in the community at the time of last year’s event were looking forward to this year’s activities. Respondents were excited to host an event where the entire community was getting together, no matter what building they reside in.

**Non-supportive:** Some respondents still wanted more opportunities to know their neighbors. Although they recognized that many residents in the Batik building are kind and cordial, they have done little to get to know one another, let alone the larger Yesler Terrace community. Some respondents said there needs to be more opportunity for community members to interact with one another. They also said that it doesn’t need to be larger events. Some respondents were looking for small social gatherings, like cocktail hours or book clubs as examples, to bring people together. Respondents felt that community spaces should be used to build organic relationships with people in the building and within the community. A respondent remarked that it would be great to have some sort of dance workout class at the community center that is taught by an SHA resident.

An interviewee shared a story of their children playing at the park, “my children were playing with Somali children and I heard them ask my kids why their names were weird. My kids have Anglo names. That made me feel good, knowing that white names are not the norm.” Although he was happy that the common names in the community are not Anglo, the notion that children can recognize someone as different because of their name indicates that there is may not be as much interaction with the diverse community as one would hope.

**Conclusion:** These paired indicators have an overall stronger and more frequent supportive associations. Most community members interact and recognize others who live at Yesler Terrace. They would like to have more interactions with community members.

*Yesler Terrace residents have similar social groups. (friends, family, religious groups, social groups)*

*Yesler Terrace residents begin to forge new social circles or identities. COMBINED INDICATOR*

**Mixed:** Few respondents indicated that they had similar social groups with the residents within the community. However, this could be a limitation of the study population, since many have only begun residence at the Batik building in 2018-early 2019. All respondents acknowledged that they wanted to identify as the same community, but had a challenging time understanding their role in the community. Some respondents shared that they feel like “the others.” They believe the market-rate residents are perceived as being wealthier when they are also working families. A respondent shared, “We could share in our misery, we have some of the same problems.” Another said, “I don’t think many SHA residents realize we have difficult financial decisions to make as well. I have to think about where I’m going to live every year if the rent goes up.” Although this sounds like a “non-supportive” statement, it is also a “supportive” statement in that this Batik resident is looking to share their experience in the hopes of sharing the similar experience with some low-income SHA residents. These are statements that residents would like to connect on some of the financial hardships that many share within the current economic climate.

**Non-supportive:** Most one-on-one interview market-rate residents indicated that they did not have many similar social circles with SHA residents. Interestingly, most interviewees felt that they did not have similar social circles in the Seattle community outside of Yesler Terrace either. They also acknowledged that this is still difficult. Many suspected that as other commercial leasing spaces are opened, there may be more opportunities to create social bonds. At this point, there are no amenities or services that support building social bonds. An interviewee stated, “I don’t even use our gym in our building, so I couldn’t even work out with someone there. Why can’t we have a commercial gym, and then reduced membership so we can at least see some people in public.”

Many respondents were new to the community or the region and are still getting used to their new surroundings. Some believe that the summer months may help bring more people out into the community and help foster an environment to build relationships.

**Conclusion:** These paired indicators have mixed evidence overall, but stronger non-supportive associations. Residents do not share similar social groups and have not had the time to forge new social groups at Yesler Terrace.

*Yesler Terrace residents care about each other*

*Yesler Terrace residents have mutual respect for one another. COMBINED INDICATOR*

**Supportive:** All respondents made statements that described mutual respect and care about each other. Batik residents who participated in the one-on-one interviews were all eager to understand the Yesler community's history and wanted to have a positive impact on the Yesler community of today. Many of the respondents worked in fields that they said could provide services to help other community members. Some wanted to provide educational, medical or legal services that could help the community. Many were concerned with cuts to federal programming and how it could affect SHA residents. All respondents were happy to live in a diverse community and wanted to celebrate and honor the multiple cultures of all the communities.

Residents also explained the mutual respect that they had for the SHA community. Although many residents were new and may not know the complete history of Yesler Terrace, many recognized the importance of the SHA community in creating the community that all residents enjoy today. They respect the wisdom and heritage of the SHA community and want to understand more of that history. Additionally, some market-rate residents want to continue to celebrate Yesler's history as they become a part of Yesler's future. They believed that the new community is not here to replace the old Yesler, but rather grow into a different version of Yesler Terrace for all in the community.

A specific incident was brought up in eight out of the eleven interviews. A child who lived in the community (it's unclear if they were an SHA resident) had come into the lobby of the Batik building and used the hot cocoa machine. They had created a mess and were asked to leave. The child responded with some unkind actions. At some point, a Batik building property manager called the police to report an assault. A text was sent to all Batik residents about the incident with a reminder to use your security key card and not let anyone in the building that you do not know. Eight interviewees thought that this was excessive use of action by Batik's property management. A few out of those eight decided to pursue this event and have asked for better conflict management training for Batik property managers.

**Non-supportive:** There were no comments made from any respondent that would indicate they did not care about others within their community.

**Conclusion:** These paired indicators have strong overall supportive associations. Residents care about each other and how to foster better relationships. Batik residents are looking to use creative problem-solving solutions to build community, rather than divisive or punitive forms of action.

*Yesler Terrace residents seek other neighbors out for help.*

**Supportive:** Although neighbors know each other, only a few respondents said they would seek a neighbor out for help. One respondent has developed a relationship where they sought the help of a neighbor to watch their children. They described the relationship as almost like family, with the neighbors visiting each other for dinner. The interviewee shared that they have small children, so they feel their neighbor, who is a grandma, likes to be around their young children. This was the only respondent who said anything like that.

**Non-supportive:** Ten of eleven interviewees did not seek their neighbors out for help. Many residents have not lived in the building long enough to form these relationships. However, when I asked probing questions as to why they don't ask their neighbors for help, responses consistently showed that it was because of a lack of comfort. One stated, "maybe over time, once we get to know someone we will be able to ask for help." Jokingly they stated, "we don't know what people do in the building so we don't know how they can help us."

**Conclusion:** This indicator has a strong overall non-supportive association. Residents did not report seeking neighbors for help and still, need more time to build trusting relationships where they would feel comfortable to ask for help.

*Yesler Terrace residents share experiences, services, and amenities together.*

**Supportive:** Many participants reported sharing services and amenities with other SHA residents. Many of the communal spaces that are open to Batik residents are shared spaces for the entire Yesler Terrace development. All respondents said they used the park and community center facilities. More residents would like to use the "stairs." These are stairs that create a path dividing Raven Terrace and the Epstein Opportunity Center to the west side and the Batik Building on the east side. Tougo Coffee has become a local coffee shop that many Batik and SHA residents use. It was also used for recruiting participants for this project.

**Non-supportive:** There are some individual spaces that are not shared with the community. SHA residents have some private community rooms and courtyards, that are used for community events and day care services. Batik residents remarked that they also have private spaces, but their private spaces

are amenities open to all residents, rather than open community rooms that needed programming to activate. Batik residents have more rooftop amenities and gathering spaces that are open for use without permission or programming requirements. They also have gym amenities and terraces that look out onto the views of Puget Sound. Many Batik residents acknowledged that the view and outside terraces are amenities that SHA residents don't get to experience.

Another Batik resident explained their disappointment in not knowing about the Vietnamese Lunar New Year Celebrations. This resident is also Vietnamese and didn't know about the celebrations until they saw another Batik resident in the elevator with some food. By that time, the resident had already made other plans. They explained that they would have canceled the plans or invited their friends over to Yesler to take part in the Lunar New Year celebration. This was a missed opportunity to share common experiences with Batik and SHA residents.

**Conclusion:** These paired indicators have mixed overall, but stronger supportive associations. Respondents who remarked about non-sharing spaces were acknowledging the design limitations of these amenities. Rooftop gardens were amenities designed for market-rate residents and their guests. Respondents reported using the shared common areas that were designed to be shared common spaces.

### *Yesler Terrace residents find common ground or bonds*

#### *Yesler Terrace residents have a shared sense of community. COMBINED INDICATOR*

**Supportive:** In some instances, Batik residents find common ground with other Yesler residents. The hot cocoa incident revealed that many residents do not want to build an adversarial relationship in the community but would rather build better bonds with one another. One respondent suggested, "why don't we have a monthly hot cocoa day? That way everyone can have hot cocoa?" This shows that some residents are eager to create more common bonds with one another and build social relationships amongst the community.

Interestingly, Batik residents also felt the use of security key cards was detrimental to building community, similar to SHA respondents in the focus groups. One respondent noted, "The other day I needed help with my groceries, but I didn't know who to ask since I didn't want to get in trouble for letting someone in." Many current residents, both market-rate and SHA residents, feel safe in the community and see the security to get into the building as an additional nuisance to the community. They may not share the experience of previous SHA residents who see the security key card as

improving the perception of safety in the neighborhood prior to the redevelopment. This was an unexpected common ground for all residents in the focus groups and interviews.

Additionally, the current political climate has pushed many residents to explore their actions in creating equitable communities. Six out of eleven respondents explained finding social bonds with other residents. These residents had gone to some community events hosted within the SHA community. Furthermore, some residents were looking for opportunities to build common bonds at Yesler Terrace. The 2018 Night Out Against Crime was organized by a market-rate resident and included participation by both market-rate and SHA residents. Market-rate residents shared their desire to create more programming and events where they can provide services and aid to the community. However, some residents shared concerns about being blamed for the gentrification in the community. “We don’t want to be seen as the white people with the savior complex planning a workshop to help the poor people.”

**Non-supportive:** All respondents felt that they were part of a larger gentrification problem. In this context, many residents spoke to gentrification as the displacement of the previous community to make room for newer, higher income community. One respondent stated, “They told us when we moved here that this used to be the ghetto but it’s not that anymore. We could barely afford to live here.” Respondents felt that the social economic differences between Batik and SHA resident were perceived to be apparent, yet they felt in actuality that there was more dimension to a market-rate resident than just a wealthier person. Many respondents felt that, like SHA residents, they were having a challenging time finding a home. The amenities, services, parks, the proximity to downtown were all perks to moving in. The move-in specials made it affordable to move into this community.

This perception of gentrification or being the person who invests in a changing community, where some previous residents are being displaced, stops some from building social bonds within the community. A respondent said “it was marketed as a mixed-income diverse community, but I don’t see any mixed-income or diversity. Batik residents stay in their building and SHA residents stay in theirs. There is no communication between us. I feel like I am helping gentrify people out of the community. It makes me not want to live here. I feel like an outsider in a community that is going through change.”

A few interviewees had tried to go to some Yesler Community Council meetings. They appreciated that there were interpreters from many different languages attending, but they didn’t know how to get involved. They explained they felt it was a meeting to tell the community decisions that had already been made, not discuss community topics, issues or programs.

**Conclusion:** These paired indicators have an overall supportive association. Relationships in the community may be new, but residents are looking for a way to find common ground. Residents are looking for opportunities to work alongside one another to create a new evolving Yesler identity. However, many respondents expressed concerns about possible misperceptions, of themselves by SHA residents, related to gentrification.

**Data Visualization**

As described before, I originally determined that respondents would be able to share experiences that would have supportive associations with five indicators of cohesion at the Yesler Terrace project. As seen in Figure 7, six indicators had a predominance of supportive responses from the one-on-one interviews. However as explained previously, four pairs of indicators shared similar “supportive” and “non-supportive” responses and were combined.

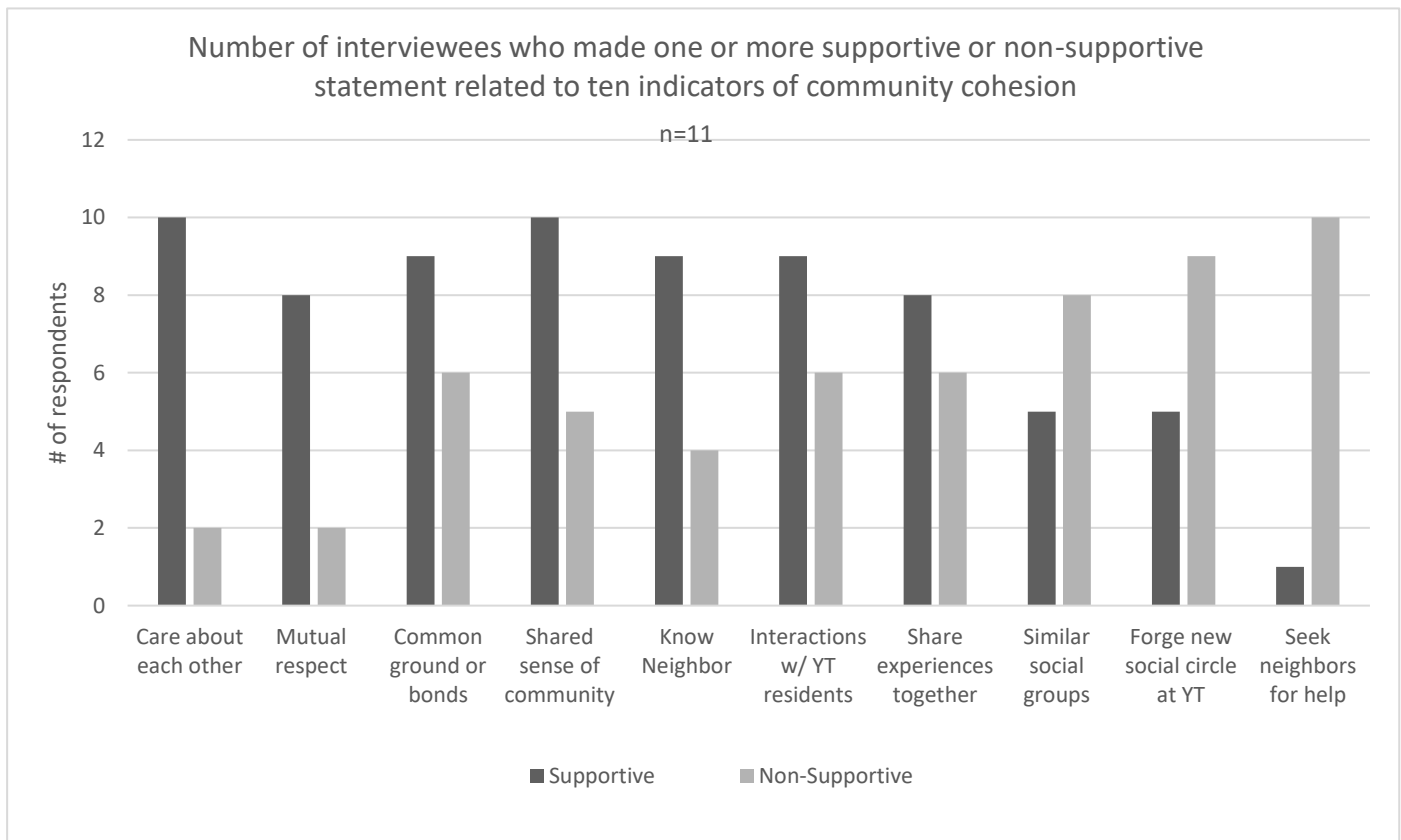


Figure 7: Number of interviewees who made one or more supportive or non-supportive statement related to ten indicators of community cohesion

After combining the four pair indicators with similar associations, I was left with six indicators. When looking at the distribution of answers, 4 out of the 6 categories had more supportive responses which met my expectation of half of the indicators, see Figure 8.

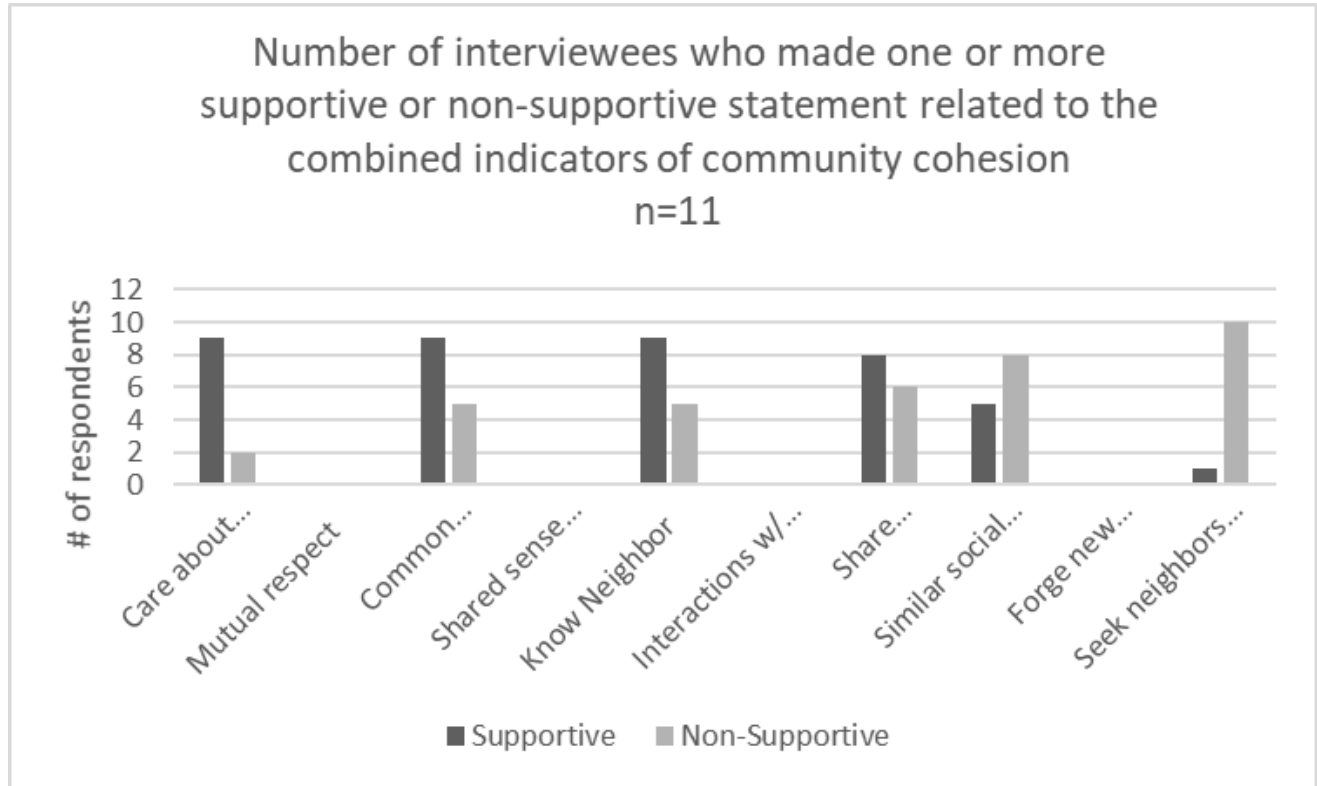


Figure 8: Number of interviewees who made one or more supportive or non-supportive statement related to the combined indicators of community cohesion

Community cohesion is apparent at the Yesler Terrace redevelopment site. As seen in both figures, more than half of the indicators had more supportive associating statements.

The semi-quantitative approach was helpful in identifying the frequency of supportive and non-supportive statements. However, the richness of this study is in the detail of each respondent's comments rather than the simple number of associations. The conversations enabled me to explore the perceptions of cohesion and how each resident interacts with people within the community and the built environment surrounding them.

## Discussion

Building community cohesion is multifaceted and has multiple dimensions. The built environment and social interactions within that environment can help foster community cohesion. As seen through all three methods employed in this project, the redevelopment of the Yesler Terrace community has provided benefits to the community associated with some level of cohesion amongst residents.

Some elements of community cohesion were found during the scope of this project. This was not necessarily expected as the site is still under construction, with community members moving in constantly. Many residents have not experienced the variety of amenities and community spaces planned within the redevelopment because these are not complete or because residents have not been in the community long enough to use these spaces. Cohesion itself has multiple dimensions, with residents at both SHA and market-rate buildings responding with different degrees of cohesion. These are key factors to recognize while discussing the level of cohesion within the community.

As discussed before, the ten indicators used for the one-on-one interviews were identified with Mark Joseph and colleagues in partnership with SHA and Yesler Terrace leadership. Through the interview process, the indicators were combined to reflect the statements made by respondents. Using the ten single indicators or the six combined indicators, I saw that half of the indicators still had overall supportive responses. These indicators were only used to codify the one-on-one interviews, through the semi-quantitative coding process that was discussed in the methods and data analysis portions. A similar study structured around these indicators with the SHA residential community would allow a better assessment of cohesion. This will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

### Supportive Indicators of Community Cohesion

*Cohesion can be found in some smaller groups and some buildings at Yesler Terrace.*

SHA and market-rate respondents shared that small groups and some buildings have been able to build cohesion, at least within buildings. Residents at SHA buildings have a shared sense of camaraderie. Although they may not know the personal details of each resident, there is a common connection because they are all SHA residents. Similarly, many SHA residents have been able to continue

to forge cohesion within the community. Programming events have helped groups stay connected. Respondents shared that some meet at a friend's apartment before heading to the karaoke or teatime events. Similarly, SHA residents described features of cohesion at specific buildings. Residents at Kebero Court stated they know their neighbors and enjoy spending time with one another at community events. Raven Terrace residents shared a distinct experience saying they usually stay in smaller social groups than bigger building-wide social gatherings.

Market-rate residents may not express the same depth of camaraderie, but they are beginning to forge social bonds between groups. Communal spaces, like rooftop community rooms and terraces, have become gathering spaces for some neighbors to meet each other. As more residents begin to move into the building, residents hope to continue using these common spaces to build small social groups.

*Green spaces throughout the community are shared.*

Both SHA and market-rate residents use Yesler Terrace Park and the accompanying green spaces throughout the community. Some community members from outside Yesler use the communal spaces as well. The park, including the benches, toys, soccer fields, exercise equipment, and recreational spaces create an inviting space for all community members. Many use the space even in inclement weather. The views of the Puget Sound, downtown stadiums and the Olympic Mountains have made the park a destination no matter the season. Many residents look forward to warmer seasons when they will be able to use the park more often. Some residents remarked that they would like to see different programming in the park and others suggested creating new programming like yoga, dance or martial arts courses that would be inviting for all residents at Yesler Terrace. These shared spaces and programming have the potential to promote building social bonds.

*Transportation changes have provided access to many other Seattle neighborhoods including the international district, Capitol Hill and downtown business districts.*

This has allowed residents to use transportation as an additional way to make connection or networks that can shape the community. It is not uncommon for neighbors to use the streetcar to go to the International District to shop. Similarly, residents use the streetcar to get to other transportation hubs (light rail or bus). Residential commuters who work similar schedules can form bonds just by waiting for the train.

*Market-rate residents have participated in some community events and want to create more community events.*

These residents may be new to the community but are looking for opportunities to create new social bonds within the community. Some Batik residents would like to have or create services that would benefit all in the community. Some examples of events they would like to plan include homework and SAT tutoring, neighborhood hobby groups (hiking, biking, crafting), legal aid courses and help, and health advocacy and awareness programs (tutoring, night out against crime, legal aid, medical training). Such events sponsored, planned and hosted by market-rate residents would align with many of the programming goals of SHA.

*Community members are looking for positive solutions beneficial for all residents.*

The details of the hot cocoa incident are troublesome. However, the subsequent reactions are informative and promising that market-rate participants describe an interest in forging better community bonds rather than punishing a child who might have misbehaved. Residents wanted to make sure the incident did not escalate beyond what had already happened. Similarly, they were concerned about ensuring the Batik building remained an open part of the Yesler Community. They hoped property management would recognize that the hot cocoa incident exposed an amenity that was not open to all in the community. Market-rate residents that I interviewed wanted all community members to respect the lobbies, as anyone would respect any communal space while being open to the use of amenities like hot cocoa by whoever visited the lobby.

*The events and programming have a visible presence in the community and have contributed to building a sense of belonging for many SHA residents within the community.*

As heard in focus groups, “Boon coffee socials that Winta Yohannes throws. We really love that she brings us all together with all the craziness going on.” Across all focus groups with SHA residents, community events and programs were described repeatedly as positive aspects of the community. There are a variety of events and programming like sit aerobics and karaoke, Boon (African) coffee time, Vietnamese teatime, or tutoring and SAT prep, that fits the needs of the multiple generations within the community.

Yet, Batik residents do not report the same experience, although they expressed strong interest to share in these experiences. Many residents stated that they wanted to know more about the history of Yesler Terrace and celebrate the cultures of the community today. The perceptions of being a market-rate resident, have kept some from seeking opportunities to interact with SHA residents. Some Batik

residents have made connections but are looking for creative opportunities to continue building relationships with residents across the growing community.

The question becomes, is it the responsibility of Seattle Housing Authority to build programming into the development of communities that will foster broad-based community cohesion? Does the agency have the power to house and provide services that foster SHA residents to build organic relationships within the community on their own, for SHA and market-rate residents.

### **Non-supportive Indicators of Community Cohesion**

*Both SHA residents and Batik residents feel that some created barriers are hindering community cohesion.*

The security key card system has helped increase the perception of safety within the Yesler community, but it has become a barrier to building relationships. All residents responded that the key card stops are a burden to the community. In a social way, it also begins to build social barriers between different buildings. As one resident said during a focus group, “People at Kebero Court talk to each other, we don’t do that at Raven Terrace.” The community has built social ties within segregated buildings. Although this is a positive sign for community cohesion, it has the potential to foster narrow social interactions within the community. SHA residents may begin to identify with a community of residents in their building, and not the greater SHA, and Yesler Terrace community.

*All residents enjoy programming and events, but these seem not as inclusive as they could be.*

For instance, a Vietnamese New Year celebration was held, but some Batik residents did not know about this event. One Batik resident commented, “it would have been nice to celebrate my Vietnamese culture with my community, but I didn’t know about it.” Other residents remarked that many events feel like they are only for SHA community members. This a difficult tension within the community. SHA programming celebrates the marginalized and minoritized communities that live at Yesler Terrace. As the community grows to include more market-rate residents, additional programming that includes market-rate residents’ perspective may foster an environment open to all residents in the Yesler community. This will help foster a broader community identity, shared by both SHA and market-rate residents in the community.

*Some market-rate residents feel uncomfortable in some community events.*

Many stated they did not know how to start building relationships with SHA residents. Some commented that they had gone to some Yesler community meetings, but they did not understand what was happening. They did not know what topics were being discussed, and if this was the correct forum for Batik residents to discuss some of their ideas for the future of the community. Respondents suggested that market-rate property managers could approach SHA with some options to engage all residents in the community.

*The Coffee shop is a widely used destination for the community, but some respondents were concerned that this was an indicator of higher-end retail establishments to come.*

Respondents were complimentary of Tougo Coffee and its efforts to be a part of the community. Interviewees stated that the art, baristas, and culture of the coffee shop are very welcoming. However, some remarked that the higher pricing of items made it difficult to assume that all residents, especially those of lower income brackets, could be patrons of this coffee shop on a regular basis. Similarly, community members were concerned that future retailers would primarily cater to the middle and higher-income residents in the mixed-income community. This was a concern for many respondents in the project. If retail spaces could not be used by all levels of the mixed-income community, were these truly amenities that could build cohesion? Would neighbors be able to share in the same experiences and spaces, like having coffee at a local coffee shop? Will events like the Boon Coffee time supplement the opportunities for social interaction at Tougo coffee? Further exploration of these questions may help develop a deeper understanding of community cohesion at Yesler Terrace.

## **Shared Features of the Built Environment**

The built environment can foster cohesion and has a potentially significant role to play in building community. The redevelopment of the 32-acre site provided much-needed upgrades to dilapidated housing stock, while also providing opportunities to improve transportation avenues and access to retail and healthcare facilities. For example, the streetcar has brought substantial changes to the community. Many Yesler Terrace residents now have an easy transportation option to access the downtown corridor and Seattle Central College on Broadway. The access to these different districts enables community members to look for economic, educational and social opportunities in these areas.

Similarly, this access has made Yesler Terrace a target for gentrification and displacement. This will become increasingly problematic as Yesler Terrace develops and market-rate residents may outnumber SHA residents 4:1. Its central location is a strong bonus to living in the community. Many

services, amenities, and employment opportunities are within walking distance of Yesler Terrace or a connecting public transportation route. However, these rapid development changes have left SHA residents feeling as if they are strangers or an outsider in their own community. In their perspective, they lived in a community that had little amenities but offered a close-knit community. The redevelopment has made Yesler an opportune community for many other people to move in, including the addition of many new amenities and community spaces. An SHA resident who lived at Yesler for a while spoke about how difficult it was previously to get a bus to stop frequently in this community, and now “we have the streetcar...and apartments renting for \$3000.” The perspective for some in the community, both SHA and Batik residents, is that the intended goal of the development was to build a community for middle-income Americans with the hope that SHA residents would attain some benefit in the process. Many residents wonder, as future retail spaces begin to open, will they cater to the middle-income community or be more inclusive of all income brackets living at Yesler?

Both Batik and SHA residents spoke about the difference in building materials. Many commented that the lobby of the Batik building looks like a high-end apartment, while the lobby of SHA building looks like hospitals or “institutional.” A Batik resident commented during their one-on-one interview, “SHA buildings look great on the outside, but are not very welcoming once you walk in.” Some interviewees noticed a difference of materials on the outside of the buildings as well. When standing at the park across from the Batik and Raven Terrace building a Batik resident one commented, “You can tell which one is market rate.” See Figure 9 for the buildings that the resident spoke about.



*Figure 9: Differences in materials and designs used at Yesler Terrace Buildings t the left are buildings for SHA residents. Buildings on the right are units leasing at market-rate pricing. Photo Source: Jonathan Joseph*

## Project Limitations

Time was a significant limitation on the scope of this project. Time played a limitation in a variety of ways.

### *Time Living in the Community*

Many of the market-rate community members had just moved into the community. None of the interviewed residents had lived in the building for a year, and many had little experience with the surrounding community. Furthermore, residents who were new to the region admitted to spending more time outside of the community exploring Seattle, than looking for opportunities within Yesler Terrace. Having a follow-up study within 6 months to a year would allow residents to be acclimatized to the community and might reveal more opportunities to enhance community cohesion. Nonetheless, the interviews, even at this early stage of development, were very informative.

### *Time for Interviews*

One-on-One interviews were scheduled to take 60-90 minutes, but most exceeded 2 hours. Coding of these longer conversations took more time than originally scheduled and limited the number of interviews I was able to complete. However, in spite of this, the lengthier interviews provided more robust insights than anticipated.

### *Questions about Community may Trigger Unhappy Past Experiences*

Although all participants chose voluntarily to be in the study, there was a potential to trigger unhappy past experiences when talking about a person's community. Community identity is personal, and when asking about how they perceive themselves within the community, a person may be apprehensive to share a negative opinion or experience. It was a limitation that I was cautious to approach. This is the reason why I choose not to record one-on-one interviews. I felt a microphone, although small, might discourage the interview participant from speaking openly and honestly. Without the microphone, I was able to keep the interview conversational and informal and build a rapport with each resident. This allowed us to have deeper conversations, where they shared their experiences with me.

### *Questions Allowed for both Supportive and Non-Supportive Associations*

The methods and questions used for the one-on-one interviews allowed for each respondent to have both supportive and non-supportive associations, even for the same indicator. This was challenging when coding and interpreting quantitative data and visualizations. This quantitative data provided a simplistic measure of cohesion. The data visualizations provide useful information but should be

interpreted cautiously. The qualitative data are more critical for determining whether supportive evidence of cohesion out balances non-supportive evidence and vice-versa.

### *Participants were Not A Representative Pool of all Market-Rate Residents*

At the conclusion of this project, the makeup of the market-rate community began to change. As reported by staff at Batik, they have made some changes to leasing pricing and are anticipating some occupancy changes. Additionally, another market-rate building began leasing, change the pool of market-rate residents. However, newer residents would not have spent enough time in the community. Although more market residents may be living in the community now, they may not have had the same experience to provide the richness of those who had participated in this study.

### *Recruiting Limitations for One-on-One Interviews*

Participants for the study were Batik residents who had already contacted SHA staff members or were using a community amenity (Tougo Coffee). These participants may already have a bias towards building cohesion as they have already made contact with other community members and services. I had originally planned to recruit participants from the Batik lobby. This would have provided me the opportunity to engage with residents who have not made a prior connection with someone else in the community. Time limitations did not allow me to recruit additional participants from Batik, however, the richness of the interviews conducted provides supportive evidence of community cohesion at Yesler Terrace.

## **Conclusions**

Yesler Terrace shows evidence of community cohesion even at this early stage of redevelopment. Yet, through this project its apparent that cohesion is a personal perspective with multiple aspects. The built environment can foster a sense of cohesion that is activated by the people who experience the community. Green spaces like Yesler Park can be planned to include spaces for activities, programming, and recreation while allowing for space for the individual to have their own experience. Soccer can provide opportunities for residents to get active in their community, while also teaching vital team building skills that can be used throughout one's life. Homes provide a sense of security and belonging, but that goes beyond the four walls of a home. Security and belonging can be impacted by the openness of a garden community or the barriers of a key card system; both important planned parts of a community that impacts a resident's sense of cohesion.

As Yesler Terrace continues to develop leaders could continue to explore how cohesion is felt in the community. As identified in this project, residents are eager for opportunities to build social connections with one another. SHA and its private development partners can build on the successful indicators of cohesion already present to create more opportunities for social interaction. This will help achieve the goals of community cohesion through mixed-income/ mixed-use redevelopment projects.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations have been outlined in procedural, conceptual and methodological approaches.

### Procedural

#### *Open all Lobbies During Business Hours*

Security key cards and the locking mechanisms on the lobbies have become a nuisance for many residents. Changes in function may help deter some of these feelings. Could the lobbies be open during business hours, and then locked requiring a key card after the office is closed? Most property management offices are staffed and are open to welcome potential residents for an appointment during the day. Lobbies could be closed after hours, requiring a key card to enter the building. Security cards could still be required to use the elevator to access any residential floors, limiting access and still providing the security that some still desire. This enables the community to use the lobby as another communal space.

#### *Activate the Lobby Spaces*

Open lobbies can be activated and provide opportunities for community cohesion. All property managers can meet to design programs and activities that would activate and entice residents to visit all buildings in the community. An example could be a scavenger hunt activity where residents are required to visit the lobby of each building to complete the entire game. Schedule programming throughout the lobbies could be a potential opportunity for community cohesion.

#### *Internships and Job Opportunities for SHA residents at Market-Rate properties*

Respondents shared a desire to understand the community's history and culture more. A position could be created at the market-rate buildings that help share the stories that have shaped the Yesler community with future residents. This position could be an internship for an SHA high-school

student. They could give tours of the community to potential future residents and share the history. Similarly, property managers at market-rate buildings could look for opportunities to hire residents from the community. SHA residents may have the skills to work in the property management offices. Job training programming at the Epstein center may help develop skills used within the property management field.

## Conceptual

### *Plan shared programming with SHA and Market-Rate Residents*

Many market-rate residents are eager to participate in programming opportunities with SHA residents. SHA could look for opportunities to share in the planning and implementation of a community event. For instance, Vietnamese New Year celebrations are hosted by SHA residents but could involve market-rate residents in the planning and implementation of the event. Market-rate residents suggested opportunities where they could share skills that may help other residents in the community. SHA could look for shared spaces where market-rate residents could host events beneficial to all community members at Yesler Terrace.

### *Highlight the Historical Art in the Community*

The art in the community is representative of the history and culture of Yesler Terrace. SHA could find opportunities to highlight the pieces of art and the significance to the community. For example, the floral sculpture is a representation of flowers that are important to the Yesler community. Yet the story may be lost for community members that do not know its history. Historical markers could help tell the story. However, activating this space with an annual program that celebrates the importance of the flowers, cherry blossoms, and tulips, to spring would help connect the sculpture to the larger community. Furthermore, the sculpture still acknowledges the private green spaces that may have been lost by some residents, while allowing for new celebrations and memories in the evolving Yesler community.

## Methodological

### *Reduce the Indicators of Cohesion*

As I completed the coding process for the data analysis of the one-on-one interviews it became apparent that some statements that had an association with one indicator consistently had a similar association to another indicator as well. Although these indicators are not duplicative, they have very

similar associations. SHA could reduce the number of indicators of community cohesion, while still looking for the same supportive and non-supportive features of cohesion.

### *Continue Asking Residents About Their Experience in the Community*

As discussed in the limitations, time played a major factor in the breadth and depth of this project. One-on-one interviews were scheduled for 60-90 minutes but exceeded over two hours in most cases. This was an unplanned circumstance but added to the richness of the information shared by residents. This is an indicator that residents are looking for an opportunity to share their experience. Although I was able to identify some recurring themes in the interviews, the recruiting pool was limited by their time in the community. Leasing of the Batik building started in 2018 and to early 2019, and no participants for my study had lived in the building for over one year.

Allowing more time for newer residents to get used to the community may provide different opportunities for community cohesion. Also, summertime is a season when more community events are planned. This can provide more opportunities to build community connections, however, the summer season is outside the time scope of this project

### *Focus Groups with SHA and Market-Rate Residents Together*

This study was forced by circumstances to use two different methods for two different participant groups. As SHA explores community cohesion further, they could bring small groups of SHA and market-rate residents together, at the same time and place, to discuss their experiences within the community. The indicators that were outlined in the study are indicators that should be present for all residents within the community. A focus group or interview process including all residents from all income brackets would enable researchers to gain a deeper understanding of community cohesion at Yesler Terrace.

### *Seattle Housing Authorities Evolving Role at Yesler Terrace*

As explored through this capstone project, the Yesler Terrace redevelopment is a designed mixed-income/mixed-use development that provided another opportunity to challenge our understanding of housing redevelopments' impacts on social and health disparities. Within this redevelopment, Seattle Housing Authority advocated for the needs of the community it serves, while balancing the financial costs of a large project. The realities are that Yesler Terrace is not a common housing development project and most likely, SHA will not have another project like this. The challenge it presents to all SHA leaders is determining what role SHA plays in fostering community. The Yesler community began as a 561-unit site and will be redeveloped into a multi-story/multi-unit/mixed-

income/mixed-use district with over 3000+ units in a community. Not only is that a remarkable physical change of the built environment, but it challenges our understanding of what building community means.

An important aspect of mixed-use/mixed-income development is the use of shared spaces. These spaces can be used for a variety of community events and programming but are also an important shared area to build organic relationships. As SHA explores its role in the community, it may want to consider ways to foster organic relationships within a community, where residents can opt in or out of participating. Some questions to consider include:

- How can the Yesler community identity evolve to still cherish and acknowledge its role in providing housing to so many SHA residents in Seattle?
- How can SHA give the Yesler community room to grow into its new identity as a mixed-income residential community, without SHA residents becoming estranged or isolated as they are increasingly outnumbered by market-rate residents?
- What should be SHA's role in creating a community identity? And is this community identity static?
- What should be SHA's relationship, if any, to market-rate residents at Yesler Terrace?

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