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# Living in a Mixed-Income Development: Resident Perceptions of the Benefits and Disadvantages of Two Developments in Chicago

Mark Joseph and Robert Chaskin

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## Abstract

Policy-makers in several countries are turning to income- and tenure-mixing strategies in an attempt to reverse decades of social and economic isolation in impoverished urban areas. In the US city of Chicago, all high-rise public housing developments across the city are being demolished, public housing residents are being dispersed throughout the metropolitan area and 10 new mixed-income developments are being created on the footprint of former public housing complexes. Findings are presented from in-depth interviews with residents across income levels and tenures at two mixed-income developments and the paper explores residents' perceptions of the physical, psychological and social impacts of the mixed-income setting on their lives.

In the US, Canada, Australia and countries across western Europe, policy-makers are turning to income- and tenure-mixing strategies in an attempt to reverse decades of social and economic isolation in impoverished urban areas (Arthurson, 2002; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000; August, 2008; Bailey *et al.*, 2006; Berube, 2005; Kearns and Mason, 2007; Musterd and Andersson, 2005; Norris, 2006; Ruming *et al.*, 2004; Silverman *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2006). Mixed-income development aims to attract middle-income families to the

site of former public housing developments while retaining a portion of the low-income population (Joseph, 2006; Joseph *et al.*, 2007; Kleit, 2005). The city of Chicago has been the site of an unprecedented public-private-sector partnership since 1999, through which all high-rise public housing developments have been demolished and public housing residents have been dispersed throughout the metropolitan area (Chicago Housing Authority, 2008; Joseph, forthcoming). Ten new mixed-income developments are being

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created that will ultimately contain over 16 000 units of rental and for-sale housing (most of these redevelopments have received grants from the federal HOPE VI programme (Popkin, 2006; Popkin *et al.*, 2004)).

One aim of mixed-income development is to decrease concentrations of poverty and deprivation in order to spur the physical, economic and social revitalisation of inner cities. Mixed-income strategies have also been promoted for their potential benefits to the low-income residents of the new developments, although empirical evidence of such impact is so far quite limited. This paper contributes to addressing this gap. Drawing on findings from a qualitative research study of two new mixed-income developments in Chicago, we investigate how residents of all income levels perceive the early benefits and disadvantages of living in a mixed-income development.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with residents rather than closed-response survey questions, the analysis provides a detailed, nuanced understanding of resident experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, the paper includes the perspectives not only of relocated public housing residents,<sup>1</sup> but also of renters and owners of subsidised and market-rate units. The examination of two developments enables insights to be drawn about some of the relevant contextual factors that might shape life in the new developments. Because findings are based on the perceptions and self-reports of respondents rather than any objective measures of well-being, they are suggestive rather than conclusive. It is also worth noting that the nature of the developments and the experiences of respondents are likely to be strongly influenced by selection processes (relocated public housing residents in mixed-income developments, for example, are not necessarily representative of the public housing population as a whole) and by some factors particular to Chicago's political, economic and administrative context.

We first review relevant literature on the conceptual foundations of the mixed-income strategy and examine its possible benefits and disadvantages for residents. Next, we describe our data and methods and provide some details on the context of public housing transformation in Chicago. We then present our findings about residents' perceptions of their early experiences in the new developments and conclude with a summary of insights and implications.

## Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence

The broadly influential analysis of inner-city decline and persistent poverty by Wilson (1987) is often cited as a key theoretical foundation for the possible benefits of the mixed-income approach to low-income families. Wilson argued that one of the main factors that contributed to the concentration of inner-city poverty and its accompanying social ills—high rates of single parenthood, teen pregnancy, school dropouts, crime and delinquency—was the out-migration of middle- and working-class African Americans from central-city neighbourhoods. Policy-makers have seized upon the possibility that reversing this process, generating an in-migration of middle-class residents, will produce an opposite, beneficial effect for those low-income residents left behind in the inner city (Joseph *et al.*, 2007; Kleit, 2001b).

A basic expectation is that, compared with their previous public housing residences that were plagued by deteriorated buildings, crime, violence and low-quality public services, the quality of life for low-income families will be vastly improved by living in a new, clean, well-managed development in the midst of a revitalising neighbourhood (Kearns and Mason, 2007). However, policy-makers expect mixed-income development to accomplish much more than just improved

housing and neighbourhood quality for low-income families. Expectations include expanded social networks that increase access to information and resources; a greater degree of informal social control and collective efficacy; the opportunity to observe and engage middle-class residents leading to changes in aspirations and behaviour; and access to better local services and amenities (Arthurson, 2002; Chaskin and Joseph, forthcoming; Joseph, 2006; Joseph *et al.*, 2007; Kearns and Mason, 2007; Kleit, 2001b).

Several scholars have offered critiques of the mixed-income strategy as an approach to addressing urban poverty. Wilson's (1987) work itself clearly stated that the reintegration of the middle class alone would not be sufficient to generate social mobility without a change of structural economic conditions including access to employment. Other scholars have argued that, by focusing on Wilson's arguments about ghetto culture and behaviour, rather than his analysis of structural inequality, the proponents of mixed-income development are promoting a strategy that does not address the true barriers to social and economic mobility (Crump, 2002; Pattillo, 2007, 2009; Smith, 2006). Furthermore, the racial dynamics and realities of structural inequities in America can be obscured by discussions of income mixing (Turner *et al.*, 2009). Pattillo points out that, although many Black neighbourhoods are already mixed income, they remain disinvested relative to majority-White neighbourhoods (Pattillo, 2009).

There is also a growing literature that critiques mixed-income development as a neo-liberal approach to the problems of the urban poor that seeks to recapture prime urban real estate despite the resultant displacement of many of those households that the strategy is purported to help (see, for example, August, 2008; Fraser and Kick, 2007; Imbroscio, 2008; Lipman, 2008; Smith and Stovall, 2008). Cities such as Seattle and San Francisco that have

committed to one-for-one replacement of demolished public housing units may be less susceptible to this critique.

Several scholars have suggested that, while there may be benefits to life in a mixed-income development for low-income residents, there are also potential downsides. Freeman (2006), Hyra (2008) and Pattillo (2007, 2009) provide in-depth analyses of the challenging dynamics of social relations across class boundaries in rapidly gentrifying neighbourhoods. Each documents the ways in which middle-class newcomers attempt to dictate new norms to which existing residents are expected to conform, which Pattillo (2009) refers to as the 'tyranny of the middle class' (also see Lees, 2008, and Lees *et al.*, 2008, for critiques of social mix policies as state-sponsored gentrification and Smith, 1996, for his influential analysis of gentrification as 'revenge' against the poor). Furthermore, the proximity to neighbours who are able to enjoy and display a more affluent standard of living may result in an increased sense of relative deprivation (Briggs, 1997; Kearns and Mason, 2007). The perception among low-income residents (coupled with any actions that demonstrate) that middle-class families are not comfortable living next to them could generate an increased awareness of class differences and a sense of stigma, ultimately leading to social isolation and social distancing (Arthurson, 2002; Briggs, 1997). And low-income families may lose whatever local power and influence they once held as the neighbourhood is populated with middle-class families whose influence may not serve the interests of low-income households (Briggs, 1997; Kearns and Mason, 2007; Lees, 2008).

A theoretical frame we will use to analyse how residents of different tenures and income levels perceive the benefits of the mixed-income development is Logan and Molotch's (1987) application of the Marxian theory of use value and exchange value to the question

of perceptions of residential neighbourhood (see also Lefebvre, 1996, for his original application of this theory to the modern city). While all residents of a mixed-income development may derive use value from their proximate environment, only homeowners have the additional benefit of an exchange value due to their real estate investment. Logan and Molotch proposed six categories of use values: daily routines, informal support networks, security and trust, identity, 'complementary' benefits such as local retail and amenities and shared ethnicity. For lower-income residents, especially those who were formerly residents of the same neighbourhood, it is conceivable that all six of these use values pertained to their previous neighbourhood and at least the first five can possibly be re-established in the newly formed community. However, middle-class residents' attachment to the new community is more likely to be characterised by a 'community of limited liability' (Suttles, 1972) dynamic, with daily functioning, social networks and sense of identity not being met locally, but through metropolitan-wide connections and non-placebound sources. For homeowners, then, exchange values may be a dominant element of their perceived benefits. This portends a potential tension because, as Logan and Molotch suggest

The crux of poor people's urban problem is that their routines—indeed their very being—are often damaging to exchange values (Logan and Molotch, 1987, p. 112).

In terms of use value—resident satisfaction and experiences in the new developments—available research on mixed-income developments suggests that residents of all incomes are mostly satisfied with their units and the surrounding development, although they may emphasise different characteristics (Joseph, 2008; Kearns and Mason, 2007; Pader and Breitbart, 1993; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 1998, Silverman *et al.*, 2005; Tach, 2009).

Research has also uncovered some emerging frictions among residents, sometimes broadly along income lines, but often specifically between owners and renters, or families with children and those without (Chaskin and Joseph, forthcoming; Joseph, 2008; Pader and Breidhardt, 2003; Ruming *et al.*, 2004; Silverman *et al.*, 2005; Varady *et al.*, 2005).

A key finding across several studies is that there are low levels of social interaction among residents of different backgrounds, particularly at a level that might lead to the social benefits, such as access to information and jobs, that are proposed in theory (Brophy and Smith, 1997; Hogan, 1996; Joseph, 2008; Jupp, 1999; Kleit 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Lees, 2008; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 1998; Ruming *et al.*, 2004; Ryan *et al.*, 1974; Tach, 2009). Indeed, there is evidence that the more diversity that exists in a community, the less trusting residents are of neighbours and the more they tend to isolate themselves from others, even from those of similar backgrounds (Putnam, 2007; see Gans, 1961a, 1961b).

## Data and Methods

The analysis presented here is based primarily on in-depth, in-person interviews of 65 residents in two mixed-income developments in Chicago. Respondents included relocated public housing residents, residents of affordable units,<sup>2</sup> and residents of market-rate units (see Tables 1 and 2 for sample numbers and descriptive statistics). Resident interviewees were randomly selected from developer occupancy lists for each site and contacted by mail, phone and in-person visits where necessary. Initial interviews were conducted between June and October 2007. Our initial wave of interviews took place when respondents had been living in the developments for an average of 19 months. Follow-up interviews were conducted roughly one year later with 53 of the original respondents.

**Table 1.** Resident sample

	<i>Oakwood Shores</i>		<i>Westhaven Park</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Wave I</i>	<i>Wave II</i>	<i>Wave I</i>	<i>Wave II</i>	<i>Wave I</i>	<i>Wave II</i>
Relocated public housing	11	9	12	10	23	19
Affordable rental	4	2	6	5	10	7
Affordable owned	5	5	6	4	11	9
Market rate rental	6	5	5	4	11	9
Market rate owned	5	5	5	4	10	9
Total sample	31	26	34	27	65	53
Total population <sup>a</sup>	200 <sup>b</sup>	—	293	—	493 <sup>b</sup>	—

<sup>a</sup>Mixed-income units occupied at time sample was drawn.

<sup>b</sup>Estimate.

**Table 2.** Resident sample selected characteristics

	<i>Overall</i> ( <i>n</i> = 65)	<i>RPH</i> ( <i>n</i> = 23)	<i>AFF</i> ( <i>n</i> = 21)	<i>MKT</i> ( <i>n</i> = 21)	<i>RTR</i> ( <i>n</i> = 44)	<i>FS</i> ( <i>n</i> = 21)
Female (percentage)	77	96	81	52	88	52
<i>Race</i> (percentages)						
African American	82	100	81	62	100	43
White	9	0	10	19	0	29
Other	9	0	5	19	0	29
Average age years	41	41	40	41	43	36
Married percentage	25	9	24	43	18	38
<i>Education level</i> (percentages)						
High school graduate	85	61	95	100	77	100
College graduate	38	0	52	67	18	81
<i>Employed</i> (percentage)	69	39	81	90	57	95
<i>With children in household</i> (percentage)	43	65	33	29	55	19
<i>Income</i> (percentage)						
Under \$20 000	31	74	15	0	45	0
Over \$70 000	14	0	10	33	7	29

*Notes:*

RPH: Relocated public housing residents.

AFF: Renters and owners in units priced affordably.

MKT: Renters and owners in units priced at market-rates.

RTR: All renters including relocated public housing residents.

FS: All owners.

Interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview instrument comprised primarily of open-ended questions covering a broad range of topics and some closed-response questions. Interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed. Interview transcripts were coded for

analysis based on a set of deductively derived themes that were refined based on inductive interim analysis. Interviews were initially double-coded to ensure intercoder reliability, then a periodic sample of coded interviews was reviewed to ensure continued reliability.

Summary matrices of responses were created to allow for systematic comparison of perspectives across interviewee type as defined by housing tenure and income level, development site and whether or not the respondent had children in the household.

Any research that relies on interview or survey data must be concerned with the possibility that there may be a social desirability bias in some of the responses. In the case of this particular research, there are legitimate questions about the extent to which respondents' answers to interview questions are conditioned by the dominant social discourse about urban poverty and the nature of the individual and neighbourhood transformation being sought through the mixed-income housing strategy. This is especially worth considering in the case of relocated public housing residents who have been subjected to a variety of formal and informal messages about changes they and their families must make in their lives, the tenuous nature of their eligibility to live in the new developments and broader social expectations they must meet in the new environment.

### Development Context

This paper reports on findings at two developments that are part of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) 'Plan for Transformation', which involves the demolition of about 22 000 units of public housing, the rehabilitation of over 17 000 units and construction of about 7700 public housing units in new mixed-income developments with a total of over 16 000 units (Chicago Housing Authority, 2008). Oakwood Shores, on the south side of the city, is being built in place of Ida B. Wells/Madden Park and will ultimately be the larger of the two developments. Westhaven Park is the second phase of the redevelopment of Henry Horner Homes on the city's west side, the first phase of which was completed prior to the launch of the 'Plan for Transformation'. Redevelopment in that first phase was limited

**Table 3.** Mixed-income developments

	<i>Oakwood Shores</i>	<i>Westhaven Park</i>
Developer(s)	The Community Builders Granite Development	Brinshore Michaels
Total projected units	3000	1317
<i>RPH units<sup>a</sup></i>		
Number	1000	824 <sup>b</sup>
Percentage	33	63
<i>Affordable units</i>		
Number	680	132
Percentage	23	10
<i>Market-rate units</i>		
Number	1320	361
Percentage	44	27
For-sale units (percentage)	27	23
Social service providers	The Community Builders, UJIMA	TASC, Project Match, Near West Side CDC

<sup>a</sup>Relocated public housing residents.

<sup>b</sup>Includes off-site, scattered-site units and the Villages superblock of 100 per cent public housing.

Source: Chicago Housing Authority (2008).

to newly constructed units only for public housing residents, so ultimately the new development will have a larger proportion of relocated public housing residents than any other mixed-income site in Chicago (see Table 3). Occupancy in the mixed-income portion of Westhaven Park was initiated in 2003, earlier than most other developments in the city and two years earlier than at Oakwood Shores.

The numerous differences between these two particular developments make our analysis less a direct comparison of two mixed-income models and more an exploration of early implications of some of the key features that differ among developments in Chicago. In particular, it is worth describing a few other unique features of Westhaven

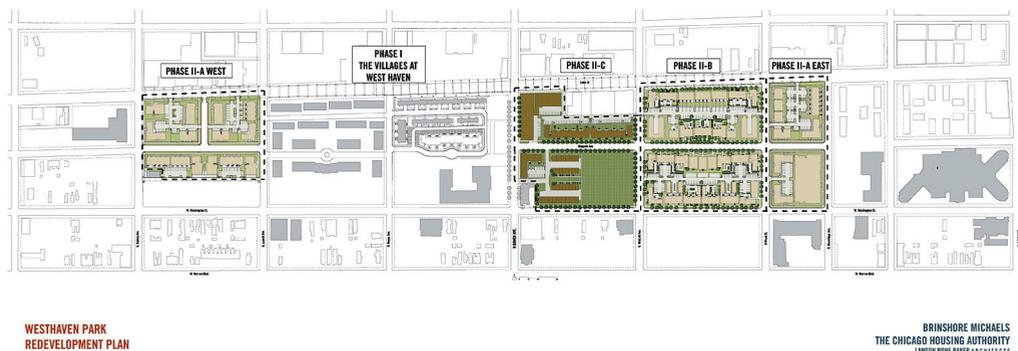
Park that have proved particularly important to social dynamics at the site and which will be referred to later in the paper. The mix and integration of units throughout the recent phases of the Westhaven Park development are offset by the 200 units of contiguous, 100 per cent public housing from the initial phase that is located in the middle of the mixed-income site (see Figures 1 and 2 for site maps). This area, officially called Phase I: The Villages at Westhaven, but referred to as the ‘Superblock’ by development staff and residents, creates challenging physical and social dynamics that will be discussed in detail later. Furthermore, Westhaven Park has a 113-unit, 9-storey mid-rise building on site which is the only building currently at either site to have a mix of owners and renters living side-by-side within the same building (a mid-rise building is in pre-development planning at Oakwood Shores). Finally, Westhaven Park is under the jurisdiction of a legal consent

decreed resulting from a housing discrimination lawsuit filed against the CHA on behalf of residents of Henry Horner Homes (see Wilen, 2006, for a history of this lawsuit and the subsequent redevelopment at Horner Homes). Until very recently, this consent decree has resulted in a much more limited set of eligibility criteria—including neither work requirements nor substance-abuse tests—for public housing residents wishing to live at Westhaven Park than at other mixed-income developments in the city, a key distinguishing feature of this development.<sup>3</sup>

### Describing the Social ‘Mix’

Although these developments are described as ‘mixed-income’, much of our discussion here will broaden the consideration of mix to consider class and tenure as well, given that these are the distinctions most often used by respondents, who refer to issues of lifestyle, behaviour, culture and attachment to work, or





**Figure 2.** Westhaven Park site plan.

with reference to neighbours' status as owners versus renters. In contrast, although clearly visible as a distinguishing factor, the relevance of race is more difficult to sort out in the perceptions of the respondents. In part, this is because class and tenure often serve as proxies for race and respondents mention race less in their assessments and judgements about their neighbours. The level of racial diversity is different at each site. This is reflected in our respondent sample and confirmed by development staff. Although only 10 per cent of respondents in our sample at Oakwood Shores are non-Black, 26 per cent are non-Black at Westhaven Park (a notably high percentage given the extent of racial segregation in Chicago and the historical perception of the public housing sites as exclusively African American). Thus, at Oakwood Shores, class dynamics are more apparent and relevant; at Westhaven Park, respondents were much more likely to mention distinctions in term of race. Furthermore, there are important racial distinctions by tenure: 100 per cent of renters of all income levels in our sample at both sites are African American. Also, at Oakwood Shores, 100 per cent of respondents in rental and for-sale units priced 'affordably' are African American. At Westhaven Park, there is greater racial and ethnic diversity among owners but not renters, which has resulted in a sense that race is being used as a proxy for tenure; some African American owners

have reported that others have assumed they are renters.

## Findings

Although they describe downsides that we will describe in detail later, most relocated public housing residents at both sites expressed overall satisfaction with their new residential environment and almost unanimously spoke of their intent to live at the development for as long as they could foresee—unless they are forced out by circumstances beyond their control.<sup>4</sup> Other renters and owners at both developments, however, had more mixed opinions about the new developments. Although most expressed a basic level of satisfaction, many articulated some early disappointments about life in the new development and concerns about its long-term viability.

Overall, we found that respondents' reflections about what they had gained (and lost) by moving into the new developments fell into three main areas: the physical environment and quality of life; emotional health (in particular stress and aspirations); and benefits or problems generated by social relations among residents.<sup>5</sup>

## Physical Environment and Quality of Life

For relocated public housing residents, the most concrete and immediate change that the mixed-income strategy has provided is

the improved quality of their residential units, buildings and immediate physical environment. For higher-income residents, the prime location of the developments is their greatest benefit.

**Physical design.** All but one respondent in our relocated public housing resident sample at Westhaven Park, and all but two at Oakwood Shores, expressed their strong satisfaction with the physical environment. The comments of a relocated public housing resident at Westhaven Park are exemplary of the way many referred both to the quality of design and maintenance of the units and buildings, and more generally to the peaceful atmosphere at each site

When I first looked at this apartment, uh, I couldn't believe it. Balcony, big bathroom, carpet, elevator working every day, (*laughing*) every day, those lights. ... I just said, 'Uh-uh, this can't be happening to me', because I'd been in that project for years. ... All I wanted to do was just get away from over there, too many gangbangers, too much noise. ... Hey, when I saw this place, it was a dream for me. (*Laughing*) My own balcony, oh!

The two major physical design differences at Westhaven Park that currently distinguish it from Oakwood Shores—the mid-rise building and the Superblock—seem to have had a substantial negative effect on the experiences of residents.<sup>6</sup> In the mid-rise, the density of the population, close proximity of units and shared elevators and lobby space have heightened and accelerated social challenges that we will discuss in more detail later. The absence of affordable and market-rate renters is also likely to be a factor; the building is made up only of relocated public housing renters and condo owners. A single condo association comprised of owners (including the developer who represents the rental units) has jurisdiction over rules and resident affairs in the entire building and this has intensified a sense of division and differential interests.

The Superblock is another challenging feature of the physical and social landscape at Westhaven Park and subsidised and market-rate respondents almost unanimously see it as a disadvantage. The area of several blocks and cross streets is large enough to feel very different from the rest of the development and there is generally much more activity in the streets (some of it criminal, according to respondents and police reports). As a Westhaven Park homeowner complained

I think it's created like two separate Westhavens. So we never go to that side of the Superblock. And I don't know anyone from those buildings who ever comes to our side. So it's more like an East and a West Westhaven Park, with [the Superblock] being the barrier.

**Physical location.** A benefit of the physical environment that was barely mentioned by relocated public housing residents but discussed prominently by other residents (including almost every market-rate owner and renter) was the location of the developments. Owners and market-rate respondents felt they were benefiting from the location both in terms of the ease of access to the city and the rest of the metropolitan region, as well as the proximity of institutional and natural amenities.<sup>7</sup> As the owner of a subsidised unit at Oakwood Shores said

Convenience to work was a big factor because I work [on the] far north [side of the city]. So I did want to move to an area that would be a little more convenient. ... I targeted this particular area because of its proximity to the lake and downtown and all of those attractions and work.

Although the locations have successfully generated market demand for units in the mixed-income developments, this finding also bolsters the arguments of those concerned that the city's most valuable locations are being appropriated for middle-class families who have many more options than the low-income families who had been living there.

The most prevalent downside of the physical location discussed by respondents at both developments was the lack of retail and service amenities within walking distance, such as retail stores, quality sit-down restaurants, coffee shops and drycleaners. This was probably the one opinion about the disadvantage of living in the new developments shared most broadly by all respondents, regardless of income or tenure, although specific priorities around such amenities differed (Chaskin and Joseph, forthcoming).

### **Emotional Well-being and Aspirations**

The emotional and psychological impact of the move into a mixed-income development is an area in which the perspectives of relocated public housing residents and other residents varied quite dramatically. Whether in terms of stress, feelings of self-esteem and motivation, concerns about safety and security, or feelings of stigma, there seem to be quite different experiences unfolding across income levels. At both sites, although at least three-quarters of relocated public housing residents described what could be called psychological benefits from their move, as did about half of the renters and owners in affordable units, less than a third of the market-rate renters and buyers mentioned this.

Two-thirds of the relocated public housing residents at both sites mentioned the high levels of emotional stress that they had experienced in their former housing development and the major reduction in stress that they, and often their children, felt in the new mixed-income developments. For example, a relocated public housing resident at Westhaven Park told us

I don't feel that I'm stressed out about being worried about if I go outside that they're gonna start a gang fight or somebody's gonna start shooting, or do I gotta sit close to the entrance of the building if I go to relax outside, or if I gotta stay close to home.

Even though most of the relocated public housing residents felt safer in the new development, almost half at both sites also described things that concerned them, including windows and doors that seem less secure and periodic shootings or fights in the vicinity.

Issues of safety and security were raised more frequently as a negative than a positive by the affordable and market-rate residents. While roughly half of the higher-income residents claimed to feel relatively safe within the development, almost all expressed concerns with safety in the broader neighbourhood and talked about specific ways that they had altered their routine in order to avoid being out alone at night. Several respondents, particularly at Westhaven Park, complained about the toll of having to lobby with city and police department officials for greater responsiveness and attention.

Beyond issues of increased or decreased stress associated with safety, a benefit that was expressed by about half of the relocated public housing residents at both sites was the sense of increased self-esteem and accomplishment at having navigated the hurdles necessary to get themselves into this stable, high-quality living environment. As one respondent put it

[Moving here] was like an awakening for me, for my lifestyle. It was something I felt—my self-esteem rose. I felt like, wow, I'm gonna be a part of the American dream because, for 33 years, I lived in an environment where it's this low, poverty [area] and everybody [was] basically in the same boat.

By the second wave of interviews, we also heard, from about half of the relocated public housing residents, that they felt an increased sense of motivation to continue to make advancements in their lives (with some, but not complete, overlap with the group who expressed a sense of accomplishment). As a Westhaven Park respondent stated

I mean when you're kind of in one spot and you're kind of used to that and you—I mean just being honest, and you don't know nothing better, and you're not used to nothing else. And then when you see different things and better things, it just makes you want to do more, and more, and more.

The issue of social desirability bias may be particularly apposite with regard to comments like these, but it is also worth noting that some residents described specific normative pressures that were motivating them along these lines. As a relocated public housing resident from Westhaven Park put it

I have to be productive to keep my apartment and to be living in a really decent neighbourhood ... as opposed to, okay, being kicked out. ... I feel that's the whole purpose of [the mixed-income developments]. ... Don't just sit back and depend on government assistance for the rest of your life. Use [this opportunity] to move ahead.

Or, in the words of another

But you know what, I'd rather pay a certain amount of rent. ... It's like you [if] ain't paying [then] people tend to act different [towards you]. That's why I said I'm really trying to get me an income so I pay something so they won't say I'm living rent free.

Although these statements of changed aspirations could be read as reflecting a change in a 'culture of poverty', critics of this theory have argued that 'ghetto culture' is a result of 'ghetto structural conditions' and that, if opportunities for economic and social mobility were made available, 'ghetto behaviour' would change accordingly (Katz, 1993; Valentine, 1968). The self-reported changes in aspiration that we have uncovered among some respondents seem to reflect their perceptions of a shift in social expectations and, perhaps, in anticipated opportunity, rather than any changes they have made from one inherently different 'culture' to another.

It is also likely that the regulatory characteristics of mixed-income developments—increased screening, monitoring and sanctioning—are at play here. Relocated public housing residents in mixed-income developments are a self-selected and screened sub-population of the urban poor who have navigated administrative processes with well-publicised rules and formal supports intentionally designed to condition greater motivation. This selection effect is somewhat controlled for in this instance, given that Westhaven Park has minimal selection criteria while Oakwood Shores has very stringent criteria, yet a similar proportion of relocated public housing residents at both sites express a sense of increased aspiration.

On the other hand, most of the relocated public housing residents also described feeling unwanted pressure in the new developments due to increased monitoring and scrutiny, including several of those who had also described positive psychological benefits. Only two or three at each development focused exclusively on positive or negative psychological impacts; for many more, it was a mix. A good example of an issue that cut both ways for some relocated public housing residents was the feeling of stigma. On the positive side, some expressed their relief at no longer being in an environment that was stigmatised and feared by outsiders. As a Westhaven Park resident put it

Because you don't wanna put anybody in harm's way. ... So the atmosphere, I mean it's much better, where you could say, 'yeah, you can come visit' and feel comfortable with letting them come visit.

On the other hand, these respondents also expressed how they were being adversely affected by being stigmatised by their more affluent neighbours. An Oakwood Shores resident explained

I'm telling you really good people came from [the public housing developments], but you get stereotyped because you [used to] live there and that's really sad.

Similarly, a relocated public housing resident from Westhaven Park said

Sometime they tend to make you feel like maybe they're a little bit better than you and some of these people they do kind of act like that like they a little better than the rest of us just because they got a little bit more money or whatever.

Although stress related to issues of safety was reduced for most relocated public housing residents, about half of them felt that the move to the mixed-income development had increased their level of stress in other ways. Different individuals had different explanations of the cause of the stress, including higher bills to pay, being around unfamiliar people or feeling socially isolated. One particular facet of the new mixed-income environment that appeared to be creating stress and tension for many of the relocated public housing residents was the stringent rules established, in some cases by property management, in other cases by the condo or homeowners associations. A relocated public housing resident at Oakwood Shores said

I was very stressed out here because it takes more to live under these rules as opposed to [in my former public housing development]. We didn't have the rules and people here watch [your behaviour]. [They] make sure you empty the garbage right or the kids [are not] too loud, so I've been stressed here.

Further, some relocated public housing residents complained that the rules are not applied equally to renters and owners. As one such resident at Westhaven Park said

They throw parties and play their music loud and nothing happens to them; they don't get an infraction, they don't get evicted. ... But

this is not their neighbourhood; they don't own the neighbourhood. ... You go and say somebody's disturbing the peace, you know, just because I'm on low income and I play my music loud on a certain day of the week and the person that's [an] owner play their music at the same time on a certain day of the week, what makes my disturbing the peace better than theirs?

Rules and expectations seem to be key areas where the tensions between the use value of relocated public housing residents and the use and exchange value of higher-income residents come into play. For many relocated public housing residents, their ability to use and enjoy their unit and the development is constrained by external social pressures, both formal and informal.

### **Social Relations: Perceptions and Experiences**

A fundamental, though intensely debated, element of the rationale for mixed-income development is that the diverse social environment—through opportunities to engage with and learn from more affluent families—will be beneficial to lower-income families, although it might be more challenging for those middle-class families who would prefer a more homogeneous environment. As we will describe, our findings suggest that resident perceptions are mixed on this issue, within sub-groups and across them. Although the clear majority of relocated public housing residents in our sample felt that they were positively affected by being around people of different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, many of them also described downsides to the experience. Yet if the relocated public housing residents were more positive, on balance, about the social benefits versus social costs of living in such a diverse community, most of the affordable and market-rate respondents were more mixed about the trade-offs.

Respondents described a variety of benefits to living around people of different social

and economic backgrounds that ranged from diversity as simply a positive feature of their surroundings, to the opportunity for low-income residents to learn from middle-class residents, to the opportunity for middle-class residents to move beyond media images and learn firsthand about families living in poverty. Only a few market-rate owners or renters made note of the diversity of the resident population as a benefit to themselves. Residents across income categories described downsides of the social mix including negative interactions with neighbours and a sense of social detachment and isolation among residents.

**The benefits of a diverse environment.** For some respondents, living in a socioeconomically and racially diverse environment was beneficial, simply to demonstrate that people from different walks of life can live together and get along. The actual benefit here seems more symbolic than instrumental. One affordable renter at Westhaven Park told us

The atmosphere is just beautiful. I mean, because you have your different races, different cultures out here. When I take my walks, I'm like, 'Wow'. You see other people, you know? I love my people, but it's okay that you can actually go out and it's like not [just] mixed incomes but now it's mixed races.

A relocated public housing resident at Westhaven Park explained the benefit in terms of the impact on her children

Just show your kids that you just—let them get used to different nationalities and different types of people and their views and their—how they live, because kids just get so content in one environment and that's all they know, and then when they go to school or different places, now they don't [know how to deal with others].

In this latter example, there was a sense that, beyond symbolism, the benefit here was preparing her children to operate effectively in the larger world.

**Positive interactions and learning from others.** Beyond the face-value benefits of living among a diverse population, there were a few respondents across all income categories who described positive interactions with neighbours. For example, a market-rate owner at Oakwood Shores said

All of our neighbours are really nice in the houses. We've met some people in the apartment buildings. They're really nice, too. I think they're all—I think they all moved in with the same frame of mind that we did. It's like, they just want to, you know, they're looking to improve the neighbourhood.

Only a few residents suggested that the benefit of the diverse population was that low-income residents could observe and learn from residents of a different socioeconomic background. As this affordable owner at Oakwood Shores put it

The only way that you see or you know better is to be around people that are doing better. ... There should be people of all income levels and all professions living together, so that we can all learn from one another.

One relocated public housing resident at Westhaven Park explained

I would rather live with other colours and nationalities to see how they live. They live a different lifestyle. ... You know, I'm learning something from them, rather than it just be around my own kind. ... Everybody's got their different way of looking, a different way of cooking, a ... different way of doing stuff. ... Sometimes we're so used to doing things our own way, we forget there's other ways to do things besides that particular way. ... I don't want to be like them, but I want to be able to do better.

A few relocated public housing respondents expressed the explicit hope that other residents would come to understand the challenges that low-income households must

deal with and, more importantly, would see that many low-income families do not fit the media image or culture-of-poverty stereotype. A relocated public housing resident from Westhaven Park explained it this way:

Some places have a problem [with] low-income [families] living with them ... because it's like, 'They come from [the projects]'. They think that we might do the same thing we was doing out there. But [once] they see and they got to know us, and [see that] we do things better, and now they know how we is.

Several affordable and market-rate respondents echoed the sentiment of gaining more of an appreciation of what low-income families have to deal with. An affordable owner said

I may be more in tune to social problems now that I am in the midst of them rather than just seeing them on TV.

A market-rate renter stated

I feel that living [here] has opened my eyes to exactly what's going on and [to] try to do something to help it.

A market-rate owner talked about how her interactions with lower-income residents at Westhaven Park had broadened her perspective

It made me realise how different the life I live is from [people of] different social and economic statuses, and I'm more enlightened. ... [It] reinforces the difference of lifestyle due to different mitigating circumstances and because of social and economic difference, education and all that kind of stuff.

A market-rate owner at Oakwood Shores described the value in terms of her children's exposure

I want my children to grow up with as many people as possible..I want them to understand poverty. ... I think you value more what you have.

Finally, although respondents discussed the benefits of observing one another's lives from afar, we heard of very few instances of interactions that led to specific, instrumental benefits. In one case, a market-rate owner at Westhaven Park told us that she had arranged for a relocated public housing resident to be hired by the condo board as the janitor for the building. Apart from this isolated example, we heard little to suggest that, at this juncture, there is any evidence to support theorised benefits of social interaction leading to tangible benefits for low-income residents such as access to resources or new opportunities.

**Negative interactions.** Concerns with the conduct of some neighbours (in the development and from the broader neighbourhood) were shared by respondents across tenure and incomes. Furthermore, this seems to be one of the main areas of change over the course of the year between our first and second interviews: by the second interview, fewer residents discussed relations among neighbours in positive terms and there seemed to be more focus on the challenges neighbours were presenting.

Many respondents expressed disappointment, not necessarily with overtly negative behaviour, but with the level of coolness or underlying tension among neighbours. An affordable owner at Oakwood Shores complained

There has been no interaction at all and, like I said, we see people all the time and people just kind of walk by and they don't make an effort to get to know you or speak or anything. So I kind of feel like there's a divisiveness and I think we have, the people who live in the apartments and then you have those people who own.

The low expectations among many relocated public housing residents about social interaction seem aptly described by the relocated public housing resident who stated

'Cause them people that just moving in, they're market people, they're not going to be mingling with you. I don't expect for them to be mingling with me.

Some higher-income respondents told us that they had given up trying to talk to the relocated public housing residents because the outreach seemed unwelcome.

About half of the affordable and market-rate respondents expressed frustration at the conduct of relocated public housing residents. For example, a market-rate homeowner at Westhaven Park said

It's just irritating. It's just really inconsiderate. Weren't you ever told that perhaps at 2:00 a.m. on a weeknight some people may have to go to work? ... When they're playing the music so loud the windows are shaking and they're screaming and laughing, it's well, I'm glad you're having a good time, but not at 3:00 a.m. on a Wednesday.

Areas of concern included loud music and other forms of noise at all hours of the day and night, parties in the parking lot, 'loitering' in front of the entryways of buildings, littering and a general lack of care for the surroundings and, above all, unsupervised children playing in and around buildings and 'running wild'. It must be noted that frustrations with neighbours' behaviour do not simply break down along class lines, there are also relocated public housing residents who expressed concerns about the conduct of their peers in the new developments (see also Chaskin and Joseph, forthcoming; Joseph, 2008).

**Social detachment.** A final downside of the social relations among residents was a pervading sense of social detachment from others. This provides support for the constrict theory proposed by Putnam (2007) and a long-standing recognition that in heterogeneous environments individuals tend to be less engaged with others (for example,

Gans, 1961b; Jacobs, 1961/1992). Across tenure and class, many residents are simply withdrawing from engagement with others locally and relying on pre-existing relationships for social and instrumental support. As a market-rate owner at Westhaven Park described

I think the expectation is pretty much to be a good resident by making yourself not seen or not heard and kind of keep to yourself. I mean it's kind of like the irony in this whole thing right now is that it's coming to like you know typical modern urban living where everyone is kind of like using their own space and that's it. Now, I don't really think that's what the objective of this whole project is.

However, others seemed quite comfortable with the social distance that they had established from their neighbours. There is a general feeling among a substantial number of the relocated public housing residents at these two developments that there is likely to be little interaction among residents and that they are not interested in making connections or getting to know their neighbours (Chaskin and Joseph, forthcoming; Joseph, 2008).

## Conclusion

Based on the perceptions of residents, what can we conclude about the promise and limitations of these planned efforts at socioeconomic integration and urban revitalisation? What do residents perceive themselves to be gaining or losing by living in these two sites? Do any sub-groups in particular seem to be benefiting from the new developments?

Framing the perceived benefits of the new development in terms of Logan and Molotch's six specific use values is a helpful way to consider the differences between sub-groups. In summary, for relocated public housing residents, there are clear benefits in terms of 'security', but their experiences in terms of

'daily routine', 'informal support networks' and 'identity' were more mixed. None of the latter three use values was particularly relevant to higher-income residents of the development and for many there was a perceived loss of security. The lack of neighbourhood amenities at this stage meant that none of the sub-groups seemed to be deriving many proximal 'complementary benefits' from their residence in the development, although the prime locations in terms of access to other parts of the city were prominently mentioned as a benefit by all sub-groups other than the relocated public housing residents. As expected, the quest for 'exchange value' was key to affordable and market-rate owners' decisions to move to the development, setting them apart from other residents.

To be more specific, the developments are clearly providing vastly improved physical surroundings—attractive and well-maintained buildings, more peaceful and stable surroundings—for the relocated public housing residents who were able to move into them. For many of these residents, the change of atmosphere has been accompanied by a decrease in stress and, for some, an increase in aspirations and motivation to continue to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children. The benefits to their immediate quality of life, however, are not matched by instrumental benefits through relations with the new neighbours. These outcomes are similar to those found in other poverty deconcentration strategies (see, for example, Mendenhall, 2004; Orr *et al.*, 2003; and Popkin, 2006). As we have suggested previously (Joseph *et al.*, 2007), it seems clear that any presumed benefits from social networks across class lines are not likely to materialise in the mixed-income context, certainly in the medium term. Furthermore, as Briggs (1997), Freeman (2006) and Pattillo (2007, 2009) have argued, the social impact of the transformation of the environment around them is complicated. Along with the physical improvements and more subdued

atmosphere have come increased oversight and intrusion into their lives from both formal administrative structures, such as the property manager and condo associations, and informal social pressure from more affluent neighbours whose lifestyles and social expectations sometimes conflict with their own. While we did not hear much reference to relative deprivation, we heard numerous references to a sense of stigma (Briggs, 1997) and social isolation (Arthurson, 2002; Briggs, 1997). Although there are some who appear to be thriving in the new environment and determined to use it as a stepping stone, others have detached themselves from the new environment around them and are simply trying to maintain their eligibility to remain in their current unit.

For affordable and market-rate renters and buyers, the move to a mixed-income development also seems to have had both benefits and disadvantages. The prime locations, quality of external design and competitive pricing in these particular developments were strong enough incentives to generate market demand among market-rate renters and buyers in the early years of development occupancy, prior to the major recent downturn in the national housing market.<sup>8</sup> Although the exchange-value incentive for buyers has disappeared for now and complementary amenities in the surrounding neighbourhoods have been very slow to come, there remains a sense among these residents that the locations of the developments are strong, the expanding revitalisation from the city centre is inevitable and, when the housing market turns around, these developments will once again prove to be strong investments. That expectation is conditional on the emergence of a stable, orderly social environment where residents of vastly different socioeconomic backgrounds may have limited meaningful social interaction across lines of race and class but are living comfortably among one another, meeting some basic agreed-upon

social norms and acting as good neighbours. More research is needed to understand the mechanisms—formal and informal—that can help to promote the necessary levels of individual and collective adjustment, co-operation and accountability to facilitate and sustain such forms of neighbouring in such socially diverse environments. Existing developments will need to turn greater attention to issues and modes of governance, property management, formal and informal social control and community building. Pattillo (2009) suggests that, in addition to the orientation and training often given to relocating public housing residents about how to conform to their new environments, higher-income residents might also benefit from some up-front orientation about the neighbourhoods and cultural environments into which they are moving, as a way to lay the foundation for the setting of new, shared norms of behaviour rather than the clash of expectations often currently observed.

Potentially overlooked in an analysis of these mixed environments are the benefits that have accrued to residents of the affordably priced units in the developments, who, by design, make up between a quarter and a third of the total population. Among all respondents, the sub-group with the most consistently positive perceptions of the experience of living among a mixed population was the renters of affordable units at both sites. This is perhaps explained by the fact that they may have much to gain from a socioeconomically diverse environment, but, unlike relocated public housing residents, do not suffer from the stigma of having moved to these developments from public housing and are not subjected to the same degree of screening and monitoring. Less burdened by the stigma and monitoring that seems an on-going disadvantage to some of the relocated public housing residents, these residents seem more able to focus on the upsides and possibilities of the new development.

Future research on mixed-income development should include attention to the characteristics and experience of these beneficiaries.

## Notes

1. We use the term “relocated public housing residents” to refer specifically to those residents who moved from traditional public housing into mixed-income developments. There is some debate among stakeholders as to the appropriate language to describe these residents, since they are in some ways in a liminal position between the public and private spheres, living in units subsidised with public housing funds and remaining on the rolls of the public housing authority, but at the same time residents of developments that are privately owned and managed. Some argue that they should be referred to as ‘former’ public housing residents, based on the aspiration that they are moving towards the status of residents in the private market; others argue that they are still public housing residents, for which the public housing authority continues to bear responsibility; others that they should be referred to simply as ‘residents’, making no distinction between them and other members of these new communities.
2. The affordable rental and for-sale units are financed with a combination of federal, state and city programmes, including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Affordable Housing Tax Credit and tax-increment financing programmes. The specific financing sources and stipulations vary by mixed-income site, depending on what was allocated to the developer. These programmes have requirements that units be rented or sold to households earning a certain percentage of area median income, typically 50–80 per cent for rental units and up to 120 per cent for for-sale units. Property managers and others working on the developments refer to residents of these units as ‘affordable renters and owners’ so we adopt that term here.
3. Screening criteria at Oakwood Shores, as in most of the other new mixed-income developments in Chicago, include lease compliance in current unit, working at least

- 30 hours a week, no unpaid utility bills, credit history check, no recent criminal convictions and passing a drug test. At Westhaven Park, the main screening criteria have been no felony conviction and a willingness to participate in a family needs assessment (Wilén, 2006). The CHA Board of Commissioners voted to extend work requirements to all residents of public housing on 1 January, 2009 and negotiations are underway at Westhaven Park for how such a requirement might be implemented given the existing consent decree.
4. According to the terms of the relocations right contract negotiated between CHA and resident advocates, once a resident accepts a unit in a new mixed-income development, that is considered their 'permanent housing choice' by the CHA and the housing authority bears no obligation to provide other housing for that household if something does not work out. This language and reality of 'permanence' must certainly contribute to the residents' expressions of long-term commitment to living in this development.
  5. Discussion of a fourth topic that emerged, financial implications of their new residence, has been omitted due to space constraints, but is available from the authors upon request.
  6. It should be noted that both of these distinguishing physical features may be temporary. As mentioned earlier, a mid-rise is being planned for Oakwood Shores. Discussions are underway among the CHA, the developer, local homeowners and public housing representatives about the future of the Superblock and whether some of the public housing units can be replaced elsewhere so that that portion of the development can be transformed to mixed-income as well.
  7. Oakwood Shores is a 10-minute drive from downtown Chicago, right off an exit ramp to a lakefront thoroughfare that connects to highways throughout the region, a short walk away from the subway line and a stone's throw from Lake Michigan and miles of biking and jogging paths along the lake to the south and north. Westhaven Park is also about a 10-minute drive from downtown Chicago, off an exit ramp to a major highway, a short walk to the subway and commuter rail and across the street from the United Center where the Chicago professional basketball and ice hockey teams play and concerts and shows are held throughout the year. Both developments are in the vicinity of major hospital and educational institutions.
  8. The nation's economic struggles have hit the Chicago mixed-income experiment sharply. Sales have slowed and those buyers who remain interested are having trouble qualifying for mortgages. For-sale construction has been largely halted. While rental production is continuing, this also has implications for the income and tenure mix and perhaps for the future attractiveness of the developments if rental housing predominates in the next phase.

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