



Promoting Positive Youth Outcomes in Mixed-Income Developments

State of the Field Scan #3



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About the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities:

The mission of the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities is to promote urban equity and inclusion through impact research that achieves more effective and durable social change outcomes. Our vision is more equitable and inclusive communities and cities. Our roles and services include research and evaluation, state of the field scans, technical assistance and strategic consultation, connecting researchers, practitioners and policymakers and maintaining an online mixed-income development database and library.

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Cover photo was provided by Elana Dahlberg of Urban Strategies, Inc. and features youth leaders of the Green Garden Bakery located in Heritage Park, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

I. Introduction

Nearly thirty years of mixed-income policy and practice across the United States and Canada has established that mixed-income redevelopment can dramatically enhance the quality of life for low-income families through improved housing quality, neighborhood conditions and safety. However, while there has been promising recent research about outcomes for children who move out of high-poverty communities, we do not yet have strong evidence about the social, educational or economic mobility outcomes for youth who live in redeveloped mixed-income communities – the very population many believe should be the greatest beneficiaries of place-based mixed-income interventions.

Recent research has demonstrated the substantial relationship between life outcomes and the neighborhood in which one is raised. This includes research on the long-term outcomes of the federal Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program, which found significant increases in educational achievement and incomes for children who moved from high-poverty public housing developments to lower poverty areas (Chetty, Hendren & Katz, 2016). This research also found that older children and youth do not benefit nearly as much from a move to a lower-poverty neighborhood; older youth may have greater difficulty adjusting to these communities and experience negative effects from the move, particularly boys (Odgers, C. L. et al., 2015).

There has been no comparable long-term research on the impacts on youth living in mixed-income redevelopments. Qualitative research findings suggest that without intentional planning and implementation of youth development strategies, mixed-income environments alone do not necessarily promote positive youth outcomes and can, in fact, create additional challenges for low-income youth, particularly youth of color (Chaskin, Sichling & Joseph, 2013). Successful, inclusive mixed-income development should leverage the opportunity to break the generational cycle of poverty for low-income youth. Yet, few mixed-income developments have a comprehensive positive youth development strategy, customized to the specific opportunities and challenges inherent in a mixed-income setting.

This State of the Field Scan seeks to inform mixed-income policy and practice by sharing the strategies and lessons learned from five mixed-income redevelopment efforts that have implemented promising youth development strategies.

The report is organized as follows: first we highlight the unique opportunities and challenges of the mixed-income setting for youth development, we then share some brief background information on the five sites profiled here, next we identify lessons learned from these sites, and we conclude with key implications for the field.

1. See also: www.opportunityinsights.org

Why Focus on Youth in Mixed-Income Developments?

This scan was motivated by our research findings about the challenges experienced by youth in mixed-income developments and by the lack of widespread models for positive youth development in these settings. Previous reviews of mixed-income development have found that:

- Most mixed-income interventions are typically planned and implemented with limited proactive attention to youth development. On-site programming efforts usually focus on younger children; the limited activities for older youth often get increased attention in response to challenges that arise post-redevelopment (for example when youth are seen as “causing problems” for the broader community).
- Mixed-income communities are usually home to residents from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and life experiences who may bring varying expectations for behavioral norms in the redeveloped community. These differences can generate divisive social dynamics, where low-income youth of color can become the sources of friction and targets of monitoring and exclusionary treatment (Chaskin, Sichling, & Joseph, 2013; Clampet-Lundquist, Kling & Duncan, 2011).
- The place-based nature of mixed-income redevelopment efforts offer unique benefits that could be better leveraged to promote focused, intentional youth interventions. Greater residential stability, improved housing quality and community safety and improved neighborhood amenities and services in these settings could be a platform for stakeholders to foster deeper relationships with youth, provide more tailored supports and programs, and influence youth

Definitions of Key Terms

Youth: The primary focus of this scan is on youth between the ages of 12 and 21 years old. Some strategies implemented at these sites also included younger children.

Mixed-income development: Housing complexes intentionally developed with units for residents of different income groups. The five mixed-income developments in this scan were originally 100% public housing complexes and were demolished and replaced with new mixed-income housing and amenities.

Youth practitioners: The range of individuals involved in designing and implementing strategies that aim to promote positive youth outcomes. These may include youth workers, property management staff, housing authority staff, social service providers, staff from community-based organizations, and other partners.

Youth everyday settings: The key environments that youth occupy and engage in during their regular daily routines. We focus on three key contexts in which youth strategies were implemented: the mixed-income community (including the site itself and the surrounding neighborhood), structured programs offered on site, and local schools.

2. National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities. (2013). State of the field scan #1: Social dynamics in mixed-income developments. Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University.

National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities. (2015). State of the field scan #2: Resident services in mixed-income developments. Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University.

See also: <https://case.edu/socialwork/nimc/research/>

over multiple phases of their lives. Mixed-income communities can be advantageous settings for developing youth leadership skills and empowering youth to effectively participate in their community, and for promoting a civic culture that sees youth as valued members of the community (Benson, 2007).

Given these insights, this scan is premised on the notion that youth can, and should, be stronger contributors to and beneficiaries of successful mixed-income communities. Research on youth development demonstrates the importance of establishing interventions that reduce risky behavior while also simultaneously promoting the development of skills and competencies that will help them succeed throughout their formative years and into adulthood. However, the dynamics of mixed-income settings require youth practitioners and stakeholders to go a step further to help youth reach their full potential. In a mixed-income transformation, positive youth development should be incorporated as an integral component of the redevelopment process. Youth practitioners and others invested in youth outcomes should aim to intentionally create mixed-income environments that provide constructive and affirming relationships with diverse peers and adults and an array of opportunities and experiences that enable youth to build life skills and competencies. A more intentional, comprehensive approach would enable youth to become engaged as partners in their own development as well as the development of their diverse communities (Perkins, et al., 2001).

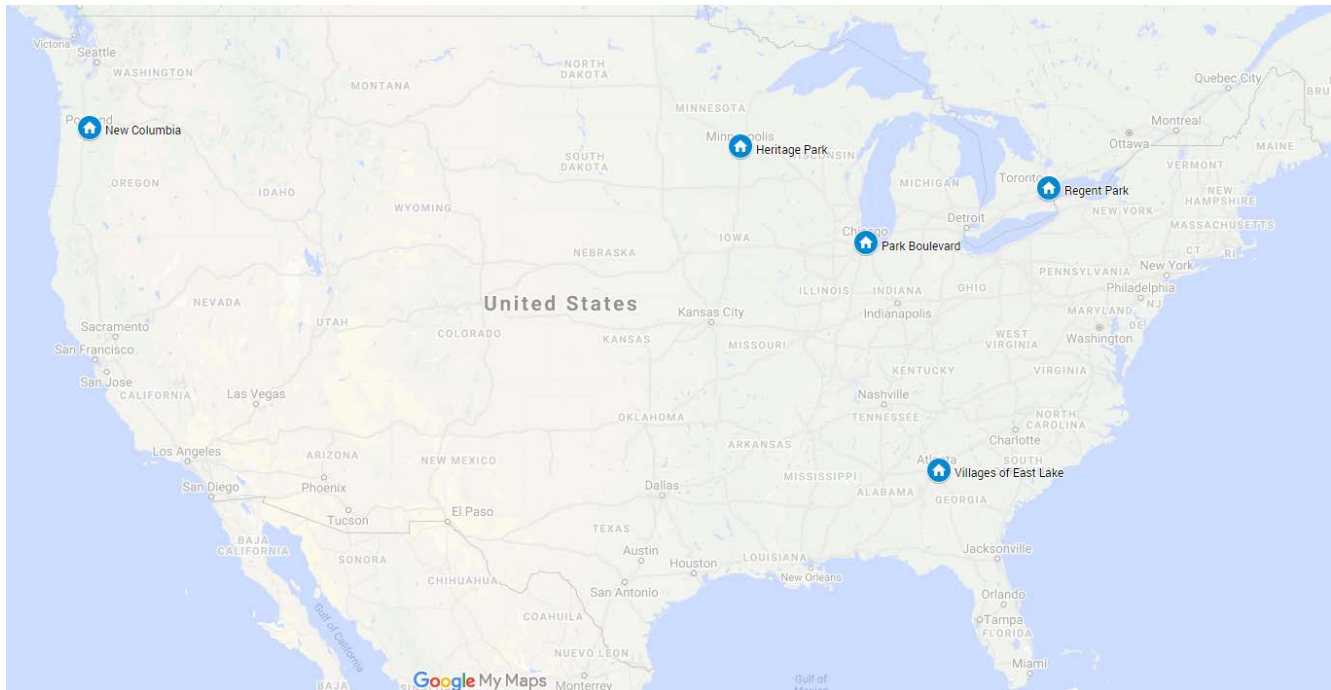
In this scan, we share the insights of those who have planned and implemented comprehensive youth-focused strategies in mixed-income communities to foster positive and healthy youth development.

The Sites: Overview

Five mixed-income developments were selected for this scan because of their exemplary approaches to providing services, supports, and operating programs aimed explicitly to develop youth leadership and promote positive youth outcomes. These sites stand out for their carefully designed, well-resourced approaches to youth development, with staff dedicated to engaging youth in ways that enhance quality of life for youth as well as the broader community. Site profiles with more detail on the context and strategies at each site are provided in Appendix D.

3. For a useful overview of the positive youth development field see: Benson, P. L., et al. (2006). Positive youth development: Theory, research, and applications. In R. M. Lerner & W. Damon (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (894-941). Hoboken, NJ, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Figure 1
Mixed-Income Sites Included in the Scan



Heritage Park, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Heritage Park is a 440-unit mixed-income development completed in 2018. While Heritage Park provides a variety of programs aimed at children and youth, the signature youth-led program is the Green Garden Bakery, started in 2014 after a community needs assessment identified food security as a major issue in Heritage Park and youth proposed an entrepreneurial venture to help address the problem. Youth now run the social enterprise with staff support. Heritage Park was redeveloped by McCormack Baron Salazar and human capital and research services are provided by Urban Strategies, Inc.

New Columbia, Portland, Oregon

New Columbia is an 854-unit mixed-income development completed in 2014. The Housing Opportunities and Services Together (HOST) Demonstration, designed and funded by the Urban Institute, was implemented at New Columbia to test a two-generation service model that focuses on both parents and youth. A Youth Advisory Board has led the creation of a community food distribution program called Harvest Share managed entirely by youth. New Columbia was redeveloped by Home Forward, the local public housing authority.

Park Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois

Park Boulevard is a 367-unit mixed-income development opened in 2007 and is still under development. Community youth created a Youth Council that held elections each year and addressed issues that impacted youth of the new mixed-income development. A Safety Network Youth Leadership Program supported activities focused on mentoring, storytelling, and communication skills. A Parent Cafe and a Barber Shop were created for parents to build social support, relieve stress and have a safe space to discuss shared challenges with parenting youth. Park Boulevard was redeveloped by Stateway Associates, LLC and the resident services were managed by Stateway Community Partners.

Regent Park, Toronto, Canada

Regent Park is a mixed-income development in its third phase of development that will ultimately have over 7,000 units. A Revitalization Youth Ambassadors Forum was established in 2013 as a way for youth to be regularly engaged in the redevelopment process. The annual Forum, now organized each year by community youth, teaches youth about civic engagement, advocacy and event planning. Regent Park was redeveloped by The Daniels Corporation and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and resident services are provided by TCHC.

Villages of East Lake, Atlanta, Georgia

The Villages of East Lake is a 542-unit mixed-income development completed in 1995. The signature youth strategies in the community are the high-performing Drew Charter School, which was the first charter school in Atlanta, and First Tee of East Lake, a golf and empowerment program for youth. A YWCA provides additional comprehensive programming for community youth. East Lake's success has led to the launch of the national Purpose Built Communities network of mixed-income communities. The Villages of East Lake was redeveloped by the East Lake Foundation.

The sites featured in this report began their intensive focus on youth at different periods in their community's redevelopment, from the early phases of planning to the post-occupancy phases after the new housing was complete. As the summaries above indicate, each site has a different focus for their youth strategy. At New Columbia in Portland, development staff surveyed youth and other residents during relocation and again when they moved back on site to determine what their priorities were for programming in the new community. At Regent Park in Toronto, after an intensive information-gathering period to inform the creation of a Social Development Plan for the community, the focus shifted to community education and capacity-building, with an emphasis on educating youth about the redevelopment process. Youth programming was prioritized at Heritage Park in Minneapolis once the new housing was complete and after a community assessment identified youth enrichment activities and employment opportunities as top priorities for residents. At all of the sites, youth practitioners and staff adapted and refocused their strategies as their understanding of the needs and desires of community youth evolved over time.

We learned from our interviews with site representatives that their focus on youth development evolved for similar, interrelated reasons including the need to:

- maximize youth engagement to promote positive development and skills,
- minimize the challenges unengaged youth can present for the community,
- minimize the stressors that youth face in a mixed-income setting, and
- shift negative perceptions of youth in the community.

The sites developed a variety of strategies to cultivate youth well-being and self-esteem and enhance their ability to contribute to their community.

II. Promoting Positive Youth Outcomes Through Their Everyday Settings

Three key, everyday settings emerged from our inquiry as critical arenas in which the sites focused on promoting more positive youth development. These were the mixed-income community (including each mixed-income development and its surrounding neighborhood), the structured programs and activities focused on youth and the local schools.

Promoting Youth Success in the Context of the Mixed-Income Setting

Set the Stage with a “Youth-Positive Operating Culture”

The “operating culture” of a site—daily norms, expectations and routines—is important because it shapes many site structures and practices, from property management and security to supportive services and maintenance. This culture influences community social dynamics, youth’s sense of belonging and value, and can either support or undermine their ability to grow and thrive as active members of their community.

The operating culture of many public housing and affordable housing communities is often shaped by isolation, division, and fear among residents, staff, and the community at large, due to decades of the marginalization of residents of color and low-income families. In mixed-income developments, property management staff may have strong biases about public housing residents and negative stereotypes about youth of color. Fear and discrimination from staff, older residents, and new higher-income, white residents can result in youth being viewed as the “other” and automatically blamed for problems in and around the community. Further, private property management entities are typically stricter than public housing management in their enforcement of rules and regulations, and can sometimes have different rules and standards for market-rate and subsidized households (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). As a result, many low-income residents of color, particularly youth, can experience uneven surveillance and penalties for violating community expectations compared to their market-rate neighbors (Chaskin, Sichling & Joseph, 2013).

Some of the sites shifted their operating cultures from one driven by more traditional compliance-based practices, which tend to reinforce inequalities and deepen mistrust in communities, to inclusive, youth-positive operating cultures. A “youth-positive operating culture” is one that values youth as contributing members of the community and emphasizes helping youth to realize their potential and inherent capacities. Promoted through a clear community vision driven by aspiration and possibility, a youth-positive operating culture ideally becomes embedded in all site communication, routines, and practices – it is not a siloed approach embraced solely by the youth programming staff.

Youth practitioners in the five sites took intentional steps to shape the site operating culture into one that was more inclusive, youth-positive, and driven by a consistent collective vision for the community. As the following quote illustrates, a youth-positive operating culture can play a pivotal role in shifting the broader community culture to celebrate, rather than stigmatize, youth.

It was important to get the community to view youth in a different way. Kids were being branded as the problem. If we could figure out what to do with kids, many of the other problems would go away. We had to start demonstrating to the community that they weren't the problem and that they were doing great things. (New Columbia)

This type of culture requires staff that are well-equipped to work with diverse groups of youth and their varying capabilities and needs. Site representatives emphasized to us the importance of hiring staff who understood and were committed to the long-term inclusive vision of the community and who could develop trusting relationships with residents. Providing clear guidelines and expectations for staff engagement and interactions with residents was especially important for staff who were new to the community.

The time building relationships was so critical. [We] needed staff to build those relationships over time and consistently. (Regent Park)

Hiring residents for staff positions was a common strategy used by sites. Staff members who are residents are invaluable for reinforcing a youth-positive operating culture. They have the benefits of familiarity with the community and pre-existing relationships with many adults and youth living in the community. As a youth practitioner at Park Boulevard explained:

There are huge benefits to having residents on staff. First of all, the resident staff are often people the youth have known from their neighborhood for their whole lives. The resident staff represent a possibility of how to be in the world as far as employment, life goals, and other key elements that are tangible, knowable and therefore are more likely to seem achievable. Also, resident staff are more likely to know the parents of the youth which is helpful for communication and support.

Engage and Empower Youth through Planning and Decision-Making

These sites engaged youth in planning and community improvement efforts. Site youth practitioners explained that putting youth and their priorities “front-and-center” and inviting them to the decision-making table helped youth develop a sense of influence and investment in their communities. Some sites engaged youth particularly early on in the redevelopment process, which allowed youth to shape the overall vision of the community, as a Park Boulevard youth practitioner noted:

By empowering youth to take the reins in identifying what they need and want, and crafting their own vision for creating community, resilience, confidence and life skills are reinforced.

Participating in this process helped youth become stewards of their community, where they continued to engage in, and even lead, other community-based activities like beautification projects. Site representatives reported that these youth leaders felt empowered to intervene when youth from outside the development caused trouble for the community.

The sites also provided opportunities for youth to give input on specific site design features and physical spaces. Regent Park in Toronto demonstrated the advantages of offering a variety of ways for youth to engage based on their age, level of interest, and availability. During the multi-year planning and development of a new on-site athletic complex, youth had multiple opportunities to participate: engaging in the grant review process, giving input into the design of the facility, playing a role during the opening of the complex and developing programs for the new center. According to the site representative, including youth in planning and design decisions supported their development of civic and leadership skills, nurtured their sense of belonging in the community and fostered a sense of respect and commitment to the spaces and activities in the development. The broader community benefitted too, because community facilities and programs were better-utilized and maintained by youth. Sites that develop community spaces or programming without youth input not only miss opportunities for supporting youth development, but also run the risk of having underutilized or misused community spaces and limited participation in programming offered on-site.

Promote Positive Social Dynamics to Foster Environments Where Youth Can Thrive

Youth practitioners used community building strategies at their sites to promote positive social dynamics and to foster environments that support youth. Successful community building efforts were consistent, inclusive, and woven into numerous activities and interactions. As the site representative from Park Boulevard in Chicago explained: “we took every opportunity to work together as a neighborhood” to foster more amiable relationships between neighbors. Annual graduation parties, holiday celebrations, neighborhood-wide trips to professional baseball games and the local zoo brought together residents of different ages, incomes, and ethnicities. At Heritage Park in Minneapolis, some community building activities focused specifically on bridging the relationship gap between youth and market-rate adult renters as a way to change negative perceptions of youth. Regent Park in Toronto involved youth in community surveying, which served to strengthen the relationship between youth and other residents, provided a platform for positive interactions and opportunities for neighbors to engage with youth and demonstrated youth investment and leadership in the community.

Mixed-income environments have the potential to help youth generate social capital by providing greater exposure to neighbors from a wider range of backgrounds, which could lead to new relationships with others who differ in race, income, and life experiences. However, as site representatives asserted, the interactions among diverse residents in these communities do not occur in a bubble. Pervasive racial, class, and power inequities in society requires greater attention to and resources for building and nurturing community cohesion in mixed-income developments. Mixed-income communities can present new tensions and stressors for youth. Youth may develop a new and heightened awareness of their socioeconomic status or have difficulty developing positive relationships with neighbors due to differences in norms, behaviors, and expectations (McCormick, Joseph & Chaskin, 2012). Youth can also experience new and different forms of exclusion, marginalization, and

discrimination from neighbors in mixed-income communities. They may have difficulty adjusting to property management and security practices that are more restrictive, and youth may be targeted by increased security or police surveillance. Experiences such as these can adversely affect youth's sense of belonging and self-worth, and youth may respond in ways that are further detrimental to themselves, their families, and the larger community.

A central and challenging theme related to social dynamics was the pervasive negative perception of youth fueled by stereotypes of youth of color. A youth practitioner at Regent Park expressed a sentiment shared by staff from other sites:

Traditionally we look at young people with a deficit-based eye. Crime and safety and security issues are automatically placed on the young people.

Stereotypes based on race, language, income, and age were often intertwined and made youth easy targets for complaints and surveillance. At several sites, older residents, particularly those who were white and market-rate, as well as those from the larger neighborhood outside the development, and even some site staff were quick to vocalize their concerns about "groups of youth hanging around" on-site. These youth were typically from African-American or immigrant families and low-income households.

The sites reported substantial shifts in perceptions of youth on-site as a result of strategic efforts to promote inclusive social dynamics through community building activities.

Engage Youth in Planning and Decision-Making around Safety

As in many mixed-income communities, safety was a prominent issue across these sites. Youth were often blamed for crime and safety issues, and police and community relations were often damaged by practices of racial profiling and youth surveillance. While many mixed-income sites rely on safety strategies that include private on-site security guards, security cameras, neighborhood watch groups, and zero-tolerance policing, these approaches can often perpetuate or deepen distrust and fear in the community. Several of these sites developed alternative approaches – such as including youth in designing safety strategies – that site representative considered far more effective in improving the overall sense of safety in developments, as well as promoting positive youth development skills.

Youth practitioners incorporated youth in decisions related to safety in a variety of ways: creating spaces for youth and police to share positive experiences and build trust, facilitating discussions about how traditional safety and security strategies are disempowering for youth and can breed fear and distrust and providing opportunities for youth and adults to co-design alternative safety strategies while promoting trust and relationship building. Regent Park in Toronto and Park Boulevard in Chicago each present strong models of how to incorporate youth into designing safety strategies.

At Regent Park, twelve youth were hired to help lead a "safety study" to better understand the history and perceptions of safety in the community. Youth helped develop and conduct a survey of residents and identified suggestions for ways the community could work together to improve feelings of safety. The results were used to redevelop safety strategies, including a new "vertical watch" strategy, where residents walk through each floor of the residential buildings, starting at the top, and then meet at the ground floor for a discussion with staff over tea and cookies.

In Park Boulevard, youth practitioners facilitated conversations between youth and Chicago Police officers, leading officers to spend more time on site with youth. The youth council at Park Boulevard held a variety of youth meetings to discuss various complaints from residents and came up with their own plan and rules regarding noise volume, curfew times, and what constituted public versus private space.

Promoting Youth Success in the Context of Structured Programs

These five sites designed exciting and engaging structured programs for youth to help foster their social competencies, such as planning and decision-making, cultural competence, self-esteem, a sense of purpose and agency, honesty and integrity and motivation to achieve.

Provide Engaging Programs and Organized Activities On-site

Sites gradually learned through needs and assets assessments, planning and emerging experience that youth of all ages need access to structured activities on-site, particularly if they attend schools far away from the neighborhood. In response to resident and stakeholder concerns that youth with too much free time were engaging in risky or destructive behavior, these sites developed a range of opportunities for youth. The impact of having these programs on site even extended beyond the youth as individuals and into the dynamics of the community. Programs served as spaces to encourage positive interactions between youth of different races, ethnicities, and incomes, leading to improved social dynamics for youth and the broader community. This was most apparent at Heritage Park in Minneapolis, which had a large and extremely diverse youth population:

The leadership in the Green Garden Bakery has changed the dynamic and bond between the African American and East African residents, especially in the youth... but it's trickling into the families as well.

Site staff also strategically activated parents and families through programming to help promote positive youth outcomes. Parents engaged in youth programs and events through volunteering, as program participants, and in some cases, as staff. For example, at Park Boulevard in Chicago, performances, zoo outings, major league sporting events, and college tours were organized so youth and parents could participate together. The youth employment program at New Columbia in Portland, K-Ching, requires parents to volunteer four hours a week to reinforce the importance of community service and engagement in the community. Parent participation helped youth feel supported and legitimized their own participation in programs and leadership development activities. Having more shared activities with parents also generated additional adult role models for other youth

Promoting Youth Success in the Context of the Mixed-Income Community

1. Set the stage with a youth-positive operating culture through hiring staff with experience working with youth and training them to emphasize a positive youth focus.
 2. Engage and empower youth through providing opportunities to give input on planning and decision-making within the development.
 3. Promote positive social dynamics through community building to foster environments where youth can thrive.
 4. Engage youth in planning and decision-making around safety strategies on site.
-

and more frequent interactions between parents, which spilled over into improved dynamics among residents in the community.

Parent involvement in programs, and connection to their children’s activities, led to their participation in other services at the sites. At Heritage Park in Minneapolis, for example, youth practitioners explained that increased engagement of youth in programs and activities made it easier to build trust with the rest of their family, and consequently staff were able to better connect families to additional social services. Similarly, in Villages of East Lake in Atlanta, the focus on youth and their families led to adults being connected to jobs and financial coaching, positioning families to be on a potential trajectory of upward economic mobility. As a youth practitioner explained, “if you only focus on youth, it would fall short because the families don’t have the support to be their best to support their kids.”

Support a Youth Council and Youth will Rise to Lead

Programs also offer the opportunity for youth to participate in more formal governance roles that also foster leadership skills and promote the development of planning and decision-making skills. The youth that participated in the Green Garden Bakery Executive team at Heritage Park in Minneapolis ran their own executive meetings and determined their own bylaws. The Youth Council in Park Boulevard in Chicago made decisions about programming priorities and established their own rules and regulations. In New Columbia in Portland, the Youth Community Advisory Board met weekly, participated in the weekly Farmers Market to raise awareness about the local food bank, and helped host a Teen Summit around food insecurity, an issue and topic that they identified as a priority for the community.

SNAPSHOT

On-Site Youth Programs

Green Garden Bakery (Heritage Park in Minneapolis): Youth-run community garden and for-profit bakery

Harvest Share (New Columbia in Portland): Youth-operated community food distribution program

Mock Trial (Park Boulevard in Chicago): Youth engage in mock trials and learn about the legal system and related careers

Youth Ambassadors Forum (Regent Park in Toronto): Space for youth to be engaged in redevelopment process

First Tee (Villages of East Lake in Atlanta): A golf and empowerment program for youth

See Site Profiles in Appendix D for more information about specific programs at each site.

Provide Meaningful Employment Opportunities

Providing youth with employment opportunities on-site has numerous benefits, not only for youth and their skill set and confidence, but also for their families, their peers, and the broader community. Sites offered employment and internship opportunities to promote professional development and skill-building. Equally valuable, however, was that youth employment helped shift the way youth were viewed by their neighbors and the larger neighborhood, as their talents and contributions to the community were more visible. Site representatives explained that in the sites - particularly Heritage Park, New Columbia, and Park Boulevard - as community members and staff saw youth working, youth were increasingly seen as assets of the community, and they were blamed less frequently for problems in the neighborhood.

Employment also served as a way for youth to support their families. At New Columbia in Portland, for example, the intensive summer employment program, K-Ching, expanded as more youth needed to help contribute to their household's income. The staff at New Columbia, in partnership with youth, created a food distribution program called Harvest Share after it came to light that youth were engaging in risky behavior in order to put food on the table for their families. Employment on site also provides youth with a way to give back to their community through service, such as at the Villages of East Lake in Atlanta, where youth who have gone through the site's golf-focused youth development program, the First Tee, have come back to be instructors and mentors.

Youth practitioners shared that youth who were working generated a positive peer influence that motivated unemployed youth to participate or otherwise contribute to their communities. In Regent Park in Toronto, youth have even become staff at the housing authority. With this model, youth are able to see a potential successful career trajectory through their peers. Youth practitioners acknowledged that employing youth on site takes the commitment of staff time to advise and guide them, but ultimately produced meaningful results in terms of engaging youth, building their leadership skills, and securing their ongoing participation (McCormick, Joseph & Chaskin, 2012).

Promoting Youth Success in the Context of Schools

Schools were another important context where the sites were able to further promote positive youth outcomes. Youth from the sites typically attended a wide range of local schools, some located within their mixed-income community, others near the site and some far across the city. Even at New Columbia in Portland and East Lake Villages in Atlanta where new elementary schools were created in the neighborhood as part of the mixed-income development, older youth often attended a variety of schools. The sites established different strategies that helped support youth in their varying educational contexts.

Promoting Youth Success in the Context of Structured Programs

- Provide engaging programs and organized activities on-site to occupy youth time and promote the development of positive skills and assets.
- Design and encourage participation of parents in youth programming.
- Support a youth council to cultivate leadership skills among youth.
- Provide meaningful employment opportunities that promote professional development and skill-building.

Strengthen Site Connections with Schools

Schools provided a venue for site staff and service providers to engage an additional institutional partner, make sure youth were taking advantage of school-based resources and to provide other mentorship and guidance on succeeding in school. The youth practitioners at New Columbia work closely with the on-site school leadership and the district leadership to discuss issues with any of the youth in the community, such as truancy and broader issues of student achievement. Site representatives learned that data use agreements or other similar data-sharing agreements with the local schools were imperative to sites being able to track their youth's educational outcomes. This was important so that sites could identify needs and develop further supports for youth. For example, the site staff at New Columbia in Portland have a broad data-sharing agreement with the school system that has allowed them to look at chronic absenteeism data, presenting an opportunity to intervene if needed.

The challenge of tracking students who attend a variety of schools around a city or region has led to creative strategies by site representatives. It is important for sites to know which schools youth attend, and to establish and maintain trusting partnerships with those schools so that academic performance can be tracked and monitored. At Heritage Park in Minneapolis, for example, youth practitioners reported that they have faced difficulty building relationships and establishing data-sharing agreements with the schools that youth attend because each school administration is very different. However, in order for youth to participate in the Green Garden Bakery, parents and participating youth must sign an agreement to provide staff with access to their educational records. So despite the challenge of working with a number of different schools, Heritage Park staff developed a solution to track at least some of their program participants.

Over time, as older youth aged out of programs and families grew, the sites adjusted and expanded their school-focused youth strategies to include younger children because staff recognized the benefits of early intervention. For example, at New Columbia in Portland, the focus was expanded to early childhood and preschool preparation to help children get ready for elementary school.

Engaging schools as part of their programmatic strategies also allowed site staff to align the on-site activities and programs with school success, further reinforcing the importance of staying in school and performing well. At Heritage Park in Minneapolis, the youth that are Green Garden Bakery Executive Team members created a requirement that, in order to get paid for their executive positions, they must perform well in school. At Villages of East Lake in Atlanta, the after-school program evolved focus on topics and projects that the youth were focused on in school as youth practitioners realized there needed to be more connection between the school curriculum and after-school enrichment. Youth practitioners at New Columbia in Portland established a Cavaliers Club, where youth workers from New Columbia have a presence in the on-site school throughout the week and eat lunch with young men to provide supports and mentorship.

Leverage the Benefits of On-Site Schools

Some mixed-income communities are in the unique position of having a school located on-site. Sites in this position were able to leverage the schools as a partner and resource. Having a school located within the boundaries or very near the mixed-income community allows youth practitioners to have closer partnerships with the school and, subsequently, a more direct influence on youth's school experience. At New Columbia and Villages of East Lake, school proximity allowed for greater communication with school staff and teachers, enabled site staff to access resources positioned within the schools and helped with data-sharing and monitoring youth outcomes.

Adjusting the school calendar to better meet the needs of the families on-site is one outcome of collaborative efforts between the mixed-income sites and on-site schools. At New Columbia in Portland, school staff adjusted the academic calendar, providing Rosa Parks Elementary year-round instruction in order to provide additional instructional days for students who needed it. At Villages of East Lake's Drew Charter School in Atlanta, youth have an extended day and a slightly extended school year.

At Villages of East Lake, Drew Charter School and the two early learning partners (Sheltering Arms East Lake Center and the East Lake Early Learning Academy) comprise the primary youth strategy for the mixed-income community – they were designed and built as a cornerstone of the redevelopment to serve the youth with the goal of breaking the cycle of poverty. This context has allowed site staff to maximize the impact on students by strengthening enrichment, offering more direct supports to students and their families, and expanding the charter school to include a high school to effectively complete the “cradle-to-college” pipeline. At Villages of East Lake, parents are engaged in shaping the direction of Drew Charter School and committed to making sure the school experience is a meaningful one for their children.

Design Supports for Youth Attending Off-Site Schools

If an on-site school can help youth bond to their school and neighborhood, the opposite might be true for youth who attend schools across the city. For example, due to family obligations or transportation barriers, youth might not be able to participate in after-school activities and parents may be less likely to attend meetings with teachers. For the vast majority of mixed-income developments that do not have schools within their communities, different strategies are needed to support youth success in this context. Youth practitioners explained that youth who attend schools in neighborhoods throughout the city do not have the same level of peer support as those attending neighborhood-based schools because their peers from school live in many different communities, rather than their same neighborhood. Youth attending schools in other neighborhoods created anxiety and

Promoting Youth Success in the Context of Schools

- Strengthen site connections with schools through data-sharing agreements and finding ways to strengthen the link between youth programming and school success.
 - Leverage the benefits of on-site schools through developing strong partnerships and taking advantage of existing school resources.
 - Design and offer supports and out-of-school time for youth attending off-site schools.
-

tension for some youth, as well as for their parents.

One exemplary approach to supporting parents was developed at Park Boulevard in Chicago, where the challenge with youth attending schools all over the city was particularly trying for parents. Given the disconnect between the youth's school experience and their experience in their home community, parents did not have a strong understanding of what their children were going through or how to support them. As a solution, parents and staff co-created the Parent Café, where they could gather to discuss the challenges that they were experiencing related to their children's education, among other topics. A youth practitioner summarized a recent Parent Café discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of youth attending schools outside of their community: on the one hand youth may have more diverse, enriching experiences and build broader networks; on the other hand, this may create great discomfort and anxiety for youth and parents around being unfamiliar with these new environments.

III. Implications for Practitioners, Policymakers, and Funders

Inclusive, youth-positive communities must be intentionally designed from the start. As this scan describes, and as previous research has shown, a mixed-income setting alone is not enough to guarantee positive youth outcomes and can have challenges that offset the benefits. It takes a deliberate strategy co-created with youth themselves to create an environment that allows youth to develop supportive relationships, cultivate inherent capacities, build new skills, and ultimately use those skills to positively influence their community. This scan of the field highlighted how youth practitioners at five mixed-income communities implemented a range of strategies in their mixed-income neighborhoods, through structured programs and through partnership with schools to promote greater youth engagement and success. This final section describes actions that practitioners, policymakers, and funders can take to work toward having a greater impact on youth outcomes in mixed-income communities.

1. Lead with a positive youth development frame

Mixed-income community transformation offers a unique opportunity to develop an intentional, focused set of strategies to promote positive youth outcomes through the community development process. Youth should be engaged in all phases of redevelopment, beginning with planning and design, helping choose partners for programming and services and playing roles in implementation and ongoing assessment and evaluation. A positive youth development frame has most promise for impacting youth if it is used from the earliest phase of redevelopment planning, through post-occupancy and in an ongoing way as the site matures. Benson's framework of internal and external assets for positive youth development is a helpful starting point for shaping strategies (See Appendix 2 and 3). It is important to ensure that key partners have a mutual understanding of the focus on promoting positive youth outcomes and treating youth as assets rather than as problems. Policymakers and funders should require that mixed-income strategies incorporate an explicit positive youth development frame and approach.

2. Equip site staff and partners with tools to promote a youth-positive operating culture

Training on positive youth development for all stakeholders – youth workers, property management, housing authority staff and partners – is critical for creating and sustaining a youth-positive operating culture that supports effective youth strategies. These trainings should involve learning opportunities that provide a platform to develop a shared understanding and clarity around roles, responsibilities, and accountability for all staff and stakeholders, including youth. Sites should be required to be specific about staff time allocations and other resources that are needed to activate and sustain attention to youth strategies. Staff and partners should be encouraged to have ongoing discussions about historical and current marginalization of youth on the basis of race, class, and other youth identities.

3. Cultivate strong partnerships with schools, youth organizations and police

Strong partnerships are a critical important component of being able to promote positive youth development at the sites. Formal and informal partnerships with the local schools and other youth-focused community organizations are essential. There should be an emphasis on promoting positive relationships between police and youth. Resources should be provided that appropriately train officers and other partners in procedures that involve non-enforcement opportunities for positive interaction and trust-building between youth and law enforcement, de-escalation techniques, understanding youth brain development, the impact of trauma and other mental health issues, and cultural differences among youth populations. Given the variety of policies and philosophies that guide and constrain these various organizations, success depends on establishing a shared commitment to a youth-positive culture and to maintaining strong coordination and communication as the mixed-income development evolves.

4. Prioritize youth participation and leadership

Promote youth participation through supporting practitioners to co-design and implement a clear plan, structure, and process for decision-making and governance that cultivate youth voice and influence. Youth boards, youth grant-making opportunities, youth-run councils and other bodies where youth have decision-making influence should be prioritized. The costs of engagement can often be high for youth and their families, and providing stipends for leadership roles, transportation, participation in programming, as well as funding for food for youth activities, will encourage and support youth participation. Along with the leadership roles and responsibilities, there should be activities and resources to build youth leadership skills and capacity.

5. Track and monitor youth outcomes and prioritize continuous improvement

Monitoring progress, participant feedback, continuous reflection, and regular reassessment are imperative to strategy improvement over time, as changing community demographics and amenities will lead to changing opportunities and needs. Ensure that program requirements, data collection, management and reporting guidelines incorporate indicators of youth engagement and outcomes. Establishing a plan for learning and self-correcting around their youth strategies will help sites to better respond to their evolving youth context.

6. Anticipate the realities of complex race and class social dynamics

Youth practitioners and community-based partners need to acknowledge and prepare for the social dynamics that occur in racially and income-diverse communities. The place-based mixed-income redevelopment process offers an opportunity to promote a strong sense of belonging and identity by activating place attachment among the youth. A sense of stewardship of the new emerging community can be built and capitalized on to mobilize and engage youth. Engaging youth to help create a sense of community cohesion through intensive and deliberate community building can positively impact the mixed-income community in the long-term.

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VI. Appendices

Appendix A: Methods

The 5 study sites were selected from a pool of 13 mixed-income developments on which initial information about youth programming was collected. We conducted preliminary interviews with staff members of seven of these sites and ultimately invited the five that we considered to be “exemplary” to be featured in the scan. We considered developments to be exemplary if they had established well-designed, funded and staffed comprehensive strategies to promote positive youth development in the mixed-income context. A case study approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of the youth strategy at each site. Data collection occurred between 2017 and 2018 and involved:

- 1) a preliminary survey to collect basic information about each site,
- 2) a series of four in-depth interviews with one to two individuals who worked with youth at each site (the focus of each of the four interviews were: the development of the youth strategy, the school engagement strategy, the results of the youth efforts and reflections and lessons learned),
- 3) a review of program materials and site documents.

For Park Boulevard, interviews were conducted with the program director who designed and led the youth strategy from 2007 and 2013.

Appendix B: Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents

EXTERNAL ASSETS			
I. Support	II. Empowerment	III. Boundaries and Expectations	IV. Constructive Use of Time
1. Family Support 2. Positive Family Communications 3. Other Adult Relationships 4. Caring Neighborhood 5. Caring School Climate 6. Parent Involvement in Schooling	7. Community Values Youth 8. Youth as Resources 9. Service to Others 10. Safety	11. Family Boundaries 12. School Boundaries 13. Neighborhood Boundaries 14. Adult Role Models 15. Positive Peer Influence 16. High Expectations	17. Creative Activities 18. Youth Programs 19. Religious Community 20. Time at Home
INTERNAL ASSETS			
I. Commitment to Learning	II. Positive Values	III. Social Competencies	IV. Positive Identity
21. Achievement Motivation 22. School Engagement 23. Homework 24. Bonding to School 25. Reading for Pleasure	26. Caring 27. Equality and Social Justice 28. Integrity 29. Honesty 30. Responsibility 31. Restraint	32. Planning and Decision Making 33. Interpersonal Competence 34. Cultural Competence 35. Resistance Skills 36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution	37. Personal Power 38. Self-Esteem 39. Sense of Purpose 40. Positive View of Personal Future

Find Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents at:

<https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/developmental-assets-framework/>

Appendix C: The 6 C's of Positive Youth Development

1. Competence (i.e., the cognitive, social, academic abilities to act successfully or efficiently in school, work, or social environments)
2. Confidence (i.e., a sense of self-efficacy and mastery; a belief in one's skills and ability to succeed)
3. Connection (i.e., a feeling of belonging; positive relationships with people and institutions including peers, family, school, and community)
4. Character (i.e., respect for principles, values, and rules)
5. Caring (i.e., sympathy and empathy for others)
6. Contribution (i.e., active participation in services, organizations, community, and civil society)

(Lerner 2007; Lerner et al., 2005; see also Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a; 2003b)



Homes at Heritage Park

Heritage Park

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Youth Lead a Sustainable Social Enterprise

SITE CONTEXT

This site profile represents information from interviews and document review that took place in 2016 and 2017.

Lead youth partners: Urban Strategies, Inc. and Green Garden Bakery

Partners: Urban 4-H, Girl Scouts, Hennepin County Master Gardeners, City of Minneapolis Step-Up, Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation

Developer: McCormack Baron Salazar

Demographics: A total of 1,500 residents live at Heritage Park, 45% are under the age of 18 and 70% of all residents live at or below 100% of the poverty line. The majority of residents in rental units are African American or East African with populations of Somali, Oromo and Hmong residents. There is an equal breakdown between the African American and East African population within the renters on site, reflecting the larger dynamic in the city where North Minneapolis is largely African American, and there is a densely populated neighborhood in south Minneapolis of East Africans. The majority of homeowners are white.

Program duration: The signature youth program at Heritage Park is the Green Garden Bakery, which began in 2014. Youth are eligible to participate as long as they remain residents of Heritage Park and many participate in the program year-round, multiple times a week.

Funding: Program funding has come from both local and national foundations, and from funds provided through the developer's operating budget.

Space: Produce is grown at Heritage Park and baking is done in a rented commercial kitchen at City Food Studio. In the past, the local Whole Foods has donated use of their kitchen.

Neighborhood amenities and dynamics: The neighborhood offers bicycle and walking trails, a public library, community centers, 24 acres of park land, and neighborhood retail and schools. Heritage Park is designated as a food desert, and most of the youth participants are seen as at-risk due to social, behavioral, and emotional challenges. Most youth living on site are also low-income. There is some tension between African Americans and East Africans among adults but there has been great progress with the youth because this has been intentionally worked on in community activities..

Status: Construction began in 2001 and finished in 2018.

Unit mix: Of the rental 440 units on site, 230 are reserved for public housing, 99 are affordable low-income tax credit units and 141 are market-rate rental units. There are 100 homeownership units surrounding the development, 40 of which were built by Habitat for Humanity.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Heritage Park provides a variety of programs aimed at children and youth with a focus on youth leadership, youth empowerment, and intergenerational collaboration. In 2010, Urban Strategies conducted a community needs assessment where residents identified food security as an issue and a desire to have more entrepreneurial opportunities for youth. Heritage Park's signature youth-led program, Green Garden Bakery, started in 2014 after youth identified Heritage Park as a food desert. Youth wanted to start a community garden and had learned about another bakery social enterprise in Minneapolis that could provide a model for the program at Heritage Park. Youth combined these goals by baking desserts with vegetables embedded in them. Youth run the program and have established a leadership and accountability structure for participating in the program that is supported by program staff. One-third of the social enterprise's profits are returned to the community in creative and impactful ways, one-third of the profits compensate the youth executive team, and one-third is invested back into the business. Parents are engaged in the program through volunteering and supporting youth in marketing the program. In 2016, youth wanted to expand the program to reach a broader range of children on site, so now the program includes opportunities for children in kindergarten through 12th grade. Many youth have lived at Heritage Park for over five years and many have graduated high school, enrolled in college and gained other employment opportunities because of the program. The program has also provided a platform for market-rate residents to interact with youth from subsidized housing through providing their professional expertise, time and money to support the success of the program, which has reduced tensions and built stronger relationships among residents. Urban Strategies has goals to expand the program to reach a broader range of residents at Heritage Park and they evaluate the program through community needs assessments every two years.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The social entrepreneurship model of the Green Garden Bakery exemplifies how youth leadership and autonomy, combined with support from caring adults, can result in powerful positive outcomes. Through this program, youth have gained valuable skills for supporting themselves, other residents at Heritage Park, and the broader community. It has also been successful at creating a sense of community among youth, parents and residents from a broad range of incomes and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

QUOTES ABOUT IMPACT

- “Our long term effectiveness has gained a lot of strength over the last few years due to the growth in our team leadership and resident facilitation of programs. It has kicked off a greater impact on the younger kids because they have strong members to look up to. Other youth who didn’t have that aren’t quite as engaged and we aren’t seeing as strong results.”
- “The increased engagement of youth has opened the gates for the relationships with some families to the other services and supports that we offer. It’s helped build trust with those families. That’s been a really big thing. There’s been a decrease of stress around having their children engage in programming or step into leadership roles.”
- “From the management perspective there was always the idea that youth were the biggest negative on the property. From being loud, illegal activities, etc. It’s because of the high population of youth that there were a lot of issues. A lot of progress has been made now that they see the youth run the business, there are youth leaders they can engage with. They can see the youth leaders as an amenity in the neighborhood, instead of something that will keep people away.”



Green Garden Bakery youth selling veggie desserts



Apartment building at New Columbia

New Columbia

Portland, Oregon

Community Building and Two-Generation Strategies

SITE CONTEXT

This site profile represents information from interviews and document review that took place in 2016 and 2017.

Lead youth partner: Home Forward

Partners: Rosa Parks Elementary School, Charles Jordan Community Center, Boys & Girls Club, Urban Institute, Meyer Memorial Trust, Income Property Management Co.

Developer: Home Forward (the housing authority for the City of Portland)

Demographics: The majority of residents are African American, there is also a significant white population and a minority who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino and Native American. The majority of youth participants in programming are African American and Hispanic/Latino.

Program duration: All programs are year-round and take place after school, during the summer and on weekends.

Funding: Funding is provided by the developer, local and national trusts, and foundations.

Space: Rosa Parks Elementary School, Charles Jordan Community Center, and Boys & Girls Club provide space for programming, and the housing office also hosts programs.

Neighborhood amenities and dynamics: The development features a park, playground, high school, community center and recreational facilities as well as open green space. While the majority of residents who live in subsidized units are African American, there is also a large immigrant population within the subsidized units in the development, many of whom speak English as a second language. The market-rate units do not have much diversity in comparison, and fewer families live in those units. In North Portland, the expensive rental housing market makes it difficult for families to move out of New Columbia, so a majority there are motivated to stay. The

community within the development has a positive relationship with police due to a 12-year partnership with the local department that enables them to have a consistent presence, anchored by having an office at the housing site, as well as strong engagement in youth programming.

Status: Construction of the redevelopment and new housing finished in 2014.

Unit mix: There are 854 units on site, consisting of 297 public housing rental units, 325 affordable rental units, 128 market rate for sale units, and 104 affordable for sale units.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Youth programs at New Columbia were developed initially to provide opportunities for the growing number of youth moving to the development after relocation and to address safety concerns of homeowners moving into new homes. With the support of the leadership of Home Forward, staff at New Columbia started short-term and long-term community building activities and positive activities for youth to engage in, many organized around the parks and communal aspects of the site like the fountain and the community garden. K-Ching is a 10-week summer work preparedness program for youth 12 and older who live at New Columbia. Youth work on-site in a variety of roles and learn the skills to be effective team members and employees, while also building community. Outfitted in “Building Community Together” uniform t-shirts, youth support each other and other residents through their work. Parents of the youth must also volunteer four hours a week in the community as a condition of their child’s employment. An alternative school on site has allowed for Home Forward to partner with the Portland Public Schools to support New Columbia youth, particularly immigrant families. The Housing Opportunities and Services Together (HOST) Demonstration, developed and funded by the Urban Institute, collaborated with New Columbia to test the feasibility and effectiveness of two-generation intensive service models. The Urban Institute assessments revealed the need to develop targeted programs aimed to address youth food insecurity, increase school attendance, increase parent engagement, and decrease dangerous behaviors. A Youth Advisory Board was formed and has led the creation of a community food distribution program called Harvest Share managed entirely by youth. Parents are engaged in supporting the sustainability of youth-led efforts. Services, property management and asset management staff continue to work together to support community building activities

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Intentional community building efforts are essential for forming a new community and bridging the divide between youth and older adults and between renters and homeowners in a mixed-income development. Community building must be a priority for all development staff with ongoing training and support. A two-generation strategy can help youth lead activities and programs they are passionate about while also engaging parents in helping to sustain the programs.

QUOTES ON IMPACT

- “Youth culture constantly changes. We, as adults have no idea what youth want. You have to bring youth into the room to figure out what they want and what their needs are in the community. When youth don’t show up, we have to look around and see what else is going on.”
- “Facilitating resident leadership and the coming together of a community to identify the things they care about and be a part of the solution are some of the most powerful and sustainable things we can do.”
- “We understand that we’ve always wanted to do more than housing, but the institutions we were working with (like the school system) just saw us as a landlord and didn’t know why we were in their business. Having the school on the campus made us realize how important it was that we work together. The schools didn’t understand why we were a strategic education partner. Building a school creates an investment.”



*Harvest Share food distribution at New Columbia.
Photo by Molly Harbarger*



Apartment building at Park Boulevard

Park Boulevard

Chicago, Illinois

Youth as Assets and Supporting Parents to Strengthen Families

SITE CONTEXT

This site profile represents information on youth programs at Park Boulevard between 2007 and 2013.

Lead youth partner: Stateway Community Partners, a nonprofit formed to support relocation of Stateway Gardens residents and Chicago Housing Authority residents and to serve the broader Park Boulevard neighborhood

Partners: Wide variety of partners in the Bronzeville neighborhood and across Chicago to support healthy living, employment skills training, educational support, and programs to foster intergenerational relationships.

Developer: Stateway Associates, LLC

Demographics: The majority of residents are African American with broad ethnic diversity among condo owners and renters from Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern European countries.

Program duration: Special youth programming started in 2007 and was maintained until 2013.

Funding: Funding came from public and private partners including After School Matters, a program to support cultural activities for Chicago's youth, Chicago Housing Authority, Illinois Violence Prevention Authority, MacArthur Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust.

Space: Programming was located in the Historic Overton Hygienic Building near Park Boulevard with a large multipurpose conference and training room that holds fifty people, and two smaller meeting rooms.

Neighborhood amenities and dynamics: Stateway Community Partners provided a variety of employment and educational support services to residents of Park Boulevard, to residents of a neighboring building, the Pershing, and the broader community. As part of the redevelopment of Stateway Gardens, the community gained several businesses in the neighborhood including Starbucks, Jimmy Johns, and FedEx. The development is adjacent to

the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, so there are students who reside there and other institutional engagement.

Status: Park Boulevard opened in 2007 after the redevelopment of the former Stateway Gardens was completed.

Unit mix: Park Boulevard originally included four phases, and of the 1,316 projected units, only 367 have been built so far with 127 reserved for public housing, 106 affordable rental units and 134 market-rate rental units.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Park Boulevard placed a high importance on creating safe, welcoming spaces for community building and resident engagement. The youth programming was created in response to interest expressed by families for youth activities and anxiety among developers that young people would put the new development at risk. The programs were designed based on the interests of youth identified through a Youth Summit and a series of youth meetings. Youth created a Youth Council that held elections each year and problem-solved around issues that impacted youth of the new mixed-income development. A Safety Network Youth Leadership Program was created and included the Mock Trial and Yell Out Loud programs. Both programs focused on the importance of mentoring relationships, storytelling, and communication. The Mock Trial was a 10-week program designed to teach youth about the legal system and related careers with the help of professionals in that field. Yell Out Loud was designed to be an ongoing space for youth to discuss issues of importance in a creative way. Both of these activities were planned and implemented with the help of youth participants. A Parent Cafe and a Barber Shop were created for parents to build social support, relieve stress and have a safe space to discuss shared challenges with parenting youth. Parents also discussed difficulty supporting the educational endeavors of their children because those opportunities had not been available to the parents. A Teen Cafe was established to support young teen mothers. Stateway Community Partners developed annual reports on the progress of programs. Youth engaged in the programs felt more welcome in their neighborhood and made great strides toward educational attainment, enrolling in college and gaining employment through training programs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Promoting youth voice, youth vision, and creating safe spaces for authentic expression, critical thinking, problem solving and conflict resolution were important to the success of the programs at Park Boulevard. The programs provided an opportunity for youth and parents to express themselves and to gain the trust of those operating the new mixed-income community and the police who viewed youth as potential threats. The programs were geared towards increasing self-confidence, collaboration, and research skills and creating opportunities to learn soft-skills necessary for higher education and developing a career path. Sharing the academic achievements and opening up performances and events to the whole community also helped to break down racial stereotypes and intergenerational barriers among residents of the community.

QUOTES ABOUT IMPACT

- “By empowering youth to take the reins in identifying what they need and want, and crafting their own vision for creating community, resilience, confidence and life skills are reinforced.”
- “While culturally as Americans we still feel it is acceptable to harbor fear of black youth, particularly males, there has been a slow shift in comfort among some in the area.”
- “It is important that the youth development is part of a broader strategy of strengthening families, and is a mechanism to help build the capacity of fragile families.”
- “It seemed the opportunity to have a safe space for creative expression regarding issues that directly affected youth, while engaging in incremental but strategic action towards a common goal of self-improvement, helped in a variety of ways.”



Youth Council meeting at Park Boulevard



Regent Park

Toronto, Canada

Youth Leadership and Voice in Redevelopment

*Community mural on an apartment building
at Regent Park*

SITE CONTEXT

This site profile represents information from interviews and document review that took place in between 2016 and 2018.

Lead youth program partner: Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Partners: Pathways to Education, Neighbourhood Information Post, Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services, Community Health Center

Developer: The Daniels Corporation, Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Demographics: Over 60% of the community is Muslim and there are residents from many countries including Bangladesh, India and Somalia and they speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Bengali, French and Urdu. The central downtown area of Toronto where Regent Park is located is home to the largest population of young people in the city.

Program duration: Revitalization Youth Ambassadors Forum programming and other programs serving and empowering youth are ongoing.

Funding: Funding for the Revitalization Youth Ambassadors Forum has come from private donations and from the Toronto Community Housing operating budget.

Space: Programs have taken place in a variety of locations including Artscape, a community cultural hub, live and work studios and galleries.

Neighborhood amenities and dynamics: New amenities included in the revitalization are the Daniels Spectrum, the Regent Park Aquatic Centre, the new Regent Park, and the Regent Park Athletic Grounds. FreshCo by Sobeys, Rogers, Tim Hortons, RBC and Main Drug Mart have moved into newly created retail space. Concerns around safety and the high number of youth in Regent Park led to some initial friction and stereotyping of youth, but efforts by Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the Revitalization Youth Ambassadors Forum have strengthened relationships between youth and adults even as safety is an ongoing challenge. An inclusive governance model was established in 2018 to build capacity and representation of all residents at Regent Park. The structure continues to evolve and consists of representational mechanisms for both the market-rate condo owner residents and the Toronto Community Housing residents and a combined Regent Park Neighborhood Association.

Status: In 1995, tenants approached Toronto Community Housing Corporation about revitalizing Regent Park and in 2003 the City Council approved a Revitalization Plan. After a public request for proposal process, The Daniels Corporation was selected as the development partner. In 2007, the City Council passed a Social Development Plan, developed in partnership with residents. In 2012, Phase 1 of construction was completed followed by the completion of Phase 2 in 2017 and a planned completion of Phase 3 in 2019.

Unit mix: When complete, Regent Park will include 2,083 replacement units of social housing, and there will be over 310 new affordable units with additional affordable rental units in future phases subject to funding availability. There will be 5,400 market-rate units. The project is expected to take up to 20 years to complete.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Regent Park's focus on youth empowerment in the mixed-income revitalization process has been a priority since the establishment of the Social Development Plan in 2007. Youth engagement began to gain real traction with the Revitalization Youth Ambassadors Forum, established in 2013. The Youth Ambassadors program is a way for youth to be regularly engaged in the redevelopment process, and the Forum is an annual event, organized by the Ambassadors with support from Toronto Community Housing staff. The Forum was created in response to a request by youth to be more involved in redevelopment and a recognition by staff that youth could positively impact the future of Regent Park with their creative ideas. Through planning for the event, youth learned about the history of Regent Park and about the decision making involved in the revitalization process. The now annual Forum teaches youth about civic engagement, advocacy and event planning. Toronto Community Housing evaluates the program and solicits advice on programming from youth who have identified employment and neighborhood integration as primary issues to focus on as the revitalization continues. Youth have also influenced plans for community features like Regent Park Athletic Grounds. Making connections with youth has allowed staff to be more connected to the whole family, engaging parents and responding to the opportunities and needs of families as redevelopment decisions are made. The Forum helped to create a network among youth and adults at Regent Park. The Forum also provided a platform for residents of all income levels to engage in the future of a revitalized Regent Park. Toronto Community Housing staff continually update the Social Development Plan to reflect current and future opportunities at Regent Park.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Empowered youth engagement in the revitalization fundamentally impacted the revitalization for the better. The Forum helped build and establish a trust between youth and Toronto Community Housing staff that extended to parents and families. The Forum has also provided the civic space for engagement by neighborhood residents, including market-rate residents who are engaged in the revitalization, to build a community that is desirable for everyone and to address issues that are relevant for everyone, like community amenities and safety.



Athletic field designed with youth at Regent Park

QUOTES ABOUT IMPACT

- “Let the youth drive the process. If no one knows [the housing authority is] there, that’s great.”
- “Youth peer to peer learning and the lens of neighborhood integration are both very important. We need youth to be out there sharing information about what’s happening in the neighborhood and what programs are available, [it] helps increase our engagement. We have to create a sense of ownership in the program on all sides, both the youth and adults who assist with the programs.”
- “Traditionally we look at young people with a deficit based eye. Crime and safety and security issues are automatically placed on the young people. Young people have been associated with problems. We wanted to shift that perception a bit by providing an opportunity to showcase their leadership skills. The relationship that youth and police had in the past added to that perception of youth in the community. It’s important to realize what young people have to contribute, especially with a project that takes 15-20 years to complete.”



Villages of East Lake

Atlanta, Georgia

Cradle to College Pipeline

Apartments at Villages of East Lake

SITE CONTEXT

This site profile represents information from interviews and document review that took place in 2016 and 2017.

Lead youth partner: East Lake Foundation

Partners: Drew Charter School, Sheltering Arms, First Tee, Healthy Connection Program, YMCA, Georgia State University

Developer: East Lake Foundation

Demographics: The majority of residents are African American.

Program duration: Ongoing Pre K-12 education and network of partners providing services at Drew Charter School, the YMCA, and in the neighborhood.

Funding: Private foundation funding for programs and for Drew Charter School.

Space: School provides programming space.

Neighborhood amenities and dynamics: Programs are open and accessible to all residents of the development and the surrounding neighborhood. Drew Charter School is one of the highest performing schools in the city and is a draw for families to move to the neighborhood. In recent years homeownership prices have been increasing, boosting the neighborhood economy but making it more difficult for Villages of East Lake residents to buy homes in the immediate area.

Status: Construction of Villages of East Lake was completed in 1995, though there have been new rental and homeownership units added throughout the broader neighborhood.

Unit mix: There are 542 rental units, and 271 units are reserved for public housing and 271 are reserved for market-rate.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

In 1995, the East Lake Foundation was founded by Tom and Ann Cousins to help transform the East Lake neighborhood and create new opportunities for the families who lived there. Mixed-income housing was built to replace the East Lake Meadows public housing. The East Lake Foundation established Drew Charter School as the first charter school in Atlanta and created First Tee of East Lake, a golf and empowerment program for youth. Early learning programs, community wellness programs and economic mobility programs are also now available for families. All programs are evaluated internally on an annual basis and externally every other year. The combination of a high quality school and targeted social support over the last 20 years have stabilized families in the community. A number of families are now thriving with many youth going to college and parents buying homes. The East Lake Foundation, along with their public and private partners and funders, have built a model for empowering youth and families through stable housing and high quality education.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The East Lake Foundation has been very successfully leveraging resources and implementing strategies incrementally over time to support families living in the mixed-income community. The success of Drew Charter School is the result of well-coordinated and well-funded efforts to ensure families from the Villages of East Lake succeed while also appealing to families from across Atlanta. The national Purpose Built Communities Network was established to replicate the model at Villages of East Lake in neighborhoods across the country.

QUOTES ABOUT IMPACT

- “We think our intensive interventions with families have made a difference. Anecdotally [we know] families who have connected with those programs have been connected to jobs and coaching. A family is now positioned to get more education and move the family out of public housing to market-rate. We know that family and all their children were supported through our school and have gone on to college. We put those things together. Working with that whole family has changed the trajectory of that family.”
- “What’s interesting is that we’ve seen great success as a school. Our academic outcomes are outpacing students with fewer kids on free and reduced lunch. We have a longer school day and school year than other schools, so students get two enrichment classes a day. There are so many different trajectories for them depending on what they’re interested in. More people are making the choice to go to Drew.”
- “[We] do find that the trends of when the redevelopment happen, when it was completed and then when Drew Charter school began to turn the proverbial page and outcomes began to increase, you began to see more families wanting to come here as a destination and that has changed the demographics, the median household income and the price of a house, all of those factors are related to the school and then the investment in the other [program] areas.”



*Students of Drew Charter School at Villages of East Lake.
Photo from East Lake Foundation*