

Building Mixed-Income Communities: Jazz on the Boulevard Case Study

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

NUMBER FOUR

RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES ON MIXED-INCOME DEVELOPMENT

Why live in a “mixed-income” development?

A critical component of mixed-income housing is how residents of different income categories think and feel about the fact that the development is “mixed income.”

What do they find appealing? How would the mixed-income environment affect their experience? What does “mixed-income” mean to them?

We learned that market-rate homeowners anticipated little personal benefit from the mixed-income setting and a few had concerns about the arrangement being unfair.

KEY FINDINGS

Subsidized renters were most likely to see benefits to living in a mixed-income development. Subsidized homeowners were most likely to see some disadvantages to living in a mixed-income development.

Many of the former public housing residents and all of the subsidized renters in the sample felt that they would benefit and grow personally from being a part of the new development.

Many saw the benefits of having people of different backgrounds living together in the same development, such as exposing residents to diversity, providing networking opportunities, and challenging stereotypes.

Study overview

THE JAZZ ON THE BOULEVARD CASE STUDY IS DOCUMENTING A NEW MIXED-INCOME DEVELOPMENT ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF CHICAGO BEING BUILT AS PART OF THE CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY (CHA) PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION.

THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM AT JAZZ IS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE THRUSH COMPANY, HEARTLAND HOUSING AND GRANITE DEVELOPMENT. THE SERVICE PROVIDER IS HEARTLAND HUMAN CARE SERVICES.

TO-DATE, IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED WITH 46 RESIDENTS OF ALL INCOME LEVELS AT THE DEVELOPMENT, REPRESENTING ALMOST HALF OF THE CURRENT POPULATION, AS WELL AS 69 PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS WHO HAD EXPRESSED INTEREST IN MOVING TO A MIXED-INCOME DEVELOPMENT BUT DID NOT MOVE TO JAZZ.

THE CASE STUDY ALSO INCLUDES INTERVIEWS WITH DEVELOPMENT TEAMS AND THEIR PARTNERS AND OBSERVATIONS OF MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.

FOR PAPERS AND MORE BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THIS AND OTHER MIXED-INCOME DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, GO TO [HTTP://MSASS.CASE.EDU/FACULTY/MJOSEPH/INDEX.HTML](http://msass.case.edu/faculty/mjoseph/index.html).

Did residents expect to experience personal benefits from the mixed-income environment?

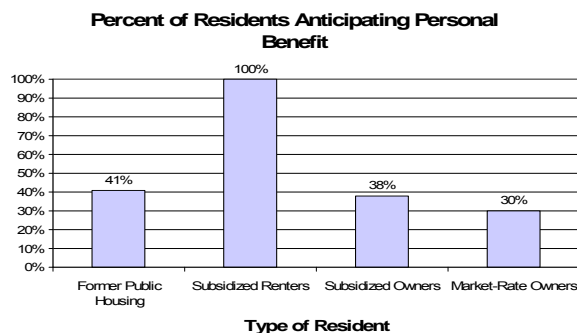
We learned that most market-rate homeowners expected little personal benefit from living in a mixed-income environment, which is likely because they all lived in socioeconomically diverse, urban neighborhoods before moving to Jazz.

For the subsidized homeowners, the primary benefit of mixed-income development was being able to purchase a new home in a great location. One stated, “I think everybody should have the opportunity to have decent housing. . .It makes me feel good to know that people who can-

not afford to buy a home are being given the opportunity to live in a clean nice building with good quality appliances.”

We asked the homeowners and subsidized renters whether they thought there were downsides to living in a

mixed-income development, and 63% of the subsidized homeowners thought that there was a disadvantage, compared to 40% of the subsidized renters and only 20% of market-rate homeowners.



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Perceived advantages of living in a mixed-income development

‘WE ARE ALL HERE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, AND WE SHOULD BE TREATED THE SAME, NO MATTER WHAT TYPE OF INCOME WE MAKE AND ALL THAT. . . EVERYBODY SHOULD BE GIVEN A CHANCE.’—
FORMER PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENT

Most public housing residents, while happy to live in a new unit and move into a more peaceful, orderly environment, did not expect benefits from their new neighbors. However, over one-third of

the former public housing residents we interviewed and all five of the subsidized renters in the sample felt that they and their families would benefit and grow personally from being a part of the new

development. They talked about mixed-income housing providing an opportunity for social mobility and advancement, not just an improvement in housing quality.

Provide equal access to housing

Several residents discussed the value of mixed-income housing and highlighted how it provided equal access to quality housing to residents of various income levels.

▣ “We are all here in the neighborhood, and we should be treated the same, no matter what type of income we make and all that. . . Everybody should be given a chance.”—Former public housing resident.

Promote diversity

Several of the former public housing residents and subsidized renters agreed that having people of different backgrounds living in the same development would promote opportunities for people to learn how to live in a diverse community and to learn from their neighbors.

▣ “I love seeing people of different races. . . I never lived with people of a different race. . . I was always in an all-black community.”—Former public housing resident.

▣ “Children will be exposed to new kinds of people.”—Subsidized homeowner.

Change perceptions of low-income people

Many lower-income residents stressed that the more affluent residents stood to gain from the opportunity to develop a more realistic and positive opinion about poor people and how they live.

▣ “(Higher-income, white residents) can see how we’re living. We can live good too...go back and tell their friends . . . ‘It’s nice over there, I’ve got a nice black lady [next door]’ . . . let them know that we have some pride. They can learn how the poor live...it helps their attitudes.”—Former public housing resident.

▣ “It will definitely open our eyes to what it’s like on all the other sides. I mean, you know, this is a world of stereotypes still. Don’t kid yourself into thinking that it’s not. And that a lot of assumptions are made about people and the way that they live. And the best way to find out if those assumptions are true or not is to see it for your own, for yourself. With your own eyes.”—Market-rate homeowner.

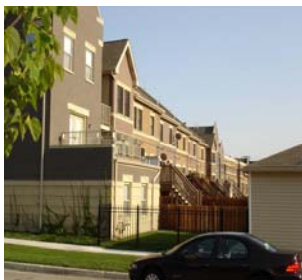
Residents expressed the importance of meeting and learning about people living in different life circumstances.

▣ “I’ve met so many interesting people that I would never have met. School teachers, hardworking people, people trying to support children, single moms. Hardworking people that I would have never have come across.”—Market-rate homeowner.

Encourage positive behavior

Several former public housing residents were confident that homeowners would not tolerate disorderly behavior. Some mentioned watching their new neighbors’ routines and habits to see how others do things, possibly leading them to change their own behavior.

▣ “I say [mixed-income development] is a kind of positive thing. Because, you know, you have different kind of people you’re living with now. Everybody’s not the same, so you kind of learn to adjust to that, you know, then live with that . . . like, everybody’s not whooping and hollering and the screaming, like you do in CHA. You learn to live alone, quieter and little more—you learn to live with the mixed-income people. And it makes you kind of change your ways a little bit.”—Former public housing resident.



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Perceived advantages of living in a mixed-income development

Keep the neighborhood looking nice

Many former public housing residents believed the neighborhood itself would be better maintained because of the presence of higher-income residents:

■ *“I’m hoping living in a mixed income area, the area would be maintained better. . . . Because these people paying all of this rent, they’re not*

going to have people over there just destroying everything.”—Former public housing resident.

■ *“[The residents will] take pride in the building and in the neighborhood. . . .and they’re going to keep it decent.”—Former public housing resident.*

Facilitate networking

Some former public housing residents were hopeful that

living near people with higher incomes would allow them networking opportunities.

■ *“Maybe I can get a hook-up [from the higher-income neighbors]. Maybe it’s beneficial to me. . . .Hey, let me talk to somebody you know. Yeah, we be like ‘The Jeffersons.’ I’m looking to move on up.”—Former public housing resident.*

Perceived disadvantages of living in a mixed-income development

Concerns re non-owners

Some homeowners worried that renters would not have the same level of commitment and care for the development.

■ *“I think that sometimes people that don’t own their unit don’t put as much value. . . . in the appearance and living in the unit.”—Market-rate homeowner.*

It’s unfair financially

Others found the mixing of owners and renters to be unfair because some residents were able to purchase or rent the same size and style units for far less money.

■ *“But if I’m paying \$300,000, I don’t think you should be paying \$150,000 for the same exact apartment, just because you can’t afford it. I’ve worked hard. I’ve worked long for the salary I’m making. You know? I really*

want you to have a nice place, but I want you to have a nice place that you can afford. So I do think it’s unfair.”—Market-rate homeowner.

■ *“Renters don’t deserve the same privileges.”—Market-rate homeowner.*

■ *“Some people might have a problem because...we’re paying this amount and they’re paying that amount.”—Former public housing resident.*

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Research Highlights series

This Highlights series explores the early experiences of residents of all income levels who have moved into Jazz on the Boulevard:

1. Movers versus non-movers: Who are they?
2. The resident population at Jazz.
3. Understanding the choice to live at Jazz.
4. Resident perspectives on mixed-income development.
5. Early resident experiences: General Satisfaction
6. Early social relations at Jazz.

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