

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

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

NUMBER SIX

### EARLY SOCIAL RELATIONS AT JAZZ

This Research Highlight explores one of the most compelling questions about mixed-income developments: how will residents interact? The findings show how residents anticipated their level of social interaction and how residents perceive their early social relations.

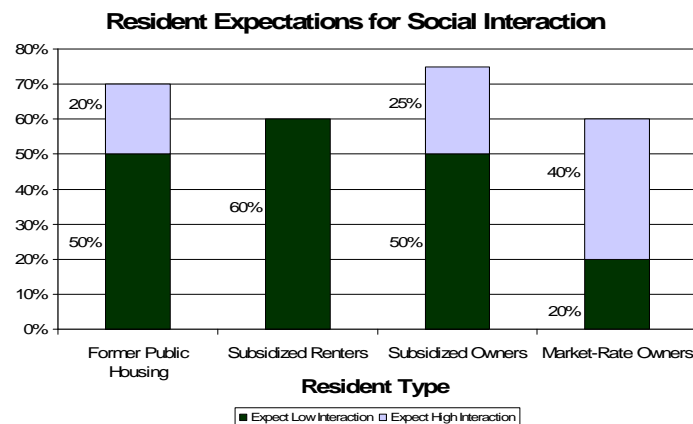
#### What level of social interaction did residents expect before moving to Jazz?

##### Homeowners

Homeowners expressed a relatively high degree of interest in getting to know their neighbors and being engaged in activities in the development and neighborhood. Although the make-up of the development was not what drew homeowners to the development, now that they are there, most homeowners told us that they intend to build ties to those around them.

##### Former public housing renters

Many of the former public



housing residents told us that they did not plan to try to get to know their neighbors. Seeking to maintain a low profile in the development, and perhaps avoid the possibility of drawing attention to them-

selves and jeopardizing their residence there, many former public housing residents said that they would keep to themselves and mind their own business.

*"I mean, this is not a village. You know? [My former development] was a village. It was a small community. We were around people who weren't employed or in school and they would say, 'Hey, Miss So-and-So, how are you doing?' 'Where are you going? To the store?' But here, I don't know who lives in the next entrance. That's fine. As long as I know who lives here. And I don't have to visit with them. Just say 'hello' and 'how are you doing?' and 'goodbye' and that's about it. We don't have to visit each other and become friends."*—Former public housing resident



#### 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).

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## Early social relations with neighbors at Jazz

**KEY FINDING: RESIDENT ASSOCIATION MEETINGS CAN BE BARRIERS TO INTERACTION ACROSS GROUPS.** WHILE ASSOCIATION MEETINGS DO PROVIDE COMFORT AND SUPPORT WITHIN HOUSING GROUPS, THEY PRESENT CHALLENGES BECAUSE THEY DO NOT PROMOTE TIES ACROSS THE GROUPS. EACH GROUP HAS HOSTED SOCIAL EVENTS THAT WERE NOT ATTENDED BY MEMBERS OF THE OTHER GROUP. IN ONE EXCEPTION, AN OPEN HOUSE WAS CO-HOSTED BY THE TWO GROUPS WITH A LIMITED BUT LIVELY TURNOUT, BUT HAS NOT LED TO ONGOING CROSS-GROUP INTERACTION THUS FAR.

Despite some interest in getting to know their neighbors at Jazz, respondents from all income levels noted a lack of social interaction.

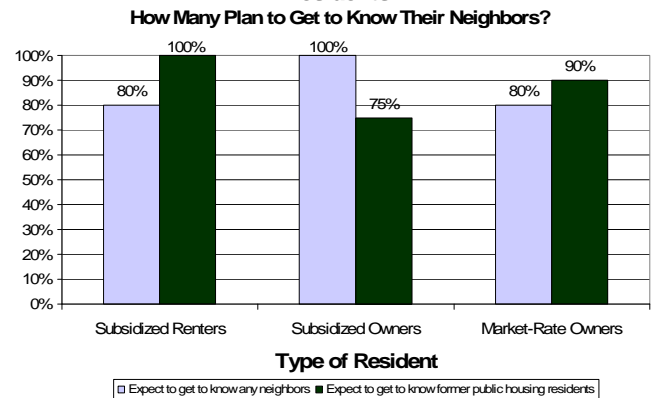
Although several described their new neighbors as friendly, the Jazz residents we spoke with largely expressed dissatisfaction with the “sense of community” at the new development.

These residents felt that social interaction would likely not happen naturally and would have to be facilitated and promoted by residents or others who would make special efforts to bring people together.

One market-rate homeowner said: “I’m dissatisfied [with the sense of community]. I really am, and...it’s not that we don’t try...it’s very difficult to get the other folks to join in. Or

even see them. I mean, it’s amazing. You live in such a small area, but you hardly ever see people. So I’m dissatisfied with that.”

Comparison Among Non-Former Public Housing Residents:



## How the building design affects social relations

The physical design appears to be a key factor in shaping social relations. There is minimal shared public space at the sections of the development completed at the time of this first round of interviews. A centrally located courtyard space with benches and grassy areas was not yet complete.

Many of the units have their own outside entrances and also have an inside entrance from the garage. Residents told us that often they did not even see their neighbors come and go. A subsidized homeowner explained: “You don’t see anybody interacting with anybody. Everybody just

goes in their unit. It’s not like we have a space where, you know, people kind of like hang out at, you know?”

Some of the residents who have established familiarity with other neighbors told us that the proximity of their units to each other led to repeated interactions.

## Resident association meetings as a vehicle for interaction

### Condo Associations

Several homeowners noted that the condo association meetings are the main way they have met other residents.

As one market-rate homeowner said, “[I started building relationships] just from going to that first association meeting. When I walked through the door, everyone

stood up and said what their name was, and greeted me. And I felt like I was being a part of something, as opposed to just somebody coming in. You know, at the condo meetings, [you can] see that people kind of knew each other.”

### Resident Associations

The “Ambassadors for Change” is a second association at Jazz that was formed

by the property manager with responsibility for the units rented by former public housing residents and other subsidized renters.

This group provides a source of peer support among those particular residents and helps acclimate them to the new mixed-income environment.

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## Impetus for interactions

Residents told us that they are likely to interact with neighbors when they have common needs and shared interests.

Specific examples include:

- \* sharing candles and food during a power outage;
- \* exchanging contact information when one of the apartments was broken into so that they could communicate better;
- \* helping to dig each other's

car out of snow piles;

- \* lending each other basic household items;
- \* and lending a hand when someone is in need.

A former public housing resident explained: *"If I don't have a cup of sugar, 'Can I borrow a cup of sugar from you?' You know, and it's not about, 'Well, what brand of sugar do you have?' Who cares? If you have what I need, and you're helpful to me, that's the most important*

*thing."*

*"Social interaction] will probably happen based on need first. . ." according to a subsidized homeowner, who continued, "[My neighbor] had dropped her iPod one night. So I came in late and parked next [to her car] and I took her the iPod. I first met her [when] she had a flat [tire] one morning, and she really needed to get to work. And she knocked on my door early morning, begging for a ride."*

"WE KNOW WHO'S WHO" BY THE BEHAVIOR, CLOTHING, OR APPEARANCE OF DIFFERENT CLASSES."

## Tensions between resident groups

### RENTERS VERSUS OWNERS

While some of the intergroup tension is driven by dynamics defined by income, class, racial differences, and the stigma associated with public housing, a core element of the differentiation among residents at Jazz falls along the basic distinction between owners and renters.

Several of the homeowners expressed unease with the physical arrangements at the development where they own units in buildings, when there are also a substantial number of renters. Some of the owners questioned why the renters had not been physically segregated from the homeowners.

A market-rate homeowner complained: *"I feel like I'm in an apartment, not like I own – [there is] too much noise, fighting, playing. I feel like I'm paying a big mortgage*

*for something that [makes me] feel like I'm living in an apartment. I'm not happy here."*

### DISTINGUISHING WHO'S WHO

There is a prevailing stigma about the behaviors and tendencies of the former public housing residents at Jazz.

Although mixed-income developments are supposedly indistinguishable from the outside in order to protect resident identity, we found that residents are able to distinguish among themselves on the basis of several factors.

**Building materials.** While developers use similar building styles and materials in each unit, many residents are able to determine distinctions between income groups.

Some determine their neighbors' housing status when they can sneak a pass-

ing glance inside other apartments and can see whether the unit has stainless steel appliances, which all homeowners received but renters did not. Former public housing residents had standard blinds provided for them by the property manager.

### Behavior and appearance.

Some residents simply acknowledged that "we know who's who" by the behavior, clothing, or appearance of different classes.

**Financial status.** Participants in the condo and homeowners associations regularly review financial reports which include information about the source of assessment payments. All payments for renters (former public housing and subsidized) are made by the non-profit development partner that owns and manages those units.



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

## Concerns about living with former public housing residents

MOST OF THE CONCERNS WE HEARD REGARDING INTERACTIONS . . . WERE ABOUT GENERAL FEELINGS OF UNEASE, RATHER THAN MAJOR CONFLICT.

Most of the concerns we heard regarding interactions between former public housing residents and other residents were about general feelings of unease, rather than major conflict.

Many of the former public housing residents we spoke with told us that the homeowners don't speak to them or even make eye contact. In many cases their behavior was described as "standoffish" or "snobby." From the homeowners' perspective, some told us that they felt that the former public housing residents seem intimidated by them, and this is part of the barrier to personal interaction.

### Homeowners

Many of the homeowners acknowledged to us that assumptions would be made about their low-income neighbors based on stereo-

types driven by a combination of race, class, and housing status, and in some cases, they admitted to having those opinions themselves.

As a market-rate homeowner stated: *"I think there are some people who move in here and who probably think that everything that happens like the break-ins . . . are caused by those people. And I think that's a disadvantage to them because they might be pinpointed or, you know, stereotyped, and it's not necessarily them."*

### Public housing residents

Interestingly, some residents who used to live in public housing also hold concerns about the behavior of former public housing residents. Those residents are very clear about the types of behavior that must be changed to make the transition to the new community. In the words

of a former public housing resident, *"stop the criminal behavior", "act decent", "take care of your property."*

### Subsidized renters

One subsidized renter questioned whether many of the public housing residents were ready for the transition:

*"[People from] public housing. They're just not ready. [They] haven't had the opportunity in most cases . . . You are responsible for your gas, your light, your phone. You have to pay your bills on time. You have to watch what kind of company you keep. You have to be responsible for how many people are living in your unit . . . You can't just tear the place up. You've got to become a very responsible resident. And things that they're used to doing in public housing that was allowed, will not be allowed nor tolerated in a unit like these units."*



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## LOOKING FORWARD: HOPEFUL SIGNS

Despite some challenging tensions across groups, some residents maintained a positive and hopeful outlook about future resident interaction.

*"I really believe," said a market-rate homeowner, "that it is important to [build relationships with former public housing residents]. Do you know what I mean? And I think they're apprehensive to begin with. You've got to break that barrier and prove to them, a couple of times, that you're just a normal, regular,*

*friendly person."*

A subsidized renter, indicating both her own prejudice and her attempts to surmount it, explained that it will be very important for all residents to keep an open mind about their new neighbors:

*"So what I found out by listening to those women [at a renters' meeting], is they had a sense of community even when they lived in the projects or the CHA... They like giving little get-togethers and saying, 'Hi, neighbor' and like that... And*

*what I ended up finding by listening long enough and not opening my mouth, is that... they know what kids live in the development and they were automatically recognizing somebody that didn't belong... I've lived in the suburbs in a building and I never knew none of my neighbors... Now here it is, you would have never thought that I would have learned something [from public housing residents]. That's why you got to keep an open mind."*

**"IT WILL BE VERY IMPORTANT FOR ALL RESIDENTS TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND ABOUT THEIR NEW NEIGHBORS."**



## Acknowledgements

*This research was supported with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, Case Western Reserve University, and a post-doctoral scholarship from the School of Social Service Administration of the University of Chicago.*

*This study would not have*

*been possible without the cooperation of the Chicago Housing Authority, the Jazz on the Boulevard, LLC development partnership, and Heartland Human Care Services.*

*We thank all of our interviewees, and above all, we are grateful to the public housing*

*residents who gave us their trust and time in the midst of a challenging period of transition and uncertainty.*

*Special thanks to Rachel Boyle and Jennifer Joseph for design and production of this Highlights series.*

## 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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