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# Resident Perceptions of Redevelopment and Gentrification in the Heartside Neighborhood: Lessons for the Social Work Profession

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*This article reports on how residents experience neighborhood redevelopment efforts and gentrification. Research on gentrification has been dominated by studies on displacement and other factors that impact neighborhood mobility. This article explores how low-income and homeless residents experience gentrification by using in-depth interviews with residents still living in the Heartside neighborhood (Grand Rapids, MI). Findings are evident in three broad areas: sense of belonging, recognition of changes in the neighborhood, and restrictions in the neighborhood. Discussion of these findings and implications for social workers are presented.*

*Key words: Gentrification, neighborhood redevelopment, resident perceptions, Heartside, Grand Rapids (MI)*

Gentrification is described as “The process by which decline and disinvestments in inner-city neighborhoods are reversed” (Freeman, 2005, p. 463). Building and investing in inner-city areas, particularly downtown areas, is not a new concept. Developers have noticed and rediscovered these neighborhoods as areas with prime land space that is desirable for businesses and young professionals. Local government officials also recognized the potential for an increased tax base and other economic opportunities for growth within these inner-city areas. Despite these apparent benefits of gentrification the list of concerns is equally long, resulting in what Freeman (2005) claims to be “one of the most controversial issues in the

urban United States today" (p. 463).

Grounded in the work of Jane Jacobs (1961/1993) in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, this article offers voices from residents living through the redevelopment efforts in the Heartside neighborhood. Jacobs (1961/1993) believed that diversity was necessary for neighborhoods to thrive, and key to this were the diverse groups of people that resided in these neighborhoods. Zukin (2010) builds on this call, arguing that Jacob's vision has greatly influenced city planning efforts, but this work has not translated into encouraging a "mixed population" (p. 25). This mixed population includes, but is not limited to, residents of poor and middle class economic status. Zukin (2010) states, "it is this social diversity, and not just the diversity of buildings and uses, that gives the city its soul" (p. 31). So what questions must be asked about redevelopment efforts in the Heartside neighborhood? What can we learn from these residents who, according to Zukin (2010), "give the city its soul" (p. 31)?

Research on gentrification in the United States seems to be dominated by the question of resident displacement. On one side of the argument, researchers claim that high-income residents moving into gentrifying neighborhoods profit from the community and neighborhood residents with limited resources (Pilisuk, McAllister, & Rothman, 1996) and that "with the return of upper-and middle-income people to the central city neighborhoods, many local very-low income residents are displaced and dispersed with furthered downward mobility in search for affordable housing" (Mulroy, 2004, p. 84). On the other side, researchers claim this "fear of displacement" was used as a call to action for community activists (Freeman, 2005, p. 463) but was merely based on anecdotal reports rather than empirical evidence (Freeman, 2005). The purpose of this article is not to weigh in on the ongoing discussion related to displacement and gentrification, but rather to explore perceptions of a specific group of residents living through redevelopment efforts and learn from their experiences.

Although research exists which explores resident perceptions of gentrification, this research has focused on racial exclusion, and conclusions have been drawn about varying attitudes about gentrification from residents based on their race (Freeman, 2006; McKinnish, Walsh, & White, 2008; Shaw &

Sullivan, 2011; Sullivan, 2007). While the relationship of race and perceptions on gentrification is important, this paper explores two new directions in the literature. The first offers a perspective on how low-income and homeless residents, in a neighborhood with a highly dense population of social service agencies, perceive the impact of gentrification. Secondly, it offers lessons the field of social work can learn from studying neighborhood gentrification. Often an issue explored by sociologists, gentrification impacts client systems that social workers serve. More specifically, social workers engaged in community practice and community organizing recognize that stable communities with access to affordable housing, resources, services and jobs is necessary for clients to flourish. In gentrifying neighborhoods, some of these benefits may be gained or lost, depending on the trajectory of the gentrifying neighborhood. Of what, however, apart from these tangibles, should social workers be aware? What can social workers learn from perceptions of current residents living through the process of gentrification? How might these perceptions inform our practice with communities in a different way?

This article attempts to raise awareness about these issues from a social work perspective by exploring perceptions of residents living in the Heartside neighborhood as they experience gentrification. The Heartside neighborhood is located in the central city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Grand Rapids is a mid-sized urban area on the west side of the state. According to the 2010 Census, Grand Rapids proper had a population of just over 188,000 residents. Adjoining suburbs had populations of over 184,000 residents. In 2002, a Michigan State University Urban and Regional Planning student group completed a study of gentrification in Grand Rapids using key national indicators of gentrification (MSU Extension & MSU Center for Urban Affairs, 2002). This study showed that both the Heartside neighborhood and one of its surrounding neighborhoods (East Hills) had primary and secondary indicators showing that gentrification was occurring in these neighborhoods. Other than this study, little research has been conducted on gentrification in Grand Rapids, and no research has been conducted on the experiences of the low-income and homeless residents living in the Heartside neighborhood.

## History of the Heartside Neighborhood

The Heartside neighborhood of Grand Rapids, MI began as a muddy flatland first inhabited by riverboat hands, blacksmiths, and shipyard and warehouse workers. The area later became a location for great commerce and exchange, as many people eagerly came to the city to settle with their families and to earn a living. In 1831, well-known Grand Rapids native Louis Campau paid \$90 for 72 acres of land that became the center city of Grand Rapids. Many others followed Campau's lead, purchasing land and developing buildings. This became part of the expanding commerce which began to revolve around the furniture industry (Olsen, 2011).

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city had more than 50 furniture factories, and many furniture-related industries such as sawmills, foundries making metal hardware, paint and varnish companies, and manufacturers of woodworking machinery. As a result, business owners came to the city to spur on productivity and bring economic growth to downtown Grand Rapids (Olsen, 2011). Grand Rapids' furniture industry was successful until the late 1920s when the stock market crashed and the onset of the Great Depression caused factories to close their doors. Over 25% of the city's workers became unemployed. For most of the 1930s, many workers depended on government programs for the work they needed to support their families. With the depression came a decline to the downtown area of Grand Rapids, where buildings experienced structural decay as a result of being left unoccupied. Racial tension broke out throughout the United States in the late 1960s, including Grand Rapids, resulting in further destruction of many buildings and a decline in the image of downtown. The downtown area had become more populated by single, unemployed males and low-income families. In addition, there was an influx of mental health patients who had previously been deinstitutionalized when many of the asylums in Michigan were closed, leaving this vulnerable population to wander the downtown streets. In the hearts and minds of local social service agencies, this population seemed vulnerable to homelessness and could greatly benefit from assistance in the areas of job placement and subsidized housing. As a result, many

social service agencies and organizations were established to help such individuals (Cutler, Bevilacqua, & McFarland, 2003; Olsen, 2011).

Non-profit agencies such as God's Kitchen, Dégagé Ministries, Mel Trotter Mission, and Guiding Light Mission began forming in the early 1920s up until the 1970s to feed and provide shelter for community residents. In 1976, Heartside-Downtown Neighborhood Association was established to be a voice for the people in the community and provide advocacy services. In the early 1980s a new non-profit housing agency, Dwelling Place, began to purchase and renovate many of the old buildings in downtown Grand Rapids for use in subsidized housing. Another organization, Heartside Ministries, was founded in 1983 to serve the needs of the homeless and otherwise marginalized persons living in the community. All of the aforementioned agencies continue to deliver services today. In addition, churches, food pantries, coffee shops, health clinics, and businesses provide services to meet the needs of neighbors in the Heartside neighborhood (Heartside Ministries, 2011).

### History of Redevelopment Efforts

Redevelopment efforts in the Heartside neighborhood can be traced back to the late 1970s. Specifically, in 1979, Act 197 of the Public Acts of Michigan, commonly referred to as the Downtown Development Authority Act, was created. This act aimed to correct and prevent deterioration of business districts; promote economic growth and redevelopment; encourage historic preservation; authorize the acquisition and disposal of interests in real and personal property; and to authorize the creation and implementation of development plans. Act 197 sought to reverse historical trends that led to loss of population, jobs, businesses and the quality of life in central cities by attacking the problems of urban decline where they are most apparent, in downtown districts (Grand Rapids City Commission, 2002). As a result of Act 197, a planning process named *Voices & Visions* was set in motion in 1990. *Voices and Visions* was commissioned by the City of Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority (1993) to "discover what was needed to make Grand Rapids grow and prosper

in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (p. 11). The planning process brought the community together in working sessions, citizen forums, task forces, discussions and debates to share ideas and participate in setting downtown’s new course for the future.

Since the inception of Act 197 and subsequent planning processes, many things have changed in the Heartside neighborhood. These changes have included the addition of hotels, museums, University extensions, condos, office buildings, an arena, renovated historic buildings, and parking structures in the neighborhood. In addition, there is a new park, a renovated amphitheater, better streets, and improved transportation.

### Residents in the Area

Heartside neighbors are individuals that sleep, eat, and seek services in the Heartside neighborhood. According to the 1990 Census Profile, the Heartside neighborhood had a population of approximately 1,552 individuals. The racial profile of the community was 66.3 percent White, 30.0 percent Black, 0.4 percent Asian, 2.4 percent American Indian, 2.4 percent Hispanic, and 0.9 percent Other races. The median age of the residents in the area was 39.9 years old (Grand Rapids City Planning Department, 1998). The 2010 Census Profile showed an increase in the population to 2939 individuals in the Heartside neighborhood. The racial profile of the neighborhood in 2010 was 61.1 percent White, 24.1 percent Black, .09 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.8 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, .4 percent Other, 3.2 percent reporting two or more races, and 7.5 percent Hispanic or Latino (Community Research Institute, 2010). Overall, the number of individuals residing in the Heartside neighborhood has grown by 89.3 percent from 1990 to 2010.

In 1990, the labor force in the Heartside neighborhood was composed of 645 people. Out of this number, 34.9 percent were female and 36 percent were unemployed. Thirteen point three percent of jobs were in the field of manufacturing, whereas the percentage of persons 25 years and older who were high school grads or higher was 62 percent (Grand Rapids City Planning Department, 1998). Many of the jobs that are available for persons without a college degree are in outlying areas of the central city and require reliable transportation. The

2010 Census Profile showed 1,280 Heartside neighbors were employed and 772 were unemployed (Community Research Institute, 2010).

## Method

This study used an exploratory qualitative research design to examine how residents in the Heartside neighborhood have experienced redevelopment efforts and gentrification. The researchers selected the Heartside neighborhood because of a long-standing relationship with social service providers, familiarity with the residents, and the long history of the neighborhood facing redevelopment and gentrification. A convenience sample was used to collect qualitative data from residents in the neighborhood.

Participants were contacted through one of the researcher's connections at a local social service agency and invited to answer questions about their experiences living in the neighborhood and their experiences with the changes. Prior to the interview, participants were given a consent form to sign which outlined the purpose of the research and use of the information. Interviews were held in locations that were convenient for the participant and included a local social service agency and a neighborhood café. Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Each interview was recorded and transcribed for coding. Approval was granted by the Human Subjects Review Committee at one of the researcher's campuses and, per protocol, tapes were destroyed following transcription.

Interview questions focused on the participant's thoughts toward neighborhood change, redevelopment efforts, and the impact of these changes on the participant's life. Specific questions included: What types of changes have you seen in the neighborhood? How do you feel about these changes? How have these changes impacted you? Follow up questions were asked to explore answers more in-depth as appropriate. Following the interview residents were given a \$10 gift certificate to a local restaurant for their participation.

Participant responses were reviewed to identify common themes. One of the researchers and a student research assistant independently coded the data. A frequency analysis helped determine which codes were most often repeated throughout

the interview transcriptions. Similar codes were grouped and from this, continued analysis common themes were developed. Both researchers reviewed the groupings and common themes. In the final review of the data, content surrounding the remarks by the participants was reviewed and conclusions were drawn.

### *Limitations*

The conclusions drawn here, though carefully reviewed through a process that attempted to minimize subjectivity, are certainly filtered through the researchers' individual perceptions of the changes in the Heartside neighborhood and the experiences of these changes on the residents. In addition, our small sample size of twelve residents may also limit possible generalizations in our findings. We look forward to seeing how future research on neighborhood redevelopment and gentrification supports or clarifies our conclusions.

### *Results*

Participants in this study identified as both male (7) and female (5), representing a wide age range which included two persons in their 20's, two in their 30's, two in their 40's, four in their 50's, and two in their 60's. Participants reported the average length of time living in the neighborhood was just over nine years. Nine of the twelve participants indicated that they were planning to leave the neighborhood soon but did not mention specifics about timing or place of relocation.

The participants in our study relied heavily upon the social services in the neighborhood. Of the twelve participants, four received a renter's subsidy and used this for housing in the neighborhood. Three participants reported staying at the neighborhood shelter and two reported living outside. The remaining three participants reported staying in the neighborhood but did not give specific information about their place of residence. Each of the participants reported being homeless at one point in time while they lived in the Heartside neighborhood. Two of the participants reported current employment—both as artisans. Again, all of the participants repeatedly referenced reliance on neighborhood social services for food and assistance with job training, legal aid, and other support services.

We discovered three broad themes with several sub-themes in the data collected. These themes were representative across all participant interviews. These themes included a sense of belonging on the part of the residents, recognition of the changes in the neighborhood, and recognition of restrictions in the neighborhood.

### Theme 1: Sense of Belonging

The first broad theme discovered in our research focused on a sense of belonging in the neighborhood. Specific sub-themes present in this broad theme included peer relationships, support services available, and an appreciation of changes in the neighborhood.

Comments were made about having peer support in the community (n = 8). Some comments were made about resident peers being "good friends." One female resident (50's) noted, "these people, a lot of these people are homeless, but they care about each other and they stick up for each other and help each other out." This same sentiment was echoed by a younger female resident (30's) who stated,

(Residents) always tell you where to find food, find new clothes, get new clothes, where to go get an ID if that's what you need ... they help, they tell you where to go. It's cool. It's alright. They help you.

Residents also noted that they knew a number of the other residents in the neighborhood. Knowing other residents was not always a positive response but indicated that the residents were familiar with other residents and had established relationships in the neighborhood. More will be shared related to this finding in the theme about restrictions in the neighborhood and perceptions of other residents in the neighborhood.

Numerous comments (n = 20) were made about social services in the neighborhood. The majority of these comments were made about the number of helpful services that were available to all within the neighborhood. A male resident (60's) noted,

And to see people that are homeless, they are being treated with royalty in Grand Rapids. They don't get

this kind of treatment in other cities. I've been to other cities and I see the people here get a lot more treatment and care and concern than I've seen in other cities.

Other comments echoed this concern for residents. A female resident in her 50's stated, "I saw where they helped the people get off their feet. I saw them changing the community trying to help the homeless and the people who want to do something."

Some comments were made about the need for additional services for area residents and a few comments were made about changes noticed in the provision of services. A male resident in his 40's noted, "There is no dental plan for people. I mean, you got Cherry street clinic, it's up the hill. They'll give you a cheaper discount, but you still got to come up with the money somehow." Another male resident (50's) indicated a decline in available services and resources he once accessed,

With the economy being as bad as it is, and people are losing their homes and losing their jobs, the budget in the downtown area has been squeezed, considerably. So the resources are dwindling. And it used to be that you could get bus tickets, here, at Dégagé Ministries if you help, two hours of work, clean-up outside the building, inside the building, uh. So those resources have dried up, as far as getting the community from point A to point B, whether it's a doctor's appointment, whether it's a job interview, those, those, those programs have pretty much dried up.

Many comments were made by the residents about the positive aspects of the neighborhood (n = 57). Residents noted that they "loved the neighborhood" and it was a "good community" with "good diversity." Residents also were positive about the improvements in the neighborhood, indicating that they "were pleased with the changes" and "the improvements are good." A male resident in his 60's noted,

Well, the city's been cleaning up, trying to make it a great city ... a lot of the original entrepreneurs originate out from the west area of the state. And they are improving on all the landscaping and creating a campus scenery for us to enjoy.

Another male resident in his 40's noted the improvements, stating,

They're trying to fix up the city, make it look better in this area of town ... like they put in these restaurants, the bars, and the Art Prize murals and stuff like that. So, they're trying to improve this area. It does look better than it used to when I first got here.

Finally, a male resident in his 50's also referenced many of the changes that have been made in the neighborhood,

Ever since last year, with the art prize, there's been a number of new establishments in the downtown area. There's a variety of restaurants in the Monroe Mall area, that cater to all nationalities, all different ethnicities ... there's a lot of business in the downtown area that's open to, that cater to the Heartside district. That's a great improvement for the community as well as for the city of Grand Rapids. So I'm happy, I'm content with what I'm seeing in the Dégagé area.

## Theme 2: Recognition of Neighborhood Changes

The second broad theme discovered focused on recognition of neighborhood changes. Specific sub-themes within this broad theme included recognition of more events in the neighborhood, improved safety, and the economic impact on the neighborhood.

Many comments were made about the significant number of events ( $n = 20$ ) being held in the neighborhood. Residents noted that many of these events were "nice events" that "brought more people into the neighborhood." They saw these events as positive activities and noted it felt as though "more was happening." Residents also noted additional events that were being provided for the residents by the service providers. This gave them a sense that the neighborhood had more opportunities both for the visitors and for the residents.

Comments were also made about an increased sense of safety and police presence in the neighborhood ( $n = 18$ ). This was welcomed by the residents. A female resident in her 50's stated, "They've stepped up the cops quite a lot because we've

had a lot of problem with drug dealers and prostitutes.” A male resident in his 40’s made a remark similar to this, noting the apparent change in outward drug use,

I think that a large portion of the drug problem is being minimized a little bit more around here. I don’t know why, but I don’t notice people outwardly using drugs as much as they used to. But maybe that’s just me. It could have something to do with the police ... I don’t know.

One female resident in her 20’s noted the discrepancy between how the police respond when visitors exhibit disrespectful behaviors and when residents do the same stating,

It’s almost like they tell you, deal with it. These people have money, so they are, you know, bringing in money to the community, so it’s okay for them to be loud, be obnoxious and to disturb a lot of the people that live down here and are less fortunate.

Some residents stated that other residents “should be locked up” and noted the negative behaviors exhibited by other residents. More information on this theme is noted in the section on restrictions in the neighborhood.

Finally, residents commented frequently (n = 60) on the economic impact of the redevelopment on the neighborhood. Numerous comments were made in regards to rehabbing of buildings, the new businesses, and other investments in the neighborhood. Residents also discussed secondary redevelopment efforts which have occurred, mainly related to new roads, new institutions coming into the area as a result of the efforts, and a general sense of how these efforts are cleaning up the neighborhood. A female resident in her 20’s noted,

Beneficial things that have happened is just bringing a lot of people down and just seeing what’s actually down on Heartside. Like the art shows and the galleries ... so these people see these things and come down and say oh, let’s come back next Sunday. And let’s maybe look at the art and buy some stuff.

Another female in her 50's noted how the businesses are investing in the neighborhood, "They've got two new bars on Division, too. And that's a good thing too. Because they serve food, so you've got people from outside coming and investing money." A male in his 40's also commented on the new restaurants stating,

I'd say a significant change is, like I said, the two very fancy restaurants that are across from my apartment building ... a lot of people from the suburbs (go there), and, you know, they dress nice. I don't know if that means they have money, but they dress nice, and they go there.

Finally, a male resident in his 60's discussed the new medical college,

They're building new colleges for medical. It's going to be one of the greatest medical towns in the, uh, state. Right now, they're in the top of their class. There's going to be a lot of great people coming from the city.

A couple of comments were made about how these redevelopment efforts have brought jobs to the area, but other comments were made about the need for jobs in the neighborhood.

### Theme 3: Restrictions in the Neighborhood

The final theme discovered focused on restrictions evident in the neighborhood as a result of the redevelopment efforts. Specific sub-themes present in this broader theme included feelings of being restricted, limited involvement in community events and limited interactions with visitors to the neighborhood, and perceptions of residents currently living in the neighborhood.

A number of resident comments (n = 10) made reference to being restricted in the neighborhood. These responses focused on places where residents were and were not welcome. For example, residents were aware that they were "welcome in the park during the day" but "not welcome in the new bars." One male resident in his 60's gave an example of this. "A buddy of mine says, 'if I had twenty bucks, I'd be across the street

having a beer and getting dinner or whatever.' And you know, it's money that separates, it's money that separates people in society."

He went on to share a story about a restaurant where he once worked:

And then this one guy came in one time to have dinner, and uh, he wasn't dressed real well and he was Black. And he uh, they uh, I think he was explaining to them that he wanted to sit down and eat and they told him to leave too.

Residents also had negative perceptions about how they were viewed in the neighborhood, with comments such as "people judge" or "we are people too" being shared by the residents. One male resident in his 60's stated, "The store owners, they see a lot of people hanging out and it kind of ruins business. So they'd really like to get rid of it (Dégagé)."

Residents commented (n = 20) on limited involvement in community events and limited interactions with visitors in the neighborhood. Specific responses revolved around visitors not understanding the neighborhood and the residents who live there and as a result being separated from them. A female resident in her 20's stated,

You'll actually notice when you walk down the street on a Friday night, you'll see upper-class on one side, which is where all the bars and the strips and things like that are, and you will see where the less fortunate are on the other side.

A male resident in his 20's made a similar comment:

Ninety-nine percent of the people, they'll look at me, and they'll turn up their nose or they'll look at me in my eye directly and then just turn away, which really pisses me off ... they turn their heads so they can't see you, or cross over to the other side of the street; ignorant, man.

Residents also noted the visitors to the neighborhood "dress nicely," "have different lifestyles," and "only visit the

neighborhood on the weekends." Some residents, however, did note that they liked the interaction with the visitors to the neighborhood or felt that their presence had no impact on them. A male resident in his 40's explained this:

People come down here to eat and a lot of the weekends, they come down here to party, and things like that. And the people, the poorer people they just, uh, gather around at the parks and stuff like that. And there's kind of a, there's a division between the two. They don't interact as much. That's the way I see it.

Finally, many comments (n = 57) focused on perceptions of other residents currently living in the neighborhood. These perceptions were overwhelmingly negative and included responses about the prevalence of drug and alcohol use by the residents, crime, prostitution, and numerous statements about residents "needing to clean themselves up" and that "residents hanging out are bad for business." A male resident in his 20's stated, "I'm talking about the homeless population is going to mess that park up. They already, like, that's going to become like really messed up." A male in his 40's also harshly criticized other residents, "A lot of them down here get checks. Disability or mental checks, so. They just take advantage of what they've got. Like food stamps, sell the food stamps. Sell your medications, you know." Finally, a female resident in her 50's also criticized behavior of other residents,

But, the businesses, some of them, where they got their business at, that's where people hang out ... That's real bad for the business. If I'm trying to run a business, I don't want you hanging out at my store unless you're coming in to buy something. Hanging out, no, that's not good.

## Discussion

### *Theme 1: Sense of Belonging*

The broad theme of a sense of belonging was not a surprising theme to find in our research. In addition to these qualitative interview findings, both researchers were aware of the strong bonds present among residents in the neighborhood and

the sense of ownership many residents felt about the neighborhood due to the time spent in the neighborhood. This sense of belonging appeared to have come from the strong social service supports in the neighborhood, and the long-standing relationships residents had developed with peers and service providers.

Evident in this theme was the appreciation for the changes taking place in the neighborhood. This concept is an interesting theme to discuss. Perhaps it was because of the strong sense of belonging and identity with the neighborhood that residents felt as though the investment being made in the neighborhood was intended for them. This idea of who the changes are intended for raises a complex issue in neighborhood redevelopment efforts, especially when gentrification is often the standard practice. This complex issue needs further exploration as it relates to the economic and social impact of redevelopment and for whom the benefits are intended. Jacobs (1961/1993) argues that residents (who others might not perceive as successful) are important individuals in neighborhoods. Not only do they fulfill important roles as "a vital part of the web of casual public life," they also can be a stabilizing group within the community as they encounter opportunities for greater financial success in the redeveloped neighborhood (p. 369).

Beyond the macro impact of the roles these individuals play, social workers should also be cognizant of the sense of belonging and neighborhood identification of these residents. This is a strength that can be identified and built upon in our practice. Research on dignity, well-being, and sense of belonging among the homeless and those living in poverty show the significance of attending to this critical issue when serving this client population (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2006; Hoffman & Coffey, 2008; Miller & Keys, 2001).

### *Theme 2: Recognition of Neighborhood Changes*

Residents were aware of the major changes taking place in the neighborhood and of the impact of these redevelopment efforts. They spoke about these activities in a positive sense, with the exception of one police interaction and the need for additional jobs. Residents seemed to have a sense of pride in the changes and how the efforts were beautifying the neighborhood. They also spoke from a sense of pride when

they discussed additional businesses and institutions that were moving into the neighborhood as a result of the continued redevelopment efforts. While many residents experienced some level of restriction in the neighborhood, which will be discussed in the next section, this did not seem to translate into additional patterns of concerns related to their place in the neighborhood.

Social workers should be mindful of this sense of pride and belonging noted by the residents in the neighborhood. Along with other researchers (Miller & Keys, 2001; Perkins, Wandersman, Rich, & Taylor, 1993), service providers in the Heartside neighborhood recognize the important intersection of personal dignity and environment by planning regularly scheduled community events for the residents. These events include monthly birthday celebrations and television sport watching parties and are held in local parks and other venues in the neighborhood. Beyond these opportunities to honor individual dignity and worth and build community, social workers should seek appropriate opportunities to give residents a voice within redeveloping neighborhoods. Zukin (2010) describes authenticity as a "tool of power" that can be used to change the culture and tastes of a community. She describes how this change moves "longtime residents outside their comfort zone" (pp. 3-4). Social workers can play an important role in working with neighborhoods and residents who may be experiencing the impact of these changes by advocating for the residents and the key elements within the neighborhood that contribute to their sense of place and belonging.

### *Theme 3: Restrictions in the Neighborhood*

While no clear pattern of additional concerns about their place in the neighborhood was evident, residents did note several areas where they felt restricted through the neighborhood redevelopment efforts. These comments were not expressed in anger but were presented as a basic reality. Research shows that often in the redevelopment process, neighborhood and homeless residents are viewed negatively. Farrell (2005), in his review of the literature over the last two decades on homelessness and neighborhood disorder, noted numerous studies which both directly and indirectly speak of homeless individuals in relation to urban disorder.

It was also interesting to hear the number of comments about negative behavior of other residents. Residents who participated in the interviews clearly distinguished themselves from other residents who exhibited negative behavior. Some of the negative behavior mentioned included drug and alcohol use, crime, prostitution, taking advantage of others, fighting, and not showing respect. These residents were also clear that residents with negative behavior were having a negative impact on the neighborhood.

Social workers recognize the challenges described by the residents and are encouraged to work with residents on their individual threatening behaviors, while helping them understand how their actions affect a neighborhood and sense of community. In addition, social workers are challenged to work with residents, such as those interviewed, to see the common good, dignity and worth of all who live in the Heartside neighborhood. Researchers (Hoffman & Coffey, 2008; Miller & Keys, 2001) specifically note the significant role that a sense of dignity plays alongside the provision of basic human services. Social workers can lead in this way, given our values and training in recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of all.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Because the Heartside neighborhood has many nonprofit service providers, additional research should explore the perceptions of agency leaders and social workers on gentrification in the Heartside neighborhood to see if they have similar responses to the experience of change as the residents. Kissane & Gingerich (2004) explored similarities and differences between perceptions of nonprofit directors and residents about the local neighborhood context. Their findings noted a number of differences related to perceptions, particularly related to the neighborhood context and on social services to add in the neighborhood. These questions and continued exploration of issues related to neighborhood redevelopment efforts and the impact this has on residents should be explored in our professional literature as we work for "authentic" neighborhoods which honor and celebrate diversity.

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