

What *Do* the Neighbors Think?

Assessing the Community Impact of Neighborhood Stabilization Efforts

Appendix F: Resident Quotes about Stability and Sense of Community

- Residents spoke of their neighborhoods in negative terms, they related positive views as well.
 - I coded 47 statements relating positive sentiments about the neighborhood as positive ones and about 49 as negative ones.
 - Sometimes the negative and positive perspective would be contained in the same sentiment. For example, a young male resident noted, “I love the neighborhood with the exception of prevalent drug dealing and prostitution that occurs around the corner.”
 - A female renter with 3 young children noted that her neighborhood was “very pleasant -- until about 7 o’clock.”
 - A young single man who lived with his family members reported that in his neighborhood, “Sometimes it’s quiet. Sometimes it’s not quiet.”
 - A middle-aged female owner recounted that, “I would say quite safe although (laughing) given some of the news reports what is striking to me is for some reason there’s a lot of stuff that happens on this street.”
- First, in reviewing residents’ comments, it became clear that many residents draw careful distinctions between well-intentioned insiders and poorly behaved outsiders.
 - One woman recounted, “On occasion, there is violence...” But she was also careful to add, “...on the first street over.”
 - Another resident vouched for her side of the street commenting, “We haven’t had any trouble, as you say, where we can see. The other side is a different story.”
 - Another female homeowner noted that while her street was safe, “There are a couple of streets that have bad residents that flow into our street.”
 - Another female renter phrased it more directly, “I find that lots of things happening in the area are done by outsiders.”
 - Another female renter reported that while no violence occurred on her street, “A couple of streets over I heard about gang violence, shootings. “
 - A female homeowner vouched for her immediate neighbors, saying that the gun violence she witnessed was, “Never people, in this-- who live on these blocks. Or, you know, so it’s kind of

odd.”

- Another male renter told us about killings that occurred, “further down [the street].”
- A male renter literally distanced himself from instability, recounting, “If there is ever any problem it is always at that end.”
- Homeowners and renters alike describe homeowners as committed, responsible and admirable community members and compare this to the behavior of renters.
 - For example, a older male renter maintained a positive view of his block explaining, “there’s homeowners and they seem to keep it up.”
 - Other people suggested that homeowners have a particular responsibility to maintain order. As one older female renter stated, “Resident owners should not let groups of people standing in front of their homes smoking, drinking or even being loud with conversation.”
 - A young female renter attributed the low level of crime on her street to the presence of homeowners, “I haven’t heard any gun shots, which is a plus. [This street has] mainly homeowners and they are older.”
 - One middle aged male homeowner attributed instability to tenants, arguing, “A lot of people around here now are tenants, not homeownersThe tenants are residents, but you know what I mean, they change all the time .”
 - An older homeowner described the abandoned foreclosed home this way, “The abandoned home is the eyesore of the street. In the 27 years I have been back here, the house and tenants have been less than good. [I have] often suspected drug activity. “
 - A middle aged male renter (57) explained his feelings of marginalization because of his housing tenure, “It is difficult for renters to feel a sense of ownership and power in a neighborhood like this. Renters are temporary. “
- Resident repeatedly cited long-term residents as a source of stability without direct reference to their ownership status.
 - As one older female homeowner explained, “I’ve lived in this neighborhood for the past 30+ years without any major incidents. Neighbors always offered help.”
 - Another middle aged man recounted, “Our family has lived in the house since 1974 and everybody knows me and I know them.”
 - A young man living with family commented on his neighborhood, “It’s nice... a lot of old people live on this street.”

- A middle aged female renter linked the high quality of the neighborhood to the presence of long-term residents. She recalled that when she first moved to the neighborhood she met a long-term resident and “she was like, really nice “oh, its really nice. we’ve lived here for I don’t know how many years.” The guy next door had been an owner for like ten years. .. Because like the ones that are pretty much here, are like older, been here for a long time. “
- A middle aged woman who lives with her family related a positive view of her neighborhood and explained, “ The same people have lived on this street for over 30-40 years... the street is changing.”
- Residents do, however, make class distinctions based on income.
 - As one older male renter explained, “And I don’t like to generalize and category people, but the closer you get to the public housing, and to the, yeah, the closer you get to the end with public housing it’s always a problem at that end. Where the private homes are you never see any police come down here, never any fights any argument, you know none of that outlandish language used. Or anything. It’s very pleasant on this end.” Another older female homeowner expressed a similar view of residents receiving housing subsidies, “This neighborhood is very noisy all times of the day. Most of this can be attributed to the apartment building on the street and surrounding streets. Most of the tenants are young, on assistance and somewhat transient. I do not believe landlords care. “ Another older female homeowner attributed the violence occurring on her street to people “running from these [housing] projects over this way.” And a third female homeowner detailed how the subsidized housing residents, “are not grateful. Government, tax dollars assisting them with the rent. The increase in crime has occurred since they moved in.”

In addition to distinctions residents make by economic class, residents also opposed the development of supportive housing in the neighborhood. One middle aged female homeowner complained that “Recently a ‘mental house’ was built down the street.” Another older female homeowner wrote that she hoped that the abandoned, foreclosed home in question would be rehabilitated and that she “would love to see respectful law-abiding families to move in not rooming house or halfway house.” Another homeowner recounted how she initially objected to the City’s plans to convert the abandoned, foreclosed home into a “ become a transition home for Little Wanderers [kids aging out of foster care]. “ However, after the developer had presented the plans before the

neighborhood council, she changed her mind and decided, “It will be good if it’s done right. New folks, will help them acclimate to life beyond foster care. “ Not every resident objected to the idea that the treatment properties might be converted into supportive housing. As one resident suggested, “I guess they should fix up the building for homeless people. “ It may not come as a surprise that this woman was a renter and not a homeowner and therefore probably did not see herself as having a financial stake in the neighborhood.

The ultimate insiders in these neighborhoods are the intergenerational households. We visited many three-family homes that contained three generations of the same family. These residents expressed not only a heightened sense of responsibility for maintaining neighborhood stability but also for the well being of their family members. For example, one resident we interviewed told us, “My granddaughter lives on the third floor.” Then her grand daughter arrived home during interview and hovered protectively until we were finished. Another elderly woman let us in to the building and her daughter opened the door to her 1st floor apartment, “what going on mom?” The mother explains that “these girls are doing a survey.” The daughter insisted that we conduct the interview in her unit. Once inside, the daughter asked her mother again if she is interested in doing the survey. The mother insisted that she wanted to participate. The daughter again reiterated that the mother did not have to do the survey and remained in the room until we finished. The presence of multi-family, multi-generational households is yet another explanation for why people choose to remain in otherwise unstable neighborhoods.