URBAN DISPLACEMENT AND LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF THE AMERICAN CITY FROM THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Jason M. Knight and Mohammad Gharipour
School of Architecture and Planning,
Morgan State University, Maryland, USA

*Corresponding Author’s email address: jakni5@morgan.edu

Abstract
How can urban redevelopment benefit existing low-income communities? The history of urban redevelopment is one of disruption of poor communities. Renewal historically offered benefits to the place while pushing out the people. In some cases, displacement is intentional, while in others, it is unintentional. Often, it is the byproduct of the quest for profits. Regardless of motives, traditional communities, defined by cultural connections, are often disrupted. Disadvantaged neighborhoods include vacant units, which diminish the community and hold back investment. In the postwar period, American cities entered a program of urban renewal. While this program cleared blight, it also drove displacement among the cities’ poorest and was particularly hard on minority populations clustered in downtown slums. The consequences of these decisions continue to play out today. Concentration of poverty is increasing and American cities are becoming more segregated. As neighborhoods improve, poorer residents are uprooted and forced into even more distressed conditions elsewhere. This paper examines the history of events impacting urban communities. It further reviews the successes and failures of efforts to benefit low-income communities.

Keywords: Urban renewal; urban redevelopment; Baltimore; displacement; community; housing; poverty; gentrification

INTRODUCTION
The history of urban redevelopment, in Baltimore and cities around the world, is one of displacement for the poor and disruption of low-income communities. Rather than benefiting residents who already occupy urban space, renewal historically offered benefits to the place while pushing out the people with rising expenses, especially rents. In some cases, displacement is intentional, or even the point, as seen in Haussmann’s 19th century redevelopment of Paris. In others, it is unintentional, as in more recent efforts to revitalize cities that consistently trigger rising rents and gentrification. Often, it is the cynical byproduct of the quest for private profits. Regardless of motives, traditional communities, sometimes defined by ethnic, racial, or other cultural connections, are often disrupted. Disadvantaged low-income neighborhoods include high numbers of renters as well as elderly residents on limited fixed incomes. They also feature many vacant units, which promote crime, diminish the sense of community, and hold back investment. Baltimore, like many cities, has a long history of efforts to renew its urban core. In the postwar period, American cities entered a program of urban renewal to overcome decay in prominent areas. While this program cleared blight, it also drove displacement among the cities’ poorest populations and was particularly hard on minority populations that had clustered in downtown slums. There was little effort to provide improvements for communities in place.

The consequences of these decisions continue to play out today. Even when physical housing conditions were drastically improved, loss of community was the top reason cited for housing dissatisfaction among displaced residents. The concentration of poverty is increasing.
and our cities are becoming more segregated. All too often, as neighborhoods improve, poorer residents are uprooted and forced into even more distressed conditions elsewhere. Through studies of urban displacement, redevelopment, and gentrification, along with research into the sociology of community, this paper identifies the ways that urban renewal has exacerbated problems in low-income communities and examines ideas of how Baltimore’s community renewal can avoid these pitfalls.

THE FRAMEWORK, FUNCTION, AND VALUE OF COMMUNITY
There is much to consider if one is to understand the dynamic qualities of urban life, of community, or of slums. What these concepts have in common—urbanism, community, and slums—is the quality of sharing an environment with others. In each, it is the experience of interactions and the contexts in which such interactions take place that contributes a great deal to our personal social identities and shapes our understanding of one another. There are unseen forces that motivate group and individual actions, with consequences that extend beyond the immediately observable. There are historical factors, social factors, economic factors, and psychological factors that can be hard to grasp. One cannot simply directly observe a community and understand all that is acting to define that community.

These concepts can be understood scientifically and they can be understood philosophically. In the 1940s, the American sociologist Amos Hawley pioneered the understanding of Human Ecology. Hawley linked the interactions of individuals with others and with their surroundings to the field of Ecology, which is the study of relationships between entity and environment, in general and Biological Ecology in particular: “Human ecology, then, may be defined more fully as the study of the development and the form of communal structure as it occurs in varying environmental contexts”. Thus equipped, later researchers, in sociology and related fields, gained the opportunity to predict outcomes based on observations and then apply those predictions elsewhere. Rather than dealing with individuals one by one, the researcher can look at groups as a sort of super-organism with its own set of conditional behaviors. If human ecology is a scientific framework for understanding urbanism, community, and slums, it then meshes nicely with the philosophical understanding of the same. As such, we can start to understand the concept of “I” as a byproduct of the interactive “We.” That is to say that within these contexts, individual identity is at least partly derived from one’s interactions with others and with the environment. However, according to the Czech philosopher Vilem Flusser, “the new image of humanity as a knotting together of relationships doesn’t go down easily, and neither does the image of the city that rests upon this anthropology (Flusser, 2005)”. The persistent image of the individualist is in conflict with the socially derived nature of humanity. Flusser seems to argue that the social nature of the city is a point of existential tension in the psyche of the individual.

THE IMPACT OF DENSITY ON COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS
It is a testimony to the disastrous history of high-density low-income housing in American cities that many still instinctively think of it in terms of “slums”. More disturbing yet is that when we think of these slums, rarely does the word “community” come to mind. So much of low-income urban housing centers on density. How close together can we really live and get along and make progress? While there is no magic number beyond which life is too dense, there has been significant effort to develop framework understandings of density and community success (Ramsden, 2011). Thanks to the work of behavioral researcher John Calhoun, using lab rats and simulations of cities and dating back to the 60s, there is a framework of basic observations about dense living conditions. In spite of the controversial nature of Calhoun’s work, subsequent findings have largely supported his arguments about density. For example, the higher the density, the higher the frequencies of violence and other social challenges (Ramsden, 2011). Of course there are other factors besides density that contribute to community success and failure. Armed
with a sensitivity to Calhoun’s studies, more recent research has shown that difficulties related to density can be mitigated through strategies of engagement (Forsyth, Nicholls, and Ray, 2010).

In one case, a team of academics and city planners, working in Minneapolis-St. Paul in 2010, sought to improve resident acceptance of higher density in a low-income community. Their stated goal was to increase “community capacity” for a more active role of residents in the decisions that most impact their experience of the community. City planners were attempting to increase density in places like transit corridors to reduce dependency on cars and increase access to services generally. The research team stepped in and executed a series of community exercises designed to promote inclusive processes and tailored for after-action study and propagation to similar projects. Among these activities were “participatory design” sessions, where residents used wooden blocks and maps to assemble and present their values and goals for housing. Additionally, the team conducted numerous group discussion sessions, while taking care to shuffle up the mix of contributors to include experienced facilitators and a cross section of residents, rather than just the most motivated. The team was successful in meeting their goals of neighborhoods being held intact, a reduced dependency on cars, and more affordability, demonstrated by higher rates of resident satisfaction with the final housing product than seen in similar scenarios (Forsyth et al, 2010). The Minneapolis-St. Paul exercise, while it is only one example, demonstrates that ongoing engagement with residents in decision making, in contrast to top-down planning, may increase satisfaction and overall planning success.

THE EXPERIENCE OF LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

The success of the effort to increase “community capacity” in Minneapolis-St. Paul is a refreshing event in an otherwise dismal history of housing for the poor. All too often, the experience has been one of repeated and frequently unjustifiable displacement. If communities thrive on the
strength of their residents, then a constant turnover of residents can be seen as a serious challenge to the resiliency of the community and a harm to those that are displaced and also those that are caught in such unstable communities. In the modern era, discussions center on three primary drivers of displacement among the urban poor: housing situation, gentrification, and slum clearance. However, there is in fact a fourth driver that far outstrips these three: eviction. In one 2012 study, conducted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, researchers found that 1 in 14 renter-occupied households was evicted annually (Desmond, 2012). While Detroit has the highest eviction rate in the U.S., Baltimore fares little better as “every year... more than 6,000 renters and their families are evicted from their homes” (Broadwater, 2015). Evictions are the area of interest for sociologist Matthew Desmond. He has improved our understanding of the underlying factors that contribute to the high rates of eviction and finds these factors to be numerous. One such factor was an unusually high rate of women evictions in Milwaukee’s black and Hispanic neighborhoods, driven at least in part by high rates of males with criminal records (thus precluding them from acquiring a lease) and high rates of single motherhood in these communities. Rates in white neighborhoods were about equal for men and women. This concentration of evictions in black neighborhoods can be further linked to the high rates of African-American urban poor and their concentration in high-poverty, segregated neighborhoods (Desmond, 2012).

Figure 2. Robert Moses is closely associated with urban renewal in the United States, during the mid-20th century (Source: C.M. Stieglitz, 1939) [Library of Congress]
Beyond the persistent forces that drive displacement, like eviction, there have been a number of punctuated moments of extraordinary displacement. In modern times, outside of war or famine, nothing compares to the disruptive impacts of urban renewal. With the support of the Housing Acts of 1937, 1949, and 1954, which dedicated significant money to “cleaning up” American cities, figures like Robert Moses, the powerful leader of New York’s urban renewal efforts, championed massive initiatives that destroyed entire communities, which many called slums, and replaced them with top-down solutions, including highways, which helped create suburban culture and the housing projects that swept up those left behind (Walker, 2012). Meanwhile, equally visionary figures like urban theorists and activists Jane Jacobs and Charles Abrams saw the tragic impacts on community long before they played out and worked tirelessly and often in vain to alter the march of urban history. Abrams for one “took no delight in the kind of ‘order’ that Moses’ vision of urban renewal created: displacement of the poor, rampant discrimination against minorities, and homogeneity of neighborhoods” (Walker, 2012). Abrams and Jacobs saw that urban renewal was failing to meet the needs of those most in need of its intended improvements.

Although the historic record of urban renewal in America’s beleaguered cities is one of failure to provide satisfactory solutions for the most vulnerable, it was not simply that urban renewal was intent on destroying lives. Rather, it was supposed to bring market forces, with government sponsorship, to bear on urban America’s most entrenched problems. For example, “the slum-clearance, or urban renewal, projects that Robert Moses initiated in New York City, began with the idea that people are the products of their environments” (Walker, 2012). It was not until it was too late that we began to understand the consequences of uprooting communities, even if they existed in dire conditions. The roots of urban renewal of the postwar period were based, in large part, on modernist ideals and utopian thinking. Ideas like Garden Cities and important modernist
voices like Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius all pointed to a vibrant future, brought about by visionary rethinking of cities (Zipp, 2012). While utopian ideals of vast public spaces and structured living conditions were the seeds of urban renewal, capitalist priorities conflicted with the more altruistic components of such ideals. Efforts like the 1966 Model Cities Program, a federal act that funded smaller scale experiments in various housing programs from President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society initiatives, started out as empowerment programs that brought disenfranchised voices into the process of addressing their own needs. But, in the subsequent Nixon years, Model Cities became another works project about building things instead of solving issues (Weber and Wallace, 2012). With such a shift, what started out with much promise and early, albeit uneven, successes came to an end in 1974 and became part of the long history of failed investment in market-driven solutions for low-income problems.

After World War II, as urban renewal was taking hold in America, many of the nation’s intellectuals took up the issue and offered their thoughts and observations. Pioneering social worker and civil rights activist Frankie Adams, writing in 1958, astutely identified many of the consequences of urban renewal projects across America. She also promoted the fairness of the programs in the effort to create positive outcomes for the displaced, including addressing the psychological needs of those who find themselves in new communities – often against their wishes. She rightly suggested that there are three options in the matter of urban slums: urban renewal, clearance, or conservation (Adams, 1958). So-called slums can be replaced with newly planned solutions, they can be swept away and residents left to find new solutions, or they can be left in place. Adams also identifies the value of diversity – economic, educational, and aspirational – for the health of a community (Adams, 1958). Meanwhile, the disruptive impacts of urban renewal rippled outward from the invested areas, as the disrupted arrived in other communities and in turn triggered additional disruption there, such as suburban flight. Building on the work of Adams, researchers in Lubbock, Texas working in 1968, postulated correctly that those displaced from intact communities in slum conditions to new housing that lacked such community would be less satisfied with their new conditions. It did not matter that the physical conditions were improved. Rather, residents most often cited loss of community as the primary reason for their dissatisfaction (Edgley, Steglich, and Cartwright, 1968). An additional component of this phenomenon is that, according to sociologist Charles Edgley, “some families affected by urban renewal were forced to become welfare clients, even though they had been self-sustaining tenants in pre-urban-renewal slum housing” (Edgley et al, 1968).

The 1980s is closely associated with the rise of conservatism to the forefront of American political, social, and economic discourse. Still, it is important to keep in mind how close on the heels of the major urban renewal projects in America this era follows. With many projects still playing out and many more showing catastrophic outcomes, conservative ideology turned to trickle-down economics for new ideas (Smith, 1982). Noted urban planner and Yale professor Alex Garvin seems to have been one important thinker to consider such notions. While many were scratching their heads over the failure of much of urban renewal’s lofty goals, Garvin and others were promoting the idea that investing in middle-income development would trigger benefits for low-income populations as the middle-income groups would “hand-down” their perfectly acceptable old housing in exchange for better opportunities (Garvin, 1980). However, his example, Corlears Hook, along the East River, was a story of displaced white residents and glosses over the uneven impacts on minorities that were commonplace in the often segregated solutions of urban renewal.

In a search for new approaches, one might consider what the New Urbanists can contribute to old urbanist problems. New Urbanism, first articulated in 1993, “is a movement united around the belief that our physical environment has a direct impact on our chances for happy, prosperous lives” (CNU: The Movement, 2015). It is largely structured around the ideals of community, but as Paul Walker Clarke, a professor of architecture, argues in “The Ideal of...”
Community and Its Counterfeit Construction,” the New Urbanist idea of community is one of pre-planned, highly structured, and physically-based solutions. Their efforts rework much of the arguments of Jacobs and Abrams and their compatriots that say community is spontaneously composed by invisible forces and chance encounters. According to Clarke, “community is an arena of participation that evolves through discourse, a constituent missing within the philosophy and constructed developments of New Urbanism” (Clarke, 2005). Addressing the pressure placed on threatened, or indeed dispersed, communities calls for more than the “design” of the trappings of community, without access for those most in need of its benefits. Rather, pressured urban communities need renewed engagement with the larger social fabric of their environment. Linkages to diversity seem very much to be the opposite of the work, if not the stated intentions, of new urbanists.

In 2005, researchers in urban housing, based in Montreal and looking for more fairness-driven distribution of affordable housing, took efforts in that city as their focus. There, housing is required by law to be distributed equally in every district of the city in an effort to avoid ever-increasing concentration of poverty. The researchers identified three criteria for successful public housing: “the social environment, the physical environment, and the accessibility of services and facilities” (Apparicio, Séguin, and Naud, 2008). While efforts to distribute housing evenly throughout the city were somewhat successful and produced a variety of positive outcomes, there was still latent discrimination in the policy as the affordable housing was consistently located in each district’s least desirable areas, near railways, highways, and assortments of existing blight, as well as distant from city services. Even in cases where public housing was located in what the researchers term “less socially deprived” areas in the periphery of the city, rewarding residents with high qualities of social and physical environment, they were often disconnected from services and facilities that may be considered critical for those living on limited income (Apparicio et al, 2008). In this way, residents in affordable housing still often found themselves in unfortunate conditions, even though some important benefits were realized.

If past efforts at renewal have been often underpinned with utopian or even altruistic motives, there have also been many who engaged in the process for the age-old motivations of personal gain. In 2001, sociologist Kevin Fox Gotham examined renewal programs in Kansas City, Missouri and found that, at some point in the evolution of urban renewal, there was a shift to the priorities of private interests (Gotham, 2001). This shift had profound consequences for the black urban poor, who found themselves in more segregated conditions than ever as they were shepherded into profit-minded housing solutions. In a privatized model, public interests, such as housing for the poor, or countering the forces of segregation, are turned over to private for-profit contractors, ostensibly to promote improved efficiencies and therefore expanded services for the same costs. Whereas privatism was often promoted as the most efficient way of delivering public services, the reality is that “privatism is the underlying commitment by government to helping the private sector grow and prosper” (Gotham, 2001). Public benefit is not the central function of privatism. So, it follows that the transfer of responsibility for public benefits to private interests served first to benefit such interests and only coincidentally served the needs of those for which benefit was actually sought.

Movements in urbanism have not fared much better in Modern America. With the onset of the administration of Mayor Rudy Giuliani in 1994, New York entered into a period of revanchism, wherein those that believe the city has been “taken away” from them, seek to reclaim what they believe is their right to possess (Smith, 1999). In every sense, this turn pitted the middle and upper classes against the lower classes, who were held responsible for all the declines experienced in New York and other large cities, including Baltimore, which implemented its own zero-tolerance policies, with New York police veterans at the forefront (Smith, 1999). It disregarded any role political leaders and profit-minded developers might have had in driving the poor into ever more crowded and difficult situations, with ever fewer resources committed to
community welfare (Smith, 1999). In large part, this is the condition we continue to find today. This is the policy of “broken windows” and can be traced forward all the way to the protests that swept American cities in 2014 and 2015. Such shifts were not exclusive to American cities, nor were they entirely delineated by race. The case of Berlin after the fall of the Wall presents an interesting perspective. Here, the shift from socialistic housing solutions to capitalistic was profound, as half the city found itself suddenly transformed. The sum of urban sociologist Andrej Holm's research and analysis in Berlin demonstrates that the rise of privatization and decline of government investment is the root cause of extensive displacement of long-standing, sometimes low-income communities, in favor of wealthier gentrifying groups (Holm, 2006).

In America, it is rare to find naked ambition when observing efforts to impact social policy. To expose the underlying motivations, it becomes important to understand how language shapes and is shaped by the agenda of those that are seeking to compel the moment. Regarding social housing policy, professor of social policy and human services, Michael Darcy offers an overview of such evolution and outright manipulation of the language. In particular, he argues that the shift from “public” housing to “community” housing is one from centralized planning to decentralized models, including privatization, which he sees as insidious in the social housing arena. “Community” here does not indicate self-management, but rather a local non-government organization, which may have little actual connection to the community for which it is responsible (Darcy, 1999). Perhaps the most notorious example of language being used to manipulate public opinion in America is Welfare-to-Work, the controversial overhaul of the American welfare system, enacted in 1996 (Bowie, 2004). While the concept of getting away from welfare and finding a decent job is appealing, it is easy to overlook the troubling findings of research in this area, including extensive evidence that jobs found are sort-lived and that “welfare leavers” frequently fail to maintain an independent status. Instead of moving from welfare to work, participants often find themselves simply in possession of neither support nor independence (Smith, 1999).

**THE HISTORIC IMPACTS OF RENEWAL**

In 1978, research backed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the US found that black mayors tended to focus more on housing than other mayors. It was supposed that this might be because black mayors were largely operating in older cities with poorer populations and therefore housing is more of an issue. A number of strategies being employed by these mayors
have proven resilient, as they continue to be used today, including cities taking derelict properties and offering either below-market resale, or reducing excess housing inventory through demolition (Bryce, Cousar, and McCoy, 1978). Previous research, as outlined in this paper so far, has demonstrated the disparate impacts of renewal. But, more recent studies have shown that we are still facing the same challenge. Even now, the higher the concentration of black or Hispanic residents, the less benefits a community will receive from private reinvestment. Ultimately, modern laissez faire policies that depend on private investment may in fact deepen racial divides, by providing benefits to white communities and furthering segregation trends (Hwang and Sampson, 2014). What may be more startling is that so few whites lived in high concentrations of poverty and so few blacks in low concentrations, that making statistical observations that seek to isolate race as a factor in mobility proved elusive (Sharkey, 2009).

Expanding on this point, British geographers presented work on suburbanization and how this trend, which continues even now, disrupts the value of constant intermingling on the streets that promotes a higher order of community. In this sense, the failure to realize utopian visions of urbanization, such as Howard’s Garden Cities and Corbusier’s Radiant City, is exacerbated by flight to the suburbs by a crucial group of that intermingling (McLeod and Ward, 2002). It does not take much to recognize that minorities face disproportionate impacts in housing policy, but it remains important to constantly develop new tools for understanding this fact and observing its patterns and trajectories.

As has been demonstrated repeatedly, community engagement unlocks potential for greater success (Rosen and Sullivan, 2012). On this topic, public housing experts Marcia Rosen and Wendy Sullivan state: “Once notorious for urban renewal that... displaced residents, San Francisco is now renowned for its best practices in housing and community development” (Rosen and Sullivan, 2012). With this unexpected opening declaration, the authors of a brief paper begin an outline of the keys to San Francisco’s newfound success in providing affordable housing, in the nation’s tightest real estate market. Among the keys to San Francisco’s success, such as it is (San Francisco in fact has a somewhat notorious housing market, known mostly for its inability/refusal to build sufficient housing at all economic levels.), a concerted effort to gather and understand the needs of local residents stands out. In spite of efforts like those in San Francisco, poverty is becoming more concentrated and this started before the Great Recession, and for blacks this growth has been fastest in mid-sized cities, such as Syracuse, Dayton, and Baltimore (Jargowsky, 2015). New housing initiatives have some benefits for low-income residents, but they are largely failing to accomplish the important goal of social integration. There are a variety of factors, including discriminatory site selection and insufficient funding, but chief among these are class-related distinctions within the mixed-income communities. According to Robert J. Chaskin, a professor of urban policy and social services, “the interplay among institutional mechanisms, organizational actions, and individual responses within the contexts foster community dynamics that place poor people in circumstances of different kinds of disadvantage and generate new forms of exclusion” (Chaskin, 2013).

GENTRIFICATION

There is a strong connection between location and a sense of one’s cultural identity. This anchored identity is easily threatened by the displacing pressures of gentrification. Gentrification has been described as “the process by which central urban neighborhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off middle- and upper middle-class population” (Hwang and Sampson, 2014). Gentrification is a dirty word in most conversations, but it is not as simple as that. Cash-strapped cities yearn for incoming residents with more wealth, to prop up the tax base and increase their ability to deliver services, from road maintenance to housing for the city’s poorest residents. Looking back to the urban renewal of the 1940s, -50s, and -60s, it is worth remembering that
those programs were intended not only for low-income minorities, but for middle-income residents and whites as well (Walker, 2012). But, whites balked at the new housing dynamic, even with segregated communities. They fled for the suburbs, leaving poor minorities just as isolated as ever (Clarke, 2005). Writing in 1958, during its peak, civil rights attorney George Nesbitt saw urban renewal itself as a vital step in the recovery of American cities, writing:

The promise of urban renewal is beginning to materialize in many communities. More and more land is being readied for housing, schools, and parks, highways and public buildings, parking space and industrial and commercial expansion to make our cities for all of us – cleaner, more attractive, and more efficient communities in which to live (Nesbitt, 1958).

Even as Nesbitt was singing its virtues, he acknowledged the serious consequences urban renewal might have for the displaced residents in communities targeted for redevelopment under urban renewal. Chief among his concerns was that there would be insufficient resources dedicated to the needs of the dispossessed, with African Americans being identified as particularly vulnerable. It is clear that this increased vulnerability had its roots in the very active segregation of the urban population into white and “non-white” (Nesbitt, 1958).

If there is a case to be made in favor of gentrification, there is most certainly a case against it, or at least its uncontrolled effects – displacement in particular. While gentrification can help a struggling city like Baltimore with an increased tax base, its extended benefits impact cities in a decidedly uneven way. The realities of gentrification are that incoming residents make preferential choices that lead to parts of a city “winning” and receiving the increased direct investment of new residents and the attendant new businesses and services. Meanwhile other parts of the city are left out of these investments and can even end up worse off, as they absorb those low-income residents displaced by rising costs in the improving areas. The mechanics of such uneven development are complex and often invisible. According to the theory of Ground Rent economics, as proposed by Neil Smith in 1982, it is not simply a function of social preference, but also the nature of economics itself that investments move cyclically, with capital seeking places (and actual land) to grow and avoiding places where it might become trapped (Smith, 1982). Where the current and future values of land are seen as differing, capital will flow. If the future is not promising, capital will flee. Thus conditions for gentrification are variably impactful depending on where one looks in a given environment.

Cultural identity and sense of place is of course not the sole providence of America and gentrification pressures are not simply the story of race stratification, as researchers in Edirne, Turkey showed in 2007. The residential environment – the community – is central to “individual quality of life” (Erdogan, Akyol, Ataman, and Dokmeci, 2007). In Edirne, they found that housing satisfaction was constructed on the basis of five dimensions: “overall housing satisfaction, perceived living conditions, physical surroundings, social relations, and local authorities” (Erdogan et al, 2007). Residents here were displaced from older, badly deteriorated communities into more modern locations. Interestingly, while they found that the modern neighborhood enjoyed higher scores in almost all dimensions, the residents of the traditional neighborhoods reported higher overall housing satisfaction (Erdogan et al, 2007).

In Istanbul, professor of architecture Elmira Gur found gentrification is paired with rapid overall growth of the city, fuelled by in-migration from rural areas and immigration. This has had two significant impacts on the city. First, long neglected neighborhoods, like the Fener-Balat districts along the waterfront have seen significant displacement and loss of authenticity, as the area underwent regeneration (Gur, 2015). Relatedly, the city has seen a rapid urbanization of its periphery, as displaced low-income residents have struggled to make space for themselves, often crowding more people into smaller spaces. In many rapidly expanding Gulf State cities, like Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, the development of affordable housing verges on crisis as the growth
from an influx of rural and desert populations has greatly out-paced the creation of housing. Accompanying the crisis of quantity is a debate about the qualities of a suitable home (Salama, 2007). This pattern of overloaded urban centers is less common in rust belt American cities, where high rates of vacancy make densification – sought after, or otherwise – a rare phenomenon. High-demand cities such as San Francisco and New York City are the exceptions.

In some instances, communities organize to resist gentrification, as is the case in Humboldt Park in Chicago where the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, established in the late seventies, acts as the front line for the preservation of its community and the place it calls home. By combining individual power through the cultural center, residents have been able to persevere despite pressure from neighboring gentrified communities and thus, existing residents have retained their community while also gaining benefit from the influx of capital to their area of the city, though pressure from rising rents can be seen and some physical “drift” of community borders has happened (Rinaldo, 2002). In some cases, cultural identity can be rediscovered, as in the case of the Weeksville Heritage Center in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, established in 1971. A historic site dating to 1838 that was tied to the story of emancipated blacks living in New York in the mid-nineteenth century was developed into a focal point for the surrounding community and subsequently became the story of the rediscovery itself of this important piece of black history. Today, the site serves as a community centerpiece and embodies four core values that it claims are central to the health of a community: sanctuary, abundance, normalcy, and celebration (Scott, 2015). For residents, the Weeksville Heritage Center is a tangible statement of belonging.

RENEWING THE ENDANGERED COMMUNITY

Community, as a defining quality for a group of people, is not a permanent construct. Rather, it must be constantly renewed and defended. Few will step forward to defend a community from the outside. To those outsiders, a neighborhood is often an abstraction and more a collection of built things than a fabric of interactions. Jane Jacobs played an outsized role in changing our understanding of urban community and it was her role in the Committee to Save West Village (CSWV) along with her advocacy at the Architectural Forum that shined a brilliant spotlight on the consequences of urban renewal. Among the many successful qualities of the CSWV was the ability to draw media attention, including support from the Saturday Morning Post, which publicly condemned New York City for its “suicidal passion to destroy [its] most distinctive neighborhoods” (Hock, 2007). Moreover, the CSWV replaced older models of individuals advocating for the protection of their own homes, to a collective argument about the potential for the community as a whole (Hock, 2007). This critical moment of direct advocacy – with residents articulating their own vision – continues to inform similar efforts at community self-determination.

New Orleans presents an interesting opportunity to understand the dynamics of community, as populations have been displaced suddenly rather than through a drawn out process. One such story of sudden displacement actually involves a community that has been displaced twice, once from its century old rural roots and again from its adopted location in the middle of New Orleans. The residents of Fazendeville, Louisiana had the original misfortune of living on the grounds of the Battle of New Orleans, from the Battle of New Orleans, and in the 1960s, they were displaced by the restorative fervor of federal parks officials. It did not matter that their own history on the site spanned 100 years; that history was discarded and the residents reformed their community in New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward, which led to their second displacement, August 29, 2005 as Hurricane Katrina swept away whole neighborhoods (Jackson, 2006). Today, the Fazendeville community remains dispersed, but its residents cling to their shared identity, suggesting the potency of a strong community identity.
With special focus on and inspiration from post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, architects, since 2005, have joined the conversation, with planners, sociologists, city officials, and others, making calls for a fresh approach. Dr. Mark Clayton, an architect and engineer, calls for an urgent re-examination of architectural priorities focused on “evidence-based practice,” wherein he calls for a five-fold principle of what he dubs “renewal architecture”: scientific, sustainable, comprehensive, holistic, and innovative. He decries the mistake of the “false freedom of the highways” (Clayton, 2006) and seeks to frame renewal architecture as a complement to New Urbanism, which he describes as nostalgic and set in historic precedents. Renewal architecture, on the other hand, is “based on a firm commitment to innovation, technology, and change” (Clayton, 2006). Clayton says New Orleans, and the city as a general concept, needs architecture that combines “principles of design, urban planning, construction, sociology, psychology, law, [and] political science” (Clayton, 2006). In this way, cities might rediscover their value in a post-suburbanization context.

Building on the logic of community engagement, researchers in the 60s and 70s examined the nature of community power in achieving effective change for residents. Sociologist Amos Hawley argued in 1963 that by concentrating power, by unifying voices as a singular force, communities could affect change at the highest possible efficacy. In response to Hawley, sociologist Richard Smith wrote in 1976 that context mattered and that in many cases a community could achieve better results through dispersed power – the activation of many forms of power across a spectrum of issues. Smith Writes:

> Cities with more diffuse power structures are more likely to achieve success in mobilizing resources for innovating new programs because, where many centers of power exist, there is a stronger possibility that the needs for various types of programs will be identified and that interested partisans will initiate actions for instituting these diverse programs (Smith, 1976).

Throughout the history of urban renewal, there has always been a quest for those actions that catalyze improvement (Walker, 2012). If the history of urban renewal really is one in which the
poorest residents have been consistently disrupted and displaced to make way for profit-minded improvements that benefit the wealthiest, then what can be done to break this pattern? In fact, there are many cases in which researchers, planners, social workers, residents, and others have found catalysts for change that positively impact low-income residents. One such example comes from researchers in Kansas City, writing in 2008. They hypothesized that “strategic planning will lead to increased rates of community change” (Watson-Thompson, Fawcett, and Shultz, 2008). Their strategic intervention in two communities did indeed produce increased rates of change, driven by priorities set by residents themselves, including beautification, crime and safety, and youth development objectives. What they found was that engaging residents in planning for their own community greatly improved outcomes (Watson-Thompson et al, 2008).

In another example, whereas prior research in urban redevelopment took as a starting point the perception that low-income communities generated negative social systems, a team of psychologists and public health experts in 2009 in New York City took the novel approach of examining the conditions within low-income communities that generate altruistic action (Mattis et al, 2009). Using qualitative interview-based research, they found a variety of motives for altruism, which they categorized as needs-based, norm-based, abstract moral principles, and socio-political. For example, a respondent’s needs-based motives might stem from an “awareness of the emotional, material, financial, physical or other needs of individuals – ‘she didn’t have anyone to turn to’” (Mattis et al, 2009). These motivated acts of altruism existed in abundance in low-income urban communities and ultimately undermine the argument that middle-class flight from cities “erodes social capital,” and that middle-class equals pro-sociality and lower-class represents anti-sociality (Mattis et al, 2009).

Another potential catalyst for change is the rethinking of the typological qualities of older urban communities. In one example of engaging the built environment to promote renewed community vigor and dynamism, Baltimore-based Trace Architects has begun, this year, the development of a new use for Baltimore’s many vacant blocks of rowhouses. With 48,600 vacant houses in Baltimore, this effort is showing one way that existing housing stock can be combined and reorganized to better suit the needs of modern residents. Moreover, the efforts of these architects is focused on allowing older residents to age in place and therefore is directly related to concerns about improvements and displacement. In short, Trace Architects is proposing the combination of four units of existing rowhouses into three new units: one accessible unit on the ground floor for aging residents and two multi-story units that wrap around it. The architects at Trace have assessed the factors that contribute to redevelopment and the displacing pressures faced by existing residents, especially the elderly (Cooke, 2015). By offering a strategy for renewing the existing housing stock in Baltimore, they hope to contribute to improved community continuity.

CONCLUSION
Communities consist of individuals with unique qualities, motives, and interests. But, they are also an entity unto themselves. Communities have their own layers of needs, power, support, and values. Among many pressures in the urban context is density, which is associated with elevated levels of violence, crime, and dysfunction. But, density and its attendant ills can be mitigated through direct engagement at the community level. Historic efforts at improvement of low-income communities have often failed at engaging members of the community. Whether well-intentioned or motivated by personal gains, powerful agents have consistently employed top-down solutions to what they identified as blight and slums. Slowly now, those interested in advancing the quality-of-life for residents, rather than for places, are recognizing the value of the contributions that can be made by the residents themselves. Indeed, if most historic failures at renewal have been characterized by top-down approaches, the most fruitful have been those following a bottom-up, community-led process. Empowering residents strengthens communities, promotes stability,
builds identity, and facilitates growth, to the benefit of existing residents (the hardest part of urban renewal.) "In whatever place he has lived for any length of time he develops a sense of belonging. Therefore, he has security in himself, and a desire to protect what he considers his. (Frankie Adams, 1958)."

As this study indicates, American cities like Baltimore have an urgent need to grow and attract new middle- and upper-income residents. But, they also have a responsibility to their lower-income residents and a significant mission to improve quality-of-life for all. Promoting a culture of community is one piece of the complex puzzle of urban life. Providing residents with a rallying point – a place to help in focusing one’s sense of identity – may promote an enhanced sense of place and in so doing, further enhance the individual’s sense of belonging. By advocating for residents under the structure of community, displacement, and loss of a sense of place and belonging may be diminished and stability may be achieved. This quality alone is among the most critical contexts in facilitating an improved experience in the urban setting.

REFERENCES


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**AUTHORS**

**Jason M. Knight**  
Researcher  
*Morgan State University, School of Architecture and Planning*  
1700 East Cold Spring Lane Baltimore, Maryland 21251, USA  
jakni5@morgan.edu

**Mohammad Gharipour, PhD.**  
Associate Professor  
*Morgan State University, School of Architecture and Planning*  
1700 East Cold Spring Lane Baltimore, Maryland 21251, USA  
mohammad.gharipour@morgan.edu