

**Imagined Boundaries: Discordant Narratives of Place and Displacement in
Contemporary Detroit**

by

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PREFACE

“You two look like some folks that want to get on a roof.” I was bewildered by the statement when I heard it overhead. I looked up to find a tall, slender Black man in his thirties standing on the roof of a building called the Dabl African Bead Museum, who I later came to learn, was named Effe. As it turns out, we actually *were* the kinds of folks that wanted to be on a roof. My friend Seth, an architect from Buffalo, had come to visit. It was 2009, and our first stop off the highway was a building covered in shattered mirrors, summoning like an architectural ode to disco. Effe was close friends with Dabl, the elderly owner and curator of the bead museum. We stood on top of the roof and looked across the city, noting the scale of abandonment, like a checkerboard of vacancy cutting through every part of the city, and existing adjacent to spaces completely unremarkable in their normality. We later toured the rest of the site and then entered the bead shop to talk to Dabl. He began, “To see what you saw on the roof, to understand Detroit, you have to understand race.” We emerged from the bead museum three hours later.

That encounter with Dabl felt like something I was accustomed to in my experiences with ethnography. We sat and talked until everyone seemed in need of a mid-afternoon caffeine jolt. But looking back, this very first experience in Detroit can now be

seen as foreshadowing this entire dissertation. This was prior to the start of this project, when I was in the middle of researching a gentrifying neighborhood in Kraków, Poland and coming through Detroit on a Saturday as a graduate student tired of Ann Arbor and looking for the closest big city. To have the opportunity to speak with Dabl openly about the history of race in Detroit, to learn from the vantage points of the air and the ground, informed the ways I would see Detroit as I began this project. Perhaps if I had recorded this first conversation I would see all of the themes of the chapters ahead encapsulated in Dabl's introduction to the city.

The spatial foci of this text are pockets of growth and redevelopment in broader spaces of population decline, like the contrast we saw from Dabl's roof. Though my research takes place in Detroit, where the scale of disinvestment is somewhat extreme, readers may recognize these spaces of contrast at different scales on a block in their neighborhood, along a border between a first and second-ring suburb, or in any other spaces where the conditions of concentrated poverty, racial segregation, and population loss exist alongside revitalization efforts or, in some cases, gentrification. I hope that the themes of this dissertation prove to be useful tools in making sense of cultural displacement in other cities around the world, and also for Detroit residents like Dabl in articulating their lost sense of place in the city.

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Detroit is a space of material and symbolic unevenness. As concentrated pockets of the city start to see the effects of revitalization efforts, the majority of the city continues to lose population and resources. This dissertation questions how different types of stakeholders in the city make sense of these changes between the years 2010 and 2017, analyzing competing cultural frames about the meaning of the neighborhood and city across multiple stakeholder groups: long-term residents, large and small-scale real estate developers, city officials who work in redevelopment, and newcomers to the city. I use in-depth interviews, participant observation, and archival data to understand the ways that these narratives about the neighborhood and city are constructed across time. I argue that the meanings of neighborhoods are reflected through mnemonic remembrances of Detroit's Urban Renewal period, as well as different spatial scales of how the concept of gentrification is interpreted. Furthermore, the meaning of the neighborhood becomes more expansive in spaces and times of decline and conversely, more restrictive in spaces and times of growth. This dissertation makes contributions to sociological work on the study of narrative frames, symbolic and spatial boundary work, the social construction of authenticity, and the urban studies literature on spaces of decline and shrinking cities. It is

also meant to serve as a translation tool between these different stakeholder groups in contemporary debates over redevelopment practices.



Figure 1.1 Map of the major geographic locations of this research (Source: Author).

INTRODUCTION

GROWTH AND DECLINE IN SEGREGATED SPACES

"I feel like I've lost my access card." These were the words spoken by a Black¹ teenager in December of 2011 during a public conversation about gentrification in Detroit. The young woman was living with her family in the Cass Corridor –a Detroit neighborhood in the midst of transformation– and was attempting to express her lost sense of belonging there. This phrase could have been indicative of any gentrifying neighborhood. Yet what made it unique is that this particular instance of "gentrification" was happening in a city with just over 20 square miles of vacancy (Davidson 2012) that subsequently underwent the largest municipal bankruptcy filing in United States history (Fletcher 2013). The teenager continued to talk about the dirty looks she received from people who "had just gotten there" and the sense that everything she used to consider home felt like it was slipping out of her fingers. When a member of the audience pressed the teenager for evidence of gentrification, the crowd erupted over the meaning of the word and whether or not feeling "out of place" warranted this label.

¹ Throughout this text, I use the term Black instead of African American based on the recommendation of many of the Detroiters who participated in this study, and I have chosen to capitalize Black but not white, following the work of authors such as Touré (2012) and Lori L. Tharps (2014). Exceptions to this include quoting informants who use the term African American or citing Census or other demographic data, whereby

In 1985, urbanist Peter Marcuse wrote about the factors of daily life in a gentrifying neighborhood that did not cause immediate displacement but encouraged eventual movement out of the neighborhood due to losing one's sense of place, or what in the instance above the teenager called her "access card." In the context of gentrifying spaces, this sometimes-nebulous loss of collective identity in space has gone by different names: cultural displacement (Hyra 2017), displacement pressure (Mazer and Rankin 2010), and social displacement (Chernoff 1980) to name a few. Studies focused on this phenomenon range from the micro-interactional studies like those popularized by William H. Whyte (1980) on the measurement of welcoming spaces to the meta-level theories of the importance of culture in neighborhood transitions (Atkinson 2002, Zukin 1987, Murray 2017).

This study falls somewhere in the middle: a meso-level approach to understanding conditions of displacement that is neither analyzing specific material changes to the built environment that affect belonging nor solely a theoretical position on the conditions of access. In attempting to strike this balance, I look at the context of one city and ask: what are the cultural narratives about redevelopment mobilized by different types of residents, and how do these narratives shape their experiences of daily life and a sense of ownership over space, accessing what Henri Lefebvre famously called the "right to the city" (1968)?

In *every* public meeting or hearing I have subsequently attended, the notion of access, "sense of place", or the "takeover of a neighborhood" was brought up, either in attempts to legitimize or delegitimize its relationship to development. I heard the anger and fear in long-term residents' voices ("*here we go again*") and the utter confusion amongst developers ("*why wouldn't you want these amenities in your neighborhood?*").

At the time this research began, I knew of only a very small number of residents who had been physically displaced from their apartments for reasons of redevelopment and rising rents (Perry 2017). I also knew dozens (and was aware of thousands) of residents who were being displaced due to foreclosure. Between 2005 and 2015, 1 in every 3 parcels of land within the City of Detroit was foreclosed due to mortgage defaults or unpaid taxes (Kurth and MacDonald 2015). Thus, in addition to seeking out these cultural narratives about redevelopment, I wanted to understand how these narratives were in turn shaped, amplified, or altered due to the unevenness of Detroit's landscape, with small pockets of growth amidst a much broader area of continual population decline, job loss, and vacancy.

My research began with two specific geographies in Detroit, which in turn led me to interviews and ethnographic experiences across the city's 139 square miles. Influenced by the framework of cultural sociologist Lynn Spillman (2002), my goal was to understand how meaning-making happens around pockets of redevelopment, the ways meanings vary, and the effects those meanings have on the residents of Detroit. Though I began with an emphasis on two of Detroit's districts—one experiencing rapid growth and an adjacent area without the same prospect of growth at the time of this research—those borders proved to be porous and malleable both in terms of how Detroit residents experienced a sense of place and how they lived their daily lives. As such, my ethnography became relational (Desmond 2014: 562), focused on “boundaries rather than bounded groups,” allowing me to tease out tensions at these borders and the ways they were navigated by residents, developers, and city officials. This meant I often moved beyond these initial spaces as actors and events necessitated, opening up the processes I

was able to study and questions I was able to address. Boundaries, whether symbolic, geographic, or both, lend shape to our everyday lives (Lamont and Molnar 2002). We understand our sense of self and place in the world through membership in several nested scales of community (Suttles 1972) and who and what we decide to include and exclude from these spaces (Zerubavel 1991). By moving outside of the geographic boundaries that initially narrowed this research perspective, I was able to better understand how residents and stakeholders in redevelopment construct symbolic and geographic boundaries and how these boundaries impacted their perceptions of redevelopment. As the next section details, the most significant boundary in shaping Detroit's redevelopment geography has been and continues to be race (Thomas 1997).

RACE AND RE-URBANIZATION

Robert Fishman (in Fainstein and Campbell 2011) calls the re-urbanization of depopulated city centers the great "Fifth Migration." Within the context of these macro-level demographic trends, researchers have devoted significant attention to urban transformation within and across neighborhoods in transition from decline to growth and what this means for residents, developers, and politicians. Researching this return to the city in 1960s London, sociologist Ruth Glass (1964) noticed a particular pattern whereby, as more middle- and upper-class populations began to move back into London, this "gentry" class would displace long-term renters because of rising property values. This initial study spawned a wide-ranging literature questioning the definition of gentrification, where and when it tends to happen, who gentrifiers are, and most significantly, its outcomes. Whether dealing with the quintessential gentrification context

of Brooklyn's brownstone-lined neighborhoods (Osman 2011), the inner-ring suburbs of Chicago (Charles 2014), or a small New England fishing port (Brown-Saracino 2010), social scientists continue to study gentrification because it serves as an all-encompassing concept for visible shifts in social class, race, and identity that are enacted through the built environment (for an overview of the vast literature in this field, see Brown-Saracino 2010; Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008; Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2010). Yet with this expansion of the literature, some scholars have even foregone the usage of the term altogether, arguing that it is too "chaotic" to fulfill its purpose as a descriptor of neighborhood change (Beauregard 1986).

By demographic standards, there is currently little evidence of a "fifth migration" back to neighborhoods in Detroit. Between 2000 and 2017, U.S. Census data shows that 272,502 residents moved out of the city, equating to roughly a 29% population loss. 6% of this loss occurred between 2010 and 2016, and as late as the year between 2015 and 2016, Detroit's population dropped by 3,541 residents, or an additional half percent. This "fifth migration" metaphor is, however, a useful way to think about broader patterns of return to the city because it signals the history of four previous migrations, and two of consequence for this context: the Great Migration of Black people from the rural South to industrial North stretching from the early 1900s to the 1960s (Grossman 1989) and the process of suburbanization among mostly white middle and upper-class residents away from cities that has accelerated in the postwar era (Jackson 1985). Race as a spatially orienting construct is one of the most critical components of how gentrification is both perceived and enacted in lived experience. However, within gentrification literature, Loretta Lees (2000:394) maintains that, "[d]espite the academic interest in marginality,

there has been relatively little attention to the intersections of race and gentrification." She goes on to argue that this line of research has been paralyzed by superficial binaries between "middle-class gentrifiers/ incomers/ (white) versus working-class residents/ displaced (black)." Notable exceptions to this broader pattern include Mary Pattillo's (2007) study of middle class Black gentrification in Chicago and John Hartigan Jr.'s (1999) investigation of how lower-income whites negotiate their "whiteness" in predominantly Black Detroit. As this dissertation shows, in highly segregated cities such as Detroit, narrative patterns about gentrification still fall along typical racial fault lines of Black and white, even as Detroit's Latino population has grown by 70% between 1990 and 2010 (Llenas 2013). The Black experience of displacement remains the predominant frame for contemporary changes across the city.

Yet even as these narratives operate within traditional binaries, the fundamental *impacts* of gentrification remain contested in sociological literature. Based on his ethnographic work in New York City, sociologist Lance Freeman (2006) argues that many long-term Black residents do not feel as negatively about the gentrification process as is typically assumed of them by researchers. Furthermore, the actual measure of displacement as a structural phenomenon remains in question, particularly when it comes to differentiating between forced removal and voluntary mobility (Freeman 2005). However, the context of Freeman's research suggests that because New York City is a "global" city (Sassen 2001) with a radically different economic history than rust belt cities, it does not serve as a useful comparison for Detroit.

Scholars such as Todd Swanstrom and Hank Webber (2014) have begun to unpack this difference by considering the impact of gentrification in what they term "legacy

cities” (places with significant population loss, high concentrations of poverty, and low household median incomes) such as St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland, and other cities commonly referred to as part of the rust belt. Their research suggests that gentrification takes on a fundamentally different form in legacy cities, arguing that displacement pressures tend to be less severe leading to the creation of racially and economically diverse neighborhoods (Swanstrom 2014).

Given the fact that Detroit has an 82.7% Black or African American population as recently as 2010, and remains highly segregated by race, these findings must be understood in conjunction with literature that captures the intensive segregation evident in Detroit. This work often falls under the broad umbrella of urban inequality (Hirsch 1983, Wacquant [1993] 2008, Massey and Denton 1988) whereby Black communities have been structurally segregated and isolated from job opportunity, safe neighborhoods, and access to strong educational systems. This literature offers insights into both neighborhood decline and growth that are able to step outside of the causal disputes of gentrification literature and speak to how long-term residents negotiate their belonging across the socio-spatial boundaries of race and class.

THE DETROIT CASE

Detroit provides an important case for understanding how long-term residents, developers, organizations, and city officials make sense of and negotiate neighborhood change. While the city is well known for its volatile ties to the automobile industry (Mikelejohn 2000), its extreme population loss (Dewar and Thomas 2013), and its status as the largest city to file for bankruptcy in the United States (Davey 2013), the story of

the most recent wave of revitalization efforts happening within that context and the contestations over those changes remains under-studied. Thomas Sugrue (2005:5) attributes the precipitous postwar decline of Detroit to "the complex and interwoven histories of race, residence, and work." Segregation and racial discrimination in postwar Detroit, like many other U.S. cities, was spatial in character, resulting in the de jure and de facto isolation of the city's Black population in overcrowded, poor neighborhoods with little to no opportunity for relocation (Sugrue 2005). Simultaneously, the availability for jobs within the city decreased dramatically. According to urban economist George Galster (2012:51), "In every twenty-year period since the end of World War II, Detroit lost roughly half its remaining manufacturing jobs... Between 1970 and 2000 alone, the number of jobs in the Detroit's three county suburban ring grew 2 percent per year, on average, while jobs in the city declined by 2 percent annually on average." As city, state, and federal-level politicians began to take note of Detroit's increasing devastation in the post World War II years, policies aimed at stabilizing areas across the city did just the opposite, resulting in further destabilization. Federal Urban Renewal policies beginning in the 1960's perpetuated the place-based discrimination of Blacks in the United States, not just in mortgage and living restrictions but also in destruction of entire neighborhoods and their commercial and retail establishments (for a detailed history of Detroit's Urban Renewal history, see Chapter 1).

The erosion of available jobs and housing, land-use policies that led to active displacement and segregation of the Detroit's Black residents, and the eventual siphoning off of Detroit's white population and their taxes to the surrounding suburban areas led to the narrative now popularized globally about the rise and fall of Detroit. In 2014, 4.9% of

white men and 5.3% of white women in Detroit were unemployed, compared with 14.4% of Black men and 11.9% of Black women (McGraw 2016). Furthermore, American Community Survey data between 2010 and 2014 shows that, although Black-white segregation has declined 11% since 2000, it is still the 4th most segregated metropolitan region in the United States (Frey 2015).

Through the study of de-populating, de-industrializing spaces such as Detroit, urban scholars as well as municipal officials and community members are now beginning to think of cities' futures outside of the assumptions of perpetual growth (Dewar and Thomas 2013). The theoretical formulation of Detroit-like cities first began with architect Philipp Oswalt (2005), who researched the characteristics of "shrinkage" through four archetypal cities: Detroit in the United States, Manchester/ Liverpool in England, Ivanovo in Russia, and Halle/ Leipzig in Germany. Work within the body of literature on shrinking cities focuses on what problems and solutions come out of such extreme population shrinkage (as opposed to territorial shrinkage). Because population loss happens without territorial shrinkage, this body of literature is closely linked to issues of infrastructural decline and property abandonment, the loss of employment opportunities, and regional attempts at restructuring governance in response to "shrinkage."

Amidst this protracted decline, both real physical change and the perception of what "Detroit" represents have undergone significant transformations in the last decade. The city motto for Detroit ("We Hope for Better Things; It Shall Rise from the Ashes") was initially a reference to the fire that razed the city in 1805 (Detroit Historical Society 2013). Over many different periods of Detroit's postwar history, this phrase has been resurrected as an axiom that fits comfortably with the city's narrative of overcoming

hardship, resurrected more recently alongside the popular slogan “Detroit Hustles Harder.” While the majority of Detroit’s geography has lost population rapidly since 2000, small portions of the city are not only showing increases in population in this most recent ten-year time frame, but they are also experiencing disproportionate levels of financial investment and media attention as described earlier in this chapter. A recent report published by the Hudson-Webber Foundation highlights a 7.2 square mile stretch of the city named by its authors as "Greater Downtown Detroit." This area has lost residents at half the rate of the remainder of the city, and the populations between the ages of 18-24 and 55 and over have both increased as shares of the overall population (Ali et.al. 2013). While this report was no doubt an attempt to encourage significant investment exclusively in this "greater downtown" area, it does demonstrate the extreme inequality between these 7.2 square miles and the remaining 131.8 in the city. Martin Murray (2017) calls these, “highly uneven spatial landscapes increasingly divided between upscale sites of luxury and vast zones of deprivation.” Detroit in 2017 is truly representative of this unevenness, both in socio-economic conditions and the materiality of the built environment.

Given local circumstances, Detroit and other places that have experienced population decline complicate the economic and sociological understanding of gentrification as it typically happens in other locations. First, at this moment in Detroit's history, the majority of housing loss happens because of foreclosures (Dewar 2009), and it remains unclear whether long-term residents are in danger of the levels of physical displacement spurred by gentrification in more densely populated cities. More people continue to leave the city at a much faster rate than the small numbers of those moving in

(U.S. Census 2010, ACS 2016). This suggests a significantly different atmosphere for understanding expressions of displacement (that may or may not be tied to housing) and the experience of simultaneous redevelopment and depopulation. As subsequent chapters will show, investment in specific spaces within Detroit has been stretched across such a long span of time that growth and decline are widely visible as stark adjacencies across the city. How does this condition change residents' narratives about what redevelopment means and for whom?

Second, the architectural theorist Andrew Herscher (2012:20) argues for an additional type of land valuation beyond use and exchange, which he calls "unreal estate." In this "unreal" valuation of property, "urban territory has slipped through the literal economy... and entered other structure of value, including but not limited to those of creative survival, exploration, play, desire, escape, and imagination... [Becoming part of] other value regimes." If these more recent explorations of (extra-capitalist) value systems are in fact shifting, what we know about these shifting value systems remain limited to journalism documenting the creative undercurrent of Detroit's revitalization (for example, Conlin 2011). Yet this process raises important questions about the impact of "unreal estate" on long-term residents and on how gentrification is understood. In fact, the processes of privileging creativity are often conflated with gentrification itself, because of the many cases of gentrification that name artists as first-wave gentrifiers (Pallagst 2009). This expression of value at a time when the use and exchange values of homes are tenuous for a large number of long-term Detroit residents could compound resentment for newcomers and fan tensions surrounding the changing landscape.

Lastly, Detroit complicates our understanding of the processes by which long-term residents rework the cultural boundaries of their neighborhoods to make sense of belonging and displacement in these blocks undergoing transitions of various types. In areas where the abandonment of property becomes the norm, meaning invested in the built environment takes on a particular potency. Residents begin to take ownership over buildings, parks, storefronts, and homes in their neighborhoods. As this dissertation shows, the presence of extreme physical abandonment across the city significantly alters long-term residents' perceptions about gentrification and whether they see the acts of new gentrifiers in a different light given such abandonment. Long-term residents are forced to articulate new boundaries of meaning and belonging between various blocks, neighborhoods, and even the city itself. Sociologist Andrew Deener (2012:8) calls these collective identifications with the landscape "public culture", meaning "the visible cues that allow us to distinguish the identities of adjacent places from one another." As he argues: "We need more observers on the ground to see how these reconfigurations within and between groups and neighborhoods come about, what local mechanisms help individuals break down barriers and interact in public spaces. (P.244)." This research responds to Deener's call for micro-level ethnographic analysis of placemaking in one of America's most socially divided urban settings.

Within Detroit, the majority of this research was focused on an area called the North End and an area just to the south of the North End, referred to as either Cass Corridor or Midtown depending on the speaker and their length of residence in the city. Figure 1.1 (p. 1) offers context for the scope of this study, as Woodward (in red) runs through the center of these neighborhoods south to north. Cass (in orange), the boulevard

that the Cass Corridor is named after runs parallel to Woodward to the west. Midtown represents a larger territory than the area typically considered the Cass Corridor, though ethnographic observation suggests the terms can be used interchangeably. In general, long-term residents tend to call the area “Cass Corridor” and only refer to it as “Midtown” if they are implying that the benefits of growth in the area have been exclusive or unjust. For newcomers, the two terms are often employed interchangeably, unless a specific effort is being made to align with long-term residents and what they see as the “authentic” neighborhood name (this subject is analyzed in further detail in Chapter 3). The North End is also represented on this map as the territory roughly north and east of the broader Midtown district. I spoke with residents who lived outside of all of these boundaries on this map and still considered themselves as part of the identity that each neighborhood is meant to represent. These toponymic tensions are analyzed throughout the remainder of this text, but for the purposes of introduction, the map may be a useful point of context.²

During the time of this research, the northern segments of the Cass Corridor were rapidly changing to accommodate a new dog park, specialty leather goods stores, and other symbols traditionally associated with the commercial face of gentrification. Additionally, rental prices appeared to be on the rise. In 2009, Midtown rents averaged \$1.25 a square foot, rising to \$1.75 a square foot in 2014 (Reindl 2014). The lower Cass Corridor was also changing at a rapid pace. Its change was more visible to Detroit residents living with the material effects of home abandonment and deterioration. Over

² George Galster (1986) critiques the use of a priori neighborhood boundaries for the purposes of research. In this dissertation, the general boundaries in Figure 1.1 were created as an initial point of reference but are interrogated throughout multiple chapters.

the course of just two years, houses that were not occupied but looked stable deteriorated into structures with caved-in roofs and crumbling porches (for pictures of this rapid deterioration, see Alsup 2016). The North End was also changing, though its change took a different form as intensive federal aid was directed toward vacant and foreclosed housing demolition, leaving much of the remaining landscape pockmarked with open space. The area continued to suffer from depopulation, and the only redevelopment work happened on a house-by-house basis (therefore at a much slower pace than the Cass Corridor).

DEFINING DISPLACEMENT AND CULTURAL CHANGE

While scholars disagree on the timeline of how gentrification unfolds, most agree that the ultimate effect is displacement: the physical removal from one's home due to market forces that create unaffordability for longer-term residents. Once the structural disinvestment of an urban neighborhood reaches a "tipping point" (Smith 1979) whereby the opportunity for profitable redevelopment is once again possible, investors make physical improvements to infrastructure and ultimately force households who cannot afford rising rents out of the neighborhood. In aggregate, displacement is presumed to be the replacing of one social group with another of a higher socioeconomic class, thus constituting the social phenomenon of gentrification.

Despite this emphasis in the literature, few scholars agree on the appropriate strategies to measure displacement. The majority of urban planners and sociologists have emphasized changes in housing affordability as one metric (Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2010). Freeman (2005: 466) suggests that despite this lack of agreement for how to

measure displacement, "a common wisdom nevertheless emerged that gentrification affected preexisting residents primarily by displacing them." As a result, while research into gentrification has generated stacks of literature devoted to its causes, patterns, and outcomes at the aggregate level, relatively little of that work has been devoted to paying close attention to what is really meant by "displacement" and how that effect is differentiated across different kinds of places. Instead, displacement remains an assumed outcome.

The physical pricing out of one's neighborhood is perhaps the most straightforward mechanism for understanding the impact of gentrification but relies heavily on assumptions about long-term residents' vulnerability without asking these questions of long-term residents themselves, particularly in cities with high rates of residential segregation. To date, few have attempted to broaden the scope of what is meant by displacement. Sociologist Michael Chernoff (1980:209), writing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, coined the term "social displacement" to articulate the non-economic and political influences of displacement in the patterns of commercial district merchants in Atlanta. He defines social displacement as:

...the replacement of one group by another, in some relatively bounded geographic area, in terms of prestige and power. This includes the ability to affect decisions and policies in the area, to set goals and priorities, and to be recognized by outsiders as the legitimate spokesmen for the area.

Chernoff suggests at the end of his text that displacement from a neighborhood may not result from economic pressures, but instead from the pressure felt through the community's loss of prestige and power. By focusing on one Atlanta neighborhood, he was able to gain in-depth insight into perceptions about commercial change in that

particular community and the ways these social factors structured economic and geographic decision-making.

Michael Chernoff's "social displacement" usefully incorporates long-term residents' sense of political and community influence into the realm of commercial redevelopment, arguing that a loss of one's political voice yields significant consequences for residents' sense of belonging. However, it stops short of incorporating the multitude of ways that race, class, affordability, taste, and other rich sociological concepts are inflected through the built environment of their neighborhoods. A new coffee shop (Meltzer and Schuetz 2012) in a developing neighborhood may lead to a sense of Chernoff's social displacement among residents, just as a group of in-movers who have started a community garden in a public park previously serving as a de facto BBQ spot for neighbors might raise flags for long-term residents about the neighborhood changing. By approaching this concept from the perspectives of multiple differing groups of actors, this research evaluates how various stakeholders draw meaning from the abandonment, replacement, or maintenance of these sites. These sites therefore damage, alter, and amplify the way local residents narrate their lives in relation to the neighborhood, the city, each other, and in relation to newcomers.

Since Chernoff's initial work and the explosion of gentrification literature thereafter, relatively little work has been done to advance his concept of social displacement. The exception is that of Richard E. Ocejo (2011), who has resurrected Chernoff's work as a means of understanding commercial redevelopment patterns and their relationship with attachment to place in New York's Lower East Side. Ocejo argues that "an understudied facet of gentrification is the cultural impact of its commercial

developments," (2011; 285). By focusing on a group of "first wave" gentrifiers who are now considered long-term residents experiencing a new wave of gentrification, Ocejo draws meaningful linkages across residents' experiences to elaborate on the influence of collective memory (Halbwachs [1941] 1992) and nostalgia for previous commercial establishments on the Lower East Side.

Although many important sociological studies emphasize the idea of “sense of place,” few interrogate how meaning around this concept is constructed beyond a normative ideal (Young1986). This is a dissertation that coheres around these "sense of place" tensions, for which I utilize the term "cultural displacement." Culture, as defined by Ann Swidler (1986: 273), refers to the “symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life.” These “symbolic vehicles” make the social lives of individuals meaningful through their expression in narratives, ideologies, memories, tastes, and other collective representations and classifications. As Swidler argues, culture is not merely a context to live within, but actually a tool kit drawn upon to inform action.

Rowland Atkinson (2000: 321 –322). traces a number of small changes that happen as part of a neighborhood often perceived as improving that can constitute a 'geography of privilege' from which original residents feel separated. The most complete development of the concept of cultural displacement to date comes from Derek Hyra (2017). Studying a gentrifying neighborhood in Washington D.C., Hyra defines cultural displacement as that which,

Occurs when the norms, behaviours and values of the new resident cohort dominate and prevail over the tastes and preferences of long-term residents

(Zukin, 2010). While there can be points of common ground between old and new residents in redeveloping neighbourhoods, often newcomers seek to establish new norms, behaviours and amenities that align with their desires (Brown-Saracino, 2009). If this occurs long-term residents may find their community does not resemble the place they once knew and may no longer identify with their neighbourhood (Abramson et al., 2006). With decreased attachment to place, low- and moderate-income residents might opt to leave economically transitioning neighbourhoods, converting them rapidly into homogenous enclaves, instead of integrated, mixed-income neighbourhoods (Maly, 2005).

Both Hyra and my own ethnographies were conducted over the same time period, making Washington D.C. a compelling point of comparison for Detroit. While many of the experiences that Hyra details of cultural displacement in his text arguably reflect similar tensions as that of Detroit, Hyra argues that cultural displacement first depends on political displacement of long-term residents whereby newcomers are able to elect officials to represent their interests. A brief comparison of significant variables across the two cities is outlined in the table below.

Variable (2016 American Community Survey)	Washington, D.C.	Detroit
Population Estimates	681,170	672,795
Total Square Feet (x 1000)	61.05	138.75
% below poverty level	18	40.3
% Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	54.6	13.5
Median Household Income	\$70,848	\$25,746
Dissimilarity Index (Metro)	66.2 (#88 in U.S.)	86.7 (#2 in U.S.)
Dissimilarity Index (City)	81.5	63.3
% Black/ African American	48.9	80.1

D.C. and Detroit have close to the same population, but the geography of Detroit is over double the square feet of D.C. The percentage of Blacks remains significantly higher in Detroit as compared to Hyra's "cappuccino city," though this is in itself a reflection of the very political displacement he analyzes. Chapter 1 of this dissertation deals with the context of political displacement in Detroit in much greater detail. As Hyra explains, D.C.'s U Street/ Shaw neighborhood was rapidly gentrifying during the time of his research. In Detroit, gentrification effects are taking hold at a significantly slower pace, such that I was able to isolate the cultural frames that are mobilized while residents remained in place. Second, Hyra emphasizes cultural displacement as the outcome of competing sets of norms, behaviors, and values in gentrifying neighborhoods. In this sense, he is able to analyze tensions around, for example, the construction of a new dog park or additional bike infrastructure in the neighborhood. Because I begin my research by asking how these types of debates emerge in the absence of significant infrastructure investments, I analyze the cultural narratives about space and redevelopment that different types of actors mobilize to make sense of neighborhood change as a whole. Thus, even when discussing infrastructure projects (see the discussion chapter for one example) the importance of history and memory emerge as critical components of these narrative frameworks. The focus of the dissertation is how long-term residents, developers, and city officials construct meaning about the neighborhood in question, their sense of belonging and collective identity within it, and how this relates to adjacent neighborhoods around the city. This broader understanding of displacement incorporates the specific histories of race, class, and place as they relate to neighborhood and citywide changes.

METHODS AND DATA

In order to access cultural narratives about redevelopment, I use the distinctive but interrelated approaches of framing (Goffman 1974; Snow and Benford 1992) and narrative analysis (Taylor 1989; Somers 1994). Both studies argue that social actors and groups unconsciously adopt and adapt frames and narratives that guide their perceptions of reality. Because this study takes the concept of neighborhood, space, and sense of place as central to how redevelopment is understood, I utilize Mario Small's (2004) *Neighborhood Narrative Frames*. Small defines these neighborhood narrative frames as, "continuously shifting but nonetheless concrete sets of categories through which the neighborhood's houses, streets, parks, population, location, families, murals, history, heritage, and institutions are made sense of and understood" (Kindle edition 1004-1005). Though I began with an interest of these narrative frames at the neighborhood level, my analysis soon expanded in reaction to the way that residents spoke about space at much larger and smaller scales than the neighborhood, often thinking about their space relationally across the entire city or even region.

One of the ways that sociologists are able to access narrative frames is through the analysis of speech acts. Jerolmack and Kahn (2014) have critiqued this practice within qualitative sociological work, arguing that what social actors say are often a poor predictor of what they actually do, which they call the "attitudinal fallacy." This research addresses this challenge at two levels. First, through the use of mixed methods that include extensive participant observation, I am able to trace actual actions and reactions in public to redevelopment projects as they match in-depth interview data. Second, as Michele Lamont (1992:18) argues in her study of symbolic boundaries, speech acts are themselves

a type of behavioral data because these boundaries are often enacted at the discursive level. I am interested not in the actual stories people tell me, but rather *how* these narratives about redevelopment are transmitted and articulated, taking speech as an act of interpretation and not information in and of itself.

The study of neighborhood change is necessarily a moving target with no clear end point. For this dissertation, my aim was to capture the dynamism of neighborhood change over an extended period of time, which allowed me to look for emergent patterns in the ways residents make sense of change in their neighborhoods but also the ways that these very narratives changed over time. This research spanned a seven-year period (2010-2017) during which I lived, researched, and worked in Detroit. This allowed for sufficient time between the start and end of data collection to recognize a considerable shift in public perceptions of gentrification in Detroit as well as important shifts in business development in the Cass Corridor, the broader Midtown area, and the North End.

To collect the evidence for this study, I conducted archival research, in-depth interviews, and participant observation as a resident and an urban planner working for the City of Detroit. I used a range of local newspaper, magazine, and online magazine articles published about redevelopment or gentrification as primary resources for the clarification of ideological debates around neighborhood change (Zubrzycki 2014: 30). To historicize neighborhood names, I read hundreds of newspaper articles from publication start dates up to the present to trace patterns of name usage in reporting. I also used all existing master plan documents— including master plan updates and reports made to City Council— from the City of Detroit’s archives to understand how planners named

particular places and conceived of redevelopment practice across the decades. The earliest of these public documents was written in 1910, and the most recent dates 2013. When available, I gathered meeting minutes, notes, and any public record taken during community engagement efforts around any major urban planning project across the span of this research.

For three years of this research, I worked for the City of Detroit as an urban planner, first in the Planning and Development Department and then in the city's General Services Department. In the first position I was hired to evaluate the overlap between the City of Detroit 2009 Master Plan, the Detroit Future City Framework, the Community Development Advocates of Detroit planning process, and any other existing planning strategies at the neighborhood level (for more on these plans, see Chapter 1). This was often an act of translation, where I would bring multiple stakeholders into a room to discuss the differences and similarities across their plans, how those were generated, and how to move forward in thinking about a particular neighborhood plan. Following this, I was hired by the City of Detroit's General Services Department, a department that includes as part of its mandate the planning of parks and open space. I was brought on to complete the Parks and Recreation Improvement Plan, which served as a document to guide decision-making and prioritization of capital improvements across the city's 308 parks. Both of these ethnographic experiences generated a profound understanding of urban planning history in Detroit, the daily challenges of city bureaucracy, and most importantly for this research, the perception of residents toward urban planners and urban planners own understanding of their work. Over that time I attended and hosted hundreds of meetings and public conversations about neighborhood change. These ranged from

formal city council hearings and official city public engagement to neighborhood events, block club meetings, and speaker series events where the Q&A portion of the event was treated as primary data and reflected in field notes.

I also conducted formal and informal interviews with long-term residents, developers, non-profit leaders, and city officials in an effort to understand the differing perceptions of redevelopment and the ways that personal histories have influenced their perceptions of and reactions to change in Detroit. Each of these categories of stakeholders served as ideal types (Weber 1949: 90) to better understand various perspectives on redevelopment. In practice, many of these individuals represented a mix of two or even all three categories. For example, multiple interviewees worked for the City government, had lived in the area of the study for over ten years, and also rehabilitated other properties for profit within the same area. In recognition of this cross-pollination, I would often ask interviewees how they thought that certain portions of their work were perceived by different groups of stakeholders. For interviews with residents of the North End and Cass Corridor neighborhoods, “long-term” was defined as over ten years in order to capture previous waves of neighborhood change as well as the perspectives of lifelong Detroiters. I made the decision to interview majority long-term residents because much of the rich gentrification literature on cultural perceptions of newcomers seemed to outweigh that of the cultural perceptions of long-term residents.

I conducted interviews with small-scale developers who owned a number of properties in these neighborhoods and carried out one interview with a representative of Olympia Development of Michigan (one of the largest developers in Detroit). I also sat down with former and current city employees to fill in gaps in understanding. Formal

interviews were all semi-structured and influenced by Rick Grannis (2009) whose work offers thorough guidance for how sociologists can take the concept of place seriously when studying neighborhood development. Questions were shaped with the intention of bridging gaps between spatial understanding of place as well as the temporal aspects of neighborhood change over time. Interviewees were asked about their block or area (the words “gentrification” and “neighborhood” were both explicitly avoided unless directly utilized by the interviewee) ten years in the past, today, and with an eye toward the future.

As part of formal interviews, I would incorporate a cognitive mapping exercise (Soini 2001) that asked residents to draw the area they have been referencing throughout our conversation (whether block, neighborhood, district, or some other name). We would then use these maps to bolster the questions in the interview portion of the conversation, by discussing their decisions to draw certain boundaries, note significant institutions and places that may no longer exist, etc. Ultimately, these maps were most useful to understand how residents conceive of their own sense of neighborhood, but were only used in combination with interviews rather than as primary sources themselves (Galster 1986). Though the cognitive maps generated by this research served more to bolster conversation, city-generated and historical maps constituted a significant part of my archival work. As Elizabeth Jean Wood (2003: 46) argues in her own ethnographic work using cognitive mapping, “[m]aps not only reflect cultural practices of their producers, revealed by analyzing what is included and excluded... they may also have enduring cultural consequences.” I used these maps to analyze the boundaries of areas to focus

development energy, how to determine where federal funding has been used, and how they relate to residents' spatialized "sense of place" today.

MEAGAN ELLIOTT, GENTRIFIER

In the final section of this introduction, I analyze my own role in the process of development underway in contemporary Detroit. Schlichten and Patch (2014) have argued that while most urbanists criticize the negative effects of gentrification, they are gentrifiers themselves, thereby creating artificial distance from their subject matter by not examining their own relationship to this process. Socially locating oneself as a gentrifier without fully unpacking this meaning in context, quoting Nygreen (2009:19), can be "benignly patronizing at best, and oppressive at worst." As a young, white, female, Ph.D. candidate, I moved to Detroit acutely aware of my privilege. It was this overt privilege that initially drew me to study the concept of gentrification, as I often heard polarizing views on whether this process was unfolding across Detroit or not, and whether it was positive or negative. Mitchell Duneier (1999: 338), in the methodological appendix to *Sidewalk* noted:

One of the things [Howard S. Becker] taught me ... is that most social processes have a structure that comes close to insuring that a certain set of situations will arise over time...This is why investigators like myself sometimes can learn about a social world despite not having had the rapport we thought we had, and despite the fact that we occupy social positions quite distinct from the persons we write about.

While the perspectives of those whose voices are represented in this dissertation will never be rendered fully transparent, I kept a separate journal throughout the course of this research as a space to reflect on my own positionality and struggles with representation or trust, that I drew upon heavily when reflecting on my role as a gentrifier.

In their work on gentrification, Schlichtmann, Patch, and Hill (2017: 26-37) developed what they call a “multi-tool” to assist researchers in reflecting on their own positionality and being more honest and critical in analyzing the ways this positionality affects the context and conclusions of their research. I originally used this tool to create a methodological appendix to my research, because it seemed self-indulgent and disproportionately long as part of the introduction to work through all of the elements of their suggested analysis. However, given my methodological emphasis on long-term Detroit residents whose experiences look far different from my own, the inclusion of this as part of the introduction became more and more necessary. Narrating my personal experiences in Detroit as a gentrifier helped to bring complexity to my circumstances, something that interviewees would often excuse me from, saying I was “different” than the blanket white gentrifier that they were talking about. If my goal was to not only represent the perspectives of long-term, mostly Black residents, but also be able to speak to the interplay that happens between those residents and people like myself, my own circumstances as a gentrifier are actually foundational to the analysis of this dissertation.

In seven years in Detroit, I moved six times, making a number of different housing choices along the way. My own status as gentrifier is what drove me to understand long-term residents perceptions of change rather than structuring this research to focus on newcomers, as many excellent recent accounts had already done (see Lees, Slater, Wyly 2010:127-188 for an overview). However, as someone who fits the category of gentrifier across multiple dimensions, it felt both disingenuous and non-rigorous not to address my status in some way beyond the simple statement of my social location as a disclaimer at the start of this text. I therefore use the "analytical multi-tool" to evaluate

my own subject position as gentrifier as a way to begin this dissertation. This auto-ethnographic exercise is an opportunity to reflexively interrogate my own agency as part of the structures around me, and cohere around themes in my own life in Detroit and how they relate to the larger themes of this dissertation. The tool of analysis, "encompasses seven facets of housing choice: monetary, practical, aesthetic, amenity, community, cultural authenticity, and flexibility," (Ibid. 2017). In what follows, I use this tool to reflect on my own housing choices and how they fit into larger patterns of change in Detroit during the time of this research.

When I first moved to Detroit, I was three years into my sociology Ph.D. program at the University of Michigan and one semester into my Master's in Urban Planning. Originally from Houston, Texas, I found Ann Arbor, Michigan to be a bit too small and dependent on the mercurial schedules of the university semester. As trips into Detroit became more frequent, I found myself wanting to live in Detroit and work in Ann Arbor, eventually shifting the course of my research geography to actually focus on Detroit. I first moved into a house in Southwest Detroit with two other women in graduate programs at U of M that cost \$250 a month. The house was part of an "intentional community," where residents emphasized social cohesion among members of the community and an ethic of teamwork when it came to household maintenance. It was only after attending my first community potluck that I realized that this "intentionality" was religious in nature. Though my lack of religious affiliation did not keep me from being able to live there, it did make me personally uncomfortable.

I also felt unsafe in this house, which was a feeling shaped by the insights of neighbors much more than any actual experiences I had while living there. On several

occasions I would walk up my block to the main street in the middle of the day, and other neighbors would slow down in their car, warning me not to walk by myself. Though I was never victimized and actually did not feel particularly unsafe in those instances, eventually the warnings from residents and family members and the unintentional joining of an intentional community got to me. I ended up moving a month and a half later to an apartment in New Center, just north of the broader Midtown area. In this area I was off of the ground floor and therefore felt much better about my personal safety, even though I was now living alone. But as I would take walks or occasionally go on runs in the neighborhood, the same warnings would be yelled to me from neighbors' porches. Sometimes I asked why, and was told just what I suspected, that it had to do with "being a white girl." When I finally moved to a small room in the neighborhood of Corktown, just West of downtown, this was the first time I did not experience this type of well-intentioned neighborhood vigilance. Rather than being a safer neighborhood, I suspect this was attributed to the fact that Corktown has a much higher population of white residents than the other two neighborhoods I had lived in previously.

When I shifted the focus of my research from Kraków, Poland to Detroit, I decided to focus on the Cass Corridor and North End neighborhoods of the city. I moved to an apartment in the Cass Corridor, where I again started being called out on the street, most memorably on a walk one block from my apartment when an elderly woman told me that I "had better get on home before something bad happens." When deciding to move in with my partner, we chose an apartment in Corktown that we lived in for a little over one year. It was the first apartment of six created in the space of a former three-story pawnshop. Apartments were built on the upper two floors with a restaurant on the first

floor called Gold Cash Gold (this development is written about extensively in Chapter 3). As referenced in the opening of this chapter, the initial appeal of Corktown was its “third places,” Ray Oldenburg's (1999) concept of the places that are not home and not work but where significant social interaction occurs. Schlichtman, Patch, and Hill distinguish between third places of this type and redistributive amenities that are supposed to be provided by government such as parks and tree-lined sidewalks.³ The use value of these spaces (like bars and restaurants) was initially for important social interaction. This included the Gaelic League, where my first generation Irish mother-in-law and ancestrally Irish father-in-law grew up going to dances and to this day attend for concerts and ceilis. We also used these third places as working space, as neither my partner nor I had an office in Detroit. After first moving to Corktown and looking for a space to get some work done outside of the house, I brought a few journal articles to an old neighborhood sports bar. The owner and bartenders at this bar chatted with me and told me that whenever I needed a place to work I should feel comfortable to come there. I continued to go there, as well as other coffee shops, sandwich places, and restaurants in the neighborhood on a regular rotation. When our son Levi was born and refused to take a bottle, I relied on places nearby to be able to work that were close enough that I could rush home every other hour to feed him.

As the initial paragraph of this section suggests, one of the more sensitive decisions of my housing choices was that I didn't want to live in a place where I was

³ Schlichtman, Patch, and Hill (2017) make the unquestioned assumption here that amenities such as parks, sidewalks, and street trees are government provisions. This assumption has been called into question as increasingly these types of traditionally public spaces have undergone shifts in ownership, management, and control (Murray 2017; Wolch, Wilson, and Fehrenbach 2005; Grimsey and Lewis 2007; Low, Taplin, and Scheld 2005).

constantly being warned or verbally harassed for sticking out or not belonging. This had mostly to do with race and visible cues to my middle class status. As a Corktown resident, I found my own ideal balance of urban anonymity (Simmel 1903) and community. Corktown's population has historically retained a higher proportion of white residents even as white residents moved out of most other areas of the city. While the number of residents of color in Corktown was higher than any suburban community, within Detroit my status as a white woman was far less noticeable than it was in other areas of the city. This was an extremely privileged choice to "want to be able to blend in " and I wrote about this decision often in my field notes.

Living in Corktown, I became friends with several small business owners who lived nearby and was struck by the ethos of intentionality among private enterprise. Though not every business owner's impact on the neighborhood was what they thought or even hoped for, each was intentional about their being located in Detroit and their role in cultivating a strong neighborhood. I found this to be a romantic notion of the idea of business, but had also never lived anywhere where intentionality of place was so strongly articulated among newcomers. On walks around the neighborhood, I was routinely stopped by residents wanting to chat or simply saying hello, to the extent that visiting friends and relatives often noted the contrast to their own hometowns or neighborhoods.

Members of the business and development communities often point to gentrifying neighborhoods as enhancing racial and economic diversity. But as Evelyn Perry (2017) points out in her study of one Milwaukee neighborhood, diversity does not equate with interaction. Diverse patrons frequent the numerous bars and restaurants in the neighborhood, and the neighborhood is also home to a diversity of races and ethnicities.

In 2015, the neighborhood was 35.2% Hispanic or Latino, 32.7% White alone, and 29.6% Black or African American alone (U.S. Census 2015). The median household income for the same year was just over \$40,000, with 13.5% of residents making less than \$10,000 a year and 22% making between \$60,000 and \$100,000. Corktown is also an important neighborhood for the region's homeless population, as a major homeless shelter is on the far western end of the neighborhood and a longstanding soup kitchen and church is located on the far eastern end of the neighborhood. As one neighbor and long-term resident put it: "New people think that there are homeless folks scopin' out their house or trying to cause trouble. They are just walking to the soup kitchen from the shelter and back." Despite the racial and economic diversity of the neighborhood as a whole, many spaces remain self-segregating, primarily by class. Our decision to eventually buy a condo came from fears of our own displacement. We had seen rising rents (a friend living two blocks away had just lost her apartment when rates were doubled overnight) and were certain that at least for the foreseeable future we would be living in Detroit. We began the search for a property that would allow us to stay in the neighborhood and not have to worry about the maintenance or rehabilitation of a single-family home. At the time, the condo market across Detroit was already so strong that places were bought the same day they were put on the market with full cash offers far higher than the listing prices. We ultimately purchased a condo from a friend and neighbor who agreed to sell to us directly instead of putting the home on the market (which would result in a bidding war and our inability to purchase). The following year, a unit in our building sold for the highest price per square foot of anywhere in Detroit, establishing what was clearly a "condo bubble" in the city. At the time, my mother would come in town for longer

periods of time to help care for our new son, Levi. He was beginning to crawl, and we knew our needs for space would become more and more pressing the older that he became, which meant our housing search started when we feel like we had just settled into our condo. We knew selling in the midst of this condo bubble would be an opportunity for us to get the space we needed with a new place.

Redistributive amenities such as parks and tree-lined sidewalks and commercial amenities (for grocery needs and work space) were extremely important in our search for housing. Corktown in this regard actually ranked lower for us. Having written the master plan for how to prioritize park improvements, I was aware of the lack of prioritization of Corktown parks. The reasons for this were that the overall density around these parks was much lower because of its historically industrial landscape, and equally important, the efforts being taken on by the residents and businesses in the area meant that this neighborhood had more social capital and was therefore less "in need" of immediate park improvements. In spite of this lack of redistributive amenities, we still had strong personal attachments to the neighborhood. When a house came up for sale right around the corner from our condo, on a tree-lined street with multiple other young families, we jumped at the opportunity.

When we put in an offer on what is now our home, I included a letter, in large part because I assumed our offer would not be competitive. The letter talked about the meaning of Corktown coming from two residents who love their current home and wish they didn't have to leave but knew they needed more space. I wrote about the fact that my husband's grandfather came from Ireland to live in Corktown two generations ago, that I served on the board of a neighborhood park conservancy, and our involvement in creating

public spaces that could be used by all residents in the neighborhood. All of this, though potentially saccharine, was very sincere in relation to our reasons for deciding to stay in this neighborhood. It also read like a manifesto for the "entrenched gentrifier who cares about local meaning, heritage, history, and people and... desires to be politically and socially involved in these local institutions without treating them as a museum piece," (Schlichtman, Patch, Hill 2017). The offer was accepted and we moved during the final months of drafting this dissertation.

Corktown relies on its status as "Detroit's Oldest Neighborhood," a campaign that has been in effect since the installation of signposts with that slogan and the beginning of the historic home tour, both in 1987. Records dating the naming and boundaries of the area generally considered Corktown date back to 1884; the neighborhood was named after a wave of Irish immigrants, many of whom came from County Cork in Ireland, who crowded into dense housing to the west of downtown within the parish of the Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church. By 1900 residents from the Island of Malta were beginning to settle in Corktown, followed by a larger concentration of Latinos in the 1920's. While the Corktown neighborhood perpetuates its status as a welcoming part of town, home to many layers of immigration, it relies most heavily on the status of the home of the Irish immigrant as the aesthetic backbone of the neighborhood's identity.

In 1978, Corktown was added to the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places and became a city-recognized historic district by 1984 (which offered further protection against housing demolitions). Schlichtman, Patch, and Hill offer a laundry list of sociologists who include descriptions of their homes and exterior and interior aesthetic facets in research on gentrification. While I do not consider large

industrial lofts or Queen Anne Victorian homes as my ideal architectural style, both offered us a context of neighbors in close proximity, which was a characteristic we greatly appreciated.

The "flexibility" dimension of a gentrifier's motivations for living in a gentrifying neighborhood are constituted by suboptimal "infrastructure, cultural unfamiliarity, and danger," (36-37). These are all in some ways understood to be negative traits in housing choice, but that might even be preferable to a gentrifier's taste, as many have documented the idea of "grit" in relation to actual or perceived crime as one of the cultural drivers of gentrifying neighborhoods. Elements that are considered part of this category likely had the least influence on my choices. While I was aware of the high number of petty theft crimes in the neighborhood, I cared more about the lower level of violent crimes than the overall perception of danger. Even so, upon moving into our home, we installed an alarm system. Although a lack of safety was not a driver in our housing choices, as an urban planner and sociologist, the idea of suboptimal infrastructure in my own neighborhood was perhaps an important factor. I felt driven to treat this as a challenge and to learn from a municipal perspective how city services are improved in the long term.

The individual assemblage of circumstances leading to my gentrifier status cannot be replicated. Even so, given that the majority of Detroit residents do not have the privilege of making the same housing choices detailed above (Sharkey 2013), each choice along these seven dimensions of analysis reflects an intersection between the self and society, representative of other newcomers to Detroit who have made similar choices within this context. Consequently, these last few pages can be deployed strategically throughout the rest of the text to understand both my own perspective when representing

other voices and also the corresponding cultural framework of other gentrifiers when discussing meaning-making among long-term residents.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The chapters of this dissertation trace different threads of how cultural narratives about redevelopment are constructed and mobilized to help the reader understand the breadth of their complexity from an ethnographic and socio-historical perspective. Chapter 1 sets the context for how development is talked about in Detroit. I first historicize Urban Renewal and the way it is collectively remembered in the present in conversations about redevelopment. While Urban Renewal is remembered as an uncontested negative era in contemporary Detroit, this section distinguishes the actual history of the Urban Renewal era in Detroit and the displacement of Black residents from the ways it is mobilized in contemporary debates about change and the fear of displacement. I then analyze contemporary public narratives of gentrification to make sense of how neighborhood change is perceived. As I argue, how people talk about the term gentrification matters, because it highlights different scales of what redevelopment means, to whom, and how it can be measured as successful or not. Finally, I examine political representation in Detroit and how emergency financial management and planning fatigue represent two outcomes of the loss of political agency within the city, thereby shaping reactions to development proposals. These three perspectives lay the groundwork for contemporary debates on neighborhood change in Detroit.

Chapter 2 focuses on the experiences of long-term Black Detroiters who have seen their neighborhoods lose population over many decades. As part of that process, residents' sense of what constitutes the neighborhood becomes more and more expansive

to accommodate a broader geography that reflects a diasporic sense of identity and a necessarily larger radius for their “daily round” (Massey and Denton 1988). This finding is especially significant with regard to race and memories of Urban Renewal, as long-term Black residents often talked about “their neighborhood” or “the neighborhoods” as a proxy for other Black residents. This suggests that regardless of the type of redevelopment intervention (state-led or market-led, vacant space or infill) long-term residents will reflect their interpretations of these projects through these expanded neighborhood narrative frames.

Chapter 3 analyzes the opposite process: as a neighborhood receives more capital investments and newcomers relocating to the area, the boundaries around the neighborhood begin to contract. This chapter focuses on the toponymy (place-naming) and boundary-making of mostly the Cass Corridor/ Midtown area, both among long-term residents wishing to celebrate their cultural heritage and newcomers seeking to align themselves with an authentic image of the neighborhood. This chapter also includes analysis of two specific redevelopment projects whose façades reflect the cultural debates at play across the city as it relates to choices about authenticity and fraught efforts to claim heritage when it is culturally valuable or economically profitable.

The final discussion chapter utilizes the case of the new Red Wings hockey arena as an application of all of the arguments dealt with in this text. In it I draw out the importance of temporal frames, showing that what actors consider the “starting point” of a redevelopment project can be critical to the way it is interpreted. I conclude with the implications of this research for sociologists, urban researchers, and urban planning practitioners.

CHAPTER ONE

DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRUST

On May 31, 2017, Detroit's Mayor Mike Duggan walked on stage at the packed auditorium of the Mackinac Policy Conference. To a crowd of majority white, majority Republican, majority non-Detroit conference attendees, Duggan proceeded to share Detroit's history of structural inequality by detailing the impacts of decades of racist policy decisions on Black Detroiters. In a meeting the following week, Planning Director Maurice Cox said, " This was the Mayor's definitive race speech. I don't think anyone knew it would be, especially in THAT crowd. But it was, and it was delivered perfectly."

Duggan began his speech by talking about the past few years of his administration's work, centered on the delivery of city services like making sure the street lights were on, the grass was cut, and the buses were running. He then said,

[N]ow what kind of a city do we want to be and is there a vision? I want to talk to you today about that vision, but in order to do that we've got to go back into our history because the way Detroit looks today is directly rooted in planning decisions that the leaders of this community made in the 1940's and the 1950's. That was the last period of growth in the city, and as I'm going to show you, unfortunately, many of those decisions were rooted in racial discrimination. And when you see the facts, you will understand what I'm talking about.... We're in the first period of growth in 50/ 60 years. People moving back. We have a chance to plan growth for the first time in a half century.

Duggan then delivered a surprisingly academic lecture, explaining the Federal Housing

Administration mortgage lending process, maps redlining the Black neighborhoods of Detroit, the Supreme Court case of Shelley V. Kramer that came out of Detroit and ruled restrictive covenants unlawful, the federal government's acceleration of movement to the suburbs, the razing of Detroit's majority Black Paradise Valley and Black Bottom neighborhoods during Urban Renewal, and the displaced renters of those two neighborhoods. In his words, "these experiences are very much in the consciousness of Detroiters, passed down from generation to generation. In many cases we have folks who still remember them."

Duggan then pivoted from this point by point breakdown of Detroit's history of Black disenfranchisement to a conversation about gentrification:

And so you say okay well how does that relate to Detroit today? So you look around the country, and you look at Brooklyn. And nobody ten years ago could have imagined this but minority families are being pushed out in huge numbers with the rapid development. Go over to Washington D.C. and see what happened with the developments going on there... (*shows maps of D.C.'s black population 20 years ago and today*). Look at the number of minorities that have been pushed out by a lack of planning when growth was coming. And so what we are trying to do is say this: can't happen here. Right? Well we watched this [happen here].

Duggan then told conference attendees about his own experience watching a building full of seniors get evicted from their apartments downtown, and the impact this had on his own perception of where we were as a city in relation to gentrification. He concluded his speech by talking through an 8-point plan for how he wanted to guarantee that Detroit moving forward would not repeat the mistakes of its past.

[I]f you think about the fact that in the middle of this climate and the middle of people being thrown out on Griswold and the middle of this sense that things were changing, the voters of Detroit elected me as the mayor. The African American community voted for me and I can't tell you what an enormous responsibility that feels like because people believed that I would deal with this fairly.

Here Duggan made a connection to the fact that as a white male, during a time of high tension over the growth of certain spaces within the city, he was elected to the office of the Mayor because he had gained trust with Black voters. The concept of trust was reinforced throughout the entirety of the speech, which was no doubt a savvy political move during an election year. Even so, with this speech Duggan tapped into some of the most enduring themes of redevelopment in Detroit across the last century and the main themes of this chapter: memories of Urban Renewal, contemporary fears about gentrification, and a persistent lack of trust among Detroit's Black residents.

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the work of narrative framing in Detroit. Rather than arguing that gentrification is a process happening in certain places and with somewhat guaranteed effects, I problematize that approach and instead examine the various ways in which people emplace (Gieryn 2000) meaning on these spaces of redevelopment through varying logics of what gentrification is and does, thereby setting the context for how Detroit residents make sense of the concept of redevelopment practices. I start with a history of Detroit's Urban Renewal and the ways that memories of Urban Renewal are resuscitated in present redevelopment debates. I then turn to an analysis of local media coverage about gentrification, supplemented by ethnographic and academic voices, examining three disparate narratives for the causes and consequences of neighborhood change that draw on the history of redevelopment in the city for context. Finally, I focus on the significance of these narratives for Detroit's long-term Black residents in relation to the concept of trust. This section analyzes political displacement

(Martin 2007; Hyra 2015) and planning fatigue⁴ as two contexts where residents have lost trust in the capacity of government representation and urban planning, and the responses of urban planners to this phenomenon on their own planning practices.

POSTWAR URBAN RENEWAL IN DETROIT

In Mayor Duggan's policy conference speech, he began the story of how Detroit could grow in the future by focusing on the last growth period in Detroit's history: post World War II "Urban Renewal⁵." The legacies of Detroit's experience with federal Urban Renewal policies mirror that of many other cities around the country (Fullilove 2005). Urban Renewal refers to the Housing Act of 1949, which called for a broad number of initiatives related to public housing provision, housing research, rural homeownership financing, and increasing authorization for Federal Housing Administration mortgages. However, when people make reference to Urban Renewal today, they are more specifically calling out Title I of the 1949 act, named "Slum Clearance and Community Development and Redevelopment" (p.3638). The title authorized the use of \$1 billion in loans over a five-year period as well as \$500 million in federal capital grants with the intention of supporting the clearance of slum areas and the preparation of those same sites for redevelopment purposes in America's cities.

Slum clearance was not considered negative in the 1940s because it was assumed

⁴ The term "planning fatigue" is often used by urban planning practitioners and even in academic articles about these practitioner processes (see Griffin, Cramer, and Powers 2014; Horne and Nee 2006 for examples). However, I have not found research to date that goes beyond the assumed empirical existence of this experience to place it in context and analyze its relevance to residents of a neighborhood.

⁵ In this dissertation I have capitalized Urban Renewal to reference the specific period of redevelopment in the United States between the 1940s and 1970s that facilitated slum clearance, major infrastructural projects, and highway building utilizing Title I of 1949 federal funding.

that a program for affordable housing construction accompanied any program of clearance. As urban planning scholar June Manning Thomas argues, “Detroit’s local Black press so regularly championed clearance as a route to new low-income housing that it was almost a continuing story: Negro Housing Desperate, Where is Slum Clearance and Public Housing?” (Thomas 1997: 58). This opinion didn’t last long. It soon became clear that “slum clearance” and “urban renewal” were in fact methods of “Negro Removal” – as it was referred to by many in the late fifties and early sixties (Fullilove 2005)– directly targeting the concentrated neighborhoods of poor, Black residents without methods of relocation or improved housing conditions. Federally backed discriminatory mortgage lending meant that once residents were told to leave their homes (often with only a few weeks’ notice) they typically had no alternatives for where to relocate. Even though Title I required the relocation of displaced persons, in a 1956 report, the Detroit Urban League found these units unsanitary and unsafe (DUL 1956).

Detroit’s planning commission intended to buffer the city’s central business district from unsightly poor neighborhoods that would discourage downtown investment. This was not a purely geographic decision, as Thomas (1997: 58) argues:

One retired planner has recalled that several areas were similarly blighted, including housing west of downtown. The difference? “I guess the practical difference was that the west side was predominantly White and the east side was predominantly Black.” In addition, Planning Director George Emery had stated, at a national planning conference, that in the “colored sections” of the city “there may be less likelihood of organized opposition.”

Detroit’s Cass Corridor was one of these blighted areas, with overcrowding happening at twice the rate of the city overall. However, Cass Corridor’s 1940 population was 99%

White, with an increase of only 3.5% Black residents by the middle of the decade (Census 1940, 1950). The Cass Corridor area was never designated for slum clearance in the same way as the historic and culturally rich Black Bottom neighborhood was, although it did later suffer the effects of a nearby slum clearance in downtown's "skid row" as well as the significant impacts of multiple highways on all sides of the neighborhood.⁶

In 1951, the planning department of the City of Detroit created a master plan oriented toward the mapping of expressways. The Housing Act of 1949 required that subsidies be used for areas that were or would become residential, but the amendments made in 1954 allowed for 10% of funds to be used for nonresidential projects (70). These amendments paired with the Federal Highway Act of 1956 meant an increase in major infrastructural and development projects were ready to unfold as soon as funding became available for Detroit. The Detroit Urban League estimated at the time that the "imminent expressway construction would displace another 9,000 families, many of them Black" (Thomas 1997:60).

The construction of expressways was a devastating intensification of Detroit's housing crisis for Black communities.⁷ It also created a multi-year waiting period for those who wanted to move but were unable to sell property or storefronts in the path of construction and could not move without the capital from that sale. This extremely long

⁶ In the Cass Corridor this meant the destruction of Hamilton Avenue—a main commercial street full of bars, movie theaters, and stores—to make way for the Lodge Freeway in 1955. This infrastructure project had the additional effect of cutting off any connective tissue linking the Cass Corridor with the "Trumbull area" neighborhood now commonly known as Woodbridge.

⁷ See Figures 2.3 and 2.4 for spatial representations of the segregated Black communities prior to Urban Renewal and the razing of these neighborhoods.

infrastructural process was a true starvation of capital investment from the neighborhoods impacted. “[L]eft behind was what one black businessman called a “no man’s land” of deterioration and abandonment,” (Sugrue 2005: 47). The concept of the “no man’s land” importantly emphasizes the origins of how the landscape was intentionally emptied for the purposes of redevelopment, a thread that reemerges in contemporary debates about redevelopment found later in Chapter 3 and the discussion chapter of the dissertation. Historian Thomas Sugrue details the cultural significance of this displacement specific to highway construction:

The Oakland-Hastings (later Chrysler) Freeway blasted through the black Lower East Side, Paradise Valley, and the Hastings Street business district, wiping out many of the city’s most prominent African American institutions, from jazz clubs to the Saint Antoine branch of the YMCA. The John C. Lodge Freeway cut through the Lower West Side, the increasingly black area bordering Twelfth Street, and the heavily black neighborhoods bordering Highland Park. The Edsel Ford Freeway... bisected the black West Side, and cut through the northernmost fringe of Paradise Valley. (Sugrue 2005: 47-48).

Initially intended as a plan to strengthen Detroit’s downtown core, remove unsightly blight, and create entry points for suburban residents to return to the city, the overall effects of the Urban Renewal process achieved just the opposite. By clearing the “slum” areas of the city, thousands of residents were displaced from their homes with a very small percentage of those same residents directed toward adequate relocated living quarters. This created *even more* entrenched poverty and increased its visibility throughout the city. The expressways created to connect the city and its surrounding region had the perverse effect of clearing out any remaining economic base and making it easier to come to the city for work but reside outside of its boundaries (Thomas 1997: 78). This era of redevelopment solidified local feelings of distrust between Detroit’s remaining residents and their municipal government. Among Detroit’s Black population,

Urban Renewal meant the intentional erasure of their communities, the memories of which are still recalled today.

The displacement experienced during this era of Detroit's past resonates in the present to such an extent that nearly any meeting to discuss redevelopment plans begins with the assumption that it is a new form of Urban Renewal. In the final minutes of a two-hour neighborhood meeting about a publicly subsidized redevelopment project, Sean, a local activist and resident, approached the microphone to express his concerns. He was speaking to a panel of residents elected to represent community interests as part of a Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC):

I'm a life-long Detroiter too, and I'm concerned in particular about the topic of affordable housing. Housing is one of the main ways that residents in this country have built wealth. And so I'm concerned about the relatively low percentage of affordable housing being committed to by [these developers].

Sean proceeded to ask two questions about the percentage of affordable housing units committed, and why –since public subsidies were involved– there wasn't a more significant commitment to affordability on the part of the developers. Members of the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) suggested that they were attempting to make demands along a number of fronts (job creation, historic preservation, and traffic congestion to name a few) and the difficulties of balancing all these community needs without pushing too hard and losing all of them in negotiations. When another member of the NAC suggested that the idea of affordable housing could not be approached as an isolated issue, Sean responded,

... I'm not necessarily taking this in isolation because the way that this development has progressed in particular around affordable housing speaks to the long history and pattern of displacement in this particular area around the downtown corridor. When you talk about the displacement of Black Bottom

through [interstate] 75, when you talk about the displacement of Chinatown through the Lodge freeway, and then over in the Corktown/ Bagley area the displacement through the 96 freeway. And so we're seeing this is a new example of Urban Renewal.

This resident, in his late thirties, was not alive to witness the destruction of the aforementioned neighborhoods or strike comparisons with neighborhood vitality prior to interstate development across the city. Yet he was not alone in his connection of contemporary large-scale redevelopment and Urban Renewal. Linkages between mid-century Urban Renewal programs and present-day redevelopment projects were consistently drawn by actors throughout this research, both in personal conversations as well as public commentary at meetings to discuss changes. Another lifelong Detroit resident, Sonia, who has lived for 30 years in an area just north of the same redevelopment project discussed by Sean, put it to me this way:

Number one with gentrification, or with Urban Renewal ...you have to de-invest. And after the '67 riots, that's like everyone, white flight was like, everybody was going. But it wasn't only that. It was like 'we're taking the resources with us.' ... That's unfair. It was a set up. It was never a good intention set up. So that's what I'm saying.

In this statement from a very long conversation on redevelopment, Sonia pieces together the major historical processes of Urban Renewal, gentrification, and the trauma of the 1967 race rebellions as all part of the same meta-project of Black disenfranchisement. This was a common articulation of the past for long-term residents, who told stories of their own or stories of family members experiencing the same displacement from their communities over and over again, ranging from the wholesale clearance of neighborhoods for Urban Renewal projects to foreclosures, predatory lending, and in some cases, gentrification.

Today, the phrase “Urban Renewal” as it is commonly used serves as a concept representative of repetitive patterns of Black disenfranchisement and displacement rather than emphasizing specific policies or developers’ roles in this displacement. As the Detroit News reported in an interview with Jeff Horner of the Citizens Research Council (Johnson 2002):

The perception is that many of Detroit's Urban Renewal projects of the 1950s and 1960s were one of the first embodiments of *gentrification* [author’s emphasis]. Communities like the legendary "Black Bottom," formerly situated on the east end of downtown, were “ ‘for the common good’ basically razed and replaced by high rise apartment and unaffordable housing," he says. The forced evacuation of the residents came to be known as "urban removal” he adds, and was "fundamentally unfair."

Another local author, Aaron Foley (2015:79), captured the same sentiment in relation to the destruction and erasure of portions of the North End, Paradise Valley, and Black Bottom: “[I]f there’s ever a reason why someone might be skeptical about new development in Detroit that threatens a long-term resident –and there’s a reason why old timers still refer to the Chrysler and Lodge freeways as ‘negro removal’– this is why.” Foley is arguing, as many others have, that the notion of redevelopment cannot be separated from a history of redevelopment in which high-density Black neighborhoods were cleared to make way for large-scale projects deemed visionary at the time. Even if a younger resident was not alive to witness that displacement, the meaning of words like re-newal, re-development, re-vitalization, and re-birth for many long-term Detroiters reads as the latest chapter in a history of targeted disinvestment and disenfranchisement in Black communities.

Today, most Detroit residents, local officials, and even non-Detroit based developers tend to agree that the impact of the Urban Renewal period was largely

negative. Robert Jansen (2007) calls this the “valence” of the mnemonic symbol, when a memory’s interpretation becomes solidified and relatively unquestioned in this manner. Although most Detroiters agree about the negative impacts of massive displacement during the era of Urban Renewal, the concept of contemporary displacement remains largely unsettled. The following section articulates three main narratives about gentrification and displacement in Detroit from 2010 to 2017. These differing articulations of gentrification frame how meaning-making happens around pockets of neighborhood change and growth.

CONTEMPORARY MOTIFS OF GENTRIFICATION

“Bring on more gentrification. I’m sorry, but I mean, bring it on... we can’t be a poor city and prosper,” (Neavling 2013). George Jackson Jr., who was at the time of this quote CEO and President of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, uttered these now infamous words in May of 2013 to a crowd of listeners in Grosse Pointe Farms, a coastal suburb that borders Detroit but whose median household income more than quadruples that of Detroit.⁸ This news broke in the same week that four different downtown apartment buildings were told to evacuate their mostly elderly and disabled tenants to make room for redevelopment (one of the four buildings was the same that Mayor Duggan would later reference in his “race” speech). Jackson’s words seemed for many long-term residents to reaffirm already present fears regarding the changing landscape of their city. As reporting of both events rippled across the city, I began to notice the impact of these local articulations of gentrification emerge in conversation at the street-level.

⁸ In 2014, the median household income for Grosse Pointe Farms was \$115,918 while Detroit’s median household income was \$25,980. The White population of Grosse Pointe Farms is 92.9% compared with 13.4% in Detroit (American Community Survey 2015).

In order to trace these local representations of the meaning of neighborhood change, I began with public articulations of gentrification starting in 2013 with this event and looking back to the year 2000⁹, answering a call within urban studies for a more complex reading of how media (and social media) contribute to local perceptions of "gentrification" (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011). As Robert Beauregard (2003: xi) notes in his text *Voices of Decline*, "urban theorists argue about the forces causing the growth and decline of cities but very rarely, if at all, reflect on how rhetorical inventions influence their interpretations." In my interviews, I avoided using the term "gentrification" because I did not find it to be a useful way to advance conversation. Yet unlike many other academically derived terms, the word "gentrification" reaches far beyond academic literature. Because the subjects of this study are citizens, this research relies on a broader public conception of gentrification, treating it not as a process of real estate and neighborhood transformation but instead as a tool of growth discourse akin to Beauregard's treatment of the narratives of decline. Local media, academics studying Detroit, and everyday residents all offered overlapping articulations of what gentrification is and how this concept relates to Detroit. Sometimes this included housing and concerns about affordability. Most often it included assumptions about demographic shifts in Detroit's population on the basis of race and/or age and the cultural impacts of new small business development. Yet across all the perspectives on the notion of gentrification in Detroit, three distinct narratives were noticeably and consistently evoked in newspaper articles, journal articles, panel discussions, and one-on-one conversations. The narratives

⁹ The year 2000 was chosen given the extreme population loss citywide between census data from 2000 and 2010. For a more thorough discussion of media analysis methodology, see Appendix A.

can be summarized as: 1) “gentrification is happening here, and is taking the same form it has always taken”; 2) “gentrification could never happen here”; and 3) “we need gentrification.” These discursive frameworks are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they offer a means of understanding emergent patterns of discourse on urban redevelopment and reveal differing articulations of value around what is at stake as Detroit changes. The following three sections provide a detailed overview for the reader to understand the construction of meaning around redevelopment in Detroit, setting the stage for the remainder of this text.

Motif 1: Gentrification is happening here, and it is taking the same form as always:

The narrative that “gentrification is already underway” connects most forcefully to this discussion of Detroit’s Urban Renewal policies that scarred the city’s Black communities. Across Detroit, neighborhoods that were at one time thriving communities became shells of their former selves, either demolished by highway construction and blight removal or isolated and ultimately made vulnerable by these same processes. In this context of extreme distrust, the term “gentrification” is a pervasive threat to be on guard against, and it is perhaps the most traditional reading of the process of gentrification as it has been written about in other cities around the world. “There has been some degree of alarm of a takeover, of gentrification,” one resident told Detroit News (Martinez 2012). And this alarm is not restricted to recent years. In his ethnographic work on “whiteness” in Detroit, John Hartigan Jr. (1999) notes a similar understanding of gentrification in the years prior to this research. As he notes in late 1980s in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood:

In Corktown the marked term is "gentrifier." Whites emphasize conflicting evidence as to whether this neighborhood is undergoing gentrification in any "classical" definition of the term. Few original residents are being displaced; only a handful of recently arrived whites have moved into the area; the value of land seems hardly to have shifted over the past few decades; and yet whites in this area are obsessed and unnerved by the significance of their racial and class position. As white professionals in the "inner city," they often feel out of place. They express this anxiety by objectifying minute social differences between themselves and other whites in the neighborhood through the term "gentrifier." With great alacrity, these whites argue over who among them represents "true gentrification," (18).

Today, the memory of Urban Renewal's effect on Detroit remains present in the minds of those who live in a segregated landscape. As Hartigan notes, decades prior to this research, white Detroiters living in Corktown were articulating a sense of racial guilt that they expressed through concerns about gentrification. And to long-term Black residents, gentrification was a process visible in the presence of more and more white faces. Gentrification, when articulated as "already happening", was frequently used as a stand-in for demographic shifts relating to race. A Detroit News article even defined the term as "the returning of whites to the city to take over the areas where blacks once lived," (Keith 2003).

Unlike most of the community protests against gentrification in densely populated neighborhoods that focus on the displacement of individuals and families from their rental apartments or homes, in Detroit's neighborhoods during this period, the majority of conversation that "gentrification is happening" was often grounded in readings of public and commercial space. Along with the depopulation of the last half-century, Detroit has experienced the closure of the majority of its commercial spaces (Commercial Land Inventory City Study, 2012). In most of these former commercial corridors, the façades of businesses that last closed their doors many years if not decades ago still remain. Because

of the relative lack of commercial vibrancy when paired with these empty buildings, during the first years of this study, small business openings with storefronts were easily visible in these neighborhoods of growth and change. They were also the beneficiaries of disproportionate amounts of media coverage as compared to Black-owned businesses across the city, a finding confirmed by Kinney 2016 and Moskowitz 2017.

In spaces of population and small business growth, as referenced in the introduction, the main public spaces discussed by residents and covered by local media were upscale restaurants, boutiques, coffee shops, and other spaces meant to evoke leisure. In these third places, it was not uncommon to see reports of new store openings attended by artists who have irregular working hours, and for these sites to be criticized publicly as "hipster headquarters". The term hipster frequently appeared in news articles from this range of years, including a Detroit Free Press article (Elrick 2003) with the subheading "First came the Irish, then the Maltese, the Hispanics and, now, the hipsters." The "hipster" as a social subculture becomes conflated with ideas about racial superiority and segregation in the city. Articles typically referenced "hipster" in quotes from residents concerned about the city's rapid change; a label that is often scoffed at in popular culture, but is a crucial signifier of access to changing spaces of the city.

With the emptying out of Detroit's population citywide, Corktown, Downtown, and Midtown have collectively seen a 59% increase in college-educated young residents (Conlin 2011). Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus –the lifestyle, values, disposition, and expectations of social groups enacted in daily life circumstances– is helpful, as habitus allows for hipsters to maintain a subtle but privileged distinction on the basis of

class and education. In this way, "hipsters" constitute a noteworthy signifier to many that gentrification is indeed already underway in Detroit.

In a reaction to this place-based experience of disenfranchisement, many long-term Detroit residents argue that they are being "pushed out." In the conversation at the opening of the introductory chapter, where the young woman talked of losing her "access card," she also spoke about the fact that "none of the people there looked like her." This idea of "looking like her" suggests two visible markers of difference when it comes to discourse about gentrification in Detroit: race and aesthetic taste. An influx of young, white, individuals can translate to feelings of cultural displacement. Similarly, young Blacks making aesthetic choices that align themselves with "hipster" middle class subcultures can generate anxiety about the changing class dynamics of the city. Being "pushed out" therefore does not have to mean pushed out of one's home, and can instead suggest being pushed out of the "new Detroit" and the neighborhood change underway.

As with the visibility of hipsters making aesthetic choices with their clothing and appearance, change is also powerfully articulated in this narrative theme as part of the built environment, such that residents will speak of gentrification "happening" when they walk by a recently opened restaurant or coffee shop. Underneath a photo for an article in a statewide magazine covering the topic of gentrification in Detroit, the caption reads, "Exposed brick, check. Reclaimed wood, check. Lauren Hood, a lifelong Detroiter who sometimes visits the Great Lakes Coffee Roasting Co. to work, notes that businesses catering to newer Detroiters speak their own language," (Derringer 2014). Many new spaces of consumption in Detroit (just as in many other postindustrial cities) feature exposed brick and reclaimed wood in an attempt to draw out elements of a building's

original character. This has the unintentional effect of homogenizing space, and more significantly, reading as a banner to those that pass by that this is a space welcome to Detroit's new gentry. As Black Detroit and author Marsha Music said, "... design matters. Intentional or unintentional, the design of a place can exclude different types of people by making them feel uncomfortable or unwelcome," (Lewis 2013). This expression of gentrification reflects a lost sense of place and community, as well as residents' feelings that they have the right to creating the vision for that community's future. As Black residents watch the disproportionate coverage of non-Black business owners and begin to feel the effects of changes to the built environment, the conclusion is that this phenomenon is no different from Detroit's own history of Urban Renewal or the process of gentrification documented elsewhere across the United States and the rest of the world.

Motif 2: Gentrification could never happen here:

In the summer of 2013, The Craig Fahle Show, a popular local radio program, hosted a show on the topic of gentrification. The show opened with the following:

When you talk about development in the city, a discussion of gentrification always follows. One of the questions we've been asking here is "do gentrification and Detroit even belong in the same sentence? Is it anywhere near the scale of places like Brooklyn or Boston or Chicago, where entire neighborhoods have changed demographically, economically, over the course of a couple of years. Obviously things happen a little bit more slowly here in Detroit when you are rebuilding from as much disinvestment as we have seen in this community.

A second predominant narrative of gentrification is that it could *never* happen in Detroit, or in a more subtle articulation, that it is a problem located too far into the future to

consider today. As with the radio show quote above, this perception often seems to be embedded within a frustration that questions the need to even discuss the concept of gentrification. Mathew Naimi, a local White entrepreneur who started Detroit's first recycling program, says in a video titled "Gentrification in Detroit?" (Wey 2012¹⁰): "change is happening in areas that are empty... I *do* think we are just filling in the gaps." The majority of vacancies across Detroit are residential, which is what Naimi refers to in this statement. The 2010 Detroit Residential Parcel Survey found that 26% of the city's residential parcels (91,000 lots) were vacant. As such, the constant reference point in social media, discussion forums, and formal media is that "there is plenty of room for everyone." As Detroit's data expert Kurt Metzger was quoted in February of 2011: "we are a long way away from gentrification," (Hulett 2013). Others, including local advertising executive Toby Barlow, echo these sentiments. In an interview for the Detroit Metro Times (Wright 2010) Barlow argued:

"Gentrification is a luxury problem that Detroit is probably 20 years away from. For gentrification to happen, a city needs an equitable balance of rich, middle-class and poor people...Detroit has no middle class of any substantial size and certainly has no real upper class."

Editorialist Jeff Wattrick again made his case in a 2011 article, stating,

"... Anyone who frets about gentrification in Detroit should be sent to the corner with Holocaust deniers and 9/11 conspiracy nuts. It simply isn't possible for the petite bourgeoisie to displace the poor in a city that's lost more than 1.1 million predominately middle-class residents over the last half-century."

Journalists and residents who express the opinion that "gentrification could never happen here", notably, are majority white. The concept of redevelopment, therefore, can be

¹⁰ <https://vimeo.com/26255897>, accessed on July 11, 2011

parsed from embodied collective memories of Urban Renewal or other traumatic contemporary types of displacement. As such, this perspective often has an entirely different spatial understanding of gentrification than those who fear it already is happening. These readings of the phenomenon tend to focus on the private space of dwellings instead of public space of group interaction.

If one is to consider the entirety of Detroit's square mileage, there is technically "room for everyone." This second narrative of gentrification's impossibility depends on a highly rational principle of capitalist development, suggesting that all empty space within Detroit's boundaries will be filled equally according to need. Yet in 2012, at the same time that over 20,000 foreclosed homes were sent to auction in the outer neighborhoods of Detroit (Lawrence 2016), rental occupancy was at 97% in Downtown and 95% in Midtown (Ali et.al. 2013). When considering the concept of a sustainable, holistic neighborhood as one where citizens experience the full rights to good educational opportunities, safety, strong social networks, public transportation, and walkable, well-lit streets, the opportunities to live in such a neighborhood are extremely limited. Few such neighborhoods exist in anything more than a piecemeal fashion, and as such, these become the most desirable places to live, have tight rental markets, and cannot accommodate demand.

The narrative that gentrification would "never happen here" yields two conclusions important to the analysis of this dissertation: first, that Detroit has much larger issues to deal with before addressing gentrification; second, that gentrification will be addressed once it happens. Studies of gentrification show that historically, gentrification is not recognized until the process is already well under way (Lees et. al.

2008). Calling gentrification an impossibility rules out a long-term vision for how to handle gentrification, rendering municipal government ill-equipped to take seriously the claims of residents about gentrification. It is for this reason that when Detroit's mayor spoke about Brooklyn and D.C. and the displacement of communities of color, he explicitly referenced this notion of impossibility, suggesting that the same narrative had dominated discussions of these other areas and as a result they did not plan for growth without displacement.

Motif 3: We need gentrification

A final narrative related to gentrification that emerged in my analysis is that gentrification is a necessary process in order for Detroit to function like a "normal" city, just as the former Detroit Economic Growth Corporation president argued for in the opening of this section. In 2002, Wayne State University's Law School sponsored a symposium titled, "Gentrification and Diversification: Why Detroit Needs It and How It Can Get It." As part of the panel, economist George Galster (2002; 1) argued that, "Though its benefits to the well-off are obvious, gentrification also provides three things that needy Detroiters require: jobs, public services, and affordable housing in decent neighborhoods." In this discussion, Galster utilized research on the influx of middle class residents to predominantly poor areas to establish these benefits. The underlying argument here is that jobs, public services, and affordable housing rank higher on a list of priorities than additional impacts of gentrification. Detroit Free Press editorialist Stephen Henderson echoed this sentiment: "As a Detroit native who has seen this place rot from

the inside out, I'd kill for a little gentrification," (quoted by Wattrick in MLive 2011).

Henderson later clarified his statement (Fahle 2013):

“When I say gentrification I mean the re-establishment of middle class life in Detroit. You know, when I was a kid here this was a pretty economically diverse place. When they mentioned housing projects, I happened to grow up in one of them in Downtown Detroit but you also had lots of other stable neighborhoods where you know people, professional people lived and sent their kids to school and worked and played in the city. There is no such thing as a successful city without that mix. And what we’ve seen happen in Detroit over my lifetime is that the middle class just left. White black whatever, middle class people don’t feel like there is value living in Detroit. As someone that’s middle class living here, I relate to some of their frustrations. A lot of things that you find in other cities I’ve lived in... there is much more vibrant middle class life. And you’ve gotta have that to attract middle class life because the middle class is what pays for a city. Without that city services are impossible. Poverty becomes more isolating and more like it looks in rural communities where poor people are sort of set off from the middle class set of amenities that other people’s tax dollars can pay for.”

The two quotes above represent some of the most nuanced local perspectives on Detroit’s history of place-based racial discrimination and the ways that gentrification must be considered within the larger context of reinvestment in a city with extreme concentrations of poverty. However, statements like these from Detroit’s public intellectuals were often taken out of context as a means of justifying development or reinforcing the need for growth, highlighted by the need for Henderson to clarify his position after saying that he would “kill for a little gentrification.” This narrative was often reflected in media discussing real estate in Detroit, embedded in larger discussions that position the city as a "blank slate."

In the summer of 2011, Tony Goldman, the developer associated with the gentrification of places like Soho in Manhattan or South Beach in Miami, visited Detroit on several occasions. Goldman was full of ideas for reinvigorating the city, encouraging all residents to "get back to the idea of an unsettled America that drew people to the West

during the gold rush– and use that idea to energize Detroit with artists." (Wasacz 2011). The narrative evoked here, in conjunction with the idea of a blank slate, has an emotive past. Words like "pioneer" are often the synonyms for the first gentrifiers to move into a community, and this quote alerts us to the idea that Detroit is a city for these unencumbered urban pioneers to pull up their bootstraps and save the city. Coverage on Detroit that emphasizes urban-pioneering, "unsettled America," and the salvation of the city also had tremendously negative responses from residents of color, bringing to the surface America's erasure of the Native American population, and pairing that colonial conquest with modern-day gentrification. A discussion of certain neighborhoods or all of Detroit, as unsettled frontier implies the symbolic, economic, and physical erasure of anyone who has stayed either by choice or by limited mobility.

Building off the frontier narrative, the idea that "we *need* gentrification" is also present in media representations of the need for "placemaking." Iris Aravot (2002) calls placemaking the "intention to establish quality of place in the public realm". The concept of "placemaking" exploded into popular usage during the years of this research, often meant as a neutral urban-planning term meant to re-orient infrastructure to the scale of human use (before that of cars) with the social aim of encouraging interaction among residents. Media coverage of placemaking and the need for more of these types of efforts often drew upon many of the motifs of gentrification discussed in this chapter, and in particular, the idea of Detroit as a blank slate. The Free Press (Hinds 2012) called Detroit, "a place that young people are embracing as a blank canvas for reinvention" quoting MTV celebrity Johnny Knoxville in his branding of Detroit as a "total DIY city!" Often, these discussions have to do with vacant spaces and the need to create destinations within

a sprawling city pock-marked with few surviving businesses, restaurants, and retail corridors. DIY projects such as those mentioned by Knoxville typically include a temporary installation in public space. In Detroit, these spaces are associated with bourgeoisie leisure and the aforementioned hipster aesthetic.

Notably, both the recommendations of the need for a bolstered middle class in Detroit and articulations of the importance of a frontier mentality or placemaking efforts imagine the city from a regional or national perspective with a comparative lens of other major U.S. cities or growth within metropolitan Detroit. Detroit is a frontier of the imagined United States and placed in contrast to the “fully” developed cities of the two coasts. Detroit is a blank slate of open land for redevelopment when compared to the population densities of surrounding municipalities or nearby cities. The question of the scale of a redevelopment project’s impact is one that resurfaces repeatedly, particularly when comparing the impressions of local developers and long-term residents about the impact of a project and who it is meant for.

Why Narratives of Gentrification Matter

The conflation of race, space, memory, hipster subcultures, vacancy, and placemaking in local articulations of gentrification seems to render this concept ineffectual. As Craig Fahle noted, when a conversation about redevelopment begins, the word gentrification is never far behind. Conversations surrounding these themes vacillate between discussing Corktown, the Cass Corridor, and other neighborhoods as gentrified (or not) and the whole of the city as one mutant experiment in gentrification. This scale of conceptualizing the neighborhood and city with fluid boundaries is dealt with most

thoroughly in Chapters 2 and 3. Though the term gentrification is so contested and employed with constantly shifting intentions, the threads of dialogue that emerge out of conversations about redevelopment in Detroit have important consequences. As the following chapters will show, they frame the capacity for imagining new alternatives for affordable private living and accessible public space interactions. They sustain or aggravate cleavages between policy-makers and their constituents, among residents, and across contested spaces of a "new" and changing city.

These three narratives have entirely different spatial readings of how change occurs in the neighborhood. The narrative that gentrification is happening takes place typically in public and commercial places because those are the most visible markers of a sense of change happening in the city, made even more visible by the bodies that inhabit them. The idea that gentrification could never happen in Detroit speaks to residential vacancies and the engulfing problem of vacant lots and abandoned homes across Detroit. And finally, there is a "need" for gentrification when the actor steps back to look at the neighborhood or entire city from an aerial perspective, considering rates of unemployment and a hollowed out middle class. When placemaking happens, it is in the city's "blank slate." If a space is conceptualized as "blank," then it becomes easy to employ the axiom "any development is good development." Yet despite all of these spatially specific vocalizations of gentrification happening or not, there is little attention offered to the geography of what is inherently a very spatialized concept under discussion.

These different motifs also constitute different valorizations of what counts as evidence in the question of whether gentrification is happening or not. Typically,

determining an answer to this question means an analysis of tax assessment changes over time, a rise in property values and median household incomes, and a change in the proportion of residents with a college degree or higher. Yet those who argue, "gentrification could never happen here" suggest that when residents speak out about feeling displaced, feelings are considered insubstantial evidence to support this phenomenon. This idea was epitomized by web magazine MLive's January 5, 2012 article with the headline "Complaints about Detroit gentrification once again rooted in feelings, not logic." The author (Wattrick 2012) argues that, "long-term Detroiters ... feel that newer, wealthier residents are pushing them out of the city, or otherwise making them feel unwelcome in their hometown. When you ask for examples or quantifiable evidence of gentrification, the specifics are few and far between." Wattrick concludes by saying, "Feelings don't count... What one feels, no matter how deeply they feel it, is irrelevant unless it can be backed up with arguments rooted in logic, reason, and facts," (Wattrick 2012). "Feeling" in this context, is a derogatory term. The logic of gentrification suggested by this title argues that gentrification is measurable by the number of residents displaced and that feeling has no place in that determination.

Sociological literature dedicated to emotion has shown that humans are not solely motivated by rational economic concerns (Thoits 1989). Kempner and Collins (1990) in their seminal work on power and emotion suggest that, "when individuals have power or gain power, they experience satisfaction, confidence, and security, whereas when they lose power, they experience anxiety, fear, and loss of confidence," thus yielding differing responses to social change (Turner and Stets 2006). While this framework provides a useful point of departure, the "loss of power" among Detroit's Black population extends

beyond the time frames of these studies, as it has happened across multiple generations and arguably did not exist by significant means in the first place. And while shifts in power relations and agency as they relate to contemporary growth in pockets of Detroit today may be more difficult to measure than the quantifiable metrics of physical displacement, the remainder of this chapter focuses on drawing out those cultural imbalances and their impact on sense of place. In the following sections, special emphasis is given to the concept of trust and the impact of *distrust* on political empowerment, both in local representation and resident engagement for redevelopment projects.

TRUST, RACE, AND REPRESENTATION

Undergirding the connections between mid-century Urban Renewal and contemporary articulations of gentrification is the concept of trust on the part of residents toward their local representatives. Sociologists see trust not as the “psychological event within the individual” but rather the “functional prerequisite for the possibility of society,” (Lewis and Weigert 1985). In other words, trust is central to the forging of collective networks of reliance as well as social control (Cook 2007). Many researchers have documented the potency of distrust in low-income communities with histories of conflict tied to Urban Renewal (Fullilove 2005; Forrester 1989; Betancur et.al. 1991; McDougal 1993). This section relies on an understanding of trust at the institutional level in the ways residents respond to local government actions (Parry 1976; Khodyakov 2007) and the specificity of that distrust as it relates to race (Smith 2010). George Galster (2017) and Janice Bockmeyer (2000) both offer elaborations on contemporary

institutional distrust among Detroit's Black residents. In her evaluation of Detroit's Empowerment Zone grants process, whereby the concept of trust was explicitly outlined as a component of implementation by the federal government, Bockmeyer argues that the consolidating power of Detroit's community development corporations (CDCs) emerged as a response to what she calls a "culture of distrust" in the work carried out by City Hall. Galster (2017:8-9) also draws attention to the concept of trust in his work outlining the mechanisms that make declining cities fundamentally different from growing ones in both form and function. As he argues, "[p]olitical trust and social capital at the municipal and metropolitan scales are easier to erode in a context of long-term decline than to rebuild in an equivalent period of growth." Trust is therefore fundamental to making sense of small pockets of redevelopment within the broader context of decline.

Having established the narratives that Detroit's long-term residents, developers, and city officials employ around redevelopment today, in this section I focus on the ways that trust in local government has eroded, thereby amplifying the cultural tensions embodied in those narratives about change and gentrification. I focus on two new empirical elements of distrust specific to a context of pockets of growth in the broader city in decline. First, distrust was present in residents' belief in the ability of elected officials to represent the interests of their electorate. This occurred both along lines of racial representation, as Duggan mentioned in the policy speech that opened this chapter, and also in relation to emergency financial management and Detroit's bankruptcy proceedings. Second, resident distrust in the city's ability to implement plans has been so significant that urban planners have actually shifted their own planning practices to accommodate that distrust and attempt to not exacerbate it further. Political

representatives and city urban planners are powerful figures in shaping change at the neighborhood level. For that reason, the erosion of social capital between these groups on the basis of trust is fundamental to the broader process of cultural displacement.

Political Displacement

On October 25, 2017, Detroit hosted a mayoral debate between incumbent Mayor Duggan and his challenger, Coleman Young II, the son of the city's first Black mayor who served from 1974 until 1994. Young II focused his debate strategy on highlighting the divisions between Midtown/ Downtown and "the neighborhoods" (a stand-in for investment and a lack thereof, elaborated on in Chapter 2). In his closing statement, he called for Detroiters to elect him in order to "take back the motherland." In the call-in portion of a local radio show the morning after, the radio host asked listeners to share how they interpreted this quote. One listener, called in with his opinion:

I'd like to make the point about Coleman's comment about the motherland... Basically what he was alluding to was the fact that we haven't had democracy in this city for over five years, beginning with the consent agreement that moved us to the emergency management and then to bankruptcy and then to the Grand Bargain, and culminating now in the Financial Review Commission, which not only oversees finances but in a lot of instances sets policies for the city and overrules many things that the Mayor and City Council – our elected officials— would like to do.

This caller represented a broad-based sentiment among many Detroiters that not only can local officials not be trusted, but that the democratic rights of citizens have been stripped to such an extent that residents are not even truly represented by any politicians they elect.

In an ethnography of gentrification in D.C.'s Shaw/ U Street neighborhood mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Derek S. Hyra (2017) argues that an

influx of new residents lead to the “loss of decision-making power by the former group,” resulting in the turnover of locally elected officials and stronger political representation of newcomer populations. Hyra calls this the political displacement of long-term residents of color, explaining that the history of elected officials in the Shaw/ U Street area is the direct result of newcomer populations displacing the votes of long-term residents, and argues that the identity of the politician directly correlates with the political motivations of that same group. During the time of this research, Mike Duggan was the first white mayor elected to represent the City of Detroit since 1974. Given Detroit’s majority non-white population, this change was not a result of demographic shifts, as Detroit’s white population was not significant enough to generate a turnover of officials on the basis of a newcomer population (Census 2000, 2010, ACS 2015)¹¹. However, more significant to the Detroit context was that Duggan was elected after the City of Detroit declared bankruptcy. Political displacement in Detroit was not driven by the election of officials, but instead rooted in statewide policies for a majority white state¹² and their impact on a majority Black city.

In 1990, Public Act 72 gave the State of Michigan the authority to appoint emergency financial managers to local municipalities nearing bankruptcy. But it wasn’t

¹¹ It is worth noting here that pre-general election campaign finance documents between Mike Duggan and his challenger, Benny Napoleon, show that Duggan had roughly 4 times the amount of campaign contributions and that many of his supporters were at the regional, state, and national level as compared to local contributions for Napoleon (Pinho 2013). While it is beyond the scope of this study to draw conclusions about the business or other interests of predominantly white funders living outside of Detroit in supporting Duggan’s candidacy, one can assume that Detroiters already distrustful of political representation would find this financial influence on the Duggan campaign to be against their best interests in the most segregated metropolitan region in the United States.

¹² U.S. Census American Community Survey from 2015 shows that the State of Michigan is 79.0% White alone. The City of Detroit in the same year was 80.1% Black or African American.

until March 16, 2011 that Public Act 4 replaced PA 72 and allowed these emergency managers the capacity to strip locally elected officials of their power and renegotiate, alter, or void union contracts before they expire (Smith 2011). In this role and as an unelected executive branch official, the emergency manager is given complete control to “(1) repeal existing local laws and ordinances, (2) enact new local laws or ordinances, and (3) act in violation of City charters,” (Brown et.al. v. Snyder et.al. 2011).

Since 2009, eight municipalities in Michigan including Detroit have been under emergency financial management, accounting for a combined total of 9.7% of the states population but 49.8% of the state’s Black or African American population, a pattern of extreme disenfranchisement of communities of color that is not limited to Michigan (Fasenfest and Pride 2016). Michigan Governor Rick Snyder appointed Kevin Orr to the role of Emergency Financial Manager of the City of Detroit, beginning on March 25, 2013 and lasting until December 10, 2014.

On May 13, 2013, the NAACP’s Detroit and Michigan branches filed a lawsuit against the governor, treasurer, and secretary of state, claiming that the Michigan Public Act 436 is unconstitutional and deprives minorities the right to vote by allowing the rule of unelected emergency managers in places where half of the states Blacks live. In the filed complaint, the NAACP points out that non majority-Black communities in debt have not been targeted, noting that,

“The Walled Lake Consolidated School District, serves over 15,000 school children (compared to 980 students in Highland Park Schools and 1,112 students in the Muskegon Heights School District, both of which have Emergency Managers), in a suburban area north of Detroit. with a \$10 million deficit, class cancellations, and disruptions in bus service, no Emergency Manager has been appointed by the State to govern the Walled Lake Consolidated School District, which has a total average White population of 85.3%.”

United States bankruptcy Judge Steven Rhodes overseeing Detroit's Chapter 9 case put an automatic stay on the lawsuit, claiming that the NAACP did not follow proper procedure, and the case was administratively dismissed (Sistrunk 2013).

Residents did not often bring up Emergency Financial Management during our conversations, referring instead to a broad-based "lack of access" or power. I suspect that this is due to the convoluted policy steps that resulted in emergency financial management of the City of Detroit. Yet even though it wasn't a significant part of our conversations, this targeted form of disenfranchisement on the basis of race laid the groundwork for Hyra's "political displacement" to a much harsher extent than even the replacement of a politician due to demographic turnover could.

More frequently articulated was a lack of access to power when it came to urban planning exercises and what "those in power" were planning for any given neighborhood. One of the empirical findings of this research was the concept of planning fatigue, or resident frustration with constant participation in urban planning exercises while never witnessing the impact of those efforts. While not unique to cities with significant population loss like Detroit, the duration of fatigue before seeing any financial investment in their neighborhood (often because of a lack of residents) is perhaps especially potent in cities with extreme population loss. The following section delves into the idea of planning fatigue in more detail, advancing understanding of residents' sense of lost power and agency in relation to local government, and showing the extent to which this distrust has even shaped practices within the urban planning department.

Planning Fatigue

Crowded around a circular table at the Northwest Activities Center, one of Detroit's thirteen recreation centers and the office headquarters of the Parks and Recreation and General Services Departments, a Black male in his early 60s named Joe says he recognizes me from a community meeting about parks from roughly a year ago. "I remember you asking me questions about the park back then. What ever happened out of that? How come we are having another meeting now?"

I explained that Joe's participation a year ago helped us to understand how many people use the park near his house and the repairs that were needed there. The input he had given at that point was part of a long process that had gotten us to today, where we had selected the park in his neighborhood along with others for major improvements over the next two summer seasons. I told him that we were having this meeting because we already had the funding to make sure it happened and that his feedback from last year helped shape the decision to prioritize that park. "You mean showing up at that meeting actually *did* somethin'?" I was surprised to see someone who truly did not believe that his voice had the capacity to effect change in his neighborhood still be so active in coming to community meetings.

The expectation that community participation in planning efforts does not lead to any measurable change is referred to among urban planners locally as "planning fatigue." For several decades, a lack of municipal and private investment in Detroit has meant many plans have been created without any capacity to implement them. Yet simultaneously as the city's coffers continued to shrink, the practice of urban planning emerged as one of the only opportunities for residents and stakeholders to imagine a better future. This

secondary relationship to those in power through the work of urban planning has yet to be explored by others that focus on political and cultural displacement, but is essential to understanding a sense of ownership over the direction of the city or neighborhood's future among long-term residents in cities that have not seen growth across multiple decades. In particular, during a time when elected representation was no longer in place due to emergency financial management as detailed in the previous section, ongoing urban planning projects focused on the city's redevelopment were the most direct and powerful way that residents were able to access local officials or their neighborhood representatives that may have more social capital and access to those same officials. Yet as city officials were time and time again unable to deliver on the promises of these planning documents, they began to alter their practices, adjusting to the concept of "planning fatigue." As one older resident shared with me,

Now I done been here twenty years and after two years of this I was like you know what I'm breaking away from those meetings because they're going nowhere. We've been dealing with this issue for twenty-five years and yet it has yet to get solved and I am frankly tired of having the conversations.

Participation in urban planning projects typically takes the form of meeting attendance, voicing concerns about one's neighborhood, and offering opinions about what one would like to see in the future of that neighborhood. These meetings are convened by urban planners, either on the part of the City of Detroit Planning and Development Department (PDD), other city departments, or by staff working for Community Development Corporations or non-profits in a particular neighborhood. Yet without the capital (or developer interest) to carry out these projects, the result has often meant years and years of meetings where residents come together to envision the future of their community and

its potential without any means to see the changes they agreed upon take place. In an evaluation of her role leading the Detroit Works Project, a massive planning effort initiated by Mayor Bing but carried out by the Kresge Foundation, urban planner Toni Griffin (Griffin, Cramer, and Powers 2014) explained this challenge:

In addition to physical and economic challenges, Detroiters had also acknowledged significant barriers to effective civic engagement. Foremost among these barriers were a profound sense of immobilization, planning fatigue, and a general perception of cynicism about planning and engagement efforts. These challenges were compounded by historic racial dynamics and tension.

In this quote, Griffin picks up on the underlying distrust among residents as it relates to planning efforts in the city, alluding to “racial dynamics” and a generalized “tension” in redevelopment practices in Detroit analyzed in other portions of this dissertation. The purpose of the article quoted above was to defend the community engagement process of the Detroit Works Project, which was met with significant criticism among residents who felt that they were not represented in the planning efforts underway.

The import of community engagement in the process of urban planning has changed dramatically in the last half century. The profession of urban planning originated out of a positivist orientation toward geographic space and attempts to manage these spaces with the goal of improving public health and overcrowding. As urban historian Peter Hall (2002) argued in his historiography of United States planning history, this style of “blueprint” planning was based on the highly theoretical model whereby the omniscient planner created the all-encompassing plan for a city. In the mid-twentieth century, as innovations in transportation meant that planners were dealing with systems at a previously unforeseen scale, planners turned to the quantification of space through demographic spatial analysis and urban plans with clearly identified and scientifically

measurable goals and the first ever calls for public participation as part of the planning process (Lane 2006). To a certain extent, this type of positivist master planning process still exists today in Detroit.

The first critique of the mid-century model of planning came from S.R. Arnstein (1969), who regarded the majority of public outreach as non-participation or degrees of tokenism rather than meaningful participation. As she argued, “there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having real power needed to affect the outcomes of the process (Arnstein 1969; 216). Since that time, urban planning theory has been transformed by the imperative to question what constitutes “engagement” and how to best employ that in planning practice (Fainstein and DeFilippis 2016) to the extent that no master planning effort can expect to receive political or financial support without the demonstration of robust community engagement. Hence the need for the Detroit Works Project to demonstrate the strength of their community engagement efforts and that they reflected the needs of residents.

While academic evaluations of urban planning from the 1970s forward were increasingly focused on resident agency, Detroit’s planning department was growing more and more aware of the impact of planning fatigue on residents and their willingness to engage in this way while plan after plan was collecting dust. The timeline for a neighborhood or a city plan can range anywhere from a year (if carried out by foundations and community organizations) all the way to multiple years (if carried out by city government). Either end of this time frame seems a significant amount of time to a resident. The reasons for extended timelines for municipalities are due to understaffing, the need to maintain all other city efforts and regulation at the same time, and the political

hurdles of moving a plan through City Council.

In cities losing population, the hallmarks of mayoral administrations tend to relate to planning strategies that will recapture lost population. Thus, although the Planning and Development Department had released a new master plan in 1992, on the heels of Dennis Archer's reelection in 1997 he announced the creation of the Community Reinvestment Strategy, to be funded in large part by the Kresge Foundation (CRS 1997). As one planner shared with me:

It was in February... everybody [was told to] come to Cobo (a large downtown conference center). If you live in the city or are a business owner, come to Cobo. People walked in... There was a map on the wall and these are the ten clusters... At that time they had assumed that the city had one million people and so they thought well, just divide it into ten areas of a 100,000 (and that's the ten clusters the [current] master plan is arranged on) and they said go to their rooms and everybody elects an advisory board. The output of this throughout 1997 was ten distinct plans. They were divided into seven or eight different topic areas... no one thought about the planning department and the [1992] master plan and how that relationship works. That's why I have to tell you this story because it sounds familiar!

Just 5 years after participation in a citywide master plan, residents in 1997 found themselves again participating in another year of planning efforts. But at the conclusion of the creation of the ten plans, there was "no tracking, there was no responsibility, there was no follow up." As this urban planner alluded, this process "sound[ed] familiar" because a similar planning process happened again ten years later.

In 2009, the Planning and Development Department finished another multi-year planning effort, resulting in a Master Plan approved by Detroit City Council. Just one year later, the Bing administration announced the Detroit Works Project, the effort mentioned previously in this section, funded by the Kresge Foundation and intended to create a framework for thinking critically about "right-sizing" the city footprint. The

concept of “right-sizing” the city was an attempt to bring business logic to the practices of city management, something that Mayor Bing prided himself on throughout his administration and based his election campaign on. This proved to be disastrous for the Detroit Works Project, ultimately leading to the dissolution of the initial project leadership, and the separation of Detroit Works into short-term and long-term initiatives. As part of the long-term initiative, a framework master plan called Detroit Future City was developed and published. Though it was created by a philanthropic foundation and therefore had no legal authority like the City’s 2009 Master Plan, the assumption among residents, developers, and stakeholders was that this framework was the city’s guiding plan for all future decision-making.

During my time working in the Planning and Development Department for the City of Detroit, I spoke with several current and former employees about the process of creating the city’s master plan. While I did anticipate the concept of “planning fatigue” to come up in these interviews, what I did not anticipate was the extent to which this concept shaped the city’s actual planning process over the course of three decades. As one long-term planner, Leroy explains:

Yes and we were aware of that on day one when we started the Community Reinvestment Strategy (CRS). [We thought] we should be very deliberate... and say ‘We’re not coming back to do another planning exercise. We are taking CRS and we are just checking in with you.’ ...[E]ven back then we were worried about planning fatigue. People are not going to go through another round of planning... because of that notion of the fatigue.

As Leroy explained, even though these large, philanthropy-sponsored planning initiatives had failed to incorporate the city’s Master Plan, as political tides shifted and external plans took a backseat, the planning department refused to follow the same path and “start fresh” with new master plans. As they saw it, the residents did not differentiate between

something carried out by a private foundation and something carried out by the city's planning division. So to avoid "fatiguing" residents even further, they continued to slowly amend and incorporate these additional plans into their own master plans.

It was within this context that again in 2010, as the Detroit Future City efforts started up in Detroit, the planning department held the expectation that the staff involved would consult their work and minimize the outreach fatigue on residents. However, just as in the late 1990s, the result was an entirely separate planning initiative with "no consultation" of the planning department: a framework or strategy for redevelopment in Detroit, but no authority to implement that strategy. Long-term Detroiters were upset with the Detroit Works Project and distrustful of the eventual Detroit Future City framework because of the aforementioned conversations about "rightsizing." Thus when Mayor Duggan was elected in 2013, he distanced himself from the process and final product. The planning department again found itself between processes, wanting to show residents that their voices had been heard. Says one community activist in response to a discussion about the Community Reinvestment Strategy:

I've participated in multiple planning processes in neighborhoods around Detroit...planning fatigue is very common. Typically, residents express frustration that it's unclear if their thoughts and inputs actually result in tangible policy changes from the City. That is one area where the trust deficit exists. I fully support regularly updating master plans and the corresponding community engagement, as long as it's done in a culturally competent manner. I've witnessed very poor processes [like] Detroit Works and some pretty good ones [like] Hope Village Initiative.

Residents who were originally motivated to see improvements in the neighborhood are often too "fatigued" by a lack of resultant change in their neighborhood to keep participating. As newcomers move into the North End and Cass Corridor, participating in these meetings for the very first time, they have the impression that they are able to see

change in a short period of time, empowering them to be further involved. Long-term residents see these impacts and assume that it is because of “who” is involved in the meetings that the effects are happening due to their race and political connections.

While Hyra’s understanding of political displacement articulates the transition of representation in office and its reflection of demographic changes in the neighborhood, this research demonstrates that the notion of political capital reaches far beyond local political office. In Detroit, those in office play an important role in shaping the ways that redevelopment happens within the city. But equally significant are the diffuse mechanisms that keep Black residents in positions of powerlessness. As one resident shared with me:

What we don’t want to talk about in this city is that this city is reminiscent of South Africa. We have a majority population and we have stripped away their power. The last time I checked, that was called apartheid. And the reason apartheid lived was because people benefited from apartheid. It is no different in Detroit. ...And foundations aren’t gonna rock the boat because if you go to a foundation, the bulk of the people there are Caucasian. So they can’t speak about diversity either. So there is a whole system ... benefitting... you really think they gon’ shake it up?

Berger (1988 in Turner and Stats 2006) argues that if expectations persist across repeated interactions, they “become more permanent expectation states for the emotions that will be experienced and expressed.” In this context, repeated exposure to planning processes yield repeated failed expectations and distrust toward the concept of planning or political representation altogether. While the majority of work within the sociology of emotions deals with power at the micro-level, Barbalet’s (1995) work on collective fear offers a cultural perspective, applying the concept of fight-or-flight to the collective level, suggesting that the actor response is dependent on the interpretation of a loss of status as fair or not. In the Detroit context for this reason, redevelopment is perpetually cast as

unfair, even when developers make attempts to show that the project is driven by resident need, desire, or interest.

This chapter pieces together a large number of themes critical to understanding narrative frames about redevelopment in Detroit: how the legacies of Urban Renewal shape perceptions of redevelopment today, debates over whether or not gentrification is underway or even possible, and the continual distrust in the ability of everyday residents to access political representation. Taken together, they set the framework for how residents, developers, and city officials make sense of neighborhood change and interpret future projects within a city still losing population overall but gaining population in small pockets. The following chapters deal with navigating the boundaries of declining and growing neighborhoods, perceptions of authentic versus inauthentic change, and branding the neighborhood and the city at large. In all of these variations of meaning-making in the changing city, memories of previous development projects and their relationship to trust continually operate as moderating forces. Narratives of what this change means resurface at scales as divergent as the block club all the way up to global perceptions of Detroit in this moment in time, with competing logics of who development is meant for.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INCLUSIVE MEANING OF “NEIGHBORHOOD” DURING TIMES OF DECLINE

Residents of the North End have long been fearful of the specter of gentrification, even as the majority of the neighborhood during the time of this research has struggled with continual depopulation, with significant numbers of abandoned homes and vacant lots. As Figure 2.1 at the end of this chapter shows, the neighborhood¹³ started losing population in the 1950s at an exponential rate. In 1950, the population peaked at nearly 56,000 residents. As of 2010, this number was just under 6,000. Given such extreme depopulation, I initially anticipated the operationalization of different types of boundary-work in the North End when compared with the greater financial investment in the Cass Corridor. What I found instead was that the conditions of these two neighborhoods shape two different types of simultaneous boundary-work practices, broadly construed as

¹³ One of the main arguments of this chapter and the dissertation as a whole is the flexibility of concepts like “the neighborhood.” In order to provide population figures for the context of decline in the North End, I used the census tracts that most closely matched the area considered the North End by the greatest number of residents. These tracts of course became fewer as residents moved out of the area, but for interested researchers, I used 1940 tracts 551-558. By 2010, these same geographies were limited to tracts 5112, 5114, and 5119.

inclusive and exclusive. Lamont and Molnar (2002: 168) define symbolic boundaries as, “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality.” Residents often define their everyday sense of place and collective identity around residence within city limits and being Black, allowing for a much more expansive definition of who “counts” within the symbolic boundary of one’s neighborhood. Yet as pockets of the city begin to become targets of redevelopment, the work of establishing boundaries and naming practices for neighborhoods again contracts, tracing a smaller geography and giving form to divisions inside and outside of that particular space.

In her work in Philadelphia, sociologist Jackelyn Hwang (2016) demonstrates the ways that neighborhood boundaries shift according to race, class, and duration living in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods. She suggests that although “real estate agents, developers, and political institutions, certainly have a powerful hand in defining neighborhoods, this framework undervalues the social processes of defining neighborhoods among residents,” (Hwang 2016: 4). To Hwang, the articulation of boundaries is critical to understanding how residents negotiate their presence and power within a changing neighborhood.

This chapter focuses on inclusive boundary drawing, with greater emphasis on the North End but examples from the Cass Corridor as well of spaces in conditions of decline. Chapter 3 focuses on inclusive boundary drawing with greater emphasis on the Cass Corridor but with examples of both spaces in conditions of growth. In both chapters, this boundary-work is both inherently symbolic (in defining who counts and who doesn’t

as part of the neighborhood) and also spatial (in defining the geographic territories of the neighborhood and the social and economic consequences of that inclusion or exclusion). I first show the ways that long-term residents define their own sense of “neighborhood,” and how personal sense of place and community has grown more expansive alongside the depopulation of the neighborhood and the alignment of community on the basis of race. This is followed by a discussion of additional ways that the boundaries of the North End have been expanded, driven by the top-down decisions of foundations, community development corporations, and even federal policy makers to draw their own boundaries in the North End in order to capture more revenue for the area. Finally, I include a discussion of the ways in which the North End occupies a liminal symbolic (if not geographic) space in Detroit’s “revitalization,” which foregrounds the next chapter’s discussion of cultural practices in spaces of more intensive growth.

GROWING UP IN THE NORTH END: NICK

Nick is a Black man in his seventies with a shock of white hair and a solemn, cerebral demeanor. We first met on the University of Michigan campus (where he works) as part of my research into the history of the North End. In the late 1950s at the age of 11, Nick moved with his family from an area 2 blocks south of Highland Park and 12 blocks west of Hamtramck to the North End. His father worked at the Dodge Plant nearby, and his mother who had been a waitress quit her job at the time of their move to focus on family life. As an 11 year old, his impression of this new area was glowing. On his new block, families lived in the majority of the homes and he quickly found more friends in the neighborhood than he could have ever imagined. He used to play stickball in the street at his old house, but after the move he could go to Thompson Junior High where

they had a baseball diamond where boys in the neighborhood would play baseball every day, all summer long. His sisters, not allowed to roam as far away from the house as the boys, created an all-girls club where members wore blue poplin jackets, called themselves “El Dricos,” and listened to records in the basement of their new home. Nick remembers going with all of his friends to the neighborhood movie theater that cost 20 cents. On special occasions they would all ride downtown to see a movie at the Fox Theater for 35 cents, and could count on a bus arriving every 15 minutes to take them back home.

Grocery stores were a particularly fond experience for Nick. Their house was third from the corner, and on the corner was a small market run by a Jewish family, the Alberts. A few blocks away was a bigger market run by an Italian family called Franco’s. If you needed fish, poultry, or eggs, you would go to Max’s Polish market also down the block. As Nick recalls, everything was fresh and if anything ran out, the grocer would send a truck to Eastern Market (the major regional market still in operation today) to pick up more food. Eventually, Nick gave up his daily baseball games and started working for Harry Albert at the corner market during the summers. Other women living on the block would give kids a quarter to pick up their groceries (which typically cost about 20 cents), letting them keep the extra change as payment.

Nick also remembers the role of pharmacies, lounges, and other social spaces in the daily life of the area:

The bigger pharmacies had a lunch counter, like Barthwell’s on Oakland and King. Everything was on Oakland, all your 5-and-dimes, pharmacies, groceries, local clothing shops, plumbers store (his own, not a hardware store), and poultry place were all on Oakland. Bars were called lounges and maybe would be called night clubs today. Places like Mandel’s Bar and Lounge, Phelph’s, Zambi, Champions, and Blue Flame off Oakland, which might be called Flame

Showbar... Oakland was a bustling neighborhood of stores and shops... Groceries and pharmacies were social spaces where people would hang out and chat with neighbors, and a the boss would even keep a little something in back at the corner store and friends would come over to share a drink together or toast or something.

Churches were also significant neighborhood institutions. In Nick's family, children were allowed to attend any church they wanted, as long as they did in fact go to church. Nick's sisters both chose different churches that were equidistant from his house in different directions. One was a Baptist church and the other Catholic. Nick remembers the neighborhood as integrated when he first moved there, with about a dozen White families on the block that in hindsight he recognizes were "starting to move away." By the time he left for college, the block was entirely Black.

LIVING IN THE NORTH END TODAY: GLENN

A few years younger than Nick, Glenn's memories of the spaces of his daily life growing up in the North End match those of Nick and so many others I spoke with in the area. We talked extensively about the same kinds of corner markets, lounges, and other spaces where time was spent:

We had corner stores, instead of going to grocery stores. Matter of fact we don't even have grocery stores now! We had little mom and pop stores with just the essentials in the store and we don't have that anymore. We had lounges and bars so that the dollars stayed in the neighborhood.

Glenn then spoke of the lounges that his parents might go to occasionally. Reflecting on the state of the area currently, he expounded:

I think we only have one bar... Apex. If you look at Oakland Avenue we have the Apex Bar, we have the gas station on the [West Grand] Boulevard, but anything else is pretty much gone. I mean I looked up one day and the neighborhood was just a hood. You know? I mean there are blocks with no one living on them. And we didn't have lights for a little while. That was scary. I've been living here all

my life and all of the sudden I don't want to go outside! ... I think it started around ... maybe 2008,9,10 and the neighborhood is gone. Well the concern I have is basically nothing that I grew up with is here anymore. I mean, the people, all the schools that I went to except Northern are gone, torn down...The stores are all gone, and I talk to some of the people that have left and they say 'what are you still doing there?'

In our conversations, Glenn often shifted between these romantic visions of the neighborhood when the area was packed with kids to one where it felt like no more families were left. With such a large number of foreclosed homes in the neighborhood, the Detroit Land Bank Authority had recently begun the process of tearing down abandoned properties. Glenn commented that it "looks more country than anything, but feels better than a vacant house so long as the grass is cut." The high number of vacancies in the area today meant that there was lots of available land but little sign that families would be moving back any time soon.

Glenn spoke to me about the many ways the texture of the landscape had changed, and how his neighborhood shifted from feeling like a space dominated by family life to one dominated by vacant land:

"[Urban farms] are interesting for a city of Detroit's size. I mean it was an urban area. Now it's rural urban... urban rural. Farms are popping up everywhere. Large one on Horton. Another one up Oakland... Then there is the one on John R. Those are the bigger ones. When you think about it, we used to all have gardens! All the neighbors would know one another. One thing I would say, putting neighbors back in the hood is something that needs to be done. The greatest need is families!"

When we spoke about the changes that have happened in the neighborhood, I asked Glenn where he spent most of his time on a daily basis. After being hit by a car while riding his bike, Glen has suffered from a number of injuries that made him ineligible for the types of manual labor jobs he used to do, meaning he has been in and out of the labor

market ever since. He told me that he spent time all over the city, and that the majority of his non-work and non-home time was spent in Corktown and around the Wayne State campus (in the Cass Corridor area). In particular, Glenn liked to volunteer at the Mana Soup Kitchen in Corktown and spend a lot of his free time building bikes with The Hub/Back Alley Bikes on Cass. But when we talked about places he could spend time closer to home, Glenn expressed fears about being outside after dark and shared that he most often just stayed home with several large dogs protecting his house.

WHAT COUNTS AS THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Nick and Glenn, both Black men in their mid to late 60's and self-proclaimed "North Enders," provide a useful point of comparison to one another and serve as helpful representatives of broader patterns among North End residents throughout my research. While Nick has remained involved in the North End neighborhood over time, he moved to Ann Arbor to attend the University of Michigan and has lived there ever since. My assumption at the start of this research was that Nick was able to construct a nostalgic recreation of his life in the North End¹⁴ due to both a geographical and temporal distance from the experience of living in the North End today. However, residents who have remained in the neighborhood since childhood, articulated the same narrative pattern: a childhood marked by specific local institutions and spaces in a small geographic boundary, and an adult life rarely spent within those same boundaries when outside of the home. Of particular significance in these recollections were schools, where children can

¹⁴ Nick was not idealistic about the North End. In fact, in 1966 he was one of the leaders at Northern High School walk out, in which over 2,000 students marched out of the high school in protest of unequal conditions among Northern High School students' education and educational materials as compared to regional predominantly White schools.

more easily orient themselves relationally because they spend the most time there. Also significant were parks, grocery stores, the lounges their parents would go to, and places of worship.

Sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch ([1987] 2007: 103) call these types of neighborhood the “daily round,” the spaces where one’s concrete daily needs are satisfied.” Among the list of daily round needs are food, schooling, childcare, and routine health needs. The authors also cite the importance of informal networks of support, security and trust, and the agglomeration effects of the neighborhood as significant to the determination of a home’s use value. For North End residents, as the population of the neighborhood plummeted over time, so too did their opportunities to connect with others in the space of the neighborhood. Residents were forced to look further outside the neighborhood to meet the needs of their daily round. As such, the scope of what was considered the “neighborhood” shifted, even if the symbolic boundaries of “the North End” remained the same.

The contemporary landscape of the North End looks very different from the densely populated neighborhood of the 1960s. Dilapidated buildings or vacant corner lots hold the place of former markets where kids could find their summer employment. As these types of places shut their doors, residents of the North End often talked of traveling by bike, car, or on foot down to the “Wayne State area” if they needed to pick up food or toilet paper, and planning trips often a 20-minute drive away to get things from a Target or Meijer superstore. As one resident in her mid-40’s put it, “the whole city is my neighborhood.”

This is not to say all local institutions withered. While many of the neighborhood's churches and synagogues are still standing¹⁵, supported by attendees living outside of the neighborhood who continue to make contributions to their church and drive in every Sunday. Because of these long-standing connections to the neighborhood through the church, I made many of my initial contacts through church spaces. Bennett Park – named after North End resident Dolores Bennett who was responsible for the creation, stewardship, and programming of a former church lot turned dumping ground turned neighborhood park– was one of the few public spaces in the neighborhood that every resident could point to. In an area where park density was low but vacant space high, this curated space was especially important to long-term residents. One resident who remembered the process of making the space a park in 1977 said it “represented the community coming together” in a way that was often unseen in the following decades. As residents increasingly relied on spaces outside of the small block radius around their homes for their daily round, they also adapted a more expansive symbolic interpretation of their neighborhood based on race and tenure within the city. The next section traces this dimension of neighborhood sense of place and the effect neighborhood definition has had on tangible land-based agreements.

EXPANSIVE NEIGHBORHOODS AND RACE

Expansive notions of “the neighborhood” were most clearly and publicly articulated in the creation of advisory groups, when city officials ask residents to nominate neighborhood residents or business owners to represent their interests as part of

¹⁵ The majority of the North End's synagogues that still stand have since been converted into Christian churches, with one used today as a recreation center and library (Elliott et. al. 2013).

an advisory group for a broader development project. During the course of this research, the one Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) established in this area was in the lower Cass Corridor for the upcoming Red Wings Hockey Arena redevelopment detailed in the discussion chapter. In approving the land transfers and public funds for this project, one of the requirements of Detroit City Council was the establishment of the NAC as a non-legally binding volunteer committee to advocate for the enforcement of benefits to the “community”. Unlike the North End at this time, the Cass Corridor was an area full of the institutions of the daily round, including social service agencies, party stores and grocery stores, and numerous bars and restaurants. In the first meeting to establish the Neighborhood Advisory Council residents were asked to nominate representatives from their community to serve as part of this advisory group. To my surprise, residents nominated people who lived far away from the actual footprint of the development under discussion:

The council member representing the District where this project was to take place stood in front of the crowd gathered, attempting to reign in growing discontent over the perceived effects of the new arena. Councilmember Castañeda- Lopez asked for the nomination of residents or business owners that represented the neighborhood. Residents were supposed to be nominated along a variety of factors (long-term residents, business owners, experts about particular topics, etc. and all intended to be representative of the neighborhood where the arena is being built). As she was explaining this, one resident called out the name of a Black funeral home director that lived in the northwest part of the city. Several people applauded this recommendation, saying this particular person was respected and represented the community well. Councilmember Castañeda-Lopez thanked the resident for their recommendation, making a point to clarify where this business was actually located. She then reminded everyone that this person should either live or work in the actual footprint affected by the arena.

Here, residents selected whom they considered part of their community on the basis of two critical and inseparable factors: geography at the scale of Detroit as a whole (rather

than the smaller scale of the neighborhood), and race. Even with the ability to draw on a much more proximate daily round, residents active enough in their neighborhood to attend this meeting still celebrated those far outside the boundaries of the arena footprint as “community leaders” for their connection to a broader sense of community and neighborhood. Ultimately, the individuals selected to be part of the NAC were largely from the adjacent Brush Park neighborhood on the eastern side of Woodward from the development. When asked about the presence of residents outside of the catalyst area for the NAC, one of its members told me

It's a good question about Brush Park. I sometimes wish there was more representation from the west side of Woodward. But I've always seen BP as having an interest in the area, even if it's technically outside the "Catalyst Area." They're literally right across the street and have had to contend with the arena's construction as much as anyone. I also think that to have more organic boundaries for the NAC serve an important moderating force that encourages broader understanding of issues that various constituents share and can benefit from.

Lack of participation from the west side of Woodward is not for want of available people in this area. Figure 2.5 at the end of this chapter shows occupied residential structures in the “catalyst” area where this major development would take place. On this map, only structures east of Woodward would be considered in Brush Park (due to the historic Brush ribbon farm, which ran north through this area to the east of Woodward). In the community meetings I witnessed for the selection of the NAC, the lack of an organized sense of neighborhood boundaries on the west side of Woodward, resulted in their isolation from these decision making processes and further fueled the reading that this area was a blank slate for redevelopment.

Recalling the discussions of Urban Renewal and political displacement from the previous chapter, the construction of place-based meaning cannot be isolated from

patterns of racial dispersion evident across the city. When residents call to mind Urban Renewal and its effects on Detroiters, they remember specifically the histories of Detroit's Black neighborhoods: Black Bottom, Paradise Valley, and Oakland Avenue as the northern commercial outpost of Hastings Street in the North End. Figure 2.6 at the end of this chapter shows two different maps layered together (Szewczyk 2014): the underlying colors represent Homeowner's Loan Corporation Residential Security Maps created in 1939. This map clearly demonstrates the North End as a redlined "most-hazardous" neighborhood. Layered on top of this is a map produced by Thomas Sugrue (2005) showing the concentrations of Detroit's Black population just one year later in 1940. These two layers give a strong spatial sense of Black life in Detroit during this time. One year later, in 1941, a City of Detroit Housing Commission annual report document classified these same areas as "slums," meaning they would be the targets of Detroit's Urban Renewal federal proposal. Figure 2.7 shows this slum classification and the ways that it aligns with the areas of Black population density found in Figure 2.6.

Because practices of segregation were so tightly enforced at every structural and cultural level (Sugrue 2005), memory about displacement starts with these areas of the city where almost the entirety of Detroit's Black population at one point lived. In this sense, the current geography of the city that was 82.7% Black or African American as of 2010 is representative of a much tighter geographic concentration only a half-century ago that now lives in a more diasporic pattern across the city. In other words, though not every neighborhood was affected by Urban Renewal, every Black neighborhood was affected by Urban Renewal.

Though the North End of Nick and Glenn's childhoods was dense and more

integrated than today, Black Detroiters faced vicious racism on de jure and de facto levels, suggesting the role of nostalgia (Boyer 2006; Boym 2001) positively influenced many families' interpretations of this era. A report by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in 1968 shows that instances of housing discrimination against Black individuals and family's was especially high in the area surrounding Northern High School, the high school Nick, Glenn, and many other North Enders attended (Bunge 1969). This concentration of discriminatory practices speak to a process whereby Detroit's Black population was at one time far more spatially concentrated, and today operates as a diaspora of that initial concentration in the way that "community" and "neighborhood" are constructed. This means that the embodied memories of urban renewal are diffuse throughout the entire city today. The most important symbolic boundary of race and memory is therefore 8 Mile, a line meant to signify all of Detroit's history in its physical border. Thus when the owner of a funeral parlor on the Northwest side gets nominated to represent the voices of Detroit's Cass Corridor, it is because he is just as much a part of "the neighborhood" as anyone else. The funeral parlor director has a long tradition of taking care of families during their most painful times, and is for that reason one of the most trustworthy members of "the neighborhood" one could hope for.

FUNDING AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPACE

Glenn characterized the contemporary landscape of the North End as "urban rural," meaning that in the center of the city one felt surrounded by open land. Though the depopulation of the North End neighborhood had been happening across many decades, the deterioration and ultimate demolition of much of the North End's housing

stock was a recent phenomenon tied to the foreclosure crisis and the mapping practices classifying this as a target area for federal public demolition funds as well as private foundation funds. This expansion of what constituted “the North End” happened at the scale of foundations and non-profits attempting to capture more funding to devote to the significant decline in this area. The North End has been one of the earliest and most significant recipients of a majority of demolition funding in the past ten years.

In 2006, the Skillman Foundation, a Detroit-based foundation focused specifically on impacting the lives of Detroit Children, created the Good Neighborhoods Initiative, a program committing \$120 million over 10 years to 6 Detroit neighborhoods. Of those, an area initially classified as the North End and later as “Northend Central Woodward” was identified as an impact area. Street banners reading “Skillman Good Neighborhood” were erected on all major blocks of the area. Residents remarked on this process only when I would ask what they considered the North End, asking for clarification of whether I was interested in their definition or what other people “like Skillman” considered the North End. As one long-term resident shared with me,

The expansion of the area was not a decision made by residents. In addition, many residents have argued that this has enabled philanthropic and public investment west of Woodward, but still being able to state that the investment is serving the “North End”. It’s complicated and I would strongly caution against anything west of Woodward being labeled the North End. Programs from Skillman and Next Detroit Neighborhood Initiative branded west of Woodward to be the North End. Now, C+PAD and others continue this because there is momentum in the funding involved. I’d consider that to have been a very top-down branding. I know some folks east of Woodward to be particularly offended by this. But it’s hard. If people west of Woodward have begun to assume that name, then is it part of their identity?

Maps, interviews, and archival documents from this period suggest that the Skillman neighborhoods *significantly* influenced the decision within the city of where to target

areas of need for federal funding. In 2008, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) was enacted by Congress to assist in areas “hardest hit” by the mortgage foreclosure crisis of the same year. This money was delegated to state and local governments in three rounds of funding totaling almost \$7 billion: NSP1 (\$3.92 billion), NSP2 (\$2 billion) and NSP3 (\$1 billion). Grantees of these funds were required to establish target areas for the rehabilitation, resale, or demolition of homes or vacant land (HUD 2017). The “North End” was named as one of these target areas across all three rounds of funding, though its boundaries encompassed an area roughly four times the size of what most consider the North End. Figure 2.5 shows the boundary surrounding the North End, and readers will note that Woodward is far to the east of the space in question. Many of the initial neighborhoods selected mapped onto the neighborhoods in Skillman’s Good Neighborhoods Initiative.

In 2010, the Department of Treasury created the Hardest Hit Fund (HHF), another federal-level initiative tailored to the demolition of publicly-owned residential housing (U.S. Dept. of the Treasury, 2010). An area encompassing the North End was part of the first round of funding. Figure 2.6 shows the HHF boundaries and their relationship to the boundaries in the previous map. While the work of creating target area boundaries did not seem to have a direct impact on how residents understood their sense of place in the neighborhood, the indirect effect was that within only a few short years, vacant lots without structures increased dramatically. Figure 2.7¹⁶ shows the full extent of the

¹⁶ Figure 2.7 was created as part of a New York Times series focused on the North End. As part of the map, they share a footnote with the following text: “North End’s historic western boundary ends at Woodward Avenue. For this series, it has been extended to the M-10, John Lodge Freeway,” (Park 2014).

number of vacant lots in the area as of 2014. When Glenn mentioned that the neighborhood really started to change for the worse around “2008/9/10,” he was equating the demolition of homes all around him with the loss of residents. The loss of residents in the North End was already underway during the nostalgic heyday of the 1960’s. But the impact of this depopulation was felt on an entirely new level as empty homes were torn down, transforming much of the neighborhood into a more pastoral landscape. When naming the current institutions of the area that stand out today, residents often speak of Dolores Bennett Park, the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, and other local farms and gardens as the recognizable spaces of the neighborhood. All of these landscape-based efforts take place on vacant lots that have been transformed in recent years to become social institutions.¹⁷

EXPANSIVE BOUNDARIES FOR DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

The North End was the beneficiary of considerable rounds of concentrated funding for the demolition of blighted properties. However, when it comes to housing and other types of redevelopment efforts, this area proves to be more liminal: it is adjacent to the “comeback” areas of the city but not quite included in those efforts. In early 2013, the Hudson- Weber Foundation, Midtown Inc., the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, the Downtown Detroit Partnership, Invest Detroit, and Data Driven Detroit all came together to compile a report on the status of Detroit’s “Greater Downtown” called 7.2 Sq. Mi. (Ali et. al. 2013). Since 1926 when Detroit annexed to the full municipal boundary we have today, the greater downtown of Detroit has always been

¹⁷ Researchers have documented the adaptive re-use of vacant land across the world with the aim of some type of social impact (Kinder 2016, Herscher 2012).

considered everything within the boundaries of Grand Boulevard, a wide avenue that draws a ring around the downtown to the river on either side. Figure 2.8 compiles three images from the City's 1961 Master Plan where these conceptualizations of the Greater Downtown are mapped clearly.

The 7.2 Sq. Mi. report seemed an attempt by many to gerrymander the greater downtown to only include neighborhoods where growth statistics could be cited and Detroit could be shown to be rebounding. Figures 2.9 and 2.10 show the boundaries of the 7.2 Sq. Mi. report and what is considered within Detroit's "Greater Downtown." Conversations with one of the report's authors suggest that while the group working on this report began with the boulevard, they ultimately changed the "greater downtown" boundaries to reflect net population and economic growth, rather than capturing both growth and continual decline. As he noted, "It was really guided more by census tracts than anything... but Eastern Market is not in there for the census tract because it really skews the data. The report includes investments there but there is a large area of subsidized housing north of Mack... Corktown has the same but it was anchored by the investments on the Eastern end." Thus the technical boundaries of the 7.2 square miles considered Detroit's greater downtown was based on where investment was already happening, not on geography or "hard edge" boundaries like landmarks or highways (Lynch 1960).

Khalilah Gaston, who was executive director for Vanguard Community Development Corporation during the time of our conversations in 2010 and 2011, commented about the specific exclusion of the North End from the 7.2 Square Miles report. When asked about why the North End wasn't included but the New Center

neighborhood was, Khalilah threw back her head laughing:

Yes! I used to work at the Downtown Detroit Partnership... and I still have some relationships there. So the reality is the North End, and you understand the history, you understand it was an ethnic enclave, and now we are years past the Holocaust and things of that nature, but in the early 1900s Jewish residents weren't considered white and they weren't included into the social and economic structure of the city, and so that's why the north end was always Other. It was always separate, had its own hospitals, its own community centers, its own local economy. Through its kind of industrialism increase that still was the case. So when GM was located on the (Grand) Boulevard they didn't invest east of Woodward so now years later people don't understand. Why did we create the boundary that we did? So I had some conversations with a few of the report's authors and I'm like, "We're downtown! We are in greater downtown!" If you include the North End than it tanks your statistics. It tanks your educational attainment, it tanks per capita income, it tanks every indicator that you want to use to tout that your downtown is back. So that happens but then we are also now seeing that portions of the North End are now being included and those boundaries are shifting. I've only been at Vanguard it hasn't even been 2 years, but we would see in the media this would start to be called "New Center" or "Midtown" which is why we've spent so much time focusing on the history and focusing on the branding. Milwaukee Junction was always part of the North End, it was just more industrial, more automotive area, so you can kind of see those shifts happening.

As the North End was excluded from the boundaries of the Greater Downtown, Vanguard CDC worked defensively, as Khalilah notes, to expand the boundaries of the broader North End against the encroaching "New Center" and "Midtown" identities.¹⁸

This conversation with Khalilah came on the tail of an urban planning project that I had participated in, which she makes reference to with the emphasis on history and

¹⁸ Midtown, Inc. absorbed new Center Council, at one time its own community development corporation intended to represent New Center, in early 2011. This merger was still fresh in the minds of many Detroiters, many of whom felt betrayed by this process. In the quote above, Gaston is trying to avoid the same pattern from happening in the North End. One of those areas of potential encroachment was Milwaukee Junction, a neighborhood with a rich industrial history just to the south of the North End's otherwise almost entirely residential neighborhood. Milwaukee Junction falls to the north of the highway bifurcating Midtown from the North End (see Figure 1.1) and due to its industrial history, has been considered prime space for "live-work" communities (which can often reads as young artists or "makers" and part of the gentrification process.

branding of the neighborhood. The purpose of the project was first to research the history of the North End and second, to use the built environment as a means of emphasizing the distinctive identity of the North End, as a tool for both newcomers and investors who might not understand this history. The plan (ultimately titled *History's Future in the North End*) was spawned by a desire to ease tensions between long-term residents and newcomers to the North End, demonstrating the long history that new Detroit residents were becoming part of. The plan also had the effect of committing to paper the strong community identity within the North End. Four years after the plan had been finished and distributed to community groups, I was attending a block club meeting in the North End as a planner representing the City of Detroit. As I introduced myself, a middle-aged woman sitting near the back called out “Were you one of the people that did that ‘History’s Future in the North End?’ I loved that! Our neighborhood has such a unique history. I feel proud to be a North Ender.” In a later conversation with the same resident, she expressed her desire to commemorate and celebrate the history of the North End (even as it relates to a history of exclusion) because it’s something that the newer residents moving into the neighborhood don’t know about at all. While she was excited by the prospect of “young blood” moving into the neighborhood, her enthusiasm for this particular project suggested a desire to be able to retain control over the future of the area by emphasizing its long (and well-established) past.

Leading up to this planning project, Vanguard had done extensive work in the neighborhood to better understand what residents consider the boundaries of the North End, resulting in the broader boundaries shown at the end of this chapter in Figure 2.11. Residents who participated in input about the boundaries, while expanding the definition

of neighborhood in some contexts, also actively resisted that expansion when imposed externally. Woodward was and continues to be the main source of contention as to what “counts” as the North End. As an example of this offense, one lifelong North End resident had the following response to a map seen on social media: “There is absolutely nothing west of Woodward known as the North End. I don’t know who you been getting your information from but that is a completely different neighborhood, do not mistake it. Don’t say that out loud. People have been physically maimed over this distinction.” In fact, the notion of what constitutes the North End is so heavily contested that at a community meeting about park improvements in Southwest Detroit in March of 2016, one resident said to another who mentioned living in the North End “ Do you really live in the North End or do you live in the bigger area that they turned into the North End?” This was reference to the efforts by community development corporations to create these much more expansive boundaries around the North End for the purposes of funding, but it also points to the distrust with which residents regard any type of boundary or rebranding work in the area.

The two participants in this conversation were white, middle-aged, and dressed in tattered clothing. The man asking about the “true” North End was heavysset with evidence of poor dental health, and constantly referenced the multiple financial restrictions that kept him from doing the kind of work that he wanted to in the community. Yet interestingly, early on in the conversation he called himself a “gentrifier.” When I asked him why he considered himself a gentrifier, he responded that wanting to use the park in his neighborhood clearly made him one. This casual association with park usage and the tastes and habits of gentrifiers did not come up again at any other point in my

observations or interviews. Other studies have documented tensions over the types of amenities in parks catering to newcomers (Hyra 2017:140-142) or the parks themselves becoming catalysts for rising property values, known as environmental gentrification (Wolch et. al. 2014). This was not the case for the park under discussion. For this resident, calling himself a gentrifier was a way to signal recognition of white privilege, even if his economic situation was precarious. Yet by sharing his understanding of how the boundaries of the North End had changed, he was also aligning himself with the North End's Black population and a collective understanding of the neighborhood's history.

When interviewing residents, I was put in touch with people who considered themselves to be North End residents without determining those boundaries myself. Occasionally, these residents lived on the west side of Woodward, and had also attended Northern High School (referenced above in relation to Bunge 1969). While a minority opinion, residents who live west of Woodward but considered themselves part of the North End begs the question of why they claim that boundary and how this type of cultural gate keeping affects their sense of place. Ultimately, Vanguard produced a series of maps reflective of these community conversations, including areas outside of what has historically been referred to as the North End prior to the building of Interstate- 75. Some residents like the one quoted above read this process to be a mimic of what they had seen with Midtown Detroit Inc. and the rebranding of the Cass Corridor (detailed more extensively in the following chapter).

Yet perhaps the most important distinction for the North End is what it is not. North Enders are distinctively not "Midtown." This again shows residents' rejection of a

label that had the potential to draw more financial resources. They are also often not considered part of “the neighborhoods”. As referenced briefly in Chapter 1, “Downtown/ Midtown v. the neighborhoods” is a symbolic boundary that shapes everyday conversations in Detroit and visions of who is benefiting from redevelopment. This is due to a historic emphasis on downtown redevelopment projects (see Thomas 1997) as a mechanism to “save” the city as a whole, which means reducing potential investments in “the neighborhoods.” In this conceptualization, as a neighborhood begins to see growth, it gets annexed out of the neighborhoods and into the “Downtown” side of this binary. The North End struggles in a liminal space between the two.

In the North End, being “Downtown/ Midtown”-adjacent suggests to residents and funders outside of this area that because they are close to the investments happening in those areas, they are likely to see a “trickle North” effect whereby being proximate to developing areas eventually benefits property values and market demand in the North End. Khalilah describes the challenges this produces for funding redevelopment work:

I think for residents in the North End there’s a lot of a pent up frustration. I think people outside of the neighborhood will always say they feel the North End is a missed opportunity. But in order for that to really be true you’ve had to really be sincere about investing in a neighborhood that has experienced 50 years of disinvestment. I don’t know if there has ever been that level of sincerity when it comes to really investing in that active level that we really need in the North End in order to see some of the changes and so ... the geography is always included because we are close to downtown but the investment hasn’t really matched. Like that level of popularity and so we are at this weird moment because a lot of attention is paid to Brightmoor or Osborn or Southwest and those are considered “real” neighborhoods where “real” Detroiters live. But the North End is also a neighborhood... so we’re kind of not seen like an Osborn or when you talk to CDCs or residents in that area they say “Oh, you guys are downtown” or “the North End always gets so much money” or “Vanguard always gets so much money” but it’s like well, *in comparison* we may get more money... or their may be an appearance of more money than Brightmoor or Osborn but the reality is it’s probably not true and it’s definitely not comparable to what’s happening in Downtown, Midtown, or now in New Center. So we’re kind of caught between

two worlds...”

Redevelopment practices focused exclusively on the downtown core align themselves with “trickle down” economic theory that this prosperity will eventually reach the neighborhoods. As this quote from Khalilah suggests, the North End plays a liminal role where it is often excluded as a part of the Greater Downtown and equally too close to be considered one of “the neighborhoods.” As such, in efforts to assist small business development, affordable housing, or any other efforts toward neighborhood growth outside of demolitions, the North End has been challenged in its capacity to raise the necessary funds for implementation.

DISCUSSION

Recognition that “the neighborhood” did not necessarily correspond with the geographic territory under discussion came up at numerous points throughout my research. At first I understood these instances to be failings in communication or understanding on my part, but after following up with many residents and sitting in on public conversations, it became clear that a “neighbor” or “the neighborhood” operates on a much more expansive scale among continuously disinvested communities. Davidson (2008) calls this “origin-area neighborhood resource displacement” where out-movers suffer the loss of support service institutions, preexisting networks, and other social support mechanisms that are not replaced in areas where residents are forced to move due to rising rents in “traditional” gentrification contexts. Across different areas of Detroit, residents stay in place and often experience the same effects of the loss of social and institutional context and the neighborhood around them evaporates. As I sat with resident after resident who fondly remembered the era of the market on every corner and houses

full of kids, their stories all slowly turned to a process of hollowing out. Naming each former family and when they moved from the block, residents watched their next-door neighbors and local provisions slowly disappear.

During that same time, the remaining residents' "daily round" of social interaction and commercial needs cast a wider and wider net. The neighborhood also expanded as necessary to capture more funding for housing demolition and foundation as a result of extreme population loss and high housing vacancy. This had the effect of creating a pastoral feel in what was once a dense, urban neighborhood.

As part of a 2017 panel of urbanists, theorist Susan Fainstein asked, "Is the whole concept of neighborhood a trap?" suggesting that the social-scientific approach focused on capital accumulation in space is a problem of layered representation. Instead, she called for "motion into the edges of neighborhoods" that refuses a false romanticized idea of the stable neighborhood as both an operationalized boundary for social science work and as the end goal of social justice. One of the purposes of this chapter has been to capture this very motion along the edges, as long-term residents and organizations construct meaningful symbolic and geographic boundaries in times of population loss. In *A Nation of Neighborhoods*, Benjamin Looker (2015:3) details the United States' relationship with the concept of the neighborhood from the 1940s-1980s, arguing that "[t]hough often bearing only the loosest relationship to any specific geographical locale, such symbolic spaces took on lives of their own, along the way offering up models for new ways of living together amid the brick and concrete of the real-life city." Looker details the importance of neighborhoods as the imagined space of tight-knit social life

and daily use value. But as this chapter shows, as those values erode, the symbolic space of the neighborhood becomes much more expansive.

The stories of Nick and Glenn served here as representative patterns of the ways that the idea of neighborhood operates at a time of high population density and then later as one moves out of the neighborhood and the other remains but spends the majority of his time when out of the house in other parts of the city. These boundaries remain open and flexible according to need, but are also reflected in concrete priorities of political representation, racial membership, and social belonging. As residents treated the neighborhood as a more expansive concept for their daily round and in relation to who could represent their neighborhood, so too foundations and community development corporations expanded the boundaries of the North End to be more expansive, capturing a broader territory for the use of federal funding or simply as a protective measure against other neighborhood CDCs. These expansions during times of decline (and the perception of growth) eventually had the effect of shaping the way the North End was perceived relationally to the rest of the city, and especially to Midtown. Alongside these expansions of the meaning of neighborhood in moments of decline, both newcomers and long-term residents alike participate in the work of contracting the boundaries of “the neighborhood” as they sense the real or perceived pressures of redevelopment on their block. The following chapter looks again to these same spaces, shedding light on the countervailing pressures at play to define the neighborhood in times of growth.

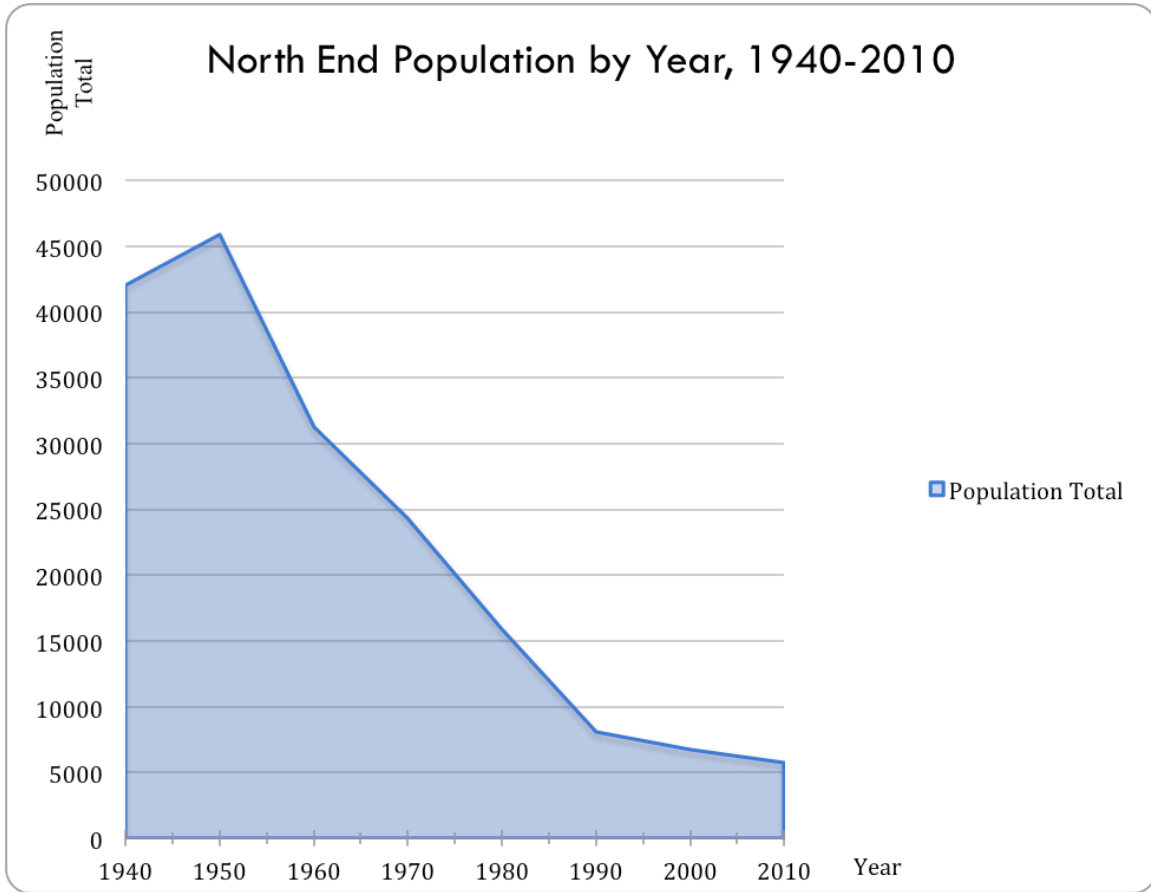


Figure 2.1: North End Population by Year, 1940-2010 (Source: U.S. Census).

This table shows population decline within the North End across 8 U.S. Census decades, demonstrating the current population of this area to be roughly 10% of what it was at its population peak in 1950.

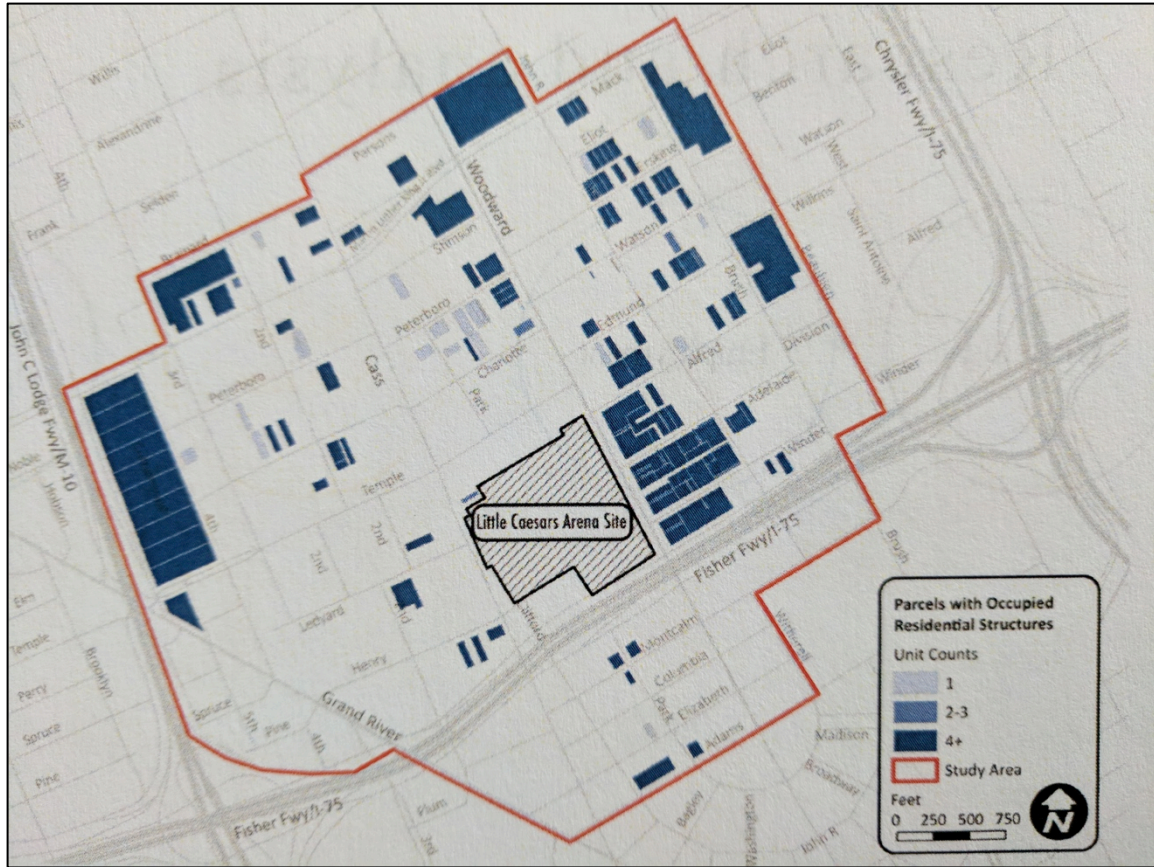


Figure 2.2: Occupied residential structures within arena catalyst area, (Source: JFM Consulting 2017).

This map was shared with residents as part of a public presentation made on June 7, 2017 by JFM Consulting. This group conducted an opinion poll on the new Red Wings arena project.

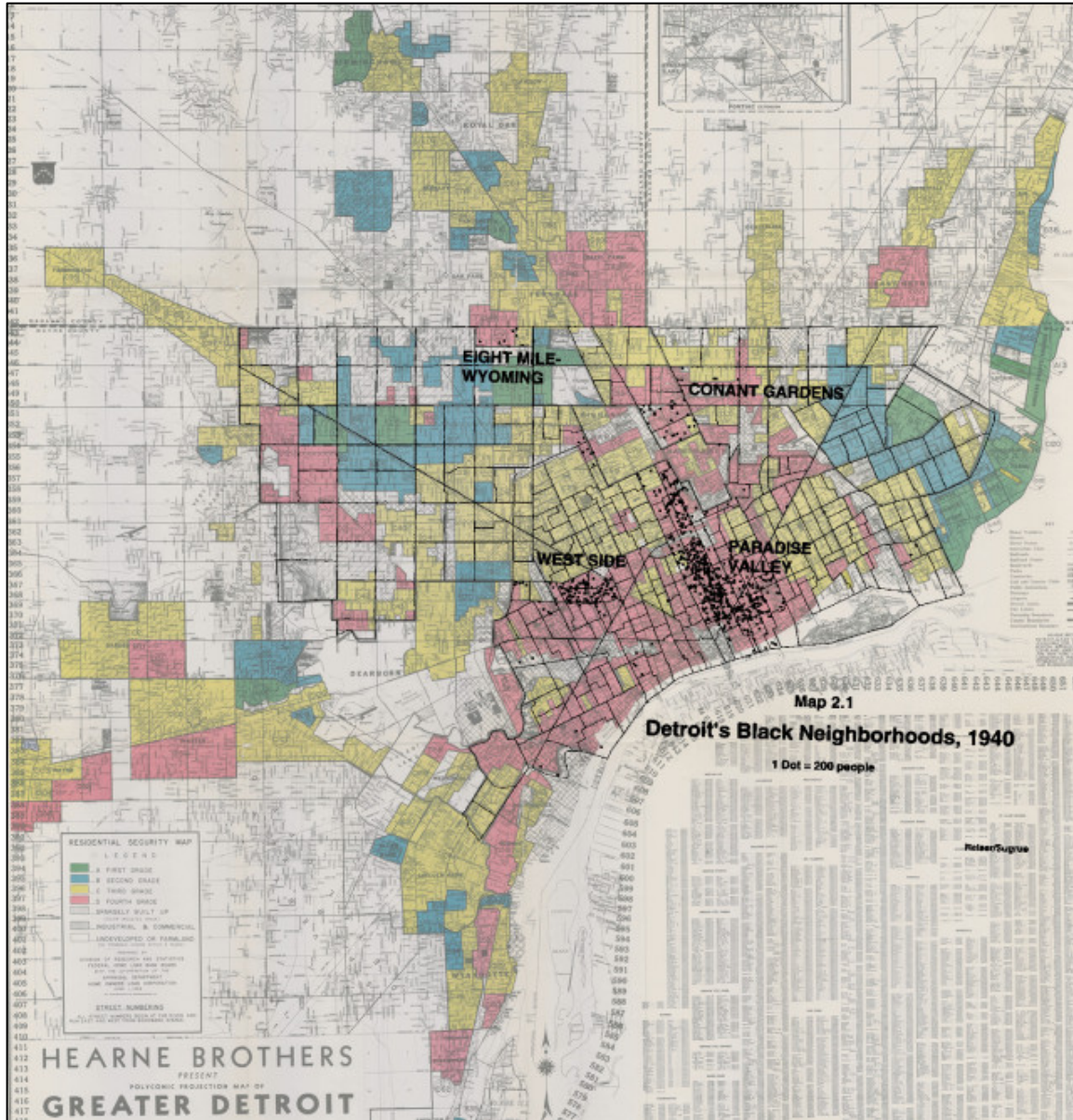


Figure 2.3: HOLC Map, 1939 with Detroit's Black Neighborhoods, 1940 (Source: Paul Szewczyk, *Detroitography*).

This map shows two layers important to segregation and race-based discrimination in Detroit. The base layer reflects the redlining maps made in 1939 to indicate areas of investment on the basis of race. The overlay map by Sugrue (2005) indicates Detroit's Black neighborhoods as of 1940.

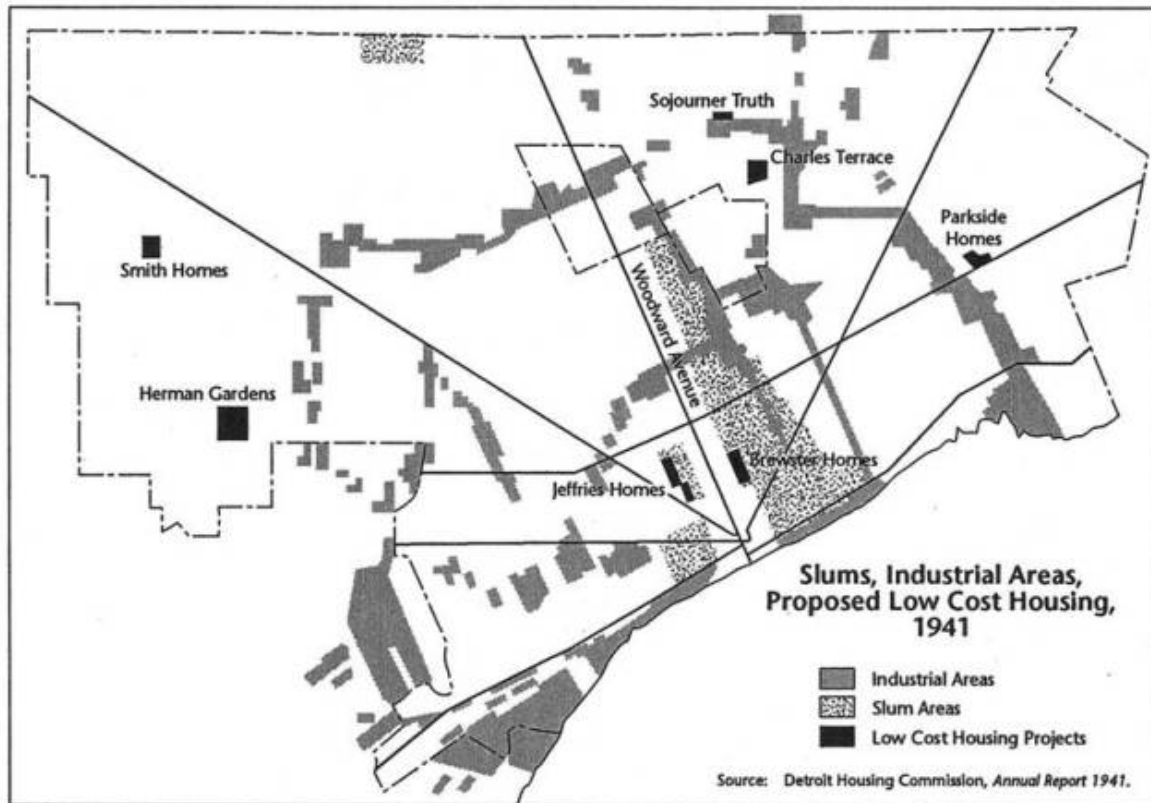


Figure 2.4: Slums, Industrial Areas, Proposed Low Cost Housing, 1941 (Source: Detroit Housing Commission Annual Report, 1941).

This map, made two years after the HOLC base layer in Figure 2.6 and one year after the Black population overlay, shows the neighborhoods classified as “slums” across the city. These areas would be classified as targets of Urban Renewal slum clearance in the future.

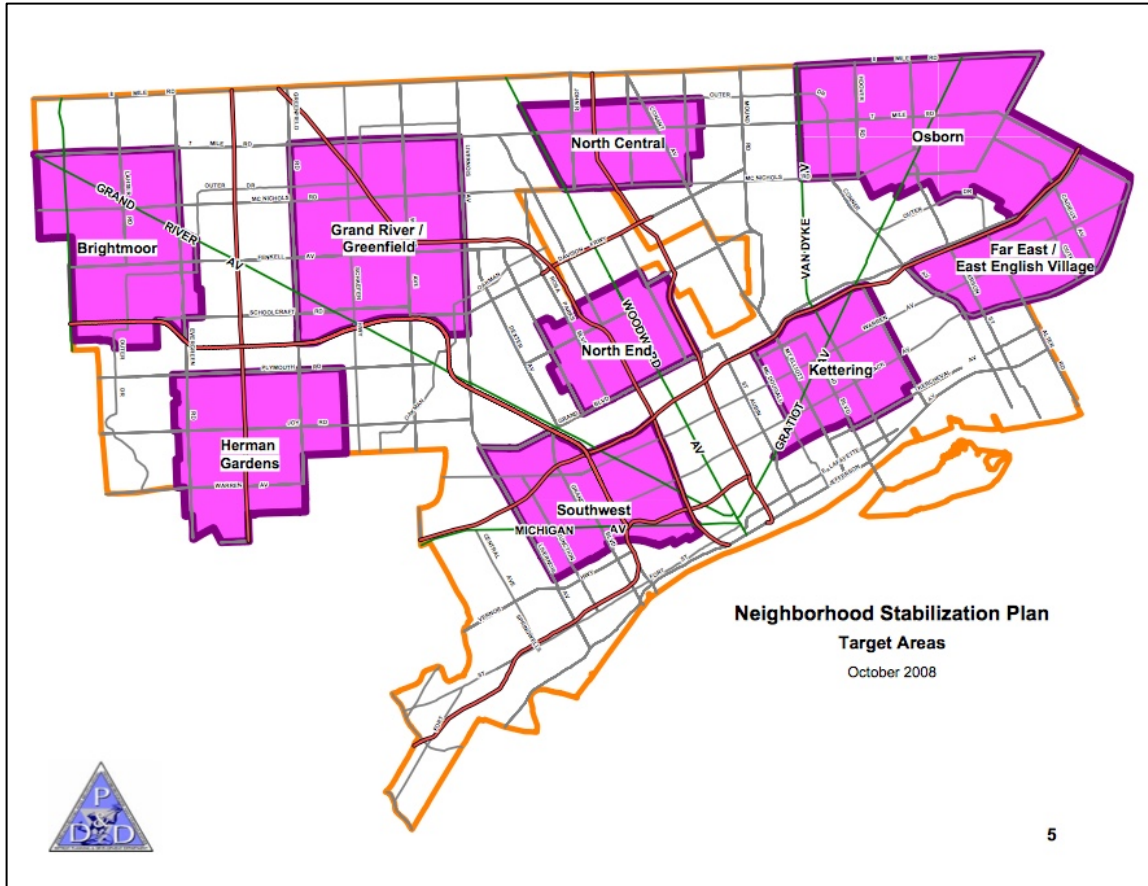


Figure 2.5: Neighborhood Stabilization Plan Target Areas (Source: City of Detroit, Planning and Development Archives, 2008).

The NSP target areas were largely influenced by the Skillman “Good Neighborhoods” boundaries detailed on pages 85-86. Note the size of the North End, the majority of which is west of Woodward.

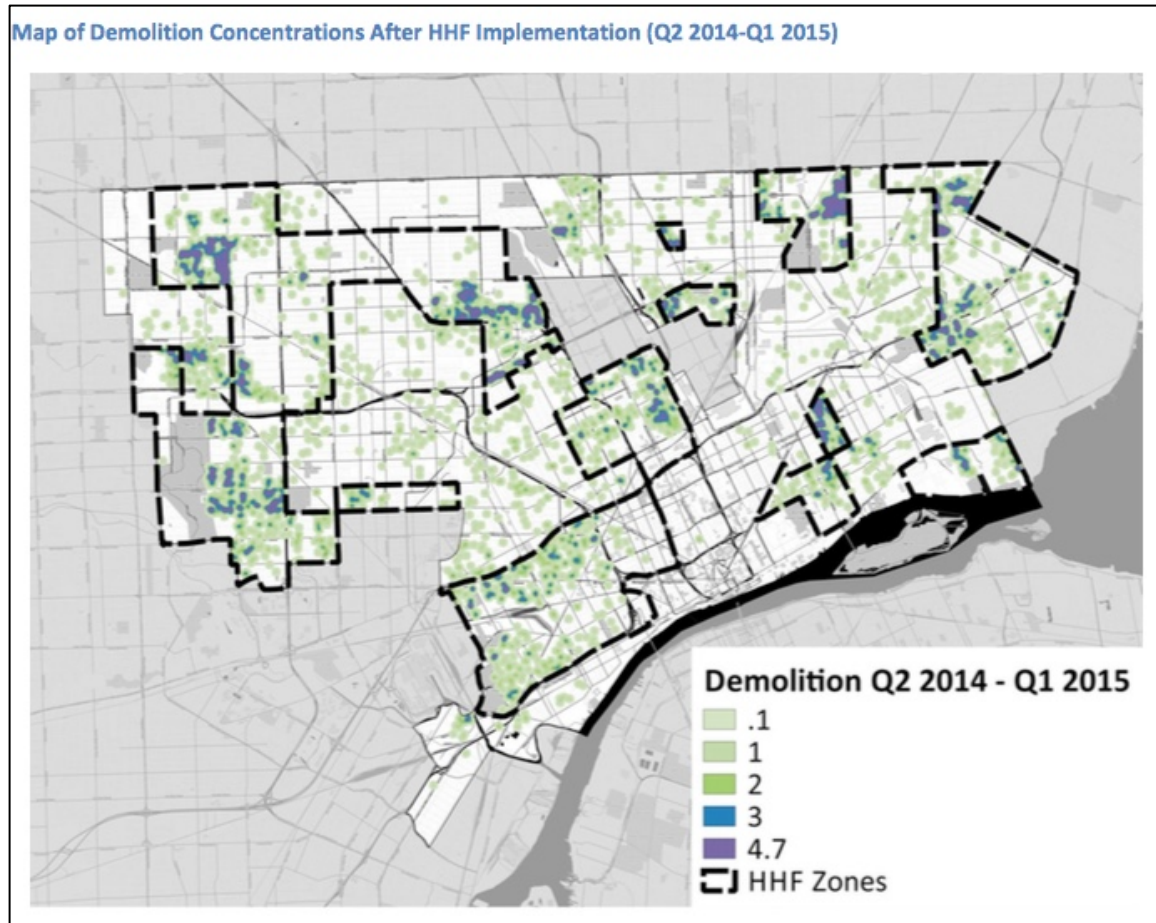


Figure 2.6: Hardest Hit Fund Target Areas (Source: Detroit Land Bank Authority 2015).

This map shows Hardest Hit Fund target areas, which have funded a significant amount of single-family housing demolition in the North End. Comparisons with the previous map (Figure 2.2) show the ways that foundation and non-profit interest shaped the areas of focus for housing demolition.

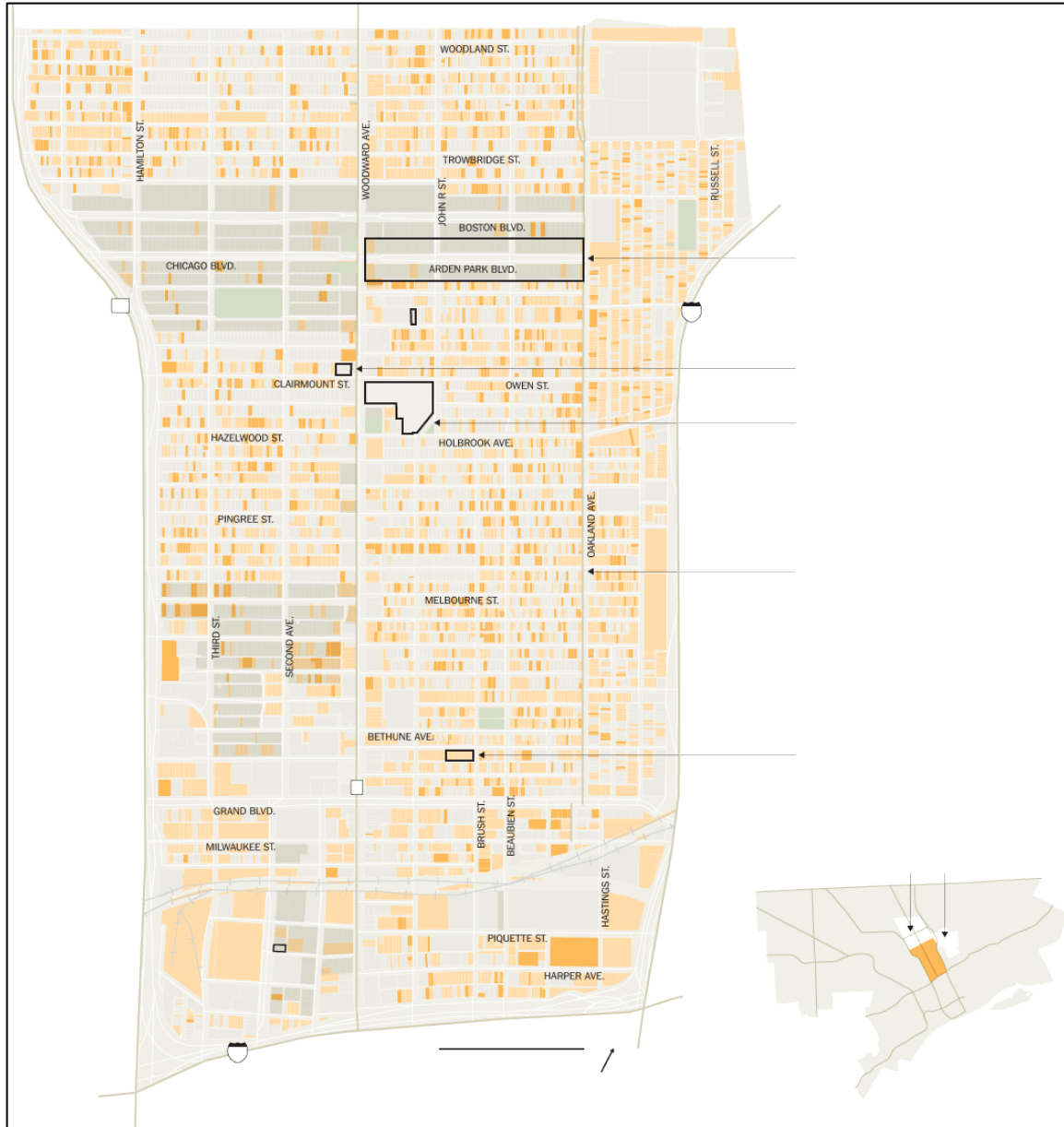


Figure 2.7: Vacancy in the North End (Source: Park 2014).

The above map created was created by the New York Times as part of a series focused on this neighborhood. It shows vacant properties in dark orange and vacant lots in light orange. The original map publication came with the following disclaimer: “North End’s historic western boundary ends at Woodward Avenue. For this series, it has been extended to the M-10, John Lodge Freeway.”

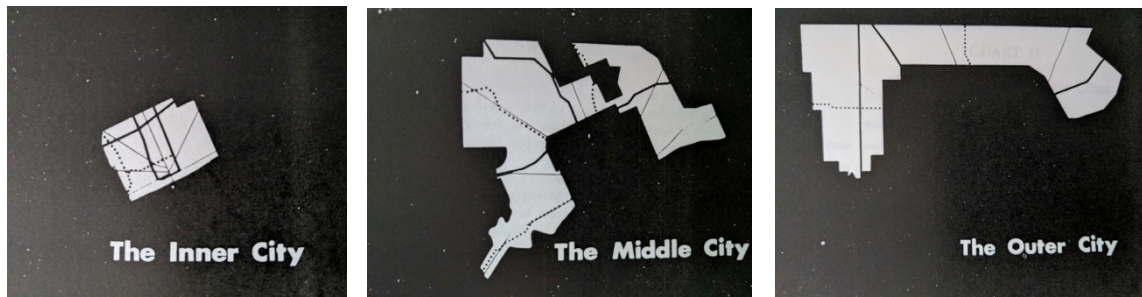


Figure 2.8: Detroit’s “Inner City” in 1966 (Source: City of Detroit 1966 plan “Detroit: a new city”).

These three images represent how the city was conceived of at the time by planners, with the “inner city” consisting of all areas within Grand Boulevard (which loops around the broader downtown) and was the “greater downtown” of the time.

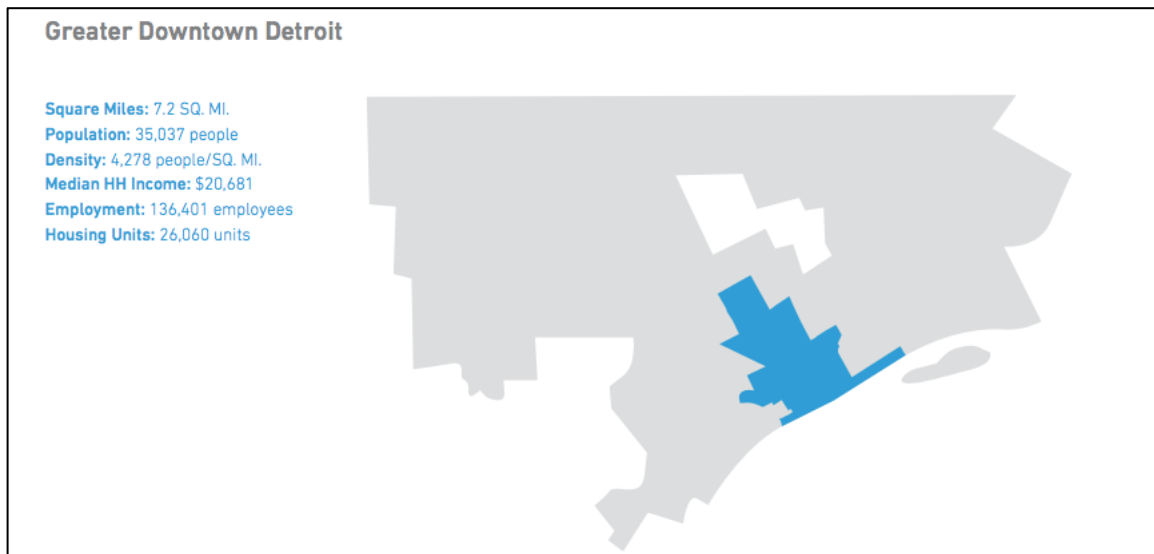


Figure 2.9 7.2 Sq. Mi. “Greater Downtown” in Context (Source: Ali et.al. 2013).

This map, from the 7.2. Sq. Mi. Report, reflects a new geographic vision of the “greater downtown,” with boundaries meant to reflect areas of growth within the city. Note that the North End is adjacent but excluded from this vision.



Figure 2.10: 7.2 Sq. Mi. “Greater Downtown” Boundary Source: Ali et.al. 2013).

This close up reveals the boundaries of the “greater downtown” in finer detail. Of note is the use of the Midtown name without reference to the Cass Corridor (though Cass Park and North Cass are included). The second edition boundary seems to include the eastern side of Woodward but not the neighborhoods off of Woodward.



Figure 2.11 Vanguard CDC North End boundaries (Source: Elliott et.al. 2013).

This map was created in response to Vanguard's community outreach to determine the boundaries of the North End. While the western (Woodward) and northern (Highland Park) boundaries are less strongly contested, the addition of Milwaukee Junction to the south and the area beyond I-75 to the east have been brought into question. This seemed to be a reactionary move in response to the encroaching interests detailed in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXCLUSIVE MEANING OF “NEIGHBORHOOD” DURING TIMES OF GROWTH

“A couple bought a bank on Michigan [Avenue] and they started calling the neighborhood ‘West Corktown’. Well that neighborhood already has a name. Let’s stop Columbus-ing things!”

The young woman speaking sat back down among a round of applause and “amens” from everyone in the room. Her comment came during the discussion portion of an event intended to bring together lifelong Detroit residents and newcomers to the city as a venue for storytelling about the past and open conversations about the present and future. The organizers of the evening’s event had begun by expressing their mutual frustrations about how “the Detroit narrative” gets told by those who arrived only recently, noting that the purpose of this series of conversations was to create a platform to have difficult conversations and to enable residents to feel like their voices are being heard. The resident that stood up to talk about the rebranding of her neighborhood (known to her as Core City) into West Corktown hit a nerve among long-term residents. Just to the east, the neighborhood of Corktown had recently undergone a slow but significant transformation, most visible in the string of recently opened restaurants, bars,

coffee shops, and other third places (Oldenburg 1999) lining Michigan Avenue. Corktown could be found frequently in the pages of the New York Times, celebrated in one headline as “A Gleam of Renewal in Struggling Detroit” (Alvin 2014) and featuring photos of an all-white group of baristas and chefs.

When asking attendees, and more broadly “new” Detroiters to “stop Columbus-ing things,” this resident drew a connection between colonial violence against First Nation Americans and the perceived contemporary symbolic violence against long-term Detroit, majority Black residents. The connection hung in the air for others to absorb. In recent summer months, residents and media outlets had been particularly fascinated with the question of this neighborhood’s name. Initial controversy sparked when newcomers to the area posted on social media about their new home in “West Corktown,” unaware that to long-term residents, this area was commonly referred to as “Core City.” The Core City moniker was given to the neighborhood as recently as 1984, when a local Community Development Corporation built a new subdivision of affordable housing there intended to stabilize the area (Meyer 2017).

This public naming clash is illustrative of one of the most definitive operational boundaries in present-day Detroit: “old Detroit” and “new” Detroit”. For long-term residents, the act of neighborhood naming sparks skeptical comments about gentrification or the “new Detroit.” Standing outside in a courtyard between Cass and Woodward, Brandi, a mid-twenties Black woman who had spent her entire life in the city explained to me a division I had heard referenced from day one of moving to Detroit: “You can always tell whether someone grew up here or not by asking where they stay. It’s east side/ west side. If they name a neighborhood, they’re not Detroiters.” Woodward Avenue,

a major corridor that runs north and south down the middle of the city is the dividing line for east and west. Brandi's evaluation of the durability of the east-side/ west-side division proved true across all my conversations with long-term residents as something that was raised either in discussing the physical space of the neighborhood and where it was in relation to Woodward and also where they attended high school¹⁹. Though the east side/ west side division originated prior to the population decline of the 1950s, the entire city only being classified as one of two sides speaks to the expansive definition of neighborhood boundaries discussed in the last chapter. The east side/ west side dividing line therefore serves as a litmus test for tenure in the city and one's ability to participate in conversations about redevelopment with –as one resident said– a sense of “history for the neighborhood.”

She was also pointing to the same fault line as the young woman worried about people “Columbus-ing” her neighborhood, suggesting that the idea of “neighborhoods” altogether was an imposed vision from newcomers to the city trying to make sense of the

¹⁹ High school names and major intersections are two additional ways that areas are often named, though these practices are not analyzed as part of this dissertation. For a long time, Detroit high schools in the city had a cardinal orientation and name: Northern High, Northwest, Southeastern, etc. Many of these schools have since changed names or closed down. And because of a policy called “schools of choice,” Detroit children can attend school anywhere across the region as long as the school has room for them. This has led to a process of student dispersion, where children often live very far from the school they attend, and therefore schools do not serve as neighborhood institutions in the ways they once did. Major intersections also serve as “neighborhood” names for many long-term Detroit residents. As one resident who worked on a neighborhoods map for the entire city noted, “Much of Detroit seems to identify far more with major intersections as identifiers of their area than with neighborhoods as we'd think of them. I've come to wonder whether the perpetual neighborhood debates are totally skew from convention. I don't even know how you'd boundary-ize [someone telling you] “I stay at Schaefer and Outer Drive.” Though both practices serve as important dimensions of the imagined neighborhood, this chapter does not focus on school locations or intersections and their role in boundary-making.

places they live and to profit off of that new vision of place. While long-term residents denounce the imposition of new neighborhood names and boundaries, they also regularly engaged in neighborhood boundary work themselves, such as the women interested in re-igniting the label “Core City,” often as a proactive measure in relation to the boundary work they see by newcomers. To analyze the cultural impacts of redevelopment at the neighborhood scale, this chapter addresses the conditions under which specific names and boundaries arose, highlights the agency of specific actors in that meaning-making process, and evaluates the role of neighborhood parameters in shaping local identity and/or increasing tensions between newcomers and long-term residents.

In neighborhoods that are gentrifying or perceived to be gentrifying, one of the first signals of change comes in the form of mapping and branding as a means of making the landscape legible to outsiders who may be interested in moving to or investing in a particular neighborhood. As these practices unfold, they touch on the core tensions of neighborhood space: authenticity, shared sense of place (Tuan 1977), and the role of long-term residents in the redevelopment of their neighborhoods. Historian Suleiman Osman (2011) has focused extensively on the curation of new neighborhood identities and authenticity in the spaces today broadly agreed upon as gentrified: the brownstone neighborhoods of Brooklyn. Charting the history of “brownstoners” in the 1960s and 70s, Osman shows that “[b]rownstoners had to do more than simply discover communities; they had to invent them. New borders had to be established, new institutions formed, new independent community institutions opened. A sense of place had to be cultivated” (Osman 2011: 194). In Detroit’s Cass Corridor, we see these same efforts to cultivate a sense of place among city planners, artists, homesteaders, and different waves of

newcomers and long-time residents alike.

To understand how those living in and around the Cass Corridor and North End operationalize the concept of “authenticity,” I use sociologist David Grazian’s (2003: 10-11) articulation of this search for authenticity by patrons of Chicago’s blues clubs. Grazian argues that “authenticity” as a concept does two things: first, it is a way to measure reality against an “idealized representation” of reality and second, it is a means of analyzing the credibility of an experience. As he points out, the flaw in this tool is that it presumes that “cultural worlds other than our own are homogenous and unchanging, rather than complex and contradictory.” The same can be said for neighborhoods, as they are frequently understood to be static spaces with specific spatial qualities and toponyms.

In relation to the built environment, the belief that neighborhoods and the people that inhabit them exist as unchanging come to the surface in periods of rapid change, such as gentrification. This cultural belief is so strong that even scholars of gentrification will draw conclusions about resident experiences on the basis of contemporary divisions between newcomers and old-timers, free of analysis that interrogates neighborhood tenure to begin with. As sociologist Sharon Zukin (2010:3) says, “A city is authentic if it can create the experience of origins,” whether or not those origins are indeed true historically. Using archival research that investigates previous generations’ boundaries along Cass, we see the multiple waves of demographic changes and contestations over what this space means to its residents and to the city at large.

Just as the previous chapter analyzed the cultural practices that helped to define the “neighborhood” in times of disinvestment through more expansive boundaries, this chapter looks at practices of boundary work in spaces of economic investment and the

inverse effect of boundary contraction. I analyze how Midtown has come to be regarded as a metaphor for growth in the Detroit context, followed by histories of the Cass Corridor/ Midtown boundaries and tensions over their claims to authenticity across multiple decades. I then return to the North End, to analyze the ways in which a small-scale developer and group of neighborhood newcomers work to tighten and re-draw neighborhood boundaries in anticipation of neighborhood growth. Finally, I turn to a discussion of how these tensions over authenticity are embodied in material spaces of redevelopment, and the impact on the landscape. Cumulatively, these themes tell us a great deal about how residents make sense of patterns of neighborhood growth alongside the efforts in times of decline analyzed in the previous chapter.

MIDTOWN AS A METAPHOR FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Because of my work for the city and the fluidity of residents' sense of place in neighborhoods, I often found myself in community halls and church basements far away from the North End and Cass Corridor/ Midtown areas. These meetings were critical to my understanding of how residents across the entire city perceived the redevelopment processes underway in areas closer to downtown. In a community church on Detroit's West side, roughly halfway between the Detroit River and the northernmost border of 8-Mile, a group of community members argued about a redevelopment project planned for a large vacant site nearby. A local leader, her voice steady and soothing, offered to the increasingly incensed crowd:

How many of you are familiar with Midtown? Well WE call it the Cass Corridor [motioning to everyone gathered at the community meeting]. They have a Mayor of Midtown. And have you ever heard the comment –I know you have– that money follows money?

The intent of her statement was to educate other community members about the concept of leverage. Her argument was that if residents allowed one developer to utilize this particular site for the project under discussion, it would open up the opportunity for others to follow and for residents to make the demands they have been pushing for many decades to no avail because of the lack of capital investment in that neighborhood. Outside of the physical space of Midtown, “Midtown” is commonly used as a metaphor for all dimensions of redevelopment and the potential of displacement. In this particular context, the comparison to the Cass Corridor/ Midtown pulled on two connected yet oppositional ideas about this particular neighborhood’s changes and what it means for the city.

First, residents regard the shift from a neighborhood name they were familiar with to this new moniker as inauthentic and as one Black resident at the same meeting suggested, a return to “white control” over the city. This perception is reflected in the faces of developers and the directors of Community Development Corporations. Sue Mosey, the “Mayor of Midtown” is a white woman in her 50’s with a longstanding reputation of being able to bring development to this area. This connection to the redevelopment underway in Midtown made residents in this northwest area even more tense and protective over the process in their neighborhood. The name Cass Corridor is widely perceived as the true or original name of this area among many long-term Detroiters, leading columnists and community meeting participants to preface any comments about the area with the fact that *they* are from the Cass Corridor (and not Midtown).

But at the same time, residents do want to see the same attention and funding

channeled into their neighborhood as they see in the new “Midtown.” It is for these two reasons that the Cass Corridor/ Midtown boundaries and naming accompanying shifts in redevelopment are so heavily contested and also serves as a testing grounds, ominous foreshadowing, or simply a metaphor for the whole city depending upon how one sees them. Yet as often as “Cass Corridor” is now treated as the undisputed original and representative name of the area, this was not always the case. Much like Osman’s brownstone Brooklyn, newcomers to the area a few decades prior carefully constructed the name, boundaries, and identity of the Cass Corridor.

Any community or neighborhood name has a history, whether the name of the owner during the first subdivisions of land in the city, the branding of early 20th century developers, a wave of newcomers several years ago, or some combination of sources. While consistently referenced as the first and true name of the neighborhood, the first references to the name “Cass Corridor” do not appear in local media outlets until 1970. The name “Cass” goes back much further, to after Detroit’s “Great Fire” of 1805 when the platting of new land was authorized for north of Detroit²⁰ along both sides of Woodward (National Park Service 1997). The Cass street name derives from the original owner of the ribbon farm, Lewis Cass, deeded in 1859 along the Detroit River that ran north along the Western side of Woodward (see p. 110 for an explanation of Woodward’s importance to Detroit’s geography). In 1870, Woodward had a rail line that ran from the riverfront to Forest (one of the streets considered close to the northern boundary of the Cass Corridor in more contemporary history). At the time, Forest was only two blocks

²⁰ Here I say “north of Detroit” because Detroit’s territory was significantly smaller than the boundaries of today. For a color-coded annexation map of the city, see the Manual of County of Wayne, Michigan from 1926 in the Works Cited.

south of the northern boundary of the entire city, and venturing that far beyond Grand Circus Park downtown was considered a frightening place where “wild beasts roamed,” (Hartman 1975).

As the city grew, the area roughly considered the Cass Corridor today was at first a space for upper class housing but quickly transitioned by the start of the 20th century as Woodward began to transition into a commercial avenue. By the 1920's, this larger area was being reconstituted through the City Beautiful movement to become the cultural center, with development of the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Library, and Orchestra Hall all along Woodward and within close proximity of one another (Woodford 2001). This centrality of artistic institutions became extremely important to the identity of the broader area.

While these institutions were being built, the area around Cass Avenue saw the increasing immigration of working class tenants as wealthier residents continued to move further north. By the 1930's, Third Avenue was known by two names –“Tennessee Valley” or “Little Kentucky” – because of the migration of roughly 200,000 white southerners to Detroit looking for employment. The “Cass area became the unofficial ‘port of entry’ for white southerners” due to the proximity of the bus terminal arriving from the south, housing affordability, and the fact that “hillbillies” were not allowed to live in other parts of the city (Hartman 1975).

Yet as historic as the name Cass is to the city, stories referencing the “Cass Corridor” as a name reflective of this area only began to appear in the Detroit Free Press as late as 1970. These articles referenced the challenging life circumstances of growing up in the Cass Corridor, citing census statistics that frequently place the blocks of Cass,

Second, and Third south to Michigan and North to Wayne State's Campus at Warren as the most poverty-stricken in the city.²¹ For a map of the Cass Corridor boundaries as they were understood by a Wayne State researcher in the early 1970s, see Figure 3. 1.

CONSTRUCTING THE CASS CORRIDOR

On February 6, 1972, when the Detroit News published its Sunday magazine with the headline "Exploring Detroit's New Art Colony- Cass Corridor." The Detroit News was utilizing a label broadly circulated by that time; though not necessarily accepted by those interviewed:

[The neighborhood] has a name ... Cass Corridor ... though its artistic residents don't call it that. "It's a city planner's label," says painter John Egner, a WSU professor. "Catchy and upbeat. But it has nothing to do with us and what goes on here. Who names their own neighborhood?" ... This reticence, Egner admits, stems from the fact that a place known as Cass Corridor might attract tourists like the ill-fated Plum Street. Sightseers looking for gift shops run by freaked-out "arty" types won't find them along Cass.

John Egner was one of a number of artists, musicians, and Wayne State University faculty, who all lived, had studio space, performed, or had their work in galleries in the area along Cass between Alexandrine and Wayne State University. Though this quote is now 45 years in the past, replace the name Cass Corridor for Midtown and no one would think twice that it was from today's newspaper.

The Cass Corridor was intimately linked to the slum clearance initiative of the

²¹ Another narrative, reinforcing the same challenges of the neighborhood, spun them positively by celebrating the abundance of social service agencies located in the neighborhood and the important work that they do for disadvantaged populations citywide. This alternative vision of the Cass Corridor, where the heritage of supportive social services in the face of devastating concentrated poverty would arise again in the years 2010-2017, as the same agencies contemplated whether or not being located along Cass actually helped them achieve their mission due to the rapid demographic changes in the area (Helms 2015).

city's "skid row" in the 1960's. The majority of those displaced at the time found their way to the Cass Corridor in search of affordable housing. Observations from 1974 note the changes to the neighborhood as a result of this process, explaining the movement up

Cass:

Further changes occurred in the community in the early 1960s when the old skid row of the city was destroyed for urban renewal purposes. As a result, a majority of the skid row occupants moved north into the Cass Corridor where reasonably priced rental units still existed. The movement of skid row residents into the area, primarily along Third Avenue, completed the dissolution of what was once a prosperous residential-commercial strip. With this migration came rehabilitation centers of the Salvation Army and rescue mission types, which subsequently encouraged greater numbers of alcoholics and winos to move into the area, creating greater and greater blight. Today, the Third Street stores are vacant and near dilapidation. Its bars are strictly segregated between neighborhood people and those that serve suburban males and conventioners out for a "slumming" or sexual experience. The residences are dilapidated and dirty with weekly fires that destroy building after building. The wino and the alcoholic, however, have found a home here among the trash-strewn empty lots and in the decaying, vacant buildings, open to trespass (Hartigan 1974).

Census data between 1950 and 1960 suggests that many of the processes discussed in this quote were already underway prior to the in-migration of those from "skid row." Allen Schaerges, a member of the Cass Corridor artists of the 1970s and former owner of the Willis Gallery where Avalon Bakery stands today, reflects back on the City of Detroit renaming process, explaining the movement up Cass:

There was that school, the Cass Corridor artists, Cass Corridor musicians, Cass Corridor poets, and you used it, you wore the Cass Corridor badge with- it was an honor. Although the name itself derived from the fifties, or early sixties, when the city of Detroit, the skid row so to speak, where the bums were, was down at Cass and Michigan. The city fathers decided the way to clean up the city up was to tear down all the tenements and small hotels that the bums lived in. ... The closest place for those people to go was up Cass Avenue, where there was a string of old four-story walk-ups that had cheap rent and the skid row kinda changed its locale. They tried to get the Chinese restaurants to follow, and one or two did, but most of the Chinese restaurants grabbed the money and went out to Clawson. But there was Chung's and a few others that stayed on Cass Avenue and that's how the neighborhood got its name, which was kinda used in a derogatory fashion for the

most part. The cheap storefronts that attracted the businesses also attracted the artists. There was a string of them renting fifty dollar-a-month flats over here in the, oh next to where the Cass Café is now. And that was probably how it got started. But the neighborhood was always open for, there were lofts, kinda underground lofts over at the Forsyth Building I think it was. A number of opportunities for people to get cheap spaces and make good art which was one of the things that Detroit's always had to offer, cheap places to live (Gruber 2011).

By the 1970's, the name Cass Corridor had effectively stuck, though not in the way that planners had supposedly hoped. Rather than a glossy forward-looking planning label, it was instead often equated with prostitution, drug dealing, and homelessness. Another artist from this time, Glinda Snowden, talked about the identifiable collective aesthetic of this group:

... [T]he Cass Corridor artists had allies [in the New York arts scene]. ... The art is rough and tumble, the art is hard-edged and rough edge and frayed edge and all these different kinds of things... Gritty... tough... defiant. Yeah. Because if you're living hand to mouth in the Cass Corridor, you're not going to be painting pretty pictures. The work is a reflection of your life. That was a big thing for me to observe. Your work is a reflection of who you are (Marshall 2011).

Snowden's perspective was unique to the group of artists who all were considered to be part of the Cass Corridor artistic movement of this period. As a Black female who had lived her entire life in Northwest Detroit, she ultimately found herself seeking artistic communities elsewhere because the Cass Corridor group was almost exclusively white and male and did not represent her own experiences as a commuter to Wayne State from Northwest Detroit. As a group of White, male, low-income artists from middle-class households, the Cass Corridor of the 1970's, though not considered the authentic name of the area at the time, already represented an identity of "grit" that this group of artists was

reliant upon for their work to sell to arts investors in larger cities.²² But slowly, as the entire city began to take on the reputation once limited to areas like the Cass Corridor, efforts to rebrand once again took place.

FROM CASS CORRIDOR TO MIDTOWN

“Pioneers on Cass Avenue: Back-to-city couple has stake in renovation.” This Detroit Free Press June 2, 1989 headline was in reference to Bob and Debbie Slattery, a couple who had established what a local real estate reporter called “the front line of encroaching respectability in a once desolate neighborhood” at the corner of Cass and Willis. Bob Slattery, after finishing his undergraduate education at Wayne State University, decided to move south of the university to invest in a property along Cass in 1981. Like other investors at this time, they were unable to get a mortgage and instead invested their own sweat equity into the house until it was in good enough condition a few years later to qualify for a mortgage to finish the work. Soon the Slatterys had purchased multiple buildings on Cass with the intent of renovating them and filling a gap of available rentals in the area.

In an article from 1989, Bob Slattery is quoted as saying that, “Now [the Cass Corridor is] starting to be fashionable in this neighborhood. But when I started there was not a lot going on here.” For the residents I spoke with, the 1980s were a challenging decade to live through. For those in extreme poverty, there was nothing to distinguish this era from any other. But for those who felt they were at the forefront of efforts to bring

²² New York City, which I use here as a reference point for this identity of “grit”, was itself on the brink of municipal bankruptcy in 1975. On multiple occasions, older artists and tourists from New York often expressed to me on visits that Detroit was “refreshing” because it reminded them of what NYC was like in the 70’s. “Gritty and real...” said one artist broker in her late 60’s.

middle class residents back into a devastated neighborhood, restoring historic architecture and reinvigorating the area through small-scale development, the identity of the neighborhood had already shifted by the late 1980's. In her cultural analysis of St. Mark's Place in Manhattan, Ada Calhoun (2016: xv-xvi) suggests that the for every generation living on St. Mark's, the street is now dead and it is "only the time of death [that is] a matter for debate." She goes on to track the various generations of counter-cultural life that called the street their home, showing that "every cohort's arrival, the flowering of its utopia, killed someone else's... the gentrified are gentrifiers who stuck around." Along the same lines, in the Cass Corridor it seems that every generation has a moment when the neighborhood "started to become fashionable" in the way that Slattery describes. This starting point of course differs depending on the time that particular actor relocated to that area. As new waves of residents move to the Cass Corridor or Midtown, however they identify it, conversations about when things "really started changing" happen on a daily basis.

Reporters covering the redevelopment work moved seamlessly between calling the area the Cass Corridor, referring to the broader renovation efforts in the area as the Cultural Center, and even sprinkling in a few references to midtown Detroit as an area of town. Yet the phrase "mid-town" in reference to the broader "cultural center" and university district seems to have a much longer history. The area was home to a few organizations, such as the Midtown Theater and a hotel opened in the 1920's called "The Midtown" which was later turned into a non-profit aiding women and children called The Midtown Care House. Residents confirm these multiple yet perhaps generic uses of the name midtown (lower cased). The City of Detroit's 1966 Master Plan, "Detroit: The

New City”, shows a map of the area between Ford Freeway to the North, Woodward to the East, Canfield to the South, and Grand River to the west, detailing that

“[S]pectacular changes have taken place since World War II in the adjacent Wayne State University and Cultural Center areas in mid-town Detroit... The University City Project is intended to carry forward the rejuvenation of this important section of Detroit.”

This project involved the clearing of 304 acres of land over a 10-15 year time frame in order to expand the university and development non-university residential and commercial properties over four phases.

From 1989: “On a good day, they can see the corner of Cass and Willis as the southern tip of a warm front blowing through midtown Detroit,” (Rose 1989). A resident participating in the online chat forum DetroitYES! (March 2009) – a platform for long-term Detroiters who want to discuss the city – suggests this more general use, writing:

“...The name Midtown goes back to the early 80's. It was used among some WSU and CCS students and folk relating to business near campus, we all called the area Midtown. I worked for a company in the Belcrest Apartment [Building] that has 'Midtown' as part of the name.”

Another self-proclaimed local historian suggested that the name “... actually goes back to John DeLorean's (Wright 1979) book *On a Clear Day You Can See General Motors*,...writer J. Patrick Wright... referenced General Motors' headquarters in “midtown” Detroit (no doubt because his audience would understand the term as applied to New York).”

The most significant use and replication of the name was perpetuated on behalf of small-scale real estate developers like Bob Slattery. His development company, titled Midtown Development, is referenced several times throughout the 1990s before conversations about rebranding the entire neighborhood seemed to be happening at a

broader scale. It was not until 1997 that the first articles begin to appear suggesting that Midtown has become an intentional branding effort. Describing the location of the new Canfield Lofts a year later, the Detroit Free Press Real Estate Editor (Rose 1998) wrote “they are on Canfield St, south of Wayne State University, across the street from the Traffic Jam restaurant. Those who remember the bad ol' days before this area became a developers haven and got renamed “Midtown” may still think of this as the Cass Corridor.” An article in 1999 suggests the role of another developer, Peter Cummings, who was “actively looking for other land in the area, which he has re-dubbed “Midtown” (Pepper 1999). Yet this branding went beyond developers’ suggestions of a new name for reporters to use. As one resident remembers:

I remember attending a meeting at Mario's discussing the new branding in 1999. I don't know what groups were involved but I remember the real estate investors were at the table... I wasn't a fan of the re-branding at the time. 'Midtown' seems to fit the neighborhood now, which seems to have and serve people with a higher median income.

The University Cultural Center Association (UCCA) was one of the main organizations promoting the rebranding of the Area as Midtown. UCCA is now known as Midtown Detroit Incorporated. Sue Mosey, the celebrated “Mayor of Midtown” joined the UCCA in 1987 as planning director, becoming head of the organization three years later. In 1999 she began work through that organization to aid rebranding efforts from Cass Corridor to Midtown by hiring a local communications firm to help with brand identity. Speaking on the controversy of the branding campaign, Mosey offered “[t]here are still some hardcore people who live in the neighborhood, who said we shouldn't have changed it... but the reality is Midtown is a much larger area than Cass ever was,” (Welch 2012). This broader geography of Midtown is understood to be bounded by Euclid Avenue to the north, M-10

to the west and I-75 to the east and south, transitioning roughly 7 smaller neighborhoods into what is now commonly thought of as the broader Midtown district. These highways effectively set what Lynch (1960:47) would call "edges," or the boundaries that seem like paths to an outside observer but cut off the potential for social interaction across said boundary.

A decade later, by the time this research began, Midtown was commonly and consistently used among developers, city officials, and also residents to refer to a much larger area than the original parameters of the Cass Corridor, suggesting that the name represented a district within which the Cass Corridor could still “fit” as a neighborhood. News stories began referring to the “Cass Corridor area of Midtown” or “the Midtown area of the Cass and Brush Corridors” (Allen and Stafford 2015). Yet as writers from the Detroit Metro Times consistently covering this phenomenon suggest, “... a sort of psychogeographical border develop between the concepts of "the Cass Corridor" and "Midtown": "When they build a condo, they say it happened in a place called Midtown. When there's a shooting, they say it happened in Cass Corridor!" (Jackman 2015). This “psychogeographical” distinction plays out again and again in the ways that developers and neighborhood boosters promote a neighborhood while distinguishing it from undesirable portions of the same space and in the ways residents articulate the boundaries of their neighborhood.

Angela, has been in Detroit since 1977, when she was recruited as a college student to campaign for Coleman Young’s second mayoral race. Angela has seen the transitions of decline and growth first hand along the Cass Corridor, a neighborhood at the epicenter of contemporary conversations about gentrification and who benefits from

changes in the neighborhood. It was there that she first opened her own small salon business in 1993:

When I chose [the location for my store in the Cass Corridor] ... Honey! I was chasing prostitutes off the corner! ... Honestly. Yeah, it was called CASS CORRIDOR (*implying it was not called 'Midtown'*). That block is right in the mix, right in the middle of Cass Corridor at that time. That was in the middle of it, in the middle of everything. Honestly where [that] place is right now (*pointing*) is where I was you know chasing prostitutes off (laughs) and that was like right... across the street from where I was. We could see 'em outside the door and we was like 'you know what come on now, we got customers coming in, if you could just take your business down the street or somewhere, or just wait until we leave!'

Angela's story speaks to the significance of the "Cass Corridor" toponym for those who lived there during times of decline and what that meant in terms of street life. By the time I had moved to the area in 2010, the exact corner that Angela spoke of was regarded as the most stable commercial corner in the neighborhood. The shops on this particular block were venerated as the "authentic" hub of consumer life in the Cass Corridor, both because they catered to Black clientele and because of their long-standing commitment to commercial life in the area. By 2015, numerous businesses opening in the blocks surrounding this corner were primarily focused on promoting luxury lifestyle brands, which made the distinction between Angela's corner and the surrounding redevelopments an easy one to cast among more long-term residents. By the end of the following year, the Black-owned and operated natural food market adjacent to Angela's first location since 2006 had been replaced by a restaurant called Alley Taco.

RECLAMATION OF THE CASS CORRIDOR

As previous sections detail, Midtown was a name that began to be used as a way to separate the broader cultural institutions of this area from the criminal associations

accompanying the Cass Corridor. Yet interestingly, that very criminal perception from the 1970's through the late 1990's has been recaptured as a hallmark of what makes the Cass Corridor desirable. During the course of this research, the contention over the Cass Corridor and branding of Midtown had become part of daily conversation so that I would often not even have to shape conversation in order for the topic of the two names to arise on its own. For many newcomers to the area, calling the neighborhood the "Cass Corridor" was an attempt to pass (Goffman 1963) as a longer-term resident at a time when all eyes were on newcomers.

At the same meeting where residents in a northwestern neighborhood discussed the shift from the Cass Corridor to the rebranded Midtown, a young Black City of Detroit employee stood up. He was there to help move along the development project that the majority of residents disagreed with. But in this moment he said "I just want everyone to know that I live in the Cass Corridor, I don't live in *Midtown*. So I totally understand where you are coming from." Making this statement, the city official used the Cass Corridor as an unspoken code to suggest that his politics were aligned with the members of the community and that he understood their needs simply by conveying that he used one neighborhood name over another. Japonica Brown-Saracino (2007; 2011) argues that gentrifiers draw on the authenticity of "old-timers" (original neighborhood residents), first as an act of valuing the collective identity of residents but also as a way of morally resolving their own guilt about moving into this neighborhood. As a middle class Black male who had moved into the Cass Corridor recently, this city official recognized his own role in the process of gentrification while simultaneously aligning himself with the long-term Black residents in the room. This effort to absolve himself of the moral guilt of

gentrification landed well with the attendees of the public meeting, who all broke out into laughter and cheers as he said “I don’t live in Midtown.”

Newcomers also appropriated the Cass Corridor label as a means to connect the redeveloping and somewhat sanitized neighborhood with the more “gritty” experience of the Cass Corridor from previous decades. The Cass Corridor’s construction as the creative hub of a previous generation was employed again in 2015 with the opening of Third Man Records Cass Corridor, the novelties storefront and record-pressing plant owned by Jack White of the White Stripes. From a Rolling Stone article covering the opening of the space:

Cass Corridor, recently rebranded as the hipper, more upscale Midtown, but White chooses to remember its earlier days...His speech is met with whoops and cheers. "Everything about this neighborhood, to me, seems like the perfect place for the renaissance and the rebirth and the regrowth from the ashes that Detroit's going to rise from," he tells the crowd, echoing the motto of the Detroit flag (and lyrics from his track "Lazaretto").
(Zlatopolsky 2015)

White, who grew up on Detroit’s southwest side, played many early shows in the Cass Corridor. Yet the intentional use of “Cass Corridor,” displayed prominently on all promotional materials for the shop, seemed noteworthy enough that several local media outlets covered the opening as both a new storefront and a declaration of support in the ongoing Cass Corridor/ Midtown debates. Regardless of the intent behind the labeling of the store as part of the Cass Corridor, the impact of drawing this alignment with “old Detroit” meant that Third Man Records was able to straddle between the benefits of being located in a posh and expensive retail district largely shaped by Midtown Inc. and the narrative of Detroit’s grunge scene and the music that originated from it.

WHAT COUNTS AS THE NORTH END?

Though many residents have talked about the rebranding of Cass Corridor as Midtown as something “new”, this research shows that the process of redefinition had already been underway for over two decades. The redefinition of the North End, on the other hand, had just begun. Whereas Chapter 2 shared attempts to redraw the North End’s boundaries as more expansive, only towards the end of this research did I begin to see attempts by newcomers to contract and classify the boundaries of the North End for development and status in ways similar to that of Cass Corridor, reflecting small-scale growth in this area. This exercise was reflected in two processes: the attempts of a new White developer in the North End named Eric to map the neighborhoods and in the efforts of a block club of mostly newcomer White residents to name their neighborhood.

Eric moved to Detroit immediately after graduating from the University of Michigan and with the help of his parents, began a business as a real estate developer in the North End. As a young white resident, establishing trust with other residents on his block has been a major challenge. When I asked him to tell me a story about those kinds of challenges, he immediately recalled the following:

Okay so for two or three years I was trying to find the owner of the townhouse across the street from mine. I had to find the LLC, which is based in Cheyenne Wyoming, and then the guy who lives in Calgary (*details a long and complicated process*) who finally allowed me to go show the home. But it turns out the sister of the guy who lost the home to foreclosure lives in the townhouse next door. And I don’t know I guess I left the gate open or something and her dog could get out, but it was a VERY confrontational thing, out in the street. Just like her yelling at me, all the neighbors came out of their houses. It was a big scene. I know the root of it is that I had and have more knowledge about how to find these people. She [with her brother] wanted to buy it and that’s fine, but I know the owner is not willing to sell it for less than he bought it for, which is \$3000 plus there is another \$4000 that have to be paid in back taxes or else it’s going to be foreclosed. She’s like “It’s not worth more than \$1000!” Then you can’t buy it! I’m sorry I can’t

help you! But she literally yelled in the middle of the street “Do you want me to go black on your ass?” And all the neighbors on the street who are black and all immediately walked away. So I was like WHAT just happened (*laughs nervously*). So it’s not necessarily a race thing but race is a pseudonym for education and understanding and privilege and all these other things.

As Eric was describing this public conflict, his face turned a deep shade of red. He was growing simultaneously embarrassed and angry, just as I imagine his reaction might have been in the moment confronting his neighbor. As he points out, the tension between the two of them was rooted in the fact that the neighbor had been living on that block for generations, yet after going through foreclosure, was unable to trace the complicated web of ownership or understand the rationale for why the home would be worth so much just in back taxes. To him, the logic was simple: if you cannot afford to buy the home, you cannot buy the home. Yet as a young white male, he was in many ways unaware of the history of the neighborhood he was stepping into. Eric calls attention to “education and understanding and privilege” as the intervening variables on a relationship defined on the outside by race. Yet because he was operating within the boundaries of how property owners legally deal with challenges and claims to ownership, he could not make sense of how to move forward in his relationship with other long-term Black residents. Eric then sought the counsel of his friend Shaun (also white) who had been redeveloping properties in a nearby neighborhood for over a decade:

Shaun: This is where your youth betrays you. Because you have a style that is very direct and upbeat and people can take that the wrong way.

Eric: So I need to look more tired and dirtier?

Shaun: No I’m serious that would help. It really would. Because a lot of older residents can relate more to that than your physical appearance. But not only that, it’s the way you talk to people. Your voice will raise easily when you get excited. And you will... it escalates conversation when it doesn’t need to escalate. And people

get defensive, and all of the sudden the answer is gonna be no, even if you have the best argument in the world...The situation you just described I can see that happening because you say ‘Hey look! It’s x y and z and it’s totally legal’ but because your presentation unknowingly is what it is and is subconsciously confrontational, I can definitely see that. ...People misinterpret you. Especially people that are not as sophisticated as you or as intellectual as you or whatever. So people that have only known the old North End their entire life are going to react the only way they know how. You at least have a couple different backgrounds you can draw upon. ... This is going to be horrible for me to say as a developer, but you have to be more chameleon like in order to get people to react in a way you want them to react. ... The people who end up getting shot²³ are the people that are confrontational and they don’t realize it.

Shaun continued to coach Eric on the micro interactional-decisions he has made as a white developer in a predominantly poor, Black neighborhood and what has helped him to “blend in” more, including looking scruffier and putting up a tough front. Though they acknowledged the differences in backgrounds that made these interactions challenging, the underlying assumption was that both Shaun and Eric ultimately knew better when it came to improving their respective neighborhood, and that consultation with the residents as equals was never raised as a way to approach these challenges.

Eric was two years into living in Detroit at the time of our interview and on a steep learning curve in terms of the reactions of his neighbors to his work. As he continued to share with Shaun, he did want to establish more trust with his neighbors. One of his ideas for how to be more open and establish trust with his neighbors was to start a blog about his business, so that he could “lay out all his cards with [his] business and what [he’s] doing.” In explaining this, Eric felt that he was going above and beyond what is expected of someone in his line of work, since he did not have to share any of this

²³ At the time of this interview, an older man who bought a home in the area went in and told the current tenant to leave because it was now his home, and was shot by the tenant. A few years prior, the same thing happened to a man from Australia. Eric and Shaun continued to share tips on how to better handle angry residents because it was, as they saw it, a matter of life and death.

information. But he had the feeling that it might make his day-to-day life easier. In early 2016, Eric drew a map of how he saw the North End and the smaller neighborhoods' geographic boundaries within it. He posted the map on Facebook, along with the following statement:

I know a ton is up for debate, and I'm one of the last persons who should be drawing boundaries, BUT... can I get some feedback/ constructive criticism? Also, if anyone has a definition for the "Historic North End" boundaries, pre-highway, could you please comment?

The map (see Figure 3.3) included some well established and agreed upon neighborhoods by residents. But it also included several boundaries, labeled separately as “Greater North End”, The North End, and North End, noting that the final category was intended to exclude “sub-neighborhoods creating their own identity.”

Residents immediately began to question the process. As one young female newcomer stated:

This topic makes me anxious. This is the first I've heard of a "Greater North End" label. To whose benefit would a Greater North End grouping/distinction need to be made? Also, my neighbors—folks who've been here far longer than I— tell me I live in the North End, so that's what I'll continue to say. I have been told on multiple occasions that the North End ends absolutely at Woodward—a point reinforced most often by neighbors who attended Northern [High School].

This resident questions the physical boundaries drawn by Eric, noting that they connect to broader social boundaries about who belongs and who doesn't in this neighborhood. She looks first to the long-term residents living around her, following their well-established sense of place in seeking the cultivation of her own. Brown-Saracino (2004) calls this group of newcomers to an area “social preservationists,” or those who view long-term residents as indispensable “arbiters of authentic community” and seek to preserve the neighborhood as unchanged even as they enter and inevitably change it.

A long-term resident, Shirley, involved in the discussion stated the boundaries as non-negotiable: “The borders to the North End are as follows: Woodward to the West, Caniff to the North, I-75 on the East, and Grand Boulevard on the South. That is all of the North End and nothing else. Everything inside there is North End and nothing else.” When another resident questioned the northern boundary, suggesting that the City of Highland Park —one of two cities encompassed entirely within Detroit’s boundaries, but with even higher concentrations of poverty than Detroit²⁴—Shirley responded, “[D]on’t nobody wanna be associated with HP. C’mon don’t drag them in.” To this resident, the boundaries of the North End on this map were drawing out an important exclusion in the geography of this general area. Though the North End has experienced extreme depopulation and property abandonment/ vacancy, it was still perceived by residents as better off than Highland Park, and thus necessitated a firm boundary between the two spaces. One white male newcomer responded to Shirley’s definitions, offering:

For better or worse- I think some people used the term North End like they're using Midtown, in that it is an umbrella term comprised of several more distinct areas/neighborhoods, i.e. Cass Corridor, Wayne State, AND Art Center, etc. are all part of 'Midtown'; whereas the North End proper is as Shirley describe but is used as shorthand to refer to everything between Loge and 75 that's clearly not New Center or Boston Ed.

Here, this resident makes subtle reference to the fact that the Midtown label is extremely contentious in Detroit, and that the same process of neighborhood change might be underway in the larger North End area. Eric’s attempts to map the neighborhood and re-tighten the boundaries of what and who counts as part of it align with the same practices within the Cass Corridor and Midtown further to the south of these blocks. Though his

²⁴ The American Community Survey for 2015 shows those living below the poverty rate in Highland Park to be 49.3% of the population, as compared to 40% in Detroit.

development work is happening on a house-by-house basis, the presence of other newcomers to the area and their sensitivities toward the boundaries of the neighborhood follow the pattern of similar efforts in spaces of growth.

Meanwhile on the west side of Woodward –an area traditionally not considered part of the North End but often referenced as such in one-on-one conversations– another group of residents began their own conversation about what their neighborhood name ought to be in one of the more nebulous areas in the map above. In an interview with Janice, a newcomer to this area, she informed me of a Facebook survey and consequent debate over their neighborhood name, inviting me to join the group. The group was called “North Woodward” and had 61 members, all seemingly under the age of 50 and with only 5 members of color. A poll was started asking the following “Help me pick a name that best represents this group (neighborhood). If you don’t see the right name, add it.” Among the listed names were North End as well as four other options, three of which referenced their relationship to other nearby neighborhoods (Greater Virginia Park, North New Center, Central Woodward, and Piety Hill). Residents were invited to vote on these options and discuss the change to the group identity.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this conversation was who was not included as part of it. Conducted online on a platform geared to younger generations, this conversation excluded a large percentage of those living in the actual neighborhood. According to the North End Woodward Community Coalition, roughly 45% of residents in this area do not have access to Internet (Dunn 2017). Additionally, by relying on existing Facebook friendships in a closed group forum, this platform reinforces the lack of interaction across race in the neighborhood. Those on the platform were extremely

self-conscious of the exclusionary nature of this project. While some remarked that it was necessary to brand the neighborhood, others argued that even engaging in naming efforts would isolate nearby neighbors just as they were “trying to get along and work together.”

In the Midtown/ Cass Corridor debates, residents used the label of Cass Corridor as a means of claiming authentic connection to “the original” neighborhood, referencing the name utilized from the mid-1970’s on and rejecting the labels of the past twenty years that were broadly constructed as artificial. In the North End, the process of re-tightening boundaries in protection against or support of redevelopment are in beginning stages similar to that of what was seen in 1970’s Cass or 2000 Midtown. Twenty years from today, will “Central Woodward” become the name resurrected by newcomers as the true name of the neighborhood?

GRITTY FAÇADES, CLEAN INTERIORS

The reclamation of grit as part of the gentrification process was not only happening at the level of interpersonal exchanges and map-making efforts. It was also happening at the level of the built environment and the ways that “New Detroit” was and is constructed. In particular, two redevelopment projects capture this struggle that questions what constitutes an authentic built environment. The first was a grocery store that since became a high-end leather goods boutique. The second, referenced in the introduction, was a pawnshop and loan office and is now a mixed-use development with a restaurant and apartments called Gold Cash Gold. In both cases, an aesthetic choice was made to retain some elements of the former façade as a nod to the history of the space, with very different effects.

At the time this research began, the corner of Alexandrine and Second in the Cass

Corridor was a parking lot for an adjacent grocery store named Tomboy. Tomboy was a lingering outpost of a national grocery chain started in the 1950's, used locally by working class residents. A third of purchases in the store were made with food assistance and the former owner estimated that roughly 70% of those shopping in the store do not have a car and are coming on foot to shop at Tomboy (John 2009).

Perhaps more important than the store itself was the exterior. The store was lined with an awning that extended over the sidewalk and an open parking lot that provided a visible and non-regulated space for informal economic transactions. During winter months of snow and spring rain showers, neighborhood residents could often be found congregating under the awning for protection from the elements and sitting on the newspaper boxes lining the store. On more moderate days, the parking lot would often be full of people of all ages, many of who seemed homeless, and many of whom were involved in transactions that seemed to involve drugs. The owner of Tomboy, Jitu Patel, said in 2009: "It can't be stopped, the drug deals and stuff, unless you have police 24-7 in the same spot." "That's the only way to stop it, and that's not going to happen in truth. But the police try," (Patel in John 2009).

In October of 2014, Tomboy supermarket closed its doors. Soon after, the awning and newspaper boxes were removed and the façade painted a pristine white for the grand opening of Will Leather Goods, the latest storefront for an Oregon-based lifestyle brand. Yet while the Second Avenue-facing storefront was replaced with big glass windows and a new sign for a high-end leather retailer, the new owners of the building chose to keep the big, cheap, plastic letters that read "TOMBOY" along Alexandrine, painting over the red so that they match the bright white of the rest of the façade. What remained was a

literal urban palimpsest, whereby the half-century history of the market was embedded into the exterior of its new use (see Figures 3.4 and 3.5 for before and after images of Tomboy Supermarket and Will Leather Goods).

While painting was underway, the residents that used to hang out day and night outside of the Tomboy Supermarket stopped coming to the corner. However, the big plastic letters remained, now painted a clean bright white. The façade served as a visual reminder of the history of the neighborhood, thereby attaching itself to the history of drugs, prostitution, and criminal activity associated with this corner's history. Inside the store, every effort is made to create an entirely different feel. When before the store was intentionally closed off and almost barricaded, the Second Avenue façade is now almost entirely glass. Inside, the shop is intended for the consumption of both leather goods and "an experience." There is a coffee bar, an area to personalize your leather goods with your initials, and a cowhide tee-pee right in the center to sit with friends. A coffee bar walk-up window exists underneath the TOMBOY letters and a vintage teal pick up truck is permanently parked in the place residents used to congregate. In this space, the displacement of physical, social, and economic uses over a short period of time offers connection to a gritty and somewhat dangerous history in a safe and sanitized new package.

Will Leather Goods' choice to leave up a portion of the façade of the former building was not the only example of a lingering architectural homage in gentrifying areas of Detroit. In the summer of 2014, my husband and I became the first tenants in a new apartment building on top of what used to be a pawnshop and loan office in the downtown-adjacent neighborhood of Corktown. Sam's Loan Office, named after owner

Sam Rubin and originally located in Detroit's skid row at Michigan Avenue and 5th St, was condemned and demolished as part of Urban Renewal in 1961. By 1963 the family had relocated and occupied the corner of Michigan Avenue and Wabash (Szewczyk 2014). Since that time, the brick façade of the building has served as an informal billboard for the business, with "PAWNBROKER" written in multiple locations down the side of the building, a list of available items inside "BUY GOLD, DIAMONDS, ART, FUR, ANTIQUES, CRYSTALS, COINS" and the message "3 MONTH LOANS ON ALL ARTICLES OF VALUE OR 30 DAY BUY OPTION FOR MORE MONEY." When it was an operational pawnshop, the exterior of the building was painted to reference all of the goods housed inside: diamonds, furs, gold, cash, etc. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Sam's Loan Office repeatedly made news as the site of multiple robbery attempts and deadly shootouts. The family operated the business until the late 1980s and retained ownership of the building until 2010, when Diamonds and Rifles LLC—a reference to the exterior signage—purchased the building.

One of the co-owners of the building is a white local entrepreneur named Phillip Cooley. In 2005, Cooley opened Slow's Barbecue on the same block as Sam's Loan Office, a restaurant long-term residents consistently point to as evidence that "gentrification is happening" in Detroit (discussed in Chapter 1). While building out the barbecue restaurant, his welding rig was stolen and pawned down the street at the future site of Gold Cash Gold. As Cooley later told a local reporter covering the restaurant, "Even if it wasn't stolen goods there, it was heartbreak and sadness. We knew if we opened that building for a positive purpose that it would have a positive impact on the community and be a safe place, versus kind of what it was, which was a menacing place

in our neighborhood (Wos 2017).” In a conversation before the building was actually developed, I found one of the co-owners digging through archival materials. She went on and on about the fascinating history of the building. They ultimately decided to name the restaurant Gold Cash Gold, a reference to the largest letter advertisements along the building. Rather than covering over the façade, painters came and carefully traced all of the advertisements of the pawnshop with a fresh coat of paint. The old steel sign “Sam’s Loans Money in 1 Hour” was also kept (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7 for before and after images of the pawnshop and Gold Cash Gold). Today, diners and tourists can be seen at all hours of the day taking pictures in front of the building, often along the Wabash side that features a two-story dollar sign.

The motivation for the Gold Cash Gold restaurant and apartments was to transform a site of “heartbreak and sadness” into one of positive use and safety for the community. The removal of the pawn shop use and the constant foot traffic of the restaurant has undeniable safety benefits for residents and visitors to Michigan Avenue. Yet alongside these benefits to the neighborhood’s increasingly middle and upper- income residents, the effect of retaining the former façade signage and lettering suggests one of the most perverse ironies of contemporary Detroit redevelopment. Pawn shops and loan offices are part of an ecology of secondary economic institutions of poverty that Wilson, Beck, and Bailey (2009) call “neoliberal parasitic economies.” These shops utilize collateral to guarantee loans where, after a fixed period without repayment, interest rates²⁵ are

²⁵ By Michigan law these interest rates have a ceiling of 3% according to the Michigan Pawnbrokers Act 273 of 1917. [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(0id5dqh0wj2holeokp4wih5s\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-446-209](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(0id5dqh0wj2holeokp4wih5s))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-446-209) However, because pawnbrokers themselves determine the subjective value of the collateral, they can effectively change the interest rate. For more

renegotiated, often with severe consequences for residents already experiencing deeply entrenched poverty. This parasitic economy is exactly the heartbreak and sadness that Cooley speaks of and wants to change. Yet, by retaining the memory of that use in the painted bricks and restored signage, the effect is almost a parody of poverty that has not left the neighborhood but just moved into different spaces of the neighborhood and city.

Slumming, or the social practice where “members of wealthy population groups visit residential areas of poor urban groups in their leisure time,” has a long history, dating back to nineteenth century London (Steinbrink 2012). The American fascination with ruin tourism emerges around the same time, in the early 1800s (Yablon 2009). Local variations on these two practice are often discussed in contemporary Detroit as “poverty tourism” and “ruin porn” respectively (Kinney 2017) and are differentiated from one another on the basis of whether humans can be seen actively living in or using these spaces (as opposed to the material detritus of poverty). Buildings like Gold Cash Gold mediate between the desire of its developers to create a space that generates vibrant use for the neighborhood and the cultural cache of slumming in Detroit. Yet unlike other instances of slumming in dive bars, jazz clubs, or other spaces accessible to whites searching for “symbolic spaces of authenticity” (Grazian 2003: 73), Gold Cash Gold is devoid of any actual social interaction with the city’s poor.

Residents often mentioned the histories of different neighborhoods’ commercial areas and the desire to see those histories reflected in the “new Detroit,” so that at the very least newcomers to an area could be more sensitive in the ways they speak about a “blank

on the use of pawnshops, payday lending, and other institutions that help the poor obtain quick infusions of cash, consult Michael S. Barr’s portion of the Detroit Area Study on Financial Services (Barr 2012).

slate.” The retention of the old identity with a shifted purpose gives the neighborhood a sense of history, or as one newcomer said, “at least it speaks to where this block came from.” With Will Leather Goods and Gold Cash Gold we see two examples of attempts to do exactly that, by lending material form to the history of both sites. At both sites, developers capitalize on the heritage and architecturally embodied “authenticity” of a place while fundamentally changing the character of the interior and the clientele meant to use it. Zukin (2010:234) notes that “[r]einventing authenticity begins with creating an image to connect an aesthetic view of origins and a social view of new beginnings.” In these buildings, a sense of authenticity is bolstered by the physical connection to the past that reminds visitors of the dangers and tragedies of these spaces while simultaneously signaling that it is now a safe space to enjoy for leisure and consumption.

In the case of Will Leather Goods, the former Tomboy exterior of the building was just as heavily trafficked as the grocery store inside. Since the new ownership and use of the building, on multiple visits to the block, I have never seen any residents using the parking lot in the same way. Frederick Wherry (2011; 135-136) argues, “...people from outside of the core [ethnic] group use the visible presence of core group members as evidence of the event’s authenticity. It is, after all, how one certifies a “good” Chinese restaurant—lots of ‘Chinese-looking’ families eating there, some ordering their food *in* Chinese.” As opposed to cuisine, music, or other cultural representations of authenticity, these buildings are successful in their allusion to poverty without having to actually see poor people. In this sense, both spaces achieve an association with “grit” through the material textures of the building rather than the visibility of the population that actually makes a space “gritty.”

In the case of Gold Cash Gold, by the time I had moved to Detroit I only ever witnessed the space as an empty building prior to the redeveloped restaurant and apartments and for that reason cannot speak to the social life around the building while it was a pawnshop. During the time it was being built out, neighbors would often pass by with excitement about the transformation. And because it had been empty for several years by this point, residents were excited to see the space go from “nothing to something.” This was a transition made possible by the interim holding of the property until Diamonds and Rifles LLC had the capital to work on the property. Leaving the space undeveloped for several years created a buffer between the actual pawnshop use and the new restaurant. Though perhaps unintentional, this buffer was useful in establishing the idea that this was a negative space in need of infill. This logic emerges again at a much larger scale in the next chapter in relation to the Red Wing’s hockey arena. For recent newcomers to Corktown, the only visible social transition was from a few homeless residents asking for money to a restaurant packed with people. And for residents who remember the store’s much longer history as a target for violent robbery attempts, they were happy to see the actual pawnshop replaced.

David Grazian (2003: 18) calls authenticity a zero-sum game, “in which too many seekers of authenticity can easily spoil the fun for everyone else.” In the case of these two buildings, newcomers get to cash in on a middle-ground experience, whereby the new use is clearly not “authentic” but the building still is, and they can therefore frequent spaces where the exterior calls forth images of a gritty and dangerous space. They get to feel part of that identity and take pictures in front of the building, while simultaneously dining or shopping in a comfortable, clean, and high-end redeveloped space.

DISCUSSION

Neighborhoods are always in the midst of change, as often as they are static and stable in the imaginations of residents across generations. This chapter traces the ebbs and flows of some of the more significant repopulation in both the Cass Corridor and the North End, and the efforts to change a neighborhood's name as well as reactionary efforts against that change. As planners attempted to utilize the "Corridor" as a label to clean up the impression of Cass as a skid row, artists rejected the label as inauthentic and not of their own making. This label, however, caught on, and the image of Cass as gritty, dirty, and dangerous was essential to both the identity of the group as well as their reception in broader art circles. In the late 80's and early 90's, another wave of newcomers to Cass, this time more focused on the restoration of historic homes, worked to revitalize the area and alter negative associations with the area, eventually leading to the contemporary rebranding of Cass Corridor as Midtown. In recent years, a rejection of that rebranding has meant an alignment with the Cass Corridor name as the original and "authentic" moniker of the area. In much the same way, as the North End starts to see small-scale infill housing and new residents move to the neighborhood, the practices of boundary mapping and re-tightening surface as a means of claiming a sense of place and one's role within it. This mapping catalyzes debates of who is allowed to draw boundaries and what counts as the neighborhood according to tenure in the city.

Ultimately, the effort of the urban planners in the 1960's worked. Cass Corridor now has the association as being one of the nicest and most redeveloped areas of anywhere in Detroit. In many ways, these waves of artists, homeowners with a penchant

for historic homes in need of some sweat equity, and later institutional efforts to bring in independent storefronts, represents the trajectory of gentrification in any city across the world. Yet in Detroit, this process happened over the course of a half-century, thereby stretching out the cultural dimensions of change that often happen far more rapidly in other gentrifying urban spaces. This much slower process means that for a long time, residents were unable to name and qualify their displacement because it happened building by building, small block by small block. Small change over such a long period of time rendered these changes invisible, or perhaps more precisely, *individual*, as residents were not able to conceive of their cumulative effect. This outcome over an elongated temporal perspective emerges again with the building of a new hockey arena, dealt with in the next chapter.

Belief in the homogenous and unchanging neighborhood (not particular to neighborhoods or cities in decline) leads many Detroiters to interpret their own vision of Detroit as “authentic” in accordance with a moment in time that resonates with them. This is the case in circumstances where the historical record of the area shows intentional (if not repeated) rebranding campaigns that reflect the same culture debates over space and identity as a previous era. The neighborhood that is collectively imagined to be “authentic” has power in the capacity to garner interest from real estate developers and city officials who see something commonly referred to as “market potential.” The neighborhood is therefore unable to be re-named, re-districted, or even broadly re-imagined without ever-present tension. When a new development project is proposed, reactions not only compel a sense of defensiveness; they throw into question the ability of a branding campaign to ever be effective because of its lack of authenticity. Hence

advocates of Core City in the introduction of this chapter only became active in reaction to the rebranding of the neighborhood as “West Corktown”. While this is broadly true in many neighborhoods around the world, in Detroit, the ease with which large areas of land get construed as a “blank slate” or “no man’s land,” paired with the expansive sense of place of long-term residents during many decades of decline means these branding efforts are even easier to implement here than elsewhere. The Core City resident at the start of this chapter argued that a “blank slate” mentality is a form of violence against long-standing communities. In Detroit, new redevelopment boundaries are constantly referred to as blank spaces (as noted in Chapter 1). Sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (1991:28-29) argues that as a means of making sense of the social world, we must first create differential categories for distinguishing social facts that we understand as blank spaces, making them distinctive from other another by creating intentional divides between them.

Drawing again here on the collective memories of urban renewal policies in Detroit, —especially within marginalized Black communities— the defining of territories as “blank” calls into consideration who is enacting these boundary changes and who has control over naming processes. Even in areas where long-term residents themselves might agree that the neighborhood does not have a strong sense of place like it used to, residents want control over the symbolic power of place. Zukin (2011: 301) expands conceptualizing authenticity beyond the nominal binary of oppression or liberation, suggesting an active “crisis of authenticity” whereby we are collectively unable to make sense of the rapidly shifting changes happening in space, time, and among ourselves and others. In this interpretation, authenticity is not merely a source of cultural and material power over others, but is actually a *mechanism* for the claiming of

space, one that has the capacity to incorporate the moral right to live, work, and buy in a space. Authenticity in this way is a tool, one that can be used both by gentrifying social actors to promote their predilections for historic preservation, but also a tool for those without financial and cultural capital to claim a right to space in response to those attempts to reimagine a space.

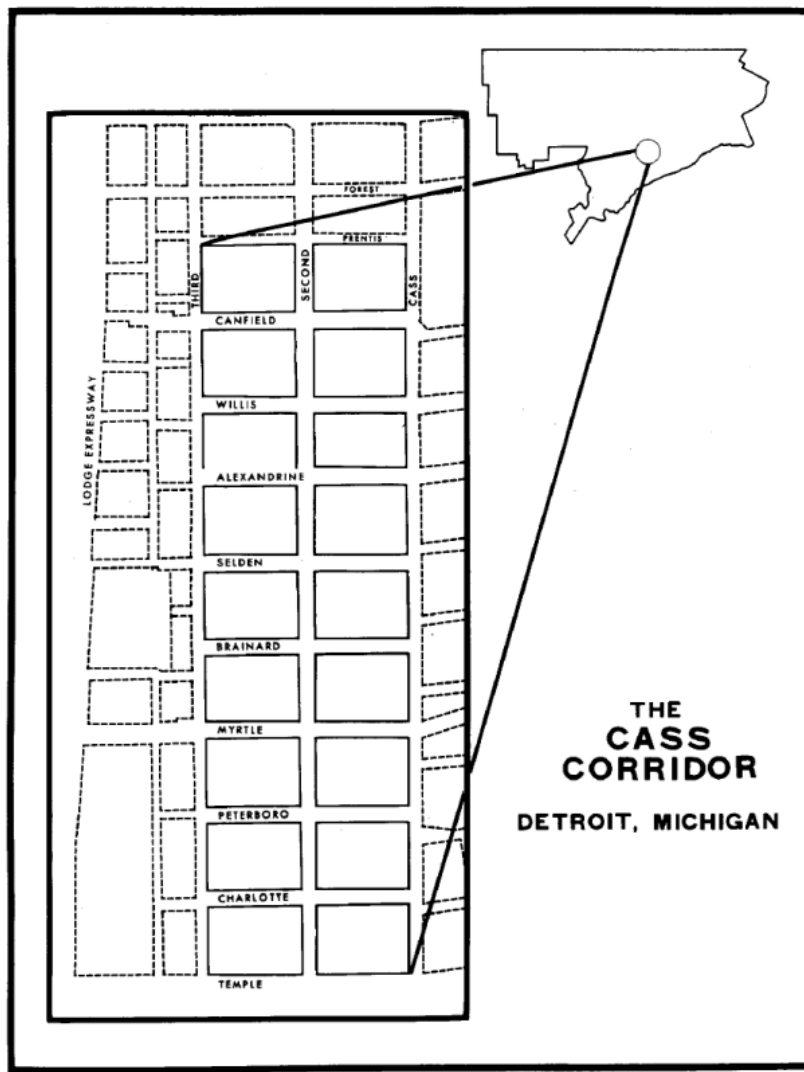


Figure 3.1: 1970s Map of the "Cass Corridor" (Source: Hartman 1975).

By the 1970s, the Cass Corridor label seems to be relatively settled, even though up until this decade little record of the name exists in Detroit. This map is part of a Wayne State University report on the Cass Corridor published in 1975.

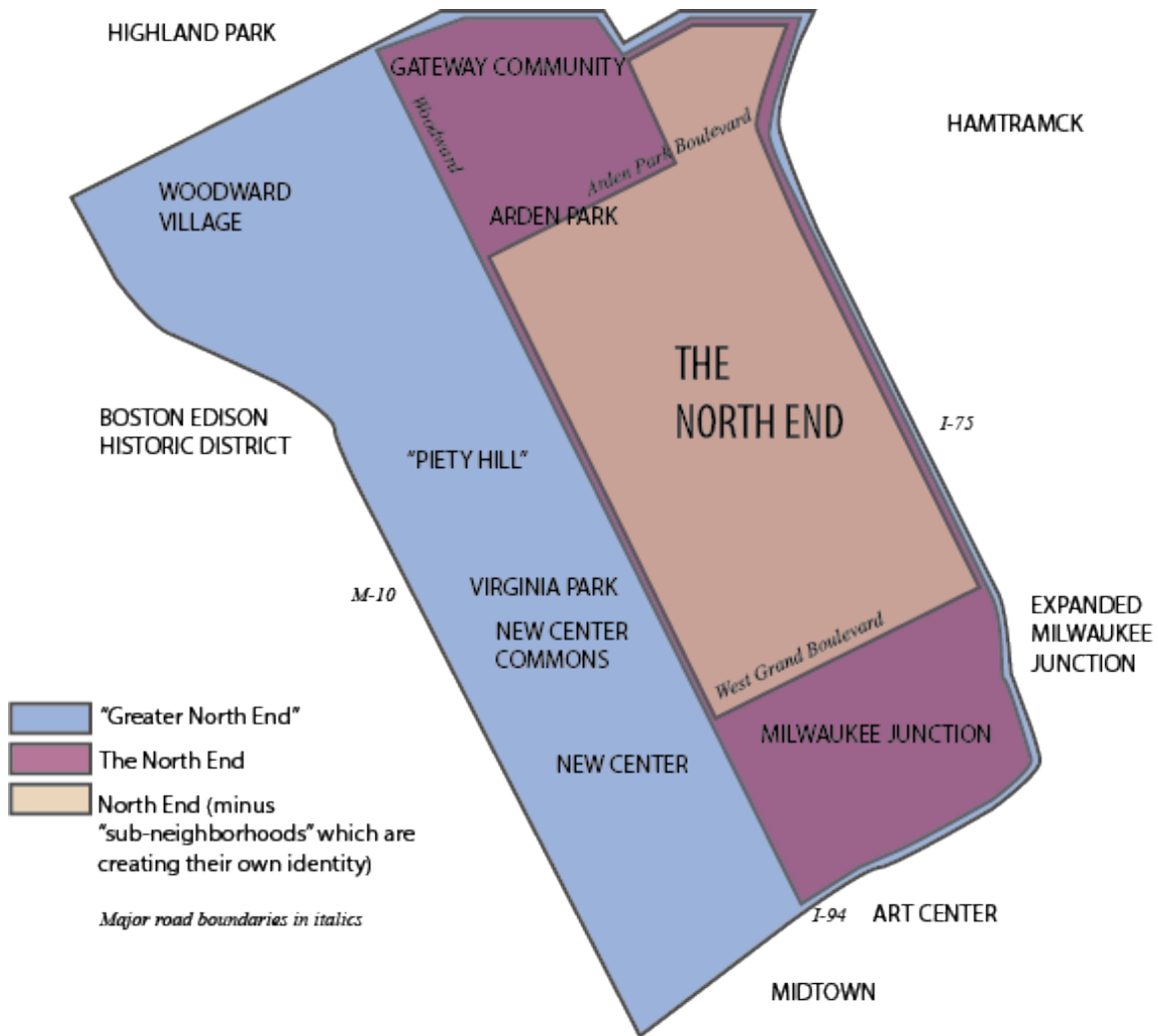


Figure 3.2: Map by local North End developer (Source: Author replication of original content by developer).

This map is a replica of one created by Eric (see pp. 127-133) and intended to distinguish various sub-neighborhoods in the North End. Upon being made public, questions surrounding the intent of the map were immediate among residents. The original map is not used for purposes of anonymity.



Figure 3.3: Tomboy Supermarket (Source: Gerard 2015)

This “before picture” shows the social spaces of the Tomboy Supermarket’s parking lot and awning area, as well as the large plastic letters of the name along the Alexandrine façade.



Figure 3.4: Will Leather Goods with Tomboy letters in white (Source: Image courtesy of Will Leather Goods for Graver 2015).

Will Leather Goods can be seen here without the signature awning and with big glass windows where there used to be shopping carts. The Tomboy letters are now whitewashed but remain as part of the façade.



Figure 3.5: Sam's Loan Office (Source: Zadoronzny 2013).

This was the building's façade when I first moved to this area, after it had been purchased by Diamonds and Rifles LLC but prior to any rehabilitation.



Figure 3.6: Gold Cash Gold restaurant and lofts (Source: Boyer 2014).

Gold Cash Gold, with a fresh coat of paint tracing the former advertisements for the pawn shop.

DISCUSSION

DISCORDANT NARRATIVES IN ACTION

The purpose of this dissertation has been to unpack the cultural mechanisms of how long-term residents, developers, and city officials make sense of the redevelopment process through narrative frames about the spaces they inhabit and work within. As Chapter 1 argued, no understanding of current redevelopment in Detroit is possible without drawing on histories of Urban Renewal here, the deployment of various local narratives on the possibility of gentrification, and an analysis of deep political disengagement and distrust on the part of long-term residents. In Chapter 2, I showed the ways that the boundaries of the North End grew more expansive with population loss. Foundations and community development corporations drew more expansive boundaries of the neighborhood to be able to capture more revenue from federal programs or as a protective measure against encroaching areas of redevelopment, just as residents had to go further and further from their block to meet their daily needs. Chapter 3 traced the efforts to contract those same neighborhood boundaries in moments of growth and perceived growth, and the relationship between changing space and authenticity of the neighborhood and who has the right to claim certain names or spaces.

Narrative frames about neighborhoods and their redevelopment are employed

differently depending on the temporal and spatial range of perspectives at play. Residents may operationalize experiences of displacement from previous generations that do not make sense to developers or newly relocated city officials and draw boundaries on the neighborhood that seem to not match the physical boundaries of the territory in question. The city official must consider the impact of a development in relation to the entire city, and the developer often imagines their project and its impacts on the region and beyond, spurring questions of “redevelopment for whom?”

During the time of the study, one of the largest redevelopment projects underway was the construction of a new hockey arena for the Detroit Red Wings. The new arena was brought up in almost every interview I conducted no matter the geography in the city. I also attended several meetings for a group attempting to develop a community benefits agreement for the arena that was ultimately unsuccessful. In this final chapter, I tie together the many threads of cultural displacement under the umbrella of the new arena project in order to demonstrate the practical utility of this analytical approach with an actual site. Because every development project and the public reactions to it are different, I do not attempt to force the context of the Red Wings arena neatly into the outline of all previous chapters. Rather, I narrate the main themes of meaning-making around this project, highlighting the connections across multiple chapters as they relate to different elements of this development. I argue that this redevelopment project is a case of cultural displacement on the part of long-term residents, meaning that their narrative frames of what the project is and means lose saliency in the broader public realm when the project is generally regarded as positive.

I begin with contextual details about the current political climate related to sports

arenas in Detroit and a timeline of events relating to the ability of the arena developers to carry out their project. I then analyze the land holding patterns of this particular developer in the area of the new arena and the response of residents to what they interpret as property speculation. Both of these sections illuminate the importance of a long-range view when considering the implications of developments for long-term residents and the lack of trust in these contexts. Following this temporal perspective, I then analyze the spatial impact of the new arena, both in relation to the perceived scale of impact from the developer's perspective and the ways that this contradicts local interpretations of space as well as the boundary-work carried out in an attempt to create 5 new "neighborhoods" within this development district. Fundamental to both temporal and spatial application of cultural displacement in the new hockey arena is the underlying question: whom does this work benefit? The arena project was one of two major projects that inspired Detroit residents to propose two Community Benefit Ordinances on the November 2016 ballot. The differences between the two proposals highlight many of the primary tensions of this dissertation and are analyzed in detail. Having applied the elements of this research to the arena case study, I conclude with the broader implications of this work, for researchers, practitioners, and residents in the fields of sociology, urban planning, and local policy.

TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEW HOCKEY ARENA

Setting the Stage for a New Arena

Starting in the 1990s, sports arenas and casinos emerged as attractive options for cities to counteract the flight of residents and businesses to nearby suburban spaces,

offering public subsidies and cheap land in exchange for the catalytic effect of creating entertainment destinations and the potential for job growth and other spinoff effects (Johnson et.al. 2012). Given the extent of Detroit's economic and social crisis in recent decades, city leadership has been eager for silver bullet solutions like those promised by large-scale developers. In 1996, the State of Michigan agreed to allow the licensing of casinos within Detroit city limits. Sports stadiums were also seen at the time to be an all-inclusive redevelopment option for struggling cities. However, independent²⁶ research into the effects of sports stadiums on the economic development of a neighborhood and/or district have been conclusive: stadiums and franchises "are ineffective means to creating local economic development, whether that is measured as income or job growth... [and] public benefits... are insufficient to warrant large-scale subsidies by themselves" (Coates 2007).

The recently deceased Mike Ilitch is a household name in Detroit, known as one of three prominent billionaires, and by most media accounts fervently committed to the city's revitalization. As the owner of both the Detroit Tigers and the Red Wings, the current era of stadium redevelopment and how residents interpret this latest project is a history inseparable from the practices of his personal holdings and development firm. It also provides a rare context whereby the development of a new Tigers baseball stadium in the mid 1990's serves as a historical precedent to the present arena redevelopment. The following is a brief historical timeline of the arena redevelopment project, meant both to contextualize the reader with the events of this particular development company and their

²⁶ The clarification of "independent" research in this context is critical, as many economists or other researchers who study the effects of sports arenas often end up working as consultants for development firms or professional sports teams (Coates 2007).

downtown Detroit holdings over the past twenty years, but also answer the call of urban researchers to not only focus on the effects of blight but also its origins (Sugrue 2005; Akers 2017).

In 1982, the Ilitch family purchased the Detroit Red Wings hockey team and inherited the Joe Louis Arena downtown as part of their purchase. Ten years later, Mike Ilitch purchased the Detroit Tigers, whose stadium was located in Corktown. In the same year, reports began to circulate that Ilitch had undertaken a study on the viability of renovations to the existing baseball stadium compared with financing a new stadium. Growing concerns over a new stadium and its impact on residents led to a citizen-driven referendum, Ordinance 7-92, passed by voters "to prohibit the use of tax subsidies for any stadium construction," (Michigan Bar Journal 1995).

Ordinance 7-92 ran counter to predominant wisdom of the mid-1990's that saw sports stadiums as vital to downtown regeneration. But as discussions of a new stadium escalated between the Ilitch family and the Downtown Development Authority in the summer of 1995, the Detroit City Council passed Ordinance 38-95, with the sole purpose of repealing Ordinance 7-92 (Citizens Research Council 1996). In the fall of the same year, a deal was announced for the construction of a new \$235 million stadium financed through a combination of gaming revenues and tax increment financing bonds collected from the Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

The DDA had to expand its boundaries in order to incorporate the territory of the new ballpark, so that funds collected in the downtown zone could be utilized toward the construction of the arena (Papapanos 2013). These boundaries were redrawn again in 2013 to include the land north of Interstate-75, so that ODM could secure public funding

for the development of a new hockey arena. The Downtown Development Authority requested a 40-block expansion of their boundaries (roughly 615 acres downtown at the time) to encompass the territory of the new arena footprint.

The legislative work necessary to make this development happen also extended to zoning regulations. In 2014, City Council was presented with a proposal to change the arena redevelopment area from a general business zoning to a planned development district. While seemingly a technicality, this zoning vote changes the mechanisms that the Ilitch Company had to go through related to the historic preservation of two hotels on the arena redevelopment site. In April of 2000, 8 years after public and legislative battles for the new baseball stadium began, the new Comerica Park hosted its first Tigers game. This drawn out process for the new Tigers baseball stadium framed any conversation moving forward about a new hockey arena, particularly as the team owner, development promises, and the suggested impact of the arena were all the exact same for both stadium proposals.

It is with this context that in 2013, the Detroit City Council approved a plan to move forward with a new hockey arena as well as the transfer of city-owned land and public subsidies to support the development of a much broader entertainment district that spans Detroit's Downtown and Midtown areas (see Figure 4.1 for a map of the full area). Detroit's new hockey arena was 58% publicly funded (Bradley 2014). The development is expected to cost a sum of \$650 million, with \$284.5 million of that coming from public investments for arena construction costs.²⁷ In addition, the City Council approved the

27. Though not taken out of the city's general fund, the funds raised through tax increment financing captured in the DDA's 615 acre footprint would go toward the School Aid Fund.

transfer of 39 vacant parcels in the redevelopment site for \$1.00, with the entire process unfolding during Detroit's bankruptcy proceedings. In this territory, Olympia Developers of Michigan (ODM) has mapped out their infrastructural plans for the arena as well as five "new" neighborhoods called "The District." This investment was widely heralded as a way to stitch back together Midtown and Downtown, as they were currently separated by a highway and the extremely disinvested site of the future arena and "District."

How the Lower Cass became a "No Man's Land"

Further north of this area, on Cass, Angela (see Chapter 3), who had seen the transitions around her storefront from a haven for drugs and prostitution to "one of the most gentrified spaces in the city" reflected on those changes. When I asked if she could compare the way her block felt in 1993 to anywhere else in the city right now, she named the intersection of Temple and Cass, only a few blocks to the South:

On Temple and Cass, yeah, I've been there. So that area... that always helps me to kind of visualize because I think there are still a lot of places that look like other places did a while ago. And so there's still a lot of buildings that landlords have just kind of, I don't know if they are holding out or just waiting to get some money so they can develop the property or something I mean that might be part of it too.

The corner Angela was describing was in the middle of the 50-block area of "the District." When I asked for a sense of how she and others felt about the hockey arena and associated redevelopment planned for the site she had just mentioned, Angela responded,

I don't think there is [uneasiness about the project] because there is nothing over there. See what I'm sayin? Now, see, if they had put like, displaced people, then we'd have a problem. But they're not displacing anything or anybody, you know.

Angela, like many others living outside of or even adjacent to the footprint of the development, saw this neighborhood as empty. The streets of lower Cass are disconnected, quiet, extremely spacious, and often a frightening space to walk. By any major metropolitan standard they do constitute a “no man’s land,” with a high percentage of abandoned homes and businesses. Yet for residents who have lived closer to or within the arena site for many years, a historical perspective of the neighborhood demonstrates a different process underway, one that supports slow speculation of properties by the very developers who claim they are reconnecting these spaces today. In a statement announcing the new hockey arena, Chris Ilitch, now CEO of Ilitch Holdings Inc. and son of Mike Ilitch, refers to the arena project as a 15-year development in the making, but with no details into what efforts have been underway during that 15-year process. As one resident, Dorothy, remembers:

Chris [Ilitch] has been trying to get this sale for twenty years. That's why I'm so pissed off because him and I talked about it twenty years ago... Chris Ilitch. His father would not allow him to do it. He wanted to build housing twenty years ago. I get that, that's visionary. I don't have a problem with that. I'm glad that you're a visionary. And being visionary you have to think about the whole vision, not just your personal one. And I just don't think that they have thought about the residents in forever, could care less.

Dorothy was highly skeptical of the new arena and the surrounding redevelopment plans by the Ilitch family. As she saw it, they had decades of opportunities to show their commitment to residents in the area but never did. Her distrust of Ilitch and ODM was consistent among the residents I spoke with living in the lower Cass Corridor area or in some way involved in the redevelopment process, who frequently referenced historical precedent (rather than the specifications of the development in question) to explain why they did not trust the family or the process underway currently.

The Ilitch family first mentioned interest in building a new hockey arena for the Detroit Red Wings in February of 1992 (*Jackson* 2014). Because of the large number of properties owned by the family and their various development subsidiaries, the exact location of a new arena and whether or not it would actually happen remained shrouded in mystery for 21 years. As one resident involved in attempts to establish a Community Benefits Agreement for the new development recalled, "[Ilitch] owns property in clusters all over the city. This made it impossible for us to be proactive about a community benefits agreement until it was practically too late!" This resident argued that even though Ilitch had hinted at the need for a new hockey arena for multiple decades, his company's vast property holdings under numerous Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) made any attempts to guarantee where the new development site would be located, and to organize residents in protest of that development, extremely difficult.

Analysis of parcel acquisition files with Wayne County shows that the first property in this area acquired by the Ilitch family on record took place in 1981, nearly three decades before the announcement of the new hockey arena location.²⁸ The majority of properties in the area show acquisition in the mid-1990s, around the time that interest in a new arena was circulated. Figure 4.1 at the end of this chapter traces a portion of these parcel acquisitions over time in the area of the new arena redevelopment. In the case of the Ilitch companies and their holdings, a significant number of properties were acquired and retained without improvements, often for over two decades.

Residents who lived in the lower Cass Corridor during this time remember Ilitch at best as a speculator who held onto properties without fixing them up, thereby making

28. A geographer analyzing the same processes citywide confirmed these initial conclusions. What is clear is that property holdings go back to at least 1999 and the selling by the city of 39 property sales for \$1 suggests that there was a majority ownership by 2012/2013.

the neighborhood even weaker than it already was and driving down property acquisition costs to be able to buy more land. Neighbors were often approached and asked to sell their properties. They also remember the number of years where so many properties sat vacant without any neighbors to watch over them or help maintain a sense of community. As one resident recalls, in a broader conversation about what she calls the "unhealthiness of how Detroit redevelops:"

SL: We gave that shit for a dollar and homeboy's a freakin' billionaire... like, he needs to pay for everything. We should give him no tax breaks, no cuts... Especially I lived here and I know exactly what he did. He ...pushed people out and stuff. ... [My friend] when she went outside her sister's windows were broken out... right? All of their cars. And unfortunately that used to happen so much over here. They used to walk down the street between 3:00-6:00 A.M. and just bust out all the windows. They never stole anything. But we knew who was doing it! They destroyed the cars, they destroyed the mailboxes, ... come on now. A regular bum person, you think they gonna do that? No! And we don't have no kids over here!

ME: So you think this was Ilitch's people trying to strategically make things look worse in the neighborhood?

SL: THANK YOU! But you will never get anyone to admit that because you don't have to do your dirty job. You just hire somebody to hire somebody to know what you need to do type thing... but for the people that's on the ground, we know what happened.

This resident argued that beyond the practices of speculation over a number of decades in the neighborhood, the development company actually took steps to make the neighborhood feel even more unstable and dangerous during this period. While reliable confirmation of these acts was not possible, the *suspicion* of vandalism as part of an overarching goal to push remaining residents out of the lower Cass Corridor was widespread among residents. Whether or not these were intentional acts carried out on the part of those affiliated with the redevelopment project, they happened during a period of years when resident "eyes on the street" were critical to a sense of safety among residents

as they noticed more and more properties sat untouched. The outcomes for residents – whether or not additional vandalism was part of this process– were effectively the same. The speculation of land reinforced the feeling of being starved of a more meaningful sense of community, even if they chose to remain on the same piece of land. It also further calcified long-brewing distrust of major developers in this area, and in the ability of local representatives to stand up for the needs of long-term residents in the face of the those developers.

Cultural studies of gentrification often reveal the mechanisms of change long after economic impacts of displacement are already underway. But what happens when the market for redevelopment slows and the patterns of gentrification underway are disrupted? Brett Williams (1988) called this process "stalled gentrification," where residents of different backgrounds who never intended to be neighbors become part of a shared community. In a similar sense, the property acquisition for the new hockey arena happened at such a slow pace, that residents watching this process unfold in everyday life were witness to a process of stalled development. Over the course of several decades, Olympia Development of Michigan became a majority property owner in the area north of Downtown in case they were able to pass legislation making the sports investment more profitable. Increasingly, other individuals and property groups bought land in the same area, counting on rumors of Ilitch land holdings for a future project and waiting without investment in hopes of their own buyout. Having had no capacity for the enforcement of nuisance laws in the years prior to the decision to locate the new hockey arena in the lower Cass Corridor, property owners were able to allow the buildings and

lots in their ownership deteriorate to such an extent that the City of Detroit would be forced to accept any proposals to change this status.

During Detroit's Urban Renewal, or Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, whole neighborhoods were classified as slums and then razed in their entirety (Fullilove 2005). Though government relocation efforts were often insufficient in quantity, unsafe, and unsanitary, the provision of new housing during Urban Renewal was at the very least culturally acknowledged and legally required (DUL 1956). Major redevelopment efforts were publicly accessible in all major planning documents and massive displacement happened for many at once. In the era of slow speculative practices and stalled development, the effects of neighborhood disintegration, the razing of dilapidated buildings, and the displacement of residents all mirror the effects of Urban Renewal and residents' memories of that process.²⁹ But because the speculation of property occurs over such an extended period of time in a private market, the *origin* of the "no man's land" becomes diffuse and difficult for residents to trace. The result is severe distrust in redevelopment practices and local government, without a means to articulate to source of the problem.

RECONFIGURING SPACE IN THE DISTRICT

Scales of Impact

The previous sections revealed the varied perceptions of Olympia Developers of Michigan at the neighborhood level as either investors or as speculators. Yet the question of who this development is meant to aid must be answered in relation to the intended

29. Detroit's Nuisance Abatement Program, operated by the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA), is the 2014 legal mechanism meant to require property owners to improve their properties and comes out of the DLBA's increased capacity. In the case of The District, much of this land was acquired at time when the City of Detroit had no capacity to keep up with nuisance claims.

scale of the impact of the project. Chapter 1 analyzed the divergent geographic scales of how redevelopment and resultant gentrification were perceived in Detroit. In the case study of the new arena, developers couched the need for the hockey arena in this location in relation to the region's need for a "thriving" city, and the role the arena would play in filling in the "no man's land" between Downtown and Midtown. While residents saw their blocks slowly deteriorate over time at the grounded scale (with the assumption that "gentrification" was already underway), developers looked at the same space as part of a regional image for Detroit (and with the assumption that we "need" gentrification).

The Ilitch family sees themselves as a family, business, and organization committed to Detroit *before* it was fashionable, who have fought to maintain the integrity of the built environment downtown and across the city. In a rare 2014 personal interview with the Sports Business Journal (Botta 2014), Mike Ilitch said:

I look at me and Detroit as one. The city is like a family member to me. I got sick and tired of people saying to me that Detroit wasn't special. When I'd tell people that I was from Detroit, they'd look at me like they felt sorry for me. I decided I was going to do everything possible so that one day everyone would view Detroit as a great city.

The scale of Ilitch's perspective emerges here in relation to the rest of the country and potentially the world, and the fact that he did not like the stigma associated with his hometown. The Ilitch companies therefore see themselves as playing a vital role in the redevelopment of the entire city. The objectives of the company are constantly discussed on the scale of the *city's* revitalization, *regional* importance, and *international* reputation, but are rarely if ever addressed at the local block or even neighborhood scale. In discussing the impact of the new arena and accompanying entertainment district, Olympia Development of Michigan (ODM) drew on memories of Urban Renewal to

emphasize their role in the city's redevelopment and how positive this particular project would be. In June of 2013, ODM announced the creation of their entirely new "district" of neighborhoods in Detroit. Speaking on behalf of ODM, Chris Ilitch said in a public statement (2014):

It's no coincidence that these areas north of I-75 are some of the most blighted areas in our city core... [D]evelopment plans call for not only building a pedestrian bridge over I-75, but also having storefronts on the bridge itself. In general, the 45-block entertainment district, stitches together surrounding assets into charming, walkable, livable neighborhoods.

By focusing on the development of Interstate 75, this announcement strategically connected the challenges of the lower Cass Corridor (namely massive property abandonment and high concentrations of poverty and violence) with that of Urban Renewal, shifting the responsibility for this gap in development onto the City of Detroit. This was a significant attempt to align the development team with long-term residents in the area who connect contemporary disenfranchisement with the impacts of Urban Renewal.

The determination of whether Olympia Developers of Michigan was solving a problem or creating one returns again to the motifs of Chapter 1 and the scale of a development's impact. To the Ilitch family, and even to residents living just outside of the arena's impact, Olympia was working to build a bridge between redeveloping portions of downtown and Midtown, eradicating a "no man's land" between the two spaces. Seen from an aerial perspective, this project is important to the entire region and how redevelopment in Detroit is perceived externally. To residents living in the arena footprint, the Ilitch family was responsible for the creation of the "no man's land," the very problem they were publicly claiming to solve. This grounded and historical

perspective of space, on a house-by-house basis, is fundamentally opposed to the regional vision of the redevelopment.

Authenticity and the New Neighborhood

While the concept of the entire entertainment district was constantly under fire from residents and activists, individual elements of the site plan were also coming into question. As Chapter 3 showed, as the neighborhood redevelopment process unfolds, we can see efforts to re-tighten the boundaries around growing neighborhoods and resultant contestations of their authenticity. “The District” was no exception. On their website, ODM has proposed five distinct neighborhoods, each with accompanying narratives of how the developer imagines the space (for a map of this space, refer to Figure 4.1). “Cass Park Village” –one of the five– is conjured as the following:

Part entrepreneurial, part artistic, this neighborhood has been conceived with individuality and expression in mind. Cass Park Village will build on the creative energy of nearby Wayne State University, Cass Technical High School and the 90-year-old Masonic Temple to become a hotbed for artists who will launch new ideas. This neighborhood will appeal to those who want to live and work in a tight-knit community within the boundaries of an urban city.

Cass Park Village will be home to independent shops, local markets and galleries, and residents will sense a relaxed atmosphere with a free-spirited attitude that is not pretentious or flashy. Like a small town, this close-knit community will encourage people to get to know each other. The daytime atmosphere will be friendly as shop owners and cafe start-ups welcome visitors, offering conversations about neighborhood happenings and current events in comfortable and casual surroundings. Nighttime will be equally laid-back as neighbors meet in the backyard for informal get-togethers or at the park for pickup softball. For those seeking something a bit livelier, local bars and galleries will come alive, offering events from poetry slams to local garage bands to full-out launch parties.

Behind the neighborhood description, “Cass Park Village” is penned in thick cursive handwriting, layered on top of a close-up image of a woman on her cruiser with a leopard

jacket biking by. The effect of this description is totalizing to the extent it is almost comical. Rather than suggesting amenities or features of the space that ODM intends to build, the website creates an all-inclusive identity for individuals choosing to live in this space, down to the very types of conversations one will have. Subtle cues hint at the idea that this neighborhood will cater to a highly educated, younger population. “Cass Park Village” thusly imagined, tells the reader that residents who do not fit this description will not fit into the lifestyle of the neighborhood.

While Cass Park Village may not exist as anything more than an idea right now, Cass Park does. Acquired in 1860 as a public park and deed restricted to ensure that the four acres would remain park space in perpetuity, Cass Park has been a unifying public space feature of the apartment complexes and community service institutions that lined it for decades. When asked about the neighborhood names and identities, one representative of the development process shrugged:

That was something we did during the planning stage. You know it's like Midtown started off as something else. Those were just names that we just thought of just for the planning stage. We don't anticipate those names sticking. It would be cute if it did, but you know. We don't anticipate, each neighborhood would take on its own identity.

Here again, “Midtown” serves as the precedent for branding practices in Detroit. As the development team suggests, they don’t anticipate that branding actually “works” fully, in the sense that residents will adopt these names and use them as a reference point for their neighborhood. Yet though this vision does call on three local institutions, the emphasis on the future tense of this neighborhood (“Cass Park Village will be...”) suggests that the neighborhood is marketed to those that do not live there currently. Conversations with

residents living around the park suggests that many were not involved in the residential input on this vision for Cass Park Village and its future identity.

When Nick and Glenn (from Chapter 2) reflected on their childhoods growing up in the North End, they had clear memories of neighborhood institutions, such as schools, grocery stores, and restaurants. An interview with a close associate of Ilitch suggests that The District and the neighborhoods surrounding the new hockey arena were influenced by Mike Ilitch's own nostalgia for his neighborhood growing up:

Mr. Ilitch always like[d] the [idea] that you could walk in any area. He says that growing up he remembered there was always a grocery store [or a place for] shopping, somewhere to buy what you need. It was always a drugstore here. It was always something in like in various neighborhoods like Mexicantown... everyone had their own. So he wanted it to be like that.You can walk to the grocery store; you can walk to the park. If you look at the plans each of the neighborhoods have some type of ...park. Each of the neighborhoods have a grouping of restaurants you know so that you don't have to walk twenty, thirty blocks.

Mike Ilitch spoke of his neighborhood growing up much in the same way that Nick and Glenn did, listing a catalogue of important institutions for meeting one's daily needs. The one notable difference is the mention of his emphasis on the Mexicantown neighborhood and the idea that "everyone had their own," meaning each neighborhood had their own set of amenities but also that each ethnic enclave had a strong social support system. Ilitch was born in Detroit in 1929 to Macedonian immigrants, at a time when density of Macedonians in Detroit was high as a result of the Henry Ford "\$5 a day" wage campaign (Foster 1988) and the continued influx of Macedonian immigrants following the 1924 Immigration Act, whereby many immigrants entered the country through Canada to skirt this new law (Yuill 2014). Whereas Black children were extremely aware of race during their childhood even if they perceived neighborhood diversity to be harmonious, Ilitch

reflects on his childhood with nostalgia for the close social ties of the white ethnic enclaves of the past (Waldinger 1987; Gans 1979; Portes and Sessenbrenner 1993).

In order to achieve the vision of the imagined, walkable, harmonious neighborhood, Ilitch required that his staff host listening sessions:

Well he actually had, you know he actually made us host listening sessions with the residents in the area to find out what they wanted you know, how do you see your neighborhood. It was always his thing is name the top three, everyone has a top three. You know and it was always a drug store, for the older residents the first thing they said was a drug store you know. And then it just was a neighborhood store. And a lot of them said not necessarily a neighborhood store that sells liquor, they just want like a neighborhood store. And then other ones always talked about 'well we need a dry cleaner's or we need a, you know...' it depended on...what area of the district you were in you know. And then when we sat down it was like we have the cleaner's over here, then you have the drug store here. And then we had the park here you know so...

In an effort to understand the needs of residents, the ODM employees who hosted listening sessions asked residents to list the three most important types of amenities in the neighborhood. And if those amenities existed already, they were checked off the list and considered "done" without consideration of whether or not those businesses could afford to remain in the area. Improvements to Cass Park have been on hold for as long as this study has been underway, again owing to long-term speculation of land within this neighborhood and uncertainty of future uses. The City of Detroit has been waiting to understand the changes to the neighborhood, use of space, and access to the park before investing in park improvements.

For residents whose opinions were not solicited as part of these listening sessions, reading about a new neighborhood with a new name reaffirms a lack of trust in this

process.³⁰ Given the history of planning fatigue in Detroit, and the fact that Ilitch actually had the capital to turn plans into a reality in the built environment, it seemed odd that he would solicit community input but not publicize that as something to be celebrated about this particular development initiative. According to a member of the Ilitch team, planning sessions were never made public because Ilitch did not like to make things public until they were “complete.” The suspicion among activists who opposed the use of public funds for the arena was that the input received in those sessions was never intended to inform the development decisions that were ultimately made. However, resident expectation of the project’s capacity to represent their needs was already so low due to planning fatigue, the experiences of the Comerica Park development, and the slow speculation of the lower Cass Corridor that the lack of their input in implementation was if anything, exactly what many residents expected.

BENEFITS FOR WHOM?

In late September of 2014, Governor Rick Snyder³¹, Chris Ilitch, Mayor Mike Duggan, and City Council President Pro Tempore George Cushingberry Jr. gathered together on stage at the future site of the Red Wings arena, ceremoniously digging their shovels into a pile of dirt meant to represent the groundbreaking of construction work on the site. Two years later, with the steel frame of the arena now a part of the Detroit skyline, the citizens of Detroit passed a Community Benefits Ordinance inspired in large

³⁰ None of the residents I spoke with for in-depth interviews were part of the listening sessions described by Olympia Developers of Michigan. I was denied a request to see any transcripts or notes from these listening sessions, again citing Mike Ilitch’s “intensively private” nature.

³¹ As one of his first acts as Governor, Snyder signed into law was Public Act 4, strengthening the Emergency Management Law already in place.

part by the arena and the lack of a proactive stance toward resident needs within City Hall.

Two separate community benefits ordinances were on the November ballot, one generated by community members seeking a direct voice in major redevelopment projects (Proposal A) and the other proposed by a member of City Council hoping to create a middle ground between full developer control and full community control (Proposal B). The proposals differed on three major tenets: the monetary threshold for when the ordinance will apply, the role of city officials in the process, and the enforceability of the contract. Proposal A proponents argued for a lower threshold, whereby any project costing over \$15 million or utilizing over \$300,000 in city incentives such as tax abatements would enact the ordinance. Because residents supporting this proposition felt that their elected officials had not represented their interests when it comes to major development in the city, Proposal A forbid city involvement in negotiations. It also required the developer to enter into a legally binding contract with community members that could yield repercussions if the developer did not uphold their end of the agreement. Proposition B was proposed as a more moderate ordinance, with two tiers: a \$75 million³² threshold that very few developments meet, and a second \$3 million tier with relaxed requirements. Both require city officials to play a mediating role in the terms of the agreement and the establishment of a Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC). However, the second proposal required no formal agreement be signed or any formal mechanism for enforcement of the ordinance, and any development can be exempt

³² This \$75 million threshold includes tax abatements over \$1 million in value and any below-market-value land transfers over \$1 million in value (Detroit Legal News, Nov. 29, 2016).

form the ordinance by City Council if deemed “impractical or infeasible” by the Director of Planning and Development for the City of Detroit or the developer themselves (City of Detroit Community Benefits Ordinance, Sections 14-12-1 through 14-12-5). Many resident were confused to see both measures on the ballot, with rumors circulating that if voters voted “yes” to both ordinances this would invalidate their ballot altogether. In fact, if both ordinances passed, the one with the greater number of votes would be enacted. Ultimately, Proposal A was rejected by a narrow margin and Proposal B passed by a similarly slim percentage of votes.

Detroit’s Community Benefits Ordinance emerged after the fallout from the Red Wings hockey arena,³³ at a time when trust in elected officials was extremely low and politicians’ ability to represent Detroit residents over developers was called into question. Residents had seen the strategy of the Neighborhood Advisory Council in effect for the hockey arena agreement, without any tangible mechanisms for enforcement of NAC priorities in place. Definitions of what even constitutes the “impact area” of the project and how those boundaries are defined were heavily contested. Although Proposal A did not pass, perhaps most remarkable to this entire process was the effort by its advocates to remove city officials entirely from negotiations with developers. Doing so was a powerful statement—at least among the 46% of residents who voted in its favor—that the officials the voters have elected cannot be trusted to represent their best interests in the

³³ At the same time as struggles over the impact of the new arena were being vocalized, residents of Detroit’s Delray community were fighting for a community benefits agreement to guarantee benefits of an international bridge crossing landing in their neighborhood. Ultimately, Mayor Duggan negotiated an agreement whereby Detroit sold the necessary parcels for the bridge footprint in exchange for \$48 million in funds set aside for job training, health monitoring, and neighborhood improvements. For a detailed analysis of the resident struggle for community benefits, see Krings 2015.

face of the growth machine (Molotch 1976). Just as state officials stripped citizens of their right to elected representation with Emergency Financial Management laws, residents made an attempt to strip local officials of their role of representation in the post-bankruptcy investment era. Local officials were forced to draft their own middle-ground legislation with Proposal B that reinstated their role as mediator between residents and developers.

Returning to the mayoral debate discussed in Chapter 1, one of the moderators of the debate, Chastity Pratt Dawsey spoke on the meaning of the “motherland” quote (see page 61), which in her interpretation had everything to do with gentrification in Detroit.

As she said (*italics are my own*):

The reason you heard the motherland comment was because it was the dog whistle to all those people who are not seeing anything compared to an LCA (*Little Caesar's Arena*). You know, you don't have anything compared to an LCA near Denby and Osborn (*in the city's far northeast*). Gentrification, this is how it happens. It happens for and by the gentry, the people with the money. And the idea is it's gonna trickle down into the neighborhoods. And if it does or doesn't is the job of the mayor. So that's why he didn't talk about gentrification (*during the debate*).

The new hockey arena was not only such a significant project in terms of size and public investment — spawning the proposal of an ordinance to protect resident interest— it also serves as a metaphor for any and all redevelopment in the city and the divisions between “old” and “new” Detroit.

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

In this dissertation, I have treated the city and the neighborhood not as a priori social facts with clear boundaries, but as imagined spaces where the politics of growth and decline play out across a multiplicity of spatio-temporal narrative frames. Social

actors do not evaluate their neighborhoods, city, and sense of belonging in both spaces along a set of rational metrics for what constitutes the “good life” (Somers 1994). Rather, actors’ perceptions about quality of life are instead analyzed through specific narrative frames, based on one’s experiences or linkages to previous acts of displacement. This in turn informs the ways in which a particular stakeholder will act, in relation to their narrative frame of the neighborhood (Small 2004) or other spatial entity. The actions dealt with in this dissertation include the drawing of symbolic and geographic boundaries, as well as reactions to development proposals and participation in the public planning process around said proposals. As such, this work has implications for many different types of groups and at many different levels. I first share the implications of this work for cultural sociologists and those interested in meaning-making research even far outside of contexts similar to this study. I then detail important conclusions for urban studies researchers concerned with concepts of decline and growth and the homogenization of urban space. Finally, I conclude with the implications of this work for urban planning practitioners, whom I believe can make small but significant impacts in diffusing cultural displacement through the understanding of these narrative frames.

Time, Space, and TimeSpace

Sociologists have long debated the predominance of time and space in shaping social behavior. Sociological discourse on the relative importance of time and space to social agency has largely been influenced by the trajectory of where emphasis within this dyad was placed in modern philosophy (Bergmann 1992). The weight of early Heideggerian thought (1927), with an insistence of the determinate character of time in relation to human existence, heavily influenced social theory within the field of collective memory

(for summaries of this vast literature, see Olick and Robbins 1998; Conway 2010). Recently, sociologists have tried to flip this body of collective memory (Halbwachs 1925) literature on its head, arguing that there is much work to be done to understand collective "future-visioning" (Mische 2009,2010, Hall 2009; Vaisey 2009, 2010; Gross and Fosse 2012; Frye 2012, Tavory and Eliasoph 2013). If we are able to make sense of how memory constrains and enables cultural action, would it be possible to demonstrate the same through groups acting in relation to their collective future?

While temporally-oriented work has continued to gain interest, another philosophical shift has influenced the discipline with the spatial turn (Lefebvre 1974) and rise to prominence of thinkers like Peter Sloterdijk (see his three-volume *Spheres*), placing equivalent or greater weight on how space lends shape to the contours of human existence. Within sociology, the spatial turn has been transformational at the neighborhood scale, previously dominated by "neighborhood effects" literature (Sampson et. al. 2002) that treats space as the independent variable responsible for shaping outcomes like health, education, and social mobility. Beyond these outcomes, cultural sociologists concerned with place (Gieryn 2000) and neighborhood effects scholars concerned with culture (Small 2004) have shown that neighborhoods shape perceptions, behaviors, and opportunities toward and within these spaces.

At the broadest level, this study has shown that the matrix between the spatial and temporal dimensions of cities and the lives of its residents cannot be split or separated. Doing so results in a sense of displacement or loss of place attachment (Low and Altman 1992) among residents, even as their housing may be secure and very little tangible change has occurred on their block. To understand the collective memory and the

imagined futures of residents in an urban area like Detroit, the sociologist must be willing to hold these opposing temporal dimensions together with the streets, blocks, neighborhoods and corners from which they emerge. This study then contributes to a field of study within social theory, cultural sociology, and cultural anthropology concerned with the interrelation of time and space, what May and Thrift (2001) call TimeSpace. Various authors have attempted to successfully integrate these two colossal concepts. The most significant of these has been Anthony Giddens' (1984) "time-space distanciation," whereby societies are able to bind themselves across stretches of time and space as a means of exercising power, social control, and legitimacy, and David Harvey's (1989) "time-space compression" whereby as distances are closed with technological advancements of modernity, the experience of time speeds up.

TimeSpace is defined as "a radical unevenness in the nature and quality of social time itself, with this spatial variation a constitutive part rather than an added dimension," (May and Thrift 2001: 5). In this dissertation, the concept of gentrification is so chaotic (Beauregard 1986) due to this very unevenness, as social actors attempt to make sense of one another's actions across exceptionally diverse parameters of time and scales of place.

John Brinckerhoff Jackson, in his essay "A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time" attempts to define the liberally employed phrase "sense of place" that is used by architects, urban planners, developers, and even residents as a catch-all for the ineffable qualities of place through design or community. In attempting to make this determination, Jackson offers associations: "a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on a shared experience," (1994: 159). I have also

relied on the openness of the term “sense of place” when describing this research in everyday conversation.

Essential in Jackson’s writing and within this study is the idea that studies of time and place cannot be split in two or abstracted from one another without risk of distortion. He utilizes the work of Eviatar Zerubavel to argue that a sense of place is the reflection of a "sense of time"; a continual rhythm that allows for shared ritual and continuity. Zerubavel (1981) argues that "time seems to function as a segmenting principle. It helps segregate the private and public spheres of life from one another." Rather than architecture or art being the foundation of a shared sense of place, it is time that operates as the shared sentiment *creating* a place. Social belonging is thus established through a shared sense of time, which helps to explain why memories of urban renewal are so easily operational today in discussions of redevelopment among Black communities. It is also why, when residents come together to anticipate future changes to a shared area, it is their sense of time that formulates their reactions to any changes in the landscape, and why newcomers are so often at odds with long-term residents, unable to bridge the chasm of understanding between the two groups.

Returning to the concept of future-visioning, this perspective of temporal and spatial collaboration offers particular promise as those working in urban planning and urban studies operate almost entirely within the context of future-visioning. Planners organize community workshops and ask residents to envision what they see as the best version of their block, neighborhood, or city. Master plans are approved by City Councils, full of maps of how an area might best be zoned 40 years from the present. To plan is inherently to attempt predictions about the future in order to adequately address its challenges. Ann

Mische (2014) defines “sites of hyperprojectivity” as “sites of heightened, future-oriented public debate about possible futures,” (p. 463). She argues that focusing on these sites can be particularly useful in the study of future projections because actors are lifted out of their everyday lives and encouraged to reflect openly about the future.

During the course of this study I found projections about Detroit’s imminent and long-term futures to be ever present. This was the case not only in interviews prior to asking anything related to the future of the City or the neighborhood (or even explicitly when attempting to ask about the past) as well as in community conversations, city offices, and the dinner table. This constant infatuation with the future certainly has to do with the immediate and challenging realities of daily life faced by many Detroit residents. In circumstances of extreme need, residents look to potential futures to find strength and hope. “Detroit’s future” operates as a powerful meta-narrative for residents, such that in every conversation with long-term residents about the context of life on their block, the fall and imminent rise of their neighborhood and the city as a whole is brought up by the resident without exception.

Yet as this study has shown, the work of future-visioning is a practice that breeds distrust and alienation. The work of “future-visioning” —for a neighborhood, for a park, or for the re-use of a singular building— does tell us a great deal about the present, but it also requires an effort to divest this particular space of historical and emotional memory, in effect creating the “blank slate” that so many already characterize the entire city to be. To culturally displace is to empty a space in order to create room to build new. As a metaphor then, “future-visioning” and the analysis of this type of work for cultural sociologists is misleading. The only way to capture meaning-making through future

projections is to integrate those with collective memories through a reading of experiences in space.

Growth and Decline in Segregated Spaces

This dissertation began with a chapter under the same heading. Through the dissertation, the integration of time and space, reflected through race, has forced me to break down barriers as they relate to classification schemas of “growth” and “decline.” While useful starting points to organize and narrow the scope of an already large project, my findings suggest that growth and decline operate simultaneously and in relation to one another across temporal and spatial boundaries. I do not mean to diffuse the efficacy of these concepts, as they are essential (particularly in demographic and quantitative analyses of urban change) to even the *definition* of concepts like “the urban.” However, in this work, even as growth within the context of decline was the fundamental premise, these constructs had the effect of obstructing my analysis, similar to the ways that neighborhoods are taken as a static unit of analysis, which restricts the types of sociological conclusions one is able to draw. Chapters 2 and 3 are organized around the strategies of boundary work that relate to decline and the strategies of boundary work that relate to growth, respectively. Yet as the reader will recognize, both neighborhoods are rendered “growing” and “declining” simultaneously across the two chapters and over the timeline of this research.

Though gentrification studies often begin with the conditions of decline that “set the stage” for gentrification (Smith’s (1979) rent gap, for example), very few authors reflect on the complexity of that process beyond assumed growth after decline. Williams’ (1988)

analysis of “stalled gentrification” in 1980s Washington D.C. and Charles’ (2014) evaluation of the uneven redevelopment of “teardown” single family housing in the inner-ring suburbs of Chicago in the aftermath of the national foreclosure crisis provide two examples whereby the assumed growth paradigm is thrown into question. In Detroit, the conditions of the last several decades have allowed for a slowing of the effects of physical displacement with newcomer re-placement (though physical displacement due to foreclosures and housing insecurity remains one of the largest challenges Detroit faces). Cultural displacement in Detroit becomes more heightened for the very reason that growth and decline are happening concurrently. This creates a narrative space for the motifs of impossible or necessary gentrification detailed in Chapter 1, as well as the retention of a majority of long-term residents not being physically displaced but who still articulate a lost sense of place in the city as a whole. Whereas other studies of gentrification draw out the tensions between newcomers and long-term residents in moments of change, conducting this ethnography in contemporary Detroit forces a rigorous evaluation of cultural change in space over long expanses of time.

The findings of this research are not limited to conditions of extreme city population loss and financial bankruptcy. Scholars within urban studies so often talk about entire cities in relationship to their conditions of growth or decline. For example, the entire sub-field of “shrinking cities” (Martinez-Fernandez et.al. 2012) is premised on this division, though too often without consideration of regional contexts of growth they are situated within. Comparative studies hoping to challenge this growth/ decline binary might look to other cities with pockets of growth and larger areas of significant population decline. This research agenda would be most enlightening when considering a comparative

ethnographic approach, perhaps with researchers already engaged in this work in Germany's Ruhrgebiet (Reicher et.al. 2011; Sattler 2015) or legacy cities in the United States (Mallach and Brachman 2013).

Gentrification as the Homogenization of the City

Early on in my time in Detroit I met George N'Namdi, an older, Black gallery owner with a Ph.D. in psychology who was instrumental in rebranding the "Sugar Hill District" just east of Woodward (and considered part of Midtown). During the course of my research, George and I had multiple conversations about the concept of cultural displacement, something he calls "gentrification of the mind" and "psychological gentrification." Speaking to a local magazine (DeVito 2014), George articulated Detroit's problem as the following:

Detroit [has] this urban soul, and a lot of times it's like throwing out the baby with the wash, in a way. By losing that energy, you lose your sense of having input into their environment. Right now, Detroiters take a lot of responsibility in their environment. We don't want it to change where they begin to feel like it's not their city.

George's perspective of how redevelopment does and ought to happen is largely influenced by his own role in this process. As a small-scale developer and a long-term Black resident of the city, George occupies a somewhat liminal space between large real estate projects backed by significant capital and the residents who often fear redevelopment is only another mechanism for their marginalization. In the above quote, George's positionality is reflected in his fluctuation between talking about personal experiences of not feeling like one has a role in redevelopment, and his professional interest in not making those same mistakes as a developer.

George's concern that Detroit would lose its "urban soul" reflects an anxiety that sociologists and urban studies scholars call the homogenization of the city (Zukin 2010). In the economic shift from cities as sources of local production to cities as centers of cultural creativity and entertainment, the same strategies used to attract businesses, residents, and tourists to downtowns across the world are replicated again and again, meaning that although these cultural strategies are attempts to make specific places seem unique and therefore desirable, the effect en masse is just the opposite.

Yet while much of the literature concerned with this type of standardization engages with the built environment, the purpose of this study has been to demonstrate the potential to replicate standardization in regards to who makes decisions about land-use and how they understand the cultural dimensions of change. The very development projects generated to make cities like Detroit unique destinations can also have the effect of making them unaffordable for the people living in these areas. This includes "cultural producers"³⁴ themselves (Grodach and Silver 2013) and the long-term residents that newcomers regard as the conduits of authenticity that make a place desirable (Brown-Saracino 2010).

Although the precarious housing of so many Detroit residents has not been the emphasis of this text, the future of the city and how it redevelops will certainly be measured against the ability of those in positions of power to retain affordable housing for the city's most vulnerable residents, either in spaces of growth and gentrification or in

³⁴ Here, Grodach and Silver (2013) use the term "cultural producers" to refer to artists of different mediums that help generate difference across space. As a gallery owner, George N'Namdi also often means artists when he talks about fears of displacement, alongside the broader assumption that artists constitute the first "wave" in a gentrification process (Cameron and Coaffee 2005).

the continual crisis of foreclosures citywide. Of equal importance will be how we handle conditions of cultural displacement in contemporary life. This is something that I have tried to capture in the dissertation, in order to clarify the *conditions* of cultural displacement and *how* meanings vary so dramatically between newcomers like myself and long-term residents like George, or more often, those with far less access to education and financial resources than George has. Those conditions include diverse narratives about gentrification and redevelopment and the ways they shape opposing visions of the city. They change on the basis of political empowerment and distrust in the political process, in expansive neighborhood boundary definition in times of decline and contracting neighborhood boundary definition in times of growth. They also reflect tensions about what counts as authentic development or not based on different understandings of the city's history.

Analyzing meaning-making around redevelopment in Detroit is inseparable from the history of race in United States cities. Institutional racism in America negatively shapes residential mobility (Massey and Denton 1988), economic opportunity (Conley 2009), education (Lewis 2006), health outcomes (Brown 2003; Bartley et. al. 1998), stigma and discrimination (Wacquant [1993] 2008), and countless other impacts. This dissertation has shown that within Detroit's redevelopment context, being a long-term Black resident in the city shapes memories about what redevelopment means reflected in the context of experiences (lived or imaged) related to Urban Renewal. Race is reflected in definitions of community or neighborhood identity, as concentrations of Black residents displaced by Urban Renewal spread to all corners of the city that eventually became majority Black. Policies calling for "fiscal responsibility" and the replacement of elected officials with

emergency managers disproportionately applies to communities of color, further fracturing Detroiters' trust in political systems and the capacity for development that is in the best interests of Black Detroiters. Here I am not attempting to reduce a diversity of Black lived experiences in Detroit to a singular effect of cultural displacement. Instead, what I hope to share is that regardless of other socio-economic or cultural indicators, being a long-term Black resident in Detroit means your impressions of redevelopment will be refracted through this lens. This dissertation is therefore a response to a comment overheard between a developer and city official, where the developer complained that a community meeting had “devolved into being about race” and “had nothing to do with this site.”

Understanding the conditions of cultural displacement and how they operate in contemporary Detroit begs the question: what constitutes “the good life” (Amin 2006) for long-term Black residents in Detroit? Throughout this dissertation in different ways, this question emerged repeatedly, often in the form of what makes a space appear public, accessible, or welcoming. At the start of this project, the formulation of my research goals focused on meaning-making about redevelopment. This broad-based approach allowed for the articulation of the ways that Detroit's Black population has been left to feel that Detroit is “no longer theirs” as George N’Namdi would put it. As I see it, the dissertation is the necessary theoretical and empirical groundwork for a secondary study that would be able to make specific claims about what makes residents feel welcome or unwelcome across a multitude of different types of spaces. In future research, I would like to focus specifically on parks and open spaces with multiple different management types (public, public-private, private), cataloging their features and developing a rigorous

qualitative tool that helps better understand that question as it relates to the concept of cultural displacement.

The Role of the Urban Planner

In exploring the themes of this dissertation while also working for various City of Detroit departments, I have been able to talk through the findings of my research with others who are actively involved in the implementation of urban planning and policy at the municipal level. The primary policy implication of this work is that it serves as a text of translation, rendering responses to neighborhood change *legible* for those that make attempts to steward such change. In the vein of Clifford Geertz (1973), cultural responses to redevelopment work serve as “symbolic templates” through which people make their worlds cognitively and emotionally meaningful.

Though planners may employ the phrase “planning fatigue” frequently, they often interpret fatigue as a reason they do not see as many residents at community meetings as they might like, and do not necessarily internalize this concept from perspectives other than their own. Of primary importance to planning practice is the recognition of the role of urban planners and city officials as access points to political power. For residents who have been otherwise disenfranchised by emergency financial management law and experience extreme distrust in the political process as Chapter 1 details, bureaucratic officials are conduits for how neighborhood change happens. As such, they have the potential to meaningfully diffuse the effects of *cultural* displacement while also creating policies to ensure housing affordability and plan for growth without *physical* displacement.

The role of the city official in redevelopment necessarily includes fundraising public and private dollars for the improvement of public goods across the entire city. Too often, planning work is considered a starting point that will inspire fundraising efforts. Yet as part of that process, residents see renderings of their neighborhood changed, that inspires both fear about cultural displacement and anticipated results that may never come to fruition. The first way to avoid planning fatigue and tension over change is to not start a planning process until a certain amount of funding is already dedicated to the area in question.

Close attention should be paid to the demographic of residents participating in community engagement and how long they have lived in the area. This may require creative outreach solutions to garner participation from a broader range of residents. For residents that have gone through multiple planning processes, a small amount of research and a shift in how planning history is discussed can go a long way. Standard planning practice recommends a close reading of previous urban planning efforts as part of the preparation for any project. In community meetings, planners often have a slide with images of other community plans carried out by non-profits or local CDCs. However, the City's own planning efforts are rarely mentioned as part of that presentation. This is often because they come from different mayoral administrations. For long-term Detroiters, all planning efforts (no matter the context, timeline, or administrator) are regarded as part of the same process. For planners, contemporary landscapes in Detroit have changed so dramatically that it seems irrelevant to mention the work of multiple generations past. But for residents who participated in those efforts, an explanation of how other plans relate to the one currently underway, as well as an explanation of why previous plans were or were

not implemented and how, helps to diffuse this fatigue. While time intensive at first, creating documentation that thinks about these plans holistically and historically is a critical effort in creating institutional memory within planning departments who often have a faster turnover rate than the residents that participate in them. This also helps new city officials develop a sense of context for previous generations of work, rather than rendering prior plans as part of the problem that they arrived to “solve.”

Relatedly, planners must not engage in future visioning work without complementary memory work (Olick 1999). The integration of memory with future-visioning work in the space of these planning studies can aid in the reestablishment of institutional trust and creating a shared sense of civic engagement at the local scale, outside of the continued disenfranchisement carried out through state emergency financial management laws. Questions that prompt a planning study might include, “what do you remember about this space in the past?” “What are the most significant institutions that you use in this area?” and “What do you consider the boundaries of this area?” As Chapters 2 and 3 have demonstrated, boundaries are powerful. The ways that planners practice boundary work can be contested and often misunderstood. Certainly, some limits must be imposed on physical space at the outset of a planning study as a starting point and a way to narrow focus. However, often as part of this process specific nodes and smaller or larger boundaries emerge in relation to resident input. These boundaries have real effects for resident empowerment, particularly given that the advisory councils detailed earlier in this chapter as part of the Community Benefits Ordinance are developed based on generalized conceptions of what counts as the “impact area” for a redevelopment. Given the great sensitivity of neighborhood boundaries and naming practices, any community

engagement effort should begin with an explanation of the purpose of the boundaries for this study and why certain names were used and lines drawn; infusing any visions of the future with memories of this space.

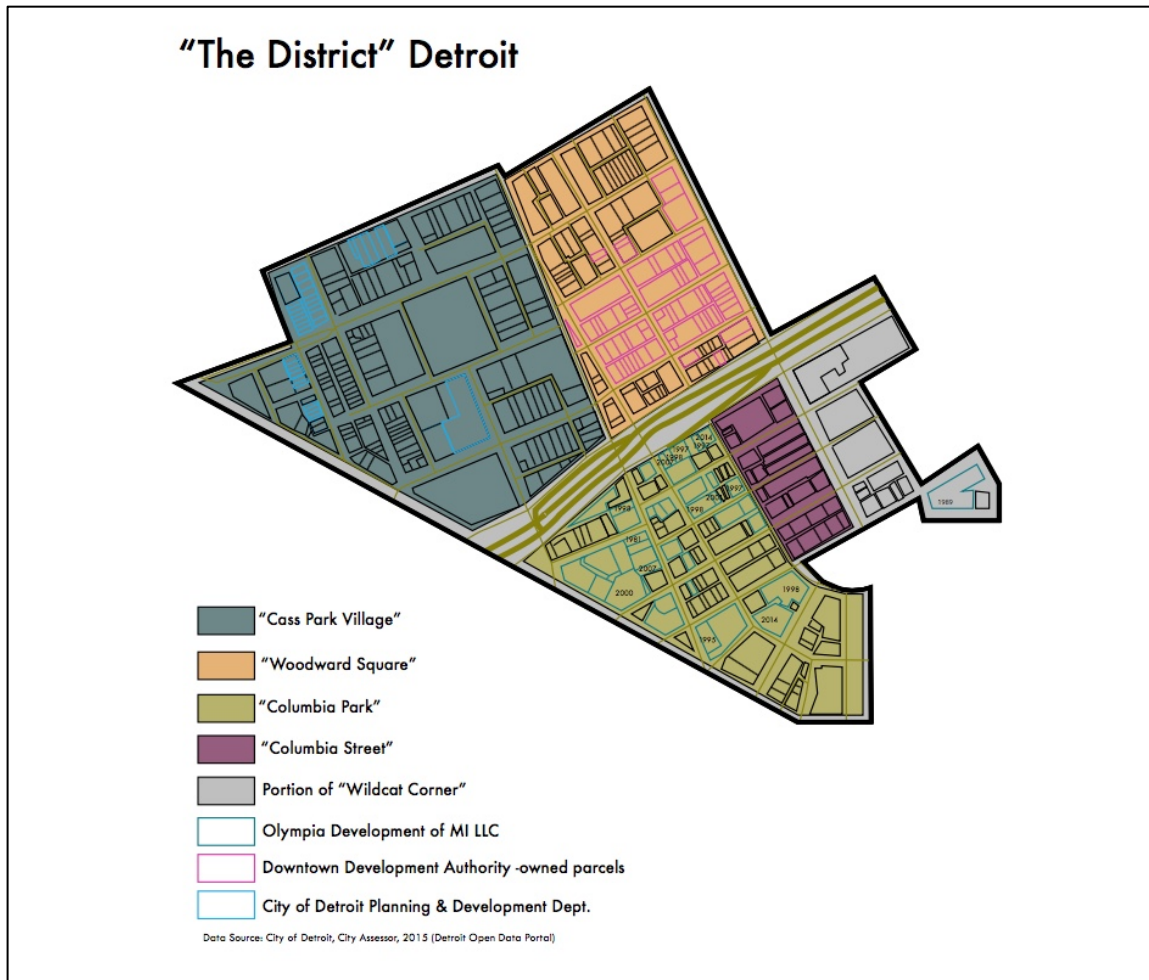


Figure 4.1 "The District" Detroit (Source: Author).

This map shows in different colors the 5 imagined neighborhoods of The District (taken from a map at thedistrictdetroit.com) and Assessors Data from Wayne County that details any available parcel acquisition dates within this area.

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APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO MEDIA ANALYSIS IN CHAPTER 1

In Chapter 1, I analyzed three motifs emergent in contemporary Detroit discourse on gentrification. These were developed through analysis of multiple types of public narratives, including resident interviews, participant observation from panels and other public conversations, academic opinions, and other sources. Media accounts of gentrification provided a strong foundation for this analysis as well, as understanding the narrative frameworks of local media and resident responses to these frameworks set the stage for broader picture of understanding cultural displacement in Detroit. I analyzed newspaper articles, magazines, and online news and editorial formats, but also includes the feedback and commentary channels for these sources as well as the voices of academics and cultural critics to gain broader insight into how Detroit residents were understanding gentrification as well as how they were responding to these various representations. Looking at all newspaper articles published between 2000 and 2013 that mention “gentrification,” I examined eight major Detroit newspapers or online magazines: the Detroit Free Press, the Detroit News, the Detroit Metro Times, Crain's Detroit Business, MLive, Model D Magazine, the Motor City Muckracker, and Huffinton Post Detroit. This search ultimately yielded 168 distinct pieces for analysis, which I then coded for emergent patterns in discourse. The year 2000 was chosen as a starting point

for this time frame because such significant changes in the city's demographics can be charted along the same timeline using census data. Between 2000 and 2010, Detroit lost a full quarter of the remaining population (Census 2000, 2010). In 2007, Detroit had the highest rate of home foreclosures nationwide (Rooney 2008). Between 2011 and 2015, the Wayne County Treasurer foreclosed on 1 in 4 properties due to the nonpayment of taxes (Atuahene and Hodge 2016). Yet at the same time, small pockets across the city were seeing gains in population (see areas of blue in Figure 2.10). Given the drastic nature of Detroit's population decline during this time, the emphasis on gentrification in the media is itself notable. Yet as early as 2009, American Community Survey results were showing a return of young, White adults without children back to the city (Data Driven Detroit 2009). The intent of selecting articles in this way was to get a comprehensive and representative sample of how gentrification has been written about in Detroit across those thirteen years, not a random generalizable sample. For this reason, I selected representative quotes to demonstrate ideas present in multiple articles, rather than quantifying the presence of specific words for each motif. By focusing on gentrification and not broader terms like "redevelopment," this analysis may have excluded more positive representations of gentrification.

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

I will start by asking, “Do you mind if I record our conversation today?” so that I can have on record how I am explaining my project any myself with each interview. Will then proceed to explain that we will be starting with a few basic questions about them and then we will chat about the area that they live in. I call this a semi-structured interview because I will adapt to the circumstances of the interview setting (the naming of specific streets if they bring them up, how they call their area, etc.) In the guide I often use the term neighborhood but will change this according to how residents speak about and name the space.

Basic Information About the Respondent

Name:

Age:

What race or ethnicity would you describe yourself as?

Do you currently have an occupation? If so, what is it? What is your work schedule like?

Do you own your home or rent?

--

How long have you been living in Detroit?

If you are not from the area originally, tell me about when you moved here...

What do you call this area of town?

Have you always called it this? Have you ever heard others refer to it by a different name?

Are you involved in any local organizations?

What are your interactions like with local neighborhood groups, development organizations, and local politicians?

How often do you interact with local business owners?

How do you feel the rest of the city perceives this area? Why? Has this changed?

Do you feel that the rest of the city looks out for this neighborhood or not really?

About the Respondent's Block/ Neighborhood/ Area:

- [If not a lifetime resident of the neighborhood] When did you first move to this particular area?
- People choose to live in certain places for a variety of reasons. How did you decide to move here?
- What other reasons were important in your decision to move here?
- When you moved here did you have a close group of friends or family that also lived here?
- What kind of people lived in your neighborhood at that time?
- Have you had friends or family move out of the neighborhood (or out of the city) during this time? Where did they go? What were their reasons for leaving? How did this affect your relationship with them if at all?
- Have you ever considered leaving? What has made you stay?
- What do you remember liking most about your neighborhood at that time?
- Tell me about a time that you felt very at home in your neighborhood...
- What were the most challenging things about living in this neighborhood at that time?
- Tell me about a time when you didn't feel at home in your neighborhood, or when you may have considered moving...
- Which of the buildings on this block have changed?
- Which buildings on this block have remained the same?
- Walk me through a day in your life when you first moved to this neighborhood. What was your schedule, who did you see, did you drive to get places, etc.
- What were some of the places outside of your home and work that you spent time when you first moved here?

About the Respondent's Experience of their Block/ Neighborhood/ Area Now

Let's do the same exercise again, where you walk me through a day in your life now.

- What is your schedule like?
- Who do you see on an average day?
- Do you drive or walk or take the bus?
- Are there any places you avoid, for safety or another reason?
- Are there any places you make a point to visit?
- What are some of your favorite things about this neighborhood now?
- What are some of your least favorite things about this neighborhood now?
- What kinds of people live in your neighborhood now?
- Do people in the neighborhood look out for one another? If it depends, what does it depend on?
- (If they talk about new people moving in) What are the people like that have moved into the neighborhood more recently?
- How frequently would you say you interact with new residents in the neighborhood? In what ways are they similar? Different?
- If you were to give me a walking tour of your neighborhood, what would its boundaries be?

- What would be the landmarks that you would be sure to point out in your tour of the neighborhood?
- How have you noticed this neighborhood changing recently in your neighborhood?
- What about in the past ten years?
- If so, what do these changes look like? Are they mainly changes to the buildings? To the people living here?
- Which changes are you happy about?
- Which changes are you not happy about?
- Would you say that any of these changes (good or bad) have changed your daily routines and habits in the neighborhood?
- If you could, would you choose to live in this neighborhood for many more years? GRANNIS
- When you think about the values most important to you, would you say that your neighbors share these same values? GRANNIS
- On a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 being virtually identical and 0 being completely different, how much are your neighbors in your current neighborhood like you? GRANNIS
- How would you characterize the neighborhoods that surround yours? (Emphasize Midtown or the North End depending on where the interviewee is from but don't choose those neighborhood names for them)
- How do you feel about your neighborhood in comparison to suburban neighborhoods right outside of Detroit? What seems better? What seems worse?

** If at the end they still have yet to mention gentrification or neighborhood change, I may say something to the effect of “Some people talk a lot about the ways the neighborhood has changed recently. Do you notice that? How do you feel about that? Etc.

After the interview and cognitive-mapping exercise are both finished I will ask if they know of anyone else that might like to speak with me and provide contact information for them to share on a flyer.

APPENDIX C: COGNITIVE MAPPING EXERCISE GUIDE

We have spent a lot of time talking about your experience in this particular area. Now I'd like to ask you to draw a picture for me of the area you live in. There is no right or wrong way to draw a map of your neighborhood. There is also no time limit. Take your time, and feel free to ask me questions along the way. Once you are done with your map, I will ask you to explain the map to me.

If I am prodded with the question of “What kind of things “I will first say whatever they wish to include, but if they are frustrated I will help nudge with the following and include that I nudged in my notes: what you would call the boundaries or limits of your neighborhood, what other parts of town that border yours, what streets feel particularly important to you, what buildings, parks, shops, and other places you spend time, and where you friends and/or family live.

Questions I may ask during the map explanation follow-up:

- Tell me about what you have drawn. (Point to various portions of the map and ask about them).
- What do you consider the heart of your area?
- If I had asked you to draw this map for me in the year 2000, what would it have looked like?
 - o What would be different?
 - o What would be the same?
- What are the spaces in this map that you feel most comfortable?
- Where do you feel safe?
Where do you feel unsafe?
- Where do you most like to spend time outside of your home?
- What is it about this place that makes you want to spend time there?
- What would you change if you could about your neighborhood?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add about this map that we haven't talked about yet?