

**THE GATING OF AMERICA: THE POLITICAL AND
SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF GATED COMMUNITIES
ON THE BODY POLITIC**

by

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Cecilia E. Dawkins, for her support,
understanding and belief in me.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

On Detroit's southeast side is a gated community containing brightly painted homes and luxury condominiums nestled in a tree-lined street adjacent to a large park. I have driven past this neighborhood many times in the past but never have actually walked through it. So one day I pulled the car over and went for a stroll. As I approached the gatehouse, I noticed it was unattended and the gate was locked in the "up" position. I continued on my walk and strolled onto the grounds. It was early afternoon on a crisp autumn day. The neighborhood was surprisingly quiet as rush hour was only just beginning. As I strolled, I did not pass or observe a single person inside, which seemed odd even for an early weekday afternoon. The only sound was the wind off the lake lapping my ears and my eyes were blinded as the sun reflected off the water. The community was clearly upper-middle class, with docks for small motorized watercraft and polished wooden sail boats at the marina adjacent to the complex. There was a small park inside and several paths for pedestrians and cyclists. I decided to follow one of these walking paths around the complex. Despite no passersby, I could not shake the feeling that I was being watched.

Following the sidewalk to its end, I found myself heading towards the exit. Walking purposefully yet casually toward the gate, the female guard yelled out "Hey you, how did you get in here?" I turned, genuinely surprised and not sure whom she was addressing. The look of confusion must have registered on my face as she exclaimed, "Didn't you see the sign on the gatehouse that says 'the guard will be right back'?" I responded quite honestly that I did not see the sign and stated that I was just out for a walk. The guard frowned and said she would

call the police if I did not leave the premises immediately. Again, I stated that I was just going for a walk and that the gate was up and I was not sure what the problem was. The guard said this was private property and no one was allowed inside without prior authorization or the expressed permission from a current resident. As I left the property, she said if she ever saw me again near the property she would not hesitate to call the police. Turning the corner I looked back and observed the guard watching me leave as she picked up her phone to dial.

As I walked away from the gatehouse, I took a quick inventory of both the preceding events as well as my own feelings towards what had just happened. I felt like an outsider. The look the guard gave me was hostile and the tone of her voice instantly put me on the defensive. It was sharp, accusatory and unpleasant. She spoke to me as if I had stolen something. Not only am I not allowed to walk in this neighborhood ever again, but if she sees me in the future, she will have me arrested. I could not help wondering what these types of developments do to a community. Have others had similar experiences as the one I just had? What are some of the consequences these experiences may have on residents and the broader community in social and political terms? I decided to find out.

Over the next several days I decided to “soak and poke” – to borrow a phrase coined by Richard Fenno (1986) – outside some local gated communities. This mostly involves participant observation, casually structured interviews and simply being there to observe and record a phenomenon as it happens. I returned to the park where earlier that week I was escorted from a nearby gated community. While walking in the park, I spoke more about this with an older African American man (who appeared to be in his late 60s) and his daughter.

Both were native Detroiters and knew of the gated community I was escorted out of earlier. When asked about the gated community in particular – which could be seen from the park – he shrugged his shoulders and said “since it’s private property they can do whatever they like, but it’s too bad they feel they need the gate in order to live here.” His daughter chimed in saying, “it’s about safety especially in this area.” However, when I asked them if this was a safe area, both agreed nodding and said the area was “pretty safe.” When I asked why then is the gate needed, the daughter quipped, “I guess you can never be *too* safe.”

Leaving the park, I ran into a Caucasian male wearing a collegiate sweater, jogging with his girlfriend and their black Labrador retriever. Both appeared to be in their late twenties and college educated. They both live not too far from the park. When asked about the gated communities near the park, they both said they were disappointed that they are gated. The man remembers when the property was an open field and playing and walking there as a child. “It used to be forest, and I remember climbing up that hill,” the man reminisced as he pointed to a small hill behind the gate. Both said they feel indifferent about the gate at face value, but worry about the message it sends to those living outside the gate. The woman asked, “Who are they trying to gate out? This area is already pretty safe.” When I asked how they would feel if someone built a gated community across the street from their home, they both said they would find that personally offensive. “What’s wrong with my neighborhood that you need to gate?” the woman asked. The man nodded, adding, “It would definitely play with my psyche. Are people trying to get away from me? It would make me feel pissed if that happened.” When I asked how, if at all, these gated developments affect them, the woman said that she tried to ride her bike through the gated community once and was

stopped at the gate. The guard said she was “not authorized to ride her bike here.” She had to turn around (surprised, annoyed and disappointed). She felt bad about not being able to explore the community now that it was gated. Her boyfriend never tried to enter, but he said he was concerned about the loss of public space (including green space) that has been displaced by these gated developments.

An older African American woman waiting for the bus said she found gated communities alienating to people like her who live outside of them. “They signal to the rest of the community the neighborhood is unsafe.” She said she was not happy to see so many gates. “Look around,” she gestured, “the church is gated, the park is partially gated, most of the stores have bars on the windows and doors. This is the way things are here.” I asked her if the gates become invisible after awhile since they are so common. “No,” she said. “You still see them.”

As I spoke with residents later on that evening and over the following days, several themes emerged. The residents I spoke to were disappointed gated communities are being built in their neighborhood. Most said they were saddened that others felt the gates were needed in the first place. Residents said they understood the urge to gate yet felt powerless to stop their development or popularity. Residents said the gates did not really address the true problem: crime and the need for crime prevention. By building the gate, the problems are pushed back onto the larger community without actually resolving them. As a result, some said gated communities were counterproductive. Almost all those interviewed took great offense to having a gated community built across the street from them. In fact, several of my informants got visibly upset and angry at the thought, which suggests that this issue resonates with people on a personal level.

Lastly, residents outside the gate lament the loss of public space that was once part of their community and that is now privatized. Space – that was formerly a part of their community – is now restricted, where one cannot physically exist without the express permission of another. This is a new reality many are disappointed to see in their neighborhood.

These preliminary findings suggest a number of questions that remain unanswered: What are the perceived long term effects gated communities have on the broader community? What does the gate *mean* to those outside the gate? Do all gates have the same meaning? Does the meaning of the gate vary by race and ethnicity? Are gated communities – and those who choose to live within them – welcomed or resented? I believe these questions need to be asked and their effects on the broader community measured and evaluated in a systematic, rigorous way. This dissertation seeks to do just that.

Gated communities are quickly becoming the fastest growing housing development in the United States. Currently over 7 million people live behind a mechanical gate or private security guard (American Housing Survey, 2001). From the early 1980s to the present, the number of gated communities has grown from five thousand to over twenty thousand (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). In many ways, gated communities have become a mainstream option for the middle class. This trend has tremendous political, social and economic implications for residents, communities and public policy more broadly. There is growing concern that gated communities can fragment a city, creating small fort-like enclaves that are beginning to wield tremendous power pursuing increasingly narrowed self-interests (Flusty, 1994; Le Goix, 2003; Low, 2003). Some gated communities are petitioning to become separate governmental entities. Others

wish to enjoy tax-free status for public services they replicate, while others wish to enjoy the benefits of city services while demanding their own space to be privatized and separated from the rest of the population.

Privatizing space – especially entire communities with the erection of a wall or gate – may have negative effects on the broader community. This could lead to a net loss for citizens living outside the gate who are often less advantaged. Increasingly, those *most* able to make a positive change in the broader community are *least* likely to do so with the erection of a gate. Robert Reich (1991) called this the “secession of the successful” where affluent members of the community are allowed to secede from the larger community to pursue narrowed interests. Worse, these types of developments may be exclusionary and further aggravate existing racial and economic housing segregation patterns eroding the social fabric of diversity and interaction that is essential to a democratic society (Vesselinov, Cazessus and Falk, 2007). The principle of one voice, one vote is at the heart of our American democracy. However, increased racial segregation of American cities threatens that ideal. Previous research has shown that increasingly homogenous neighborhoods reduce and narrow political participation (Oliver, 1999). Therefore, the increased popularity of exclusive, homogenous gated communities presents a potentially serious problem.

This dissertation explores the effects of gated communities on those living *outside* the gate – the broader community – in political and social terms. Surprisingly there has been relatively little scholarly debate that identifies and measures the *consequences* these types of developments may have on the *broader* community. To the extent that there has been any scholarly discussion at all, the analysis has been focused on those living *inside* the gates. While these gated

developments are growing mostly unchecked and unchallenged, the political and social implications of them on residents outside the gate remain uncharted. This dissertation is the first study to explicitly explore the political and social consequences of gated developments upon residents *outside* the gate in communities exercising the gating option.

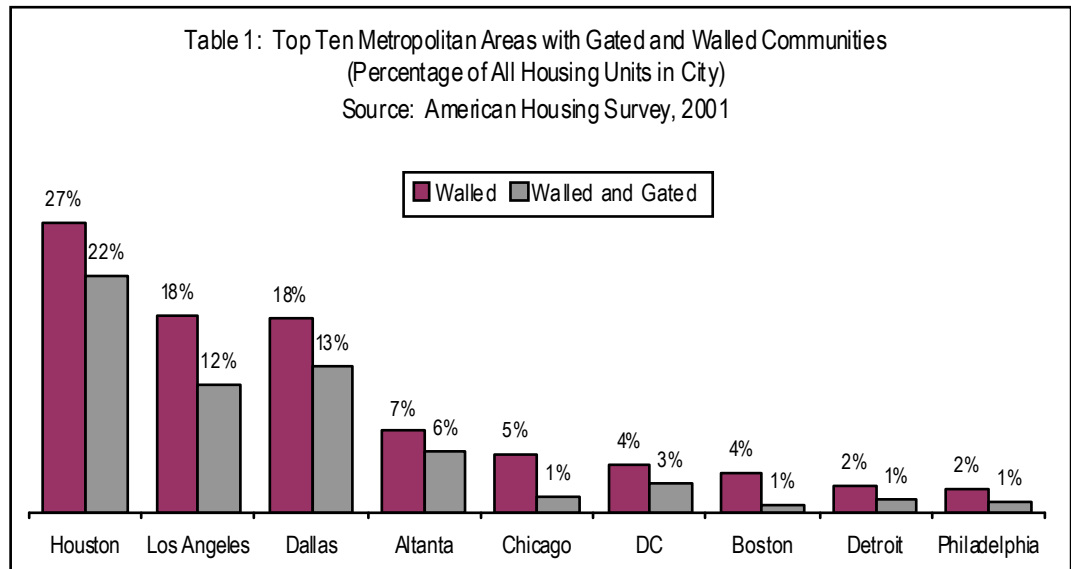
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The state of empirical evidence of the effects of gated communities is poor. The majority of studies are theory based with reasoning from a handful of qualitative and a few descriptive quantitative research studies that have explored residents that live *behind* the gate; that is, those living inside a gated community (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Davis, 1990, 1992; Higley 1995; Lang and Danielson, 1997; Low, 1997). However, despite numerous theories about the potential negative consequences, the impact of gated communities on the *broader* community remains unknown and untested. The following is the state of the literature.

According to the latest survey data, 5.9% of all housing units (7 million households) report living in a community that is surrounded by a wall or a fence (American Housing Survey, 2001). A walled community is typically defined in the literature as a community that is enclosed by three or more sides. A gated community typically is walled but also has limited access from either a manned or unmanned gate. Of these walled communities, nearly 60% are also gated (Sanchez, Lang, Dhavale, 2005). The number of gated communities varies by region. On the West coast, 11% of all housing units are walled compared to 6.8% in the South, 3.1% in the Northeast and 2.1% in the Midwest. These developments are more prevalent in new construction and therefore are more concentrated in regions experiencing new growth – the west and the south. As shown in Table 1, gated communities are growing fastest in specific metropolitan areas.

Table 1: Top Ten Metropolitan Areas with Gated and Walled Communities



Major cities in the South and West have seen the largest growth of gated communities. Currently nearly three in ten (27%) of all housing units in Houston are walled and over two in ten (22%) are gated. Similar trends can be found in Los Angeles, Dallas and Atlanta. It is interesting to note that even traditional Midwestern and Northeastern cities are seeing their housing landscape change. It should be noted that gated communities are not monolithic nor are the residents who occupy them.

Sanchez, Lang and Dhavale (2005) found renters to be two and a half times more likely to live in walled or fenced communities and are three times more likely to have controlled access than homeowners. They also found demographic differences by housing tenure. Owners who lived in gated communities were more likely to be White, have higher incomes and be older. They concluded that renters living in gated communities “fort up” for security while many homeowners did so for other reasons like status, prestige and exclusion. While renters are increasingly likely to live in gated and walled

communities, this should not detract from the growing trend of the affluent seceding from the broader public community.

In the first, and largest, study conducted on gated communities in America, Edward Blakely and Mary Snyder (1997) identified three distinct types of gated communities: lifestyle, prestige and security zone. Lifestyle communities are often gated and attract the “new leisure class” mostly made up of retirees and tend to include golf facilities and other activities centered on leisure pursuits. Next, there are prestige communities, which tend to emphasize exclusion and tend to be upper-middle class. Then lastly, are security zone communities, which are “enclaves of fear.” These three types are located both in the nation’s urban centers and in suburbia. They made two overarching claims: 1) gated communities limit social contact and interaction and; 2) gated communities privatize space and government. They theorized that this loss of contact leads to the “narrowing of the bonds of mutual responsibility and the social contract” (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).

However, Blakely and Snyder’s (1997) major contributions to the study of gated communities were the debunking of three major myths floating in the industry: 1) the correlation of gated communities and higher resale values; 2) the correlation between gated communities and lower crime rates and; 3) the correlation between gated communities and community cohesion. The myth about higher resale values was debunked by Blakely and Snyder’s (1997) data. Except for one development, they found that gated communities did not hold higher resale values than their non-gated counterparts, and in some cases even had a slight price disadvantage. The myth about less crime was also shaken by preliminary data that suggested gated communities were not any safer than

similar communities without gates. And there was the unsatisfactory trade off of restricted emergency access, which is a cost that is often not recognized. The third misconception clarified is that life behind the gates creates a “close-knit” community, which is unsupported (see Low, 2001).

If gates are not effective in lowering crime, providing higher resale values, or creating a close knit community, why are people choosing to live behind the gate and what are the consequences of this choice? This question is especially urgent given the role race has played in housing segregation (Danielson, 1976; Jackson, 1985; Massey & Denton, 1993).

Robert Lang and Karen Danielson (1997) – using reasoned theory – claimed that people choose to live behind the gate because they are thought to reduce risk from crime and low resale values despite the fact these beliefs are unfounded. Often these misperceptions are reinforced by developers and real estate agents of gated developments for reasons of self-interest. Residents of gated communities also may be seeking refuge from the demands of city life. According to Lang and Danielson (1997), “Gated communities offer residents the perception of a safe haven from the new, often chaotic metropolis.” Such perceived safety can come at a high cost to society, however, by creating and reinforcing “inward-focusing community culture where tension between the individual and society tilt towards self-interest” (Lang and Danielson, 1997). Based upon existing theories they conclude the following: 1) gated communities may promote civic engagement within gated communities at the expense of participation in the larger community; 2) gated communities promote excessive hyper-regulation within common interest developments but are resistant to state and national government regulation on their communities and lastly; 3) gated

communities promote integration *and* segregation by potentially slowing down the white flight to suburbia in urban areas; however in the suburbs these developments further segregate communities by race and social class.

Setha Low (2003) explored the role that fear plays in the attraction of the gated community. Using a series of over 100 interviews with residents in seven gated communities in three cities (i.e., New York, San Antonio and Mexico City) she found that fear is the most common tie that binds residents of gated communities together even though gated communities are no safer than similar communities without the gate (Low, 2001). According to Low (2003), the gated community movement has a long architectural history, going back to the boundary wall. Historically, this has resulted in the creation of a strong internal community and identity formation. However, Low found that residents do not say their interactions with their neighbors are more friendly or intimate than in communities they have lived without the gate. She noted that “living in a gated community represents a new version of the middle class dream precisely because it temporarily suppresses and masks, even denies and fuses, the inherent anxieties and conflicting social values of modern and suburban life.” Of course, exclusive suburbs have always existed with their covenants, contracts and deed restrictions (see Danielson, 1976; Higley, 1995). What is troubling to Low is that, unlike covenants of the past, gated communities are rarely challenged for being discriminatory and are now infiltrating the middle class. Low compares the design of gated communities to that of a living virus that “infects” each succeeding generation with the myths, fear, misperceptions, stereotypes and prejudices of the preceding generation. To Low, architecture and the design of space has serious consequences to the life of communities and across generations.

According to Steven Flusty (1994), architecture has a powerful influence on residents and communities to create and reinforce fear. Flusty offered a causal theory to explain the rise of gated communities: paranoia about crime. He contended that the threat of crime (real or imagined) has permanently affected the very fabric of the architecture of our nation's communities. Flusty coined the term "urban paranoia" which he defined as perceptions of threat and crime that are not justified by the reality of the real incidence of crime. According to the most recent National Crime Survey on the nation's crime statistics, there is a twenty year low for crime against United States households and residents yet the perceptions of threat have increased sharply.

Flusty argued that this paranoia and hypersensitivity to threat have resulted in architecture that is creating less open public spaces and these changes have consequences for community life. The results are four new types of spatial design reflected in our communities: "slippery" space (i.e., space that cannot be reached, due to contorted, protracted or missing paths of approach), "prickly" space (i.e., space that cannot be comfortably occupied), "jittery" space (i.e., space that cannot be utilized unobserved due to active patrol or monitoring by security cameras) and "crusty" space (i.e., space that cannot be accessed due to obstructions such as walls, gates and check points). Even if the actual threat of crime is only perceived, the effect of this perception is very real and is now influencing the architectural design of our communities and neighborhoods with seemingly little concern for possible negative externalities. The linkage of architecture and crime however, is not new.

Oscar Newman (1972) stressed the important link architecture has in deterring crime. He underscored the need for communities to be restructured so

that it is the community itself that deters crime not an outside entity like the policy of a private security firm or a gate. Newman offered his defensible space thesis, which is “a model for residential environments which inhibit crime by creating the physical expression of social fabric that defends itself.” This is the opposite of the trends Flusty (1994) observed. Central to Newman’s model is the role of the entire community in creating an environment where crime is increasingly difficult to commit. According to Newman (1972), “means must be found for bringing neighbors together, if only for the limited purpose of ensuring survival of their collective milieu.” Architecture, he continued, has the power for good or evil: “Architecture is not just a matter of style, image and comfort... Architecture can create encounter and prevent it.”

Newman warned against designs that withdraw from the larger community and suggests they are self-defeating in the protection against crime. According to Newman, crime prevention must be a community effort:

Designers can position units, windows, and entries and prescribe paths of movement and areas so as to provide inhabitants with continuous natural surveillance of the street and project grounds.... Moreover, the building complex and the residents are integrated into the community. The complex protects the street as well as itself. The street life helps, in turn, to protect the complex. Instead of being an act of withdrawal, this design reinforces residents in their expression of concern for their own domain and for the streets and activity which it is tied. In this way, residents do not achieve internal security at the expense of the surrounding area, but by insuring that the surrounding area is equally secure (Newman 1972, p. 15).

Sally Merry (1993) used historical analysis to argue that most Americans in the middle class are experiencing a tension between their public and private lives: “Americans have schizophrenic views of separation and community... They seem to want the intimacy of community along with the freedom of

privacy” (p. 71). Merry found that “[many] neighborhoods marked by patterns of staying away, of building fences, of cutting off relationships and moving out in response to problems and conflicts. Good fences make good neighborhoods here because they diminish the opportunity for conflict.” However, unlike Newman’s (1972) plea for community integration to combat crime, many of these communities are withdrawing from the larger community, hoping to find a refuge.

Sidney Brower (1996) conducted a study of towns and suburban residential environments to understand what makes a “good” neighborhood from the residents’ perspectives. He used a series of neighborhood surveys to detail the types of communities residents say they prefer to live in. When asked about the components of a good neighborhood he found three key elements: ambience, engagement and reputation. According to residents, ambience is the number one characteristic of good neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that are well kept and maintained are paramount. Second to this is the importance of engagement which residents define as feeling safe and secure. This also includes friendly neighbors, a place where they can meet new people easily, a place where people know your name and a place where personal relationships are long lasting and personal. Lastly, the reputation of the community or neighborhood is critical. This includes a place that is desirable to live, a place where all residents have a similar lifestyle and a place that is protected from the larger problems of society and is a good place to raise children.

John Freie (1998) argued that gated communities are exploiting American’s desires for community connectedness while only providing empty promises. According to Freie, a genuine community is built by a web of relationships that people form as they develop connections. These connections

build trust and are the basis for mutual respect and community and common purpose. All of this, claimed Freie, is contingent on a shared space in which formal and informal social interaction can take place. Increasingly, however, community has become a commodity to be marketed and sold, while only providing the illusion of genuine community interaction, so long as you pay the admission price (Freie, 1998). The search for community has paradoxically created the opposite (see Bickford, 2000).

Mike Davis (1992) showcased the transformation of Los Angeles into what he calls a “Fortress City.” He traced the changes in the City of Angels to the quest for security. The result has been further residential segregation and “an unprecedented tendency to merge urban design, architecture, and the police apparatus into a single, comprehensive security effort” (Davis, 1992). The negative externalities are multiple: decreased usable public space, the creation of fortress-like enclaves and inhospitable street environments for all citizens.

Examining the current state of research as a whole, one is struck by three broad themes. First, the voices of those living outside the gate are largely absent in the scholarly literature. Second, no one has explored or attempted to measure the effects of gated developments on the *broader* community in social or political terms. Third, we know little about how communities are dealing with gated developments at the local level, how decisions are made and whose interests – if any – prevail systematically.

To begin to understand – and ultimately measure – the impact of gated developments on the broader community in social and political terms, one must first include the voices of those living *outside* of the gate. However, as noted above, a careful review of the existing literature finds this group surprisingly

absent in the scholarly discourse. The focus stubbornly remains on those choosing to live behind the gate, while the voices of those being “gated out” are generally not included in the discussion. I assert that these voices are key to understanding the meaning of the gate and are a pre-requisite to any efforts to measure the impact of gated developments on the broader community. This dissertation begins to fill this gap in the scholarly research.

CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

This dissertation explores the social and political consequences resulting from communities exercising the gating option. For purposes of this study, a gated community is defined as a group of houses that have limited access points that are controlled by gates, either manned or unmanned. Gated communities typically are walled off from adjacent streets thereby creating its own separate community of houses, streets, parks and boulevards. This research examined what the gating option does to communities in terms of changes in political participation, civic engagement and social interaction as *perceived by* residents who live in neighborhoods *nearby* gated communities.

This is an important distinction. Instead of focusing on the characteristics of those choosing to live behind a gate, the focus is on the *consequences* of having gated developments on the broader community in social and political terms. Now that gated communities have become a mainstream option for the middle-class it is even more important to understand and measure the impact of this housing type on the *broader* community; something that has been largely ignored until now.

Ideally, one would establish a causal relationship between the erection of the gate and actual changes in political participation, civic engagement and social interaction. However, due to the poor state of existing data on gated communities, this is not possible at the census block, tract, county or state level.¹ Furthermore, in this preliminary stage of the research process, a quantitative

¹ The American Housing Survey (AHS) from the U.S. Census is the largest dataset with geo-coded housing data at the national level. However since the AHS uses a national sample, estimates quickly break down at the state, county, tract and block levels. I argue any negative effects stemming from the gate would occur at the local level and would not be detected using existing datasets.

analysis is both premature and ill advised. We need to understand the range of opinions and experiences surrounding this issue before attempting to quantify it in a meaningful way. Therefore, I argue what is needed is a methodology that can capture the full range of opinion and consequences stemming from communities *exercising* the gating option in social and political terms. This dissertation sought to do just that.

Based on what we know from the current literature, I expected to find in communities with high concentrations of gated developments that residents living outside the gate will perceive those living within the gated community to have reduced – and narrowed – political participation and social interaction. I also expected to find evidence that showed gated communities divide communities. Also, based on my initial pilot study in Detroit, I expected to find evidence of two things: 1) resentment towards the gate and those living behind it from residents living outside gated communities and 2) perceptions that the use – and growth – of gated communities is structurally based and favors the private interests of those wanting to gate over the collective interests of ordinary citizens outside the gate.

This dissertation explores the negative externalities of gated communities upon the *broader* community *as perceived by* individuals living *outside* the gate. I do not have data on the political participation, civic engagement or social interaction of those living within gated communities.² Even so, the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of persons residing in proximity to gated communities, as captured and examined in this dissertation, provide us with valuable insights into the effects of gated developments upon the broader

² This is partly because we still do not have accurate data on the exact number or location of gated communities at the local level to link to existing datasets on residential participation or civic engagement.

communities in which they are embedded. The dissertation also examines the effects of gated communities from the perspective of a sample planning commissioners who serve in municipalities containing or proximate to gated developments.

Stage 1: Focus groups with residents

Based upon the existing literature, it was essential to capture the voices of those living *outside* the gate. To this end, I conducted a series of focus groups with diverse populations living in communities with high concentrations of gated developments. The use of focus groups is ideally suited to allow the exploration of meaning, perceptions and new ideas to form, evolve and shift. This study specifically looked at the experiences, opinions and perceptions of diverse populations including African-American, Latino and Caucasian residents. Using a battery of open-ended questions, this study explored the following questions:

- Are residents aware of gated communities?
- What does the gate mean to them? What does it signify?
- Do all gates have the same meaning? If not, how does their meaning vary and what factors influence this variation in meaning?
- Are there differences in opinion along race or ethnicity?
- Do residents see them in positive, neutral or negative terms?
- Is there any resentment or concern over gated communities in their own neighborhood or are they seen as desirable and something to aspire to?
- What – if any – are the perceived consequences of gated communities on the broader community?

- Is there a perceived power dynamic when it comes to the decision making process on the development of gated communities? Whose interests prevail systematically? Whose voice is being heard the loudest?

From April 23-27, 2010, the author conducted three focus group discussions with residents living in three communities in the greater Dallas-Ft. Worth metropolitan area: Dallas, Arlington, and Lancaster/Desoto, Texas. Dallas was chosen for three reasons: 1) it has the third largest concentration of gated communities in the nation; 2) it is free from having large numbers of retirement communities which I argue present a different dynamic I would like to isolate from the present research in order to better understand this issue clearly and; 3) unlike California or Florida, it has generally *not* been studied and thus offers the potential for insights on gated communities that have remained unexplored.

Each focus group was moderated by the author, a professionally trained and nationally certified focus group moderator. The focus groups were held in a professional focus groups facility located in downtown Dallas. Focus group participants were carefully screened and recruited by trained interviewers using a detailed screener document (see Appendix D). To hear from as many perspectives as possible, participants were recruited by random digit dialing (RDD) from the general population living in each community. Participants were divided into three distinct groups along race and ethnicity and included a mixture of the following participant characteristics: gender, income, age, and education.

Table 2: Description of Focus Groups

Group Type	Group Participants
African American	Homeowners from Lancaster/Desoto, Texas
Caucasian	Homeowners from Dallas, Texas
Latino	Homeowners from Arlington, Texas

Dividing groups along race and ethnicity is a common practice in qualitative research when sensitive issues are present in hopes of creating a more comfortable atmosphere to discuss them and by reducing social desirability response bias. Since these focus groups potentially deal with U.S. housing policy, economic and racial segregation, housing preferences both current and historic, the author believes this was the best way to explore any and all of these areas in depth.

It should be noted that the author is an African American male, and research indicates the race of the moderator matters—although not always in entirely predictable ways (Kreuger, 1988; Morgan, 1997; Langer, 2006). When discussing particularly sensitive or personal issues, generally one would try to match the race of the moderator to the race and ethnicity of the focus group participants to encourage participants to be open and candid. What surprised me, however—particularly as I moderated the Caucasian and Latino groups—was the candor and openness of the responses from all the groups on this issue. The presence of an African-American moderator may have moderated somewhat the intensity of the reactions to gated communities within the Caucasian and (possibly) Latino focus groups, but hardly inhibited open and energetic

discussions of the matters at hand. I took care to create an open, welcoming atmosphere and emphasized that there no “right” or “wrong” answers to the topics we discussed. The use of open-ended questions and written techniques that help to avoid “group-think,” as well as asking questions in multiple ways, enabled me to elicit reliable and frank information from participants about their attitudes and experiences.

Each municipality in this study was selected to provide insights from diverse communities, all of which contain high concentrations of gated developments, to more fully understand public opinion around gated communities and their perceived impact on the broader community.

In addition to the characteristics listed above, each participant had to meet the following criteria to qualify for the focus groups:

- Registered voter;
- Currently working full or part-time outside the home;
- A homeowner living near but not in a gated community;
- Adult 21 years or older (excluding those who are retired or unemployed);
- Moderate level of interest in current affairs/political issues/community issues;
- Moderate level of activity being involved in their community, church or associations. (Those who are extremely involved or describe themselves as an “activist” were not invited to participate in the group discussions.)

Only those who qualified for the groups were invited to participate. Each focus group lasted 120 minutes and included 6 to 8 participants. The groups were audio-taped and transcribed by a professional transcriber. All participants agreed

to sign a consent form giving permission for them to be audio-taped before the start of each focus group according to Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations of the University of Michigan (see IRB approval in Appendix C). As compensation for their time, each participant received \$100 in cash at the end of the group discussion.

By design, participants comprised a sample of what others could be called an “attentive public.” The attentive public is generally defined as those who read a newspaper regularly, are at least somewhat involved in local affairs and are registered to vote. Such individuals are generally thought to be somewhat more involved and engaged in political affairs than the general adult population. This population was chosen for several reasons: 1) they match the profile of those living outside of gated developments generally; 2) they are more likely to be able to place this issue in context given the other issues of the day and most importantly; 3) to gauge the impact gated communities have on the broader community, one should speak to individuals who are at least somewhat involved socially and politically in their communities.

The majority of participants in the study were from middle-class backgrounds. The modal income was between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Only a handful earned over \$125,000 and none earned less than \$25,000. Each group had a mixture of white- and blue-collar workers, ranging from bond trader, accountant, and travel agent to house cleaner, heating and cooling technician, and daycare provider. Since gated communities have become solidly middle class,

study participants were selected to broadly match that demographic shift.³

In general, most participants were native to the Dallas-Fort Worth area or had lived there for at least 10 years. Participants were evenly split in terms of education across the groups, with half having a college degree and half having only some college (including an associates or technical degree). There was a mix of parents (and grandparents) and individuals without children in each group, with the groups leaning slightly more towards parents. All participants were working full-time outside of the home, with no part-time workers included.

Stage 2: Telephone Interviews with Planning Commissioners

To serve as a check on the focus-group findings and to add additional insight from how other cities have dealt with the effects of gated communities, I conducted a series of telephone interviews with planning commissioners. In addition to asking planning commissioners many of the same questions as in the focus groups, planning commissioners are in a unique position to provide insights to help us understand how decisions are made and whose interests – if any – prevail systematically in their decision making process. I explored the concerns some residents mentioned in the pilot study that suggested other interests – besides those of residents actually living in the community – were taking priority. However, at first glance, it was unclear who actually was in charge of making these decisions. To find out, I conducted an exploratory meta-analysis of zoning

³ Of course this means the voices of those who are very rich and very poor are not included. However, the main focus of this research is to hear from those who define themselves as middle class representing low to moderate income levels (\$25,000-\$100,000) which are included.

ordinances and master plans from a dozen metropolitan areas.⁴ After analyzing the data, I was struck by four broad findings: 1) the overwhelming majority of communities are silent on their regulations towards gated developments, even in communities with high numbers of gated developments; 2) final authority to approve or deny major planned development – including gated communities – rests with planning commissioners in the majority of communities sampled⁵, 3) municipalities are bound by their master plan when it comes to new construction but the majority of master plans are vague and broad with respect to housing type, design and tradeoffs with the surrounding communities⁶ and as a result; 4) there appears to be considerable discretion given to the planning commissioners to interpret, design and create communities that aspire to the shared community vision outlined in their master plan.

Planning commissioners appear to hold considerable amount of power and influence on the planning decisions in most communities yet we know little about their views towards gated communities. In fact, it is surprising how little we know about the perceptions, opinions and beliefs of those in power determining whether – and in what concentrations – to build gated communities. By giving voice to this previously unstudied population will help us to better understand elite opinion on – and experiences with – gated communities and their impact on the broader community in social and political terms. Using a battery of open-ended questions, this study explored the following questions:

⁴ I randomly selected 12 metropolitan centers and selected two suburban communities from each metropolitan area, resulting in a sample of twenty-four (24) suburban communities. Cities varied by region, population, economic development, and presence and concentration of gated communities.

⁵ The remaining communities authorize the city council or Mayor's office to make the final decision with consultation from the planning department and the planning commissioners.

⁶ Part of this is by design, master plans must be flexible and not too rigid to give it flexibility to change as their community changes.

- How are communities dealing with gated developments?
- How open (or restrictive) are communities' land use and zoning ordinances when it comes to gated communities?
- How do community officials see gated communities?
- Have municipalities studied gated communities in social or political terms or do communities even see this as a problem *to* study in the first place?
- How much power – implicit or explicit – do residents have when it comes to influencing the decision making process for building gated developments in their *own* community?
- Whose interests – if any – prevail systematically when it comes to the authorizing of gated communities?
- Who benefits? Who loses? Who bears the costs (if any)?

From December 9, 2011 until January 15, 2012, the author conducted ten (10) in-depth telephone interviews with planning commissioners across the country. I chose planning commissioners for three reasons: 1) planning commissioners are in a unique position to describe how communities are dealing with gated developments *right now* (beyond zoning ordinances); 2) planning commissioners are knowledgeable about how much power ordinary citizens have in shaping the development of their own community and neighborhoods especially when it comes to gated developments; and 3) planning commissioners offer a better understanding of the decision making process – and the criteria used – in making such decisions. Taken together, this unstudied population will shed light on both the perceived benefits and real life consequences of gated communities on the broader community.

Each planning commissioner interviewed represented a suburban community outside of a major metropolitan center. (See Table 3.) Each city was chosen at random from a sample of cities with varying concentrations of gated communities and stratified by region, population, demographics, economic growth, housing type and tenure.

Table 3: Cities from Greater Metropolitan Areas Represented in Study by the Planning Commissioner Respondents

Atlanta, GA	Detroit, MI
Charlotte, NC	Las Vegas, NV
Columbus, OH	Los Angeles, CA
Dallas, TX	San Diego, CA

To encourage candid responses – and to protect respondents from being identified – each interview was anonymous. To ensure anonymity, the names of the suburban communities remained confidential and were not included in Table 3 or in the findings below. Each interview lasted one hour, was audiotaped and then transcribed by a professional transcriber. Respondents agreed to an oral consent document authorizing the taping of their conversation at the start of the interview, according to Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines of the University of Michigan.⁷ Respondents were offered an incentive of \$25 to be donated to a 501(c)(3) charity of their choice as a partial reimbursement for their time. Half accepted the incentive, half declined.

Planning commissioners are residents appointed by a city’s mayor – or city council – to serve a two to three year term on the planning commission in the community in which they reside. Unlike professional staffers and planners,

⁷ See appendix C for IRB authorization, oral consent form and interview guide used.

planning commissioners are often *not* experts on housing, planning, or architecture.⁸ This is by design. Planning commissioners serve as a “common sense” check on new development and help make sure proposed development adheres to the goals, vision and aspirations of the community. In many ways, planning commissioners represent the voice of the residents and as a result are given considerable discretion and influence over planned developments in their community.⁹ Almost all of the planning commissioners interviewed had served more than one term, with an average tenure of 6 years. Most had lived in their respective community for 10 years or more, with a handful having lived their entire lives in the community they now serve.

Limitations of Research Methodology

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used, and the study objectives themselves, this research is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor are they intended to be, projectable to a larger population. The focus groups and telephone interviews used to conduct this research sought to develop insights and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures.

⁸ However about a third of the respondents in the sample were either an architect or had some professional housing background.

⁹ Even in communities where the planning commissioners are not authorized to make the final decision, the majority of the time the city council (or mayor) sides with their recommendations.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussion

This study explores the political consequences, social consequences and power dynamics associated with gated communities as perceived by residents living outside the gate and by planning commissioners living within their respective communities. Overall, the study finds that residents living in the vicinity of gated developments and also planning commissioners of municipalities with concentrations of such developments view them as having negative consequences for the broader community in social and political terms.

Each of the three focus groups with residents and the telephone interviews with planning commissioners discussed different aspects of their views and experiences with gated developments. Our informants' responses provide an overlapping pattern of emerging themes around certain key points. I have organized them to clarify certain points. I am struck by the many common experiences among residents across race and ethnicity but also at some of the differences among the racial and ethnic groups in this research. I highlight these differences when they vary from the broad findings. The views of planning commissioners and residents tend to align most of the time but do diverge when it comes to both the consequences of the gate and when it comes to whose interests prevail in their usage.

A review of existing polling data and scholarship from both the academic and private sectors reveals one central fact: *we know very little about what people think about gated communities.* Before one can understand, and ultimately measure, the impact of gated developments upon the broader community, we

must understand how people perceive gated communities, the meaning they ascribe to the gate, and their experiences interacting with gated developments.

Economic Conditions

Many of the focus group participants and the surveyed planning commissioners reported that poor economic conditions were hitting their families and their communities hard, particularly on the issue of housing.

Planning commissioners said the biggest issues facing their communities stemmed from poor economic growth and the recent downturn in the housing sector. In every telephone interview, each commissioner detailed how planned developments had come to a standstill – sometimes in the middle of a project – while other planned developments never got off the ground due to failed financing or lack of demand.

“[I]n the last couple of years because of the economy we really haven’t had much going on,” one commissioner stated, and then added, “Everything [has] been planned [but] nothing [has] happened since then.” This was particularly true for commissioners in the Southwest, who mentioned significant challenges with the sheer number of housing foreclosures and abandoned properties in their municipalities. “We’re used to projects that are planned well and then built fast,” one commissioner from the Southwest explained. “And, you know, everything came to a screeching halt.”

Overall, the recession followed by a period of slow economic growth has resulted in stalled projects and has delayed or postponed future projects. Despite the economic downturn, planning commissioners remained cautiously optimistic about the future for their communities and for the country overall. These

sentiments were echoed in the focus groups, in which participants acknowledged they were concerned about their own financial health and those of their neighbors.

When it came to managing priorities, residents reported they were just trying to stay afloat in the uncertain atmosphere of job loss and decreased housing values. Planning commissioners said their priorities had shifted from managing growth during the boom years to how best to restart the housing sector. Many planning commissioners said that previously the majority of their time was spent managing rapid growth and new development projects in their community. “Well today there’s not a whole lot of planning going on because of the housing issues,” one commissioner explained. “But not too long ago, [...] County – the county that I’m in – was the seventh fastest growing county in the country...[and] the biggest issue we faced [was] trying to encourage less sprawl.”

The current marketplace has shifted priorities towards finding ways to restart the housing and planned development sectors. “With the current economy, less houses are being built,” one commissioner noted, “even though we’re not close to build-out yet.” In fact, commissioners reported that most of their time is spent focused on trying to get their community’s housing sector stabilized and growing again. Planning commissioners readily admitted they are open – if not somewhat eager – when it comes to considering a wide range of proposed development projects. One commissioner explained the challenge his city is facing, “Cities grow, they age, and either they find a way to regenerate or they die...you can pretty well tell where the city is [by looking] at their growth cycle; it’s the life cycle of planning and development.”

Although not mentioned directly by residents initially, planning commissioners reported they saw an increase in the number and intensity of

concerns over safety and crime, even in areas that have historically low rates. Second to the economic conditions facing their respective communities, commissioners said they had noticed increased concerns from residents over crime, community safety and policing. These concerns have risen across the board, even in communities with extremely low levels for incidents of crime. “I think crime and safety probably is number one for most people today,” a commissioner acknowledged. Another said, “We want to all be able to be safe, and it’s not the ‘50s anymore, it’s not ‘Ozzie and Harriet’ time when you can tell the kids to go out and play and come back at, you know, sunset.”

In addition to concerns over crime and safety, there was tension in many communities over how to balance affordable housing needs with attracting high-value homebuyers. In high-rent areas, there were increased concerns over the need to provide more affordable housing, especially given the problems in the housing sector. But commissioners reported increased resistance to such efforts, as many current homeowners feared it would further depress housing values.

Several commissioners cautioned that some of this tension might represent something more than concerns over housing values. These tensions also appeared to reflect resistance to new development in general, antipathy toward the type of people perceived to be moving into a community, and an overall resistance to change. As one commissioner explained, “A lot are upset if there’s denser housing or if there’s apartments or something because, well, this element is gonna come in. I have to explain to people a lot [of] time [that] you can’t buy a house here for \$160,000, [and] they are making more than you are and are more educated.”

Definition and Characteristics of “Ideal” Community

Before introducing the topic of gated communities, residents and planning commissioners were asked a series of open-ended questions about how they define their own community and how they would describe a “good,” “bad”, and their “ideal” community. When asked how they define their “community,” residents described their community as their neighborhood or school district (for parents) more than any other description. This self-designation trumped all others, except for racial or ethnic identification for African American participants. To most African Americans, their community was both their immediate neighborhood *and* their connections to others through their racial identity. Overall, this suggests that most respondents are spatially connected to their community and to those within it.

When asked to describe their “ideal” community, residents replied that it was one in which people were connected and shared a responsibility to one another to lift up others when they stumble. Additionally, many said that their ideal community had a larger *purpose*. Participants described a community in which residents actively worked together to address common goals *and* problems that faced the larger community. This kind of community fostered a sense of belonging, was friendly, safe and comfortable.

Planning commissioners went into greater detail. At the beginning of each interview, commissioners were asked to describe what makes a “good” community and what it would “feel like” to be within one. Commissioners had a near unanimous consensus: a good community meant having a safe, low-crime community with high levels of residential participation in local affairs. One commissioner explained, “Safety is number one. I think [political] participation

is absolutely important. You can't have people isolated and removed and have any sense of community." As in the focus groups, good schools and well-maintained roads and physical infrastructure also were part of their vision.

Second to these characteristics, commissioners mentioned the need for communities to be "well-planned" in terms of traffic flow, usability and access, and quality of life, both now and in the future by anticipating future needs as the community grows. Green space, parks and open space followed, as most commissioners said these were key components for a good community – even in the desert communities. "You don't often think of green space in the deserts," one commissioner explained, "but we have a lot of trails and what's considered green space, and the thing I like about it [is] that I think it makes a good community."

For a plurality of commissioners, a good public transportation system and a healthy and thriving downtown were essential elements of a "good" community. But these components were not mentioned in isolation. The overall framework that linked these pieces together was one of creating something larger than the sum of its parts. One commissioner explained that it was important to have "walkable and livable communities [where] people know their neighbors...with front porches and not a bunch of garages, so people really get to *interact* with people. [T]hat's kind of my sense of what a good community should be."

When asked to describe how a "good" community would *feel*, most commissioners said a good community would feel homey, open and inviting. There would be a sense of belonging and cohesiveness. One commissioner described a good community as "a place that you were very comfortable to belong and proud to belong; welcoming, open, accessible, inviting; just a

rewarding place to be to call home.” Notably, several said their community already had many of these elements.

When it came to their “ideal” community, commissioners emphasized a sense of connectedness. They mentioned connected, walkable communities with high levels of resident participation more than any other characteristic. One commissioner explained his ideal community as a place in which “you can run out of the house without having to lock your doors; [a place] where your neighbor brings your dog back when he gets out of the yard, and cops that stop and say hello instead of drive by.”

High quality schools, a thriving downtown and excellent city services ranked high on commissioners’ lists. What was striking were the feelings commissioners attributed to being *in* their ideal community. “Well, it would feel safe,” one commissioner explained, and then added, “It would feel familiar, you would feel comfortable in all parts of the city; because you’re living, working, going to school in the community, you’d know a lot of people and you’d have relationships in the community.” Unlike their descriptions of a “bad” community – which were more likely to be in physical, spatial terms – commissioners tended to use more subjective feelings when they described their ideal community. This suggests their ideal community may be less about a physical construct and more about shared connections with others.

When it came to describing a bad community, both commissioners and residents envisioned a community with high crime rates, where neighbors were not involved in pursuing common goals or addressing shared problems, where residents were disconnected and isolated from each other, and the community had little to no community spirit or greater purpose. In fact, for many the epitome of

a “bad” community looked and felt a lot like Detroit. Indeed, Detroit was named on several occasions due to its perceived number of abandoned houses and boarded up businesses. “I’ll probably say this without having any first-hand knowledge,” one commissioner admitted, “but my first thoughts are like Detroit, Michigan or the suburbs of Detroit or, say, Philadelphia. I say that without ever having been there or having any first-hand experience.”

Unlike in the descriptions of a “good” community, most of the descriptions of a “bad” community tended to be in physical and spatial terms. One commissioner described his vision of a bad community this way: “I kind of picture [a place] where everything is run down, you have dilapidated buildings, you have street lights out, you have parks that aren’t maintained, you have streets that aren’t maintained—you know, broken down and abandoned houses and places where there’s, you know, crime and people don’t feel safe.” Another commissioner said she imagined, “blight and very little activity, business activity or otherwise; shuttered homes, shuttered businesses, for sale signs, for lease signs, weeds growing in lots, boarded up windows... [W]hen you say ‘bad’ community, that’s what I think about.”

Commissioners and residents alike noted a sense of fear and hopelessness in such communities, where residents felt they have to live behind locked and burglar bars to be safe. “There would probably be a sense of fear,” a commissioner acknowledged. “You [don’t] know where the next meal is coming from or [whether] you are going to get harmed.... [T]o me, I think the sense of hopelessness would be the worst.”

Along with this sense of fear was also a sense of isolation. Several commissioners and residents mentioned a “bad” community as one made up of a

various assortment of neighborhoods each isolated from each other. One commissioner described a bad community as “various disparate neighborhoods isolated from each other.” For another commissioner, a “bad” community would be one in which this sense of isolation was paramount throughout the community. “It would feel disconnected, it would feel unfamiliar.” He paused, then continued, “You would not feel welcome in all areas. It would feel like you’re intruding on people’s private space.” “I don’t think I could stand to stay there very long,” another commissioner reflected. “I’d get out as quick as I could.”

Initial Perceptions of Gated Communities

Initial perceptions toward gated communities ranged widely across race and ethnicity among residents in the focus groups and from the perspective of planning commissioners. This section details the commonalities and differences within and across these disparate populations, starting with residents in the focus groups.

Focus-group participants were asked to write down the first words, phrases or image(s) that came to mind when they heard the words “gated community.”¹⁰ The most common responses were “isolated”, “safe”, “expensive” and “keep out.” Most participants believed gated communities tend to be upper class, offering nicer amenities and more expensive homes in safer communities, often with their own private security. In many cases, they indicated that their perceptions were shaped by their own experiences with gated communities. Most of the participants knew the names of gated communities in their own

¹⁰ To capture participants’ initial perceptions towards gated communities – and to avoid group-think – participants were asked a series of questions using individual written handouts (see appendix A). Only after all of the participants had answered a question did we discuss as a group.

neighborhood and described them as “upscale” and “desirable.” Almost every participant also described gated communities as “isolated,” “isolating,” or “divisive,” however. One participant went as far as to say that gated communities resembled more of a “bubble” than a housing development. To many participants, the gate was a sign of withdrawal from themselves and others. The gate itself was frequently noted as being inherently divisive. To build a wall is to – by design – divide, separate, limit and partition.

One cannot deny that gated communities have a genuine appeal to many people, however. Many focus-group participants found the promise of higher resale values, added security and the projection of status afforded by the gate desirable. Although some of them questioned how well these communities delivered upon this promise, the appeal was nearly universal across the focus groups. This was particularly true in the Caucasian and English-speaking Latino groups. The gate served as a symbol of affluence that was – until now – reserved for the very well off, and there was a desire to project that status outwards. More so than any other feature, it was the gate that was the most attractive feature to most. One participant described the gate as a “hood ornament” that showcased class status to others. Another woman said, “It’s the gate, it’s the prestige. It has a prestigious connotation.”

In fact, more than another other group, the English speaking Latinos not only said they found gated communities appealing, but they also were most likely to aspire to live in one. The appeal of gated communities to Latino participants – more so than any other group – was not the gate itself but what the gate represents: security, prestige and peace of mind. At the same time, Latinos were the only group to feel that gated communities were out of reach to people like

themselves. In fact, most Latino participants equated gated communities with a lifestyle they might never attain but dream of one day achieving, nonetheless. While Latino participants said those who live in gated communities are not “like them,” most would like to be like them one day.

Gated communities took on a different meaning for African Americans. In sharp contrast to their Caucasian and English-speaking Latino counterparts, African Americans saw gated communities as elitist (the only focus group to describe them that way). While other residents saw gated developments as private, protected and secure places, African Americans described them as being segregated, isolating and predominantly White. “You still have the racial segregation,” one African-American man reflected, “because it’s [still] predominantly White.” In addition, African-American participants were the only group to discuss gated communities in terms of financial cost. They mentioned the high cost of maintenance, the high cost of privacy and exclusion, the high cost of status and prestige (which they did not see as worth the investment) and the high cost of entry (that is, will they be welcomed by the existing neighbors?). Several participants mentioned a fear of being trapped inside a gated community. One older African-American woman explained, “I don’t want to be trapped behind there—or my family.”

For most African American participants, the appeal of gated communities was limited. Unlike the Caucasian and Latino focus groups, most African American participants did not see such communities as a desirable option for people like themselves. “I don’t feel like I have any need for a gated community,” one African-American female homeowner observed. African Americans viewed gated communities as costly, inconvenient, pretentious

developments located in ritzy suburbs that offered little in terms of racial diversity. One African American woman noted, “It’s not worth it to me, and I don’t have nothing but negative stuff [on gated communities].” As a result, African American participants were the least likely to see gated communities as a status symbol or something to strive for or aspire to obtain.

Despite these differences in the appeal of gated communities, the gate was broadly perceived as being important to maintaining security. Gated communities were perceived as being safer and quieter than other communities because only those living within the complex could enter, and unauthorized people could not enter without permission. One resident explained, “Solicitors aren’t supposed to be there, criminals aren’t supposed to be there, people walking by aren’t supposed to be there, trespassers aren’t supposed to be there, people stealing cars aren’t supposed to be there. So it helps keep people out that don’t have a right to be in that gated community.” Several participants said they would feel more comfortable having their children play in such a community without having to watch them constantly. Participants also perceived gated communities as offering nicer amenities, such as a golf course, parks with play areas, pools and high quality sports and exercise rooms.

Commissioners said they understood the appeal of gated developments for some residents. “Some people,” one commissioner explained, “still have the idea that ‘Oh it’s a gated community, it must be better!’” Gated communities appeared to offer prestige, safety, higher resale value and more control over one’s own neighborhood. “I think it’s the quality of life,” another commissioner said. “I think it’s the implied or the perceived quality of life. Is life better there? It would appear, yes. I mean, that’s the perception.” This perception was shared by some

residents and a small minority of commissioners. In fact, one commissioner was part of a neighborhood effort to erect a gate in their existing community. He lived one block from a senior high school and explained his rationale for the need for the gate: “We actually looked at becoming a gated community at one point just to keep the kids out of the neighborhood; zooming here at 60 miles per hour in a 25 mph zone where our own kids are.” Another commissioner was in the process of buying a home in a gated community. When asked what he found appealing about the gate, he said the gated development offered “peace and quiet.”

Part of the appeal was also the residential control of the built environment of both property and people. “Some people want to live in a more controlled community,” one commissioner explained, “and many times when it’s gated comes more control that’s implemented both over your neighbors and yourself—keeps a community up to a certain level and standard.” Part of the appeal appears to be allowing only the “right sort” of people inside. “The innuendo is,” one commissioner noted, “absolutely, we keep the riffraff out and only the right people get in.”

However, several commissioners were concerned over whether gated communities were “justified.” One commissioner explained, “Frankly [it’s] a waste of energy. It costs a lot of money to build and maintain a gated community, and frankly I wonder whether they are achieving their goal. I’ve got a pretty strong opinion they are not achieving their goal.” Another commissioner explained it this way: “[I]t frustrates me at times when I think [about it]. It’s such a waste, and I feel bad for the people who would pay the additional money to live in a gated community when it may not be achieving its goal.”

In addition, several commissioners said there were aspects of gated life

that many people fail to realize: that the gate will not make them safer. “They’re useless,” one commissioner observed. “Their crime is worse there than it is across the street where there is no gate.” Due to the lack of regular police controls, commissioners said gated communities were less safe than similar communities without the gate. Several commissioners also questioned whether the added cost of buying into a gated development was a good financial decision, since the return on investment was often low. “[With] the fees and so forth,” one commissioner said, “I’m not sure they’re justified.”

Personal interactions with gated communities appeared to negate any perceived prestige among most commissioners. Many of them *did* say that prestige was a word that came immediately to mind at the mention of gated communities, but in the same breath they also described personal interactions with gated developments that made some of them feel the security was overblown or misused on people like them instead of towards “real criminals.” “You know,” one commissioner observed, “people that live [in a gated community] are not any more privileged than the guy across the street without a gate.”

Of those who have had an interaction with a gated community, most commissioners said their most recent experience had been an irritating and annoying one. Several of them told stories of visiting friends or family members within gated developments that tried their patience. One commissioner described his most recent experience visiting his parents who live in a gated community: “I have to go through one gate and speak to a patrol, a security guard who verifies my name and drivers license even though my last name is the same as my parents, and I say I am so-and-so, going to so-and-so.... It’s a major inconvenience. Once I’m through that gate, I have to go through another gate to get to them and, well, I

don't spend a lot of time there.”

Unlike the focus groups participants, personal interaction with gated communities tended to make the planning commissioners *more* negative toward them. One commissioner explained, “[I]t’s one thing if you’re going to and from work once or twice a day. But then if you have to... sit and wait for the gates to open and close, whether it’s six times a day or ten times a day, it ends up being a pain.”

Another commissioner said, “The idea of having to come into a gate every night, every time I leave, to go through a gate? Wholely-moley that just doesn’t appeal to me!” In addition to the inconvenience factor, most commissioners no longer believed that gated communities command a premium in the housing market like they once did which made some of the hassle of the gate seem that much more unnecessary.

For this reason, most commissioners said that gated developments were inconvenient, not prestigious. One commissioner explained, “To me personally, [it’s] more of an inconvenience—that I’m going to have to slow down or stop and wait for the gates to open or close. I look at them like that, as opposed to a status symbol.” Many other commissioners agreed and wondered what the fuss was about when it came to the appeal of gated communities. “Just because you have a gate,” one commissioner explained, “[doesn’t mean much]. The gates aren’t anything fancy. It just controls your access a little better.”

In contrast to the White and Latino focus groups – in which residents exhibited discernible envy towards those choosing to live behind the gate – planning commissioners did not convey that impression. In fact, a majority of commissioners stated forthrightly their antipathy toward at least one aspect of

gated communities, while the others were generally neutral towards them. “Well, I guess to me,” one commissioner stated, “my images tend towards the negative.” Another commissioner explained his feelings on gated communities: “I just don’t get it. I mean, to cut myself off from everybody else? It just doesn’t make sense to me! So, anyway, they have no appeal [to me].”

Many of commissioners’ concerns were about the message the gate projects to other people. “I feel like it [a gated community] was intended to exclude the vast majority of people in town,” one commissioner reflected and then quipped, “Look, I’m a lawyer. I’m probably the person they would intend to build that neighborhood for!”

Meaning of the Gate and Gated Communities

This section explored the knowledge residents have when it comes to gated communities. It also delved into the layers of meaning ascribed to the gate and gated communities more generally. Since this was asked only of residents in the focus groups, the analysis is limited to this population. To identify and differentiate layers of the meaning of gated developments, residents were presented with several items to react to, and I noted any changes in their attitudes towards gated communities.

Residents were generally knowledgeable about gated communities, but some gaps were evident. When asked where gated communities were located and who were most likely to live in them, most participants correctly said gated communities could be found almost everywhere in the country but particularly in the South and on the West Coast. Gated communities were widely perceived as being a suburban phenomenon, while many participants acknowledged a large

number of gated rental units in inner cities. Participants noted that gated communities were no longer solely for the very affluent but were now more mainstream and middle class. According to most participants, there was *not* a stereotypical type of person who lived in gated communities, except for being affluent and – for some – being Caucasian (expressed most strongly in the Latino and African American groups).

Yet there were gaps in participants' knowledge of gated communities. Many of them believed incorrectly that gated communities had higher resale values, offered safer communities and offered tight-knit communities behind the gate. Of these, the misperception of higher resale values and improved safety were held most frequently.

Table 4: Facts on Gated Communities

Facts on Gated Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gated communities are quickly becoming the fastest growing housing development in the United States (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).– Currently over 7 million people live behind a mechanical gate or private security guard (American Housing Survey, 2001).– From the early 1980s to the present, the number of gated communities has grown from five thousand to over twenty thousand (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).– According to the latest survey data, 5.9% of all housing units report living in a community that is surrounded by a wall or a fence (American Housing Survey, 2001).– The number of gated communities varies by region. On the West coast, 11% of all housing units are walled compared to 6.8% in the South, 3.1% in the Northeast and 2.1% in the Midwest. (ibid)– These developments are more prevalent in new construction and therefore are more concentrated in regions experiencing new growth (U.S. Census, Metropolitan Housing Survey, 2004).– The Dallas Metropolitan area has the third largest (after Houston and Los Angeles) number of gated communities in the country with 13% of all housing units walled AND gated (U.S. Census, Metropolitan Housing Survey, 2004).– Owners who live in gated communities are more likely to be White, have higher incomes and are older. Renters who live in gated communities are three times more likely to be Latino or African American, have moderate to lower income and are younger. In fact, there are more Latinos renters in gated developments than any other group (Sanchez, Lang and Dhavale, 2005).– Renters are two and a half times more likely to live in walled or fenced communities and are three times more likely to have controlled access than homeowners (Ibid).– Gated communities – overall – do not have lower crime rates compared to similar communities without gates (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).– Gated communities do not tend to have higher resale values in the market when compared to similar housing. In some cases they even had a slight price disadvantage. (Ibid)– Gated communities do not have higher levels of community or being “close-knit” (Low, 2001).

After asking a series of open-ended questions about gated communities at the beginning of the sessions, I tested a series of facts about gated communities (see Table 4). Across all the groups, the three most surprising facts were: 1) gated communities do not have lower crime rates than similar communities without the gate; 2) Dallas has the third largest number of gated communities in the nation and; 3) gated communities do not have higher resale values as compared to similar houses without the gate. After discussing these facts –

especially ones that most participants cited for why such communities are attractive – many participants began to question why the gates were needed in the first place. This information debunked much of the rationale they initially used to support gated communities in the first place. There was a noticeable shift from the initial conversation at the beginning of the groups, which assumed that life behind the gate was better. The exception was the African-American focus group, which tended to have a negative view of gated developments to begin with.

When it came to the meaning residents attributed to the gate, and to gated communities more broadly, the initial frame they used was essential. After discussing the facts on gated communities, focus group participants were shown a series of pictures (see Table 5) of a variety of gated developments and asked to rate them on how appealing they found them.

Table 5: Pictures of Gated Communities Tested in Focus Groups



In doing so, an interesting dynamic occurred in almost all of the groups: where they placed themselves vis-à-vis the gate dramatically influenced their perception of the gate, the gated development and its impact upon the broader

community. That is, the meaning of the gate depended upon which side of the gate participants placed themselves. One focus group participant explained it this way:

[It] depends on which side I'm on of the gate. It's security if I'm on the inside, but it could also be insecurity and frustration, if I'm on the outside. It has a different feeling depending on if you're on the outside. So it has a different feeling depending which side I'm on.

As noted previously, participants were purposefully selected because they were living in places with high concentrations of gated communities—the assumption being that participants would automatically see themselves as living *outside* of gated communities. What I found was that many participants did not perceive their relationship to gated developments that way, however. The initial frame they used – with the notable exception of the African American group – was to place themselves *behind* the gate looking *out* onto the broader community. Upon doing so, they tended to see the gated developments more favorably and discount or downplay possible negative consequences.

In sharp contrast to the Caucasian and English-speaking Latino groups, African Americans saw the gate in racial terms that were intrinsically linked to historic racial exclusion, isolation and segregation. Most African Americans felt the gate was a clear effort to separate the gated residents from people of color. “It’s in the back of your mind [always],” one African American participant explained. Another woman agreed saying, “You have to remember that we came from segregation, we came from not being respected growing up.” Unlike the Caucasian and Latino focus groups, African Americans believed the gate was meant to keep *them* out and not criminals or the amorphous “other.” “I think it can promote classism and racism,” one African American man stated. “You

know, when we started moving in, you know, they started moving out. Now [these same people] are likely to be in gated communities.”

Many African-American participants took the gate personally. The gate meant for people like themselves – people of color – to stop. It signaled that they were not welcome. While some saw gates as a symbol of prestige and status, this was secondary to the primary meaning of racial exclusion. “[That] community becomes ‘us versus them,’” one man observed, and “they’re not a part of us.”

“In my neighborhood I live in, there is a wall now,” one African-American man explained, “and the moment that gate goes up, the community [will] take a different tone.” A woman said she felt the same way: “Once the gate goes up, I’m like, okay, you’re over here and I’m over there, and you’re staying over there and I’m staying over here.”

Ironically, while gated communities were the least appealing to most African-American participants, many of them felt they were judged negatively for not living in one. Several mentioned they knew of people who lived in gated communities and said those people think they were “better than us.” “Sometimes to me,” one African-American woman explained, “the residents living in gated developments think they are better than us, and it’s how they look at it.” In fact, quite a few African-American participants mentioned that they wanted to buy into a gated community just to show others (inside the gate) that they, too, can afford it ... and then sell it and leave.

When asked why minorities are increasingly choosing the gating option, participants overwhelmingly asserted they are trying to “keep up with the Joneses” and that they are not trying to run from each other. One participant put it this way: “I think we’re just trying to [make it]. It’s a status symbol, and we’re

still trying to make it to this next level.” This suggests that the gate is more than just about exclusion but that it also signals to others you have “arrived.” The desire to signal that to others was strong among African-Americans participants.

In contrast, once their frame of reference was shifted to placing themselves *outside* of the gate, Caucasian and Latino participants began to raise concerns about belonging, identity, and the gate creating an “us versus them” feel. The meaning of the gate for them changed sharply.¹¹ The initially positive characteristics of higher resale value, safety and the appeal of the gate itself were replaced with concerns about status and identity. Now the gate simply meant “stop.” It also raised normative questions such as “Am I *allowed* to enter?” and “Am I *supposed* to enter?” One woman explained, “It means ‘stop’! Am I allowed to enter? Am I supposed to enter? Can I have access to it? Can I open the gate? If I see the gate, I’m stopping, I’m stopping....”

For others, it brought up questions about self-worth. Several participants said for those who cannot afford to live in one, a gated development can stir up feelings of inferiority and resentment toward those who can. One woman explained:

I guess it would depend on the gated community. You might feel frustrated that you don’t measure up—like the people inside may be a little bit above your level, and you’re insecure about that, and that could lead to some feelings of inferiority.

There appeared to be a perceived judgment from those who lived behind the gate toward those living outside. Participants felt that residents inside the gate were implicitly saying they were better than you. For most, the gated community created a “members-only feel,” which could be appealing for those who choose to

¹¹ By simply asking a question like “What would you think if a gated development was built across the street from your home” the frame participants used shifted.

live behind the gate, but can be disrespectful toward those who do not. That said, for many White and English-speaking Latino residents, such feelings were not activated until their frame was shifted, placing them outside the gate.

Just as actual gates vary, so too do the meanings attributed to them. After the participants rated several pictures of gated communities (refer back to Table 5), they sorted the gates into three general categories (of their choosing): “keep out” gates, “prestige” gates and “security zone” gates. Participants used the quality of the housing as a proxy for the neighborhood characteristics, and this enabled participants to sort the pictures into one of the three categories. In general, the gates seemed to reflect the perceived quality of the housing: cheaper housing tends to have cheaper looking gates, while more expensive homes tended to have more grandiose gates.

Community Reaction to Gated Communities

To get a better understanding of how communities are dealing with gated developments, I turned to planning commissioners for their insights. They were asked a series of questions about whether there has been any discussion of – or reaction to – gated communities in their municipalities. If so, which concerns were voiced, and by whom.

Commissioners responded that this topic was not top-of-mind for most residents, nor did it come up very often in front of their planning commission. As a result, this was not a matter about which planning commissioners thought on a day-to-day basis, particularly given the downturn in the housing market.

“We have more than we can count. They are so common,” one commissioner noted. “Quite frankly, I don’t think they get discussed very much

at all.” Another commissioner agreed, “I don’t think there’s ever been a community-wide discussion [here] about gated communities.”

When residents become concerned about an increase in crime, however, commissioners reported that attention turned to gated developments as a potential solution. One commissioner recalled a recent conversation he had about such developments: “You know, there were break-ins, and the neighbors started asking about gates [and gated communities.]” For most municipalities, however, gated communities were not discussed much with residents or in planning commission deliberations.

Indeed, 8 of the 10 commissioners reported that their communities had not had *any* significant discussion about gated communities. As a result, few communities have had conversations about the potential social and political consequences of gated developments. This dearth of conversation appears to occur regardless of the number or concentration of gated developments within communities.

Interestingly, the two communities in the sample that have had broad conversations about gated communities have either severely limited their use or banned them completely. “If the city council had not taken the perspective of keeping it a community as a whole,” one commissioner explained, “it could have been easily turned into a collection of a couple of hundred gated communities, which there is no sense of community at that point.” Another commissioner noted that some of the more affluent residents objected to not being able to live in a gated community. One commissioner from a community that limits their use said, “The extremely wealthy don’t understand why the city is even restricting them. If they can afford it, they [think they] should be able to do it wherever they

want.”

One respondent served as commissioner in a city that banned gated developments and is located near a community with many such developments. The commissioner joked that his city tried to do the opposite of what the other one did:

They're everywhere. You can't go down any street and not find a gated community... Once you get past the city center ... you're inundated with gated communities, and it doesn't matter what the social or economic climate of the neighborhood is.... We always make our comparisons to what they're doing in ____, and it's always [to do] the opposite of what they are doing!

For the overwhelming majority of the municipalities in the present study, however, such conversations simply have *not* occurred. Indeed, the only time there have been any sustained discussions about gated developments at the local level was during the housing boom of the 1990s, when such developments were being erected for the first time in large numbers.¹² Even during the housing boom, however, commissioners reported that the deliberations were limited to specific proposed developments and rarely sparked a broader community discussion.

“I know there was discussion on it when they were first developing it. You know, that was like 15 years ago, and I wasn't on the planning commission for that,” one commissioner explained. Generally, for many communities it was often left to the market, as developers supplied a demand for this housing type. And so it has remained for many years.

¹² See Veal, K. (2000) “Gated Communities: A Case Study”. Undergraduate Thesis. Princeton University. Unpublished Manuscript.

Consequences of Gated Communities

Initially, most residents were unsure about the potential impact that gated residential developments may have upon the broader community. At first – partially due to the initial frame many participants used and perhaps the novelty of the topic – few thought, at least initially, of the negative impact gated communities could have on the broader community. Their focus was on the positive aspects (e.g., prestige, status, safety) of the gate. When residents were asked to describe their recent interactions with gated communities, however, the effects on the broader community became more apparent: they restricted access, limited interaction, and divided communities.

For most focus group participants, the appeal of gated communities was moderated by their perceived negative effects only after the participant's initial frame of reference was brought into question. When asked what would happen if a large gated community was built across the street from their home, participants mentioned that gated communities limited access, placed barriers to building social networks, and fostered feelings of resentment and inferiority among individuals residing outside the gate. Several participants who had had direct interaction with gated communities described problems trying to gain entry. The problems included gate malfunctions, problems being buzzed in, and needing to providing proper identification.

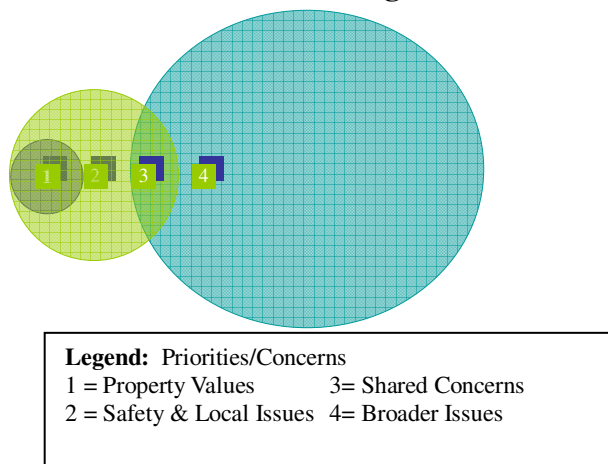
Upon reflection, many participants felt that the gate inhibited communication with fellow neighbors. One man said, “The fact that now instead of looking at the neighbors across [the street], I can see this big gate and fence and these houses. I can't really talk to them because there's a gate and I can't get through the gate and they have it that way [intentionally].”

“They’re just removing themselves away from everything” one woman noted. Another woman agreed and chimed in, “I don’t know if it’s just a kind of snob thing, [but] you don’t see them, you just see their cars.” Not only were residents outside the gate unable to interact with their gated neighbors, most felt it reoriented and narrowed the priorities of those living behind the gate.

Residents – all of whom are living in places with high concentrations of gated developments – worried that such developments served as a barrier to interaction, engagement, and participation in local and neighborhood affairs for those behind the gate. Homeowners believed that gated communities resulted not only in fragmented communities, but also re-ordered the priorities of those who live behind them. This was not merely an abstract idea. For many, it was their experience living in such communities.

Homeowners described the impact of gated communities on the broader community much like a series of intersecting circles (see Table 6). Their primary priority (innermost concentric circle, indicated by circle #1) was a desire to maintain their property values. Second to this were safety and localized issues related to their homeowners association (represented by circle #2).

Table 6: Perceived Ordering of Priorities for those Behind the Gate



It is important to note that the concerns to which focus-group participants gave the highest priority – circles #1 and #2 - were perceived by those in the focus groups as largely *independent* of the broader concerns of the entire community (#4). And it was only under unique circumstances that the *secondary* concerns intersected with the concerns of the broader community (represented by #3). In fact, most participants said not only are the priority of the concerns shared with the broader community limited (the intersection of circle #2 and #4), but it would take an extremely urgent and extraordinary issue to upset this order. Even issues such as public schools, the building of a nuclear power plant, or violent crime were perceived to be less likely to be salient to persons living behind the gate.

One participant who lives next to a gated community lamented, “You can never get inside and you never hear from them.” Another woman explained it in her own words, “Our entryway is in touch with other entryways, and [a gated community] is on that same little street. It's almost like they're the ones that don't tinker with everybody else. They stay in their own little pond. They're just not involved.”

The consensus across the groups and interviews was that while it is still possible for individuals residing behind the gate to be engaged with the broader community, the gate made it much less likely to occur. Of course, the present study cannot splice out whether it is the gate that is causing this withdrawal or if it is the people who choose to live within a gated community that created this effect. The consequences for the broader community remain the same, regardless.

While being careful not to judge, participants said they understood the urge to gate. In fact, there appeared to be an odd combination of envy,

understanding and resentment towards those living behind the gate. Many of the reasons to gate were perceived as justifiable: the promise of safer communities, higher resale values, prestige, and superior amenities, to name a few. In general, there was a sense that persons living behind a gate had nicer things than the participants in the focus groups, and the gate symbolizes and signals this to people outside the gate.

Most participants felt that persons living within the gate liked nice things. That perception resulted in little or no expressed resentment initially. After all, liking – and ultimately attaining – nice things is part of the American Dream. “I think it’s true,” one woman explained. “Residents living in gated communities are not very different than those outside. They want that perception of safety.” As homeowners, they also understood the desire to protect one’s investment. In fact, many participants aspired to be able to afford to live in an upscale gated community in the future, and others were somewhat envious of those who could already. “There aren't that many places [anymore] that are truly safe,” one woman reflected. “So if they have found a community where it's gated and that is the reason for wanting [a gated community] to keep your children safe, then it's understandable.”

Expressions of resentment soon followed on the heels of the initially neutral-to-positive observations about gated communities and the persons living within them, however. Resentment came in two forms: 1) resentment towards those who had nicer houses and were flaunting it with a grandiose gate that created animosity and feelings of inferiority and; 2) resentment towards those who chose to separate from people like themselves. Focus-group participants took offense at people who choose to separate themselves from their community

and, more personally, those who choose to separate themselves from people like *themselves*. One woman described her feelings this way: “Just that feeling of ‘you’re trying to separate yourself from the rest of the community.’ Almost like ‘I’m better than you.’”

To many, withdrawal into an enclave with a gate and wall was perceived as a personal insult. When asked how they would feel if a gated community was built near his home, one man said he would feel that “they don’t want me there.” Another participant flatly stated that people in her community “resent the gate.” She lived adjacent to a gated development and described routinely seeing graffiti on the gate. She attributed this to resentment about the gate and what it stood for. She explained, “You could have people who resented the fact their house is so much better [than their own], and [now] graffiti writers [are] going in and trashing that neighborhood, creating animosity.”

There appears to be another widespread effect of communities exercising the gating option, however: gated communities are perceived to be inherently divisive but they do not exclude. Focus group participants flatly rejected the notion that gated communities were exclusive havens for the rich only. Most participants believed that gated communities were part of the middle class, and anyone wanting to live behind a gate could do so. As a result, there was a consensus (African Americans notably excepted) that no one was being kept out or excluded from living in a gated community. In many ways, gated communities have now become equal-opportunity in their division. Most participants agreed that anyone could live in a gated community if they had enough money to be able to buy into one—“green” is still the one color that is always universally accepted. As a result, it appears the mass appeal and widespread nature of gated

developments leads some to believe that any potentially negative consequences of them are minimized because anyone can live within one. “Anyone,” one homeowner admitted, “can live in a gated community.”

The effects of gated developments upon on the broader community may be more far-reaching than focus-group participants realized, at least initially. If one accepts the premise that everyone can live in a gated community, then those being “gated out” becomes an amorphous “other.” This “other” is not limited solely to criminals and potential lawbreakers but to *all* those outside the gate, including *themselves*. When gated communities occupied the realm of the upper-class, those households being gated out consisted of everyone who was different from the upper-class, socially, economically and politically. Now that most homeowners believe that anyone – including minorities – can live in a gated community if they so choose, the mental image of households that reside outside the gate has changed.

One resident asked, “are people gating out criminals, or people like me?” The question soon arose: “Who is being gating out?” One homeowner described the individuals being kept out as “those people who don’t belong or shouldn’t be there.” When pressed, participants said that anyone who does not live there, those who do not have permission to be behind the gate and those who look like they do not belong are being gated out. While seemingly innocuous, this is a subtle but important distinction; gated communities are inherently divisive yet open to everyone. This has the effect – as it did for many homeowners in the focus groups – to be less concerned over the proliferation of gated developments, since “anyone” can live in one. However, the *effects* of such developments upon the broader community remain the same. Indeed, now that they are more

commonplace, their effects are larger yet, ironically, concerns over their prevalence are downplayed due to the perception of an open, free housing market with reduced discrimination for all types of homeowners.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of the effects of gated communities came when focus-group participants were asked whether gated communities fit into the “ideal” community they described at the beginning of the sessions. For the majority of homeowners and most planning commissioners, gated communities were nearly antithetical to their “ideal” community. The overwhelming majority of participants felt that gated communities did *not* fit into the “ideal” community they envisioned at the beginning of the sessions.

“I feel like there would be some separation,” one woman explained. “I said that interaction was important to me, to be able to see your neighbors. I just wouldn't feel connected.” Gated communities placed barriers to many characteristics that participants and commissioners alike valued highly: interaction with one’s neighbors, a sense of purpose, and working to address common problems and shared goals.

Generally, most respondents felt that gated communities created an atmosphere of isolation and division, which were antithetical to their ideal community. One man explained that residents living in gated communities “don’t communicate, they don’t get together, they don’t do those [things] and so they’re extremely isolated and choose to be isolated.” Another participant chimed in, “I just don’t feel like everyone would feel connected. I feel like it would just separate us.” While most participants believed that gated communities conflicted with their ideal community, a minority said they could fit into their ideal community but that it just would be harder to achieve due to the gate.

Arguments in Support of Gated Communities

At the end of the focus group sessions, I tested a series of arguments circulating in the scholarly literature in favor of – and in opposition to – gated developments.¹³ This last section of the sessions intentionally challenged participants’ perceptions, attitudes and beliefs regarding gated communities. The objective was to gain a deeper understanding of participants’ beliefs, attitudes and perceptions. I noted whether the tone, language or meaning changed after being presented with arguments (and counterarguments) in favor and in opposition to gated communities. How, and in which direction, participants shifted is just as important as their reactions to specific message statements, because both get us closer to understanding the meaning and consequences that participants ascribed to the gate and gated communities.

Each statement was presented aloud as participants followed along in their handouts. Then each participant was asked to rate each statement on a scale from 0 to 10 on how “convincing” a reason it is to support or oppose gated communities, where zero is a “not convincing at all” reason to support/oppose gated communities and a ten is a “very convincing” reason to support/oppose gated communities. Participants were also invited to cross out any part of the statement they did not like or agree with and circle parts they especially liked or agreed with. Only after each person had rated the statement individually did we discuss their reactions.

Peace of mind, individual choice, and the ability to be autonomous resonated the most with residents. The most convincing message tested in

¹³ See Appendix A for the full text of the materials tested in the focus groups.

support of gated communities is the “peace of mind” statement (see Table 7).¹⁴

Table 7: Arguments in Support of Gated Communities

Arguments in Support of Gated Communities
<p>PRIVATE PROPERTY (a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gated developments are built on private property. So those who want to gate are free to do what they want with their land. It would be different if it was public property they are gating, so they have no obligation to feel any pressures not to gate.
<p>PEACE OF MIND (a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gated communities have received a lot of stigma but it’s about safety and peace of mind. Residents living with gated communities are not any different than those living outside the gate. They want the same things everyone in the community wants: a good community to live and raise their children in.
<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Many gated communities are built in neighborhoods in the inner city or inner suburbs reversing a long trend of disinvestment and flight. Gated communities are needed in these areas for middle class families to move to areas that need a larger tax base. So in many ways, gated communities play a vital role in economic development and revitalizing communities.
<p>MULTICULTURAL (a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gated communities are not about race. More and more minorities are beginning to gate themselves and are taking advantage of the benefits of gated communities. This is not about excluding anyone out.
<p>(a) These headers were never shown to participants.</p>

Participants related to the desires of households residing behind the gate to seek for peace of mind, safety, and security for their families—the very same things participants wanted for themselves and their own families. Many participants knew friends or family members who lived in gated communities, and their own neighborhoods included a good many gated developments within them. Although some participants over the course of a focus-group session

¹⁴ These headers shown in Table 7 were never shown to participants.

questioned how effectively gated communities could deliver on the promise of peace of mind, safety, and security, those reasons to gate remained just as salient at the end of the sessions as they were at the beginning. Participants rated the “private property” message statement almost as highly. The appeals to freedom and individual choice to select and change ones’ property were universally accepted and strongly cherished.

Appeals to improving neighborhoods through economic development received a mixed reception, while highlighting the diversity of residents living in gated communities fell flat. The statement that had the widest range of responses (both high and low) was the “economic development” argument. For some participants this was a very convincing reason to support gated communities, as they were perceived to bring money into the cities and suburbs that were proximate to the gated developments. Other participants found this statement unconvincing as a reason to support gated communities. This result suggests that the economic development aspect of gated communities may not be a primary concern when it comes to supporting their proliferation and popularity, at least as perceived these participants.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the least convincing message tested in support of gated communities was the “multicultural” message. Almost universally – except for the African-American group – participants rejected the notion that gated communities are about race and racial exclusion. While many participants were surprised to learn that Hispanics are more likely to live in a gated development (rental) than any other group, most of them still perceived gated communities to offer equal opportunity to all.

Arguments in Opposition to building Gated Communities

When it came to arguments in opposition to gated communities, no statement was clearly embraced wholeheartedly. Instead, residents pulled themes from each of the statements tested. (See Table 8).

Table 8: Arguments in Opposition to Gated Communities

Arguments in OPPOSITION to Gated Communities
<p>FAIRNESS/EQUALITY (a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gated communities are about fairness and equality. To build a wall is by its very nature meant to exclude someone or group. When a community builds a wall, it reduces space that formally was available for everyone to enjoy. Now one cannot physically exist in this space. That is wrong and shouldn't happen in [YEAR] in America.
<p>RACE/EXCLUSION (a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gated communities are nothing new but the latest chapter in the racially exclusionary U.S. housing policies. Now instead of Jim Crow era laws, racial covenants, and redlining policies of the past, we have gated communities being built. These types of developments may be exclusionary and further aggravate existing racial and economic housing segregation patterns eroding the social fabric of diversity and interaction that is essential to a democratic society.
<p>REDUCE/NARROW PARTICIPATION (a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– The principle of one voice, one vote is at the heart of our American democracy. However, the increased racial segregation of American cities threatens this ideal. Previous research has shown that increasingly homogenous neighborhoods reduce and narrow political participation. Therefore, the increased popularity of exclusive, homogenous gated communities presents a potentially serious problem.
<p>(a) These headers were never shown to participants.</p>

Participants were drawn to several themes, such as fairness, equality and reducing political participation, and strongly opposed to others, such as racial segregation and exclusion. The highest rated statement to *oppose* gated

communities was the “equality/fairness” message.¹⁵ Homeowners lamented the loss of public space and felt that the gate divided groups from one another. This was the most underlined and discussed phrase in any of the messages. One woman explained, shaking her head, “When you put up a wall in front of a community, [now] you no longer can walk there.”

The appeal to fairness and equality framed the issue in a context that made some participants more mindful about being outside the gate. The theme of reducing political participation elicited mixed reactions. While participants were concerned over a reduction in political participation, many simply did not believe this was as serious a problem as asserted in the message statement. To most participants, this message statement was too strongly worded, but the underlying theme of reducing participation was a credible and relevant concern.

Not surprisingly, explicitly linking gated communities into the broader realm of U.S. housing policy or race relations fell flat. Most noticeable in the Caucasian and Latino focus groups, participants rejected the perception that gated communities were racially exclusionary or aggravate existing segregated housing patterns. In fact, in all groups except for the African-American focus group, homeowners did *not* connect gated communities with segregation or race. Most participants (incorrectly) believed the United States was becoming much less segregated economically and racially, especially in the biggest cities in the nation. Across the groups, homeowners felt that gated communities were not the next chapter in racially exclusionary policy and that if one wanted to exclude others, one could do it without the gate, such as enacting land-use policies that limit development to high-end, single-family houses.

¹⁵ These headers were not shown to participants.

We turn now to the last exercise that participants were asked to complete: to write down their main concern(s), if any, over the construction and usage of gated developments. Participants could borrow phrases from previous statements tested or comments made in the discussion or craft an entirely new message. The range of themes that emerged from the messages can be arranged into three categories (as shown in Table 9, using actual wording from participants): 1) insular, narrow benefits or does not benefit community, 2) segregates, promotes segregation by class, and; 3) appeal built on false or faulty promises.

Table 9: Participant Generated Arguments in Opposition to Gated Communities

Participant Generated Arguments in OPPOSITION to Gated Communities	
INSULAR/NARROW BENEFITS/ISOLATION/DIVISION:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Gated communities do not benefit community because it doesn't add anything other than the gate." - "Gated communities exist for a select group of people who want them. They are removing themselves from society. We as a people cannot allow this to happen. There is not a 'privileged' group or society to exist within our community."
SEGREGATES/PROMOTES SEGEGATION:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Gated communities are part of the segregation of the community. The wall separates the social classes. The wall separates the high income from the low income."
FAULTY/FALSE PROMISES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Gated communities have statistically shown that they do not increase property values, decrease crime or increase a sense of tighter community which are all primary reasons for residing within one. Therefore, rendering them ineffective in and amongst themselves as well as in the community they are located in."

Division and isolation were the most common reasons to *oppose* gated developments. Homeowners also cited the isolating effects of such developments upon the broader community and connected them to the overarching theme of

political and social withdrawal. Respondents' perceptions were not merely abstract notions; rather, they derived from direct experience living among such developments and interacting (or, as the case may be, not interacting) with the people live within them. As one homeowner explained, "Gated communities do not enhance the community. It creates a separation between them and you." Another participant added, "Gated communities should be opposed, because they instill a sense of isolation with the community and deter micro-neighborhood friendliness."

Other participants thought that gated developments should be discouraged because such developments might implicitly demean the status of others in the broader community. "To keep others from feeling left out," a woman explained, "and for everyone to feel together [in the] community, gated communities should be opposed."

Some participants were of the view that gated communities promised a lot but delivered very little. One participant explained, "I don't think they should build gated communities, because the gate doesn't change anything. It just makes it harder and longer to get to your neighbors. I see no positive effects [of the gate], and it is just for looks."

A surprising number of participants cited segregation as a reason to oppose gated communities, despite the fact that they rejected the message tying gated communities to racial housing policies. Focus group participants were more concerned over the effects of *class* segregation. "It segregates classes of people," one man asserted. Another participant agreed, saying, "Gated communities have a tendency to divide and segregate communities."

Others said that gated communities were built upon a number of false

promises, and once those were debunked there are few legitimate reasons to have them. “Gated communities add a false sense of security” one homeowner stated and “don’t increase property values of the houses within.” This conclusion led many participants to question why gates were needed. Many of them felt that gated communities promise more than they can deliver and in the end are not worth the potential negative impact upon the broader community.

So far, the results suggest that gated communities – from the perspective of those residing outside the gate – can exert negative effects upon the broader community. Focus-group participants opined that gated communities narrow political participation for persons who live behind the gate, are inherently divisive, and foster feelings of resentment among those living outside the gate towards those who are perceived as withdrawing from their community.

One could feel more confident if these patterns were confirmed by a source independent of the focus groups. Toward that end, I move from a study of homeowners to one of community leaders—specifically, planning commissioners. From their somewhat different vantage point, what do planning commissioners perceive to be the consequences of gated communities upon the broader community? Do their opinions comport with those of the focus group participants, or not? Let’s find out.

Insights from Planning Commissioners

From the onset, planning commissioners were more consistent in their opinions towards gated communities. When asked what the gates symbolize – if anything – a slight majority of commissioners said gated communities symbolized disparity and division over status. One commissioner explained that,

to him, gates symbolized three things: “keep out, a feeling that I’m not welcome, [and] an unwelcome feeling [that] I’m better than you.” A minority of commissioners said gated communities did symbolize status. One commissioner said, “[I]t’s a symbol of status: ‘I live here because I can afford to live here and that makes me better than the person who doesn’t live in a gated community.’” This could be a false choice, however. Gates do not have to be dichotomous in their meaning or effects; they can be both a status symbol *and* have divisive effects. As one commissioner explained, “[Gates] mean two things: it’s keeping something in and it’s keeping something out, and from both sides there can be good and bad kept in and good and bad kept out.”

Commissioners were asked about the advantages and disadvantages gated communities offer residents. To assess the frame commissioners used, I purposefully left *which* residents unspecified. As the conversation deepened, I asked whether or not they thought gated communities affect the broader community and, if so, in which way(s), for which populations, and direction and magnitude. The majority of commissioners used a frame that started with those *behind* the gate, but they were much more concerned about the broader community than were participants in the focus groups.

“Sense of security” was the most cited benefit, but most were skeptical of this claim. When asked what advantages, if any, gated developments offered residents, nine out of ten commissioners said they offered a greater “sense of security” for those living behind the gate. However, most said that this sense of security was fleeting and was rarely achieved in practice. “I don’t think the numbers bear that out,” one commissioner asserted referring to the promise of a safer environment. He continued, “I don’t think the perception lines the reality.”

Another said, “If someone is interested in burglarizing a neighborhood, they’re gonna be able to burglarize the neighborhood whether or not there’s a gate on it.” This suggests the primary benefit that gated communities profess offer might not be a reality.

Privacy and quietness were mentioned second after security and safety. “I mean, they’re paying the money to live in a gated community for safety [and] privacy,” one commissioner noted. Gated developments do appear to offer reduced traffic within a given development, and so on this promise such communities may deliver. Several commissioners said they did not see *any* benefit to these developments, yet they believed they should be an option for people who want it. As one commissioner explained, “I guess [one benefit] would be [that] if you *did* want to live in that type of community, it would be available to you.”

According to planning commissioners, the benefits of gated communities were limited to those *behind* the gate. Gated communities were perceived to have high quality amenities that made life behind them more enjoyable. “When you have a gated community,” one commissioner explained, “generally you have to have parks and other recreational facilities included within the gate.” However, when asked what, if any, benefits gated communities offer the *broader* community, all of the planning commissioners gave the same response: none.

In contrast to the issue of affordable housing, which does serve a larger purpose, gated communities appear to offer no benefit – directly or indirectly – to those living outside the gate. “I have a pretty strong opinion,” one commissioner admitted. “I don't think there are any benefits to being in a gated community.” According to planning commissioners in this study, the benefits of gated

communities appear to be *solely* for those *behind* the gate. “Well, I don’t know if they [gated communities] necessarily offer the broader community anything at all,” one commissioner noted. “I think it benefits the people that are in them and can afford to pay for that luxury.” Another commissioner agreed, “I don’t see any advantages for the larger community of having a gated community within the environment.”

“False sense of security” was perceived as constituting the biggest disadvantage for those living behind the gate. Much as in the focus groups, when asked whether there were any disadvantages to gated developments, commissioners tended to start with those behind the gate. Half of the commissioners said the biggest disadvantage to gated developments for households living within one was a “false sense of security.” “The people that live in gated communities,” one commissioner explained, “feel like they have this sense of security that they don’t.”

But a gate is not only about safety. It is also signaling to people outside that they are different. One commissioner detailed his experience, “By putting up gates, they’re not putting them up [just] to keep the robbers out. They are putting them up to keep somebody that isn’t their like-type or mindset out.” This signaling was troubling for several commissioners, because it could sow the seeds of discord with those outside the gate.

When it came to the biggest consequence for the broader community, commissioners cited reduced and narrowed political participation most frequently. When asked what, if anything, these types of developments do to communities, six of the ten commissioners responded that gated communities reduced and narrowed residential political participation. As one commissioner explained in

detail, “A community is often formed—or at its core, in other words—[in] eating establishments, working environment, ...where we really see people, [in] recreation, you know, be it bowling or hockey, or ... that sort of thing. [I]t seems kind of hard to imagine this [with gated communities].”

I followed up this open-ended question with a list of possible consequences—hindering social networks, trust, willingness to get involved in community issues, dividing communities—and asked whether any of these could also be negative externalities resulting from the presence of gated communities in varying concentrations. Half of the interviewed commissioners said that some or all of those consequences stemmed from gated communities to various degrees.

“I think that you’ve really hit the nail on the head,” one commissioner remarked. “I think each and every one of those are potential unintended consequences.” But a majority said that reduced and narrowed political participation was the biggest consequence for the broader community. “Why should I get involved in this area of the community,” one commissioner speculated, “when I have my own community that’s over here and that’s walled?” She continued, “I don’t want to get involved, because we already have our own park and we already have our own pool.... If it’s a school, they have [another] school near them. Why should we bother with anybody from another school?” Another commissioner said he saw this happen in this own community: “They are committed to their own neighborhood and amenities and the safety of their neighborhood, but I think that stops at the gate.... I don’t think they are as inclined to worry about what happens on the other side of town, for example.” Another commissioner was even more explicit: “[If] it’s something that directly affects them as a community, especially when it comes to perceived home prices,

they'll come out in force. If it's something else in the community, they're not as vocal." Yet another commissioner chimed in, saying, "Unless it affects them, they probably will not participate in political activities. Now if you want to do something across the street from them, they will be in up in arms; [but] a mile away, they couldn't care less."

Second to reduced and narrowed political participation are exclusion and discord for those outside the gate. "They can be exclusionary," one commissioner noted. "You hate to have them be a separatist unit, and you have to be careful about that. I don't think anybody would want to see a city planned where everything was walled and gated." With this division can come seeds of resentment. "For those outside of that gated community," one commissioner explained, "there [often] is some sense of resentment.... Resentment based on ignorance, ignorance of what the gated community [really] offers. Maybe a sense that 'Well, gee, there must be something really great in there, and they don't want me in there seeing it and experiencing it.'"

Other times, resentment may be based on something more tangible. One commissioner explained, "To the degree there are parks within the gated community that are not accessible to the larger community, and if there's a situation where a larger community did not have the economic wherewithal to have it all, there could be resentment just simply based on actual facilities within the gated community that are not accessible to the larger community." Another commissioner described a personal story and highlighted some of the divisive effects gated communities have on the broader community:

Thinking back to communities that my parents grew up in, where there's no such thing as a gate other than in your backyard fence, we grew up in a place [where] there were no gates. We went

where we chose, different neighborhoods, we had friends in every neighborhood, we could freely move between [them]. So there was a sense of community.... You'd lose some of that.

While race relations was not raised as a topic during the interviews, one commissioner from the only Southern MSA in the sample of commissioners explained his frustration with gated communities:

It's hard enough to make housing affordable and fair and equal for all, even with the best intentions. I think when you put a gate up it reinforces what is already a difficult sort of mix to make happen. And I think it builds resentment.

Another commissioner summed up his views, "[T]here are a lot of people on the inside [of the gated community] and see it as comfort[able] and safe. I see it from the outside, and I see it as divisive and as a way to separate one part of the community [from the other]."

Commissioners were generally of the view that the intensity of effects of gated developments depends upon their relative concentration and placement. Most commissioners said they would not want to see a community made entirely of gated developments, but none offered an opinion as to at what point the negative effects became disruptive. "Oh it depends on how many there are and [how] even," one commissioner explained. "Ours are pretty spread out but if you have too many of them in a particular area it would very quickly end up with an 'us versus them' mentality." A commissioner from a municipality located just outside of Las Vegas said that half of his town was gated and then added, "But they're so common, I don't think it's a big deal. It's just life as we know it here." This suggests that concentration is only part of the equation. Placement is another. With placement comes the role of "good" planning, which – according to commissioners – can reduce but not completely eliminate some of the negative

externalities.

Taken together, the insights from the planning commissioners bolster many of the initial focus group findings. From the perspectives of residents living outside the gate *and* those in leadership positions, there was a broad consensus over the perceived effects of gated developments upon the broader community. In communities exercising the gating option, participation in community affairs was perceived to be narrowed and reduced. Gating can instill resentment, envy, and division and make it harder to achieve the “ideal” community many strived to create.

If both residents and planning commissioners agree upon the potentially deleterious impact of gated developments upon the broader community, then one might infer that there is less cause for concern, since neither would be eager to permit such developments to proliferate. However, as I show below, this is not the case. First I turn to residents to get their perceptions of whose interests prevail, and then I consider the views of commissioners to see how their decisions are actually made and ultimately influenced.

Whose Interests Prevail Systematically?

To tap into how – if at all – gated communities are connected to powerful and moneyed interests, I asked residents a series of questions. The questions included: Who advocates for and against their use? What role the market should play versus the voices of those living in the communities where gated developments are built? Whose interests prevail and whose voice is heard the loudest if there is a conflict over a gated development being built?

Residents perceived developers and real estate agents to be the primary

reason why gated communities are so popular and in demand. Contrary to what commissioners said, most residents believed that such communities are built not because there is demand for them but because they are being marketed using potentially misleading promotional campaigns. Participants in the focus groups were of the view that developers and real estate agents market these developments as something desirable to obtain. “I feel like this is a marketing ploy,” one resident said. “They're [developers] capitalizing on the [promise of] safety, when maybe it's not there.” The majority of participants believed the demand for gated communities was created by effective marketing that capitalized upon the public’s misunderstanding of the facts. While most participants acknowledged that there was a baseline of public demand for gated developments, most of them also felt it was being manipulated by individuals seeking to profit from such developments. Some participants struggled as to which came first, the demand or the gated developments. The consensus, however, was that developers and real estate agents artificially increased the demand for gated developments.

Residents living outside of gated developments were seen as the biggest opponents to such developments. No other group or organization was named. Interestingly enough, when asked who was against building gated communities, most residents paused. One woman reflected, “I’m assuming there probably are. I just don’t know of them.” After a moment, residents said the only ones they could imagine being opposed to gated developments were those in the neighborhoods where they were located or were being built. “Probably the person or probably the place wherever you planted it [a gated development] will be pissed about it,” one man quipped. Another participant said, “I don’t hear of

anybody saying much.... You certainly don't hear of cities or counties or politicians saying 'don't do it.' They are staying out of it." One woman said, "It's rare that you find a gated community that everyone says 'Man, I hate that area.'" In fact, many residents took comfort in the fact no one else was concerned over the growth of gated communities, because it suggested there was no downside to them or anything to be concerned about.

That said, residents believed there was a power dynamic that systematically favored developers and others who promoted gated developments over those residing outside the gate. When asked who currently has power over the decision-making process of whether or not to build gated communities, the majority of focus-group participants replied developers and real estate agents wanting to build and sell this type of housing wielded a disproportionate amount of power. Individuals who may object to the placement, size and number of such developments were perceived as having little influence over the decision making process. "I'd say," one resident explained, "if you're asking me do I want involvement [in the decision making process]: yes, because if they are going to build a gated community across the street from me, I'll [want to] have a say in that." Across the groups, there was a shared, nearly universal belief that residents ought to be able to influence decisions about the siting of gated developments within their own communities. "I think the community's interests should prevail," one focus-group participant asserted. Another one agreed: "The [interests of] the people there should prevail." "In general," one participant observed, "I would want people on the other side [of the gate] to have a say in it."

The majority of participants believed that the nearby presence of gated housing developments did affect them, and they wanted to have a say over their

presence in their own neighborhoods. Moreover, participants said they wanted the interests of persons living in the community to take precedence over those of developers and real estate agents. One resident explained, “The overall vicinity... should come into play. The builders should be the last. [I]t should be the people living there, [both] existing now and into the future....” In sum, the focus-group sessions reveal that residents living near gated housing developments believe that there is a fundamental disconnect between the interests that prevail (namely, those of developers and real estate agents) and the interests that *should* prevail (those of the residents in communities where such developments are being built).

With these insights in mind, we turn now to the expressed views of the sample of planning commissioners. The local planning process is multi-layered and dynamic. Numerous ordinances, building codes, and regulations, which vary from locale to locale, must be taken into account. Developers proposing a major planned development must meet these requirements, and typically obtain approval from the planning department, the economic development department, conduct and pass an environmental impact study, submit to a public hearing and, ultimately, gain the assent of the planning commission and the city council or mayor, depending upon the ordinances of the particular municipality. Although the ordinances are a matter public record, the evaluation process and the criteria used are variable and open to interpretation. To better understand the process, the commissioners in the sample were asked to imagine a hypothetical situation: a developer wanted to build a gated development in their community. I asked them to walk me through their roles from beginning to end to highlight how they make their decisions, which criteria they used, and how they weighed different

populations, groups, interests, and goals. This hypothetical example enabled the commissioners to explain their evaluation process in detail regardless of the number or concentration of gated developments in their respective communities.

Given the shared concerns over potentially negative externalities stemming from gated communities, it is somewhat surprising that none of the communities in this sample used special criteria for evaluating gated developments. “I think that [the gate] would be a very small part of the total package,” one commissioner observed. Commissioners said these planned developments must go through the same process but are not subject to any special scrutiny or evaluation. Most commissioners said that they put their trust in the evaluation process and their staff to make the right decisions. “You can go through a tremendous amount of time and development back and forth with the staff,” one commissioner explained, “before it ever gets to us as planning commissioners.”

Commissioners used a broad perspective and a holistic approach when evaluating gated communities. Nearly all the commissioners in the study readily admitted that by the time a proposed project came before their committee, they knew the developer had satisfied the prerequisite steps (e.g., conducted and passed the environmental impact study, met or exceeded local zoning ordinances and building codes), and their primary job was to evaluate the proposed development in broader terms. One commissioner explained how he sees his role, “‘Is this really the best use of the land?’ which is always our number one criteria. ‘Is this the best use for this particular piece of land?’” In general, there is no “check list” at this stage. Most commissioners described their role as evaluating

how well the proposed project “fits into the fabric” of the existing community.

Commissioners said they were not particularly interested in details (such as color or specific architectural details) but were more interested in “how it all fits together.” When asked to explain what they meant by “fit”, one commissioner described it this way: “When it does [get to us], we get to look at the [big] picture...we look at how it interfaces with the rest of the community.” “And so we’re not looking necessarily down at the micro level,” she continued, “I’m not looking does it have gold plating on the gate? I’m looking at how it fits within the city and our long-term plan for a city.” Another described his role, “[The] flow and the integrity and balance to the long-term plan is something in the back of our minds.” Another commissioner explained it this way: “We’ll look at things like has the integrity of the area been maintained? Basically, we didn’t put a red shoe in a box of ten whites. It fits, it flows. And that covers so many things.”

Decisions about gated communities are a balancing act of satisfying interests and minimizing trade offs. Planning commissioners said they try to balance the needs and desires of their fellow residents while minimizing the negative impact of those decisions upon others in the broader community. “There’s a tap dance to be done,” one commissioner quipped. Another commissioner who has struggled with this balancing act described his experience: “There are some people who legitimately have issues of privacy and security that they need some place like that, but it’s a real balance scheme from a city’s perspective as how much do you allow for that?” Another commissioner asked, “How many people really need it [to live in a gated development]? How many people just think they need it and it’s their ego saying, ‘I want to live in a gated

community?””

The trade-offs involve not only the opinions of residents who wish to live behind the gate and those who do not. It also involves developers' interests and the matter of economic growth. One commissioner explained that his attitude towards gated communities could be changed if they serve a broader goal, such as the economic revitalization of a low-income neighborhood. “If a developer came in and said, ‘Listen, we’d like to buy up these two or three apartment complexes and level them and build a really nice gated community, ...I think we would look very positively on that.’” When asked to clarify, he said he could favor it because it would bring money to a poor part of town and, more importantly, “it can be a catalyst to really turn an area around and stop the decay and regenerate and reinvigorate it.” In fact, all of the commissioners, even ones who were inclined to be negative towards gated developments, said they were open towards such developments, depending upon the specific project. “I’m in the middle,” one commissioner, who was initially hesitant towards gated communities, admitted. “I could be swayed.” In sum, it appears that some commissioners are trying to capitalize upon the demand by one segment of residents (and developers) to meet other goals, while still trying to minimize the negative spillover resulting from such decisions.

A city’s master plan provides a broad framework but is flexible and subject to interpretation. Commissioners are concerned over how developments fit with the existing build environment and the long-term effects of those developments well after developers leave. As a result, commissioners kept their community’s master plan top-of-mind. One commissioner explained that his community’s master plan “plays a very big role, [and that’s] the reason the plan is constantly

updated.... It's not like we carved it in stone in the '60s and set it up on the shelf and said, 'That's it!'" Another commissioner said, "Nobody can draw a plan to make an entire city come together." Commissioners indicated that, for the most part, their municipal master plans were quite flexible with respect to gated communities. In fact, unless a gated development was explicitly banned, one could fit into the plan of each community in this study. When asked to clarify, one commissioner stressed the importance of being flexible: "The more broad you get, the grayer it gets. Believe me, machines can't do it. You need interpretation." Sometimes flexibility bent to favor private interests, however. One commissioner recalled such an instance. "The previous comprehensive plan unfortunately wasn't looked at, and there were things that were happening that were contrary to the comprehensive plan."

When asked what types of questions and concerns they would have when considering a proposal for a gated development in their own community, increased traffic congestion and emergency access topped commissioners' lists. "Basically [I'm] going to ask about traffic flows," one commissioner said. "How many new cars are you going to put on the road? Are the arterial streets going to be affected? Is the ingress and egress to your neighborhoods going to be affected? Is it designed properly? Do you have parks or green space?" "The main thing I can think of," one commissioner explained, "is that the entrance has to be designed a little bit different... the egress for your emergency responders." Another commissioner agreed: "I think the only discussion I can think of that came up [for gated communities] are access to emergency personnel."

Second to vehicular traffic concerns is the desire to minimize the impact of development on those living adjacent to a new gated community. The challenge

becomes how to integrate gated developments into the overall plan, enabling it to fit and flow with the existing community. Even here, though, the emphasis tended to be upon physical impact. Notable by their absence were concerns about the potential negative social impacts of gated developments upon the broader community. In the interviews, when commissioners indicated that they attempted to minimize the impact of gated developments upon the broader community, they said they looked mostly to make sure traffic congestion was not overly burdensome on those living outside the gate.

As commissioners described their decision-making processes, it became clear that there were few if any formal assessments or evaluations of potential social impacts. Commissioners tended to narrow their immediate concerns to traffic congestion, emergency access, and overall “fit” with the existing built environment. The assessment of what makes a good “fit” was subjective, and commissioners said they have disagreed with their colleagues at times about it. “I find the wall [to be] a problem,” one commissioner noted. “But if there’s other people that don’t think that it’s a problem on the planning commission, they would approve it.” Another commissioner admitted she had been overruled by her colleagues, several of whom live in a gated community, on building a gated development in her neighborhood. Another commissioner, one who was not concerned about the impact of gated communities, said, “I don’t know anybody on the planning and zoning committee that would object to this. If people are willing to do that and bear the burden of maintaining their own roads and gutter systems, [I don’t see anything wrong with it].” The concern here is not that people disagree but that commissioners acknowledged the potential for negative impact upon the broader community yet did not assess those potential effects in a

systematic way.

According to the commissioners included in this study, most communities a neutral stance toward gated developments. Most of them relied upon “the market” to allocate the number of gated developments in communities. To minimize any unforeseen or unanticipated consequences, local governments provided meetings and forums in which members of the public could speak their minds regarding proposed developments. Planning commissioners said they take comments from these meetings into careful consideration when they evaluate a potential project. “[W]e pay very particular attention to the feedback of the people,” one commissioner stated. “I mean, that’s where many times we amend those development laws.”

But there appear to be some challenges in relying on residents to sound the alarm. One is the problem of participation. One commissioner said candidly, “It helps when people come in.” Another commissioner stated:

Normally, they'll [developers] come into the meeting and discuss with us what they'd like to do, and then we go back and say, ‘You need to do this, this and that.’ And then when they come back for the next meeting, [it] would be a public hearing where the community has a chance of input. And I can almost bet that there'd be nobody [to] show up.

Several commissioners noted that oftentimes it is not simply an issue of apathy. Sometimes citizens are not made aware of the goings-on in their community in a way that allows them time to respond. As one commissioner explained,

One of the big things that happens way too often is the homeowners will get a 72-hour notice that a zoning change has been applied for, and they’re like, ‘I’ve got three days to try and organize the neighborhood!’ You know they don’t consider that fair, and there’s been a lot of discussion about that. But that’s where we are. That’s our policy right now.”

Another commissioner explained that in his community the notices are sent only

to households immediately adjacent to the proposed development. “[I]f you’re within 500 feet you’ll get a notice,” but residents living more than 500 feet away might not be notified, which can inhibit full participation. Taken together, relying upon the public to assess the broad impacts of gated developments is a tenuous proposition. As a practical matter, that responsibility devolves primarily to the planning commissioners.

In their interviews, most of the commissioners indicated that they harbored at least some reservations about the impact that gated developments can have upon a community. But, they said, there is demand for them, and their job is to try to accommodate the needs of all of their residents while minimizing the impacts on others as best they can. “[Gated communities] wouldn’t be my favorite thing to have next to me, but if there’s a demand and people want it…” one commissioner explained, leaving the end of his sentence implicit.

Commissioners who strongly opposed gated communities were nonetheless hesitant to impose their preferences upon others. “Well, you know,” one commissioner said, “I’m not one that wants to dictate to others where they can and cannot live.” Another commissioner explained, “I don’t like them. I don’t like them at all, [but] I believe in a mix of housing. I believe in choice.” Being able to choose one’s housing type is a broad theme and plays a powerful role in commissioners’ evaluations of gated communities. “I think that I would be open to it [a gated community],” one commissioner admitted. “I try not to pass judgment before I’ve heard everything—you know, both sides.”

The tension between an individual’s right to choose and the effects of those choices on others is echoed in the focus groups. Participants were evenly split between saying they preferred to let the market decide and being more

cautious over building such developments until seeing how they affect communities. One homeowner explained,

I still think you should have your choice. If I want to be there, I can go when I want [to]. If I don't want to be there, I want that option, too. I don't think I should be forced [in]to 'Hey, we need to have 20 of them,' or 'No, we can't have [more than] two.'"

Another participant disagreed: "I'd be cautious [over building gated communities], because the market can be manipulated." Ultimately, most participants believed that "the market" should determine their number and location, and not some "arbitrary" public policy. At the same time, however, homeowners said they *are* concerned about the *impact* that gated communities may have. This paradox suggests that both commissioners and residents struggled between the rights of the individual to select the housing type of their choice and the rights of others in the community who are affected by such choices.

There appears to be a systematic bias towards individual choice over community interests. The result is that interests that favor gated communities tend to trump broader community interests and conceptions of the public good. Although most of the interviewed commissioners were of the view that gated developments can affect the broader community negatively, the evaluation process they described appears to be biased towards permitting more gated developments to be built despite whatever personal reservations the commissioners harbored. Most of them dismissed the claims developers make about higher resale values, a stronger tight-knit community behind the gate, prestige, and even if the gates are needed in the first place. Yet even the commissioners who had the strongest opinions against the proliferation of gated

communities nevertheless strongly believed in the individual's right to choose the type of development in which to live.

An important focus of this section has been centered on the social and political consequences of gated developments upon the broader community from the perspective of residents living in communities with high concentrations of gated communities and from those in power to approve or deny such developments. Both sets of data indicate that gated communities are perceived to *have* a potentially negative effect in terms of reducing and narrowing participation among those living behind the gate and reducing social interaction and fostered feelings of resentment, division and exclusion among those outside the gate. However, planning commissioners – while acknowledging these effects – do *not* systematically weigh these potential negative effects in their decision making on whether to approve or deny gated developments in their community. Individual choice remains of paramount importance, thereby allowing households with the sufficient resources to withdraw from the community, while the negative consequences of their choices are spread across the broader community.

Local mechanisms to capture public reaction to gated communities might be of limited effectiveness due to lack of interest, but the problem could also be due to misinformation, narrowed administrative procedures, and restricted notifications. Most communities have not engaged in systematic deliberations about the broader consequences of gated developments, nor have they commissioned systematic studies to document the extent and intensity of potentially negative social and civic externalities. As a result, some communities with gated developments constitute something of an on-going experiment, the future of which is uncertain.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Implications for Public Policy and Next Steps for Future Research

Building upon the findings detailed in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses upon key implications for public policy, particularly at the local level. The last thirty years have witnessed a proliferation of gated communities in nearly every major metropolitan area in America. Gated communities, once an option only for the wealthy and elite, have now become a credible option for mainstream, middle-class Americans. While scholars have focused on *why* people choose to live behind the gate or explore what life is like “behind the gate,” I argue, respectfully, they miss a critical point: the effects gated developments have on the *broader* community. The growth of gated developments affects the *entire* community and has implications for residents, communities and public policy more broadly.

This investigation is the first to explore the effects of gated developments on the broader community in social and political terms from the perspective of those *outside* the gate. The failure to subject this topic to rigorous academic analysis may be due to several factors: 1) the lack of high quality, quantitative data; 2) the severe downturn in the housing market pushing this issue to the sidelines and; 3) the relatively recent explosion in the number of gated communities across the country. As a result, the impact of gated developments upon the broader community has been unexplored and undefined until now.

The findings from this study provide insights into the scope and extent of the negative externalities of gated communities as perceived by nearby residents

and by citizens serving on local planning commissions. Both sets of informants were found to believe that gated communities have dual effects: they reduce and narrow the broader civic participation of those households behind the gate, and they limit social interaction and foster feelings of resentment and exclusion among at least some residents who do not live inside the gate. Evidence revealed in the present study suggests that this holds true irrespective of region and number of nearby gated communities. There appears to be some variance in the intensity of those perceptions by race and ethnicity, however. Members of the African-American focus group tended to be particularly attuned to exclusionary messages that gates can convey. On the other hand, Latino participants were distinguished by their aspiration to reside in such developments.

An exploration of the decision making process by planning commissioners authorized to approve gated developments revealed the interests of those seeking to gate (developers and residents who want to live in a gated community) appeared to prevail systematically over the interests of others, including even fellow planning commissioners who opposed their usage. This bias was aggravated by an overall lack of a formal evaluation of the impact gated developments have on the broader community in social or political terms.

Taken together, these findings suggest that gated communities *do* have substantial negative effects on the broader community and have implications for residents, communities and public policy. The implications from the research follow.

Key Insights from the Investigation

The following are insights gleaned from the focus groups with residents

and telephone interviews with planning commissioners. I briefly describe each of these insights and then suggest broader implications for public policy in the following section.

Initial framework matters. Where participants place themselves vis-à-vis the gate is essential to understanding public opinion on gated communities, the meaning ascribed to the gate, and the perceived impact upon the broader community. Except for the African American group, residents initially placed themselves behind the gate looking out. As a result, most of them did not consider or downplayed the possible impact gated communities had on the broader community. Once participants were placed outside of the gate, the meaning – and their opinions towards it – changed sharply. Participants became increasingly critical of the necessity and consequences of the gate. Planning commissioners tended to have a broader lens on this issue. However, most of them also started from the perspective of those behind the gate looking out. This suggests, due to the initial framework used, the perceived negative externalities might be reduced or expressed to policy makers with less intensity.

Gated communities have a broad but not universal appeal. Study participants admitted that gated communities appealed to them on some level. The appeal was highest for Latino and Caucasian participants and lowest for African American participants. Originally I assumed that gated communities had a limited appeal. However, what was surprising was their widespread appeal, even to those most critical of their popularity and usage. In addition, the appeal was fairly robust, even after focus-group participants were presented with facts that debunked many of the positive features that participants found appealing.

This suggests that Americans have firmly entrenched beliefs and that many retain them to justify their desire towards gated communities.

There are marked differences in the meaning of the gate by racial and ethnic identity. When it comes to the meaning of the gate – and gated communities more generally – opinions are sharply divided along racial lines. For Latino and Caucasian residents, gated communities were perceived to be a symbol of the “good life” that was part of the American myth. Caucasian and Latino participants felt their desire for nice things and working hard to achieve them was uniquely American. For African-American participants, however, the gate was a symbol of racial segregation and a reminder they had not fully arrived. African-American participants held this view even after being presented with the changing racial demographics of households living in gated developments. This range of meaning associated with the gate suggests the message the gate projects is dynamic and represents more than a means of entry. Its effects run deeper than initially imagined.

The rise in the popularity of gated communities in the middle class appears to reduce the intensity of concerns over exclusionary effects. Except for the African American participants, gated developments were not seen as exclusionary if everyone (in theory) could buy into the gated development even if the effect of which was exclusionary onto the broader community. For participants in this research, the primary concern was that everyone had the ability to buy into a gated community as an issue of fairness. In other words, division was tolerable but (racial) exclusion was not. The fact that anyone could live in a gated community assuaged concerns over exclusion. However,

regardless of the semantics, the effect of these developments on the broader community remains unchanged.

Gated developments are perceived to have negative externalities for the broader community in terms of reduced participation and interaction in local affairs and resentment towards those who withdraw from community. While the perceived effects of gated communities was affected by the initial frame participants used and the degree of their desire to live within one, residents and planning commissioners alike admitted they *were* concerned about the negative impact gated communities had on the broader community. More specifically, the biggest concern over gated communities was the sense of withdrawal from community affairs on matters of shared concern and importance. In addition to re-ordering and narrowing priorities of those behind the gate, gated communities were perceived as a major barrier to the creation of the most cherished aspects of their “ideal” neighborhood: a larger purpose, neighbors who actively worked together, a place that fostered a sense of belonging that was safe, friendly and comfortable.

The effects of gated communities run contrary to the “ideal” community they strive to achieve. With surprising consistency, residents and planning commissioners were clear on the characteristics of their ideal community: a safe, thriving community with high levels of political participation and residential involvement in community affairs; a place where neighbors knew – and were connected – to each other. However, those very attributes were *harder* to achieve when a community had gated developments within its limits. At the end of the interviews with commissioners, I asked them whether gated

communities could fit into the “ideal” community they described at the beginning of the study. The majority of commissioners said that gated communities *could* be part of their ideal community but that it would be *in spite of* gated developments, not because of them. In other words, due to the negative effects that stemmed from gated communities, the rest of the community must strive to overcome these in order to achieve their ideal.

Language matters when discussing gated communities and whether people should care. The most convincing arguments tested in support of gated communities focused on individual choice and decisions, autonomy, and private property. In addition, arguments that highlighted and reinforced the positive aspects of gated communities (e.g., increased property values, less crime and more tight-knit communities) garnered high ratings. Arguments that challenged those perceptions with factual data, discussed broader community effects in terms of participation and engagement, loss of public space and the “withdrawal of the successful” helped reframe this issue. By the end of the discussion, most participants shifted to becoming more neutral and critical (English-speaking Latino, Caucasian) or negative (African American) on the overall effect that gated communities had on the broader community. Much of this shift occurred after being presented with more information and facts about gated communities and exploring what the gate promised, what the gate delivered, and explicitly asking what the impact would be on those outside the gate as many participants never considered this question before. It is important to note that while these arguments did shift some participants’ opinions, they did not create opinion where there was none. In fact, for many participants, this was an emotional issue, and the

arguments tested sought to reveal their true opinions through open-ended discussion, facts and more discussion.

There appears to be systematic bias towards individual choice over community interest. While most planning commissioners felt that gated developments impacted the broader community negatively, the evaluation process that commissioners described appeared to have a systemic bias towards permitting gated developments to be built (all things being equal). Most of the commissioners I interviewed dismissed claims that developers made about higher resale values, a stronger tight-knit community behind the gate, prestige and even if the gates are needed in the first place. Even commissioners who had the strongest opinions against the use of gated communities still strongly believed in the individual's right to choose the type of home to reside in.

A disconnect: an acknowledgement of negative effects on the broader community but no formal evaluation of these impacts in their evaluation of gated communities. There seems to be a disconnect between the subjective goals commissioners sought in their ideal community and their formal evaluation of the housing designed to create said community. Political participation and community engagement were sought in almost all of the commissioners' ideal communities, yet their formal evaluation of gated developments were devoid of any metrics of social or political impacts. In other words, commissioners valued a community that fostered high levels of political and social involvement, yet they did not evaluate or even ask (formally) whether or not these types of communities actually fostered or hindered the type of community they were trying to create. The primary concerns in the evaluation

process were focused on traffic flow and emergency access. Even after several follow-up questions, most commissioners stubbornly focused on those areas in their evaluation of gated communities. Consequences were still viewed mostly in physical terms (e.g., traffic congestion, blocking access to main arteries), not in social or political terms. This suggests there is an absence of systemic evaluation of the impact of these developments in social or political terms. Worse, it makes making an informed decision harder to make and places communities at risk for unanticipated consequences for residents on both sides of the gate. What is needed is formal evaluations of the impact gated developments have in the areas where commissioners see the negative effects (e.g., reduced and narrowed political participation, feelings of exclusion, division and resentment). Just as developers have to show the impact on the physical environment, commissioners should be able to measure and evaluate the impact of gated developments on the broader community *before* deciding whether or not to build them.

A lot of faith is placed in "good" planning, but there are limits when it comes to gated communities. For many commissioners, "good" planning was about accommodating everyone's needs while they minimized the negative externalities on everyone else. Overall, commissioners were confident in the power of good planning to help make their communities places people wanted to live, grow and raise children. However, they admitted there were limits to how much good planning could do to overcome the negative externalities that stemmed from gated communities on the broader community. Even when they tried to make sure the gated community fit with the adjacent community, the very nature of having a gate made that fit all the more difficult to achieve. I ask: how

does one adjoin two pieces and make them flow when one has wall with a gate? Good planning can overcome many obstacles but may not be able to negate all of the effects of gated communities on the broader community.

No studies to date and none planned for the future. While most commissioners said they have reservations with gated communities, none of the towns have commissioned or conducted a study on this topic to more fully study their true impact on the broader community. In fact, only one community has had a town meeting on it, and ultimately decided to severely restrict their use after having placed a moratorium on them while the entire community weighed in. Even in places with high concentrations of gated communities said they had few conversations over their use or their impact on others beyond traffic congestion and fit. As a result, while the effects are real, the scope and magnitude are not fully known. Without additional resources focused on this topic, it will be difficult for communities to make fully informed decisions about the types of communities they build and want to live in. The present study provides a baseline to build upon.

"Fire Alarm" failsafe might not be enough. Relying on a "fire alarm" style alert system as a failsafe might not be enough to protect residents from the negative externalities from gated communities. The term "fire alarm" was coined by Mathew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz (1984) when theorizing about types of congressional oversight. "Fire alarm" oversight generally involves listening out for complaints from citizens who bring potential problems to policy-makers' attention. Commissioners admitted that most residents were not involved in most community planning discussions, nor were they paying attention or

particularly informed about the changes in their community in terms of planned developments. Moreover, given the findings from the focus groups where misinformation combined with the initial frame most residents used may result in residents being much less likely than commissioners to “sound the alarm.” As a result, this places the burden and responsibility back onto the planning commissioners to properly and fully evaluate the true benefits and costs associated with gated communities.

Administrative procedures might serve to reinforce narrow focus.

Commissioners readily admit the issue of gated communities is not top-of-mind, especially with the downturn in the housing market. However, the limited scope on this topic could also be a consequence of the administrative process that most communities use to notify residents about new development. Each community represented in this study requires developers to notify residents adjacent to a proposed new development to enable residents with a chance to weigh in. Typically, the law requires developers to notify those living within 500 feet of a proposed project. In addition, in several communities, the law requires only a 72-hour notice before a hearing, which can make it difficult to organize a response to a proposed development. Taken together, these administrative procedures might have the consequence of circumventing a broader conversation about the types of communities desired and for whom. This state of affairs is aggravated by the seemingly innocuous process of hearing each proposed project one-at-a-time in front of the planning commission. If these proposed projects occur in separate parts of the city, it can be difficult to be knowledgeable about these changes and makes having a broader conversation about the desirability and impact of gated developments much more difficult.

Critical time: commissioners more open to development – of any type - than during the housing boom. Time has never been so urgent to understand better the impact of gated developments on the broader community than now. With the housing sector in recession, communities have a unique, but quite possibly fleeting, opportunity to pause and evaluate the type of communities in which they want to live and to assess the types of the neighborhoods they have built. Yet, several commissioners said they were actually more open to development – of any kind – to get back to the growth they experienced during the years of the real estate bubble. One commissioner said, “Right now we would welcome everybody with open arms!” He then laughed and continued, “We want to see new developments. We want to see activity. We want to see things back to the way they used to be.” Some communities are apparently so eager for new development that concerns over the negative impact that gated communities have on the broader community might be further muted in their evaluation process.

Implications for Public Policy

Architecture and the spaces we create matter. The spaces that we create, build and live within have very real effects when it comes to our interactions with each other and our engagement with the broader community. The findings from this research suggest that the effects of gated developments upon the broader community manifest themselves in the scope of public engagement in local civic and social affairs. In fact, the effects of the gate extend much farther than previously thought. The feelings of exclusion and division run deep and permeate across much of the community. There is also a feeling of resentment for many residents, especially among the African Americans residents

– many of whom attributed the gate as a symbol of exclusion. With the state of existing data, it is difficult to tease out the causal flows of whether it is the architecture itself that is causing the effects or the types of people who are attracted to the architecture that is creating the effects. Either way, the impact on the broader community remains the same. And these effects are the main focus of this research study.

Gated communities overpromise, fail to deliver, and undermine community goals. Gated communities have an allure and appeal for many residents. Gated communities appeared to offer security, better amenities, close-knit communities and a place in which children can play outside without fear. The present study suggests, however, that not only do gated communities fail to deliver on these promises, they actually *undermine* the collective goals of the broader community. Nevertheless, many participants in this study still aspired to live within a gated development. Part of this may be due to the initial frame used in relation to the gate and whether they see themselves as being impacted or not by the effects of the gate. In other words, if residents place themselves behind the gate, they are much more likely to downplay the impact of the gate. However, if they see themselves as outside the gate (as African-American residents and planning commissioners tend to do), they are more likely to identify the type and scope of the effects on themselves and the community at large. The lasting appeal of the gate – despite acknowledging negative impacts on others – might be due to misperceptions about gated communities, who live in them and what life is actually like behind the gate. For others, the gate is tied up with homeownership and the American Dream. Taken together, the allure of gated communities and

the litany of false promises blind many to the negative externalities they deliver.

Communities have a role to play in this. Communities do not have to passively accept gated residential developments or be a slave to market conditions. Communities – both residents and planning commissioners – have a pivotal role to play in shaping their own destiny when it comes to both the number and concentration of gated developments in their neighborhoods. Much of this starts with conversations about gated communities with diverse populations—something that only a small minority of communities have attempted.

More discussion at the community level is needed. Most communities are not discussing gated developments or their impact upon the broader community at precisely a time when many municipalities should be discussing them. Once the housing market recovers, the growth of gated developments could resume, and the opportunity to reflect and evaluate the full extent of their impact will be lost. In addition to the need for broader deliberations with residents, municipal officials could benefit by discussing their experiences with – and policies towards – gated developments with *each other*. From the sample of communities represented in this research, there was considerable variance in the range of experiences and expertise with gated developments that could be shared across communities. By pooling those collective experiences, no community would need to start from the beginning and could adapt and learn from the successes and missteps of other communities.

Informed decisions require relevant data and regular evaluation. During this study I was struck by the lack of any research – formal or informal –

at the local level exploring the potential impact of gated communities on residents outside the gate. To achieve the goals they set forth for the communities they build, municipalities need to know the effects that different housing types can have on the broader community. The present study suggests that community officials may need to take a closer look at the impact gated communities have and formally establish procedures to fully evaluate their impact *before* deciding on whether to approve or deny their usage. However, this evaluation should not end at the proposal stage. Communities should also routinely evaluate the impact of the built environment upon the broader community in light of the goals the community seeks to achieve. Municipalities may do this as part of their re-evaluations of their master plans, but few commissioners said that the subject of gated residential developments has come up during such deliberations. Informed decisions require gathering and evaluating *relevant* information. The present study suggests that communities should take a closer look at the impact that gated developments have upon the broader community and incorporate that knowledge into their decision making processes. This is particularly important since there appears to be a disconnect between the goals to which communities aspire and the impact of gated developments upon those same community goals.

Race and class stereotypes may be implicated in the perceived desirability of gated developments. The focus-group sessions indicated that the stereotypical resident of a gated community is perceived to be affluent and white, even though that stereotype is increasingly inaccurate. Although the interviews with planning commissioners never asked about it directly, racial and class stereotypes may have something to do with why planning commissioners in

our survey were reluctant to restrict gated developments even while acknowledging the negative consequences of such developments for residents living outside the gate. For some community elites, the stereotypical resident of a gated development may constitute a desirable target population.

There are limited restraints on the proliferation of gated residential developments. Despite the findings from this research documenting negative externalities associated with gated developments, there appear to be limited safeguards on the proliferation of them. In most municipalities, there are three potential restraints: 1) the community master plan; 2) the “fire alarm” signal from the public and; 3) the planning commissioners and their evaluation process. Each of these currently has a limited effect on constraining the proliferation of gated developments. Undoubtedly, much of the recent reduction in the growth of gated developments is attributable to the downturn in the housing industry rather than with any of the three safeguards. Most proposed gated developments could fit into nearly any municipal master plan. The fire alarm feature expects too much of ordinary citizens, and the evaluation process typically employed by planners and planning commissioners does not take into account the potential impact of the gate on the broader community beyond a narrow focus on traffic and emergency access. Municipalities should examine their policies to determine whether they encourage or inhibit the types of communities to which their residents aspire.

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study reframed research on gated developments to include the voices, perceptions, and experiences of individuals residing outside the gate. The

objective was to understand the impact that gated communities can have on the broader community. The study provided evidence suggesting the nature of those effects. More research is needed to understand these effects in greater detail and in different contexts, however. I highlight three areas for further research below.

1. Quantitative analysis is needed to gauge the scale, scope and intensity of effects of gated developments. The current state of quantitative data on gated communities is poor. If we had better data, we could better estimate the scope of the impact of the gates upon the broader community. Currently, most surveys do not ask whether residents live in a gated community. There is currently one national sample of gated communities (American Housing Survey, 2001), but it does not ask (or track) any political or social measures. Estimates and measures need to be created to allow for comparisons to be made at the state and county level. Another benefit would be the ability to shift from cross-sectional analysis to evaluations over time (time series) to evaluate the long-term effects upon the broader community and upon diverse populations in terms of civic engagement and political participation. This would provide additional insights onto how the impact of the gate shifts and changes over time as other key variables shift, change, and fade in importance. This in turn could inform public policy to address these effects upon the broader community.

2. Further research is needed to understand variation by race/ethnicity. This present study revealed some notable differences along lines of race and ethnicity – especially for African Americans – when it comes to the meaning of the gate and the intensity of perceived effects upon the broader community. Additional research could provide deeper insight into those

variations—and their potential significance for public policy. Additionally, it would be useful to study predominantly minority gated developments that are located within preponderantly minority urban settings. Why do minorities choose to locate themselves within a gated development within a primarily minority community? Does this change their perceptions of the gate and their interactions with it? Does it change their political participation or civic engagement in the broader community?

3. Investigate variations along lines of social class. The present study explored the perceived impact of gated developments in several middle-class, suburban settings. There are many types of gated developments, however—varying from low-income, urban settings to high-income, exurban settings. How do the perceived (and actual) effects of gated developments change as a function of the social class of the residents living within it and the social class of residents in the surrounding neighborhoods? This is an area of inquiry that is unexplored, and further research could add to scholarly knowledge and inform public policy.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

“As a citizen who has worked in this growing community for nearly two decades and lived here for eleven years, I would prefer that gated developments not become the predominant residential format, as I believe the result is a “Balkanization” of the community, with streets and boulevards becoming “canyons” from which all one can see are walls. Nonetheless, as a libertarian, I respect that as an individual has the right to erect a fence around his/her property, so too may like-minded persons similarly associate (whether I think it misguided or not) within gated enclaves.... Ultimately, I think the market will determine whether these become a permanent fixture or [just] a passing fancy. I am hopeful that the latter is the case.”

- Planning Commissioner
to Author, February 9, 2000

My interest in gated communities dates back more than 15 years to when I was a young, idealistic undergraduate student at Princeton. At the time, I was struck by the expansive growth of gated developments and how communities were dealing with such developments in the booming 1990s and into the new millennium. So I picked up the telephone and talked with planning commissioners and city planners from several cities in the American Southwest and West, the places with the highest concentrations of gated communities at the time. I found three broad findings: 1) communities were growing faster than they have in decades and the demand for gated developments was strong; 2) few communities had restrictions on the usage of gated developments and; 3) many planners and commissioners suspected there may be negative effects associated with these types of developments but had no data to justify restricting their growth. As a result, most communities defaulted to the market to allocate the number and relative concentration of gated residential developments. In many

ways, this dissertation is a response to my initial inquiry, which began in a dorm room in New Jersey 15 years ago.

I have argued in the present study that the gate creates a line in the sand, separating one group from another, and that this has a negative effect upon the broader community. I have argued that these effects *matter* when it comes to our interactions with each other and the body politic. The social separation created by gated developments is intentional. The wall and the gate define boundaries that cannot be traversed except for those who are, or have the express permission of, members of the gated community. The walls and gates make it clear who is not welcome: those who are not “like us.” For some, this trend to gate is the epitome of segregation. Gates – and walled developments – effectively determine where people can travel and within which spaces people can physically exist. The present study suggests that the effects of the gate are widespread: the feelings of exclusion, division and resentment permeate farther than just the gate. It actually can affect the *entire* community if the number and concentration of gated developments are high enough.

This is further aggravated by the fact that not all community residents wield equal power when it comes to the decision making process to permit gated developments. Many commissioners acknowledged negative aspects associated with gated communities and would prefer not to see their numbers grow, yet this is not reflected in their policies or formal evaluation process. Many commissioners appear to publicly discourage their use yet silently condone their existence by allowing individuals who wish to gate to determine whether gated developments will be built. I ask, who is winning and who is losing? It was once believed that these development types had inherent positive value, such as

increased housing value, lower crime rates, and enhanced community cohesion among the developments' residents. None of these purported benefits is found consistently today, but the myth retains its hold on the general public, with a few notable exceptions.

Indeed, during the height of the housing boom, eight out of ten new residential developments involved gates, walls or private security guards (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). Scholars have theorized that much of this growth was due to both individual and structural factors. Evan McKenzie (2003) argued that the growth of gated communities is due to three intersecting factors: 1) developers seeking to maximize profits; 2) local governments seeking increased growth (and tax revenue) in the housing sector while keeping public expenditure low; 3) middle and upper class residents seeking a safer environment with increased control over their own private "utopia" due to the fear of crime and fatigue with ineffectual local governments.

The growth of gated communities has coincided with a global trend toward the privatization of public space (see Soja, 1989; Davis, 1990, Punter, 1990; Goldberger, 1996; Marcuse and Kempen, 2002). Miao Xu et al. (2008) attribute much of the growth of gated communities to the spread of neoliberal ideology, policies, and practices. Co-dependent with the growth of global capitalism, neoliberalism emphasizes privatization, the transfer of public services to the private sector, and limits on governmental intervention. As a consequence, there has been a worldwide reduction in investments made in the public sector and in public goods such as education, health, housing, transportation infrastructure, public parks and similar amenities.

Xu et al. (2008) theorized that as a consequence of the trend towards

privatization, it becomes increasingly difficult to make a persuasive case for public investments in parks and other public spaces. Municipalities struggling with looming budget deficits now appear to be actively courting developers who will build and maintain park-like private spaces and amenities, which is seen being preferable to no new spaces at all (Goldberger, 1996). As a result, public places have been systematically replaced by new private spaces (see Sorkin, 1992). Often these new spaces are reachable only if individuals can gain access to the private building or development, which has become increasingly difficult, particularly within gated communities. Taken together, these factors create a “perfect storm” resulting in significant consequences for residents, neighborhoods and communities more broadly that are not themselves incorporated within gated developments.

I propose that the increasingly pervasive acceptance of neoliberal ideology among individuals in authority is insidious. I found in the present study that despite a majority of planning commissioners who held at least one significant reservation on the effects of gated developments upon the broader community, every commissioner accepted that implicit premise that the private preferences of individuals who want to gate are paramount.

At the heart of the matter is the concept of community. Ironically, the very thing that people who are attracted to gated communities are seeking is *least likely* to occur within a gated enclave. Patricia Collins (2010) argued that “community” no longer occurs naturally, due to the transformation of space and the new power dynamics that shape our urban landscape. Collins observed that gated communities are the latest means to limit, partition, and maintain social inequality. She contested privatization is the latest response to the previous ideal

of the democratization of space. Driven by fear, the search for safe (private) spaces has resulted in a fundamental shift in how one sees one's own community (Ellin, 1997; Marcuse, 1997; Wilson-Doenges, 2000). As Collins (2010) explained, "[the] growth of gated communities points to a reversal of safety and danger: safety is now associated with life within private gated communities and danger spreads through the uncertainty of public life." This tends to create a perverse incentive to "fort up" with more and more gated communities in response to the perception of crime (whether accurate or not) or in response to other gated communities being built in adjacent neighborhoods.

The epitome of this idea is what Peter Marcuse (1997) termed the citadel in America. Marcuse argued that previous definitions of the phenomenon represented by gated communities do not go far enough to fully capture their impact on American cities. He proposed the idea of a citadel and defined it as a "spatially concentrated area in which members of a particular group, defined by its position of superiority, in power, wealth, or status, in relation to its neighbors, congregate as a means of protecting or enhancing that position." Marcuse contended that citadels by their very nature are exclusionary, but their relationship vis-à-vis to those outside the wall is one of superiority. Not only are those behind the gate different, they are *better* than those outside. Marcuse worried about the transformation of American cities with the growth of gated communities (citadels). He believed they are antithetical to the American idea of a just and fair society (see Gans, 1968; Massey and Denton, 1993). Gated communities enable individuals with the most resources to displace crime to neighborhoods with fewer resources, ones that may not be able to afford similar surveillance options (Helsley and Strange, 1999; Hope, 2000).

Rowand Atkinson and Sarah Blandy (2005) went even farther and asserted that gated communities violate our fundamental contract to each other, and especially to neighborhoods with different social, racial and economic characteristics. Atkinson and Blandy explained, “As private governance has grown, the concentration effects of poverty and problems of crime displacement have been systematically layered onto an urban poor already weighed down by a wide range of local problems.” To Atkinson and Blandy gated communities have the potential to exacerbate existing problems in the broader community systematically. In addition, even with the downward trend in social capital (Putnam, 2000) and reduced political participation in the suburbs more broadly (Oliver, 2001) and the effects of sprawl on reducing political participation (Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, 2001; Williamson, 2010), gated communities appear to *further* aggravate and hasten this trend towards increasingly separate and private worlds (Etzioni, 1995; Judd, 1995; Devine 1996; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Blandy and Lister, 2006; Le Goix, 2006).

My research contributes to the scholarly literature by suggesting even *within* an overall trend of reduced social capital, civic participation and engagement in the nation’s suburbs, our built environment matters both in shaping our interactions with each other and the body politic.

Increasingly, the life behind the gate is at odds with democratic ideals of a free and open society (Blandy and Lister, 2006; McKenzie, 2006). My research suggests that the effects of the gate are not limited to those households residing behind the gate. Instead, the effects extend far beyond the gate, affecting the entire community. The growth of gated developments, combined with the acquiescence of most planning commissions creates significant negative

externalities for the broader community.

This dissertation represents a first step in providing insights into the effects that gated developments can exert upon the broader community in social and political terms. It is clear from the attitudes, opinions and experiences of those living outside gated communities that the gate is perceived to impact both households behind the gate and households outside of the gate. I urge that these findings be incorporated into conversations at the local level with residents, policy makers, developers and commissioners. The planning commissioner quoted at the beginning of this chapter cuts to the heart of the matter: What is the proper stance that communities should take on the proliferation of gated communities? Should the "right to choose" be the default policy, given the findings from this study showing detrimental effects to the broader community? Should residents be able to wall themselves off from the larger community, while the costs and consequences of such actions are spread across the entire community?

While each unit of government will need to make its own determination of the benefits and drawbacks of gated residential developments, such developments should be evaluated for their short-term and, more importantly, their long-term effects upon the broader community. Just as in a classic collective-action dilemma, members of the public can make private decisions that appear to satisfy their individual wants but that collectively undermine the goals that each of them seeks. On the issue of gated developments, communities should tread carefully if they leave the decisions primarily in the hands of individual residents and private developers who act out of their own self-interests. In view of the findings of the present study, planning commissioners are well advised to understand fully, and

to measure and evaluate carefully, the broad social and political impacts of gated developments upon their communities.

APPENDIX A

Focus Group Moderator's Guide

Dallas, Texas – April 21 6:00pm (Caucasian)

Arlington, Texas – April 21, 8:15pm (English speaking Latino)

DeSoto/Lancaster, Texas – April 22, 7:30pm (African American)

IRB #: HUM00036688

Introduction

- i. Focus group ground rules
 1. (e.g., speak one at a time, voice as loud as I am speaking, no need to agree/welcome disagreement, location of bathroom etc).
- ii. Informed consent
 1. Audio taping
 2. Read informed consent form (IRB)
 3. Answer questions about study and group discussion
 4. Obtain signatures before preceding
- iii. Participant introductions
 1. First name, hobbies and something about your family

Context

- i. Give me a word or a phrase that best describes how things are going for your and your family these days?
- ii. What is your biggest concern?

Involvement in local and community affairs

READ: Let's change gears and talk a little about your involvement – if any – in

local affairs in your community or neighborhood.

- i. Are any of you involved in any social, religious or political activities in your community?
- ii. If so, how active are you? Which issues? What types of activities? Why are you involved? How did you first get involved?
- iii. If not, many people are unable to be as active as they might like in their community, what are some reasons for you for not being as active these days?
- iv. When you think of your community, how do you see it? Is it your local neighborhood? School district? County or state? Or national? Or some other way. DISCUSS.
- v. EASEL. Thinking locally, what makes a “good” community? What does an ideal community look like? Feel like?
 - a. PROBE: Interactions with others. Engagement in politics.

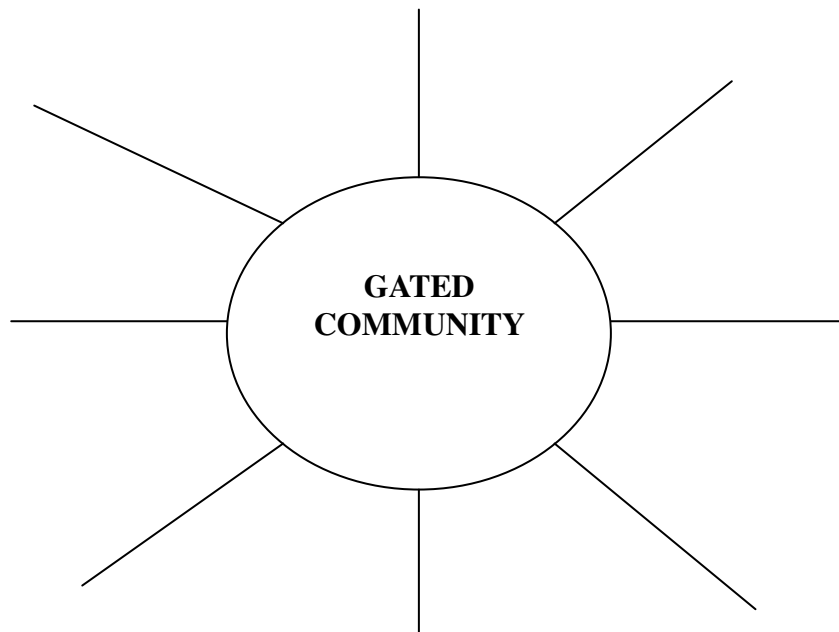
Initial perceptions of Gated Communities

READ: Now we are going to do something a little different. We are going to do a word association. PASS OUT HANDOUT¹⁶

EASEL. DISNEY WORLD EXAMPLE. For example, when I said the words “Disney World” what first comes to mind?

READ: Okay, turn to page 2 in your handout. Where you’ll see the words “Gated Community” in a circle with a bunch of lines coming out. I want you to write down the first words, phrases or images that spring to mind on the lines below. Then we’ll discuss them. EASEL. GO AROUND ROOM ONE AT A TIME AND WRITE WORDS DOWN. DISCUSS THEMES.

¹⁶ At the end of this document.



- a. **QUICKLY ASK:** Do you know of any gated communities in your neighborhood or community? If so, what do you think about them?

Initial Knowledge and Meaning of Gated Communities

READ: Now I would like to talk in more detail about your thoughts about gated communities. . . If you are not sure, that's okay too, I want your perceptions and opinions here.

- i. In general, where do you think they located?
- ii. Who lives in gated communities? Is there a particular type of person or family that is more likely to live in one? **DISCUSS.**
 - a. **PROBE IF NECESSARY:** Suburban or Urban, Mostly Caucasian or Mostly Minority, Higher or Lower income?
 - b. Why do you think these communities are so appealing and popular? Would you want to live in one?
- iii. The gates symbolize many things to different people. What do the gates

mean to you? EASEL. LIST. DISCUSS.

iv. Who is *least* likely to gate? Who is *most* likely to gate? Who are they gating out? EASEL. LIST. DISCUSS.

a. MINORITY GROUPS ONLY:

i. PROBE: What do the gates symbolize – if anything – to the African American/Latino community?

ii. What do you think of those who choose to live behind the gate? Are they like us or different?

iii. PROBE: Do you think African Americans/Latinos feel any resentment towards those living behind the gates?

Explain

v. Are gated communities an extension of U.S. policies of exclusion or not so much?

vi. If a gated community was built in your neighborhood, would you consider it part of your community or outside your community? Explain.

vii. Do gated communities fit into that “ideal” community we discussed earlier? Why/Why Not? RETURN TO EASEL.

viii. Are all gated communities the same? If not, how are they different? Are some more accepted than others? Why?

ix. HANDOUT: Here are some pictures of different types of gated communities on index cards. Each of you will have the same set of pictures. Take a few minutes to look at them then I want you to think of a “framework” for you to sort these images into. Then go ahead and sort your pictures into piles. Use as many categories you wish then we will discuss as a group. GET FRAMEWORKS. DISCUSS.

- x. PROBE: How did you make order (meaning) from these pictures?
 - a. Why did you choose this framework?
 - b. What other “frames” did you consider?
 - c. Are you concerned about any of the categories you’ve sorted your pictures into? Are any of the pictures themselves shocking?
 - d. Are any of the categories you’ve sorted not of great concern to you? Explain.

Facts and Myths about Gated Communities

- i. HANDOUT. Now I want to read you some facts about gated communities and get your thoughts on them. Please follow along with me and at the end, circle the most surprising fact to you. Then we will discuss them.

GATED COMMUNITY FACTS
<> Gated communities are quickly becoming the fastest growing housing development in the United States.
<> Currently over 7 million people live behind a mechanical gate or private security guard (American Housing Survey, 2001).
<> From the early 1980’s to the present, the number of gated communities has grown from five thousand to over twenty thousand (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).
<> According to the latest survey data, 5.9% of all housing units report living in a community that is surrounded by a wall or a fence (American Housing Survey, 2001).
<> The number of gated communities varies by region. On the West coast, 11% of all housing units are walled compared to 6.8% in the South, 3.1% in the Northeast and 2.1% in the Midwest. These developments are more prevalent in new construction and therefore are more concentrated in regions experiencing new growth. (U.S. Census, Metropolitan Housing Survey 2004)
<> The Dallas Metropolitan area has the third largest (after Houston and Los Angeles) number of gated communities in the country with 13% of all housing units walled AND gated. (U.S. Census, Metropolitan Housing Survey 2004)
<> Owners who live in gated communities are more likely to be White, have higher incomes and are older. Renters who live in gated communities are three times more likely to be Latino or African American, have moderate to lower income and are younger. In fact, there are more Latinos renters in gated developments than any other group. (Sanchez, Lang and Dhavale, 2005)
<> Renters are two and a half times more likely to live in walled or fenced communities and are three times more likely to

have controlled access than homeowners.

<> Gated communities – overall – do *not* have lower crime rates compared to similar communities without gates.

(Edward Blakely and Mary Snyder, 1997)

<> Gated communities do *not* tend to have higher resale values in the market when compared to similar housing. In some cases even had a slight price disadvantage. (Edward Blakely and Mary Snyder, 1997)

<> Gated communities do not have higher levels of community or being “close-knit” (Low, 2001)

GET MOST STARRED. DISCUSS REACTIONS.

IF NOT BROUGHT UP ASK: If gated communities are not safer, hold higher resale values or offer a close knit community, why are they so popular? What’s the *real* reason people are gating?

Consequences of Gated Communities

- i. Some have said gated communities are problematic for communities while others disagree. Where do you stand?
- ii. EASEL. Let’s talk about some of the potential consequences for these types of developments for communities exercising the gating option. What do you think these types of developments do to communities?
LIST. DISCUSS. Why?
- iii. PROBE IF NECESSARY – Does it affect social networks? Friendships? Willingness to get involved in community issues? Divide communities? Narrow or reduce participation?
- iv. HANDOUT. Let’s take a look at what others have said some of the consequences these developments have on communities and get your reactions to them. I will read them aloud and I want you to underline the part(s) that concern you the most.

v. HANDOUT

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF GATED COMMUNITIES

There is growing concern that gated communities can fragment a city, creating small fort-like enclaves that are beginning to wield tremendous power pursuing increasingly narrowed self-interests (Flusty, 1994; Le Goix, 2003; Low, 2003). Researchers from the University of Chicago have shown that increasingly homogenous neighborhoods reduce and narrow political participation (Oliver, 1999). Some gated communities are petitioning to become separate governmental entities. Others wish to enjoy tax-free status for public services they replicate; while others wish to enjoy the benefits of city services while demanding their own space to be privatized and separated from the rest of the population.

- vi. GET UNDERLINED RESPONSES. DISCUSS.
- vii. Are you concerned about these consequences? Why/Why not?
- viii. Do you feel there are other consequences not mentioned here that you are concerned about?
- ix. EASEL. Let's go back to what we said earlier about the meaning of the gate to you. Does this change how you view gated communities or not so much? DISCUSS.
- x. Let's get more specific, thinking about yourself and your family, how would you feel if they built a gated development across the street from your home? What would your first thoughts be?

Arguments For/Against Gated Developments

HANDOUT. Turn to page X of your handout...

READ: Here are some arguments in support of and opposition to gated communities. I want you to rate them on how convincing they are to you personally on a scale of 0 to 10. If you think the statement is "very convincing", give it a 10. If you think it is "not at all" convincing, give it a zero. Of course your rating can be anywhere in between. I will read them aloud and you can

follow along with me. . .PICK THREE PER SIDE. RANDOMIZE.

FOR (+)

PRIVATE PROPERTY. Gated developments are built on private property. So those who want to gate are free to do what they want with their land. It would be different if it was public property they are gating, so they have no obligation to feel any pressures not to gate.

PEACE OF MIND. Gated communities have received a lot of stigma but it's about safety and peace of mind. Residents living with gated communities are not any different than those living outside the gate. They want the same things everyone in the community wants: a good community to live and raise their children in.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Many gated communities are built in neighborhoods in the inner city or inner suburbs reversing a long trend of disinvestment and flight. Gated communities are needed in these areas for middle class families to move to areas that need a larger tax base. So in many ways, gated communities play a vital role in economic development and revitalizing communities.

MULTICULTURAL. Gated communities are not about race. More and more minorities are beginning to gate themselves and are taking advantage of the benefits of gated communities. This is not about excluding anyone out.

AGAINST (-)

FAIRNESS/EQUALITY. Gated communities are about fairness and equality. To build a wall is by its very nature meant to exclude someone or group. When a community builds a wall, it reduces space that formally was available for

everyone to enjoy. Now one cannot physically exist in this space. That is wrong and shouldn't happen in [YEAR] in America.

RACE AND EXCLUSION. Gated communities are nothing new but the latest chapter in the racially exclusionary U.S. housing policies. Now instead of Jim Crow era laws, racial covenants, and redlining policies of the past, we have gated communities being built. These types of developments may be exclusionary and further aggravate existing racial and economic housing segregation patterns eroding the social fabric of diversity and interaction that is essential to a democratic society.

REDUCE/NARROW PARTICIPATION. The principle of one voice, one vote is at the heart of our American democracy. However, the increased racial segregation of American cities threatens this ideal. Previous research has shown that increasingly homogenous neighborhoods reduce and narrow political participation. Therefore, the increased popularity of exclusive, homogenous gated communities presents a potentially serious problem.

OBLIGATION. It is problematic to assume private property owners are free to do what they will to their property without any consideration to those living in the broader community. Right now, entire neighborhoods are seeking to secede from their jurisdiction and become their own entity free from the obligations (and tax burden) of the larger metro area. This can create what Robert Reich calls the “secession of the successful” where affluent members of the community are allowed to secede from the larger community to pursue narrowed self-interests. The result is often a reduced tax base for those unable to gate and that's just not fair. Gated communities allow some to shirk their obligation to their community.

GET RATINGS. DISCUSS. MOVE TO NEXT.

- i. AT END: Now I want you to write your own argument against gated communities. . .

Power and Interests

- i. Let's change gears for a second. . . Who do you think is advocating for gated communities to be built? PROBE IF NECESSARY: Developers, real estate agents/brokers, local politicians, the public/market demand?
- ii. Who do you think would be against building gated communities? PROBE IF NECESSARY: City Planners, the public, local politicians?
- iii. Some have said we should let the market decide when it comes to these types of developments. While others believe we should be more cautious in building them. Which is closer to how you feel? Why?
- iv. Do you think people think about some of the consequences of gated developments on the broader community or not? Why/Why not? PROBE IF NECESSARY: Do they not know or just not care?
- v. Due to the decentralized way housing is constructed and permits issued, local communities and jurisdictions have considerable say in the types of housing allowed.
- vi. Whose interests do you think prevail in these types of decisions when it comes to development of gated communities? PROBE: Whose interests should prevail in the decision making process around gated communities at the local level?

- vii. Who do you think is the most knowledgeable about the consequences of gated communities? The least? PROBE: Developers, city planners, local politicians, the public?
- viii. Who do you trust the most on this issue? The least? PROBE: Developers, city planners, local politicians
- ix. Is this a local issue that concerns you? Why or why not?
- x. Is this a local issue that you would want to learn more about? If so, who would you look to for information?
- xi. Is this an issue you would like to get involved in? Who would you want to work with?

Conclusion

- i. EASEL. Earlier some of you said you were involved in local affairs in your community. If your community had a high concentration of gated developments, would your involvement change? How so?
- ii. EASEL: A lot of attention has been focused on those behind the gate, but very little attention has been focus on the consequences these developments may have on the larger community living outside the gate. After everything discussed tonight, what concerns you the most about gated communities?
- iii. EASEL. What do you think are some solutions to offset some of the consequences we discussed earlier?
- iv. Is there any thing you would like to add that was not discussed before we end the group discussion?

-- THANK AND DISMISS --

FOCUS GROUP HANDOUT. – REDUCED FORMAT

PAGE 1:

First Name: _____

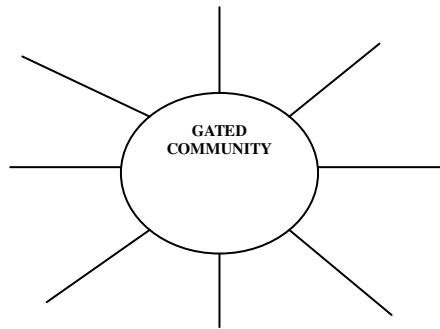
Location: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

PAGE 2:

When you hear the words “Gated Community” what words, images or phrases –
if any – spring to mind?



GATED COMMUNITY FACTS

- <> Gated communities are quickly becoming the fastest growing housing development in the United States.
- <> Currently over 7 million people live behind a mechanical gate or private security guard (American Housing Survey, 2001).
- <> From the early 1980's to the present, the number of gated communities has grown from five thousand to over twenty thousand (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).
- <> According to the latest survey data, 5.9% of all housing units report living in a community that is surrounded by a wall or a fence (American Housing Survey, 2001).
- <> The number of gated communities varies by region. On the west coast, 11% of all housing units are walled compared to 6.8% in the south, 3.1% in the Northeast and 2.1% in the Midwest. These developments are more prevalent in new construction and therefore are more concentrated in regions experiencing new growth. (U.S. Census, Metropolitan Housing Survey 2004)
- <> The Dallas Metropolitan area has the third largest (after Houston and Los Angeles) number of gated communities in the country with 13% of all housing units walled AND gated. (U.S. Census, Metropolitan Housing Survey 2004)
- <> Owners who live in gated communities are more likely to be White, have higher incomes and are older. Renters who live in gated communities are three times more likely to be Latino or African American, have moderate to lower income and are younger. In fact, there are more Latinos renters in gated developments than any other group. (Sanchez, Lang and Dhavale, 2005)
- <> Renters are two and a half times more likely to live in walled or fenced communities and are three times more likely to have controlled access than homeowners
- <> Gated communities – overall – do *not* have lower crime rates compared to similar communities without gates. (Edward Blakely and Mary Snyder, 1997)
- <> Gated communities do *not* tend to have higher resale values in the market when compared to similar housing. In some cases even had a slight price disadvantage. (Edward Blakely and Mary Snyder, 1997)
- <> Gated communities do not have higher levels of community or being “close-knit” (Low, 2001)

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF GATED COMMUNITIES

There is growing concern that gated communities can fragment a city, creating small fort-like enclaves that are beginning to wield tremendous power pursuing increasingly narrowed self-interests (Flusty, 1994; Le Goix, 2003; Low, 2003). Researchers from the University of Chicago have shown that increasingly homogenous neighborhoods reduce and narrow political participation (Oliver, 1999). Some gated communities are petitioning to become separate governmental entities. Others wish to enjoy tax-free status for public services they replicate; while others wish to enjoy the benefits of city services while demanding their own space to be privatized and separated from the rest of the population.

Privatizing space – especially entire communities with the erection of a wall or gate – may have negative effects on the broader community. This could lead to a net loss for citizens living outside the gate who are often less advantaged. Increasingly, those most able to make a positive change in the broader community are least likely to do so with the erection of a gate in some communities. Robert Reich calls this the “secession of the successful” where affluent members of the community are allowed to secede from the larger community to pursue narrowed interests. Worse, these types of developments may be exclusionary and further aggravate existing racial and economic housing segregation patterns eroding the social fabric of diversity and interaction that is essential to a democratic society (Vesselinov, Cazessus and Falk, 2007).

Appendix B

Telephone Interviewer Guide and Oral Consent

Planners and Zoning Board Members

IRB #: HUM00055016

Introduction

READ: “Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. Your interview will last no more than 30 minutes and you will be able to exit at any time during the interview. Before we get started, I would like to go over a few things...”

- i. Informed consent
- ii. Read informed consent form (see appendix A)
- iii. Answer any questions about study and research
- iv. Obtain verbal consent before proceeding; start audio tape.

Respondent introduction

- i. First name and how long you have lived in this area

Context/Background

READ: In your capacity as a [PLANNER/ZONING BOARD MEMBER], what are the *biggest* concerns or challenges when it comes to planning today in your local community? [LIST, THEN RANK TOP THREE]

- i. What about nationally? [LIST, THEN RANK TOP]
- ii. Generally when it comes to the residents in your community, how involved would you say most are in local and community affairs? Which issues are the most salient? IF NOT MENTIONED: Are there any salient planning or zoning issues of concern (in the past several years)?

- iii. Thinking locally, what makes a “good” community?
- iv. What if I asked you what an “ideal” would look like? Feel like?
- v. What does a “bad” community look like? Feel like?

Initial perceptions of Gated Communities

READ: Now I would like to talk in more detail about your thoughts about gated communities. . . If you are not sure, that’s okay too, I want your perceptions and opinions here. . .

- i. When you hear the words “gated community”, what images, words or phrases come to mind? [LIST THEN RANK MOST PROMINENT]
 PROBE: What feelings – if any – come to mind?
- ii. What are some *advantages* gated communities offer residents? [LIST THEN RANK] PROBE: What about for the broader community?
- iii. What are some *disadvantages* of gated communities for residents? [LIST THEN RANK] PROBE: What about for the broader community?
 PROBE: Do you think there are any unintended consequences resulting from their use on the broader community?
- iv. The gates symbolize many things to different people. What – if anything – does the gate mean to you? [DISCUSS]
- v. Why do think gated communities are so appealing to some residents?
 PROBE: Do gated communities deliver on these things? PROBE: Is there a particular type of person or family that is *more likely* to live in a gated community? *Least likely*? Why?

Community Reaction to Gated Communities

READ: Now I would like to discuss [INSERT NAME OF TOWN] more specifically. . .

- i. Does your community have any gated communities?
 - a. IF SO, what do you think about them?
 - i. Approximately how many are there?
 - ii. Has there been a community discussion on this?
DISCUSS.
 - iii. What has been the reaction to them –if any – from the broader community?
 - iv. Are they appealing?
 - v. Any concerns voiced? (If so by whom?)
 - b. IF NOT, what about in general, what do you think about gated communities?
 - i. Has your community discussed building them at all?
DISCUSS.
 - ii. Are they appealing?
 - iii. Any concerns voiced? (If so, by whom?)

Potential Consequences of Gated Communities

READ: Some have said gated communities are problematic for communities while others disagree. Where do you stand? [DISCUSS]

Let's talk about some of the potential consequences for these types of developments for communities exercising the gating option.

- i. What – if anything – do you think these types of developments do to communities? LIST. DISCUSS. Why?
- ii. PROBE IF NECESSARY – Does it affect social networks? Friendships? Willingness to get involved in community issues? Divide communities? Narrow or reduce participation?

- iii. Let's get more specific, thinking about yourself and your family, how would you feel if someone built a gated development across the street from your home? What would your first thought be?

Policy and Power Dynamics

READ: I want to change gears again. . . I have briefly reviewed your planning process and master plan but have a few questions. . .

- i. Let us say a developer wanted to build a gated development in your community, what would this process entail?
 - a. PROBE: Walk me through your role and what you would be looking for during each stage of the process.
- ii. Ultimately how are decisions made on such a project?
- iii. Who makes the final decision?
- iv. By which criteria do you evaluate such projects?
 - a. LISTEN AND PROBE FOR: concerns over broader community impacts, interactions.
- v. Is there an assessment of the potential impact these types of developments may have on all residents (either formally or informally)? DESCRIBE.
- vi. How much influence do YOU have over this decision?
- vii. Have you ever been overruled by the city council or Mayor on such matters? If so, what other criteria weighed in their decision?
 - a. IF NOT MENTIONED: How important – and influential – is the master plan in these decisions?
- viii. How much power are ordinary residents given in such planning matters (either explicitly or implicitly)?
- ix. What happens if there is a conflict between a developer wanting to build

such a development and residents in the community? What would happen then? EXPLAIN.

- x. Have such conflicts occurred in the past? If so, how did the city respond?
- xi. When it comes to planning matters, which has more power? The citizens or developers when it comes to determining the type of development in their community?

Power and Interests

Let's change gears for a second. . .

- i. Who – if anyone – is advocating for gated communities to be built?
 - a. PROBE IF NECESSARY: Developers, real estate agents/brokers, local politicians, the public through market demand?
- ii. Who – if anyone – would be against building gated communities?
 - a. PROBE IF NECESSARY: City Planners, the public, local politicians?
- iii. Do you see these developments as *primarily* driven by developers supplying this housing option or primarily resulting from demand from residents?
- iv. Some have said we should let the market decide when it comes to these types of developments. While others believe we should be more cautious in building them. Which is closer to how you feel?
 - a. IF MARKET ASK: Do you think there should be *any* constraints placed on these types of developments? Why or Why not?
 - b. IF CAUTIOUS ASK: What about gated communities is

making you cautious?

- v. What forces – if any – exist to act as a constraint on building gated communities?
- vi. Do you think people should be concerned over the increased popularity of gated communities or not? Why?
 - a. IF NECESSARY: Do you think they affect the broader community? Why?
- vii. Whose interests do you think prevail in when it comes to the decisions making process around gated communities? Whose interests should prevail?

Policy Implications

- i. Is this an issue that concerns you? Why or why not?
- ii. Going back to the “ideal community” you described at the beginning of the interview, can gated communities fit into that vision? Why/Why not? IF SO: Under which circumstances?
- iii. Lastly, what changes – if any – would you make to the current policies governing gated communities in your local community?

Charity information

OBTAIN CHARITY ORGANIZATION FOR THEIR INCENTIVE CHECK

NAME OF CHARITY _____
ON BEHALF OF _____

-- THANK AND DISMISS --

INFORMED CONSENT - ORAL

Interviews with Planners and Members of the Planning and Zoning Board/Committee

PI: Keith Veal, Ph.D. Candidate
Co-PI and Dissertation Chair: Greg Markus, Ph.D.
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

IRB #: HUM00055016

Introduction:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this research is to better understand your opinions, perspectives and beliefs of various types of housing developments in your community. If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last no more than 30 minutes.

Compensation:

Respondents will receive \$20 towards a 501(c) (3) charity of their choice for participating in the study. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose without penalty.

Participants who decide to exit the interview – at any time and for any reason – will still receive the full incentive towards the charity of your choice.

Confidentiality:

For the purposes of this research project, your identity will be kept anonymous.

Neither your identity nor your personal information will be shared with – or sold to – any third party. The researcher and the members of the researcher’s committee will review the collected data. Information from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result from this study. Any publication will maintain the confidentiality of all participants.

Risks:

The risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing work-related information to a colleague. The interviews do small pose a risk to the confidentiality of respondents from being identified from colleagues in the same industry. To minimize this risk, identifiable information will be stripped from any quotes that might potentially identify a particular respondent and all findings will be organized into broad themes to further minimize this risk.

Audio tape:

The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. Participant identity will remain confidential. The focus group transcriptions will be stripped of any identifying participant information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher at Haven Hall at the University of Michigan, Central Campus. When no longer necessary for research, all materials will be destroyed.

Persons to Contact:

Should you have any questions about the research or any related matters, please contact Keith Veal, Ph.D., Candidate, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor kveal@umich.edu or Gregory Markus, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. (734) 763-2222. gmarkus@umich.edu.

Institutional Review Board:

Should you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board, 540 E. Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Consent:

Would you like to participate in this research study? ____YES ____NO

IF YES, READ: “By agreeing to participate in this study I confirm that I have understood the information read to me and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

IF NO, READ: “Thank you for your time.”

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Documentation

Subject: eResearch Notification: Study Approval (Focus Groups)
From: eresearch@umich.edu
To: kveal@umich.edu



Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board • 540 East Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210 • phone (734) 936-0933 • fax (734) 998-9171 • irbhsbs@umich.edu

To: Mr. Keith Veal
From: Richard Redman
Cc: Gregory Markus

Subject: Initial Study Approval for [HUM00036688]

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Study Title: Political Participation and Gated Communities
Full Study Title (if applicable): The Gating of America: The Social and Political Consequences of Gated Communities

Study eResearch ID: [HUM00036688](#)

Date of this Notification from IRB: 2/23/2010

Initial IRB Approval Date: 2/20/2010

Current IRB Approval Period: 2/20/2010 - 2/19/2012

Expiration Date: Approval for this expires at 11:59 p.m. on 2/19/2012

UM Federalwide Assurance (FWA): FWA00004969 expiring on 11/17/2011

OHRP IRB Registration Number(s): IRB00000245

Approved Risk Level(s): No more than minimal risk

NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL AND CONDITIONS:

The IRB HSBS has reviewed and approved the study referenced above. The IRB determined that the proposed research conforms with applicable guidelines, State and federal regulations, and the University of Michigan's Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). You must conduct this study in accordance with the description and information provided in the approved application and associated documents.

APPROVAL PERIOD AND EXPIRATION:

The approval period for this study is listed above. Please note the expiration date. If the approval lapses, you may not conduct work on this study until appropriate approval has been re-established, except as necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to research subjects. Should the latter occur, you must notify the IRB Office as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR INVESTIGATORS

APPROVED STUDY DOCUMENTS:

You must use any date-stamped versions of recruitment materials and informed consent documents available in the eResearch workspace (referenced above). Date stamped materials are available in the “Currently Approved Documents” section on the “Documents” tab.

RENEWAL/TERMINATION:

At least two months prior to the expiration date, you should submit a continuing review application either to renew or terminate the study. Failure to allow sufficient time for IRB review may result in a lapse of approval that may also affect any funding associated with the study.

AMENDMENTS:

All proposed changes to the study (e.g., personnel, procedures, or documents), must be approved in advance by the IRB through the amendment process, except as necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to research subjects. Should the latter occur, you must notify the IRB Office as soon as possible.

AEs/ORIOs:

You must inform the IRB of all unanticipated events, adverse events (AEs), and other reportable information and occurrences (ORIOs). These include but are not limited to events and/or information that may have physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic impact on the research subjects or other.

Investigators and research staff are responsible for reporting information concerning the approved research to the IRB in a timely fashion, understanding and adhering to the reporting guidance (http://www.med.umich.edu/irbmed/ae_orio/index.htm), and not implementing any changes to the research without IRB approval of the change via an amendment submission. When changes are necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject, implement the change and report via an ORIO and/or amendment submission within 7 days after the action is taken. This includes all information with the potential to impact the risk or benefit assessments of the research.



Richard Redman
Chair, IRB HSBS



Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board • 540 East Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210 • phone (734) 936-0933 • fax (734) 998-9171 • irbhsbs@umich.edu

To: Mr. Keith Veal
From: Richard Redman
cc: Greg Markus

Subject: Study Approval for [HUM00055016] - Telephone Interviews with Planning Commissioners

Full Study Title (if applicable): How Local Communities dealing with the Gating Option: Interviews with Planners and Zoning Committee Members
Study eResearch ID: [HUM00055016](#)

Date of this Notification from IRB: 10/18/2011
Review: Expedited

Initial IRB Approval Date: 10/17/2011
Current IRB Approval Period: 10/17/2011 - 10/16/2013

Expiration Date: Approval for this expires at **11:59 p.m. on 10/16/2013**

UM Federalwide Assurance (FWA): FWA00004969 expiring on 11/17/2011

OHRP IRB Registration Number(s): IRB00000246
Approved Risk Level(s):

Name	Risk Level
HUM00055016	No more than minimal risk

NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL AND CONDITIONS:

The IRB HSBS has reviewed and approved the study referenced above. The IRB determined that the proposed research conforms with applicable guidelines, State and federal regulations, and the University of Michigan's Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). You must conduct this study in accordance with the description and information provided in the approved application and associated documents.

APPROVAL PERIOD AND EXPIRATION:

The approval period for this study is listed above. Please note the expiration date. If the approval lapses, you may not conduct work on this study until appropriate approval has been re-established, except as necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to research subjects. Should the latter occur, you must notify the IRB Office as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR INVESTIGATORS**APPROVED STUDY DOCUMENTS:**

You must use any date-stamped versions of recruitment materials and informed consent documents available in the eResearch workspace (referenced above). Date-stamped materials are available in the "Currently Approved Documents" section on the "Documents" tab.

RENEWAL/TERMINATION:

At least two months prior to the expiration date, you should submit a continuing review application either to renew or terminate the study. Failure to allow sufficient time for IRB review may result in a lapse of approval that may also affect any funding associated with the study.

AMENDMENTS:

All proposed changes to the study (e.g., personnel, procedures, or documents), must be approved in advance by the IRB through the amendment process, except as necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to research subjects. Should the latter occur, you must notify the IRB Office as soon as possible.

AEs/ORIOs:

You must inform the IRB of all unanticipated events, adverse events (AEs), and other reportable information and occurrences (ORIOs). These include but are not limited to events and/or information that may have physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic impact on the research subjects or other.

Investigators and research staff are responsible for reporting information concerning the approved research to the IRB in a timely fashion, understanding and adhering to the reporting guidance

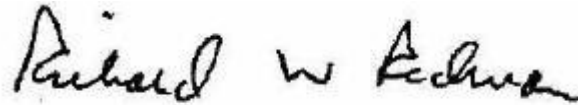
(http://www.med.umich.edu/irbmed/ae_orio/index.htm), and not implementing any changes to the research without IRB approval of the change via an amendment submission. When changes are necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject, implement the change and report via an ORIO and/or amendment submission within 7 days after the action is taken. This includes all information with the potential to impact the risk or benefit assessments of the research.

SUBMITTING VIA eRESEARCH:

You can access the online forms for continuing review, amendments, and AEs/ORIOs in the eResearch workspace for this approved study (referenced above).

MORE INFORMATION:

You can find additional information about UM's Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) in the Operations Manual and other documents available at: www.research.umich.edu/hrpp.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard W. Redman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Richard Redman
Chair, IRB HSBS

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Screening Documents

Gated Communities and Civic Participation Study

Exploring residents’ views toward gated communities and gated developments

Focus Group Screener

Dallas (1 group)
White Group

Arlington Area: (1 group)
Latino (English speaking)

DeSoto/Lancaster Area: (1 group)
African American Group

- 120 minute mini-focus groups
- Recruit 6 (to seat 4-6)
- Home owners Only
- Mix of Gender, Income and Age (21+). Exclude retired and unemployed

INTRODUCTION: Hello. This is (name) and I’m calling for (recruitment firm name). We are conducting a study about housing developments in your area. For this project we are conducting group discussions with people from all over the CITY area. Those who participate in the groups will be paid \$100.00 for their time. This is not a sales call or an attempt to sell you anything. To see if you or anyone in your household qualifies for one of our groups, I first have some questions. . . .

RECORD GENDER OF POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT. RECRUIT MIX.

Male1

Female.....2

1. Do you currently rent or do you own your house or condo?

Rent THANK AND TERMINATE.....1

Own Condo/House2

2. What is your age? _____ [RECORD EXACT AGE] RECRUIT MIX
21+ and TERMINATE 65 AND OLDER

3. Are you registered to vote?

YesCONTINUE..... 1

No THANK & TERMINATE 2

4. How active would you say you are in keeping up with current events nationally OR local affairs in your community? READ CATEGORIES. Would you say you are. . .

Very Active 1

Somewhat Active 2

Somewhat Less Active 3

Not at all Active THANK AND TERMINATE 4

Don't know/REF REPEAT. TERMINATE 5

5. Do you participate in ANY activities in the community where you live or don't you participate in any community related activities?

IF NECESSARY ADD: This could include being a member of a neighborhood crime watch, participating in local politics, being a member of the PTA (Parent Teacher Association), any volunteer or charity work, church-sponsored events, youth or adult sports or community theater.

Yes 1

No LIMIT 2 PER GROUP 2

Don't know/REF THANK & TERMINATE 3

6. Do you currently live in a housing development that is gated or employs a private security guard at the main entrance?

Yes THANK AND TERMINATE 1

No 2

Don't know/REF THANK & TERMINATE.....3

7. Are you currently working (full or part-time) outside the home?

Yes.....CONTINUE..... 1

No THANK & TERMINATE..... 2

Don't know/REF..... THANK & TERMINATE..... 3

8. What is your current occupation? TERMINATE IF RETIRED OR UNEMPLOYED OR WORKING IN REAL ESTATE/HOUSING FIELD.

[RECORD RESPONSE VERBATIM]

9. What is the last year of schooling that you have completed?

1 - 11th grade..... TERMINATE 1

High school graduate TERMINATE 2

Some college /AA/Tech 3

College graduate..... 4

Post-graduate school.....5

Don't know/REF..... THANK & TERMINATE 6

10. Please tell me which of the following income ranges your family falls into: RECRUIT A MIX

Less than \$25,000 1

Between \$25 and \$50,000 .. 2

Between \$50 and \$75,000 .. 3

Between \$75,000 and \$125,0004

\$125,000 or more..... LIMIT 2 PER GROUP.....5

Don't know/REF THANK & TERMINATE6

12. Lastly, do you consider yourself:

- White 1
- Black/African American..... 2
- Hispanic/Latino..... 3
- Native American/Alaska Native 4
- Asian 5
- Other (SPECIFY: _____) 6

INVITE DECISION GRID:

GROUP #1: WHITE → GO TO DALLAS INVITE

GROUP #2: ENGLISH SPEAKING LATINO → GO TO ARLINGTON
INVITE

GROUP #3: AFRICAN AMERICAN → GO TO DeSOTO/LANCASTER
INVITE

INVITATION

PAYMENT: \$100.00

READ: We'd like to invite you to participate in the discussion being held on [DATE] at [TIME].

MAKE SURE PARTICIPANT UNDERSTANDS THE FOCUS GROUP WILL BE A FULL **120 MINUTES** LONG. IT WILL END AT [TIME] PM. THEY SHOULD ARRIVE AT LEAST 15 MINUTES BEFORE GROUP TIME, THAT IS AT [TIME] PM.

READ: If you arrive at the facility 15 minutes early, that is at [TIME], there is a chance that you will receive a bonus of \$50. The host/hostess will put the name of whoever is at the facility 15 minutes early in a hat, and whoever they pick will get the bonus. This does not mean the earliest person gets the bonus, just that everyone who is there 15 minutes early has an equal chance to win.

ALSO HAVE ALL PARTICIPANTS BRING A PHOTO ID AND READING GLASSES- THEY WILL BE READING MESSAGES DURING THE GROUP.

A LIGHT DINNER WILL BE SERVED.

NAME : _____

CITY/TOWN: _____

DAY PHONE: _____

EVENING PHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

DATE: _____

RECRUITER: _____

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