

TAKEN SPACES:  
PERCEPTIONS OF INEQUITY AND EXCLUSION IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Abbey Lynn Chambers

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Doctoral Committee

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Raymond J. Haberski, Jr., PhD, Chair

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Tom Guevara, M.P.A.

October 23, 2020

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Susan B. Hyatt, PhD

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Jason M. Kelly, PhD

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the activists of today working to disrupt the injustices of the status-quo, as well as the activists of future generations who will carry this difficult but necessary work forward on the way to genuine equity and inclusion. It is also dedicated to my kids, who, although young, already understand the importance of fairness, kindness, generosity, and inclusion among all people.

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TAKEN SPACES:

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American cities are rampant with structural inequities, or “unfreedoms,” which manifest in the forms of poverty, housing instability, low life expectancy, low economic mobility, and other infringements on people’s abilities to do things they value in their lives and meet their full potential. These unfreedoms affect historically and systemically disenfranchised communities of color more than others. Too often, economic development that is supposed to remediate these issues leads to disproportionate economic growth for people who already have access to opportunity, without adequately creating conditions that equitably remove barriers, extend opportunities, and advance freedoms to all people. This dissertation investigates why this pattern persists. In this work, I describe the significance of the differing ways in which economic development is perceived by people living and working in an historically and systemically disinvested urban neighborhood facing socioeconomic transformation near downtown Indianapolis, Indiana, and city decision-makers in governmental, nonprofit, and quasi-governmental organizations. The ethnographic research methods I used in this study revealed that: many residents described economic development as a process that *takes* real and perceived neighborhood ownership away from the established community to transform the place for the benefit of outsiders and newcomers, who are, more often than not, white people; and city decision-makers contend that displacement is not a problem in Indianapolis but residents consistently see economic development leading to displacement. I contend that the type of disconnect that persists between the perceptions



of people who live and work in the neighborhood and those of city decision-makers is the result of exclusionary development practices and helps perpetuate inequities. This work concludes with a solution for rebalancing the power between well-networked and well-resourced decision-makers and residents facing inequitable and exclusionary development.

Raymond J. Haberski, Jr., PhD

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Power and Freedom in Urban Spaces**

Cities are characterized by constant fluctuation. Businesses and people come and go every day, and construction projects regularly change skylines and modify streetscapes. Within a matter of weeks, months, and certainly years, the look and feel of an urban space can be drastically transformed. Imagine someone revisiting an urban neighborhood where they used to live a decade ago. It was a place that felt like home when they lived there, where the faces and façades were familiar, where the person felt comfortable, like they belonged there, and where they felt a sense of ownership or stewardship over the place and the community. Likely, what they would find upon their return after so many years is that the urban neighborhood has changed in the way it looks and feels and maybe even the kinds of people who live there. The person will probably feel like an outsider and the place will feel strange and unfamiliar. There will be glimpses of what the place used to be, but it will just be...different. In the most extreme cases, changes in urban neighborhoods can make places practically unrecognizable when local landmarks have deteriorated due to economic decline or they have been demolished, reconfigured, or covered up due to economic growth, and when people on the streets are completely different in race and class from those who lived there years before. One may wonder: What happened? Why did the area change? Now imagine someone experiencing these kinds of changes, including the loss of comfort and sense of belonging, taking place while the person still lives in the neighborhood. How might someone feel about those changes and the individuals and institutions involved in the development processes that catalyzed such transformations?

A prevailing assumption is that urban development creates conditions under which a city's economy can remain responsive to local, regional, national, and global changes and challenges in order to achieve and maintain "material prosperity and high quality of life" for residents.<sup>1</sup> Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen says that development's paramount purpose should be to facilitate freedom, which he defines as "individual capabilities to do the things that a person has reason to value."<sup>2</sup> According to Sen, development should create conditions under which an individual can pursue things that are meaningful to them, be it material prosperity, the highest levels of civic or professional leadership, a life of humility and frugality, or a life of middle-class comfort. Sen's concept of freedom aligns with American ideals about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and it bestows in individuals the ability to define for themselves the things that give them freedom based on their unique contexts, needs, abilities, and values.

American cities, however, are rampant with structural inequities, or "unfreedoms," as Sen would call them, which "leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency."<sup>3</sup> For example, many American cities remain segregated by race and income level, which results in the predominantly white communities that hold onto wealth enjoying different economies and opportunities compared to poorer communities, which are disproportionately comprised of people of

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<sup>1</sup> Maryann Feldman and Nichola Lowe, "Evidence-Based Economic Development Policy," *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization* 11, no. 3/4 Policy Design (2017): 35.

<sup>2</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 56.

<sup>3</sup> Sen, xii.

color.<sup>4</sup> These separations effect things such as life expectancy<sup>5</sup> and economic mobility, that is, the ability for a child born into poverty to rise out of poverty by adulthood.<sup>6</sup>

Unfreedoms exist partly because of neoliberal economic policies, including free trade and deregulation, that facilitate wealth-building capacities of private individuals and entities, and lean toward exclusion rather than inclusion.<sup>7</sup> These policies support development efforts that channel wealth and opportunity vertically to the top of the socioeconomic spectrum where they pool among the mostly white people who already have access to wealth and opportunity, rather than facilitating the type of development Sen talks about, which would equitably distribute wealth and opportunity horizontally across all geographies and demographics.<sup>8</sup> In 2018, *Bloomberg* noted that “the chasm between rich and poor hasn’t been this wide since data collection began in the 1960s.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “America Is More Diverse Than Ever--But Still Segregated,” *The Washington Post*, May 10, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/segregation-us-cities/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.03ed2e11d713](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/segregation-us-cities/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.03ed2e11d713); *The New York Times*, “Mapping Segregation,” July 8, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/08/us/census-race-map.html>.; Reade Pickert, Jonathan Levin, and Hannah Recht, “Americans Earning Over \$200,000 Are Flocking to These Neighborhoods,” *Bloomberg*, December 18, 2018, [https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-12-18/these-are-the-neighborhoods-attracting-america-s-richest?utm\\_campaign=news&utm\\_medium=bd&utm\\_source=applenews](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-12-18/these-are-the-neighborhoods-attracting-america-s-richest?utm_campaign=news&utm_medium=bd&utm_source=applenews).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Essex, “How Long You Will Live Depends on Where You Live,” *93.1 WIBC*, February 7, 2019, <https://www.wibc.com/news/local-news/how-long-you-will-live-depends-where-you-live>.

<sup>6</sup> Raj Chetty et al., “The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940,” *Science Magazine*, April 28, 2017; Jasmine Garsd, “The American Dream: One Block Can Make All the Difference,” *All Things Considered* (NPR, October 4, 2018), <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/04/654085265/the-american-dream-one-block-can-make-all-the-difference>; U.S. Census Bureau and Opportunity Insights, Webpage, *The Opportunity Atlas*, accessed July 25, 2019, <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Harvey, “The Right to the City,” *New Left Review* II, no. 53 (2008): 38. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Harvey provides a political-economic history of the origins and spread of neoliberalism.

<sup>8</sup> Annie Lowrey, “The Great Affordability Crisis Breaking America,” *The Atlantic*, February 7, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/great-affordability-crisis-breaking-america/606046/>; Signe-Mary McKernan et al., “Less Than Equal: Racial Disparities in Wealth Accumulation” (Washington D.C.: Urban Institute, April 2013), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/23536/412802-less-than-equal-racial-disparities-in-wealth-accumulation.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Pickert, Levin, and Recht, “Americans Earning Over \$200,000 Are Flocking to These Neighborhoods.”

These policies have promoted the exclusion of a lot of people and left them struggling to overcome systemic unfreedoms.

In his essay “The Right to the City,” anthropologist and economic geographer David Harvey critiques current, neoliberal urban development processes, explaining how they are not structured to solve urban challenges, like housing instability and poverty.<sup>10</sup> Instead, they merely address the problems geographically, only improving quality of place one area at a time, rather than focusing on addressing the systemic issues that created the challenges in the first place.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, development processes benefit only some residents, forcing those who are experiencing challenges to migrate and concentrate in areas of the city where rates of such challenges may be already high or rising.<sup>12</sup> This is as true in Indianapolis as it is in many cities around the United States. Over the past several years, there have been significant investments in development in Indianapolis: from 2012 to 2016, combined state and city tax incentives for economic development in the city totaled more than \$600 million,<sup>13</sup> and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is several years into administering a program called Great Places 2020, which is a \$200 million multi-neighborhood initiative to revitalize five “neglected pockets” around the city by combining “private-sector investments with federal tax money to spark residential and commercial activity.”<sup>14</sup> However, Indianapolis

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<sup>10</sup> Harvey, “The Right to the City.”

<sup>11</sup> Harvey.

<sup>12</sup> Harvey; John T. Metzger, “Planned Abandonment: The Neighborhood Life-Cycle Theory and National Urban Policy,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 1 (2000): 7–40.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Parilla and Sifan Liu, “Examining the Local Value of Economic Development Incentives: Evidence from Four U.S. Cities” (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, March 2018), 17, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/examining-the-local-value-of-economic-development-incentives/>.

<sup>14</sup> Scott Olson, “Great Places 2020 Organizers Hope 2018 Is Transformative Year,” *Indianapolis Business Journal*, November 29, 2017, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/66470-great-places-2020-organizers-hope-2018-is-transformative-year>.

neighborhoods provide stark examples of sustained inequality: neighborhoods on the near east and southeast sides of downtown have seen double-digit decreases in poverty since 2010, while those on the near north and northwest sides of downtown have seen double-digit increases in poverty.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, while overall poverty in the city has decreased since 2010, the relative poverty rates among the city's white, Black, and Hispanic populations remains consistent: poverty among whites is approximately one-half that of Blacks and approximately one-third that of Hispanics.<sup>16</sup> While it is apparent that economic development efforts have facilitated change, and even growth in some areas, the term "development" has meant very different things to Indianapolis residents living in different communities across the city.

In 2014, a group of economics and public policy scholars sought to provide an ethical definition of economic development. Feldman et al. wrote a paper called "Economic Development: A Definition and Model for Investment" in which they assert:

Economic development is the expansion of capacities that contribute to the advancement of society through the realization of individual, firm and community potential. Economic development is measured by sustained increase in prosperity and quality of life through innovation, lowered transaction costs, and the utilization of capabilities towards the responsible production and diffusion of goods and services. Economic development requires effective institutions grounded in norms of openness, tolerance for risk, appreciation for diversity, and confidence in the realization of mutual gain for the public and the private sector. Economic development is essential to creating the conditions for economic growth and ensuring our economic future.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Matt Nowlin, Unai Miguel Andres, and Kelly Davila, "The Changing Landscape of Poverty," Community Trends (Indianapolis, IN: SAVI, June 26, 2019), 5, [http://www.savi.org/feature\\_report/the-changing-landscape-of-poverty/](http://www.savi.org/feature_report/the-changing-landscape-of-poverty/).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, "Poverty and Income Profile," Prepared by SAVI, 2018, [https://profiles.savi.org/topics/?utm\\_source=data-tools&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=data-tools](https://profiles.savi.org/topics/?utm_source=data-tools&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=data-tools).

<sup>17</sup> Maryann Feldman et al., "Economic Development: A Definition and Model for Investment," 2014, 12, <https://www.eda.gov/files/tools/research-reports/investment-definition-model.pdf>.

The authors clarify that, “by capacities, we mean conditions conducive to promoting an array of intermediate outcomes that set the stage for the realization of potential” for individuals, firms, industries, and social and geographic communities.<sup>18</sup> The authors’ definition of economic development reflects Sen’s understanding that genuine development facilitates freedom, creating conditions that expand “individual capabilities to do the things that a person has reason to value.”<sup>19</sup>

Feldman et al. found it necessary to define what economic development is because they contend the concept “is often conflated with the more easily measured economic growth.”<sup>20</sup> They explain that while economic growth focuses on short-term or even medium-term gains in aggregate, “economic development creates the conditions that enable long-run economic growth. [...] [F]or growth what matters is the number of jobs while for economic development the focus is wages, career advancement opportunities, and working conditions.”<sup>21</sup> Growth metrics are concerned less with who reaps benefits from economic transactions and more with whether benefits are reaped at all, by anyone, while development metrics look at whether economic transactions are creating conditions that enable economically excluded individuals to connect to and benefit from economic growth. Equity is inherent to development, but not to growth. For economic processes and transactions to convert from mere growth to genuine development, they must create socioeconomic conditions that reduce barriers, expand capacities, and extend freedoms to individuals who experience the most barriers; they must focus on equity rather than on growth.

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<sup>18</sup> Feldman et al., 12.

<sup>19</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Feldman et al., “Economic Development: A Definition and Model for Investment,” 1.

<sup>21</sup> Feldman et al., 1.



In Indianapolis, city leaders have acknowledged inequities, such as wealth, income, and opportunity gaps across geographies and demographics, and they have created various strategies to address them, including administering grants to community development corporations and nonprofits and modifying the criteria that determines which development projects will receive tax incentives.<sup>22</sup> Still, it does not seem like city leaders have wrapped their minds fully around the concept of development as something that reduces barriers and expands capabilities, and they have yet to focus on conditions, rather than transactions. Most of Indianapolis’s economic development efforts have been and continue to be based in transactions that result in inequitable and exclusionary economic growth. This is represented in the way that the city’s most powerful, well-resourced development entities are those that facilitate development by channeling resources toward the monetization of places rather than the empowerment of individuals and communities that have been historically and systemically disenfranchised.

For example, the city’s Department of Metropolitan Development’s Lift Indy grant program (discussed in Chapter 4), the Great Places 2020 program (a multi-organization partnership administered by LISC), and the City of Indianapolis’s focus on downtown Indy growth (supported by nonprofit and quasi-governmental partners like Develop Indy, Indy Chamber, and Downtown Indy, Inc.)<sup>23</sup> are all anchored in place-

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<sup>22</sup> City of Indianapolis, “Inclusive Economic Growth: Promoting Job Access in Indianapolis,” accessed November 22, 2019, <https://www.indy.gov/activity/inclusive-economic-growth>; City of Indianapolis, “Lift Indy,” accessed August 19, 2020, <https://www.indy.gov/activity/lift-indy#:~:text=Lift%20Indy%20is%20a%20comprehensive,%2C%20economic%20development%2C%20and%20placemaking.&text=The%20program%20uses%20data%20to,program%20proposals%20for%20these%20areas>.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, in Hunden Strategic Partners, “Downtown Indianapolis Retail Spending Power: An Analysis of the Expanding Downtown Footprint and Retail Spending Power” (Indianapolis, IN: Indy Chamber, 2019), <https://indychamber.com/BuyIN/>, the authors estimate that the amount of untapped capital in the downtown area is nearly \$100 million. They project that this number will grow and make the case

based goals of increasing land values and creating sites for business owners to make money and residents (and tourists) to spend money. However, rather than focusing directly on creating conditions that eliminate the barriers that hold inequities and exclusions in place, they focus on attracting the people, institutions, organizations, and agendas that already have the power to consume, generate, and accumulate capital.<sup>24</sup> This results in an unbalanced monetization of places wherein sections of the city, from downtown's large Wholesale District to smaller retail corridors within neighborhoods, are transformed into multi-block, pay-to-play amusement districts where more affluent people can fully immerse themselves in entertainment, shopping, dining, and drinking experiences. Under these terms, the value of an individual is in their spending power, and the places that are steeped in low-paying service-sector jobs, now more abundant than ever,<sup>25</sup> cater to these prized consumers without also offering opportunities for the workers serving up these amenities to earn the income levels required to fully enjoy them, too.<sup>26</sup> While the monetization of places could potentially, albeit indirectly, help

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that "retailers and others should take a closer look at the opportunities to capture this spending power" (Hunden Strategic Partners, 4).

<sup>24</sup> Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith, "The Changing State of Gentrification," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 94, no. 4 (2001): 464–77. Also, in George Lipsitz, "Learning from New Orleans: The Social Warrant of Hostile Privatism and Competitive Consumer Citizenship," *Cultural Anthropology* 12, no. 3 (2006): 451–68, the author shows how economic agendas prioritize capital production and accumulation above human welfare, using as a case study recovery efforts in New Orleans, Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina. Similarly, Zimmerman asserts that urban development strategies focusing on capital attraction and accumulation exacerbated existing inequalities in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Jeffrey Zimmerman, "From Brew Town to Cool Town: Neoliberalism and the Creative City Development Strategy in Milwaukee," *Cities* 25 (2008): 230–42).

<sup>25</sup> Rachel E. Dwyer and Erik Olin Wright, "Low-Wage Job Growth, Polarization, and the Limits and Opportunities of the Service Economy," *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 5, no. 4 (2019): 56–76; Chad Shearer, Isha Shah, and Mark Muro, "Advancing Opportunity in Central Indiana," Metropolitan Policy Program (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, December 2018), [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018.15\\_BrookingsMetro\\_Indy-Opportunity-Industries\\_Report\\_Shearer-Shah-Muro.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018.15_BrookingsMetro_Indy-Opportunity-Industries_Report_Shearer-Shah-Muro.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> There is an abundance of research concerning the increase of low-wage work over the past 20 years, as well as the precarity of this type of work, and the difficulty workers experience in trying to advance out of low-wage sectors and into sectors that offer greater opportunities for both advancement and income growth.

create better, more freeing conditions for individuals who have been affected by historic and systemic disinvestment and who have long been living in the neighborhoods where development efforts are deployed,<sup>27</sup> my study, as well as research and reporting from numerous others, show that, too often, benefits from economic growth are neither equitably nor inclusively distributed among residents.<sup>28</sup> While economic strategies may lead to economic growth, the benefits of that growth often do not meaningfully reach the individuals at the lower end of the income distribution to create authentic and equitable economic development. The reason for this has to do with persistent, systemic, and structural exclusions that have yet to be fully addressed.

Harvey proposes that the solutions to alleviating these inequities must be spatial. Like the sociologist and spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre, who laid the foundation for studies on socio-spatial production, Harvey says that we can produce more democratic

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See, for example, Raj Chetty et al., “The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940;” Molly Kinder and Amanda Lenhart, “Worker Voices: Technology and the Future for Workers” (Washington, D.C.: New America, November 21, 2019), <https://www.newamerica.org/work-workers-technology/reports/worker-voices/>; Marcela Escobari, Ian Seyal, and Michael Meaney, “Realism About Reskilling: Upgrading the Career Prospects of America’s Low-Wage Workers” (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, December 2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Realism-About-Reskilling-Final-Report.pdf#page=40>; Shearer, Shah, and Muro, “Advancing Opportunity in Central Indiana.”

<sup>27</sup> For example, see arguments made in Quentin Brummet and Davin Reed, “The Effects of Gentrification on the Well-Being and Opportunity of Original Resident Adults and Children,” Working Papers Research Department (Philadelphia, PA: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, July 2019), [https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/research-and-data/publications/working-papers/2019/wp19-30.pdf?utm\\_campaign=Hutchins%20Center&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=75255592](https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/research-and-data/publications/working-papers/2019/wp19-30.pdf?utm_campaign=Hutchins%20Center&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=75255592).

<sup>28</sup> Janna Graham, “‘A Strong Curatorial Vision for the Neighbourhood’: Countering the Diplomatic Condition of the Arts in Urban Neighbourhoods,” *Art & the Public Sphere* 6, no. 1 & 2 (2017): 33–49, [https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.6.1-2.33\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.6.1-2.33_1); Michele Hoyman and Christopher Faricy, “It Takes a Village: A Test of the Creative Class, Social Capital, and Human Capital Theories,” *Urban Affairs Review* 44, no. 3 (January 2009): 311–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087408321496>; Derek S. Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Kathe Newman and Elvin K. Wyly, “The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City,” *Urban Studies* 43, no. 1 (2006): 23–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980500388710>; Peter Moskowitz, *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood* (New York: Nation Books, 2017).

social and physical urban spaces by shaping and creating urban spaces differently, using development processes that are structured in more equitable ways and that are more inclusive of people who are not part of the dominant class.<sup>29</sup> The concept of the dominant class is grounded in the work of social theorists like Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, and Pierre Bourdieu and describes a group of individuals and institutions that hold decision-making authority over both politics and economics, giving them the power to structure society in ways that primarily channel political and economic benefits and advantages back to the dominant class to maintain its powerful position.<sup>30</sup> The dominant class is comprised of city leaders and decision-makers and those with enough cultural, economic, educational, and social capital<sup>31</sup> to be invited to or to assert themselves at decision-making tables. Typical members of the dominant class are part of a culture of privilege which allows them to sit on boards; hold leadership positions in city government, nonprofit organizations, philanthropies, and for-profit businesses and corporations; and perpetuate a set of behaviors and ethics often understood in popular American terms as upper-middle-class. Because of the history of

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<sup>29</sup> Harvey, "The Right to the City"; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–86; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Social Theory* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), <https://soth-alexanderstreet-com.proxy.ulib.uits.iu.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/soth/sourceidx.pl?sourceid=S10019883&showfullrecord=on>; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "A Critique of the German Ideology," trans. Tim Delaney and Bob Schwartz, *Marxists Internet Archive, Marx Engels Internet Archive*, 1932, [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_The\\_German\\_Ideology.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf). It should be noted that this dissertation is only using Marxist theory to describe the dominant class as the class of individuals and institutions that have power over how and where resources flow and to explain how the dominant class maintains its power. This dissertation diverges from Marxism in the way that it does not fully renounce capitalism but rather it supports mechanisms and processes that will produce more equitable and inclusive outcomes from capitalism.

<sup>31</sup> These are the forms of capital described in Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

systemic and structural racism in the United States, which has held back people of color from having the same opportunities as their white peers,<sup>32</sup> members of the dominant class are often white people. Collectively, these members have the most influence over shaping the look and feel of urban spaces to produce social and physical spaces that are embedded with varying and subjective degrees of inclusivity/exclusivity and equity/inequity.<sup>33</sup>

In Indianapolis, it is not difficult to determine who is part of the dominant class of leaders who make decisions about the city's spaces. For instance, when city government leaders, in partnership with Indy Chamber, the region's largest chamber of commerce, put together an inclusive growth working group to create a strategy to address economic inequities and exclusions in the city, they tapped individuals from familiar institutions—the “usual suspects.” They are the same partners with which Indy Chamber seems to collaborate time and again, and the relationships among all the partners seem reciprocal. They all seem to invite each other to sit on boards and work together on programmatic efforts around the city. For example, representatives from the community development corporation Near East Area Renewal (NEAR), Englewood Community Development Corporation, and LISC are not only members of the inclusive growth working group, but are also implementation partners for the Indy East Promise Zone.<sup>34</sup> LISC's 19-member board includes two inclusive growth working group members, and another three people who work for organizations that have representation in the inclusive growth working

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<sup>32</sup> There is an incredible amount of resources about the racial income, wealth, and opportunity gaps, but one of the most comprehensive sources for understanding the complexities of these issues is Thomas Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

<sup>34</sup> Indy East Promise Zone, “About: Team,” accessed August 28, 2020, <http://indyeast.org/about/team/>.

group.<sup>35</sup> Considering that LISC has two representatives in the 25-member inclusive growth working group means that individuals or organizations associated with LISC comprise six of working group's members. That ratio amounts to 24%, which is the same percentage of people of color who are included in the inclusive growth working group. On one hand, maybe the overlap helps create a useful redundancy so there is cohesion across multiple organizations and efforts; on the other hand, maybe it is an indication that opposing or challenging perspectives get excluded. After all, with such a small network of partners with which to strategize and innovate, leaders cannot possibly develop an adequate understanding of the conditions that present significant social and economic disparities to economically excluded populations nor can they come up with effective solutions without receiving consistent challenges to their assumptions.

We need to cultivate spaces of productive disagreement. Lefebvre and Harvey both argue that the kinds of social relations we have are tied to the types of social and physical spaces the dominant class produces and vice-versa.<sup>36</sup> Urbanist and spatial theorist Edward Soja agrees, arguing that we must analyze space in different ways to critique social processes—that is, social relations—and cultivate “new areas of understanding and political practice.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, if we want different social relations, that is, if we want development processes to overcome unfreedoms and maximize freedoms, if we want to move toward the shaping and creating of more inclusive social and physical urban spaces, and if we want to produce more equitable social and economic outcomes,

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<sup>35</sup> LISC Indianapolis, “Boards and Committees: Local Advisory Board,” accessed August 28, 2020, <https://www.lisc.org/indianapolis/who-we-are/boards-and-committees/local-advisory-board/>.

<sup>36</sup> Harvey, “The Right to the City.”

<sup>37</sup> Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, Globalization and Community Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 5.

then we must structure processes that shape and create urban spaces differently.<sup>38</sup> This will require us to reimagine the ways in which we understand urban spaces, the processes used to shape and create them, and the interpretations and perceptions that the processes and spaces evoke in spatial users.

### **The Boundaries of This Study**

This study focuses on the role that governmental entities and nonprofit, quasi-governmental organizations play in economic development and on the processes that create the conditions for growth in an historically and systemically disinvested area. This study also focuses on how residents in such an area respond to development efforts. As such, it includes perspectives from residents and people who work but do not live in the neighborhood as well as perspectives from employees in governmental entities and nonprofit, quasi-governmental organizations. This study not does include perspectives from realtors, real estate developers, site selectors, mortgage brokers, and a long list of others who are not on the front lines of catalyzing an area's transformation but who come along a later, once the opportunity to reap financial benefits seems promising.

While this study focuses on economic development, it does not focus on specific tools often used by development practitioners, such as tax-increment financing, tax abatement, Community Development Block Grants, specific affordable housing initiatives, or the like. Rather, the focus is on understanding the ideological frame that decision-makers use to decide how and where to deploy such tools and other resources, what considerations factor into their decisions, and how city leaders—both in public and private sectors—define success. The study compares the intellectual frames used by

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<sup>38</sup> Harvey, "The Right to the City."

decision-makers to those used by neighborhood residents in order to identify the way perception shapes the interpretation of urban development. Ultimately, the different conclusions reached by these groups reveal where urban development fails to address inequities and instead advances unfreedoms.

### **Significance**

This study contributes to bodies of research about economic development often understood in terms of gentrification and cultural displacement. This research comes at a critical time both locally and nationally. Locally, Indianapolis city leaders are beginning to place more emphasis on closing wealth and income gaps. Nationally, conversations about inequities and exclusions in everything from the economy, to health care, to education, to housing, and more, have been amplified as the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities, and protests about police violence toward people of color, especially African-Americans, reached a fever pitch and have remained there for months. Most Americans realize there is a long way to go to removing the systemic issues that create alternate realities for people who are white and/or affluent and people who are not.

This study relies in part on city residents in a predominantly Black neighborhood to explain what economic development is and how they understand and act on such development. It places residents' perspectives on equal ground next to perspectives from city-level economic development administrators, who are typically portrayed as—and even imagine themselves to be—experts in knowing how best to facilitate development. This study generates new knowledge by contrasting how people from very different perspectives understand development and experience its impacts.



## Research Questions

This study began from a concern I had about socio-spatial injustices. I simply wondered why low-income urban neighborhoods look so different from more affluent neighborhoods and why this pattern persisted in cities throughout the U.S. I knew that understanding this pattern meant moving beyond both the systems and institutions of economic development to the residents of these neighborhoods; to the people who live with the decisions made within a system and by institutions that operate as if these residents don't really exist. As such, this study responds to Soja's call to cultivate "new areas of understanding and political practice,"<sup>39</sup> since, most of the time, residents' perspectives are not meaningfully included in economic development efforts that shape and create urban spaces and redevelop neighborhoods.

Decisions about neighborhood redevelopment tend to be top-down, guided by the perspectives and priorities of city leaders, who may not fully understand what residents care about or even need. Phillip Converse explains that people like city leaders and others with macro-level decision-making power—people whom he calls political elites—may have distinctly different ideological frames guiding their decisions compared to the average city resident.<sup>40</sup> Cramer's research on perceptions of rural-urban divides says something similar.<sup>41</sup> She explains that residents in poorer, rural parts of Wisconsin felt like their communities did not "receive their fair share of public resources" in comparison to urban and suburban communities. Rural residents perceived non-rural decision-

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<sup>39</sup> Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Phillip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics (1964)," *Critical Review* 18, no. 1–3 (2006): 1–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08913810608443650>.

<sup>41</sup> Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, Chicago Studies in American Politics (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

makers to be powerful political elites who ignored, disrespected, and even undermined the local wisdom, lifestyle, culture, and experiences of rural residents in favor of supporting urban and suburban residents instead.<sup>42</sup> Although Cramer's research shows that state and federal government expenditures per capita were comparable in rural, urban, and suburban areas, residents in rural areas still perceived they were not being treated fairly, indicating there was something deeper at play.<sup>43</sup> Rural Wisconsin residents read certain symbols and signals from public officials and the news to conclude that government spending was inequitable and rural areas were losing out. While Cramer's work demonstrated that the reality of public spending contradicted rural views, she also showed how the perception of power and its uses can be as important as reality.

Informed by the concerns and scholarship described above, I developed the following research questions to guide this study:

1. What are residents' perspectives on economic development and what influences have shaped those perspectives?
2. What are practitioners' perspectives on economic development and what influences have shaped those perspectives?
3. What are the disconnects between residents' and practitioners' perspectives on economic development and how do those disconnections inhibit equity, inclusion, and the expansion of freedoms?

### **Methods, briefly**

To respond to my research questions, I engaged in fieldwork in an historically and systemically disinvested urban neighborhood in Indianapolis. From January 2019 through October 2019, I conducted interviews and did participant observation in the Riverside neighborhood, which is one of several neighborhoods in the Near Northwest Area of downtown Indianapolis, Indiana. I chose the Riverside neighborhood for this

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<sup>42</sup> Cramer, 23.

<sup>43</sup> Cramer, 90–110.

fieldwork because I wanted to hear perspectives on development from people who were living and working in an economically distressed urban area that had not yet begun seeing significant injections of public, private, or philanthropic capital, but where some activities seemed to be indicating that such investments may be on the horizon and that the type of socioeconomic transformation that other near-downtown neighborhoods have been going through may soon begin affecting this neighborhood, too. A more detailed description of the Riverside neighborhood is included in Chapter 2.

During my fieldwork period, I spoke with 47 people over the course of 42 interviews, attended 39 community meetings and events, and had innumerable informal conversations with people who lived and worked in the area. Out of the 47 people I interviewed, 17 were current or former Riverside residents, nine people worked at neighborhood organizations, and 21 people worked at organizations missions directly or indirectly supported economic or community development across multiple neighborhoods, the entire city, or the Central Indiana region. I focused my fieldwork on the ideological frames people used to understand economic development's impacts and compared people's perceptions across the different classifications of interviewees. Chapter 2 goes into detail about the context of my fieldwork, the interviewees, the theoretical and practical approaches I used in my fieldwork, and the methods I applied to analyzing the information I gathered.

While this study sheds light on some important findings, the findings are not intended to be scientifically generalizable across all populations or geographies. Unlike quantitative research, which is good at showing the prevalence or breadth of a social phenomenon, qualitative research is good at showing that a social phenomenon exists at

all and then delves into the deep nuances of it to create new knowledge about where and why it exists.<sup>44</sup> The methods I used uncover new knowledge about disconnecting perspectives on economic development between residents in an historically and systemically disinvested neighborhood and practitioners. Surely, there are other historically and systemically disinvested neighborhoods like Riverside where longtime residents are subjected to economic development that they experience as being inequitable and exclusionary, while practitioners make the case that it is not. The prevalence and consequences of these disconnections should be investigated through further research. Additionally, methods I used can and should be applied to enhance economic development practices, iterate decision-making, and facilitate growth and development in more equitable and inclusive ways.

### **Key Findings**

This dissertation describes the significance of the differing ways in which economic development is perceived by people living and working in an historically and systemically disinvested urban neighborhood facing socioeconomic transformation and city decision-makers, whether they are in governmental or quasi-governmental organizations. The ethnographic research methods I used in this study revealed that: many residents described economic development as a process that *takes* real and perceived neighborhood ownership away from the established community to transform the place for the benefit of outsiders and newcomers; and city decision-makers contend that displacement is not a problem in Indianapolis but residents consistently see economic development leading to displacement. I contend that the type of disconnect that persists

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<sup>44</sup> Kristin Luker, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2008), 22–39.

between the perceptions of people who live and work in the neighborhood and those of city decision-makers is the result of exclusionary development practices and helps perpetuate inequities.

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

I conclude this introductory chapter with the following section defining a theoretical framework for understanding urban spaces and the processes that shape and create them. Chapter 2 describes the context in which the bulk of my fieldwork took place, which was in the Riverside neighborhood in the Near Northwest Area of Indianapolis. I include historical and statistical information that provide additional background about the community in which I conducted this study. The chapter also outlines theoretical and practical approaches and methods I used to gather and analyze data, and some of the complexities I encountered during the fieldwork period. Chapters 3 and 4 detail the study's findings. Chapter 3 describes the way residents and practitioners each perceive development to illustrate how members in each group think about it in different terms. Chapter 4 discusses the disconnection between residents' and practitioners' perspectives on development and tells why those differences enable development to perpetuate inequities and exclusions, thereby perpetuating unfreedoms. Chapter 5 presents a case study to illustrate how the theories and approaches I used can be applied in an analysis that shows how development processes empower well-networked and well-resourced outsiders and edge longtime residents out of decision-making. Chapter 6, the final chapter, provides a solution for rebalancing the power between those well-networked and well-resourced decision-makers and longtime residents in an historically and systemically disinvested area.

## Understanding Urban Spaces in New Ways

My argument brings together theories on spatial justice, visual culture, and power to provide a framework for understanding urban spaces in new ways. I use this approach to offer a novel interpretation of the way gentrification consumes the intellectual and material lives of residents who find themselves and their community encroached upon by outsiders newly seeing economic value in the neighborhood's location and/or its assets. In any community, regardless of whether it is urban, suburban, or rural, there will be spaces to which different groups of people want to lay claim and extract value, but the ways in which urban spaces are geographically limited, dense in terms of people per square mile, and characteristically diverse in population and uses make the framework described here particularly evident.

To shape and create urban spaces differently in order to produce different social relations, we must understand urban spaces differently. In particular, we must recognize how a) urban spaces are shaped and created by a hegemonic system of spatial producers that is rooted in white supremacy; b) the hegemonic system embeds spaces with signals that convey meanings to spatial users; and c) the interpretations spatial users draw from spaces are deeply subjective.

We are all spatial users. We use spaces, such as sidewalks, highways, and public transit systems, to go places, like to school and work, and we use other spaces, like parks, restaurants, and offices, to do things, like spend time with family and friends and hold meetings. However, we generally are not individually or independently producing spaces. Rather, spaces are produced for us “by more powerful others,”<sup>45</sup> which are

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<sup>45</sup> Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 19.

defined and abstract forces that shape spaces either by creating them anew or by ensuring spaces retain their shape and thus their power. These forces include the dominant class, collectively comprised of city leaders such as publicly elected officials and their appointees, administrators in for-profit, nonprofit, and philanthropic entities, investors, and developers. Members of the dominant class tend to be white people. Other forces that shape and create spaces also include organizations and institutions, such as city departments and civic and philanthropic entities, and tax and regulatory structures, such as property taxes and zoning ordinances. While all of these forces have defined power, forces that shape and create spaces also include less defined, more abstract structures, like social norms, perceptions, and biases. These abstract structures manifest within members of the dominant class, and they guide and undergird decision-making, providing the appearance of logic. The defined and abstract forces share distributed power that does not come from a single source but that exists like a fog, in small, particulate forms and actions that, when combined and manifested throughout the network of dominant class members, create a significant yet ineffable influence over social and physical spaces.<sup>46</sup> Together, these defined and abstract forces comprise a hegemonic system of spatial producers that facilitates the deployment of strategies that order social and physical urban spaces in ways that maximize and maintain economic production for the dominant class.<sup>47</sup>

Consider, for example, the role that a regulatory structure like zoning plays in shaping urban spaces and affecting property values. A *New York Times* report found that

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<sup>46</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 777–95.

<sup>47</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Ed Wall and Ed Waterman, eds., *Landscape and Agency: Critical Essays* (New York, NY: Routledge, an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 3.

“it is illegal on 75 percent of the residential land in many American cities to build anything other than a detached single-family home.”<sup>48</sup> This type of zoning limits the amount of housing that each city block can accommodate. When desirable spaces are zoned for lower residential density, it is available to fewer people. As such, it becomes more expensive, meaning only those who have accumulated enough wealth can gain access to it. Studies show that the wealth gap in the United States is racially stratified—Blacks hold about 10% to 11% the amount of wealth as whites,<sup>49</sup> contributing to racial and economic segregation of communities throughout U.S. cities.<sup>50</sup> Restrictive zoning, along with city leaders and decision-makers and the social norms, perceptions, and biases that hold restrictive zoning in place, represent a hegemonic system of defined and abstract spatial producers that hold significant power over the ways urban spaces develop. While we rarely hear it stated this way, such development advances and even undergirds white supremacy.

Lefebvre says that the dominant class makes decisions to suit its own interests.<sup>51</sup> Because the dominant class has long been and still is comprised mostly of white people, the dominant class’ decisions about the shaping and creating of spaces are based on what Lipsitz calls a “white spatial imaginary.”<sup>52</sup> He explains that “a white spatial imaginary,

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<sup>48</sup> Emily Badger and Quoc Trung Bui, “Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: A House with a Yard on Every Lot,” *The New York Times*, June 18, 2019, sec. TheUpshot, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/18/upshot/cities-across-america-question-single-family-zoning.html>.

<sup>49</sup> Trymaine Lee, “A Vast Wealth Gap, Driven by Segregation, Redlining, Evictions and Exclusion, Separates Black and White America,” *The New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/racial-wealth-gap.html>; McKernan et al., “Less Than Equal: Racial Disparities in Wealth Accumulation.”

<sup>50</sup> The New York Times, “Mapping Segregation.”

<sup>51</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

<sup>52</sup> George Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape,” *Landscape Journal* 26, no. 1 (2007): 10–23.



based on exclusivity and augmented exchange value, functions as a central mechanism for skewing opportunities and life chances in the United States along racial lines.”<sup>53</sup> It is a frame for envisioning how spaces should be organized and used and it views spaces through a lens that is tinted by white expectations, experiences, and priorities and tilted toward white supremacy.<sup>54</sup> White supremacy is based in socially constructed ideologies about the superiority of white people and expectations and standards based in white experiences. Barthes calls these socially constructed ideologies “myths.”<sup>55</sup> He contends that myths are “constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things,” meaning that, when we buy into myths, we forget the historical legacy that went into shaping present-day realities and the intention that went into creating those realities.<sup>56</sup> Instead, we are “tricked” into believing those realities are part of a “natural” order of things.<sup>57</sup> For instance, according to Lipsitz, as “the white spatial imaginary views space primarily as a locus for the generation of exchange value,”<sup>58</sup> it naturalizes the idea that space’s supreme purpose is to be a vehicle for private capital accumulation, perpetuating white supremacy rather than putting space in service of enhancing civic and economic participation and inclusion.

Urban development is full of myths. One example is the myth that neighborhood decline, especially in predominantly poor communities of color, is a natural stage in a neighborhood’s “life-cycle.”<sup>59</sup> Metzger points out that “planners constrained by fiscal

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<sup>53</sup> Lipsitz, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape.”

<sup>55</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers (Paris and New York, 1957).

<sup>56</sup> Barthes, 58.

<sup>57</sup> Barthes, 58.

<sup>58</sup> Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape,” 15.

<sup>59</sup> Metzger, “Planned Abandonment: The Neighborhood Life-Cycle Theory and National Urban Policy.”

and political conditions have used [the neighborhood life-cycle] theory to encourage the ‘deliberate dispersal’ of the urban poor, followed by the eventual reuse of abandoned areas.”<sup>60</sup> The myth that decline is a natural part of a neighborhood’s “life-cycle” ignores the long-lasting impacts that structures like redlining and suburbanization have had on residents’ ability to maintain property ownership and vitality in their neighborhoods.<sup>61</sup> The myth of the neighborhood “life-cycle” theory becomes apparent when considering that it does not hold up against communities that have maintained both whiteness and affluence for many decades and thus have never experienced notable periods of decline. Rather than working to explain something meaningful, the neighborhood “life-cycle” theory masks the realities of inequitable and exclusionary urban development. In a global capitalist market, myths favor narratives that facilitate modes of producing social and physical urban spaces that maximize efficient and effective economic production as determined by the mostly white dominant class.<sup>62</sup> Myths also dismiss or actively avoid anything that might undermine the effective use of their intellectual power, such as the root causes of economic disparities, including the systemic racism that has oppressed people of color for centuries. The myth of urban development plays a strange game of drawing popular attention toward economic disparities based on geography, portraying those disparities as “opportunity,” rather than focusing on systemic barriers and exclusions based on the people who experience them and the institutions that perpetuate them.

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<sup>60</sup> Metzger, 7.

<sup>61</sup> Metzger, “Planned Abandonment: The Neighborhood Life-Cycle Theory and National Urban Policy.”

<sup>62</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 53.

My analysis of urban development helps explain why some urban spaces, such as residential and commercial corridors, parks, and even entire neighborhoods, become targets for the dispensation of place-based development resources, including financial incentives for private development and placemaking strategies that rebrand areas with new names and identities that convey certain sets of values and priorities.<sup>63</sup> Typically, the values and priorities conveyed are those of the dominant class, which are based on the economic growth potential of a space and which may not align with the values and priorities of established users, resulting in an all too familiar pattern of gentrification that sets urban spaces on trajectories toward demographic shifts and increases in property values. This can—and often does—create upheavals in the social and physical spaces of those areas.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, other urban spaces in the same city, not yet seen as valuable by the hegemonic system of spatial producers, not yet having the “light” of development shone upon them, continue to be neglected and left to decades-long trajectories of decline.<sup>65</sup> The legacy of white supremacy in the United States, which has never been fully addressed or repaired, is why development’s outcomes consistently exclude

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<sup>63</sup> Kriston Capps, “Your Entire City Is an Instagram Playground Now,” *CityLab*, December 29, 2017, sec. Design, <https://www.citylab.com/design/2017/12/congrats-your-city-is-an-instagram-playground-now/549152/>; Monica Degen, Caitlin DeSilvery, and Gillian Rose, “Experiencing Visualities in Designed Urban Environments: Learning from Milton Keynes,” *Environment and Planning A* 40 (2008): 1901–20; Guy Julier, “Urban Designscapes and the Production of Aesthetic Consent,” *Urban Studies* 42 (2005): 869–87; Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape”; Vanessa Mathews, “Aestheticizing Space: Art, Gentrification and the City,” *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 660–75; Andrew Zitcer, “Making Up Creative Placemaking,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 00, no. 0 (2018): 1–11, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1177/0739456X18773424>.

<sup>64</sup> Capps, “Your Entire City Is an Instagram Playground Now”; Degen, DeSilvery, and Rose, “Experiencing Visualities in Designed Urban Environments: Learning from Milton Keynes”; Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*; Julier, “Urban Designscapes and the Production of Aesthetic Consent”; Mathews, “Aestheticizing Space: Art, Gentrification and the City.”

<sup>65</sup> Jason Richardson, Bruce Mitchell, and Juan Franco, “Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities” (Washington, D.C.: National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2019), <https://ncrc.org/gentrification/>.

residents and result in economic exclusion and gentrification. Urban redevelopment has yet to focus on genuine development for those experiencing unfreedoms and remains stuck in inequitable economic growth patterns that prioritize place over people.

The ways urban spaces look tell spatial users about the hegemonic system's ideologies, that is, myths, through symbols that are embedded into the spaces. Urban spaces are shaped and created through formal development processes, which are underpinned with intention and logic that guide each development step and phase. These development processes inherently embed spaces with symbols or "visual artifacts to be used or 'read.'"<sup>66</sup> In the same way that advertisers carefully compose advertisements using symbolic images and sounds to convey meanings beyond accompanying text or language, spatial producers imbue urban spaces with symbols that signify what spaces are supposed to do and be, who and what they are for, and what users are supposed to do in and think about them. Houze points out that, as we move through spaces daily, "we encounter many images and objects" that are "part of a shared language, a visual vocabulary of the collective imagination."<sup>67</sup> We as spatial users are familiar with things we encounter in urban spaces, even if they are spaces we have never visited before, because the symbols embedded in those spaces relate to and build upon previous uses of those same and similar symbols and they signify familiar meanings.<sup>68</sup> Symbols and signals convey to spatial users things like: walk here, not there; turn here; go this way,

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<sup>66</sup> Guy Julier, "From Visual Culture to Design Culture," *Design Issues* 22 (2006): 67.

<sup>67</sup> Rebecca Houze, *New Mythologies in Design and Culture: Reading Signs and Symbols in the Visual Landscape* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 1.

<sup>68</sup> Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, Ltd., 1999), 33–40; Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2007), 90–103; Houze, *New Mythologies in Design and Culture: Reading Signs and Symbols in the Visual Landscape*.

not that way; this space is public; this space is private; you're welcome here, but not here; this space is good for investment, this space is not. As spatial users, we are used to seeing such symbols and signals: crosswalks tell us where to cross streets; fences denote private spaces or spaces with unique uses; and carefully maintained streetscapes and rehabbed storefronts, made possible by the strategic investment of public and private resources, connote an array of possible interpretations about cultural, civic, and economic values.

Because of the whiteness of the hegemonic system of spatial producers, we can see manifestations of the white supremacist ideology embedded into urban spaces through symbols that align with the white spatial imaginary. Zitcer says it is the white spatial imaginary that prompts a gentrifier to ask, "Where is the yoga studio? Where is the organic food co-op?"<sup>69</sup> These are things that, according to Zitcer, align with and symbolize the mostly white dominant class's expectations of urban spaces. Things like yoga studios and organic food co-ops, according to Zitcer, can signify the myth of the superiority of whiteness and the economic value of white expectations. In other words, yoga studios and organic food co-ops are symbols that signify that the neighborhoods where those things exist are good for a particular kind of investment from a particular demographic, usually one that is white and middle- or upper-class. The absence of those symbols, then, signifies that the neighborhoods where such things are not present are not good for investment from that economically empowered constituency, according to the white spatial imaginary. This ideology is, of course, not limited to yoga studios and organic food co-ops. It can be extended to other aspects of the way a space looks, the kinds of people who use the space, and the ways in which those people use it. Zitcer

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<sup>69</sup> Zitcer, "Making Up Creative Placemaking," 4.

describes how the dominant class brings “a set of class-informed assumptions, a ‘habitus’ that allows those with purchasing power to begin to reshape the environment to match their spatial imaginary.”<sup>70</sup> If a space does not align with the white spatial imaginary, the mostly white dominant class, which controls resources and decision-making processes, has the power to take control over those spaces. It does this using socially constructed ideologies—that is, myths—to justify decision-making processes and actions that transform spaces to align with the white spatial imaginary, ultimately perpetuating both the ideology and the reality of white supremacy.

Depending on who we are as spatial users, the sense we make of spaces is deeply subjective. Not all spatial users draw the same interpretations from spaces. What seems to be a space embedded with symbols of white supremacy to one spatial user may seem benign and welcoming to another. As individual spatial users, we instinctually and psychologically attempt to understand what we see and experience in spaces.<sup>71</sup> To make sense of a space, we may tap what is already familiar about it through our personal experiences as well as what we know about past policies and practices that have affected the space and present-day policies and practices that may be affecting it still.<sup>72</sup> The same space can look and feel psychologically and physically different based on how it is being used and by whom and based on each user’s individual impressions of and reactions to the space. For example, a community meeting room may feel comfortable to a resident

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<sup>70</sup> Zitcer, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 245; Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York, 2002). Lefebvre calls for analyzing space via three approaches: spatial practice (the everyday lived experience in space); representation of space (the way space looks); and representational space (the way space “feels,” i.e. the instinctual or psychological responses space stimulates).

<sup>72</sup> Richard Schein, “The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 4 (1997): 660–80; Wall and Waterman, *Landscape and Agency: Critical Essays*, 3.

when it is filled with familiar neighbors and when tables are arranged in a circular format that encourages open and collaborative dialogue. The same space, however, when filled with board members or city officials and arranged in a linear format that directs attention toward the front of the room, may feel stifling, uncomfortable, or unwelcoming to the same resident. At the same time, another resident may feel comfortable in both environments. The point is that space matters, and the way it matters depends on the perceptions of the individual experiencing it.

Because the dominant class controls the resources and decision-making processes that create and shape spaces, it always has the final word on spaces, which means spatial users have limited ability to assert agency in spaces. As spatial users, we can, through disruptive uses of urban spaces, accept or reject the intentions, logics, and strategies that are embedded into urban spaces and shape the spaces to our own benefit.<sup>73</sup> We do this, for example, when we subvert intended uses of private property by sitting outside a café just to access the free wifi without buying anything or using the lobby of a corporate office building—a space intended for exclusive use by employees and others who have business in the building—as a shortcut across a city block. However, the amount of agency we can exercise is limited. Urban spaces are so highly shaped and created through capitalist motivations and for the dominant class’s capitalist purposes that there is likely little room to exercise our agency in these spaces without consequence.<sup>74</sup> Spatial producers may subvert to our subversions by structuring mechanisms for excluding us. The café, for instance, may design a way to prevent non-customers from accessing the

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<sup>73</sup> Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 91–110.

<sup>74</sup> Julier, “From Visual Culture to Design Culture,” 68.

wifi, for example, by requiring an access code that must be received from the cashier upon making a purchase. The manager of the corporate office building may require anyone passing through the lobby to either have an ID badge visible or check in with a security guard upon entry. Additionally, disrupting urban spaces that we see as oppressive or offensive by defacing them could land us in legal trouble. Thus, spatial users' attempts to shape urban spaces to their benefit may be met by the dominant class' attempts to thwart them, creating a tension between spatial users and the hegemonic system that produces spaces. This tension turns urban spaces into "terrain[s] of struggle where various agents continually attempt to impose and/or resist differing constructs."<sup>75</sup>

In recent years, we have seen these tensions play out in public calls for the removal of monuments memorializing Confederate participation in the American Civil War. Groups of people have lobbied to have such monuments removed from public spaces, seeing them as oppressive or offensive symbols that uphold racist ideals, but the power to remove the monuments—legally, anyway—lies within the defined and abstract forces that comprise the hegemonic system of spatial producers. Thus, removing the monuments takes time, effort, and political will, which are barriers that can seem impossible to overcome, especially in the context of white supremacy.<sup>76</sup> As spatial users, we are not only in a continuous, reciprocal, and collaborative dialog with urban spaces, but we are also part of a constant, ever-responsive, reverberating relationship with spatial

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<sup>75</sup> Mitch Rose, "Landscape and Labyrinths," *Geoforum* 33 (2002): 459; Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Derrick Bryson Taylor, "Confederate Statue in North Carolina Comes Down After 112 Years," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/20/us/pittsboro-confederate-statue.html?searchResultPosition=3>; Julie Zauzmer, "He's on a One-Man Quest to Take down Confederate Monuments in Maryland," *The Washington Post*, October 26, 2019, sec. Local, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2019/10/26/hes-one-man-quest-take-down-confederate-monuments-maryland/>.



producers by way of urban spaces. In the end, however, the dominant class always has the ultimate ability to reshape and recreate spaces to serve their own values and priorities.

My fieldwork in a disinvested neighborhood in Indianapolis illuminates how residents' perceptions of development are based on their lived experiences. Residents who talked about their community's needs and ideals being neglected by leaders conveyed perceptions of powerlessness in the shadow of well-resourced and well-networked outsiders newly focusing on development in the area. My research helps build understanding about how traditional development relies on ideologies that will fail to address equity and inclusion because they do not adequately understand and incorporate the ideologies of residents. Both groups have intellectual and material frames of understanding—one cannot simply cancel out the other. Development does not alleviate the urban challenges it supposedly means to address because development does not focus on maximizing freedoms, overcoming unfreedoms, and moving toward more inclusive social and physical urban spaces and equitable social and economic outcomes. This study presents data that illustrate how the hegemonic system of spatial producers operates in ways that suit the values and priorities of the dominant class, which claims urban spaces and assumes leadership over processes that shape and create them.

## Chapter 2:

### Background, Data, and Methods

The information and comments presented in this dissertation come from a qualitative study on perceptions of economic development. From January 2019 through October 2019, I conducted interviews and fieldwork in the Riverside neighborhood, which is one of several neighborhoods in the Near Northwest Area of downtown Indianapolis. I chose the Riverside neighborhood for this fieldwork because I wanted to hear perspectives on development from people living and working in an historically and systemically disinvested urban area that had not yet begun seeing the type of transformational development that some other economically distressed neighborhoods near downtown had,<sup>77</sup> but where some city funding and private market and nonprofit activity signaled that such development may be on the horizon.

The most significant signal of such development is 16 Tech, a 60-acre Innovation District newly established near the neighborhood's southern border, where, once the district begins operations, "researchers, entrepreneurs, and creative thinkers" will make "truly groundbreaking discoveries" in fields like technology, biomedicine, and advanced manufacturing.<sup>78</sup> To support these endeavors, the City of Indianapolis invested \$75 million in tax incentives,<sup>79</sup> along with an additional \$3 million in tax incentives to seed

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<sup>77</sup> For example, from 2010 to 2018 assessed home values on the north, east, southeast, and south sides of downtown rose by 25%, 57%, 25%, and 73%, respectively. During the same timeframe, assessed values on the near northwest side, where the Riverside neighborhood sits, decreased by 15% (based on the author's analysis using data from Indiana Department of Local Government and Finance via IBRC, "Median Assessed Value-Residential," Prepared by SAVI, 2018, <http://profiles.savi.org>).

<sup>78</sup> 16 Tech Community Corporation, "16 Tech Innovation District," accessed June 9, 2020, <https://www.16tech.com/innovation-community/>; Victoria Davis, "Talent Attraction Key to City Innovation, Economic Growth at 16 Tech," *Indianapolis Recorder Newspaper*, April 21, 2016, [http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/business/article\\_8f6a57dc-07e7-11e6-9eaa-770085b360a6.html](http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/business/article_8f6a57dc-07e7-11e6-9eaa-770085b360a6.html).

<sup>79</sup> Davis, "Talent Attraction Key to City Innovation, Economic Growth at 16 Tech."

the 16 Tech Community Investment Fund, which will make grants to community groups and operate in perpetuity.<sup>80</sup> To sustain the Community Investment Fund, companies that lease space in the district will contribute \$.20 per square foot of leased space to the fund, amounting to about \$400,000 per year that can be granted to community groups.<sup>81</sup> Construction on the district's first building broke ground in 2019, and it is scheduled to open in 2020.<sup>82</sup> In my fieldwork, I heard from district developers and Riverside residents that the neighborhood is expected to be a prime area where the district's new employees will live because of its close proximity to the district, to the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) campus, and to the many amenities and resources that downtown Indianapolis offers.

In addition to 16 Tech, there are other redevelopment efforts in motion that are affecting the Riverside community, including efforts to redevelop vacant industrial properties and add pedestrian trails to connect the neighborhood to the city's expansive and expanding trail system.<sup>83</sup> There is a master plan to redevelop and reconfigure Riverside Regional Park starting with the renovation of the dilapidated Taggart Memorial, which is being made possible by a \$9 million Lilly Endowment grant.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> J. K. Wall, "16 Tech Gets Go-Ahead Funding from Council," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, November 16, 2015.

<sup>81</sup> I heard this information conveyed by a 16 Tech representative in numerous community meetings.

<sup>82</sup> 16 Tech Community Corporation, "16 Tech Innovation District."

<sup>83</sup> These topics were frequently discussed in interviews and community meetings I attended during my fieldwork period. One example of a redeveloped vacant space is along West 29<sup>th</sup> Street where a nonprofit health and fitness education organization called Nine13sports renovated and moved into an industrial space. The organization's staff regularly attended community meetings. Also, during the course of my fieldwork, there were several conversations about trail systems. In particular, there were conversations about Fall Creek Trail extending from its current termination point at Meridian Street into the Near Northwest Area to connect it with and extend the Central Canal towpath.

<sup>84</sup> Domenica Bongiovanni, "From Parks to Festivals: Lilly Endowment Will Spend \$48.8M to Make Indy a Better, Cooler Place," *Indianapolis Star*, December 5, 2018, <https://www.indystar.com/story/entertainment/arts/2018/12/05/lilly-endowment-gives-away-millions-improve-indianapolis-neighborhoods/2077673002/>; Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, "Riverside Regional Park Master Plan," 2017, <https://www.riversideparkplan.com/>.

Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership (INHP), in collaboration with Indy Chamber, is offering financial assistance to employees at select proximate institutions, including Marian University, IUPUI, and Eskenazi Hospital, to purchase or make external repairs to homes in Riverside and other nearby neighborhoods.<sup>85</sup> There is also the Northwest Quality of Life Plan, which is part of the Great Places 2020 program.<sup>86</sup> Quality of life plans are typically resident-led, and they detail specific actions and timelines for addressing resident-defined needs. Together with 16 Tech, these efforts signal a new focus on the Riverside neighborhood, which can simultaneously bring a long period of disinvestment to an end as well as put the area at risk of having the kind of economic, social, and cultural transformation that can lead to the displacement of dedicated, longtime residents.

### **Community Context**

The area we know as Riverside is an historically industrial neighborhood situated within three miles of the central business district in downtown Indianapolis. It was mostly a farming community until modern industrial development began around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>87</sup> In 1892, a cerealine mill (also known as malt flakes), called Cerealine Manufacturing Company, seeking to cut costs, moved from Columbus, Indiana to the present-day site of the Bunge soybean plant on 18<sup>th</sup> Street between Gent and

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<sup>85</sup> “Indy Chamber Announces Anchoring Revitalization Program,” Indy Chamber, *Indy Chamber News Archives* (blog), September 12, 2017, <https://indychamber.com/news/indy-chamber-news/indy-chamber-announces-anchoring-revitalization-program/>. Interestingly, information about the Anchor Housing Program is not linked on INHP’s website and only seems to be available via an internet search of through announcements from individual organizations. For example, see “Down Payment on a Bright Future,” Indy Chamber, *Indy Chamber News Archives* (blog), June 22, 2018, <https://indychamber.com/news/down-payment-on-a-bright-future/>.

<sup>86</sup> “North West Area Quality of Life Plan” (Flanner House, 2014), <https://flannerhouse.org/north-west-quality-of-life-plan/>.

<sup>87</sup> The Polis Center, “United Northwest Area (UNWA),” accessed November 25, 2019, <https://www.polis.iupui.edu/RUC/Neighborhoods/UNWA/UNWANarrative.htm>.

Montcalm Streets in the southeastern quadrant of the Riverside neighborhood.<sup>88</sup>

Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the area was populated by mostly white working- and middle-class residents, the majority of whom lived in single-family homes while some lived in multi-family buildings.<sup>89</sup> There were retail and entertainment venues, doctor's offices, grocery stores, pharmacies, schools, libraries, fire stations, service stations, transit lines, and all the other amenities typical of a thriving urban community.<sup>90</sup> However, as with many urban neighborhoods around the country, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century white flight to the suburbs, incited by racially discriminatory policies and practices, like redlining, led to residential and commercial disinvestment and hindered reinvestment in and around Riverside.<sup>91</sup>

Today, Riverside is part of a broader area called the Near Northwest Area, where about 10,700 residents live.<sup>92</sup> Riverside is the largest neighborhood in the Near Northwest Area and is home to about 3,000 to 5,500 residents, depending on how one defines the neighborhood's boundaries.<sup>93</sup> In interviews and during fieldwork, residents and others familiar with the neighborhood described Riverside's boundaries spanning from 30<sup>th</sup> Street to the north to one of three southern edges: 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Fall Creek, or 10<sup>th</sup> Street; and then from White River to the west to one of three eastern edges: the Central

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<sup>88</sup> Sharon Kennedy, *Memories of Cerealine Towne* (Indianapolis, IN: Published by the author, 2000), 20. Cerealine is a flaked corn product. The Indiana Historical Bureau calls cerealine "a precursor to cold breakfast cereal" and says brewers have also used it "as a malt alternative" ("Cerealine Manufacturing Co.," n.d., <https://www.in.gov/history/markers/4094.htm>). Hominy is also a corn-based product that, once processed, can be eaten alone or can be ground into grits or into a finer texture and used like flour.

<sup>89</sup> Kennedy, *Memories of Cerealine Towne*.

<sup>90</sup> Kennedy. In interviews, residents also talked about businesses and amenities that used to exist in the area.

<sup>91</sup> For a detailed case study of how white flight and racially discriminatory policies and practices impacted Detroit, MI, see Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>92</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, Prepared by SAVI, 2018, [http://profiles.savi.org/?utm\\_source=data-tools&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=data-tools](http://profiles.savi.org/?utm_source=data-tools&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=data-tools).

<sup>93</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages.

Canal and Fall Creek, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street, or I-65. Some residents described the neighborhood as a “peninsula,” being surrounded on the west, south, and east sides by the White River, Fall Creek, and Central Canal waterways, respectively, and grounded on the north side by 30<sup>th</sup> Street. (See Appendix A for a map of the area showing these varying conceptualizations of the neighborhood’s boundaries.)

Included within Riverside’s boundaries is Riverside Regional Park, which was a frequent topic of conversation in my fieldwork and the site of many community meetings I attended, and which is the backdrop of the issues discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. Riverside Regional Park was established in 1898 by Indianapolis mayor Thomas Taggart. Today, the park is an 862-acre municipal park, making it one of the largest public parks in the country.<sup>94</sup> Over the years, park amenities have included swimming, fishing, canoeing, shelter areas for gatherings, playgrounds, a soap box derby hill (which turns into a sledding hill when it snows), all kinds of classes for people of all ages, and sports, including football, soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, boxing, tennis, and golf.<sup>95</sup> The park is managed by Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, which is a city department that manages public parks, trails, and other recreation spaces throughout the city and county. Because many of the park’s facilities and amenities are in a state of disrepair due to lack of investment and adequate maintenance over many years, in 2017 Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, along with partners, stakeholders, and residents, underwent an in-depth master planning process to reimagine the entire park. The first investment into bringing the master plan to fruition came in

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<sup>94</sup> Riverside Regional Park Foundation, “Park History,” accessed June 3, 2020, <https://www.indyriversidefoundation.org/park-history>; Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, “Riverside Regional Park Master Plan.”

<sup>95</sup> Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, “Riverside Regional Park Master Plan,” 9–26.

2018 when Indianapolis-based philanthropy Lilly Endowment granted more than \$9 million to repair the dilapidated Taggart Memorial, build an outdoor amphitheater that will use the memorial as a backdrop and stage, and provide support to make Indianapolis Shakespeare Company the space's anchoring organization.<sup>96</sup> In my fieldwork, I heard residents express both anticipation and apprehension about the changes that the park's transformation could bring to the adjacent Riverside neighborhood.

Riverside's population is between one-third to three-quarters Black and about 20% white. Most of the rest of the residents are Hispanic and there is a small percentage of Asian residents, comprising about .5% to 3.5% of the neighborhood's population, depending on how one draws the boundaries.<sup>97</sup> Poverty and unemployment in the area are high at 24% and 17.5%, respectively,<sup>98</sup> but the population is not homogenous. There are working-class residents, residents of some affluence, lots of senior citizens, and families with kids of all ages. There is an active culture of civic participation in community organizations, which often partner with city entities and other nonprofit agencies to address the area's challenges with vacancy, housing instability, poverty, and unemployment. One of the most active neighborhood groups is the Riverside Civic League, which I was told is the second oldest neighborhood association in Indianapolis (although no one in the area seems to know which is the oldest, and, to date, I have not been able to figure it out either).

It was at the February 2019 Riverside Civic League meeting when I made my first formal introduction to residents in the Riverside neighborhood. When it was my turn on

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<sup>96</sup> Bongiovanni, "From Parks to Festivals: Lilly Endowment Will Spend \$48.8M to Make Indy a Better, Cooler Place."

<sup>97</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, 2018.

<sup>98</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages.

the meeting agenda, I stood at the front of the room and summarized who I was personally (a wife, mother of three, and graduate student), briefly pitched my research project, and asked people to sign up to schedule an interview with me, which a few people did. I knew, however, that I would have to work harder at getting people to sit down with me than simply giving a short announcement at a community meeting. Being aware of my position as an uninvited stranger to the community and an upper-middle class, well-educated white woman with ties to a university about which many residents did not have warm feelings,<sup>99</sup> I knew it was necessary to show my commitment to learning from people in the community by regularly showing up to meetings and events, especially when personally invited, listening carefully to residents' concerns, working to understand the deeper roots of those concerns, talking openly and authentically about race and power, centering others' perspectives and not my own, and acknowledging my inherent privilege.

## **Methods**

### ***Theoretical and Practical Approaches to the Fieldwork***

During my fieldwork period, I spoke with 47 people over the course of 42 interviews, attended 39 community meetings and events, and had innumerable informal conversations with people who lived and worked in the area. (See Appendix B for a list of interviews by date along with interviewee descriptions; see Appendix C for a list of community meetings and events and their dates and locations.) I began my fieldwork

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<sup>99</sup> For more on the contentious history between Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and the city's Black community, see Paul Mullins, "The Last Holdouts: Community Displacement and Urban Renewal on the IUPUI Campus," *Invisible Indianapolis: Race, Heritage and Community Memory in the Circle City*, October 9, 2016, <https://invisibleindianapolis.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/the-last-holdouts-community-displacement-and-urban-renewal-on-the-iupui-campus/>; Wildstyle Paschall, "Indiana Avenue: The Ethnic Cleansing of Black Indianapolis," *New America, Indy Voices* (blog), February 4, 2020, <https://www.newamerica.org/indianapolis/blog/indiana-avenue-ethnic-cleansing-black-indianapolis/>.



equipped with knowledge of community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods and participatory action research (PAR) methods, both of which value residents as co-creators of new knowledge derived from social science research processes.<sup>100</sup>

Additionally, I was trained in oral history methods, which also stress that new knowledge is co-created between researchers and participants and which emphasize the use of oral histories to connect people's past experiences to present values and beliefs.<sup>101</sup> I gave each interviewee a copy of the transcript of our conversation to convey that the conversation was not merely "my data," but it was something that was meaningfully co-created and thus ownership of it was shared between the interviewee and me.<sup>102</sup> The oral histories training in particular taught me to approach interviews with the perspective that each interviewee had a unique story to tell and each person's story was based on interpretations of what they remembered and experienced. I made a point to regularly reiterate what I thought I was hearing from people to make sure I was understanding their perceptions accurately.

My training in CBPR, PAR, and oral histories motivated me to include in my research design some co-creative elements, even though I, as the researcher, was individually defining the research topic and the list of interview questions and prompts.

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<sup>100</sup> Sarah Banks and Andrea Armstrong, eds., *Ethics in Community-Based Participatory Research: Case Studies, Case Examples, and Commentaries* (Durham, UK: National Coordinating Center for Public Engagement and the Center for Social Justice and Community Action, 2012); Jarg Bergold and Stefan Thomas, "Participatory Research Methods: A Methodological Approach in Motion," *Historical Social Research* 37, no. 4 (2012): 191–222; Centre for Social Justice and Community Action and National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement, *Community-Based Participatory Research: A Guide to Ethical Principles and Practice* (Durham, UK: Durham University, 2012); Alice McIntyre, *Participatory Action Research* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Ltd., 2008).

<sup>101</sup> Marjorie Hunt, *The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, 2016).

<sup>102</sup> This philosophy came from my training in oral history methods, which stress that new knowledge is co-created between researchers and participants and which emphasize the use of oral histories to connect people's past experiences to present values and beliefs.

To introduce some co-creative elements, I built into my research design the flexibility for the project to evolve based on new information I gathered and new realizations I had throughout the fieldwork period. I remained responsive to what I saw and heard in the field, asked for feedback and input from interviewees and community members, and modified my approaches accordingly. For example, upon designing my research project, I had only planned on interviewing residents who were actually living in the Riverside neighborhood; I had not planned on seeking interviews with people who only worked in the area and did not live there. However, I realized early in my fieldwork period that individuals who worked at places like neighborhood schools, Riverside Regional Park, and other nonprofit entities offered critical, community-sustaining support to the neighborhood's residents, that they had their own memories and experiences in the area and thus their own stories to tell, so I concluded that perspectives from representatives at those entities needed to be included in the study.

To enable more participant input into my research design, I also invited interviewees to add information and insights to our conversations beyond my planned questions and prompts. Toward the end of each interview, I asked interviewees if there were any other thoughts or topics they wanted to add to our conversations—for example, was there anything we did not talk about that they thought was critical to mention. Sometimes this added substantial insights to our sessions as it gave interviewees an opportunity to mention issues or concerns which they might have hesitated to bring up earlier or that simply did not come up during the course of our conversation. It also gave interviewees an opportunity to clarify anything they thought they might not have communicated clearly earlier in the interview. For example, when I asked one

interviewee whether she had anything else to add to our conversation, the resident pointed out specific types of neighborhood changes she read as signals of gentrification. In her view, “big art installations going into neighborhoods signifies the start of gentrification.” She noted that the appearances of such new amenities as public art, makerspaces, and microbreweries signaled a cultural shift toward white tastes: “it seems like, uh...white people like to follow the trendy, artsy stuff. No offense, but...they tend to.” Our conversation continued for more than ten minutes as we went from talking about signals of gentrification, to how neighborhood development that gentrifies seemed to be seeping from one neighborhood to another around the city, to talking about the efforts of a neighborhood nonprofit organization that was working on addressing the neighborhood’s challenge with crime by focusing on meeting and supporting current residents’ needs and abilities, rather than focusing on attracting outsiders to the area. This was the only point in the interview when the interviewee clearly conveyed her perspective that development tends to be racialized. She had implied it earlier in the interview, but she made it clear only after I asked her if she had anything else to add to our conversation. Asking interviewees whether they had anything else to add, and following all my planned questions and prompts with this question, enabled me to tap into some perspectives that I otherwise would have missed.

I also allowed participants to have input into my research design by concluding each interview by asking interviewees for their suggestions about whom I should talk to next about the project. This served the dual purpose of pointing me toward individuals with perspectives that interviewees thought would be important to the study and

expanding my network of prospective research participants. I will say more on this point later in this section.

Another strategy for remaining responsive to the information and insights I gleaned from my fieldwork was by following Clifford Geertz's theory of thick description in my approach to notetaking while in the field. Geertz argues that culture is a social discourse conducted in words and actions, which signify larger concepts in a society and that, by objectively observing series of incidences, researchers can build understanding of the subtleties in what people do and the ways they interact.<sup>103</sup> With Geertz's ideas in mind, I entered each community meeting, interaction, and interview ready to listen, learn, and take notes in order to understand people's perceptions and the processes they used to influence what went on in the neighborhood. Using advice from not only Geertz but also from Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's book on ethnographic fieldwork processes,<sup>104</sup> I closely noted as many observations as possible, no matter how mundane the details may have seemed, such as: Who was and was not present from place to place and meeting to meeting? How was the room organized? How was the agenda organized? Who sat next to whom? Who was social and with whom and who was quiet and isolated? Who said what? How was a dissenting opinion received and addressed? Attending community meetings and noting these details helped me administer richer interviews while memo-writing helped me inductively find themes in what I observed and heard.

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<sup>103</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 3–30.

<sup>104</sup> Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Throughout my fieldwork, I kept in mind Converse's research showing that the beliefs people hold may not make logical sense to anyone else but those individuals, but that those individuals' perceptions play important roles when it comes to the decisions they make, underscoring the importance of understanding the structure and contexts of people's belief systems.<sup>105</sup> Relatedly, Cramer's research on perceptions of rural-urban divides uncovers some of the ideas that shaped the belief systems of people in rural Wisconsin who felt like their communities did not "receive their fair share of public resources" in comparison to urban and suburban communities. This belief persisted among many rural residents despite data Cramer provides showing that, in fact, rural areas received about the same amount if not more public resources than non-rural areas. Apparently, rural residents' contexts and experiences were driving their perceptions, and I found similar circumstances in my fieldwork, where some residents held beliefs that, on the surface, seemed incongruous or surprising, compared to what I had heard from other residents in interviews and community meetings. I had to understand that people's views of the neighborhood, their future, and what development means grew out of personal experiences that directed their responses. For example, a couple of interviewees said they thought the establishment of the bilingual, English-Spanish charter school program at Global Preparatory Academy at Riverside #44 was an attempt to put up barriers to discourage the neighborhood's African-American children from attending the school and to make the neighborhood appeal to other kinds of families. As a result of these perceptions, those individuals did not support the school. But my fieldwork gave me access to contrasting perspectives on why a bilingual program was founded at the

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<sup>105</sup> Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics (1964)."

Riverside neighborhood school. For example, one school representative told me that, around the time the new program was established, Indianapolis lacked educational options for the city's Spanish-speaking children and their families. She said that, since the former Riverside Elementary School #44 was a "troubled" and "low-performing" school,<sup>106</sup> a charter was granted to not only improve student outcomes by putting the school under new management, but also to help close the city's educational opportunity gap by establishing a bilingual program that could teach Spanish-speaking and English-speaking students alike. While the school representative and other supporters, including former residents who attended School #44 as children and current residents who sent their kids to the school, saw the program as a positive addition to the neighborhood, the local "truth" remained among some people that the program was exclusionary. If school representatives want to build a mutually supportive relationship with community residents, as they said they did, they would have to explore and address the view that the bilingual program was not intended to meet the needs of the neighborhood's Black students and families. A recurring phrase I heard in my fieldwork was "perception is reality." People act and react based on their belief systems, which are based on their own real contexts and experiences. We need to understand how people's belief systems are produced through their experiences of marginalization created by long-standing structural inequities.

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<sup>106</sup> Rich Van Wyk, "Once-Struggling Elementary School Sees Remarkable Turnaround," *WTHR 13*, April 29, 2017, sec. Local, <https://www.wthr.com/article/news/local/once-struggling-elementary-school-sees-remarkable-turnaround/531-f3cac536-2d94-4e21-859f-4dcb41546356>.

### *Gathering and Analyzing Data*

Out of the 47 people I interviewed, 15 were current Riverside residents—two renters and the rest homeowners—and two were former residents who currently lived elsewhere in the city, though they still owned the home where they grew up, and continued to be involved in the neighborhood’s civic life. The majority of residents I interviewed were Black or people of color, while two were white. Nine of the people I interviewed worked at neighborhood organizations, such as a school, community center, or nonprofit organization whose reach focused on the Riverside neighborhood specifically or the Near Northwest Area more broadly. Seven of those neighborhood folks were Black or people of color, while two were white. Throughout my research, I found that emotional ties to the neighborhood tended to run deep among many people who lived or worked there. For instance, one man, who lived elsewhere in the city but still owned his family home and was active in Riverside’s civic community, said, “My body is on the east side. My heart and soul’s on the west side.” This man’s comment illustrates how, for many people I met and interviewed, Riverside was not just any Indianapolis neighborhood but it was a unique place that had personal history and meaning for people who spent time there, who worked there, who grew up there, and who raised families there.

To find residents and other neighborhood folks to speak with in the Riverside area, I used a combination of convenience sampling and maximum variation sampling. Once I had established some relationships with neighborhood residents, I also used snowball sampling to extend my initial network of subjects. I started with my own personal network and then reached out to community associations and organizations

where residents were active participants and leaders. I attended community meetings, made announcements about my research project, introduced myself to people at meetings, and asked residents if they would be willing to sit with me for an interview. Getting residents to dedicate time to me was slightly difficult, since I was asking them to give up personal time to talk with me. At the end of each interview with a resident or someone who worked in the neighborhood, I asked each interviewee if they could recommend other people for me to talk to about the topic. Early on in my interview process, I noticed that interviewees tended to recommend people who were already actively involved in community associations and organizations, and so I started asking specifically if they could think of anyone else who was not already actively involved. Sometimes they said they could not think of anyone and sometimes they came up with a person or two, but they were unwilling to connect me for reasons I can only guess. Possibly, they did not want to be the impetus for my infringement on someone else's time. To try to gather as many varying perspectives as I could, I asked residents if they could think of anyone who might see things differently or have opposing viewpoints from their own.

For this research, I wanted to interview different kinds of people whose perspectives would reflect a range of insights on economic development in Indianapolis and in the Riverside neighborhood. Thus, in addition to interviewing residents and other neighborhood folks, who were embedded in the Riverside neighborhood and intimately familiar with its civic and cultural dynamics, I also interviewed city leaders who spent little to no time in the area and so did not have intimate knowledge of what the area was like civically or culturally. I interviewed 21 people who fell into this latter group. These



interviewees included economic development “experts,”<sup>107</sup> who were practitioners working at organizations whose missions directly or indirectly supported economic or community development and whose operational reach spanned the city, if not the broader Central Indiana region. These were organizations working to create the conditions under which the city’s and region’s economies can remain responsive to challenges, and they were almost exclusively public and nonprofit entities. Examples of these organizations include the Office of the Mayor, City of Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development, EmployIndy, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police District, Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership, Indianapolis Neighborhood Resource Center, Indy Black Chamber, Indy Chamber, Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Of these 21 interviewees, two-thirds were white while the rest were Black or people of color. While scheduling interviews with residents was a little challenging, I found it was easier to get interviews with practitioners. Since I was asking practitioners to talk with me about issues that were already related to what they did professionally, they simply put me on their work calendars. For them, I was just another meeting.

This type of “expert” sampling enabled me to gain insights from city-level practitioners who were familiar with past and present high-level economic development strategies and processes that have shaped and are shaping Indianapolis and how and why those strategies and processes might be changing. For example, in one interview with a city-level practitioner, I asked the interviewee what she considered to be an example of an innovative development strategy. She said she thought the Indianapolis Cultural Trail

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<sup>107</sup> I put the word “expert” in quotation marks to note that there are different types of expertise. While economic development professionals may be well versed in formal mechanisms for catalyzing economic growth, residents are experts in the qualitative outcomes economic development transactions produce in their communities.

was one of the best development investments in the past 25 or so years. The Indianapolis Cultural Trail is a paved 8-mile pedestrian and biking trail that connects to all six of the city's Cultural Districts. It was constructed from 2007 to 2013 in partnership with the City of Indianapolis using philanthropic dollars and federal grant money.<sup>108</sup> The interviewee explained that, around the time when the trail was being conceived, the city's economy was shifting, along with the global economy, from a manufacturing-intensive, production economy to a technology-intensive, knowledge economy. She said:

In a production economy, which is what we were for lots and lots of years, cheapest is always best. In a knowledge economy, it's all about quality of life, amenities, and workforce. Well, it's all about workforce, which means quality of life and amenities. Right? It's all about what talent you can have, how can you attract it, how can you retain it, how do you give them what they need to, like, be innovative? It's all people based. It's about the quality of your workforce. And, yeah, invest [in a high-quality workforce] by investing in the [Cultural Trail]. It creates the kind-of foundational infrastructure of quality of life that I think is really important for being a leader in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

This comment gave me insight into how this practitioner conceptualized what economic development was supposed to do and how its success was measured. According to her, strategies that attracted knowledge economy workers—typically more affluent, well-educated, white individuals (also called the “creative class”)—were the most successful. This conceptualization conformed to the economic growth strategy described by Richard Florida in his book *The Rise of the Creative Class*,<sup>109</sup> and it was typical of practitioners I interviewed, yet differed from residents' conceptualizations of successful economic development. For many residents, projects like the Cultural Trail were evidence of

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<sup>108</sup> Indianapolis Cultural Trail: A Legacy of Gene & Marilyn Glick, “About: History,” accessed August 12, 2020, <https://indyculturaltrail.org/about/history/>.

<sup>109</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

gentrification and proof that the city was working to serve the interests of constituencies other than them. Insights like this, which I gleaned from my conversations with practitioners, were different from information I gathered from scholarly writing, news articles, and press releases. The interviews enabled me to understand how practitioners defined success in economic development and gave me access to some nuanced perspectives on the ways in which strategies, activities, projects, and programs for development have emerged in Indianapolis.

To find city-level practitioners to interview, I started with my own network of people, which included people who I knew were involved in economic development in the city. I also “cold called”<sup>110</sup> people who were involved in initiatives seeking to spark neighborhood and community transformation, such as 16 Tech and those described in the above section. As with the interviews with residents and other neighborhood folks, I ended each interview with city-level practitioners by asking them if they could recommend other people for me to talk to about the topic.

I conducted the interviews as semi-structured conversations, using a list of guiding questions and prompts, which varied slightly depending on whether I was interviewing a resident, someone who worked in the neighborhood but did not live there, or a city-level practitioner. (See Appendix D for my lists of guiding questions and prompts). Following best practices learned from my oral histories training, I started each interview by prompting interviewees to talk about themselves. This served as a “warm-up” for both the interviewee and me, helping us settle into our environment and the interview process, and it also helped inform me of some of each interviewee’s personal

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<sup>110</sup> I say “cold called,” but I often sent e-mails rather than made phone calls to solicit time from practitioners who did not know me personally or professionally and who were not expecting my inquiry.

background. For residents, I asked them to tell me about when and where they grew up. When I interviewed people who worked in the neighborhood but did not live there and city-level practitioners, I asked them to tell me about their careers, specifically what the experiences and motivations were that led them to work in their fields. Also, toward the beginning of each interview, I asked the interviewee to define economic development. This was the question that kicked off our deeper dive into conversations about how development impacts communities.

Interviews with city-level practitioners lasted about an hour while interviews with residents and other neighborhood-level folks averaged about an hour and ten minutes. I conducted all interviews in-person and at a location in or near the Riverside neighborhood. A few interviews took place in residents' homes while others took place in libraries and other community spaces, coffee shops, restaurants, and in people's places of employment, either in their personal office or a conference room. I digitally recorded all interviews, with permission from interviewees, and manually transcribed them. After transcribing them, I sent the transcriptions to interviewees for review to make sure they did not have any second thoughts about anything they said and to ensure they felt like they were clear about saying what they meant to say. Only one interviewee, a resident, said she wanted to change something she said. During the course of our conversation, she had referred to some of the low-income residents in the Riverside neighborhood as "poor people," and she felt that seemed insensitive. We changed the terminology to "low-income people."

I used a web-based program called Dedoose for my coding and analysis processes. I used open coding to identify themes in what respondents said about

economic development by tagging passages with keywords. With the city-level practitioner transcripts, I noted how interviewees defined economic development as a term, what they associated with economic development, how they said development was facilitated in Indianapolis, and what they said were the outcomes of development processes. In the transcripts from interviews with residents and people who worked at neighborhood organizations, I looked for the same points, but, since residents and other neighborhood folks were typically not involved in city-wide economic development initiatives, I also looked for indications of what information they were drawing on to develop their perceptions of how economic development affected them and their community. As I coded interviews, I drew comparisons across and among all three categories of interviewees to identify patterns in what people said about economic development and which signals they drew on and what information and experiences they used to interpret those signals to develop their perceptions.

### **Notes on Participant Classifications**

I initially planned on dividing interviewees into one of two categories: “residents” and “practitioners.” People who lived in the Riverside area were going to be classified as “residents” and people who worked in city-level administrative positions related to economic development activities in the city were going to be classified as “practitioners.” Of course, communities and the roles and relationships people have in and to them are more complex than that, and so, as I described above, I quickly realized that I needed a new classification for individuals who worked in the Riverside area and who were important to include in the study but who could not be classified neatly as “residents” or “practitioners.” Throughout this dissertation, I use the term “neighborhood affiliates” to

refer to these individuals.<sup>111</sup> This term is similar to the term “stakeholder,” which is commonly used in the planning and design stages for community initiatives, such as the area’s quality of life plan and the Riverside Regional Park Master Plan, to broadly refer to anyone who is not a resident but who has an interest in the neighborhood through a public, nonprofit, or for-profit entity which they represent.<sup>112</sup> However, the term “neighborhood affiliate” draws a distinction between those individuals whose work puts them in regular contact with area residents and city-level development administrators whose work, while it impacts area residents, does not put them in regular direct contact. As I make the distinction between “neighborhood affiliates” and “practitioners,” I assert that neighborhood affiliates, especially those who are embedded members of the community, have different, typically more complex, understandings of the dynamics of the neighborhood’s civic culture and residents’ concerns about development’s impacts on the area compared to people who work in city-level administrative positions, whose perceptions of the area and its residents may be informed by brief interactions in the area and even second-hand knowledge about neighborhood events and contexts, and thus their perceptions may be oversimplified and even offensive to area residents.

In an interview with one neighborhood affiliate, the interviewee demonstrated the idea that, since he worked in the area, he had more authentic insights into the area’s strengths and challenges. About halfway through our conversation, I asked the interviewee to tell me about how the neighborhood has changed over the years. He said,

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<sup>111</sup> Other terms I considered using were “neighborhood allies” and “neighborhood partners,” but I decided against these terms since it is feasible that individuals who have regular direct contact with residents may not be seen by residents as “allies” or “partners.” Although all the neighborhood affiliates I interviewed seemed to be respected and valued members of the Riverside community, which was partly why I interviewed them, I settled on the term “neighborhood affiliates” to avoid assigning to this group of interviewees a level of community acceptance that I am not entitled to determine.

<sup>112</sup> For example, see “North West Area Quality of Life Plan.”

“it’s changed in a way that you don’t see too many businesses being started or maintaining themselves here, but what you do see is a lot more pride in the community in terms of people wanting to make sure that they maintain the communal sense and that people [outsiders] aren’t coming in to kind-of take advantage of the fact that there’s a lot of abandoned homes [which those outsiders may try to buy cheaply and use to turn a profit].” I asked him to describe what made him think residents were taking more pride in the neighborhood:

Abbey            Are there certain things you’ve seen, sort-of efforts ramping up or certain things that...?

Interviewee    Oh yeah. So...Riverside has this parade that goes on. You know, so, um, they wanted to keep that tradition alive. Also, um...that park is very instrumental when it comes to baseball, when it comes to, just, people having gatherings and them having cookouts and things like that, but then, also, when you see how many people come out for the Jazz and Blues in the Park [at Watkins Park] and the strip on MLK...you just understand that people do care about the community. But then, when something bad happens and you hear people defending exactly what’s going on, like, you know, people not wanting to come in this area because they heard there was a shooting that happened. You know? But, then again, if something happened downtown [in the central business district], it’s not something that people feel like, “Well, I’m not gonna go downtown.” So, it’s not a reflection of what downtown looks like unless it’s a particular event [referring to Black Expo]. And so, you have a lot of people who are like, “Well, I feel safe walking down the street [in Riverside and other neighborhoods in the Near Northwest Area], but I also know my community.” And so, that defense is also there. And, because I go to a lot of community meetings because of my [work at a nonprofit in the area], I’m able to hear a lot more clearly those things, but also as I walk around I hear those things as well. So, you get to hear those echoes of pride when it comes to this neighborhood and disgust when people take it to a level that is not called for when it comes to talking about this area.

This participant addressed the perception that, since there is a lot of vacancy and abandonment throughout the area, then residents must not care about the place, but he contested that interpretation based on his experiences working in the area. According to him, someone not as intimately familiar with the area as he was may not know about the large numbers of people who use park amenities and attend community events, like the Riverside parade and the Jazz and Blues in the Park events. The involvement he saw from area residents indicated to him that residents cared deeply about their community, even if the signals showing people cared were not immediately and visibly obvious based on the way neighborhood spaces looked or the number of vacant and abandoned buildings.

I also had to make some decisions about how to classify people who did not live or work in the area but who grew up there, still owned their family home, and were active in the community's civic culture. I interviewed two individuals who fit this description. I decided to classify and analyze my conversations with these former residents alongside the residents who lived in the neighborhood, rather than creating another new classification for them, because their concerns about development in the community aligned with those of other residents when it came to the issue of displacement and questions about outsiders' motivations for investing in the area. Additionally, when these former residents spoke about the community, they used language that showed they imagined themselves being interwoven into the fabric of the community rather than as outsiders looking in. For example, when talking with one woman who grew up in the neighborhood and cared for her mother who still lived in the family home, which the interviewee and her siblings also looked after and expected to inherit upon the mother's



passing, the woman expressed concern about the lack of essential services in the neighborhood, saying, “*we* don’t have...the banks and the, um, the grocery stores or the pharmacy...those things that people need all the time...*we’re* in a food desert” (emphasis added). Later in our conversation, she said, “When *we* begin to put things back into the neighborhood, who are *we* gonna generate...? Who are *we* gonna encourage to become residents of the neighborhood? Are *we* then going to build housing that is going to be too high for people to really afford the housing?” (emphasis added). Although she no longer lived in the area, she, like many residents who lived in the area, was concerned about both the area’s state of disinvestment as well as the potential changes new investments could catalyze. Once development helped bring essential services back into the area, she wondered if the area would still be affordable to longtime residents and people like them, including herself, or if it would be transformed to only cater to the needs, abilities, and values of more affluent people. These are concerns I heard repeatedly throughout my fieldwork as residents disputed the best strategies and pathways to neighborhood redevelopment and who had a right to have a say.

### **The High Stakes of Being a “Resident”**

Just as I debated the most appropriate classifications for the various types of people I encountered and interviewed in the Riverside area, my fieldwork revealed that Riverside residents themselves had similar debates about how to classify one another and justify their own belonging in the “resident” category. The classification of “resident” has important implications in decision-making, since being classified by others in the community as a “resident” gave an individual a voice on issues the Riverside community faced, such as the most appropriate location for a new biking and pedestrian trail or

whether to fight against or support a zoning variance request from an industrial property owner. Meanwhile, being classified as a “nonresident” assigned an individual with outsider status and provided justification to those accepted as “residents” for negating the power of the individual’s perspectives.

In both community meetings and interviews, I noted tensions about who should and should not be considered a “resident” in the neighborhood. Akin to the way in which the neighborhood’s boundaries widened and narrowed depending on who I talked to, so too did people’s conceptualizations of who a Riverside resident was. The classification of “resident” versus “nonresident” or outsider was open for people to define and defend for themselves, and some people I spoke with had strong feelings about why the distinction mattered. In one interview, a white man in his 30s, who had been living in the neighborhood for about 20 years, expressed frustration that some people who influenced decisions did not live in the area. Instead, they either worked in the area and were speaking on behalf of constituents they served, or they were property owners whose permanent residences were elsewhere in the city. When talking about a contentious issue relating to an industrial operation that potentially was going to open on the eastern edge of the neighborhood, providing training opportunities and jobs but also possible noise and air pollution, the interviewee explained that he did not think some people who were opposing the operation should have a voice because, according to him, they were not “residents” even if they were property owners. While we talked, he described the concerns of some people who lived in the Riverside neighborhood, saying those concerns were “legitimate” explicitly because their primary places of residency were in the neighborhood, but he said, “everybody else who has registered a complaint lives in

Ransom Place, they live in Lawrence, they live in Golden Hill, they live in Warren Central district. They don't live here. They own property here. [...] The people who were raising these objections that don't live in my neighborhood...they're influencing and directing the future of a neighborhood and people they don't even know, based on their individual desires." In his view, the objections of people who did not live in the area were "shrouded in environmental justice or social justice," and their concerns were misguided attempts to block something perceived as "bad" simply because it was an industrial operation. When it came to the property owners who did not live in the area, he perceived that what they were actually trying to do was protect their investment, and he classified them as "investors," even if they were former residents and the property they owned was the home where they grew up. The interviewee believed individuals who did not live in the area did not adequately understand the needs of the community the way he did because he physically lived in the area full-time, and he believed this gave him the most accurate understanding of neighbors' struggles and needs. For this interviewee, the right to have a voice on neighborhood issues hinged on someone's physical, full-time residency in the neighborhood.

In what almost seemed like a direct rebuttal to the above interviewee's comments, another interviewee, an older Black man who grew up in Riverside, owned the family home where he grew up, and remained active in the civic community, said that what determined "resident" status was not simply whether or not one physically lived in the neighborhood full-time. He said someone's emotional connection to the history of the place should also factor into someone's status as "resident" or "nonresident" and thus also whether someone should have a voice in neighborhood decision-making processes.

To him, a lack of emotional connection to the area's history could even negate legitimate "resident" status, even for someone who physically lived in the area. He said that someone who lived in the area and owned their home but who did not have an emotional connection to the area's history was merely an "investor." I told him that his perspective differed from what I had heard from other interviewees, and we talked about these differences of opinion on who did and did not embody the type of "resident" status that warranted a voice in neighborhood decision-making processes:

Abbey Not to offend you, but just to relay what somebody told me, somebody who lives in Riverside said that somebody like you, who doesn't live in Riverside but owns property is an "investor."

Interviewee Mmm...yes.

Abbey That whole concept you just explained to me was totally flipped around...and the same word used about you, someone like you.

Interviewee Okay, but, now, here's the difference. How much money did I put up? How much money did they put up?

Abbey Yeah.

Interviewee So, my investment is heart, soul, love, history.

Abbey Yeah.

Interviewee That's my investment. Theirs is ching-ching dollar bills. And, when they get enough of it, it's different.

Abbey Even when they live there, though?

Interviewee Even when they live there? Um...yeah, because they came in during the season when it was time to make some money. They didn't come in when the season was to go through the hard times.

He said he thought investors knew when it was going to be "time to make some money." He thought people who had money to invest could recognize investment patterns or "the cadence," as he called it, and they would time their property purchases accordingly, when properties were cheap but there was potential for property values to increase. He said,

“they’re aware.” I asked him directly if he considered himself a resident, even though he no longer lived in Riverside, and he said, “Oh, always. Always.” In his view, his history with the neighborhood, his personal and emotional connections to it, and his continued engagement in the area’s civic organizations and neighborhood institutions, plus the fact that he owned the home where he grew up, justified his classification as a “resident.”

In my fieldwork, I observed how different conceptualizations of the “resident” versus “outsider” or “nonresident” classifications had implications for development initiatives. Much of my fieldwork took place at community meetings, which were advertised broadly and open to anyone who wanted to attend. I went to as many of these meetings as I could. These were meetings where people could get information about events, activities, and resources available to area residents. They were also the settings in which residents attempted to come together as a united front to support or oppose proposed neighborhood initiatives, whether presented by people living and working in the neighborhood or outsiders. In any community, consensus is important because it is a mechanism that gives groups of people power to shape the future. For example, if enough residents oppose something like a zoning variance request from an industrial property owner, they may be able to stop it, and if enough residents support an idea, like a program to help elderly residents on fixed incomes pay for maintenance on their homes, they may be able to muster the resources to bring it to fruition. Finding consensus, however, is often difficult, and it is complicated by disagreements over who should have a voice in the first place. There were two particular community meetings where the meeting agenda turned toward discussions about especially contentious development initiatives, which, in order to move forward, needed to make decisions as a united front—

they needed consensus. One topic was about perceived needs that the \$3 million 16 Tech Community Investment Fund could help meet. Residents expressed differing ideas about what needs should be prioritized. The other, and more hotly disputed topic was about the industrial operation that I described above. People in support of the operation thought it would offer good employment opportunities to locals, while people opposed to the operation considered it to be a potential nuisance due to risks of noise and air pollution. Because these topics were contentious, conversations about them at the community meetings became impassioned and people began talking over one another. To rein in the discussions, meeting leaders asked attendees to raise their hands if they were Riverside residents. They did this as a means of simplifying the conversations, but this strategy also effectively excluded some people from having a voice on these topics. At one point in the conversation about the industrial operation, a pastor who worked at a church in the neighborhood but who did not live in the neighborhood, lobbied to be included, saying that he represented the views of Riverside residents who lived in the neighborhood but who were not present at the meeting. One of the meeting leaders agreed, saying his perspectives were “representative,” and so he was allowed to raise his hand and have his voice heard on behalf of residents who were not present. It is likely that other people disagreed about whether he should have been allowed a voice on the issue, but arguing such distinctions in the midst of a crowded community meeting is difficult, especially when the meeting is already running over its allotted time.

What I observed in my fieldwork was the high stakes of being valued as a resident. Undeniably, these kinds of contentious situations ended up pitting people who genuinely cared about the community against one another, creating animosity and

division in the community, even when people had similar visions for the neighborhood's future. For instance, the white man and the Black man whose views I described above both wanted people in the neighborhood to benefit from neighborhood transformation catalyzed by new public, for-profit, nonprofit, and philanthropic investments, and they both said they did not want to see current residents displaced by gentrification. While they agreed on what they wanted the outcomes of development to be, they disagreed on the best means of getting there.

At least some residents believed this contentiousness was not so much the result of residents simply disagreeing with one another, but that it was one consequence produced by the historically and systemically disinvested state of the neighborhood, combined with observable patterns of gentrification and displacement they had witnessed throughout Indianapolis and other U.S. cities. Residents struggled to determine whether they would actually benefit from those investments or if they were going to be duped into supporting efforts that were going to lead to gentrification and potentially their own displacement. One resident spoke to this point when she talked about her time in a leadership role within the neighborhood's civic community several years ago. She said, "there was a lot of strife and conflict within the neighborhood and part of that is because when you have a neighborhood that needs a lot and you have a city that has a little to give, then everybody wants a piece of the pie." In her view, because there were so few resources available, people had to fight for what they could get. Another resident said something similar. In our interview, I asked the woman if she thought 16 Tech was going to benefit the community, and she said she thought residents were being misled. She said, "I think they're playing all of us against each other...because they have this grant,

they're supposed to give back to the neighborhoods, and all of us [different neighborhood groups] are competing for the same money, so I feel like they're sitting back and just, 'Let them burn themselves out and we'll get to the point and say, "Well, you all could never come up with a decision, so this is what we decided on.'" That's what I feel...I'm just not feeling 16 Tech." Following that comment, she talked about how she thought the 16 Tech Innovation District was a good concept, but she doubted it would benefit area residents. She said, "I'm glad they're bringing the jobs there, but I don't think they're bringing them there to enhance the neighborhood." Her comments illustrate how residents' emotions seemed to toggle between hope for the future and the fear that certain types of investments would catalyze the type of development that would gentrify the area and displace current residents. Their vision of the future often seemed to reflect their memories of the past, when jobs were plentiful, homes were occupied, and numerous local shops offered everyday necessities. The historically and systemically disinvested state of the neighborhood, the limited resources dedicated to ensuring that longtime residents would benefit from neighborhood redevelopment, and the limited points at which residents in general have opportunities to impact the type and direction of their neighborhood's redevelopment creates these high stakes situations, where people vie for control over an uncertain neighborhood future.

These are some of the contexts that provided a backdrop for my fieldwork in the Riverside neighborhood, where development was a frequent topic of conversation and debate. As a researcher, I sought to understand as many perspectives as I could, recording whose perspectives on a given issue came to the forefront, whose got reduced or eliminated and how and why those things happened, who was not participating and



why that happened, and where there were points of disconnect between and among interviewees in the classifications I defined. The methodologies I brought to bear in my research revealed significant cases of this last issue—points of disconnect—particularly regarding perceptions about development among residents and neighborhood affiliates compared to perceptions about development among city-level practitioners. In the next chapter, I will describe these disconnects and show why understanding what they are and where they come from is important to designing development strategies that will equitably and inclusively distribute the benefits that come from development activities.

### Chapter 3:

#### Development That *Takes*

The first time I can remember driving through the Riverside neighborhood was several years before I began doing fieldwork there and even before I decided to pursue a PhD. There wasn't a glimmer of thought in my mind that I would become as familiar with the area and the people there like I am today. It was a weekday evening, and I was leaving work in downtown Indianapolis to pick up my kids from daycare. The evening rush hour was especially slow because of a torrential downpour. Wanting to avoid getting trapped in stopped traffic on the interstate downtown, where traffic was always slow anyway, I took side streets, cutting through the Riverside neighborhood. I did not know it was the Riverside neighborhood at the time. I didn't even know the name of the street I was on. All I knew was that Google Maps showed me it was a clear north-south route from 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 30<sup>th</sup> Street, and I could use this route to connect to another street, and then another, and finally to the interstate at a point past the downtown gridlock. I would find, however, that the path was not clear after all. The storm was so strong that large, fallen tree branches and deep, standing water blocked parts of the road to the point where I thought about turning around and finding a different route, for fear of getting stuck in the flood.

Another time I can remember driving through the Riverside neighborhood was a few years later. I was in my second year of the PhD program, but I had not yet begun doing fieldwork in Riverside, so it was still an unfamiliar area. Again, it was rush hour, I was leaving downtown to pick up my kids, and I was seeking an alternate route to avoid slow traffic so I wouldn't be late to daycare. This time, however, my commute was

disrupted by a major construction project that had a large portion of the interstate completely shut down. Many people were seeking alternate routes due to the construction, so my previous path wasn't going to cut it. Google Maps showed me there was a road parallel to the route I had taken before. It was a meandering two-lane road bordered on one side by the White River and on the other by a golf course and an expansive park. Based on the map on my phone, it did not seem like there was traffic on this route, so I took it. I was surprised to find a scenic mile-and-a-half stretch of road lined with mature trees and uninterrupted by stoplights. It was so scenic and serene, in fact, that it didn't seem like I was in the middle of a large city anymore. It was the perfect detour, and I could hardly believe there were no other drivers using this route.

This road would become part of my regular commute route throughout the duration of the weeks-long highway shutdown. I would later learn that this scenic route was cutting through Riverside Regional Park, a more than 120-year-old park, once a destination park for people across the city, and a park that remains one of the largest municipal parks in the country, yet a park I had never heard of before I started doing fieldwork in the area. Over the course of several commutes, I noticed many amenities along the route: there was a boat ramp into "Lake Indy" (a lake I had never heard of before my fieldwork), a wide, paved walking/biking trail, a large family recreation center, an aquatic center, sports fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, playgrounds, wide expanses of grass, and picturesque groves of mature trees. Despite the presence of all these amenities, however, I hardly saw other drivers along the way or many people using the park. I could tell the area was not well maintained: the lines on the road were faded, the pavement was patchy and cracked, and the curbs were crumbling and choked with old

grass clippings; the baseball diamond infields were overgrown; there were football goal posts, but no lines delineating a field; there were weeds growing through the mulch in the playgrounds and the playground equipment was faded and rundown.

I interpreted what I was seeing and experiencing on these drives as signs of neglect, although not by residents, and not specifically by the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, which manages the park. Indy Parks, as the city's parks department is colloquially called, is a grossly underfunded parks entity, having only about \$35 per resident<sup>113</sup> to spend on operating its more than 11,200 acres<sup>114</sup> of park property in Indianapolis-Marion County. No, the neglect I was sensing was a larger, more systemic form of neglect.

My first year in the PhD program had rewired my thinking on urban spaces and taught me to consider the impacts of city planning and decision-making across time and space. For example, even though the city's parks system is grossly underfunded, I wondered why I had never heard of this park before, despite having lived in downtown Indianapolis for seven years and then commuting from downtown to the northwest suburb of Zionsville after I moved there. In fact, after starting fieldwork in the Riverside neighborhood, I realized that I regularly drove past parts of the park, like Municipal Gardens and Major Taylor Velodrome, without even knowing it, and I had golfed at all of the park's courses and at its driving range without realizing they were part of the park. I

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<sup>113</sup> Amy Bartner, "When It Comes to Parks, Indy Is in a Tie for Last in the U.S.," *Indianapolis Star*, June 7, 2017, <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/2017/06/07/when-comes-parks-indy-tie-last-u-s/370522001/>. This article uses data from ParkScore, a survey administered annually by The Trust for Public Land, ParkServe. Following this article's 2017 publication, it appears that Indianapolis parks data has not been included in subsequent ParkScore surveys.

<sup>114</sup> "City Park Facts: 2020 Acreage and Park System Highlights," ParkServe (San Francisco, CA: The Trust for Public Land, 2020), <https://www.tpl.org/parkserve/downloads>; City of Indianapolis, "Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department," accessed August 5, 2020, <https://www.indy.gov/agency/department-of-parks-and-recreation>.

also found it strange that I was familiar with the names and locations of other large parks in the city, such as Holliday Park, Eagle Creek Park, and Garfield Park, without having visited all of them. I was familiar with them because I knew people who lived near them and talked about them because they enjoyed them regularly, even if the infrastructure and amenities were, like those at Riverside Regional Park, not well maintained because the parks department had so little funding.

The fact that I had never heard of Riverside Regional Park prior to beginning fieldwork in the adjacent majority-Black Riverside neighborhood was an indication that my personal and professional networks at that time were mostly comprised of white people, but it is also feasible that my ignorance about Riverside Regional Park was indicative of a white spatial imaginary that did not find value in a park that was mostly used by non-whites and surrounded by majority-minority communities. The neglect I sensed in the area was not merely a matter of money and maintenance; it also was related to something more systemic. The entire area, from the park to the roads to the adjacent Riverside neighborhood, had been economically and socially left behind, forgotten, and neglected by the city's majority-white dominant class, including decision-makers who have access to resources and the power to control when, where, and how those resources are deployed to help neighborhoods grow and thrive in ways that meaningfully include and support those neighborhoods' residents.

On my evening commutes through the area, I thought about the sprawl of downtown redevelopment, both in Indianapolis and in other U.S. cities. Little of it seems to cater to the needs, abilities, and values of the people who typically live in a city's seemingly neglected or "forgotten" neighborhoods, which often are places where there

are disproportionately large communities of low-income people and people of color. Rather than being practical and affordable to such residents, urban redevelopment seems to follow a formula that results in redeveloped neighborhoods looking and feeling similar to one another; however, the urban redevelopment formula *takes* just enough of the longtime community's character and history to make each neighborhood just a little bit different so newly enticed residents feel like they are buying into something unique, fashioning themselves as trailblazing influencers who get to turn everyone else on to the things *they* have discovered in *their* new neighborhood.

Before long, the redeveloping neighborhood is *taken* in terms of its culture and property. It no longer embodies what had been there for decades prior, nor does the place authentically harken back to what it may have been like before disinvestment and neglect made it vulnerable to being *taken*. Instead, it looks and feels a lot like other neighborhoods that have been redeveloped. It suddenly seems clean and new. Likely, the city has come in and replaced much of the crumbling infrastructure that had been in disrepair for years, and public tax incentives, as well as grants from philanthropic and public sources, have catalyzed economic activity from outside investors. New and rehabilitated buildings stand out prominently, sometimes jarringly, in their size and aesthetics. Designers of these buildings seem complicit in bucking the architectural styles of the neighborhood's existing buildings and homes, conveying messages of rejection and desertion to longtime residents by imposing new aesthetics onto the community without honoring, complementing, or blending in with the area's old stylings. While old designs may signal stagnation and decline to outsiders, newly constructed and rehabilitated buildings, in their sleek straight lines and minimalistic color schemes, bear

an aesthetic of gentrification. They are like beacons signaling that the neighborhood is becoming like other neighborhoods that have been redeveloped and it is good for investment. The buildings are styled as advertisements, but not for longtime residents. Instead, they seek to appeal to the modern, upscale tastes of affluent renters and homebuyers and those who want to be seen as affluent or fashionable. Like those other neighborhoods that were redeveloped before, the area eventually becomes replete with things that symbolize and attract wealth, such as expensive boutiques, specialty alcohol venues (think wine shops and microbreweries), and restaurants offering menu items according to the latest foodie trends (think farm-to-table and all things kombucha). These things create a cultural dynamic that can make new residents feel comfortable and like they belong while also making longtime residents feel like the changes that were catalyzed, using so much time and effort on the part of outside decision-makers, were never meant for them.

When I first moved to Indianapolis in 2006, Fountain Square was all the rage. I saw some of its rise in popularity first-hand, when I worked for about 15 months at the Wheeler Arts Community, formerly a subsidized housing complex that was converted into market-rate apartments in 2018.<sup>115</sup> I also witnessed some of Fountain Square's transformation over the several years that I was involved with a downtown arts advocacy organization, the Indianapolis Downtown Artists and Dealers Association (IDADA). I saw how creative types (myself included) and trendsetters (not me) flocked to Fountain Square on the first Friday of each month, ostensibly to see the latest art exhibits, but the

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<sup>115</sup> Scott Olson, "Under New Owner, Fountain Square's Wheeler Building Converting to Market-Rate Housing," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/69191-under-new-owner-fountain-squares-wheeler-building-converting-to-market-rate-housing>.

real motivation among most people seemed centered on enjoying a night of free eating, drinking, and socializing. I knew lots of artists who set up studios in the Murphy Arts Building and who used vacant storefronts near the square to host one-night exhibitions. During that time, the area's community development corporation, Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND), was renovating house after house throughout the neighborhood. For a handful of years, SEND hosted an event called "Fab for Less," to showcase homes they had renovated on a relatively small budget. The event not only served to renovate homes, but it also drew attention and people to the area. The year I worked at the Wheeler Arts Community, SEND paid artists who lived in the building to renovate their own apartments and open them for public tours. That year, Fab for Less was part of a trio of events happening within walking distance from one another and all centered on art.<sup>116</sup> What I was witnessing was many years' worth of efforts by several different neighborhood groups to transform the area from one that was predominantly low- to middle-income and working class to something different.<sup>117</sup> The implication was that the transformation would bring something better, but no one, including me at the time, seemed to be asking *better for whom?*

By the time I arrived in Indianapolis, Fountain Square had developed a reputation for being a quirky, alternative, "off the beaten path" locale that was fun, creative, and affordable, which are things that attracted new people to it, especially the affordable part. Over the years, however, the transformation that had been set in motion years prior kept evolving. Investments from private entities have increased, new businesses have opened

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<sup>116</sup> "This Weekend in Fountain Square," *On the Cusp* (blog), September 2007, <http://on-the-cusp.blogspot.com/2007/09/this-weekend-in-fountain-square.html>.

<sup>117</sup> The Polis Center, "Fountain Square," accessed August 7, 2020, <https://polis.iupui.edu/about/community-culture/project-on-religion-culture/study-neighborhoods/fountain-square/>.



in the vacant storefronts, and the area's reputation has gone from being alternative and affordable to being more mainstream and upscale. People call Fountain Square "gentrified."<sup>118</sup> This new identity is signified in part by the conversion of the Wheeler Arts Community, the area's only affordable housing option, into market-rate apartments.<sup>119</sup> It is also indicated by the surge in luxury and market-rate housing construction in the area,<sup>120</sup> where the average rental rate is \$1,116 per month, which is over \$200 per month more than the city's overall average,<sup>121</sup> and which would take a household income of at least \$45,000 (or about \$21.60 per hour, full-time) to be able to afford without being housing cost burdened, that is, without spending more than 30% of the household income on housing-related bills.

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<sup>118</sup> Domenica Bongiovanni, "'Fountain Square Might As Well Be Broad Ripple': Why Artists Say the Quirky Hub Changed," *Indianapolis Star*, October 29, 2017, <https://www.indystar.com/story/entertainment/arts/2017/10/29/fountain-square-might-well-broad-ripple-why-artists-say-wild-hub-changed/628426001/>.

<sup>119</sup> Olson, "Under New Owner, Fountain Square's Wheeler Building Converting to Market-Rate Housing."

<sup>120</sup> Tom Harton, "Virginia Avenue Attracts Yet Another Project," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, September 10, 2012, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/36584-virginia-avenue-attracts-yet-another-project>; Scott Olson, "City Exploring Unusual Financing Option for \$18M Fountain Square Project," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, November 17, 2016, <https://www.ibj.com/property-lines-scott-olson/61314-city-exploring-unusual-financing-option-for-18m-fountain-square-project>; Scott Olson, "Developer Plans \$9.1M Project on Fountain Square Parking Lot," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, September 30, 2014, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/49751-developer-plans-9-1m-project-on-fountain-square-parking-lot>; Scott Olson, "Deylen Finalizes Design for Slate in Fletcher Place," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, April 28, 2014, <https://www.ibj.com/property-lines-scott-olson/47386-deylen-finalizes-design-for-slate-in-fletcher-place>; Scott Olson, "Milhaus Swings Creative Deal for \$16M Apartment Project in Fountain Square," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/68217-milhaus-swings-creative-deal-for-16m-apartment-project-in-fountain-square>; Scott Olson, "One Fountain Square Apartment Project Opening. Another Progressing," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.ibj.com/property-lines-scott-olson/66209-one-fountain-square-apartment-project-opening-another-progressing>; Mickey Shuey, "Developers Plan \$13M Apartment Project on Teamsters Local Site in Fountain Square," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, April 21, 2020, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/developers-plan-13m-apartment-project-in-fountain-square>; Mickey Shuey, "Townhomes Planned on Former Service-Station Site in Fountain Square," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, November 6, 2018, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/71209-townhomes-planned-on-former-service-station-site-in-fountain-square>.

<sup>121</sup> RENTCafé, "Indianapolis, IN: Rental Market Trends," 2020, <https://www.rentcafe.com/average-rent-market-trends/us/in/indianapolis/>. According to the same source, the city's average rental rate is \$902 per month.

People have told me that, before Fountain Square became popular, which was long before I moved to Indianapolis, Mass Ave. was the area where the creative and alternative crowds convened. Much like Fountain Square, Mass Ave. today has shifted from alternative to mainstream. It has become an area characterized by expensive housing<sup>122</sup> with retail venues and restaurants that suit area residents' tastes. These tastes align with a white spatial imaginary that is shaped by a majority-white, upper-middle- and high-income dominant class. Just as Mass Ave. has been *taken*, so too has Fountain Square, leading me to wonder what area will be the next site of urban development that *takes*. Perhaps, with SEND's move from Fountain Square to the Twin Aire neighborhood east of Fountain Square,<sup>123</sup> and with the new Criminal Justice Center being established there,<sup>124</sup> Twin Aire will be the next site of urban *taking*. Or maybe the Near Eastside will be *taken* next, as seemingly signaled by concerted efforts to renovate housing<sup>125</sup> and create an arts and design district along East 10<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>126</sup> Will the next

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<sup>122</sup> Median monthly rent in the Mass Ave. area increased by almost 69%, from \$554 in 2010 to \$936 in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Averages, Prepared by SAVI, 2018, [http://profiles.savi.org/?utm\\_source=data-tools&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=data-tools](http://profiles.savi.org/?utm_source=data-tools&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=data-tools)). Average rent in 2020 is one of the highest in the city at \$1,404 (RENTCafé, "Indianapolis, IN: Rental Market Trends."). Median assessed home values increased by about 31%, from \$208,380 in 2010 to \$273,766 in 2018, which was over 300% more than the 2018 county median (Indiana Department of Local Government and Finance via IBRC, "Median Assessed Value-Residential."). In the same timeframe, median household income increased by almost 50%, from \$34,775 to \$52,041 (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages.). While assessed home values have been higher than the county median for many years, those in Mass Ave. have increased at a higher rate. Additionally, when the area's median household income was lower than the county median in 2010, the median increased at a higher rate than it has county-wide and was higher than the county median in 2018. These data show that Mass Ave.'s transformation has made it a higher-income, more expensive place to live in comparison to the county as a whole.

<sup>123</sup> Olson, "Under New Owner, Fountain Square's Wheeler Building Converting to Market-Rate Housing."

<sup>124</sup> Scott Olson, "Integrating Criminal Justice Center Is Key to Lifting Twin Aire Neighborhood," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, April 18, 2018, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/68449-integrating-criminal-justice-center-is-key-to-lifting-twin-aire-neighborhood>.

<sup>125</sup> "Near East Area Renewal Celebrates 100 Homes," Near East Area Renewal, September 21, 2017, <http://indyeast.org/near-east-area-renewal-celebrates-100-homes/>.

<sup>126</sup> Hayleigh Colombo, "East 10th Street Pursues Status as Arts District; Some Neighbors Brace for Change," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, February 21, 2019, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/72633-east-10th-street-pursues-status-as-arts-district-some-neighbors-brace-for-change>.

neighborhoods that come into the redevelopment limelight, that is, the popular consciousness of the city's dominant class, be transformed like Mass Ave. and Fountain Square, made to look and feel mainstream and upscale, and shaped to align with a white spatial imaginary that socially and aesthetically excludes other spatial imaginaries and that economically excludes people with lower levels of wealth?

During my many drives on that meandering road through Riverside Regional Park, I thought about this pattern of neighborhood redevelopment, how it facilitates places being *taken* by well-networked and well-resourced outsiders and handed over to a white spatial imaginary. I thought about how much places like Fountain Square and Mass Ave. have changed just in the relatively short time that I have lived in and near the city and how their transformations have happened in large part because of concerted efforts to deploy public, nonprofit, and philanthropic resources in those areas for the explicit purpose of transforming them, as is happening in the Twin Aire neighborhood and on the Near Eastside. I thought about how such patterns might apply to the area along my altered commute route through Riverside Regional Park, with its natural beauty, recreational amenities, and expanses of open fields, and I considered the adjacent neighborhood within such a short distance of the city center, and I realized: If nothing about urban redevelopment changes—and quickly—*this is gonna get taken*.

### **Ripe for the *Taking***

My first interview with someone in the Riverside neighborhood was with a pastor at one of the 84 churches in the area.<sup>127</sup> Before interviewing him, I had interviewed several city-level practitioners, asking them about the same kinds of things I asked all

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<sup>127</sup> Admittedly, I did not personally count all the churches. This number was repeated numerous times in interviews and community meetings to convey that the neighborhood has a large number of churches.

interviewees, such as what economic development is, how it is facilitated, and who it benefits. City-level practitioners said economic development includes things like, “figuring out how to have a thriving economy in a particular area” and “investing resources and providing incentives to attract businesses and, more importantly, jobs, and...creating avenues for people to...grow their wealth so that...people are able to make a better income, maybe have benefits.” City-level practitioners conceptualized economic development as an additive and generative process, where investment catalyzes growth that benefits individuals and communities.

The pastor had a different view of how economic development operates. He conceptualized economic development as a process that includes a subtractive, degenerative phase, where “there’s an allowance of things to happen...there’s an allowance to let the community go down purposely.” He imagined this to be a critical phase that enables the additive and generative growth process that will follow. According to him, once a community degenerates to a certain point, the subsequent investment that revitalizes the place does not benefit longtime residents. To clarify the process as he saw it, he described a neighborhood near where he grew up in Indianapolis:

I’ve seen it happen from where I lived. I used to live at 19<sup>th</sup> and Guilford. There’s a renaissance happening over there where there’s all kinds of new homes being built along that whole corridor from Fall Creek Parkway all the way south. Those homes over there were priced [very low] like over here. They [city leaders and others in positions of power] allowed the community to go down just like over here. They let everything go to pot. They tore down the homes that they didn’t want to rebuild. They were perfectly fine. They come in with...homes that people who spend their whole life can’t afford to live in it. And so, I’ve seen it. So, when I’m over here [in Riverside], I’m keenly aware...they’re going to do the same thing again.

The area the pastor was talking about is now a neighborhood called Fall Creek Place, but when he was growing up at 19<sup>th</sup> and Guilford, the area was colloquially called “Dodge City,” because it was one of the city’s highest-crime areas. It was also a predominantly low-income and Black area. He saw “Dodge City” as comparable to the present-day Riverside neighborhood, and, as a result, he also imagined Fall Creek Place as a potential picture of Riverside’s future, which he feared would be a neighborhood where the homes are expensive and the benefits of redevelopment do not reach `idents.

Over the course of the past 20 years, Fall Creek Place has been transformed into a neighborhood that is mostly white and affluent. Whites comprise as much as 77% of the area’s population.<sup>128</sup> The median household income is about \$89,000 per year (almost 200% more than the county median),<sup>129</sup> and the median assessed home value is more than \$200,000 (over 200% more than the county median).<sup>130</sup> Fall Creek Place is clearly different today from what it was when the pastor was growing up in the area, and it is continuing to change. Its transformation was catalyzed through concerted city efforts using a \$4 million Homeownership Zone grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and

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<sup>128</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, 2018.

<sup>129</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages. This data is based on a census block group that is bounded by Meridian Street, Fall Creek, New Jersey Street, and 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> Streets, which is the western half of the Fall Creek Place neighborhood and the area that shows the most dramatic change in the datapoints I have listed. While the Fall Creek Place neighborhood boundaries extend east to College Avenue (according to the homeowner association’s website [Fall Creek Place Homeowners Association, “About Fall Creek Place: History,” accessed April 21, 2020, <https://www.fallcreekplace.com/about-fall-creek-place>.]), I am unable to capture data that aligns perfectly with the neighborhood’s boundaries or that singles out the excluded area from New Jersey Street to College Avenue. As a result, while the population of whites, median assessed values, and median household incomes would likely be lower for the whole neighborhood, they still would be likely to show that Fall Creek Place has undergone a substantial demographic change, based on upward trends in these numbers across the census block group that includes the eastern half of the Fall Creek Place neighborhood and that extends from New Jersey Street to Ralston Avenue/Hovey Street.

<sup>130</sup> Indiana Department of Local Government and Finance via IBRC, “Median Assessed Value-Residential.”

Urban Development, plus municipal financing and public-private partnerships between city entities and local organizations.<sup>131</sup>

The Fall Creek Place neighborhood website describes the area's development: "vacant lots, abandoned homes and dilapidated homes were acquired, new streets, sidewalks, lighting, utilities, and trees were installed, and special financing packages were assembled for homebuyers."<sup>132</sup> The pastor looked at Fall Creek Place today and perceived that those special financing packages have mostly benefitted white homebuyers. The area has a homeownership rate of almost 80%, up from about 69% a decade ago, but the area's growth in population when broken down by race has not been even: over the past decade, the population of whites has increased while the population of Blacks has decreased, both in percentages and in real numbers.<sup>133</sup> As a result, the pastor did not see that the efforts to transform "Dodge City" into Fall Creek Place benefitted the Black community that used to be there, nor Indianapolis's Black population as a demographic group. From his perspective, Fall Creek Place represented the displacement of a Black community to make way for a white community, and an affluent one at that.

The pastor was not the only one of my interviewees who mentioned Fall Creek Place. In fact, that neighborhood's transformation came up in nine out of my 42 interviews. By comparison, other redeveloped neighborhoods that interviewees talked about were Fountain Square, which came up in five interviews, and Ransom Place, which came up in three interviews. All types of interviewees, from residents to neighborhood

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<sup>131</sup> Williams Celeste, "Inner City Is Home-Buyer's Dream," *Indianapolis Star*, May 22, 2002, sec. B.1, <http://ulib.iupui.edu/cgi-bin/proxy.pl?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.ulib.uits.iu.edu/docview/240508149?accountid=7398>.

<sup>132</sup> Fall Creek Place Homeowners Association, "About Fall Creek Place: History."

<sup>133</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, 2018.

affiliates, to city-level practitioners talked to me about these neighborhoods' redevelopment. When it came to Fall Creek Place in particular, however, I found that residents and others in the neighborhood had distinctly different perspectives on the area's transformation compared to what city-level practitioners said about it. Many residents and neighborhood affiliates I interviewed pointed to Fall Creek Place as an example of the way neighborhoods are *taken* for the benefit of affluent white people. They said there was significant displacement of the area's original residents, but some city-level practitioners told me that little displacement happened with Fall Creek Place's development because the area's vacancy rate was already so high when redevelopment plans were made. One practitioner contended, "Fall Creek Place was mostly vacant lots or vacant houses or derelict houses that weren't very well taken care of." Along similar lines, another practitioner said that "no homeowners were displaced" when Fall Creek Place was developed and that the development plans brought racial and income diversity to the area by attracting new white residents who ranged from low- and middle-income to upper-income homebuyers. According to practitioners, instead of displacing people, the plans for Fall Creek Place populated and diversified the area. The neighborhood's website alludes to this, saying, "Today, more than 400 new families join many long-time residents calling the neighborhood home."<sup>134</sup>

The trouble with this perspective, however, is that it does not consider reasons why there was high vacancy and concentrations of poverty and crime in the area in the first place. The perspective that Fall Creek Place was densified and diversified also ignores the fact that a predominantly Black area was transformed into what is today a

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<sup>134</sup> Fall Creek Place Homeowners Association, "About Fall Creek Place: History."

predominantly white area, where neighborhood dynamics and decision-making has been transferred to an entirely different group of people. Thus, the perception that displacement happened in the area now known as Fall Creek Place persists among residents who share a racial identity with the former “Dodge City” residents.

The pastor saw Fall Creek Place not as a success story of urban redevelopment transforming a poor, crime-ridden area, but as a tragic injustice wherein public-private partners used government resources and processes to gain control over an area that used to be home to people of color. Rather than addressing and mitigating the racialized reasons the predominantly Black community that was there was poor and crime-ridden, and perhaps empowering those residents to rebuild the community from within, Riverside residents and neighborhood affiliates conveyed a perception that the transformation of the area into Fall Creek Place was the last stage in a long process of economic degeneration affecting people of color. The pastor saw established residents having been displaced and he was afraid the same kinds of strategies were being used to *take* the Riverside neighborhood, too. He feared that the predominantly Black neighborhood, which had already seen years of economic degeneration, would be transformed like Fall Creek Place, away from the needs and values of the area’s longtime population and in service of new, more affluent, and likely white inhabitants who have access to more economic and social capital than what existing residents have, and who have more power to attract more economic capital than what existing residents can attract.

To further illustrate his point, the pastor talked about the expansion of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) along Indiana Avenue. Today, IUPUI occupies land where communities of predominantly Black residents used to



live.<sup>135</sup> Indiana Avenue was the hub of Black culture in Indianapolis, but over the course of many years starting in the 1960s the University slowly encroached on the Avenue and nearby neighborhoods.<sup>136</sup> Today, there are few remnants of the area's former communities and little of the Avenue's historic Black culture remains. The pastor used the word "taken" when talking about the hollowing-out of historically Black spaces, which were special points of pride in Indianapolis's Black history, and their transformation into houses of economic endeavors that are neither related to their historically Black roots nor operated by decision-makers that, according to the pastor, represent the Black community, historically or presently:

...from the Madame Walker Building, that whole corridor leading this way out of downtown was Black. I mean, they've taken over...one of the two churches that was on the Underground Railroad [Bethel AME Church] now is being turned into a hotel... A viable place on the canal, that was an Underground Railroad site—[snaps fingers]—been *taken*. And then you go to the Madame Walker Building—[snaps fingers]—*taken*.

When I heard the pastor talk in this way about development in the city and how spaces are "taken," it caught my attention because it was the way I had conceptualized the process when I was driving through the Riverside neighborhood on my altered commute route more than a year before I began fieldwork. At the time, I did not know if others also perceived development operating this way, but I indeed heard other people, both

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<sup>135</sup> Mullins, "The Last Holdouts: Community Displacement and Urban Renewal on the IUPUI Campus"; Paul R. Mullins and Lewis C. Jones, "Race, Displacement, and Twentieth-Century University Landscapes: An Archaeology of Urban Renewal and Urban Universities," in *The Materiality of Freedom: Archaeologies of Postemancipation Life* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 250–62.

<sup>136</sup> Mullins, "The Last Holdouts: Community Displacement and Urban Renewal on the IUPUI Campus"; Mullins and Jones, "Race, Displacement, and Twentieth-Century University Landscapes: An Archaeology of Urban Renewal and Urban Universities"; Paschall, "Indiana Avenue: The Ethnic Cleansing of Black Indianapolis."

residents and neighborhood affiliates like the pastor, talk about development in similar ways.

During an interview with one resident who grew up in the neighborhood, still owned his family home, and remained active in the neighborhood's civic life, the man, like the pastor, brought up IUPUI's expansion, as a handful of interviewees did. He said, "No disrespect to IUPUI, but they came through Lockefield [Gardens Apartments] and just took that over the years."<sup>137</sup> I did not hear him correctly initially, and I asked, "What do you mean they took it over?" He corrected me, saying, "No, I said they *took* it." I asked him to elaborate on how that process of "taking" worked, and he explained:

In various ways. First is that there's no investment allowed in there. There's no loans given, then there's no way to upkeep what is there. And so, people tend to move out. Those who have maybe, say, better resources, they're gonna move to greener pastures. And so, those who remain behind are those who are lower economically...and so, the neighborhood goes down. And then they came up with the schools...changing school busing, so people would leave again because the school system changed through integration and busing. And so, it's like a leak in the pipe, you know? And it becomes worse and worse, and then it's easy pickins, then. In the same area that was not allowed to have loans, all of a sudden, it's the way of someone, somewhere—I can't point the finger to be sure—but somebody says, 'Oh, this is now good for economic development.' Well, I guess so, because, for the last 15, 20 years, you more or less raped it.

He acknowledged that characterizing the process as "rape" seemed strong, because the word connotes serious violence, but he felt it was accurate. Later in our conversation,

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<sup>137</sup> Lockefield Gardens Apartments was built in 1937 as a Public Works Administration (WPA) sponsored project to house some of the city's Black residents. The complex was closed in 1976 to make way for IUPUI. For more information on Lockefield Gardens Apartments, see "Lockefield Gardens Apartments," National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Indianapolis, accessed August 14, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/indianapolis/lockefieldgardens.htm>; Robert G. Barrows, "The Local Origins of a New Deal Housing Project: The Case of Lockefield Gardens in Indianapolis," *Indiana Magazine of History* 103, no. 2 (2007): 125–51; and Matt Nowlin and Meghann Bowman, "Changes in Indy's Historic Black Neighborhoods," SAVI, June 18, 2016, <http://www.savi.org/2018/06/18/changes-in-indys-historic-black-neighborhoods/>.

when talking about urban redevelopment processes, he said, “they don’t do it with you. They do it to you.” Indeed, this language makes the process sound like rape. Like the pastor, this resident conceptualized a subtractive and degenerative process that degrades a neighborhood and its people, exploiting, even increasing, their vulnerabilities and reducing their agency so the area becomes susceptible to redesign, repurposing, and repopulation according to plans created by outsiders who have the power to make such decisions and who have access to and control over the resources that can bring their plans to fruition.

Among interviewees who talked about economic degeneration and processes that *take* neighborhoods, violent imagery was common. For instance, another resident used the rape analogy when she likened the city’s large downtown institutions, such as hospitals and universities, which seem constantly to be expanding their footprints and building new buildings throughout the downtown area, to the Biblical figure David, a powerful king. She said, just as King David lusted after Bathsheba, ultimately taking her violently by raping her and having her husband killed, the city’s large downtown institutions lust after land they would like to occupy, including Riverside Regional Park and the adjacent Riverside neighborhood. Because the park has so much open space that may appear to outsiders to be “unused,” since the park is not well maintained, since the city has little money to dedicate to the park, and since the Riverside neighborhood is so advantageously situated near downtown resources and amenities, the area may seem to high-level decision-makers to be both desirable and available for the *taking*. The interviewee imagined the thinking among decision-makers in such large downtown institutions was, “We’ve got the money, we’ve got the power, I can rape you anytime I

want to.” From her perspective, and from the perspectives of many people I interviewed, “money has power,” meaning that the people and institutions who have money, have power to do what they want to do. She said, “they have such a big foot that whenever they decide they wanna march, they just do it.” Later in our conversation, I asked if she had any hope that the neighborhood would not be *taken*, and she said, “No, I think they’re gonna do it. I don’t think they give a crap. I don’t think the city cares and I think everybody’s just paid off, and whoever just put the money in their pockets, that’s who they’re gonna listen to. The constituencies be damned.” According to this interviewee, residents have little voice in development activities that they perceive will cause harm.

In addition to the rape analogy, interviewees used other violent terms to characterize development activities. The same resident who used the David and Bathsheba metaphor said the persistent neglect and lack of investment in the neighborhood was like “a death by a thousand cuts.” She said it was “all of those little things,” such as the lack of maintenance on bridges, sidewalks, and the park, unaddressed for too long and noticed daily by many residents, that became frustrating and disheartening to residents and made the area seem like it was not good for investment. Another resident called it “economic apartheid” when, as she described it, certain groups of people, such as low-income people, senior citizens on fixed incomes, and people of color in general, were treated as “collateral damage” in economic development processes. According to her, development processes systematically and repeatedly exclude certain groups of people, sacrificing them by ignoring their needs in order to meet the needs of other groups. Other residents characterized degenerative development as a process of starvation, that is, withholding resources from a place and its residents so communities

cannot get what they need to grow and thrive, such as loans for housing and businesses and good schools to create pathways to good job opportunities. For instance, when talking with a resident and his wife about development along Indiana Avenue, which displaced the area's Black culture, the man said, "I have a suspicion, and that's just me, I'm not cynical, but I have a suspicion that they take away economic development, take it down, so they can bring it up." Making sure I understood what he was saying, I suggested, "Starve it of resources?" He said, "Yeah, right. Starve it." Activities attempting to catalyze economic development seemed so disruptive to individuals and communities that were not recipients of those activities' benefits that interviewees compared the development activities to acts of real and trauma-inducing violence, such as rape, apartheid, and starvation.

About six months into my fieldwork, I was attending a Near Northwest Area community meeting, when one of the community elders, a woman who had lived in the area for about 60 years, talked about how difficult an experience she had working with a city-wide nonprofit housing organization to get a grant to have her roof repaired. She lived on a fixed income, so the grant was critical to her being able to have the work done. After she spoke, others chimed in and said they had similar experiences getting access to resources like that. Another resident bluntly said that the reason it was hard for residents in the area to get access to resources was because "they're waiting for us to die." In her view, if resources were not being entirely withheld, they were being made difficult to access until the residents who were fighting for the community, who tended to be older residents, passed away. Others in the meeting expressed agreement with her. The perception was prevalent that, when the pillars of the community were gone, when there

was no one left in the community who remembered what the area was like before the storefronts were vacant, when there were no longtime residents with much influence remaining active in the neighborhood's civic life, and when there was little of a networked community among longtime residents remaining in the area, it would be "easy pickins," and decisions-makers would be able to come in and make their own plans for the area. After the area had been drained, the "leak in the pipe" would be repaired using formerly unavailable public and philanthropic resources, which would flow easily into the community. Among residents and others I interviewed in the Riverside area, many people perceived that economic development was enabled by a prior process of economic degeneration that degrades a neighborhood and its people in order to render it ripe for the taking.

### **Perceptions of Intentionality in Degenerative Development**

It is striking that these interviewees seemed to see economic degeneration being done intentionally. Part of why they saw it this way was because they recognized a pattern where activities framed as economic development repeatedly have *taken* the same kinds of degraded places and transformed them in ways that have benefitted outsiders. Several residents I interviewed pointed to the same historic Indianapolis examples to illustrate this pattern. For instance, residents brought up how Indiana University acquired properties on downtown Indianapolis's west side and transformed a once predominately Black area into an urban campus—now IUPUI—a process that degraded and ultimately wiped out those Black communities. A resident who was working at IUPUI in the 1980s told me about how he saw blueprints for IUPUI's expansion into a nearby residential area. He said, "I looked at all the plans. So, obviously, if they've got the plans, they've

got to get rid of the people that was there.” He said, “They slowly did it and, as you see, there’s nothing [of that former community] there. People can’t afford to be down [there] now.” Residents also mentioned how, in the 1960s and 1970s, interstates sliced through predominately low-income and Black neighborhoods around the Indianapolis area, dividing communities, destroying homes and businesses, and displacing residents, as interstates did in cities around the country at that time.<sup>138</sup> Finally, residents talked about how, in the early 2000s, the City of Indianapolis acquired properties in the degraded “Dodge City” area to transform it into Fall Creek Place, now a predominantly white enclave of affluent homeowners.

Residents said they felt like decision-makers turn a blind eye to the needs of disenfranchised populations and the negative effects economic development activities too often have on such communities. Talking specifically about the midcentury interstate construction that destroyed his childhood home, the same resident who characterized economic degeneration as “rape” said of development patterns, “it’s the same story told over and over again.” He asked, “How do we continue to let that happen when it’s not a new plan that’s being carried out?” He implied that the harm economic transactions often do to disenfranchised communities must be intentional because people who have “got their thumb on all the demographics...have to know [that it happens].” He continued, “if I can see it—and I don’t have degrees and economic training—then everybody else can see it...more has to be done, because if I can see it, they can see it. All the politicians, the Mayor, the Mayor’s Office, the [Indiana General Assembly and the people in their

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<sup>138</sup> Paul Mullins, “In the Shadow of the Interstate: Living with Highways,” *Archaeology and Material Culture: The Material World, Broadly Defined* (blog), October 3, 2019, <https://paulmullins.wordpress.com/2019/10/03/in-the-shadow-of-the-interstate-living-with-highways/>; Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*.

offices], the businesspeople...if I can see it, and the people that live there can see it...” He paused, then quipped, “Ray Charles can see it.” In other words, the negative impacts created by economic transactions that often affect disenfranchised populations are so obvious that absolutely anyone can recognize them, especially those who are well-educated and experienced people in positions of power, that is, decision-makers. This resident implied that one would have to be willfully ignorant to deny that development efforts repeatedly have excluded and even negatively impacted the same populations.

Indeed, traditional, place-based development strategies that are rooted in theories about markets, investments, and returns fail to benefit low-income people and people of color because those strategies focus on building capital and by definition can only benefit those who start with capital, and therein lies the problem. These strategies focus on growth and not development because they do not aim to reduce barriers or expand the material conditions of people across socioeconomic lines to ensure that everyone can participate in economic markets, and so the people at the bottom of the income distribution, those who stand to benefit the most from the outcomes that development strategies purportedly bring, consistently experience the most constraints on their ability to gain from the economic growth that these place-based strategies deliver. Thus, a cycle of systemic economic, financial, and ultimately social disadvantage continues because development never authentically engages with or addresses the needs and priorities of the most disenfranchised populations.

### **The Practitioner Lens**

While many residents and some neighborhood affiliates expressed highly critical views of how economic development has impacted them, city decision-makers, not



surprisingly, had different perspectives on their work. The city leaders I interviewed were high-ranking officials and administrators in city and state government and in nonprofit and quasi-governmental organizations in Indianapolis. They represented a class of actors that have direct impact on how and where resources flow. Not only that, this group shapes the development environment by creating and modifying policies that govern decisions about resources. As one city employee put it, high-level practitioners have the power to create the rules, regulations, and policies that define who will be “the winners and the losers” in any economic growth endeavor. These individuals are members of the dominant class who, through their positions and the organizations and institutions they represent, collectively influence both the defined and abstract forces that shape and create space.

While residents and neighborhood affiliates tended to speak about development in personal ways, focusing their comments on their own neighborhood and on populations with which they identified, city practitioners had a broader, more clinical view of development. They looked at development in aggregate across the entire city. Some interviewees who I classify as city-level practitioners also looked at development in Indianapolis from the perspective that Indianapolis is the economic engine for both the Central Indiana region and the State of Indiana. As such, they considered factors outside of Indianapolis that might affect efforts inside city limits. Some practitioners were even concerned with Indianapolis’s ability to interact with and compete in national and global economies.

Compared to residents and neighborhood affiliates, city-level practitioners operate within a different web of variables, as they strive to balance pressures and perceived

needs coming from multiple directions, from residents to powerful business leaders. On one hand, city leaders are bound to an economic development imperative, which obligates them to use their limited resources to create conditions under which individuals can pursue things they have reason to value. This means both regulating the private sector, thereby preventing widespread and irreversible damage that could be caused by an untempered quest for capital, and filling gaps in critical services that the for-profit sector does not see as valuable investments, typically because those services are not profitable in the short term. Much of this work falls to city leaders in publicly elected and appointed positions and in administrative positions in government departments. Talking specifically of the public sector's role in society, Feldman et al. assert that:

When every actor in society is capable of being an active agent with the potential for full participation in economic and communal life, society makes better use of available resources. If we reconsider the rationale for government investment through a capacity building lens, then government serves as a facilitator for the population at large, including the private sector. By promoting capacity, the public sector's contribution extends beyond improving efficiency and equality towards bolstering a foundation upon which long-term growth and development can be sustained.<sup>139</sup>

Feldman et al. conceptualize government as “the only entity that has the mandate to promote the wellbeing and prosperity of the nation and the economic clout to keep the economy on course.”<sup>140</sup> However, government alone does not shoulder the responsibility of bolstering a strong foundation upon which all individuals can build meaningful lives; the responsibility is shared by nonprofit and quasi-governmental entities, such as community, business, housing, and workforce development agencies, which receive and administer public resources and to which government outsources many of its economic

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<sup>139</sup> Feldman et al., “Economic Development: A Definition and Model for Investment,” 15–16.

<sup>140</sup> Feldman et al., 3.

development duties. Together, city-level development practitioners in governmental, nonprofit, and quasi-governmental entities act as mediators, whose foremost responsibility is to maintain an equitable balance between private interests and public needs.

On the other hand, city leaders are bound to a cogent economic growth imperative placed on them by powerful business leaders, private interest groups, and others who value short-term returns on their investments and whose capital the city must be able to access via tax revenues. To maintain a steady stream of tax revenues so the city can administer services and perform other necessary functions that keep the city operational and sustain an environment in which individuals and communities under its jurisdiction can not only survive but thrive, city leaders adopt policies and strategies that provide a friendly environment in which businesses can prosper. The belief is that the consequences of not creating a business-friendly environment would be that businesses would take their jobs elsewhere and that employees—i.e. city residents—would follow. Ostensibly, too many restrictions on businesses' abilities to remain competitive in their fields and attract and retain employees could set the entire city on a trajectory of economic decline that would undoubtedly affect all residents.

It is easy to imagine that the pressures coming from both mandates—to promote wellbeing and prosperity for residents and ensure private sector growth—motivate a heavy focus on economic growth. Indeed, many residents benefit from growth, for example, when their incomes and property values increase. However, while growth may ward off decline in aggregate, too heavy a focus on it seems to detract from the larger, long-term goal of creating economic development that reaches all residents. The results

of the heavy focus on growth has historically been and continues to be such that predominantly white communities enjoy different economies and opportunities compared to poorer communities, which are disproportionately comprised of people of color.

In interviews with practitioners, there was significant focus on growth, even as some practitioners expressed concepts of economic development that were similar to those described by Feldman et al. and Sen. For instance, one practitioner said that economic development is actually about economic opportunity, which is “ultimately, fundamentally, about choice. Do you have choices over your life, or do you not have choices?” The way he described having choices and not having choices aligns with Sen’s ideas about freedoms and unfreedoms. Similarly, another practitioner explained that “economic development removes barriers and improves capacity and provides equity.” Further, he acknowledged that “you can do everything short of access—be ready, create opportunities—and still not develop the economy,” which is to say that, if people do not have access to opportunities, if there are barriers in their way or they lack skills or other resources to fill access gaps, then those individuals will be excluded from economic growth and economic development will not occur. However, among practitioners, creating the conditions that give people access or choices focused heavily on additive transactions, or growth: more jobs, more workforce development programs, more housing. While they may have talked about removing barriers, I heard little about directly addressing the kinds of systemic barriers and exclusions that are currently and disproportionately affecting communities of color, such as wage stagnation in existing low-wage job sectors, like personal care and food and beverage services, which are

sectors that are increasing in demand as the economy continues evolving,<sup>141</sup> and housing cost increases that are leading to severe housing instability and ultimately displacement.<sup>142</sup> What's more, I heard little about specifically empowering communities of color to facilitate development in their own neighborhoods. Instead, I heard a great deal about removing barriers to create opportunities for the private sector to do business, with residents receiving whatever residual benefits that could be compelled from business leaders.

One conversation I had with a high-level administrator who worked for the city exemplifies especially well practitioners' view of how economic development operates in Indianapolis. During the interview, he described in detail the city's strategy for facilitating economic development and how and why it has changed over time.

At the start of our conversation, I asked the practitioner to define economic development, which is something I asked of each interviewee, whether resident or practitioner. He said economic development is part of community development and it is what facilitates and maintains vitality in the city as a whole and in each neighborhood. He said, "neighborhoods function best when they have access. Access to jobs, access to quality education, access to the arts, access to infrastructure investment, access to healthcare, access to amenities, access to parks." According to him, economic development is what makes that access possible for individuals and communities, which is a conceptualization that aligns with Feldman et al.'s definition of economic

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<sup>141</sup> Escobari, Seyal, and Meaney, "Realism About Reskilling: Upgrading the Career Prospects of America's Low-Wage Workers."

<sup>142</sup> Tim Robustelli et al., "Displaced in America: Mapping Housing Loss Across the United States" (Washington, D.C.: New America, September 2019), <https://www.newamerica.org/future-property-rights/reports/displaced-america/>.

development as something that expands freedoms. He continued, “what we try to do [as the city] is figure out where the gaps are in any particular neighborhood and how do we fill them, whether it’s by the city or by another partner who might be more apt to provide something that we’re not, and it’s that sort of comprehensive community development that we strive to achieve in every neighborhood.” What he was talking about was making sure each community throughout the city had a firm foundation upon which residents could build for themselves the kinds of lives they wanted based on their personal values. Whether that meant climbing a corporate career ladder, pursuing specialized job training or an advanced degree, or accessing necessary healthcare to ensure a full life, comprehensive community development meant filling in “the gaps” so no one would be systemically precluded from accessing any of the city’s offerings that would enable someone to reach their full potential and enable the city’s neighborhoods to be strong, healthy, and vibrant.

This idea of comprehensive community development led us into a conversation about the quality of economic development in the city and how practitioners have measured development efforts in the past, and how they measure it in the present. He said, “It’s one thing to celebrate the promised jobs that an employer wants to bring to Indianapolis. We do that all the time. We count them [the jobs]. You know, we cut the ribbon when the plant opens, or whatever. But what’s the residual benefit to the neighborhood in which those jobs are located? Or what if those jobs aren’t located in a neighborhood, but they’re located at the airport?” This latter question was a particular concern for him and one that practitioners seemed newly interested in discussing in some depth. In the past, development leaders celebrated any job that was brought to the city;

more recently, however, practitioners have started being more discerning about how they define development projects as successes for the city.

I told the practitioner I agreed with his concern about whether jobs by the airport benefit people in the city's urban neighborhoods, knowing that the airport is located in a large industrial area about 12 miles from downtown, which can be a long distance for someone who does not have access to a personal vehicle and instead relies on the city's lackluster public transit system. The interviewee told me the city was focused on strategies that would connect people to jobs, or, more accurately, that would bring jobs closer to where people lived. He said the city was doing this by trying to "flip the script a little bit and look at sites in our neighborhoods with a fresh perspective. Sites where jobs used to be, in many cases." Such sites are mostly where large manufacturing plants used to be located, close to downtown, and embedded in neighborhoods so that employees could walk to work—think of the history of manufacturing up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The birth of the interstate system contributed to the transformation of those old manufacturing sites into large brownfields. Many of the neighborhoods where those plants—and jobs—were located remain in a state of disrepair, or, at least, the neighborhoods that have not yet been redeveloped over the past 20 or so years. The interviewee acknowledged that this long-term lack of investment is due to the trend of companies and developers coming to the city and building on greenfields near city limits, instead of using those brownfields, which are closer to downtown and closer to a lot of unemployed and underemployed residents. He said companies and developers prefer greenfields because they "are drawn to what's easy, and that, in many cases, is, like, the

call center in the cornfield...it's easier to build the building because...you're not dealing with complex challenges of urban sites.” What was easy for developers took precedence.

Since Indianapolis is surrounded by interstates, access to greenfields has been perceived by many to be easy for the vast majority of people, assuming workers have access to a personal vehicle. While it is true that most people in the city, region, and state have such access,<sup>143</sup> this perspective is problematic because residents who live in poverty often do not have a reliable vehicle.<sup>144</sup> Still, the practice of building on greenfields was allowed and even encouraged by previous practitioners because of the way they measured economic development, where any job a company brought to the city was considered to be a successful economic development effort—a “win” for the city—even if the job was located far away and/or did not pay a decent, family-sustaining wage. The interviewee acknowledged the impact this practice has had on urban neighborhoods, saying, “we separated jobs from the conversation of neighborhood health, and we just ignored the fact that when the jobs went away...of course neighborhoods are going to suffer decline as a result.” He continued, “now we're trying to put those pieces back together in a comprehensive way.”

The city's strategy for putting those pieces back together includes attracting development to some of the city's largest brownfields in order to reactivate those former

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<sup>143</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, 2018. The percentages of non-car work commuters in Marion County, the Central Indiana region, and state of Indiana are low: 5.2%; 3.6%; and 4.5%, respectively. The vast majority of Hoosiers rely on a personal vehicle to get to where they need to go.

<sup>144</sup> Catherine Lutz, “The U.S. Car Colossus and the Production of Inequality,” *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 2 (2014): 232–45. In her article, the author shows that not having a personal vehicle perpetuates inequality, since, even in urban areas, many people cannot get to work in a reliable way without a vehicle, yet owning one is crippling expensive for people who have minimum wage jobs. She concludes that the usefulness of personal vehicles and the infrastructure that has been built by U.S. economic and political systems to support and perpetuate personal vehicle ownership have normalized use of the car and blinded U.S. society to the fact that its reliance on everyone having a personal vehicle has perpetuated inequality.



manufacturing sites that are embedded in some of the city’s oldest neighborhoods and economically hardest hit areas. These are areas where unemployment and poverty are typically high. The interviewee talked about a 50-acre brownfield on the near eastside that used to house jobs for approximately 8,000 workers about 30 or 40 years ago.<sup>145</sup> That number is equivalent to about 26% of the near eastside’s population today.<sup>146</sup> As that huge site sits vacant, the near eastside’s unemployment rate, while it has decreased about five points over the past several years, remains high at 13%, which is nearly double that of the county’s rate of about 7% and more than double that of the state’s rate of about 5%.<sup>147</sup> About 34% of near eastside residents live in poverty.<sup>148</sup> About 11% of workers commute to their jobs without a car, which means they walk, bike, or take public transit.<sup>149</sup> Other commuters may carpool with coworkers, friends, or relatives or even take services like Lyft and Uber, which can be expensive.<sup>150</sup> In other areas, such as the Near Northwest Area, where the Riverside neighborhood is located and where a 20-acre plot of land has sat vacant since about 2000,<sup>151</sup> about 22% of workers commute to work without a car.<sup>152</sup> For these non-car work commuters, a low-wage job, such as one in a

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<sup>145</sup> IndyEast, “A New Life for Sherman Park,” Indy East Promise Zone, April 25, 2019, <http://indyeast.org/a-new-life-for-sherman-park/>.

<sup>146</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, 2018.

<sup>147</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, via IndyVitals, prepared by SAVI, 2018, <https://indyvitals.org/>.

<sup>148</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, 2018.

<sup>149</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages.

<sup>150</sup> For New America’s Future of Property Rights program, I was a researcher on a study that investigated housing instability and displacement in Marion County (Robustelli et al., “Displaced in America: Mapping Housing Loss Across the United States.”). I interviewed four renters who told me about their struggles with finding and maintain housing. One mother, who was living with five of her kids in a hotel on the northeast side of the city commuted to work on the northwest side via Lyft or Uber, then paid a coworker to take her home when she got out of work at 11:30pm.

<sup>151</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, “Carrier-Bryant, Indianapolis, IN-Region V,” Indianapolis, IN-Region V, accessed July 29, 2019, [https://response.epa.gov/site/site\\_profile.aspx?site\\_id=7559](https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=7559).

<sup>152</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, 2018.

call center, out near the airport or anywhere else near the city limits, where the greenfields are, is probably not a practical option. What's more, brownfield development can bring environmental and even physical and mental health benefits to residents who live in neighborhoods pockmarked with brownfields, which can signal messages of blight and decay, leaving residents "distressed" and with "a feeling of loss of control."<sup>153</sup> Developing brownfields, then, is important to creating conditions where the benefits of economic growth can reach residents in these hard-hit urban neighborhoods. The approach city leaders use to develop the brownfields, however, will be important in determining whether their strategies create economic growth as well as equitable and inclusive development that reaches existing residents.

The interviewee said one tactic the city is using to try to attract companies and developers to inner-city sites is explaining that "it actually may not be cheaper to develop in the middle of a cornfield." He said that, although a company may see immediate savings by building on a greenfield, there may be long-term costs if the company must continuously train and retrain workers, for example, "if you can't get [employees to the job site] because you're only paying \$12 an hour and there is no transit, and the workforce that you're seeking, maybe, doesn't have dependable transportation." He said he and his colleagues are starting to see where companies in far-flung parts of Marion County and the Central Indiana region are starting to struggle with retaining employees. He said they "can't get people...if they get people, they train them and then the person leaves after training to go get a higher paying job that's closer to home." Now, the city is trying to convince companies and developers that it may be more cost effective for them

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<sup>153</sup> Zeenat Kotval-K, "Brownfield Redevelopment: Why Public Investments Can Pay Off," *Economic Development Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2016): 277, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242416656049>.

to build on urban sites and pay employees \$15 an hour or more to keep them longer. He said, “it may be cheaper for [the companies], in both the short-term and the long-term, to do that, to spend a little more on workforce and to pick a location that’s closer to [the workers].” According to him, practitioners are trying to make this case to business leaders that the investment in the site and the workers will pay off in the long run. Additionally, he said those benefits would not be exclusive to the businesses. The city and neighborhoods would also benefit: the city would start receiving tax revenues from the redeveloped brownfields, and, potentially, the development of the brownfields could spur additional development around the sites, providing some walkable amenities and even more job opportunities to residents who live nearby.

He said another of the city’s tactics for attracting development to some of the city’s brownfields is to pay for and manage brownfield remediation, which many companies and developers do not want to handle themselves because it can be costly and time-consuming to clean up former industrial sites. The city is also handling some of the site preparations, such as demolishing old buildings and building new infrastructure, which may be necessary to attract development. As Kotval-K summarizes, such tactics may pay off,<sup>154</sup> which is what this practitioner said Indianapolis city leaders are banking on. He said, “we’re taking that cost, concern, liability out of the hands of the developer and just doing it, because that’s what government is good at...lifting up these sites to make sure that they’re being considered.” He said that, when the city demolished buildings and cleaned up the 50-acre site on the near eastside, the city “started getting calls...immediately, because developers saw that something was happening.” He said the

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<sup>154</sup> Kotval-K, “Brownfield Redevelopment: Why Public Investments Can Pay Off.”

city was installing “new roads, new sewers, new drainage, to make the site shovel ready for, hopefully, the types of well-paying maybe advanced manufacturing jobs that could employ residents that don’t have a college degree, but don’t need one.” In his mind, brownfield remediation would translate into economic growth for not only the city and private developers and companies, but, importantly, for residents, too.

It was clear that this practitioner genuinely wanted all residents to be able to reap benefits from economic growth as he described how broad development strategies can positively impact residents on a highly localized level. Our conversation had started with an overall definition of economic development and how that relates to neighborhoods, and then we talked about how and why city leaders are taking a new approach to economic development based on lessons from past approaches that were focused almost exclusively on growth for growth’s sake, that is, attracting as many jobs as possible regardless of job quality, pay, location, or people’s ability to access the jobs, whether because they did not have the right level or type of education or training, because they did not have reliable transportation, or because they faced any number of other barriers to obtaining the jobs that were available in the city. We went from talking about the big-picture idea of economic development to talking about the city-wide strategy for changing it and discussing how that strategy can impact an individual, for example, someone without a college degree. In the conversation, the interviewee acknowledged that former approaches to economic development primarily benefitted the companies and developers, and not so much workers, because those approaches enabled private entities to do what was best for themselves, rather than finding a plan that would provide more benefits, such as better locations and higher wages, to more of the city’s residents,

especially those who live in areas that have been hard-hit by the economy's shift from manufacturing-intensive to technology-intensive industries.

The practitioner also described another shift the city is trying to make. Rather than focusing solely on this previous type of vertical economic growth, where most economic benefits went to individuals and entities with established access to wealth and opportunity, leaving those without access struggling at the bottom of the income distribution, this interviewee explained how city-level practitioners were trying to incorporate horizontal growth, as well. Under a new approach, the city's efforts and economic development's benefits are meant to reach more communities and individuals. The interviewee said, "when we think about the quote-unquote 'middle class' and rebuilding what has suffered for the last 25 years as the economy's changed, we have to look at more than just jobs created. Who's getting them? Where do they live? What else is going on in their lives? Do they live in a healthy neighborhood? Do they need repair assistance for their house? All of the things that we sort-of took for granted for a 40-year period after World War II." In a subtle acknowledgement of structural racism, the practitioner added, "even then, over that 40-year period, those benefits were only being realized by certain segments of the population, when you really dig into it." This comment shifted our conversation toward inclusive growth.

### **Inclusive Growth in Indianapolis**

In July 2019, City of Indianapolis leaders, along with the city's quasi-governmental economic development agency, Develop Indy, plus other nonprofit partners, announced a new strategy for using tax incentives, like tax-increment financing (TIF) and tax abatements, to catalyze more inclusive economic growth by connecting the

city's economically vulnerable and impoverished residents to good job opportunities. Under the new strategy, companies requesting tax incentives from the city will only be eligible if they pay at least \$18 per hour and offer healthcare benefits. The requirement seems to be an acknowledgement that simply bringing jobs to the city is not enough. If companies want the city to give them public dollars to locate in Indianapolis, then the jobs the companies offer must be good jobs, as defined by whether they offer family-sustaining wages and benefits. Additionally, companies that will be eligible to receive incentives are those that commit to focusing on “improving access to transit, training, child care [sic] or social services” and those that “reduce racial, income and hiring disparities, or that locate in a distressed neighborhood.”<sup>155</sup> This requirement compels companies requesting public dollars to contribute more than just good jobs to the Indianapolis economy; they must also help address access barriers in order to create better conditions in which Indianapolis workers—especially those who have experienced systemic barriers—can obtain good jobs and ultimately thrive.

The city's inclusive growth strategy is a result of a slow swell of popular realization across the country that wealth and income gaps in the United States are reaching crisis levels.<sup>156</sup> In 2018, The Brookings Institution wrote a report about Central Indiana's changing economy, noting that “globalization and technological change

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<sup>155</sup> Hayleigh Colombo, “City to Tie Incentives to \$18-an-Hour Pay,” *Indianapolis Business Journal*, July 25, 2019, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/city-to-tie-incentives-to-18-an-hour-pay>.

<sup>156</sup> Raj Chetty et al., “Is the United States Still a Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility,” NBER Working Paper Series (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2014), <https://www-nber-org.proxy.ulib.uit.edu/papers/w19844.pdf>; Escobari, Seyal, and Meaney, “Realism About Reskilling: Upgrading the Career Prospects of America's Low-Wage Workers”; Natalie Holmes and Alan Berube, “City and Metropolitan Inequality on the Rise, Driven by Declining Incomes” (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, January 14, 2016), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/city-and-metropolitan-inequality-on-the-rise-driven-by-declining-incomes/>; McKernan et al., “Less Than Equal: Racial Disparities in Wealth Accumulation.”

continue to reshape regional economies like Central Indiana’s and the access to opportunity they can provide. Middle-class jobs that were once plentiful have grown scarcer and many workers now struggle to get by. As a result, longstanding challenges around access to opportunity and economic mobility now appear more severe and could threaten the region’s future prosperity.”<sup>157</sup> In the report, the authors make the case that, if Indianapolis city leaders do not make changes to the way the city’s economy operates, the city will lose its competitive edge, which would mean loss of industry, jobs, tax base, and more. In a word: decline.

In 2017, representatives from Indy Chamber participated in The Brookings Institution’s Inclusive Economic Development Learning Lab. The Lab was “a six-month intensive engagement...to help regional economic development groups ‘make the case’—to their business members, boards, and other economic and community development organizations—that inclusive economic development should be a core component of their work because it is a growth and competitiveness imperative.”<sup>158</sup> In September 2017, Brookings published a pair of reports summarizing the Lab’s case for inclusive growth. Brookings defines inclusive growth as “a process that encourages robust long-run growth by improving the productivity of individuals and firms in order to raise local standards of living for all people.”<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Shearer, Shah, and Muro, “Advancing Opportunity in Central Indiana,” 12.

<sup>158</sup> Ryan Donahue, Brad McDearman, and Rachel Barker, “Committing to Inclusive Growth: Lessons for Metro Areas from the Inclusive Economic Development Lab” (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, September 2017), 3, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/committing-to-inclusive-growth-lessons-for-metro-areas-from-the-inclusive-economic-development-lab/>.

<sup>159</sup> Donahue, McDearman, and Barker, “Committing to Inclusive Growth: Lessons for Metro Areas from the Inclusive Economic Development Lab.”

In December 2018, Brookings published another report, the one cited above, this time in partnership with Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP).<sup>160</sup> CICP convenes “the chief executives of Central Indiana’s prominent corporations, foundations and universities in a strategic and collaborative effort dedicated to the region’s continued prosperity and growth.”<sup>161</sup> The report Brookings and CICP produced is an extensive analysis of the job- and income-related challenges Central Indiana residents face and what city leaders, policymakers, and their partners can do about it. While it is embedded with economic reasons for providing workers with easier access to jobs that pay living wages, it also makes a moral case for economic inclusion, emphasizing the need for people to have access to opportunities that will enable them to achieve “middle-class standards of economic security.”<sup>162</sup>

Indianapolis’s inclusive growth strategy is heavily based on these three Brookings reports, as well as stakeholder interviews administered by HR&A Advisors, the consulting agency that compiled the data and wrote the strategy.<sup>163</sup> The strategy’s basic premise is to use tax incentives to convince businesses to participate in activities intended to connect jobs, opportunities, and resources with people who historically have been inhibited from being able to fully participate in the city’s economy. However, what is largely missing from not only the reports, but also the inclusive growth strategy, as well as city-level practitioners’ perspectives on development, is resident input. Typically, residents are not meaningfully included in development processes, especially at the

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<sup>160</sup> Shearer, Shah, and Muro, “Advancing Opportunity in Central Indiana.”

<sup>161</sup> Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, “About Us,” accessed July 24, 2019, <https://www.cicpindiana.com/about-cicp/>.

<sup>162</sup> Shearer, Shah, and Muro, “Advancing Opportunity in Central Indiana,” 28.

<sup>163</sup> HR&A Advisors, Inc., “Inclusive Incentives: A Roadmap for the Indy Chamber” (Indianapolis, IN: Indy Chamber, February 2019).



highest levels of decision-making, and city leaders' assumptions about the benefits that development transactions bring to residents are not always accurate, as demonstrated by the dramatically different perceptions residents and neighborhood affiliates expressed to me about Fall Creek Place, compared to city-level practitioners. In my interviews, I found disconnects between the way residents and neighborhood affiliates perceived development compared to the way city-level practitioners perceived it. These disconnects beg the question: How will city leaders ensure that their inclusive growth efforts empower historically and systemically disenfranchised communities so the neighborhoods where those communities reside do not get *taken*? Developing a better understanding of these disconnects, which I will detail in the next chapter, may help city leaders execute an inclusive growth strategy more effectively, creating not only economic growth, but also genuine economic development that equitably improves access, reduces barriers, and expands freedoms for residents throughout the city.

## Chapter 4:

### The Displacement Disconnect

Throughout my dissertation work, I have found myself repeatedly returning to a short but compelling essay, which is specifically about creative placemaking, but more broadly about neighborhood redevelopment. It was written in 2013 by arts and culture policymaker Roberto Bodeya, who is currently the Cultural Affairs Manager for the City of Oakland, California. In the essay, Bodeya talks about his own experience working with other arts and culture policymakers and program administrators from across the nation, who, from his perspective, dived head-first into funding and administering creative placemaking practices without adequately reflecting on the consequences and implications of their work. He says that, among those colleagues, there is an alarming “lack of awareness about the politics of belonging and dis-belonging that operate in civil society.”<sup>164</sup> He observes that his colleagues “are tethered to a meaning of ‘place’ manifest in the built environment.”<sup>165</sup> He continues:

And this meaning, which operates inside the policy frame of urban planning and economic development, is OK, but it is not the complete picture. Its insufficiency lies in the lack of understanding that before you have *places of belonging*, you must feel you *belong*. Before there is the vibrant street, one needs an understanding of the social dynamics on that street—the politics of belonging and dis-belonging at work in placemaking in civil society (emphasis in the original).<sup>166</sup>

Bodeya reminds us that, prior to redevelopment, places already have meaning and value to the people who live and interact there. They are places where those people feel like they belong, thanks to the place’s civic and cultural dynamics. That meaning and value,

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<sup>164</sup> Roberto Bodeya, “Placemaking and the Politics of Belonging and Dis-Belonging,” *GIA Reader* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2013), <http://www.giarts.org/article/placemaking-and-politics-belonging-and-dis-belonging>.

<sup>165</sup> Bodeya.

<sup>166</sup> Bodeya.

and those civic and cultural dynamics that create a sense of belonging among residents, must be understood and appreciated in order to ensure that redevelopment benefits those established residents. Bedoya sounds the alarms about the possible harm that could be done, albeit unwittingly, when outsiders controlling creative placemaking processes have inadequate understandings and make inaccurate assumptions about the civic and cultural dynamics that create a sense of belonging for residents in the area. If they are not careful, and regardless of their good intentions, creative placemaking efforts could result in catalyzing new dynamics that create a sense of dis-belonging among the area's original residents.

In my research, I found that, among city-level development practitioners, there was a similar lack of understanding and appreciation of the way residents perceived development in Indianapolis. Residents looked at historical contexts combined with their personal experiences and the experiences of people with whom they identified to conclude that economic growth in Indianapolis was not designed to benefit them. Practitioners took a clinical approach to development, primarily looking at quantifiable data to inform their perceptions of Indianapolis's economic growth, concluding that, while Indianapolis has historically struggled and continues to struggle with economic inequities and exclusions, it is not as bad as residents say it is. They pointed to quantifiable data to invalidate and dismiss residents' perceptions. This difference of perspective creates a disconnect wherein the ways in which practitioners measure success in development do not align with how residents experience development in their everyday lives.

The disconnects I observed were most apparent in conversations I had with people about gentrification and displacement. Because I was talking with interviewees about economic development and neighborhood change, our conversations naturally lent themselves to the topics of gentrification and displacement. My interviews revealed how differently residents and neighborhood affiliates perceived these issues compared to city-level practitioners. While many residents and neighborhood affiliates saw gentrification as an intentional process that enabled powerful outsiders to *take* a neighborhood, displacing its residents, many city-level practitioners took issue with claims that their work contributed to gentrification and displacement. In interviews, I heard city-level practitioners say displacement was nonexistent in Indianapolis or that it existed, but it was not a significant problem in the city. This perspective not only clashed with what residents conveyed to me, but it also is inconsistent with findings from a June 2020 report from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition ranking Indianapolis in position 12 on a list of the nation's top 20 most intensely gentrifying cities.<sup>167</sup>

Displacement is an outcome of inequitable, exclusionary development processes, i.e. gentrification, and it affects low-income people and people of color who do not have the same economic, cultural, or social capital as middle- and upper-income people, who tend to be white. Moskowitz writes that gentrification is “about systemic violence based on decades of racist housing policy in the United States that has denied people of color, especially Black people, access to the same kinds of housing, and therefore the same

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<sup>167</sup> Jason Richardson, Bruce Mitchell, and Jad Edlebi, “Gentrification and Disinvestment 2020: Do Opportunity Zones Benefit or Gentrify Low-Income Neighborhoods” (Washington, D.C.: National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2020), file:///C:/Users/pinta/Downloads/Gentrification-and-Opportunity-Zones-2020-v9.pdf. NCRC defines gentrification as a class- and culture-based form of neighborhood change and describes displacement as a key dimension of gentrification (Richardson, Mitchell, and Franco, “Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities.”)

levels of wealth, as white Americans. Gentrification cannot happen without this deeply rooted inequality; if we were all equal, there could be no gentrifier and no gentrified, no perpetrator or victim.”<sup>168</sup> According to Moskowitz, that which gets displaced is the gentrified victim of “systemic violence,” or development that *takes*. Gentrification, and thus also displacement, is a symptom of economic development efforts that are inequitable and exclusionary.

Gentrification-induced displacement has two dimensions, one that is physical<sup>169</sup> and one that is cultural.<sup>170</sup> Physical displacement happens when a neighborhood’s housing related costs, such as market-based rental rates, mortgage rates, and property taxes, increase to the point where existing residents can no longer afford such costs and are forced to move out of the neighborhood and into an area where those costs are lower.<sup>171</sup> Oftentimes, when renters who are already struggling financially are forced to move, they end up in neighborhoods where things like crime and poverty rates are higher or they end up in housing situations where the home is less safe or less stable or the landlord is more negligent, or all of the above.<sup>172</sup> Especially for low-income people, forced displacement can initiate a downward spiral, as it can mean moving away from support networks, jobs, schools, public transportation, and even into a life of transience

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<sup>168</sup> Moskowitz, *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood*, 5.

<sup>169</sup> For thorough and recent literature reviews of gentrification and physical displacement, see Richardson, Mitchell, and Franco, “Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities”; Miriam Zuk et al., “Gentrification, Displacement, and the Role of Public Investment,” *Journal of Planning Literature* 33, no. 1 (2018): 31–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412217716439>.

<sup>170</sup> Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*; Moskowitz, *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood*; Richardson, Mitchell, and Franco, “Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities.”

<sup>171</sup> Zuk et al., “Gentrification, Displacement, and the Role of Public Investment.”

<sup>172</sup> Matthew Desmond and Tracey Shollenberger, “Forced Displacement from Rental Housing: Prevalence and Neighborhood Consequences,” *Demography* 52 (2015): 1751–72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0419-9>.

and homelessness—stays in hotels, cars, shelters, on friends’ and family members’ sofas—if new housing is not secured immediately.<sup>173</sup> For large families in particular, being forced to move can mean separation, as some family members find space to stay in one place, with an aunt, for instance, while other family members find housing elsewhere, maybe with a friend.<sup>174</sup> Physical displacement can throw already-struggling families into “crisis mode,” and it can have devastating effects from which it can be difficult for people to recover.<sup>175</sup>

Physical displacement can be relatively easy to identify in a gentrifying neighborhood where, for example, the absolute number of Black residents decreases while the total population of residents increases. Although there is significant talk, concern, and writing about gentrification-induced physical displacement, some studies show that it is only an issue “in cities with tight housing markets and in a select number of neighborhoods.”<sup>176</sup> A 2019 study of gentrification and displacement in cities across the U.S. showed that the cities with the most gentrification and displacement were New York City, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. Philadelphia, Baltimore, San Diego, and

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<sup>173</sup> Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2016); Robustelli et al., “Displaced in America: Mapping Housing Loss Across the United States.”

<sup>174</sup> Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*; Robustelli et al., “Displaced in America: Mapping Housing Loss Across the United States.”

<sup>175</sup> Robustelli et al., “Displaced in America: Mapping Housing Loss Across the United States.”

<sup>176</sup> Maureen Kennedy and Paul Leonard, “Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Choices” (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, April 2001), 1, [https://web.archive.org/web/20111017161034/http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2001/04-metropolitanpolicy\\_maureen%20kennedy%20and%20paul%20leonard/gentrification.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20111017161034/http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2001/04-metropolitanpolicy_maureen%20kennedy%20and%20paul%20leonard/gentrification.pdf). See also Terra McKinnish, Randall Walsh, and Kirk White, “Who Gentrifies Low-Income Neighborhoods?” (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2008), <https://www.nber.org/papers/w14036.pdf>; and Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, “American Neighborhood Change in the 21st Century” (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Law School, April 2019), <https://www.law.umn.edu/institute-metropolitan-opportunity/gentrification>.

Chicago.<sup>177</sup> The primary reason why such studies assert that displacement is not widespread across many U.S. cities is because the studies focus only on physical displacement using quantitative data, typically from the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>178</sup> Even while it may appear that we can capture an accurate picture of physical displacement, some studies show that the issue is more complex as it can be difficult to pinpoint reasons why someone left a neighborhood.<sup>179</sup> Was it because the rent or taxes became unaffordable? Did a renter decide to become a homeowner, but had to move from the neighborhood to find a home they could afford? Was the person informally evicted? Is the person experiencing long-term housing instability that may be emblematic of a city's widespread housing issues?

As tricky as gentrification-induced physical displacement can be to track, cultural displacement is even more difficult to identify and measure because it cannot be quantified and tracked easily, if at all. Cultural displacement happens subtly, across a series of events that begin influencing the place's housing options, amenities, businesses, and other community dynamics in ways that may not align with what established residents perceive to be meeting their needs or values. As newcomers move into the redeveloping area, they tend to be more affluent white people who likely have more social and political capital and whose tastes probably align with the dominant class's white spatial imaginary, since they themselves, because of their affluence or whiteness, or both, are members of the dominant class. In his study of a gentrified Washington,

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<sup>177</sup> Richardson, Mitchell, and Franco, "Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities."

<sup>178</sup> For example, Brummet and Reed, "The Effects of Gentrification on the Well-Being and Opportunity of Original Resident Adults and Children."

<sup>179</sup> Summarizing several of these studies is Lance Freeman, "Displacement or Succession? Residential Mobility in Gentrifying Neighborhoods," *Urban Affairs Review* 40, no. 4 (March 2005): 463–91.

D.C. neighborhood that shifted from being mostly low-income and Black to more affluent and white, Derek Hyra found that “white newcomers express their community preferences through political displacement, which engenders feelings of resentment among the long-term Black population and replicates, if not amplifies, prior social inequalities.”<sup>180</sup> According to Hyra, “while some original African American residents are able to stay in these redeveloping neighborhoods, they are losing political power.”<sup>181</sup> He describes the result being that the perceived needs and values of those white newcomers overwhelm those of the longtime residents. For example, Hyra explained that “while biking infrastructure is being constructed to attract new city residents, some existing African American residents resent it, because they view it as an amenity they did not request. In fact, some perceive it as a symbolic message that they are no longer wanted in the neighborhoods where it is being placed.”<sup>182</sup> The author also recounts a situation where white newcomers were able to secure resources for the construction of a dog park, which was mostly used by said white residents, while the existing soccer fields and basketball courts, which were mostly used by the neighborhood’s Black and Hispanic residents, remained neglected, despite needing maintenance.<sup>183</sup>

At the time of my study in the Near Northwest Area, there were deep concerns about senior citizens on fixed incomes and whether they would be able to afford to keep up with maintenance on their aging homes and afford to pay property taxes, which were predicted to increase with imminent gentrification. Significant time was dedicated in community meetings talking about the needs of the area’s senior citizens, and state

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<sup>180</sup> Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*, 132.

<sup>181</sup> Hyra, 20.

<sup>182</sup> Hyra, 140.

<sup>183</sup> Hyra, 140–41.



legislators attended at least three different community meetings during my fieldwork period to talk with residents about the issue. Hyra's study shows that we cannot assume that neighborhood redevelopment will result in meaningfully integrated neighborhoods; while the areas may statistically become mixed in terms of race and economics, they may not become mixed socially or culturally. One group may overpower others. If one of the threats that accompanies gentrification is that the perceived needs and values of longtime residents get pushed aside in favor of the perceived needs and values of younger, more affluent newcomers who possess more capital of all types—social, political, and economic—then would such an issue as that of how the community as a whole will advocate and care for the area's aging population be considered a priority? Even as residents may not become physically displaced, the cultural changes in their area can make them feel unwelcome in the same place that used to feel like home.

One person I interviewed who worked in the Near Northwest Area described the difference between physical displacement and cultural displacement: "There's the displacement because you get pushed out and then there's displacement because things change so much around you that you no longer feel welcome there." She said this type of cultural displacement can create "culture wars" between longtime residents and newcomers. In an interview with a resident who grew up in the Riverside neighborhood and owned a home there, I asked the man whether he thought he would be able to stay if the neighborhood gentrified. He said that, while he did not think he would have a problem being able to afford increased housing costs, he was not sure he would want to stay. He said, it was "hard to say, because, of course, there are a lot of memories attached to [the neighborhood], but, once it feels like, you know, the strengths and the

greatest attributes of my culture are not, um, respected and being upheld in the space, it's kinda hard to continue to want to stay physically there, whether or not I still own property there." The National Low Income Housing Coalition describes cultural displacement along lines similar to both the neighborhood affiliate and the resident:

The closing of long-time neighborhood landmarks like historically black churches or local restaurants can erase the history of a neighborhood and with it a sense of belonging [for established residents]. The influx of a population of upper- and middle-income residents can also change the political landscape, with new leaders ignoring the needs of long-time residents. The loss of long-time residents' political power leads to further withdrawal from public participation and a loss of control.<sup>184</sup>

In sum, cultural displacement can be defined as the *taking* of established residents' ability to shape their neighborhood according to their perceived needs and values.

To be able to describe how a neighborhood's longtime residents were culturally displaced in a gentrified area, one would need to have an intimate understanding of the community's history and the dynamics of the area's civic life as well as an understanding of residents' collective values and priorities prior to the area's transformation. Such a study would effectively capture the processes that excluded and silenced longtime residents and replaced them with newcomers. While physical displacement may not always accompany cultural displacement, the latter is just as much a concern for longtime residents in a redeveloping neighborhood. At its core, displacement, too often an outcome of neighborhood revitalization, is the result of inequitable and exclusionary economic growth, that is, gentrification.

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<sup>184</sup> "Gentrification and Neighborhood Revitalization: What's the Difference?," National Low Income Housing Coalition, April 5, 2019, <https://nlihc.org/resource/gentrification-and-neighborhood-revitalization-whats-difference>.

City-level practitioners I interviewed were fluent in the statistics that illustrate the ways in which Indianapolis's economy is inequitable and exclusionary. As indicated in numerous reports, things like poverty, homeownership, income, and unemployment, when stratified by race, show that whites enjoy a more robust economy and more economic opportunities than Blacks and Hispanics.<sup>185</sup> It is because practitioners are aware of these kinds of statistics that the city and its partners created the inclusive growth strategy. However, when it came to perceptions of why and how neighborhood redevelopment consistently excludes and displaces established residents, it seemed like city-level practitioners missed how residents conceptualize displacement. There was a disconnect, which hinders any city's ability to effectively execute its inclusive growth strategy.

This disconnect was evident in the way practitioners and residents talked about Fall Creek Place, which came up in many interviews. Residents talked about Fall Creek Place like it was a tragic injustice wherein public-private partners used government resources and processes to *take* an area that used to be home to a predominantly Black population of residents; however, practitioners had a different view. One practitioner who worked for the city said, "I think of places like the Old North Side and...Fall Creek [Place] where these were challenged areas and neighborhoods and then people have come

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<sup>185</sup> Laurie Goodman, Alanna McCargo, and Jun Zhu, "A Closer Look at the Fifteen-Year Drop in Black Homeownership," Urban Institute, *Urban Wire: Housing and Housing Finance* (blog), February 12, 2018, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/closer-look-fifteen-year-drop-black-homeownership>; Lee, "A Vast Wealth Gap, Driven by Segregation, Redlining, Evictions and Exclusion, Separates Black and White America"; Alanna McCargo and Sarah Stochak, "Mapping the Black Homeownership Gap," Urban Institute, *Urban Wire: Housing and Housing Finance* (blog), February 26, 2018, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/mapping-black-homeownership-gap>; McKernan et al., "Less Than Equal: Racial Disparities in Wealth Accumulation"; Shearer, Shah, and Muro, "Advancing Opportunity in Central Indiana"; U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, "Poverty and Income Profile."

in with a vision and some capital and decided to devote time and energy to it and they turned that around.” A bit later in our interview, he talked about Fall Creek Place again, saying, “neighborhood redevelopments like that have been huge success stories because I remember what those were like before they were renovated and they were very challenged, and places you didn’t want to be. Now, those are great places to be. So...yeah, I think there’s a lot of good that can come from doing it the right way.” In this practitioner’s view, Fall Creek Place, now comprised of a predominantly white population, was an example of an economic development effort having been done “the right way” because the place was no longer a “challenged” area and was transformed into an area that was desirable and good for (white) investment. The implication was that, before people devoted time, energy, and capital into transforming the area—when the area was still “Dodge City”—it was not good for investment.

Another practitioner, who worked for the city around the time when Fall Creek Place plans were first being implemented, also talked about the development as if it was an overall “win,” even for residents who were not physically displaced:

The idea is that mixed-income [neighborhoods are] better. People are better when they live around...they learn so much from other people, diverse races, all that kind of stuff... So, the Feds said that about Fall Creek Place. [...] And so...in Fall Creek Place, if you owned your house and you wanted to stay in the neighborhood, we didn’t put you on the list for acquisition. So, that was like, ‘Oh, you should be able to win from this development. Why do you want to sit around with the [disinvested] neighborhood and now it’s going to be a good neighborhood [and you have to move]?’

According to this practitioner, adding new residents, including those who were white and more affluent, to the former “Dodge City” area was only going to make it better. He did not consider the development’s cultural impacts on the neighborhood and how that would

affect longtime residents' sense of comfort, belonging, or ownership in the neighborhood.<sup>186</sup>

Neither did another practitioner who was also working for the city at the time when the Fall Creek Place development was initiated. She stated that there was no displacement of homeowners in Fall Creek Place and that the area was not gentrified but rather densified and diversified:

So, [people say that] whenever you start seeing...um...white people move into a traditionally Black neighborhood, it becomes gentrified. I don't think that's always the case...Fall Creek Place was, um...no homeowners were displaced. Renters were displaced. It was a homeownership zone. But, at the end of the day...it was pretty much racially equal. I think it was 51% to 49%, and that pretty much is as equal as you're gonna get. But, because you were starting to see more white people living there, it became more of a racial issue that...the process...turned a traditionally African-American neighborhood into a white neighborhood when, in fact, the reality was it was pretty diverse.

This practitioner took issue with claims that “Dodge City” had been transformed into a “white neighborhood” when the population immediately following the city’s investments actually became about half-white, half-Black. In her view, there was nothing wrong with transforming an area mostly comprised of Black residents into one that had a whiter population as long as it was still racially balanced. Her definition of a “white neighborhood” seemed to require that the population was predominantly white, and it did not account for the dominance of white culture—how retail and restaurant offerings and other amenities that open in a gentrifying neighborhood cater to affluent whites, making appeals for their. Her perception of whether or not there was displacement in Fall Creek

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<sup>186</sup> Incidentally, the case that mixed-income neighborhoods are “better” seems never to be applied to predominantly white, wealthy neighborhoods, including suburbs, where homeowners closely guard their property values through homeowner association bylaws and restrictive, exclusionary zoning. For one of many discussions on this topic, see Lipsitz, “Learning from New Orleans: The Social Warrant of Hostile Privatism and Competitive Consumer Citizenship.”

Place did not account for the cultural impacts of introducing so many white people into a predominantly Black community. She did not perceive a cultural aspect of displacement but only a physical one.

Perhaps, the culture the practitioner recognized in “Dodge City” was narrowly characterized by high levels of crime, poverty, and vacancy, which was a common characterization of the area among members of the dominant class, even as recently as 2017. In November of that year, the *Urban Times*, a monthly downtown news magazine, published a full-page advertisement from a realty group selling homes in Fall Creek Place with a header that read, “Real estate prophets said build here so the people came and they built and all was good in the kingdom.”<sup>187</sup> The ad continued:

It was once an unseemly place filled with unholy habitats and vice lords. Thusly people banded with bureaucrats and rebranding Oracles who ordained Dodge City be henceforth and forever known as Fall Creek Place. With blessing of the banks, brokers, and bureaucrats ZMC Urban Homes began building new homes for the blessed who believed urban living could be holy, hop, righteous, and upscale. People flocked Downtown, and ZMC built mightily, and a new order of peace and prosperity spread across from Goose the Market [a local market and butcher shop], where kingdoms start at \$636,000. Only four left. Yikes.<sup>188</sup>

The ad was meant to be humorous to its intended audience, that is, those who were “holy, hip, righteous, and upscale.” At the price point of the homes being advertised, it is safe to imagine the intended audience was comprised mostly of white people. It should not be surprising that many people found the ad’s implications to be deeply offensive and racist, as it characterized the previous culture of predominantly Black and low-income residents

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<sup>187</sup> Reprinted in Jen Kinney, “Outrageous Ad Is Part of Pernicious Neighborhood Rebranding Game,” *Next City* (blog), November 10, 2017, <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/outrageous-ad-part-neighborhood-rebranding-game>.

<sup>188</sup> Kinney.

as “unseemly” and “unholy” and said the community was filled with “vice lords.” However, the owner of the realty group, who was the person who wrote the ad, was indeed surprised by people’s reactions, saying he did not realize the problematic nature of the ad until someone told him about it.<sup>189</sup> His ignorance and tone-deafness speak to a larger problem that is related to the comments from practitioners I interviewed. Because the culture that existed in “Dodge City” was not considered to be of value in the eyes of members of the dominant class, who labeled it as “bad” and “challenged,” the area’s culture did not count and was not considered to have been displaced. Because the area’s culture was seen as “bad” and “challenged,” there was no consideration for the affects that the neighborhood’s transformation might have on existing residents’ levels of comfort or sense of belonging in the neighborhood, there was little consideration given to the personal and emotional connections people may have had to the “Dodge City” community and its institutions, and there was no importance given to the ways in which displacing renters, too often disregarded for their presumed transience, may have disrupted social and familial networks.

Many practitioners I interviewed seemed to only conceptualize displacement as physical and did not imagine a cultural dimension. It seemed like many practitioners’ view was that displacement had to be quantitatively measurable—that is, it had to be physical displacement—for it to count as displacement. For example, in an interview with a city-level practitioner who worked for a nonprofit organization that partners with the city on development efforts and is a key player on the inclusive growth strategy, I

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<sup>189</sup> Kinney.

asked him whether his organization was addressing gentrification and displacement in Indianapolis. He said:

I don't think we've been successful enough to worry about gentrification just yet, and I don't say that to seem insensitive, but, when four census tracts have experienced growth in values that could lead to displacement [and] if 30% of our census tracts are seeing a 10% loss or more in value, that tells me we're not successful enough to [worry about displacement].

According to this practitioner, Indianapolis's economy was not yet "successful" or robust enough to create the levels of income inequality or economic exclusion that would produce quantitatively measurable levels of widespread physical displacement that would make such displacement a significant enough problem for city leaders to prioritize.

According to this perspective, displacement is only a problem when there are enough numbers to prove it, but this perspective leaves some critical questions unanswered: How many people have to be getting physically displaced and in what timeframe before displacement is considered to be an issue worth prioritizing? Are city leaders even tracking displacement locally? Once displacement reaches the threshold at which it is deemed by city leaders to be a problem, how will they remediate it? How do city leaders reconcile any level of physical displacement with the new agenda prioritizing inclusive economic growth? Should physical displacement not be an indicator that economic growth must not be reaching all residents?

I again heard this perspective during an interview with a city-level practitioner who worked for a different organization from the practitioner who made the previous comments, although her organization is also one of the city's partners on the inclusive growth strategy. I asked the interviewee to talk about what her organization was doing to address gentrification and displacement concerns. She said:



The data I have seen, and it might be a little bit dated at this point, it's been about a year, is that we're not really, as compared to, I mean, it's good to have, to understand, because you don't want it to get too far along, but, realistically, maybe other than the Fountain Square area and maybe Mapleton-Fall Creek a little bit, we have not hit that tipping point as Indianapolis. We do have an issue about affordable housing, in general. But, you know, it's good to have the lens, it's good to know in case, but we're not yet really there.

While she struggled with her response, it seemed like gentrification and displacement from her perspective were not currently significant problems throughout all of Indianapolis like they were in other cities. She said that, if the issues were present in Indianapolis, they were isolated to a couple of neighborhoods, which was similar to the other practitioner's comment about the city only having four census tracts potentially showing displacement. However, she acknowledged it was good for city leaders like her to be tracking data that may show that gentrification and displacement were spreading, although she also acknowledged that she had not seen such data in some time. The practitioner who talked about the census tracts expressed something similar, saying that, while displacement was not a current concern, "now is the perfect time to plan." Again, these practitioners do not seem aware of the ways in which economic development can lead to exclusionary cultural changes within communities. Their comments denied displacement as a problem because it was not quantifiably measurable, meaning data, if it was even being tracked locally, were not showing that physical displacement was happening, and their comments are supported by some data that shows displacement is only a problem in some of the nation's largest, highest-density cities. Because displacement in Indianapolis was not proven in real numbers, the practitioners believed concerns about displacement were unfounded, essentially denying residents value in their perspectives that displacement was a problem that city leaders should prioritize.

Comments from one practitioner illustrate particularly well the perception that residents' concerns about displacement were unfounded, based on his belief that most people, including residents, did not understand gentrification well enough to be able to determine whether its outcomes were harmful or beneficial. We had the following dialogue:

Interviewee I think the challenge with talking about gentrification is that it's pretty complex, and, uh, in some ways, um, it's informed by a lot of narrative that people have picked up somewhere. Like, they read about it at school, or they read about it in the newspaper, they watch a movie, but they don't necessarily...they've never defined their term and it becomes more about, um...like, it's, like, so multifaceted, and so, it's hard to talk about intelligently in a five-minute soundbite or even a 30-second soundbite. So, I mean, the 30-second soundbite is, gentrification is bad, if there's displacement...occurring, but...the ultimate goal of [my organization's] work is a healthy, vibrant, resilient neighborhood. And that includes a mix of diverse people in that neighborhood. Diversity in terms of race, diversity in terms of family, kind-of, size, and family orientation, or whatever, and diversity in terms of income. A healthy neighborhood, um... A lot of the things that sometimes, uh, are struggles for certain neighborhoods are really about the concentration of poverty. And so, we want to have a mixed-income neighborhood. That's a really healthy thing. Now, you don't want anybody pushed out, and that's a different conversation. But...it gets conflated.

Abbey It does. Mm-hmm. [affirmative]

Interviewee Those two get conflated...

Abbey Gentrification and displacement, right.

Interviewee And to separate it out... It's as if you have one, you know, one economic development deal happening on MLK and, suddenly, you know, [people say] "Well, there goes the neighborhood, we're all getting kicked out."

Abbey Yeah, that is the perception out there. Mm-hmm. [affirmative]

Interviewee Oh, my god, and it's like, um, but that's not true. And, in fact, we're all fighting hard to get that one development or, you know, together we're, like, working on, like...

“Wouldn’t you rather...” uh, “Do you want shuttered businesses and, you know, unsafe corridors?” “No, we want it to be, like, a vibrant...” Wouldn’t it be amazing to have the [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street] corridor to just be, you know, what it is already, which is a center of African American culture and vibrancy and have African American business-owners thriving there and... Wow. That’s the goal, and that’s kind-of how we approach, at least, that neighborhood.

Abbey                    Yeah.

Interviewee        So, the gentrification question is nuanced. So, to me, do we want increased incomes in a neighborhood? Yes, we want everybody to rise. Right? Do we want increased assessed values in the neighborhood? Yeah, the neighborhood assessed values could go up.

Rather than believing that residents’ concerns were based on their own real experiences, the experiences of people they knew, and historical and well-documented accounts of displacement in other parts of Indianapolis, this practitioner said he believed that residents’ concerns were based on what they read in books and heard from the news and in movies. He acknowledged that he was aware of residents’ fears that a single economic development effort could catalyze the type of private investment that could lead to displacement, but instead of seeing those fears as legitimate, he dismissed them. Furthermore, like the practitioner who talked about Fall Creek Place as an overall “win,” this practitioner only saw benefits—no downsides—to attracting more affluent residents and catalyzing increases in assessed values. He did not seem to perceive a cultural dimension of displacement, only a physical one. There seemed to be a disconnect between the way he and other practitioners perceived displacement and the way many residents perceived displacement. Many practitioners seemed to only conceptualize displacement as something that forces someone to move from their neighborhood. They did not seem to imagine that efforts seeking to revitalize a neighborhood could create

conditions under which a neighborhood could be *taken* from longtime residents by displacing the established culture and changing civic dynamics to the point where those longtime residents lose the ability to make decisions about the neighborhood's future in terms of what it might look like, the amenities that might exist there, and the kinds of people who could afford to live there.

Interestingly, the disconnect I observed in the way many residents and neighborhood affiliates perceived displacement compared to the way many city-level practitioners perceived the issue was not isolated to those groups. There was also a disconnect among city-level practitioners themselves where a few practitioners, unlike some of their peers, acknowledged that there was more to people's perceptions of displacement than what data could show. In what seemed like it could have been a direct retort to claims that Indianapolis was not "successful enough" or had "not hit that tipping point" to warrant active displacement abatement efforts, one practitioner who worked for the city said "if you're waiting for it to be an issue before it is an issue [to be prioritized], then you're already too late." In other words, if practitioners wait until displacement is quantitatively measurable across the city, then the problem already will have gotten ahead of decision-makers. It will have become so large that fixing it would require more resources and more complex solutions than if the issue had been abated sooner. The practitioner's comment allowed for the possibility that residents and neighborhood affiliates were tracking an issue that, while not yet quantifiable, was maybe signaling a larger future problem, the validity of which could be confirmed by recognizing real, persistent economic exclusions. In the Riverside neighborhood, for example, the fact that poverty and rental rates among the existing, predominantly Black population are so high

should be enough to tell practitioners that the dual threat of both physical and cultural displacement is legitimate.

I also noticed a racial dimension to the disconnects in city practitioners' perspectives on displacement. Specifically, the Black practitioners I interviewed did not seem to question that there was a cultural aspect to gentrification and displacement, nor did they seem to question the importance of this aspect. For instance, one practitioner said the following when talking about a large, multifaceted development project: "We know these types of developments lead to gentrification, so my job is to figure out how to get neighbors on more stable footing, how to preserve the *culture* that they have in the neighborhood and keep people in the neighborhood, versus, like, being pushed out and *feeling* like, you know, [residents]...didn't have a say and weren't considered in terms of what was being developed and what the outcomes were going to be" (emphasis added). Another Black practitioner said, "I think that what the residents are articulating is feeling further oppressed...I can understand their perspective. Absolutely. And I've talked to so many Riverside residents. That's how they feel, in general, just, with the entire Riverside [neighborhood] development, they just feel, 'We're being displaced.'" As Black individuals, these practitioners did not have to be convinced that changing a neighborhood in ways that attract more affluent white individuals could be experienced by non-white longtime residents as displacement. Conversely, the practitioners who were most adamant that displacement was not an issue in Indianapolis, that the city had not yet been "successful enough" to have to worry about displacement, were all white individuals, who only imagined that displacement could be physical, not cultural.

Of course, not all white practitioners dismissed the importance of cultural displacement. One particular white practitioner seemed to embrace the idea that maybe residents had perspectives to which city leaders were not privy, and he told me about the time when he realized this. He said he attended an event that he called “a meeting of neighborhoods” where he heard some neighborhood folks from various areas around the city express concerns about gentrification and displacement. He said conversations at the event gave him new perspectives to consider:

It was interesting, because one may not think that displacement or gentrification, however you want to define it, would be happening in some of the neighborhoods that brought it up...but if they believe it's a concern today or an issue today, then we've got to pay attention to that. [...] As I left the meeting, and I was trying to wrap my mind around why some neighborhoods would say that gentrification's happening...well, it's because [those residents] maybe moved into the neighborhood, or had been in the neighborhood for a long time, and there's a certain 'secret sauce,' authenticity, in the neighborhood...and there is a fear that that gets lost as neighborhoods change over time.

The conversations the practitioner heard at this event seem to have opened his eyes to the fact that there is a cultural dimension to displacement. He heard residents express fears about their neighborhood's “secret sauce” and “authenticity,” which is to say the neighborhood's culture, being at risk of disappearing. During our interview, this practitioner acknowledged that “perception is reality,” meaning that what people perceived to be true was real to them, and those perceptions should be taken into consideration and investigated, rather than dismissed. He said, “if neighbors are concerned and think [displacement is] happening, whether those numbers are in the single digits or the hundreds, we need to pay attention.” In his view, displacement should be taken seriously as an issue in the city—regardless of the quantifiability of it—expressly because residents perceived it to be an issue.

However, even among practitioners who seemed to be open to understanding that there is a cultural dimension to displacement, there is more work to be done to bridge the disconnects between residents and neighborhood affiliates and city-level practitioners. For instance, while speaking to a group of Near Northwest Area residents and other community members at a monthly community meeting, the same practitioner who said “perception is reality” told the group that the city wanted to use “the playbook of Fall Creek Place” in its efforts to redevelop the Near Northwest Area. He said this to quell fears that development in the area would displace homeowners, since the residents at the community meeting were mostly homeowners, some of whom had been living in the neighborhood for decades. While at the time no one at the meeting voiced dissatisfaction with the idea of deploying some of the same strategies in the Near Northwest Area that were used to transform “Dodge City” into Fall Creek Place, my fieldwork indicates that such strategies would receive pushback if the city moved to implement them. In fact, a couple of months later, when the same group of residents and community members reconvened for another monthly meeting, Fall Creek Place came up in a renewed conversation about possible strategies residents could use in Near Northwest Area redevelopment efforts. One resident commented that Fall Creek Place’s development strategy displaced people to the city’s far eastside. There seemed to be general agreement among the meeting’s attendees that that is indeed what had happened.

The city-level practitioner was obviously unaware that the general sense about Fall Creek Place among Near Northwest Area residents who I encountered was that the area had been *taken* from the predominantly Black community that had existed there and that it had been transformed into a white neighborhood. The practitioner conceptualized

Fall Creek Place as a success because it turned an area that was typically characterized by city leaders like him as “bad” or “challenged,” based on its high rates of vacancy, poverty, and crime, into an area that was low in all those characteristics, but his perspective on Fall Creek Place was missing a cultural dimension. The fact that the perception persists among city leaders that “Dodge City’s” transformation into Fall Creek Place was nothing but a “win,” is indicative of how little most practitioners know about residents’ perceptions of how development impacts their everyday lives.

Cultural displacement happens when a neighborhood is *taken* through inequitable and exclusionary development processes that catalyze changes in a neighborhood and its dynamics in ways that attract new residents who tend to have more economic and social capital than the area’s existing population.<sup>190</sup> Such *taking* happens because neighborhood redevelopment focuses heavily on economic growth via attraction of capital (e.g. emphasizing the importance of “mixed-income” neighborhoods), rather than on reducing barriers and expanding freedoms and capabilities. Because people with access to capital tend to be white people, neighborhood redevelopment efforts may signal to residents in a disinvested, predominantly Black neighborhood, like Riverside, that the area’s population is going to become whiter. What’s more, the new white population will likely bring with it a set of white expectations, comprised of people who will have the capital to enforce those expectations and reshape the area’s character, civic dynamics, businesses, and amenities to align with their white spatial imaginary and give themselves the positive sense of comfort, belonging, and ownership to which white supremacy tells them they are entitled. If not mitigated, such development processes can cause the area’s longtime non-

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<sup>190</sup> Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*; Kennedy and Leonard, “Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Choices.”



white residents to feel loss of ownership, belonging, and control in the place where they have lived. They will feel displaced. For many people in the Riverside neighborhood, turning the area into a “mixed-income” neighborhood would be comparable to turning the neighborhood into another version of Fall Creek Place, which, while it may have started as a more economically and racially mixed area when the development was first established, today reflects little of the “Dodge City” community that used to exist there. Based on what I heard in interviews and fieldwork in the Riverside area, residents expressed the need for a different type of economic development strategy from the one used in the Fall Creek Place development. However, if residents’ perceptions are not heard or valued by city decision-makers, who control resources and decision-making processes, and if the disconnect I have described here is not bridged, development efforts seem as likely as ever to have exclusionary, inequitable outcomes.

**Displacement: Unintended, but not Accidental**

City-level practitioners’ perceptions of development, gentrification, and displacement seemed disconnected from residents’ concerns about their neighborhoods being *taken*. Conceptually, the terms gentrification and displacement are unspecific and passive when it comes to who is doing the gentrifying and who or what is being displaced. The terms leave room for someone to make the argument that both gentrification and displacement, as outcomes of economic development efforts, are unintended consequences. For instance, while the intention of a particular economic development plan might have been to help restore vitality and economic viability along a formerly vibrant retail corridor, the gentrification of the corridor and adjacent neighborhoods and the associated physical and cultural displacement that resulted were

not part of the plan and were unintended consequences. The term gentrification can leave one to wonder, Who is the gentrifier? Is it economic development practitioners who catalyzed growth through the development plans they made and implemented or is it the people who moved into the neighborhood, having been attracted by its transformed appearance and culture? Is it both? Similarly, as shown in the previous section, the term displacement can leave room for argument over who or what is getting displaced and whether displacement is even happening. The concept of neighborhoods being *taken*, however, implies intentionality, even if the *taking* is not intended to destroy neighborhoods, overrun the area's cultural history, or edge out longtime residents politically; it places accountability with the decision-makers who catalyze the type of for-profit, private market investments that predictably transform places without directly and meaningfully benefitting existing residents. Residents I spoke with expressed perceptions that economic development that *takes* neglects the needs of established residents and dismisses their perceptions of how development activities impact them and their communities. They perceived that city leaders created conditions that empowered already powerful and well-connected outsiders, rather than existing residents, to take the reins on neighborhood change. They saw those conditions enabling those outsiders to transform neighborhoods to suit their own needs and values, resulting in those neighborhoods being transformed into different types of places that appealed to new types of residents. Because residents perceived an historical pattern to this type of neighborhood change, and because these patterns seemed obvious to them, residents perceived that claims that these patterns do not exist must be intentional, willful ignorance.

Unsurprisingly, city-level practitioners take issue with the accusation that their efforts are intentionally harmful to existing residents in a neighborhood undergoing redevelopment, or that they turn a blind eye to the needs of historically and systemically disinvested communities. Certainly, the practitioners I interviewed spoke with sincerity when they said they thought economic development activities should benefit everyone and that they and their colleagues were working on solutions to address some of the biggest barriers people face to participating in and reaping benefits from the city's economic growth. The umbrage practitioners take to critiques of their efforts may have to do with the way in which practitioners seem bound to supporting an economic growth imperative that does not lend itself to inclusion, putting them in a tricky spot. Economic development practitioners are supposed to create conditions under which the city's economy can remain responsive to local, regional, national, and global changes and challenges in order to achieve and maintain "material prosperity and high quality of life" for residents.<sup>191</sup> If this is not done, if business leaders determine that the city's economy is not an environment in which they can thrive, then the city could lose its competitive edge and companies may choose to locate elsewhere. Without businesses, there would be no jobs and without jobs no one would want to live in the city. If the city's economy stalled, and especially if it started declining, the city would lose tax revenue and its ability to operate would begin to shrink. While the city's economic growth does not seem to reach all residents equitably, the city's economic decline would certainly impact all residents on some level. As a result, according to the economic growth imperative, practitioners must always be able to show that their efforts are in fact creating conditions

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<sup>191</sup> Feldman and Lowe, "Evidence-Based Economic Development Policy," 35.

that are leading to net capital gains for city businesses and residents, or, at least, for the city's dominant class. There is little room for investment in activities that reap little to no returns.

Because the organizations for which practitioners work are typically public or nonprofit entities, such as city departments, community development organizations, and philanthropies, they do not individually or even collectively have enough collateral or cash on hand to dedicate to wholly resident-led community development efforts, especially in areas where longstanding disinvestment has created deeply depressed markets. As a result, practitioners work to catalyze private market investment to fill the large gap between limited public and philanthropic resources available and the amount of resources that would be required for a community to meet its own real and perceived needs. Only private, for-profit individuals and entities have enough capital to fill this gap, but they must be convinced to do so, since, in the words of one resident, "people don't invest where they don't expect a return." Typically, for investors to stake their capital into a project in any area, financial returns must appear likely to outweigh risks. Thus, the role that practitioners in public, nonprofit, and philanthropic entities play is to create the conditions for economic growth to happen by reducing those risks, or at least creating the appearance of reduced risks. Typically, the risk reduction comes in the form of catalyzing and facilitating the transformation of the historically and systemically disinvested neighborhood into a place that appears to outsiders to be starting to align with a certain trajectory, which is one that coincides with a white spatial imaginary, since it is whites who tend to hold access to necessary capital. This process involves transforming the neighborhood's character, including its physical appearance and civic dynamics, and

the transformation is signaled through the types of buildings, amenities, housing options, services, and retail venues in the area. As the neighborhood's character begins aligning with a white spatial imaginary, it will begin to appeal to middle- and upper-income whites outside the area who will feel like it is a good place to invest their capital. One neighborhood affiliate described the pattern this way: "When you start to make a place more appealing, and it starts to feel more safe to the folks that would view this as typically an unsafe place, [it] becomes...a draw." In this case, "safety" can refer to a low level both financial and physical risk. Current neighborhood redevelopment strategies typically abide by the idea that, regardless of the area's past or present use or population, the neighborhood must appear to be "safe" for white people and their capital in order for redevelopment efforts to be deemed successful, as determined by the dominant class's measures of growth. Once enough private capital investment accumulates in an area, limited philanthropic and public resources can be directed elsewhere.

One city-level practitioner described this process of creating conditions that will boost private investment in order for the city to be able to redirect resources elsewhere when she talked about the city's use of federal dollars through a program called Lift Indy. In 2017, the city began making annual Lift Indy grants to neighborhood groups that applied for them.<sup>192</sup> Of the city's grantmaking process, the practitioner said, "we use data and we select neighborhoods where there is some market momentum that maybe they just need a little extra push with some federal assistance to get them to actually tip to where the market is taking care of things itself [and] they don't need that additional

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<sup>192</sup> Hayleigh Colombo, "Neighborhood Effort Lift Indy Launches With \$4.5M Investment," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, October 12, 2017, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/65794-hogsett-neighborhood-effort-lift-indy-launches-with-45m-investment>; City of Indianapolis, "Lift Indy."

subsidy.” She said that, through the Lift Indy program, the city “really wanted to have an impact on [the neighborhood that received the grant] to where we could invest federal funds for a 3- to 5-year period and then the goal was that that neighborhood would no longer need our federal funds.” She further explained, “the reason that [grant program] came about was because we have a history of investing these federal dollars 20-plus years in the same neighborhoods with seeing little change, and we’re still doing that with some of the funds. We continue to do that, but we wanted to have this impact to where we could say, ‘Okay, we did that neighborhood and we don’t have to go back there ever again.’” Essentially, through the Lift Indy grant program, the city is trying to boost private market activity one neighborhood at a time so limited public resources can be redirected to fill other needs in other neighborhoods.

A representative at a housing agency described how financially difficult it was to fill needs in a disinvested area when he talked about some houses his organization helped build in the Riverside neighborhood, in an attempt to boost the housing market there. He said it was challenging “to put together the financing to build those homes.” He continued:

We lost a lot of money on the homes. We spent approximately \$160,000 per home. We sold them for under \$100,000, and they appraised at \$99,000, but it cost \$160,000. To build the house cost us \$160,000. Concrete, ‘sticks,’ 2x4s, windows, shingles... They aren’t less expensive...because you’re building in Riverside.

His organization built the homes at a loss, which is something the for-profit private market is not likely to do. Only the city or a nonprofit organization will do this, typically using public and philanthropic dollars, which are limited.

Because funds are limited, development practitioners strategically attempt to catalyze for-profit private market activity in disinvested neighborhoods by creating conditions wherein private investments will seem safe. This is where a practitioner's role becomes tricky. Although it is not specifically practitioners' intention to displace people through economic development efforts, the displacement that is too often associated with neighborhood redevelopment is not accidental, since consequences of development efforts are well-documented and predictable. Practitioners know that, when they change the physical and social dynamics of a neighborhood, the place begins to attract more investment, which attracts more affluent residents, who tend to be white people. As the neighborhood changes physically and culturally and as property values, property taxes, and rental rates increase, it becomes less and less likely that people of color will be able to afford to live in the place, especially in the long term, as values and rates continue rising over time, and especially if they are trying to purchase a home in the neighborhood, like their white peers.<sup>193</sup> The economic increases that development catalyzes effectively lock out people of color, who, as a general population, have lower incomes and less wealth than whites. As the one resident, whose childhood home was destroyed by the interstate, said, development practitioners "have to know" that economic growth gains routinely fail to equitably benefit the populations of people that historically have been excluded, especially since it is rare for economic development efforts to be

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<sup>193</sup> A study by the Indiana University Public Policy Institute shows that Black and Hispanic residents in Marion County are denied home purchase loans at significantly higher rates than white residents: 10% and 11% for Black and Hispanic residents, respectively, compared to 6% for white residents. The study concludes that "Black residents in majority-Black neighborhoods experience the greatest barriers to home purchase loans across all racial/ethnic groups and Marion County neighborhoods," and it points to lower incomes, higher poverty rates, and discriminatory lending practices as contributing factors ("Home Lending Inequities in Marion County" [Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Public Policy Institute, September 2020], <https://policyinstitute.iu.edu/doc/loan-inequities-brief.pdf>).

embedded with meaningful and effective strategies that intentionally and aggressively direct resources toward empowering existing residents to have a role in shaping the future of their neighborhood. Instead, there is an over-dependence on a “trickle-down” approach that relies on residents being able to stay in the changing neighborhood to reap residual benefits from things like decreased exposure to poverty and improvements in educational and employment opportunities, which are indeed positive outcomes; however, even Brummet and Reed, who argue that there are more positive than negative outcomes from gentrification, show that 30% of the most severely disadvantaged renters stay in a gentrifying area while the other 70% move out and so do not reap benefits.<sup>194</sup> While Brummet and Reed claim that disadvantaged residents who move do not relocate to “observably worse neighborhoods,”<sup>195</sup> Desmond makes the case that the opposite is true. His study finds that, when people are forced to move, they do indeed move to “poorer and higher-crime neighborhoods than those who move under less-demanding circumstances.”<sup>196</sup> Of course, while it may be relatively easy to understand when a renter is forced to move due to something trackable, like an eviction, it is much more difficult to understand when a renter perceives they are being pushed out due to harder to track circumstances, such as an increase in rent at the end of a lease, making the housing too expensive, or a strained relationship with a negligent or exploitative landlord, which

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<sup>194</sup> Brummet and Reed, “The Effects of Gentrification on the Well-Being and Opportunity of Original Resident Adults and Children”; Shireen Deobhakta, “Analysis of Social Costs of Gentrification in Over-the-Rhine: A Qualitative Approach” (Doctoral Thesis, Louisville, KY, University of Louisville, 2014), <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1335&context=etd>; Andrew Zitcer, Julie Hawkins, and Neville Vakharia, “A Capabilities Approach to Arts and Culture? Theorizing Community Development in West Philadelphia,” *Planning Theory & Practice* 17, no. 1 (March 2016): 35–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2015.1105284>.

<sup>195</sup> Brummet and Reed, “The Effects of Gentrification on the Well-Being and Opportunity of Original Resident Adults and Children,” 3.

<sup>196</sup> Desmond and Shollenberger, “Forced Displacement from Rental Housing: Prevalence and Neighborhood Consequences,” 1751.



prompts a renter to move.<sup>197</sup> On the surface, it may appear that renters in situations like these leave their housing voluntarily, but renters may perceive that they were forced to leave due to unfair or unmanageable circumstances. Likely, landlords would have different perspectives. Clearly, these issues are complex. At the heart of them, though, is inequity and exclusion. Some people have less access to economic growth's benefits than others. What's more, the most severely disadvantaged residents are the ones who have the least access, yet those are the residents who face the most barriers to opportunity, and, historically, such populations have included people of color. The systems that measure the effectiveness of economic development interventions do not adequately consider or mitigate possible adverse outcomes, and they do not intentionally and aggressively ensure that everyone receives benefits equitably. Additionally, the systems of measure do not account for the effects that cultural displacement can have on longtime residents who stay in changing neighborhoods, and they are unable to measure what opportunities—what other spatial imaginaries—are lost when residents perceive that development processes are inequitable and exclusionary. While residents I spoke with perceived that significant resources are directed toward spurring economic growth that will benefit the same types of residents who have always benefitted, i.e. members of the dominant class, comprised of mostly white people, they also perceived that there are not enough resources directed toward mitigating adverse outcomes that follow an historic pattern or equitably connecting specific populations to economic growth's benefits, and these are the reasons why, in the eyes of so many residents I spoke to, economic

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<sup>197</sup> Matthew Desmond, Carl Gershenson, and Barbara Kiviat, "Forced Relocation and Residential Instability Among Urban Renters," *Social Service Review*, June 2015, 227–62.

development processes do not simply or passively gentrify and displace, but they actively and intentionally *take* neighborhoods.

The housing agency representative quoted above said he thought the homes his organization built were the first homes constructed in the area in a generation and that the new homes catalyzed “a little bit more private market activity.” He said this private market activity was “happening because [buyers] can charge enough rent to make it worth investing or they think they can sell it for a high enough price point that they can invest a little bit [and resell it].” He said his organization planned on building more homes, still subsidizing them through philanthropic support, but maybe selling them for \$110,00 or \$115,000.<sup>198</sup> He said, “We’re moving that market up so that there’s reason for those vacant lots to be filled in by the private sector—we’re not going to fill that whole neighborhood.” His organization was working to create an environment in which private individuals and entities who have access to capital would be able to invest in the neighborhood with as little risk as possible and then complete the neighborhood’s redevelopment on their own, without needing further public or philanthropic resources to motivate them. Importantly, the organization’s efforts were not directly coupled by

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<sup>198</sup> One of my committee members, Tom Guevara, pointed out the following: “At this price point, a person needs to make about \$30,000 per year, plus full benefits, to meet minimum affordability requirements; plus about \$5,500 for a down payment. At that wage level, a person would spend 30% of gross pay on housing. That is a margin with no room for unanticipated expenses or emergencies, and assuming a person with wages at that level could get financing. It also means housing appreciation and the taxes that go with it will put a lot of financial stress on the homeowner unless wages grow faster than taxes and insurance increases.” Unfortunately, trends in housing costs, as well as other costs, such as medical expenses and childcare expenses, are increasing, while wages remain stagnant, especially for low-wage workers (Marcela Escobari, “The Economy Is Growing and Leaving Low-Wage Workers Behind,” The Brookings Institution, *Education Plus Development* (blog), December 19, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2019/12/19/the-economy-is-growing-and-leaving-low-wage-workers-behind/#cancel>; Alcynna Lloyd, “Home Prices Are Rising Faster Than Wages in 80% of U.S. Markets,” Housing Wire, January 10, 2019, <https://www.housingwire.com/articles/47878-home-prices-are-rising-faster-than-wages-in-80-of-us-markets/>; Lowrey, “The Great Affordability Crisis Breaking America”).

efforts to connect existing residents, particularly those who rent, to those homeownership opportunities.

The idea of “moving that market up” would likely be alarming to some residents who may interpret that to mean that rents and property taxes would increase and gentrification and displacement would come. The interviewee seemed to acknowledge this, but he justified “moving that market up” through an ultimatum directed at residents and other neighborhood folks who might have been concerned about gentrification and displacement in the area. He said:

If [the residents] want amenities to return to the neighborhood, if they want [the nearby Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street corridor] to return to being a vibrant economic [area]...they need more rooftops. To get more rooftops, it has to be economical, which means it has to pay enough for someone to build it, which means the price has to go up. So, I don't know what the equation is to keep them all affordable and create a business district, to get affordable and get density.

Essentially, residents and others in the neighborhood who wanted to see the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street corridor restored as a strong economic corridor could have this vision realized, but at a cost. Residents would have to sacrifice some affordability.

While he said his organization's strategy was to try to keep as many low- to moderate-income housing units in the area as possible, he said he ultimately did not “know how you would override the impact of the private sector,” which his organization was working to catalyze. Essentially, this city-level practitioner did not know how residents would be able to stave off gentrification once the private market started investing. Another city-level practitioner said something similar when he said, “the owners of properties that are rented [in redeveloping neighborhoods] are selling them for whatever they are and then [renters] have to move out. Those are the [people] that are really impacted by

gentrification, and I'm not sure how to solve that problem." He continued, saying that "bigger cities have codes that require low-income rental units in every development," but, according to him, Indianapolis does not "have that kind of a market," even though almost one-fifth (19%) of Indianapolis residents live in poverty, one-third (33%) of Indianapolis households are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income paying for housing and related costs, such as insurance and utilities, and more than one-quarter (26%) of the city's households live below the ALICE threshold, where their household income is above the poverty line but still not adequate enough to enable the household to make ends meet comfortably.<sup>199</sup> The ALICE rate and poverty rate combined means that 41% of households are struggling, and likely housing costs represent a large share of those households' expenses.

One may reasonably wonder why the public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors create conditions that will catalyze exclusionary private investment when critical concerns about potential negative consequences of development efforts remain unaddressed. When strategies, such as the Lift Indy grant program and the housing program the housing agency representative described, fail to create conditions that remove the barriers and the systemic economic exclusions that led to a neighborhood's decline in the first place, it is fair to question whether city leaders' efforts are catalyzing gentrification and displacement. Further, it is fair to ask if city leaders are actively *taking* neighborhoods by intentionally creating pathways for predominantly white, for-profit, private market entities outside the neighborhood to make investments that will change the

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<sup>199</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages, "Poverty and Income Profile"; United for ALICE, "Poverty and Income Profile," Prepared by SAVI, 2018, [https://profiles.savi.org/topics/?utm\\_source=data-tools&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=data-tools](https://profiles.savi.org/topics/?utm_source=data-tools&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=data-tools).

culture of the place and create economic conditions that popular wisdom says will likely exclude specific groups of residents, namely, people of color, who tend not to have the level of income or wealth needed to participate in the neighborhood's new economy.

The way neighborhood redevelopment routinely excludes the same kinds of people sets up an ultimatum for residents in a disinvested neighborhood, who may want to see vitality and economic viability restored in their area but not at the cost of culturally or physically displacing themselves or their neighbors. They have a difficult choice to make: on one hand, residents can comply with development investments from outside their community, allowing their neighborhood to be *taken* and transformed to align with the white spatial imaginary; on the other hand, residents can fight development investments from outside their community and risk being labeled as a community that does not care about its neighborhood and/or does not understand what is good for itself. Residents are in a lose-lose situation when it comes to neighborhood development investments from outsiders because there are no practices in place that give residents meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes and no policies that give residents real power in the shaping of development outcomes.

The point that a community that opposes a development investment may be perceived as a community that does not know what is good for itself came poignantly to the fore of the conversation I had with the practitioner who said he believed many people's concerns about inequitable neighborhood development were based on things they learned in books, the news, and movies. While we were talking, the topic of Riverside High School came up. Riverside High School is a liberal arts and sciences charter school in the Riverside area. The school was founded in 2017 after some

contention between school supporters and some residents who worried the school could contribute to gentrification in the area,<sup>200</sup> as they perceived its sister school, Herron High School, had done in neighborhoods across town.<sup>201</sup> In fact, this perspective that Riverside High School was going to help catalyze gentrification in the Near Northwest Area was still prevalent among Riverside residents when I was doing fieldwork, two years after the school opened. For example, when I asked one resident what she thought of 16 Tech, she immediately connected the establishment of 16 Tech with the founding of Riverside High School and the gentrification of the area:

I think [16 Tech] is going to be good for Indianapolis, but I also think that, because this neighborhood's so close, and that Riverside High School's right over here, that the people that are gonna be buying [homes] here are gonna be buying and fixing [them] up, which is gonna increase the taxes and whatnot.

In her view, good jobs at 16 Tech, combined with the good education people's kids could get at Riverside High School, would incentivize middle- and upper-income people to move into the Riverside area, which would lead to increased home values, property taxes, and rental rates. In her eyes, 16 Tech and Riverside High School were components of neighborhood change that would catalyze unmitigated neighborhood transformation.

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<sup>200</sup> While this contention does not seem to have been covered by local news media, interviewees referenced it and it also came up in community meetings.

<sup>201</sup> Herron High School on East 16<sup>th</sup> Street has been touted as a key contributor to the Near Northside's transformation. (See Scott Olson, "Armory Revamp for Herron High School Campus Clears Major Financing Hurdle," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, January 16, 2018, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/67077-armory-revamp-for-herron-high-school-campus-clears-major-financing-hurdle> and Riverside High School, "About Us: School Profile, History," accessed July 1, 2020, <https://www.riversidehighschool.org/about-us/school-profile/>.) Over the past ten years, the Near Northside has seen about a 7% increase in population while the percentage of people of color in the area has decreased by about 9 percentage points, from about 55% to about 46% (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Averages). Additionally, the median assessed home value has climbed steadily over the past 10 years, increasing from \$77,671 to \$134,235, a nearly 73% jump (Indiana Department of Local Government and Finance via IBRC, "Median Assessed Value-Residential").

When I talked with the practitioner about Riverside High School, though, he seemed puzzled about why residents fought the school because, from his point of view, since the school was going to serve Near Northwest Area kids, it was a “win” for everyone. He even implied some kind of perversion or deficiency in residents’ logic when he said, “That [school] has a designated area, so people can come from other places in the city, but the priority is given for those neighborhood residents. How awesome is that? [...] Yet some people fought that high school...strangely. It makes no sense to me why you wouldn’t support a really, really great school coming into your neighborhood that’s gonna prioritize your kids.” From his perspective, residents were fighting their own best interests. He did not seem to understand the way residents perceived the establishment of the school to be signaling something threatening. He did not seem to realize that it was not so straightforward as residents merely not wanting a good school close to their neighborhood. He was not aware that residents were fighting a development process they perceived to be comprised of not only this one intervention, but a series of interventions that linked together to create conditions that were unjust and that they feared would enable their neighborhood to be *taken* by powerful outsiders.

Although information about the school prioritizing kids from Near Northwest Area neighborhoods does not appear to be on the school’s website, throughout my fieldwork I heard many people, including this practitioner, residents, and school administrators, say that the school gives area kids this priority seating. In fact, this prioritization is one of the outcomes of residents pushing back on school supporters when they were trying to establish the school in the area. According to residents I interviewed, the school wanted access to tax incentive dollars from a tax-increment financing district

that is comprised of some Near Northwest Area neighborhoods. Residents, however, did not want “their” tax dollars, as they saw them, going toward a school they perceived would contribute to the gentrification of the area. In exchange for \$1.5 million in tax incentives, which the school wanted to help fund repairs on the historic building it now occupies,<sup>202</sup> school administrators agreed to give area kids priority seating. Although the school may still contribute to future gentrification and displacement in the Near Northwest Area, for now, at least, the area’s current high school kids and their families are benefitting from the school being in such close proximity to where they live. Whether and how the school’s demographics shift over time will be indicative of whether the Riverside neighborhood and the Near Northwest Area transform in ways that align with residents’ perceived needs and values or with a white spatial imaginary instead.

### **The Need for More Equitable and Inclusionary Strategies in Urban Development**

Residents in the Riverside neighborhood perceived economic development processes to be inequitable and exclusionary and operating in ways that *take* places, rather than creating conditions that will reduce barriers and expand freedoms and capabilities. City-level economic development practitioners, who control resources and decision-making processes, did not see development operating in these ways. There was the disconnect. Furthermore, the assumptions that some practitioners expressed about developments’ impacts and outcomes actively denied residents value in their own perceptions that development processes threatened to change the culture and power dynamics in their communities. Processes that residents perceived as *taking* neighborhoods may be unintentional in the minds of city-level practitioners, but they

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<sup>202</sup> Olson, “Armory Revamp for Herron High School Campus Clears Major Financing Hurdle.”



typically are not accidental because the way development works and the outcomes it tends to produce are not unknown. Development's outcomes are strategic and largely predictable. As city leaders, and members of the dominant class, and thus also part of the hegemonic system of spatial producers, practitioners need better strategies for understanding the implications of the decisions they make and the processes they use, which too often lead to inequitable and exclusionary outcomes. Most importantly, they need to be able to comprehend what comprises the white spatial imaginary and understand how and when they are deploying it in spaces that could benefit from spatial imaginaries that empower residents and expand freedoms, instead oppressing and displacing, because it is practitioners' inability or refusal to acknowledge and understand the white spatial imaginary that helps hold inequity and exclusion in urban development firmly in place.

## Chapter 5:

### The White Spatial Imaginary in Practice:

#### The *Taking* of the Taggart

In her essay about race and racism in the United States generally and in Indianapolis specifically, Mari Evans describes what it is like to be excluded, or, in her words, “locked out” of living a full and free life. She says, “the subtleties and strategies of ‘locked out’ are easily read and the impact of them as psychologically harmful as they are physically limiting... ‘Locked out’ crushes the spirit and rechannels what could be positive creativity into negative creative acts.”<sup>203</sup> What she describes are the ways in which the hegemonic system of spatial producers has shaped and created inequitable and exclusionary physical, social, and even mental spaces.

Throughout the essay, Evans never names a specific person who is part of the hegemonic system or who is solely responsible for creating inequitable and exclusionary spaces. This is because the power of the hegemonic system of spatial producers is, as Foucault describes, distributed across people, institutions, policies, practices, and “subtleties and strategies.”<sup>204</sup> The hegemonic system’s power is often conveyed covertly, rather than overtly, but, when this power concentrates in urban development processes, it becomes a commanding force that enables the dominant class to discount and displace established claims to urban spaces and assume leadership in processes that shape and create spaces. In Riverside Park, the abstract nature of hegemonic power became apparent through, of all things, a grant. I use the grant as a case study to illustrate how

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<sup>203</sup> Mari Evans, “Ethos and Creativity: The Impulse as Malleable,” in *Where We Live: Essays about Indiana*, ed. David Hoppe (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 30.

<sup>204</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 777–95.

development processes can be masqueraded as inclusive but actually work to facilitate development that *takes*.

### **Riverside Regional Park**

In 1898, less than a decade after the Cerealine Manufacturing Company opened its mill on 18<sup>th</sup> Street near the eastern border of the Riverside neighborhood, sparking many decades of economic and population growth in the area, Indianapolis mayor Thomas Taggart established Riverside Regional Park on the neighborhood's western border along the White River. Today, as an 862-acre municipal park, Riverside Regional Park is one of the largest public parks in the country.<sup>205</sup> The park spans from its northern border along 38<sup>th</sup> Street south to 18<sup>th</sup> Street and encompasses land on both sides of White River. It makes up the western boundary of the Riverside neighborhood. Over the years, park amenities have included swimming, fishing, canoeing, picnic shelters, playgrounds, a soap box derby hill (which turns into a sledding hill when it snows), all kinds of classes for people of all ages, and sports, including football, soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, boxing, tennis, and, most notably, golf. Until recently, Riverside Regional Park included three 18-hole golf courses, but one was closed at the end of 2019. There is also a golf academy, which features its own 9-hole, par 3 course. All the golf courses date back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>206</sup>

At the heart of the park is an area known as “Riverside Park Proper,” which marks the historic entrance to the park.<sup>207</sup> This space includes a large but dilapidated

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<sup>205</sup> Riverside Regional Park Foundation, “Park History”; Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, “Riverside Regional Park Master Plan.”

<sup>206</sup> Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, “Riverside Regional Park Master Plan,” 9–26.

<sup>207</sup> Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, 15–17.

Romanesque-style memorial, which was dedicated to Mayor Taggart in 1931.<sup>208</sup> The space also includes playgrounds, an outdoor aquatic center, and the Riverside Family Center, which houses Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department staff offices, meeting rooms, a gymnasium, a workout room, locker rooms, and a large, open room called the Auditorium. Today, the Auditorium serves as an event and meeting area, but it housed an indoor swimming pool from about the late 1960s until the mid-1990s.<sup>209</sup>

Riverside Regional Park is managed by Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department (“Indy Parks Department”), which is a city department that manages public parks, trails, and other recreation spaces across the city and county. Throughout its more than 120-year history, Riverside Regional Park has been an anchor in many area residents’ daily lives. One former resident, a middle-aged Black man who grew up learning to box at the park, said, “this place saved me.” Like he did as a kid growing up nearby, neighborhood kids spend after-school hours and summers at the park and at the aquatic center, and adults and families go there for classes, community meetings, and events year-round. Life for many people in the Near Northwest Area revolves around Riverside Regional Park.

In 2017, Indy Parks Department, along with partners, stakeholders, and residents, underwent an in-depth master planning process to reimagine the entire park. Many of the park’s facilities and amenities are in a state of disrepair due to lack of investment and adequate maintenance over many years. The estimated cost of implementing the master

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<sup>208</sup> Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, 15–17.

<sup>209</sup> To date, I have been unable to pinpoint the exact years when the indoor swimming pool at Riverside Regional Park opened and closed, but newspaper articles from the Indianapolis Star and Indianapolis Recorder newspapers have referenced active use of the indoor pool during this time period.

plan in its entirety was \$118 million when the plan was created,<sup>210</sup> although, in conversation, most people seemed to rounded that estimate up to \$120 million and even to \$130 million, since costs will likely inflate over the course of the projected 10- to 20-year timeline that it will take to fully realize the master plan.

In December 2018, plans for the park got a lift when Indianapolis-based philanthropy Lilly Endowment granted more than \$9 million to repair the dilapidated Taggart Memorial, build an outdoor amphitheater that will use the memorial as a backdrop and stage, and provide support to make Indianapolis Shakespeare Company (“Indy Shakes”) the space’s anchoring organization.<sup>211</sup> This funding was a substantial contribution toward the implementation of the \$120 million master plan. The windfall funding came as a surprise to area residents, some of whom had worked for years trying to generate support for repairing the Taggart Memorial as part of a task force initiative with Indiana Landmarks, a nonprofit organization that strives to preserve historically significant buildings and sites around the state. The task force’s calls for funds to repair the Taggart Memorial went unanswered, and the site was eventually added to Indiana Landmarks’ list of most endangered historic sites.<sup>212</sup> In 2018, after Lilly Endowment announced that it would be granting millions of dollars through a new Arts and Cultural Innovation grant, Indianapolis Parks Foundation,<sup>213</sup> Indy Shakes, and Indiana Landmarks partnered to write for and then received a \$9.24 million grant.

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<sup>210</sup> Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, “Riverside Regional Park Master Plan.”

<sup>211</sup> Bongiovanni, “From Parks to Festivals: Lilly Endowment Will Spend \$48.8M to Make Indy a Better, Cooler Place.”

<sup>212</sup> IBJ Staff, “Two Area Landmarks Make ‘Most Endangered’ List,” *Indianapolis Business Journal*, May 2, 2011, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/26906-two-area-landmarks-make-most-endangered-list>.

<sup>213</sup> Indianapolis Parks Foundation is a nonprofit entity whose mission is to develop and sustain the public parks, trails, and green spaces that are managed by Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department.

While residents and neighborhood folks I talked to and encountered during fieldwork seemed mostly eager for the park to finally receive the attention it needs and deserves, I also noticed skepticism about processes being used to bring master plan implementation to fruition. Many residents, feeling pushed around and sidestepped at times, expressed fear about what new attention on the park from outsiders may be signaling about the future of the majority-Black communities surrounding the park. Residents expressed the sense that development efforts led by powerful and well-resourced outsiders representing predominantly white institutions were seeking to capitalize on the area's assets, including its proximity to the city center, the 16 Tech Innovation District, new schools, many churches, active civic life, and, significantly, Riverside Regional Park.

### **Perceptions of *Taking***

When I started fieldwork in the Riverside neighborhood in January 2019, I assumed Riverside residents had been engaged in designing the proposal for the funds Lilly Endowment granted to repair and activate the Taggart Memorial space, but I learned that had not been the case. Lilly's website says the plans outlined in the grant application for the Taggart Memorial were "grounded in the visionary masterplan [sic] for Riverside Regional Park."<sup>214</sup> Indeed, the park plan, which was produced over the course of several months and includes input from Riverside and Near Northwest Area residents, calls for the Taggart Memorial and the space to the west of it to be transformed into a performance venue.<sup>215</sup> In my fieldwork, however, I heard residents and neighborhood affiliates

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<sup>214</sup> Lilly Endowment, "Our Work: Strengthening Indianapolis, Arts and Cultural Innovation," accessed August 2, 2019, <https://lillyendowment.org/our-work/community-development/indianapolis/arts-culture-grants-list/>.

<sup>215</sup> Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department, "Riverside Regional Park Master Plan."

express sentiments of starting to feel “locked out” of the park due to the exclusionary nature in which the grant funds were secured. One woman who had been working in the neighborhood for more than 15 years told me,

[The task force] really worked hard at [getting the memorial restored], and once [the grant] came to fruition, you know, some of the members were a little bit irritated because they didn’t know about this, and that recognition wasn’t given up front, that, you know, *Hey, we’ve put in a lot of effort and time on this to get this restored, and, you know, you guys just walk in and, like, have this money, and not even giving us...any kind of credit for it.*

A longtime resident who grew up in the neighborhood expressed skepticism about how the grant came about and wondered why the foundational programmatic funding supported Shakespeare performances, which she seemed to see as irrelevant and unrelatable. She wanted to see programming geared more specifically toward Black audiences, who she referred to as “the inner city” and who, for the last few decades, had been the primary users of the spaces surrounding the memorial:

Interviewee Lilly had a grant, from what I understood, and they [the outside organizations] just wrote in and got the grant. Now, they said they’re supposed to do other things there, like, uh, Freetown Village.<sup>216</sup> I don’t know. They’re supposed to do that, but that is going to be something I’m really gonna push.

Abbey Yeah?

Interviewee You know, I’m not saying that the inner city don’t like Shakespeare, but, come on. Most people don’t like Shakespeare... I mean, it’s just, like, *You give a grant for that and you have this Freetown Village where they do readings and they put on plays and...* Why couldn’t that grant have gone to them? But, as I’ve just said, they’re supposed to use it for multiple things, so we’ll see.

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<sup>216</sup> Freetown Village is an organization that recounts histories of Black experiences in the United States “through theater, storytelling, folk crafts, heritage workshops, music, day camp, and special events” (Freetown Village, “About Freetown Village,” accessed June 8, 2020, <https://www.freetown.org/what-we-do>).

Both these interviewees seemed to see it as problematic that a group of people and institutions that were not part of the community that typically used the park wrote for and received this large grant, without including community members in the decision to write for the grant and make the space Indy Shakes's home base. One resident, who participated in the master planning process, expressed a sense of having been duped. She said, "On all of those boards that they had at those different meetings, I never heard one time somebody go, *You know what we're not getting enough of? Shakespeare!*"

Prior to the grant, residents seemed to feel some sense of duty toward this publicly owned space, which was part of what motivated some of them to help found a task force to work toward repairing it. Because they perceived it being part of their neighborhood and because it was something many of them encountered on a near daily basis, they seemed to feel like it was their responsibility to care for it as a public memorial, especially when it seemed like no one else was paying attention to it. It is easy to imagine they might have felt that, because they cared enough to spend time and effort actively pursuing the memorial's preservation, they might have earned the opportunity to influence what would happen there. Through the grant, however, a group of predominantly white outside entities, all of which are private nonprofit organizations, was able to take control over the public space, whose purpose was neither formally nor informally theirs to determine, while saying they were meeting the desires of residents in the surrounding communities, who expressed wanting the Taggart Memorial repaired and transformed into a performance space, although not necessarily to be the home of Shakespeare plays. By leveraging and connecting their social and economic capital, outsiders were able to bring to fruition a privately held vision of having Shakespeare performances at the Taggart



Memorial, a publicly-held space, without meaningfully including residents in development processes.

While those who wrote for the grant did not consult with residents in the proposal-writing process, resident engagement began in earnest after the partners received the grant, likely to gain resident buy-in to help ensure successful grant implementation. For instance, representatives from Indy Parks Department and Foundation and Indy Shakes started regularly appearing on community meeting agendas to give updates and solicit participation in their own meetings and events. Additionally, Indy Parks Department and Foundation staff and Indy Shakes representatives requested suggestions from residents in programming over 50 free community days. Suggestions included performances by kids from area schools, the Riverside High School graduation ceremony, a jazz festival and other types of musical events, and, of course, Freetown Village events. No grant dollars will be dedicated to community performances and events aside from the in-kind donation of the space. Outside of these free community days, individuals and organizations that want to use the space must pay a fee to rent it.

In an interview that took place after the grant was awarded, a representative from one of the organizations that submitted the proposal said it was “up to us to figure out how we fit into the fabric of the Riverside neighborhood and how we connect with people in ways that support what is already there arts-wise and add to it.”<sup>217</sup> While there is friendly sentiment in this statement, and it is good that the speaker recognized the importance of community engagement, there is also a sentiment of entitlement and

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<sup>217</sup> Marc D. Allan, “\$9.24 Million Grant Brings Indianapolis Park Back to Life Through Shakespeare,” *Butler Stories Newsroom*, April 24, 2019, <https://stories.butler.edu/content/924-million-grant-brings-indianapolis-park-back-life-through-shakespeare>.

privilege. Indeed, residents were actively engaged in helping to program the space, but that importance was only expressed after control over the Taggart Memorial space was established and a framework for programming it was designed. Community engagement was apparently not a priority during the process of making decisions about whether or not the grant was a good fit for the Taggart Memorial or the communities of people who had been the primary users of the spaces around it. Instead, that decision was made by more powerful outsiders.

When I attended community meetings, I heard a lot of optimism about changes that were coming not only to the Taggart Memorial space but also to Riverside Regional Park generally. People were open to changes and wanted to welcome resources that could help with their goals to enhance quality of life and place in Riverside and the Near Northwest Area, but they wanted to be meaningfully included in decision-making processes. In interviews, residents conveyed a sense of skepticism about whether coming changes would benefit current residents. In response to my question about what she thought of the park master plan, one senior citizen, who had been living in the area for almost 60 years, said, “I think it’s great that they’re going to improve a lot,” but then she quickly added, “what people are afraid of is that they’re gonna be pushed out.” She said people at the senior workout classes she attended nearby talked about this. She said people were always concerned that things will be improved for “somebody else.” I probed this line of thinking, trying to understand her own perceptions:

Abbey            You don’t see that, though?

Interviewee    It’s not gonna be for us. You know, but, I say, *Go to the meetings and find out.* I always say, *Go to the meetings and put your input in.* You know? *If they don’t know what you want, sometimes they can’t give you what you want.*

Abbey Sure, that makes sense. So, you don't really see that there's a risk that it wouldn't be improved for people who live here?

Interviewee Well, I'm just kind-of iffy now. I need to see, you know? Because you just have to wait and see, because there's a lot of people right now that are feeling like it's not gonna be...that they're gonna fix it up for somebody else.

While she thought it was good that resources were being dedicated to the park, she was uncertain about whether current residents would benefit from the improvements. During our conversation, she said residents feared inequitable development would take over the Riverside area and lead to gentrification and displacement as they perceived development had done in other parts of the city.

The same resident who wanted to see Freetown Village programed at the Taggart Memorial connected changes at Riverside Regional Park with neighborhood transformation that is strategically intended to benefit people other than current Riverside residents:

The whole, like, where they're gonna redo Riverside, that whole master plan is...the master plan. People want quick access to downtown. It's a perfect location. The park, the golf course right there, downtown, the highway. No matter which way you go. I mean, it's a perfect location, and that's what they, you know, since that's the trend now, to come back [to the inner city], they've already...they've saturated downtown, so, now it's branching out.

This resident said the trend of people wanting to live in urban neighborhoods was "branching out," as if it was an unstoppable force, seeping outward from the city center with the inevitability of a viral outbreak. During an interview with a middle-aged man who used to live in the neighborhood and still owns his family home, I heard him speak in a similar way. I asked him if he thought residents had any power to reshape neighborhood transformation they perceived to be exclusionary so it would benefit

residents and he said, “The attitude is, *They’re gonna do it anyway. You can’t stop it.*” When it came to development at Riverside Regional Park and in the adjacent Riverside neighborhood, at least some residents felt like there was no hope that they and others like them would get to benefit from the transformations being led by outsiders.

Residents recognized Riverside Regional Park and the Taggart Memorial as unique features in the area, and they expressed fear that powerful, well-resourced outsiders were seeing these features as desirable assets they would like to control. Residents expressed concern that these outsiders were encroaching on the area and beginning processes of slowly staking claim over its social and physical spaces, edging residents out and taking control over processes to shape spaces for their own purposes. When residents, especially those from historically disenfranchised populations and geographies, perceived that development processes were being planned without them and implemented with little to no feedback from them, they were inclined to believe those processes were purposely exclusionary and that any benefits from development were explicitly or implicitly not for them. They believed the full benefits of development would not reach them because they felt like they had not been meaningfully included in decision-making processes and because, historically, the people who have reaped the most rewards from development activities have been decision-makers.

Interestingly, when interviewees talked about these seemingly unstoppable, exclusionary development processes, they typically did not pinpoint a specific person or entity that was driving the processes or explicitly responsible for creating the conditions interviewees felt excluded them. Even when it came to the Lilly grant to the Taggart Memorial, residents did not seem to hold Indy Shakes, Indy Parks Department or

Foundation, or Indiana Landmarks solely responsible for creating conditions that felt exclusionary. In interviews, residents often referred to an ambiguous “they” when talking about who controlled development, like the interviewee who said the trend of people wanting to live in urban neighborhoods is “branching out,” when she said, “they’ve saturated downtown.” Another resident referred to “the powers that be” when talking about who drives development.

Sometimes residents talked about “the city” and its involvement in creating conditions that felt exclusionary, but, even then, they usually spoke in general terms rather than holding a specific city department or person, such as the mayor, accountable. For instance, when talking with a pastor about the neighborhood’s infrastructure, he described how the infrastructure was not well-maintained, saying that repairs made to sidewalks and roads were only done in sections rather than holistically, thus the patchily repaired surfaces seemed to deteriorate again too quickly. However, he did not attribute the lack of maintenance or patchwork repairs to the City of Indianapolis Department of Public Works, which does these types of repairs. He spoke in general terms, referring to an ambiguous “they” when he said, “We’re looked at as a commodity to be sold, not a community to be invested in, and they don’t do that anyplace else...They don’t care. They’re just waiting to move us out.” The consistently poor condition of the neighborhood’s infrastructure signaled to him that there was something working against the Riverside community, but the source of that antagonist was not coming from a single individual or entity.

When residents spoke in these general terms, using an ambiguous “they” to talk about a powerful, seemingly unstoppable force they felt was working to displace them or

infringe upon their freedom to shape the social and physical spaces in their neighborhood, what they were signifying was the hegemonic system of spatial producers. Because the hegemonic system's power is distributed, and not held within a specific individual or entity, it can be difficult to pinpoint where the power is coming from, thus also making it difficult to hold individuals and entities accountable. For example, in the case of the Lilly grant to the Taggart Memorial, who should be held accountable for the exclusion residents said they experienced? Should the granting entity be held accountable for not requiring better, more thorough community engagement and more community representation on the submitted grant proposal? Should the entities that wrote for the grant be held accountable for not engaging with residents in their processes? Should the city be held accountable for letting the Taggart Memorial fall into such a state of disrepair that only a windfall of funding from a private entity could save it? These questions do not have definitive answers, but certainly interrogate a history of structured and systemic exclusion wherein others have had power and residents have not.

Not only did residents seem to feel powerless in the shadow of the hegemonic system of spatial producers, but they also seemed to see the hegemonic system through a racial lens. Interviewees talked about "white people" to signify their perception that the hegemonic system was comprised mostly of individuals and entities that were white, informed by white experiences, and/or seeking to manifest a white spatial imaginary. One resident, choosing his words with intention, conveyed this when we were talking about who had the ability to increase outside investment in the neighborhood:

- Abbey           Who do you think...you said "they," is that...who would that be?
- Interviewee    In terms of attracting resources?
- Abbey           Yeah. You said something about "they would..." um...

Interviewee Yeah, so, people with buying power, um, so, white people. People in positions of power, um, in different institutions, whether they be nonprofit institutions or, um, institutions that lend money or, um...educational institutions... So, basically the, um, elite that...can reshape neighborhoods as they see fit.

In this case, the interviewee referred to members of the dominant class as the “elite” and conveyed his perspective that they are mostly white people. Another resident said something similar when I asked her how the neighborhood is changing: “It’s more of...an ‘us’ and ‘them’...what’s happening now transition-wise. I know you’ve heard about the gentrification type of thing...?” I confirmed that I had, and she continued, “And so, now there’s a lot of push and pull from residents and outsiders that the neighborhood’s being taken over by white people.” For these interviewees, whiteness is synonymous with the power to *take*.

While residents did not pinpoint specific entities they were holding accountable for excluding them from development in the neighborhood, they connected what they were seeing and experiencing in development processes to the racial ways in which other institutional processes led by the dominant class, such as redlining, have hindered people of color from building the individual and community wealth that would enable them to pursue things they have reason to value.<sup>218</sup> Residents perceived exclusion in development processes being yet another mechanism, in a long and historic list of mechanisms, that infringes on their freedoms. When no individual or entity can be held accountable for excluding residents, it can be difficult to know where and how to deploy solutions, and so the hegemonic system that “locks out” people from participating in

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<sup>218</sup> There is an abundance of writing on how systemic and institutional racism has affected wealth-building in Black communities. See for example, Lee, “A Vast Wealth Gap, Driven by Segregation, Redlining, Evictions and Exclusion, Separates Black and White America.”

processes that shape and create social and physical spaces is allowed to perpetuate, and exclusion continues.

In the case of the Lilly grant to the Taggart Memorial, powerful, well-networked, mostly white outsiders made the decision to write for the grant without including residents in decision-making processes, and the grant was awarded in part to make the memorial home to an organization that had no prior history with the park or the surrounding communities whose residents had been, for decades, the primary users of the spaces surrounding the Taggart Memorial. The grant writers justified their actions by saying they were responding to what residents said they wanted, but residents, not having been included in decisions about the grant, interpreted the process used by the well-connected outside entities to be exclusionary. Residents saw the process as a mechanism for staking claim to the space and taking control over the shaping of it—they *took* it. Residents perceived the grant to be a sign that the mostly white dominant class was turning its attention toward not only Riverside Regional Park but also the adjacent Riverside neighborhood. They interpreted the grant as a signal that an unstoppable force was seeping into the Riverside neighborhood, and that exclusionary development processes, such as the one used to secure the Lilly grant for the Taggart Memorial, would continue to shape and create social and physical spaces in their neighborhood according to a white vision of what the neighborhood's spaces should be. Residents expressed worry that, eventually, they would be entirely sidestepped, edged out, discounted, and displaced, left without any power or the freedom to shape and create social and physical spaces throughout their communities. They feared that, just as the Taggart Memorial was *taken*, so too would be Riverside Regional Park and the Riverside neighborhood.



## Chapter 6:

### Embedding Equity and Inclusion into Urban Development:

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

In order to shift the imbalance of power that shapes urban spaces, create more inclusive social and physical urban spaces, and achieve more equitable social and economic goals, we must follow Soja's advice and develop "new areas of understanding and political practice."<sup>219</sup> We need to closely examine decision-making processes that shape and create spaces to understand not only who and what is involved in development processes, but also how spatial users perceive those processes and their outcomes impact them and their ability to shape and create the kinds of social and physical urban spaces they value. Spatial users need to be included in decision-making processes if development is going to achieve goals relating to equity and inclusion.

In a remarkable essay, Cheryl Harris helps us understand how equity is not possible without inclusion. Her essay exposes the way in which the U.S. legal system has promoted exclusion and segregation using scales, based on standards of whiteness and white experiences, to unfairly decide legal cases, resulting in the systemic protection and upholding of white interests and experiences and a "legacy of oppression" affecting people of color.<sup>220</sup> The legal system is both a part of and an entity that shapes and perpetuates the hegemonic system of spatial producers. Harris argues that the U.S. legal system should apply "*equalizing* treatment" to people and cases, rather than equal treatment, in order to eradicate systemic segregation and exclusion (emphasis in the

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<sup>219</sup> Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 5.

<sup>220</sup> Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1791.

original).<sup>221</sup> Harris explains that “the meaning of equalizing treatment would vary, because the extent of privilege and subordination is not constant with reference to all societal goods,” thus there cannot be a “one size fits all” approach and each case must be considered individually.<sup>222</sup> Her argument for equalizing treatment shifts the perspective about what is good, fair, or equitable, toward individual users, much like Sen’s definition of freedom. Thus, solutions aiming to eliminate social and economic inequities must consider each individual’s unique contexts, needs, abilities, and values.

In order to tailor strategies, interventions, solutions, and opportunities to individuals’ unique contexts and values, those individuals must be included in decision-making processes, but decision-makers, guided by dominant social norms, perceptions, and biases and operating in alignment with their own values and priorities, or those of the institutions they represent, are often blind to the ways in which their processes are exclusionary. For example, in the case of the Lilly grant to the Taggart Memorial, decision-makers likely thought they were being reasonably inclusive by allowing 50 free community days and enabling residents to help program those days. They did not realize they baked exclusion and inequity into the process—and thus the space—when they wrote for the grant without including residents. Residents, perceiving that development processes are both exclusionary and unstoppable and that power dynamics between themselves and decision-makers are too imbalanced to equalize, may feel they have little to no ability to influence development. As a result, development processes continue being shaped by powerful, well-networked decision-makers, and residents continue being

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<sup>221</sup> Harris, 1780.

<sup>222</sup> Harris, 1780.

either left out entirely or only included in tokenistic ways, like being allowed to help program free community days.

What could help in this situation is what I call a neutral third perspective, inspired by Derek Hyra's study on gentrification. In his ethnography of the Washington, D.C. Shaw/U Street area, Hyra describes how gentrification turned the low-income, predominantly Black area into an ethnically and economically diverse neighborhood, but he says that social integration among longtime residents and newcomers did not happen.<sup>223</sup> He describes how the neighborhood's social dynamics maintained a level of microsegregation that resulted in the wealthier—and typically whiter—newcomers replacing longtime residents, not necessarily physically, but *politically*. He explains that, although longtime residents and new residents lived next door to one another, they either did not build meaningful relationships with one another or they held perspectives, interests, tastes, and values that were vastly different from one another. As I described in Chapter 3, Hyra found that, because at least some of these newcomers had more social and political capital, in addition to economic capital, longtime residents lost their ability to influence decisions about the neighborhood, such as how to transform a publicly-owned, underutilized green space.<sup>224</sup> While they may not get displaced physically, longtime residents get displaced politically and culturally in too many urban development processes.

Hyra's solution to this problem is what he calls "third spaces," which are places in neighborhoods that provide opportunities for bridging gaps in the relationships between

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<sup>223</sup> Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City*.

<sup>224</sup> Hyra, 140–41.

longtime residents and newcomers.<sup>225</sup> He describes third spaces as neutral places “where people feel comfortable speaking about difference and inequalities, and work through these challenging issues through shared activities that cut across differences.”<sup>226</sup> He identifies “corner stores, coffee shops, bars, bookstores, and eating establishments” as places where these conversations can happen.<sup>227</sup> What he describes are places where agonistic struggles<sup>228</sup> can play out and thus residents and others who may participate in these spaces can build understanding and appreciation of one another’s perspectives and find common values.

Other researchers who have also acknowledged a cultural displacement dimension of gentrification have offered similar solutions. Kennedy and Leonard recommend the use of consultants “to unify new and old residents around a single community vision” and to create “forums where both old and new residents could meet on common ground and re-knit themselves to incorporate the new and the old into a unified whole.”<sup>229</sup> Their vision sounds similar to processes already used in development efforts, where residents are invited to attend a public meeting or forum, often facilitated by a consultant or someone leading development efforts, and residents give their feedback on what they want to see in their neighborhood. Of course, the decision on whether and how to incorporate residents’ feedback is not up to residents but rather rests with the more powerful and well-connected individuals leading the development efforts. Kennedy and

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<sup>225</sup> Hyra, 160.

<sup>226</sup> Hyra, 160.

<sup>227</sup> Hyra, 160.

<sup>228</sup> In Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” the author says that, because people are self-determining agents, there is a power struggle and thus an agonistic relationship between them where both seek freedoms simultaneously. He calls the agonistic relationship one that is both “reciprocal incitation and struggle, less of face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation” (790).

<sup>229</sup> Kennedy and Leonard, “Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Choices,” 39.

Leonard's description of what a consultant would do is reactionary to development processes already underway, rather than proactive in giving existing residents power to help shape development processes in real-time, and it does not account for the power of the dominant class or the white spatial imaginary.

In her paper arguing for more frequent and strategic use of logic models in development processes, Lenihan comes closer to analyzing not only economic inequities and exclusions but also power imbalances that hold those issues in place. She says, "the logic model framework has the potential to help policymakers consider linkages between problems/conditions, activities, outcomes and impacts of a programme."<sup>230</sup> She also says that a logic model "should not stop at the short-term level" and that it should "move away from methodologies that: (1) concern themselves solely with narrowly defined economic impacts (e.g., number of jobs created) and (2) measure impact purely at the level of the 'assisted' firm."<sup>231</sup> Instead, according to her, logic models should be expanded to incorporate "broader society impacts," which she says include "private and social benefits and costs."<sup>232</sup> Her recommendations take into consideration adverse impacts and outcomes that may be unintended yet implicit in economic development processes and that may inhibit development interventions from achieving the goal of expanding freedoms. While her recommendations are unspecific, she at least accounts for development impacts and outcomes beyond those that are short-term and easily quantifiable.

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<sup>230</sup> Helena Lenihan, "Enterprise Policy Evaluation: Is There a 'New' Way of Doing It?," *Evaluation and Program Planning* 34, no. 4 (2011): 328, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2011.03.006>.

<sup>231</sup> Lenihan, 330.

<sup>232</sup> Lenihan, 323.

Primarily building on Hyra’s recommendation about creating neutral “third spaces” in gentrifying neighborhoods, but also incorporating insights from Kennedy and Leonard and Lenihan, I conclude that displacement-mitigation interventions must be proactive and intentional, yet flexible enough to pivot as needed throughout development processes. Instead of simply creating “third spaces” where residents can engage with one another if they choose to do so, and instead of decision-makers holding community meetings or forums to gain resident input, I recommend that agonistic struggles can and should be actively initiated and moderated by a neutral third perspective. Such a perspective can audit<sup>233</sup> development processes and be a conduit of knowledge-building between historically and systemically disenfranchised populations and geographies and the hegemonic system of spatial producers, which defaults to creating exclusionary and inequitable conditions. Carefully auditing development processes can assess the extent to which residents feel invited or welcomed to offer agonistic perspectives or excluded from doing so. An audit can investigate: Do residents perceive that they have the freedom to exert their agency in development decision-making or do they perceive that processes are closed to them? To what extent are processes actually closed to residents because they are happening behind closed doors or within closed networks? Do residents perceive

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<sup>233</sup> The idea of an audit was inspired in part by the book *ARTocracy: Art, Informal Space, and Social Consequence, A Curatorial Handbook in Collaborative Practice* by Nuno Sacramento and Claudia Zeiske (Berlin: JOVIS Verlag, 2011). In this book, the authors outline an approach to collaborative art practices. Their approach includes a cultural audit. The cultural audit is a broad snapshot of the qualitative and quantitative components that comprise and contribute to a community, including things like geography and climate, demographic makeup, community assets, where people go when they finish school, professional opportunities for young people, voting patterns, government, transportation, and much more. The idea of an audit also comes from equity audits conducted in schools “as a way of determining the degree of compliance with a number of civil rights activities receiving federal funding” (Susan L. Groenke, “Seeing, Inquiring, Witnessing: Using the Equity Audit in Practitioner Inquiry to Rethink Inequity in Public Schools,” *English Education* 43, no. 1 (2010): 83–96, p. 87).

their efforts to exert their agency will be impactful or do they perceive that exclusionary development is unstoppable?

A neutral third perspective can use qualitative, on-the-ground methodologies to gather residents' insights and expertise, contextualized by their lived experiences, assess perceived and real needs and abilities from many angles, discover areas of disconnect between city leaders' assumptions and residents' perceptions and experiences, and identify points of exclusion so inclusive solutions can be reached. For example, city leaders can use an auditing process to understand Black residents' experiences with institutional racism and apply that knowledge as those leaders assess how, when, and why they use tax dollars to incentivize development. A community development corporation can use an auditing process to understand perspectives among residents who are not active participants in the community, using that information to get a more well-rounded vision of the type of future residents want for the area. Finally, as described in the case study presented in Chapter 4, a philanthropic organization can use an audit to change the way it designs grant proposal processes to ensure they are inclusive of individuals who will be affected by grant-funded activities.

The audit can be carried out by an embedded researcher who builds authentic, trusting relationships with residents, practitioners, and any other parties involved, recording perspectives that are common, popular, unpopular, and unexpected.<sup>234</sup> I personally served in such a role on an experimental artist-led community development

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<sup>234</sup> The idea of an embedded researcher was inspired in part by the book *ARTocracy* by Sacramento and Zeiske. Part of the authors' approach to collaborative art practices includes the role of a "Shadow Curator." Like the Shadow Minister in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the Shadow Curator is someone who "acts as an embedded critic who scrutinizes what [partners] do and thereby brings constructive alternatives to [their] work process" (Deveron Projects, "Shadow Curating," accessed June 8, 2020, <https://www.deveron-projects.com/about/shadow-curator/>).

and crime prevention project that was focused on a small geographic area of Indianapolis's Near Eastside. Called Indy East Art Peace (IEAP), the project was partially funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The project participants included a team of 12 members, comprised of four Near Eastside residents, four artists, and four police officers from Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department's East District; two administrators, one from the Arts Council of Indianapolis, who was the lead administrator, and one from a Near Eastside community development corporation; and then there was my role, which was as the project's embedded researcher, labeled as a "shadow scholar." The "shadow scholar" role was closely embedded into the project, it was distinct from the roles of project team members, administrators, and community members. I followed the 16-month-long project as an observer, attending all project meetings and community events, and as an evaluator, interviewing project participants and administrators at least once, and multiple times with most participants. The interviews helped to evaluate the project in real-time by extracting individuals' experiences and perceptions and distilling what was learned in the interviews into new knowledge that was then used to iterate project priorities and processes.<sup>235</sup>

In the IEAP project, the "shadow scholar" role began with the first meeting among the project's team members and ended with the last meeting. As in the IEAP project, the embedded researcher in a development project can begin as soon as development plans originate and continue indefinitely, or until the development project is complete. The researcher can provide necessary timely feedback that can be used to

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<sup>235</sup> The IEAP project and its outcomes are described in Indy East Art Peace, "Art Peace: A Toolkit for Peacebuilding and Crime Prevention Through the Arts" (Arts Council of Indianapolis, 2019), <https://indyarts.org/docman/arts-council/191-indy-east-art-peace-toolkit/file>.



iterate processes and enable course correction as needed.<sup>236</sup> Various participatory methodologies, such as community-based participatory research (CBPR) and participatory action research (PAR), which emphasize individual expertise and value co-creation of knowledge,<sup>237</sup> offer both cautionary advice and guidance on how to carefully navigate political and cultural dynamics to draw input from as many people as possible. Individuals and organizations, including city departments, nonprofit entities, and philanthropies, dedicated to equity and inclusion can invest in this research initially. Over time, their practices will create new social norms where this research would be an expected component of development processes.

In fact, a rudimentary form of the model I am describing already exists in the City of Indianapolis Mayor's Neighborhood Advocate Program. This program employs 10 Mayor's Neighborhood Advocates (MNAs), who represent different parts of the city, attend community meetings and events, and act as liaisons between the city and the communities within their assigned boundaries. During fieldwork, I saw the MNA whose district included the Riverside neighborhood and Near Northwest Area dozens of times, as he often attended the same community meetings and events that I did. Mostly, his role consisted of conveying information from the city to residents about programs the city was hosting, such as job or resource fairs, and then conveying information back to the city about things residents needed the city to do, like trim low-hanging tree branches in the public right-of-way and fix broken streetlights. Although I heard residents express

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<sup>236</sup> Feldman and Lowe, "Evidence-Based Economic Development Policy."

<sup>237</sup> Banks and Armstrong, *Ethics in Community-Based Participatory Research: Case Studies, Case Examples, and Commentaries*; Bergold and Thomas, "Participatory Research Methods: A Methodological Approach in Motion"; Centre for Social Justice and Community Action and National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, *Community-Based Participatory Research: A Guide to Ethical Principles and Practice*; McIntyre, *Participatory Action Research*.

appreciation for the role the MNA played in the community, I also heard frustrations about the role. For one thing, I heard comments about the high turnover rate of MNAs; it seems the role is often used as a steppingstone into other positions in city government. More significantly, I heard people express with frustration that the MNAs do not “have any power.” Although the title of the role includes the word “advocate,” the MNAs are seen, not only by residents but also by others,<sup>238</sup> as simple liaisons that convey practical needs to city government entities, which, incidentally, is something residents can do themselves through the Mayor’s Action Center; the MNAs are not seen as a source of community empowerment.

The MNA program can and should be expanded to be made more meaningful and useful to both communities and city government. Two or three times as many MNAs can be hired to represent smaller geographic areas in which MNAs can become more deeply embedded into communities than what they are capable of doing across the larger geographic areas they currently represent. MNAs can be trained in the research methodologies that derive knowledge from listening in on residents’ conversations about how their communities are developing not only to find out *what* their concerns are but also to understand *why* they have those concerns. In this way, MNAs can provide perpetual auditing that can iterate development processes and identify persistent patterns that could be key to addressing systemic disparities and barriers. As resources are extended to private-sector entities in the forms of tax incentives and grants, dedicating resources toward expanding the MNA program and transforming it into a more meaningful and useful community advocacy program is one of many methods through

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<sup>238</sup> One of the individuals who said the MNAs do not “have any power” was someone who did not live in the Near Northwest Area but who worked for one of the city’s nonprofit community development partners.

which city government leaders can direct public resources toward empowering communities and creating conditions that expand freedoms.

Finally, while this dissertation has focused primarily on the social relations that create inequities and exclusions in development processes, the significant role that quantifiable economic disparities play in holding structural inequities and exclusions in place cannot be understated. Often, the literature on gentrification and displacement seeks to address these disparities by recommending housing-related interventions, such as land trusts, housing trust funds, subsidized housing, and rent control,<sup>239</sup> which seek to ensure housing is affordable to even the most disadvantaged residents and enable people to remain in a changing neighborhood. These interventions are fine, but they are limited, as they represent responses to a symptom of a larger problem, rather than efforts that get at the root of the problem, which is that an increasing number of people are making too little money to afford to meet their needs. As housing costs continue to climb and wages remain stagnant, housing-related interventions that seek to hold housing costs down will only need to be expanded in perpetuity. At some point, the gap between wages and housing costs, as well as the costs of living generally, will need to be addressed for most workers, especially workers in low-wage jobs, as part of an effective strategy to create conditions wherein all people are able to participate freely in the economy, without being unduly constrained by systemically low wages. Even after economic disparities are addressed, however, intentional efforts will still need to be made to overcome the

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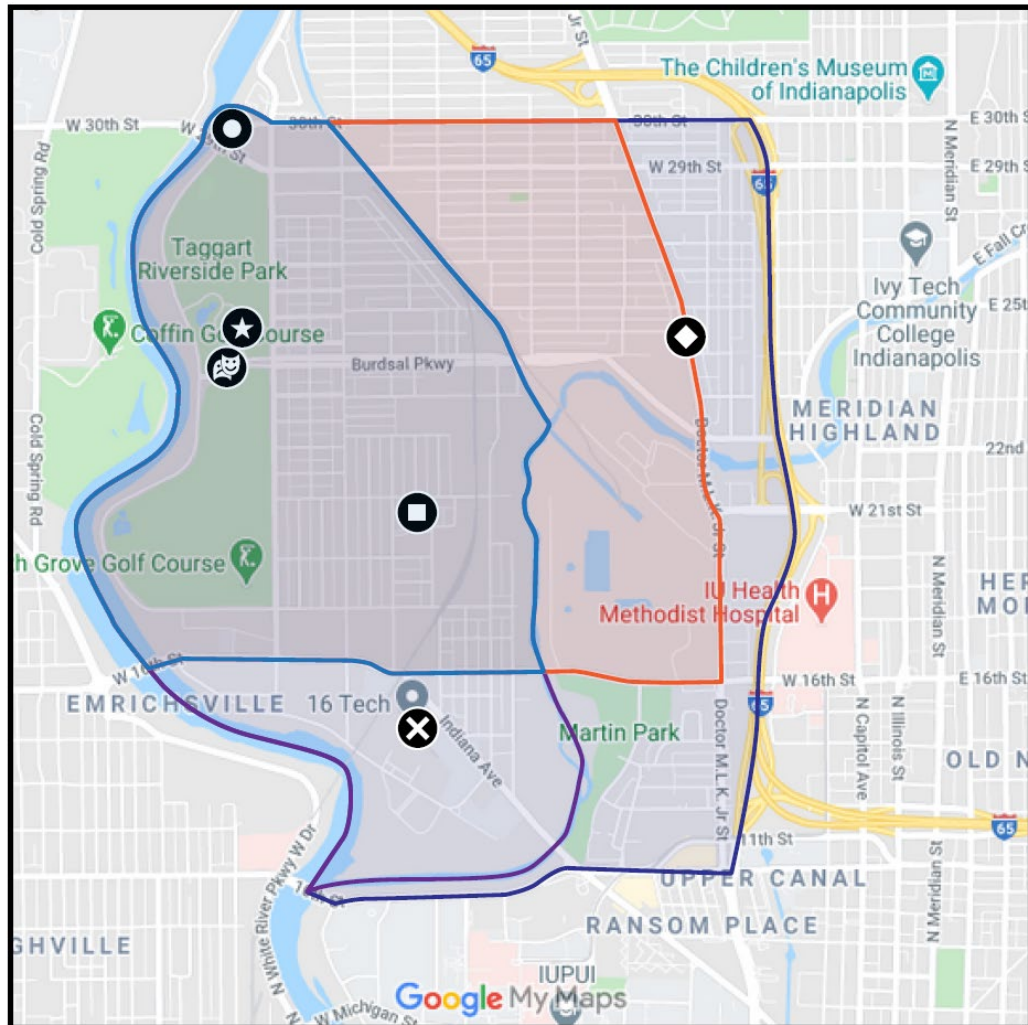
<sup>239</sup> Brummet and Reed, “The Effects of Gentrification on the Well-Being and Opportunity of Original Resident Adults and Children”; Kennedy and Leonard, “Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Choices”; Lourdes Germán and Allison Ehrich Bernstein, “Land Value Capture: Tools to Finance Our Urban Future” (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, September 2018), <https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/policy-briefs/land-value-capture>.

supremacy of whiteness and white experiences and the power of the white spatial imaginary.

The research presented in this dissertation illustrates how development can operate in exclusionary and inequitable ways, infringing upon people's abilities to shape and create social and physical spaces they value and perpetuating the imbalance of power that prevents development from solving urban challenges. If we want different social relations, that is, if we want development processes to maximize freedoms and overcome unfreedoms, we must design different ways of producing urban spaces. We must move away from neoliberal tendencies that enable wealth to pool at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy and instead move toward the shaping and creating of more inclusive social and physical urban spaces that will lead to more equitable social and economic outcomes. The hegemonic system of spatial producers needs to be disrupted and dismantled, and the processes of spatial production rebuilt. Closely examining development processes and creating mechanisms that can empower spatial users to incorporate their perceptions and experiences into decision-making processes so they can help build social and physical urban spaces that are equitable and inclusive can help facilitate freedom, enabling people to pursue the things they have reason to value.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Neighborhood Map



Map Illustration by Tim Pospisil

This map shows neighborhood boundaries, as defined by residents. White River and 30<sup>th</sup> Street consistently comprise the west and north boundaries, respectively. The dark blue line shows the largest possible neighborhood area, expanding to the east and south, while the light blue line shows the smallest possible area. The purple line extends the light blue line to the south to delineate the boundaries that make the neighborhood a “peninsula.”

#### Neighborhood Sites Relevant to this Study:

- |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|  | 16 Tech<br>1210 Waterway Boulevard                                   |  | Riverside Family Center<br>Riverside Regional Park        |
|  | Flanner House<br>2424 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St.                 |  | Riverside High School<br>3010 N. White River Pkwy. E. Dr. |
|  | Global Preparatory Academy at Riverside #44<br>2033 Sugar Grove Ave. |  | Taggart Memorial<br>Riverside Regional Park               |

## Appendix B: Interviews by Date

No.	Interview Date	Number of Interviewees	Classification	Description
1	1/23/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator in a non-profit community development organization
2	1/29/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator in a city department
3	2/6/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Higher education administrator
4	2/19/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Community liaison at a for-profit corporation
5	2/19/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Program administrator in a city department
6	2/21/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Administrator at a for-profit corporation
7	2/22/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Pastor at a neighborhood church
8	2/26/2019	1	Resident	Younger homeowner, living in the neighborhood for about 3 years
9	2/26/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Program administrator at a neighborhood nonprofit
10	3/1/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator at a quasi-governmental development agency
11	3/5/2019	1	Resident	Middle-aged homeowner, lifelong resident
12	3/7/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator in a city department
13	3/8/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator at a quasi-governmental development agency
14	3/12/2019	2	Residents	Retirement-aged, married homeowners, living in the neighborhood about 3 years
15	3/12/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Program administrator at a neighborhood school
16	3/13/2019	1	Former Resident	Retirement aged homeowner (family home), grew up in the neighborhood, still active
17	3/25/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Program administrator in a city department
18	3/25/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Executive administrator at a neighborhood nonprofit

19	3/26/2019	1	Resident	Middle-aged homeowner, born in the neighborhood, moved away, living in the neighborhood permanently about two years
20	3/28/2019	1	Resident	Middle-aged homeowner, living in the neighborhood about one year
21	5/7/2019	1	Former Resident	Retirement-aged homeowner (family home), grew up in the neighborhood, still active
22	5/8/2019	1	Resident	Middle-aged homeowner, living in the neighborhood about 20 years
23	4/17/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Administrator in a city department
24	5/13/2019	1	Resident	Younger renter, living in the neighborhood about 2.5 years
25	5/28/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator in a nonprofit housing agency
26	5/29/2019	1	Resident	Senior citizen homeowner, living in the neighborhood about 50 years
27	5/29/2019	1	Resident	Younger renter, living in the neighborhood about one year
28	5/30/2019	1	Resident	Younger homeowner, lifelong resident
29	6/6/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator at a nonprofit community development organization
30	6/10/2019	1	Resident	Senior citizen homeowner, grew up in the neighborhood, moved away, living in the neighborhood permanently about 20 years
31	6/11/2019	1	Resident	Middle-aged homeowner, living in the neighborhood about 2.5 years
32	6/11/2019	3	City-level Practitioners	Executive administrators in a nonprofit business development agency
33	6/11/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Program administrator in a nonprofit community development organization
34	6/17/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator in a city department
35	6/17/2019, 6/6/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Executive administrator at a neighborhood school (interviewed over the course of two sessions)
36	6/26/2019	2	City-level Practitioners	Executive administrator and an assistant in a city department

37	6/26/2019	1	Resident	Younger homeowner, living in the neighborhood about five years
38	7/9/2019	1	Resident	Middle-aged homeowner, lifelong resident
39	7/16/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Program administrator in a nonprofit community development organization
40	7/16/2019	2	City-level Practitioners	Elected official and an assistant
41	7/18/2019	1	City-level Practitioner	Executive administrator in a city department
42	10/16/2019	1	Neighborhood Affiliate	Higher education administrator



### Appendix C: Community Meetings and Events by Date

No.	Date	Meeting/Event	Location
1	2/7/2019	Riverside Civic League Meeting	Riverside Family Center
2	2/21/2019	Indiana Department of Environmental Management Public Meeting	Municipal Gardens at Riverside Regional Park
3	2/22/2019	16 Tech Community Update	Eskenazi Fine Arts Center
4	2/28/2019	Community Meal	The Learning Tree
5	3/7/2019	Riverside Civic League Meeting	Riverside Family Center
6	4/11/2019	Global Preparatory Academy Community Council Meeting	Global Preparatory Academy at Riverside #44
7	5/2/2019	Riverside Civic League Meeting	Riverside Family Center
8	5/16/2019	QOL Plan Community Meeting	Flanner House
9	5/31/2019	16 Tech Community Update	Eskenazi Fine Arts Center
10	6/5/2019	Metropolitan Development Commission Meeting	City-County Building
11	6/6/2019	Global Preparatory Academy Community Council Meeting	Global Preparatory Academy at Riverside #44
12	6/6/2019	Riverside Civic League Meeting	Riverside Family Center
13	6/12/2019	QOL Plan Housing Committee Meeting	Flanner House
14	6/15/2019	Riverside Reunion	Riverside Family Center
15	7/11/2019	16 Tech Topping Out Ceremony	16 Tech
16	7/11/2019	QOL Plan Housing Committee Meeting	Flanner House
17	7/18/2019	QOL Plan Community Meeting	Flanner House
18	8/1/2019	Riverside Civic League Meeting	Riverside Family Center
19	8/3/2019	QOL Plan Food Access Committee Meeting	Flanner House
20	8/8/2019	QOL Plan Housing Committee Meeting	Flanner House
21	8/12/2019	City-County Council Meeting	City-County Building
22	8/14/2019	QOL Plan Community Meeting	Flanner House
23	8/19/2019	QOL Plan Arts, Parks, and Public Spaces Committee Meeting	Riverside Family Center

24	8/25/2019	Chess in the Park	Frank Young Park
25	8/25/2019	Groundwork Indy Garden Festival Day	Groundwork Indy
26	9/4/2019	Taggart Memorial Community Update	Riverside Family Center
27	9/5/2019	Global Preparatory Academy Community Council Meeting	Global Preparatory Academy at Riverside #44
28	9/5/2019	Riverside Civic League Meeting	Riverside Family Center
29	9/7/2019	Riverside Parade	Riverside Regional Park
30	9/9/2019	Taggart Memorial Ribbon Cutting	Taggart Memorial at Riverside Regional Park
31	9/12/2019	QOL Plan Housing Committee Meeting	Flanner House
32	9/18/2019	QOL Plan Education Committee Meeting	Flanner House
33	9/19/2019	QOL Plan Community Meeting	Flanner House
34	10/1/2019	Taggart Memorial Community Meeting	Riverside Family Center
35	10/3/2019	Global Preparatory Academy Community Council Meeting	Global Preparatory Academy at Riverside #44
36	10/3/2019	City-County Council Parks Committee Meeting	Phoenix Theatre
37	10/10/2019	Mayor's Neighborhood Resource Fair	Riverside Family Center
38	10/10/2019	QOL Plan Housing Committee Meeting	Flanner House
39	10/17/2019	QOL Plan Community Meeting	Cleo's Café

## Appendix D: Interview Questions and Prompts

### *Interview Questions and Prompts for Residents*

- Where and when were you born? [Have you lived here your whole life? //OR// What brought you to Indianapolis?] [How long have you been living in this area?]
- What was it like growing up in XXX?
- Tell me about the Riverside neighborhood. What was it like when you first moved here? [How has it changed?]
- Tell me about the way your neighborhood looks. Has it always looked this way? [How has it changed?]
- What do you see in Riverside that is encouraging? What do you see in Riverside that is discouraging? [Why do you think those things are present?] [Who is responsible for those things?]
- Who takes care of the Riverside neighborhood? [Who maintains it?]
- What has it been like being a resident in the City of Indianapolis? [Do you feel included in decisions about the city? Do you feel included in decisions about your neighborhood?]
- How would you describe the growth of the City of Indianapolis? [Who is responsible for it?] [Who does it benefit or who has it benefitted?]
- What is your understanding of what economic development is? [From your perspective, what do economic development processes look like? Who is involved? What are the steps?]
- What happens when the City identifies a place as desirable for development or revitalization?
- How or where do you see Riverside fitting into the growth of the City?
- Tell me about the economic development happening in Riverside.
- Does it seem like new people are moving into the neighborhood? [Do you know where are they coming from? Do you know why they are moving here?]
- Does it seem like people are moving out of the neighborhood? [Do you know where are they going? Do you know why they are leaving?]
- What is your understanding of how tax dollars are distributed in the City?
- Is there anything else you would like to add to our conversation?
- Is there anyone else you think I should talk to about this?

### *Interview Questions and Prompts for Neighborhood Affiliates*

- To get started, let's begin with what you do at [Name of Organization]. What does your role encompass?
- Tell me about [Name of Organization]'s relationship with the communities around it. What role does [Name of Organization] play? Why is it important for [Name of Organization] to be involved?
- Tell me about the Riverside neighborhood. What is it like? What do you see? Has it changed over the years/Is it changing? If so, how and what is catalyzing the changes?
- Who takes care of the Riverside neighborhood? [Who maintains it?]

- How do you define economic development?
- How would you describe how economic development has typically worked in the City of Indianapolis? How is it different from the past, if at all? What has it done or what has it been used to do? [What has been its purpose?] Who has been involved? Who has benefitted (most)?
- How or where do you see Riverside fitting into the growth of the City?
- What tools does the City use to facilitate economic development?
- What do you know about how the City identifies places for facilitating economic development?
- Do you see [Name of Organization] having an economic development role in surrounding neighborhoods?
- There is a lot of commentary on how economic development transforms communities, specifically in terms of gentrification and displacement. Can you share your thoughts on the relationship between economic development and community transformation?
- What do you think are the most meaningful ways of measuring economic development either at the city or neighborhood level?
- What past or current economic development activities do you think have been most successful and why? What past or current economic development activities do you think have been least successful and why?
- Is there anything else you would like to add to this conversation?
- Is there anyone else I should talk to about this?

***Interview Questions and Prompts for City-level Practitioners***

- To get started, let's begin with what you do at [Name of Organization]. What does your role encompass?
- How do you define economic development?
- How would you describe how economic development has typically worked in the City of Indianapolis? What has it done or what has it been used to do? Who has been involved? Who has benefitted (most)?
- Are economic development's function and processes in Indianapolis different from the past? How and why?
- What is your/your organization's role in the city's economic development? Is the City of Indianapolis leading the way or following the lead of others in how leaders facilitate development?
- What tools does the City use to facilitate economic development?
- How does the City identify places for facilitating economic development?
- There is a lot of commentary on how economic development transforms communities, specifically in terms of gentrification and displacement. Can you please share your thoughts on the relationship between economic development and community transformation?
- What do you think are the most meaningful ways of measuring economic development in the city of Indianapolis?
- What past or current economic development activities do you think have been most successful and why?

- What past or current economic development activities do you think have been least successful and why?
- How do you think economic development is connected to social issues in the city, such as wellness, homelessness, and poverty?
- Is there anything else you would like to add to this conversation?
- Can you think of anyone else I should talk to about this?

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<https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412217716439>.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

### **Abbey Lynn Chambers**

#### **Education**

- PhD in American Studies, Indiana University degree earned at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, December 2020
- MA in Art History, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, August 2006
- BS in Art History, Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Rapids, MI, May 2004

#### **Work Experience**

- Research Assistant, Future of Property Rights Program at New America, Washington, D.C., October 2020-present
- Research Assistant, Mobility and Safety Needs for Rural and Urban Populations, Indiana University, Indianapolis and Bloomington, IN, September 2020-present
- Resident Scholar, New America Public Problem-Solving Partnership, New America Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, May 2019-May 2020
- Research Assistant, IU Public Policy Institute, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, August 2018-February 2020
- Research Assistant, IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, August 2017-May 2019

#### **Teaching Experience**

- Teaching Assistant, Department of Anthropology, IU School of Liberal Arts, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, January 2020-May 2020

- Adjunct Instructor, Department of Art History, IU Herron School of Art and Design, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, August 2008-May 2013

### **Reports and Publications**

- Author, “Reimagining Urban Spaces and the Processes that Shape and Create Them” (article), *The North Meridian Review*, special issue, forthcoming
- Contributor, “Displaced in America” (report), Future of Property Rights Program at New America, Washington, D.C., September 9, 2020
- Author, “Evictions Court Diaries” (article), *NUVO*, Indianapolis, IN, July 7, 2020
- Author, “To Battle Racism, Apply a Racial Lens to Policymaking” (op-ed), *Indianapolis Business Journal*, Indianapolis, IN, June 26, 2020
- Co-author, “Community Credit Needs Assessment” (report), IU Public Policy Institute, Indianapolis, IN, February 2020
- Author, “Inclusive Growth in Indianapolis... Will We Mess It Up?” (op-ed), *Indianapolis Business Journal*, Indianapolis, IN, August 9, 2019
- Co-author, “Inclusive Growth in Indianapolis: Recommendations and Overview of Local Strategy” (report), IU Public Policy Institute, Indianapolis, IN, January 2019

### **Presentations**

- Panelist, “Housing and the Pandemic,” Side Effects Public Media, Webcast, September 24, 2020
- Panelist, “Displaced in America: Housing Loss in Indianapolis,” Future of Property Rights Program at New America, Webcast, September 15, 2020

- Co-presenter, “Revisiting the ‘Neighborhood of Saturdays’: Exploring the Legacy of a Multi-Racial Community on Indianapolis’ Near Southside,” Bringle and Hatcher Civic Engagement Poster Showcase, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Online, April 27-May 1, 2020
- Co-presenter, “Mayoral Use of Tax-increment Financing (TIF), Works in Progress Discussion, IU School of Liberal Arts, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, November 30, 2018
- Keynote speaker, “Making it Work,” Indiana Women’s History Conference/Hoosier Women at Work in the Arts, Indianapolis, IN, April 6, 2018
- Session organizer and moderator, “Exploring Current Trends and Unconventional Methods in Visual Art and Design,” IU Alumni Association Weekend U: Competing for Your Attention, Indianapolis, IN, February 16, 2013

### **Honors and Awards**

- Valedictorian, Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Rapids, MI, May 2004
- Recipient, Art History Excellence Award, Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Rapids, MI, May 2004