GRAY MATTERS

A familiar scene plays out in many small towns across America: the storage units overburdened with polished hampers and computer parts from a historically underinvested, but tight-knit community.

The phenomenon is synonymous with revitalization and economic growth. Neighborhoods, which had been brought to the brink of public and private involvement for decades, are reinventing themselves. These neighborhoods are seeing basic amenities like grocery stores for the first time. But for many, gentrification also means a loss of culture, history and community—a loss of the physical and mental health stress that accompanies that loss.

On Sept. 3, a convened health and gentrification expert panel to discuss how to logistically revitalize a way that ensures equitable health and well-being. Led by national leaders in the field, including researchers Dr. Baby Bondenell and Dr. Lance Freeman, and public health officials Fidelis Velez and Traci Yniguez, attended jointly issued policy recommendations that encourage revitalization while stemming displacement.

HOUSING STRATEGY

Avoiding displacement through the preservation and creation of affordable housing was at the forefront of recommen- dations. To ensure that affordable housing is included in new developments, experts recommended city-based developer incentives, such as tax breaks, tax abatement or fast-tracking processes, together with stringent local regulations.

Finding the rehabili- tation of existing housing stock to result in viable or destruc- tion might be a more costly affable method of providing affordable housing as a new construction.

Recently, more experts recommended the rehabilitation of existing housing stock to result in viable or destruction, thus might be a more costly affable method of providing affordable housing as a new construction. Experts recommended increased support of nonprofits, such as Whole House Char- ities, which has begun to turn these homes into multi-family units, and a cost housing rehabilitation program.

Experts also recommended policies aimed at stimulating additional tax revenues for homeowners, rent, control, and TCO-sponsored programs such as the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) for homeless persons, initiative that addresses the practice of pov- erty should be explored. These include a 30-year mortgage that reduces the cost of housing rehabilitation.

CAPTURING THE PROITS OF REVITALIZATION

Gentrification could contribute to the strengthening of the existing community’s economy by directly generating tax revenue. In Houston, the Increment Development Zone (TDI) is one such strategy. To establish a TDI prop- erty owners who own more than 30 percent of a zone’s appraised value are entitled to tax breaks. Once a TDI is set up, any tax revenue over the revenue from the pre-TDI property value are partially committed into a board- governed fund.

Experts recommend that this captured revenue be retained in the neighborhood using economic develop- ment strategies that are equitable.

BUILDING TOGETHER

Another strategy to capture revitalization’s value is ensuring the inclusion of workers, residents in the labor force needed for new development. Experts suggested that this could be part of a broader effort to foster collaboration between city and residents. Coalition building should include all stakeholders in equal- ities, such as housing developers, city officials, and residents.

Fostering and main- taining collaborative efforts in the community can also be promoted by public awareness campaigns. For example, a campaign may be launched to educate the surrounding residential neighborhood on the benefits of new development, which could improve health outcomes.

Don’t displace, revitalize. By Quinta Moore

Experts at Rice lay out ideas on how to renew neighborhoods without gentrification.

A DATA-BASED POLICY FRAMEWORK

Experts unanimously agreed that more from data-driven and outcomes-focused programs that are tested in real-world settings.

There are on known individual-level longitudi- nal studies that track the health and well-being outcomes of original residents in gentrifying communities. However, there are numerous and persistent bottlenecks that show improved health outcomes. But this means that communities are often served by very few different population groups. But these residents in gentrification community prior to the neighborhood change, and those who lived in the community after.

Current studies have thus failed to identify health indicators that differentiate gentrification from revitalization. To evaluate more accurately and reduce the numbers in these studies, experts recommend that city officials and developers record and gather data from community members us- ing community-based participatory research. Other recommendations include utilizing big data to predict gentrifica- tion and balance the health and stability of residents ahead of time.

The challenge of ensuring that the health and economic growth of gentrification are shared equally is a goal. To do so, experts recommended policies that promote affordable housing, along with the existing community’s long-term economic and social goals.

By Quinta Moore

The city completed a renovation of Emancipation Park in the Third Ward this year.

Why it’s harder than ever to move out of poverty. Houston Chronicle.com/cornucopia/property

Why gentrification is making it harder to move out of poverty. Houston Chronicle.com/houstongentrification

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