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HOPE VI: calling for modesty in its claims

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Introduction

There is little question that the goals and policies of mixed-income housing in US cities are fundamentally about the transformation of urban space. And yet, despite the centrality of this goal, there are only a few studies to suggest that the transformation of urban space envisioned by its supporters and decried by its opponents is of any great magnitude (GAO, 2003; Holin et al, 2003; Zielenbach, 2003; Turbov and Piper, 2005; Castells, 2010). While these point towards benefits of the spillover effects of HOPE VI (Home ownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere) mixed-income projects, there is variation even within HOPE VI developments in the same city. Many of these empirical studies, as well as more conceptual accounts of the factors which would support neighbourhood transformation, suggest that development pressure, that is, the existence of neighbourhood desirability in relation to other areas of potential investment, are the strongest correlates to change. Studies have not concluded that mixed-income itself has been the cause of neighbourhood change; the two most recent studies on the effect of HOPE VI mixed-income housing development on neighbourhood change have concluded that other development pressures, market dynamics and a host of other amenities (that is, transportation, commercial retail, employment opportunities) may be necessary to transform low-income areas of cities. These factors tend to come together in economically strong cities (Castells, 2010; Zielenbach and Voith, 2010). Further, Goetz (2010) finds that the degree of neighbourhood change is not correlated with positive changes for individual-level outcomes for low-income families.

Based on these and other studies on the effects of HOPE VI for neighbourhood change and individual-level outcomes including the everyday experiences households have in HOPE VI redevelopments, we

suggest a call for modesty regarding the impacts of the actual 'mixed-income' component of these revitalisation and poverty amelioration initiatives. Notwithstanding non-HOPE VI mixed-income initiatives that may only use 'mixed-income' as a veil for market penetration into, and subsequent gentrification of, targeted low-income neighbourhoods, we contend that many cities that are not 'economically strong' may show less pronounced HOPE VI effects as measured by people or place-based outcomes. These changes, as previous work has suggested, may be unevenly distributed when examining multiple HOPE VI initiatives in the same city. Our study of four HOPE VI developments in Nashville, Tennessee, examines both place-based change as well as changes experienced by residents in these developments. We examine the narratives of 120 households within these developments to understand the perspective of people actually living in four of these environments. Prior to the case study, we briefly review mixed-income housing policies and how the 'mixed-income' component is purported to operate.

Policies and practices of mixed-income housing

In general, mixed-income housing is done in one of two closely interrelated but not synonymous ways. The first is through the dispersal of poor people who are geographically concentrated. The second is through the redevelopment of formerly poor areas or housing developments. These two ways can roughly be thought of as people-based and place-based mixed-income policies respectively. Or they can be thought of as two different ways in which the urban geography of poverty is being remade. The first is a deliberate spatial strategy of dispersal and deconcentration of poor people away from a poor area in which the fate of the area from where they are dispersed is of secondary concern, if it is of any concern at all. The second is a deliberate spatial strategy that remakes the spaces in which poor people reside. In so doing the bulk of the poor are inevitably displaced, but what happens to them is of secondary concern. And while they are distinct from each other, they have significant overlap – if for no other reason than the fact that poor people are dispersed from areas that are redeveloped. There are several policies or sets of policies associated with each of these strategies. We discuss the policies associated with dispersal before proceeding to those associated with redevelopment.

Since the early 1970s, and increasingly since the early 1990s, there has been a decided shift in the form that federally subsidised housing takes, and that shift has been away from the project-based subsidised

stock and towards the voucherisation of subsidised housing. While vouchers were not originally meant to promote mixed-income housing or neighbourhoods, they have become strongly associated with this goal, and therefore they have grown in support among mainstream housing policy analysts. As the project-based subsidised stock opt out of the affordable housing programmes and convert to market housing, the tenants within them receive vouchers that they can use *in situ* or they can take with them wherever they decide to live. This slow drip of the conversion of housing from project-based to vouchers has not received the attention of the more dramatic demolitions associated with HOPE VI, but has impacted far more affordable housing units, as more than a quarter of a million units have been lost, with most converting the tenants to vouchers (see DeFilippis and Wyly, 2008).

The second set of dispersal policies are Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity. The Gautreaux programme began in 1976 and was the result of a US Supreme Court decision against the Chicago Housing Authority for concentrating public housing in black neighbourhoods in the city. The programme gave selected residents counselling, and other assistance, to help them move into whiter neighbourhoods. The Moving to Opportunity programme has generated significant attention among academics and policy makers, more than is perhaps suggested by the experimental programme's very modest size of fewer than 5,000 people in just five cities (see, for instance, Briggs et al, 2010). The programme placed people in project-based subsidised properties into one of three groups: (1) a group that simply stayed where they were; (2) a group that received vouchers that could only be used in low-poverty neighbourhoods; and (3) a group that received regular Section 8 vouchers. The point of the programme was to measure the outcomes for the people in the three different groups. While Moving to Opportunity was modelled on Gautreaux, the big difference is that Gautreaux was race-based and Moving to Opportunity was income-based.

Policies that focus on the transformation of poor neighbourhoods or housing developments take several forms. Perhaps the best known, and most studied, is HOPE VI. HOPE VI is the demolition of public housing and its rebuilding as mixed-income housing, often with New Urbanist design principles. The specific dimensions of HOPE VI have been outlined in numerous studies, but one of the central goals of this programme is to create physical and social environmental conditions that will enable those defined as lower income to pull themselves up from poverty into a higher socioeconomic status and experience an increased quality of life as it relates to the places they live (see Joseph

et al, 2007, for an excellent overview of HOPEVI's stated underpinnings and goals). While many critics of HOPE VI show that the absolute numbers of subsidised housing units in these developments decrease in comparison to the pre-existing public housing development on which they were built, other studies have demonstrated that mixed-income housing neighbourhoods have not produced the intended economic, or quality of life, goals, even for those who have been able to relocate into the completed HOPE VI developments (Joseph et al, 2007; Fraser and Nelson, 2008). Joseph et al (2007) suggest that there is a 'need to lower expectations' for what HOPE VI might accomplish for lower-income populations because the conceptual underpinnings and routes by which low-income people might achieve their goals in the context of HOPE VI are either underspecified or not operating as conceived. We add that this current state of affairs may be due to an under-appreciation of the relationships between home, neighbourhood and work. For example, while HOPE VI-inspired improvements in housing stock, architectural design and aesthetics are seemingly desirable, public housing authorities, social service providers and even HOPE VI communities all operate in the context of social forces – such as the production of labour markets and public policy – which are beyond their immediate power to change.

Finally, there is the issue of gentrification. Whether or not policy makers, public officials or private sector supporters of mixed-income housing explicitly endorse gentrification as a potential outcome of mixed-income housing implementation, the reality is that the creation of desirable housing markets can have that effect. Goetz (2005, p 70), citing Bennett and Reed (1999) as an example, notes, 'that private investors are now bidding up property values in the vicinity of public housing projects', as a way to accrue profit from speculative increases in land rent. Neil Smith (2002) notes that gentrification is a general strategy engaged by public and private sectors to revitalise their cities to be competitive places for other forms of economic investment. The confluence of housing policy and broader urban economic development strategies tends to promote place as an amenity for new economy workers (that is, those with more disposable income). What is remarkable about this trend is not that developers have pushed for new markets to invest their capital in, but rather that public policy, via academia (Florida, 2005), has fostered this sense of creating a common good that, like the Reagan years, promises to trickle down to those in the most vulnerable position but rarely does. While some observers have demonstrated that HOPE VI-styled mixed-income housing pushed people out of their home spaces, for the more capitalised members of society, the parallel non-HOPE VI – public–private ventures to

reclaim low-income neighbourhoods for higher socioeconomic status populations – simply devastate opportunities for those who are less privileged (Fraser and Kick, 2007).

Why mixed-income housing, and does it work?

The fundamental goal of mixed-income housing in the US is a reorganisation of the relationship between poor people and urban space. We have discussed the two different ways in which these respatialisations occur. But the questions remain, why are such policies being pursued, and what kind of evidence is there to support or critique such efforts? There are various reasons why mixed-income housing is a goal, but all share a core belief about the deleterious 'neighbourhood effects' of poor people living together. And all the justifications, or at least those stated anyway, inevitably come back to the issue of helping the poor by having them live in proximity to the rich (or at least middle class). These effects are thought to play out in four different ways (see Joseph et al, 2007; DeFilippis and Fraser, 2010): the improved social networks/social capital of the poor people that live in mixed-income neighbourhoods; the increased social control and improved social organisation the poor will have if living near middle and upper-class people; the importance of middle class and wealthy people on the behaviour of the poor – in terms of presenting role models for the poor; and the improved services and goods available to the poor once upper-income people live nearby (the political economy of place).

The first of these four has its roots in Putnam's (2009) understanding of social capital, the thinking being that poor people lack social capital and placing them in proximity to the wealthy will increase the quality and quantity of their social networks, thereby enabling them to improve their incomes and quality of life. The second and third have their roots in Wilson's 'underclass' perspective (Wilson, 1987) and Lewis's 'culture of poverty' (Lewis, 1959) – any distinction between the two being increasingly irrelevant from the point of view of policy. This is the idea that, as Brophy and Smith (1997, p 6) bluntly put it, 'physical concentration of poor households in multifamily projects causes severe problems for the residents, including joblessness, drug abuse, and welfare dependency ... a mixture of income levels will reduce the social pathology caused by concentration'. Finally, the last reason, the political economy of place, is rooted in the recognition that public services and the goods of collective consumption are better provided in middle-class and wealthy neighbourhoods than in poor ones.

When examining the impacts of these policies, it is clear that these programmes do not produce their hypothesised results and there is little evidence that the expected benefits will be realised. Simply put, poor people do not seem to benefit much from mixed-income housing. Goetz, in an article summarising the literature on mixed-income housing, states, 'the degree of improvement in quality of life reported by the residents is mixed, being quite modest in most cases and frequently nonexistent' (Goetz, 2010, p 5).

The failure of mixed-income housing neighbourhoods to improve life for poor people is not particularly difficult to understand. There are several reasons that seem clear to us. These policies – particularly those that promote mobility – often leave poor people in places without the social networks and informal social support of prior neighbourhoods. Similarly, such mobility-based policies often leave poor people without the institutional services and support of their prior neighbourhoods, and locates them in new places which lack the institutional capacity to provide those services (Goetz, 2010). Finally, mixed-income policies have also failed to create social mixing, networks and interaction – that is, social capital. This is because the mixed-income housing neighbourhoods leave the larger social cleavages unaltered. For example, HOPE VI developments – and the organisations that govern them – typically sort people based on subsidised versus market rate status. Thus, social sorting occurs based on classed, and in many cases, raced and gendered identities.

There are a wide range of urban redevelopment efforts that purport to use mixed-income housing strategies as a way to deconcentrate poverty and improve neighbourhood conditions by attracting higher income populations to targeted low-income areas of cities (see Fraser and Nelson, 2008, for an overview). These efforts have been marked by a large degree of variation of people and place-based outcomes (A. Smith, 2002), and this heterogeneity has posed a challenge for researchers to make generalisations about the people and place-based effects of mixed-income housing strategies as a whole. While we report that most studies find little, if any, direct effects for low-income residents, there have been more pronounced place-based outcomes. Indeed, this edited volume usefully asks the (possibly rhetorical) question 'Is mixed-income housing yet another route towards urban gentrification?', to which we respond 'Sometimes'. A host of studies on HOPE VI have emerged that find 'positive' place-based changes related to urban revitalisation and accompanying increases in housing values (Zielenbach, 2003; Kleinhans, 2004; Bair and Fitzgerald, 2005), and there are a wide range of treatments that focus on routes toward

these place-based outcomes highlighting the importance of location, management and 'appropriate' income mix (Brophy and Smith, 1997; Finkel et al, 2000; Wexler, 2001; Varady et al, 2005). While these enabling conditions to transform public housing and nearby neighbourhoods may come together to produce pronounced urban revitalisation, in some cases gentrification, in many cases HOPE VI mixed-income housing initiatives produce more modest spatial outcomes. This does not mean that these outcomes are trivial, as some segments of society may experience very real advantages while others experience the effects as deeply disadvantaging.

Our case study draws on historical documents and interviews (n = 120) with households from four HOPE VI sites in Nashville, Tennessee, as well as housing authority staff, social service providers and city officials. These data tell a story of mixed-income housing development that has a range of effects on people and place that fall somewhere in between the status quo and complete neighbourhood/development transformation. Nashville is in some ways a unique case, but it does demonstrate well our key theme: HOPE VI outcomes are often modest, and the mixed-income component may provide relatively little to the dynamics of limited change. We are intentionally placing ourselves between people who sing the praises of the programme and those who condemn it, to create a more nuanced story, one in which the important successes in transforming people and places are noted but their limited scope and reliance on dynamics other than income mix are acknowledged. Context always matters in geography, and our examination of HOPE VI in Nashville demonstrates that there is a lot more to HOPE VI than just its mixed-income structure.

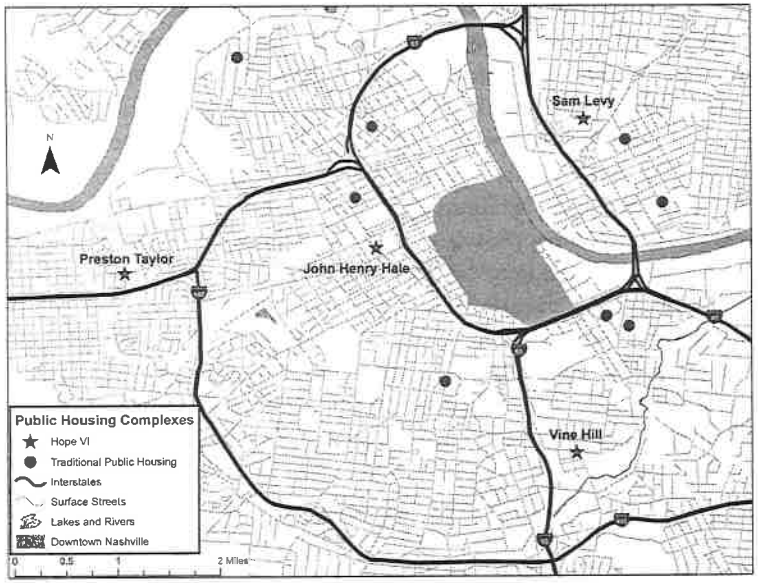
HOPE VI in Nashville, Tennessee

The Metropolitan Development and Housing Authority (MDHA) in Nashville has received a total of four HOPE VI grants to rehabilitate four distressed public housing complexes in the city. The agency's applications to the Department of Housing and Urban Development catalogue a litany of deficiencies and problems with the physical plant, high crime rates and extreme poverty levels at the now rehabilitated complexes. The barracks-like construction and high density that characterised these sites prior to redevelopment were criticised as fitting in poorly with the surrounding neighbourhoods, which were rapidly deteriorating themselves due to disinvestment.

MDHA received its first HOPE VI grant in 1997 and received subsequent grants in 1999, 2002 and 2003 to rehabilitate Vine Hill,

Preston Taylor, Sam Levy and John Henry Hale Homes respectively (Figure 14.1 shows the locations of the sites in Nashville). Like many HOPE VI projects across the country, the programme involved a significant reduction in the number of units available at the sites; only 800 subsidised rental units remain at the four sites, from more than 1,800 original units (see Table 14.1 for details). MDHA was quite intentional in structuring eligibility requirements for the units to radically alter the residents' income diversity; it was an explicit goal of the programme that less than 50% of residents would fall into the 'very low income' category, whereas 100% of pre-HOPE VI residents fell into this category.

Figure 14.1: Public housing complexes in Nashville



Efforts to include market rate residents in Nashville's HOPE VI redevelopments have been mixed at best. Only 10% of rental units at Preston Taylor, the largest HOPE VI site, are reserved for market rate tenants; the rate rises to 20% for John Henry Hale and Sam Levy. Market rate rental units are physically identical to subsidised units and are dispersed throughout the complexes. Only Preston Taylor has on-site homeowner units, expanding the resident mix from renters to owners, but even here the majority of units built for sale – incidentally, almost all of which were priced for low-income families – were located off-site.

Table 14.1: Changes to site-based housing at four HOPE VI complexes in Nashville

Complex name	Original number of units (bedrooms)	New subsidised rental units	New market rate rental units	New onsite home ownership units	Total new units (bedrooms)
Vine Hill	280 (590)	152	16	0	168 (420)
Preston Taylor	550 (1,437)	280	30	40	310/40 (732)
Sam Levy	480 (1,256)	181	45	0	226 (562)
John Henry Hale	498 (1,176)	188	40	0	228 (547)
Total	1,808 (4,459)	801	131	40	916 (2,261)

Mixed-income living and opportunities in HOPE VI communities

Many of the residents with whom we spoke were able to identify many advantages and opportunities inherent in living in HOPE VI communities as opposed to living either in other forms of public housing or in market rate rentals. By virtue of policy, to be eligible for a unit residents must be either working or pursuing an educational qualification. Those who are working towards either a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or degree are generally quite happy with the opportunity to do so and the support they receive through HOPE VI in the pursuit of that opportunity. Consider this woman, a single mother with two young children, who was studying to become a nurse:

> Interviewer (I): "So when you moved [to HOPE VI] were you already in nursing school?"
>
> Respondent (R): "No, when I first moved in here I was not in nursing school. I was doing tech work at Bordeau [nursing home], and I had another part-time job. I was working at a daycare. Then they had these papers coming around saying who wants to go back to school to be an LPN [licensed practical nurse], so I was like I'll try it, just give it a shot.... They offer some other type of programs too, but I know it's not just nursing."

I: "And so you knew about the nursing school through the site manager?"

R: "Through the site manager, uh-huh."

I: "And have any of your neighbours said there is a hospital in Franklin that is going to be hiring soon and you should put in your resume? Is there any of that kind of networking that happens here?"

R: "No, cause everybody's just like in and out over here. Cause I can sit here all day long, and I can just watch how my neighbours are ... everybody is in and out. We got kids, some of us work at night, some of them work during the day, some work part time, full time.... Other than my two neighbours on each side of me, I'm going to say hey as they are going down the street or as they are coming in I might just say hey...."

I: "So when it comes time for you to find a job do you think that you will be able to get help with like your resume or something with the services that are here?"

R: "Uh-huh, uh-huh, they have classes. They always send these papers around like now they are offering a free computer class. They do free GED courses up here ... free resume writing, free classes for all of this different stuff, so yeah they do."

I: "So generally you think that living here has been a boost to your goals?"

R: "Uh-huh. But not only that, I can afford to do it. I don't have to pay like six hundred dollars in rent. I can go to school, work a little part time and still be able to afford my home, and not worry about getting evicted, so I think it has benefited me a lot."

This woman was only a few months away from graduating and had a plan that when she had a job as an LPN she would move out of the city to find better schools for her children and housing that was still of high quality but cost less. In our discussion around how HOPE VI

had helped her achieve her goal of becoming an LPN, she explicitly denies that links with her neighbours had played any role. Rather, she says that people's busyness in trying to maintain their current status through work or to get ahead through education were an obstacle to meaningful interaction that could provide the networking that could potentially help neighbours identify new opportunities. This theme appeared in a number of interviews: neighbours are constantly in and out at all hours of the day, taking care of their children or going to work, and do not have compatible schedules or the time to be particularly neighbourly. This woman attributes her success in moving towards her goals to two things, specifically vocational programmes offered either by site management or by social service providers and the opportunity to live in housing that was affordable as she pursues the goal. She found out about the opportunity for LPN training through information provided by site management and will be able to use formal career services provided in the neighbourhood to assist in the search for a permanent position after she graduates if she needs to; her neighbours play no role in the means by which she finds and accesses these opportunities. Furthermore, she describes her affordable rent as a significant advantage that provides her with more stability so that she can continue to pursue her studies without interruption. This is a feature of *affordable* housing policy, not mixed-income housing policy.

Residents also report that HOPE VI provides them with the opportunities to take risks in their lives, such as opening their own business or changing careers. Consider this woman, who has just finished her culinary education and is beginning to open a catering service:

I: "If there is anything particular about Sam Levy versus any other place that you might have lived that is particularly helpful for you in meeting your goals, or maybe challenging or maybe some obstacles?"

R: "I think, well with me really I think it's just because of the income part of it, it's allowing me to save and it's helped me that way, because if I was living somewhere else where I had to pay about eight hundred dollars a month I honestly wouldn't be able to afford some of the things that I do have for my business and pay some things off that I was able to pay. I was actually able to pay my truck off since I've been here because I haven't had to pay as much as I would somewhere else. Financially it has allowed me to better

myself, and I don't think my business would have grown as much over the past two years because I wouldn't have had the money to make it grow like that. And it gives you an opportunity, you can still have somewhere nice to live, but you can still put your money into, you know, furthering business, education, whatever. I've finished school since I've been here, you know, it's allowed me to do a lot of things financially that I don't, I can't honestly say I would have done had I not been here."

I: "Okay, do you think that uh, that if you were living somewhere else that you might not have finished school?"

R: "Maybe not. The last apartment that I was living in before my sister's house, it was about the size of this downstairs and I was paying seven hundred dollars a month, and the utilities were much higher – we get a break on the utilities over here. Being here allowed me to pay for that, so financially I don't think I would have been done with school now. I don't think we would be having another baby right now either. I mean a lot of things factored into the finances and being over here allows you to financially get yourself together. I don't think anybody should just use it, people who might say, hey I don't have to pay as much let me go spend that extra money. It has allowed us to save and do other things and get out of debt and all that."

This woman's HOPE VI experience has helped her both to finish school, start and expand her own small business, pay off some debts and improve her overall financial situation – she says elsewhere that she is also taking advantage of the escrow account which accumulates money towards a down payment for a house and has used credit counselling classes to improve her credit score. Increased financial stability and capacity has also allowed her to expand her family without worrying how to pay the bills. She is, in many ways, a posterchild for the outcomes that the people who initially drafted the HOPE VI legislation had envisioned, but she is also extraordinary, for she is among a handful (four or five) of individuals in our sample who have similar levels of achievement and optimism for the future. Most tellingly, however, she attributes none of her success to the mixed-income nature of the neighbourhood. Her neighbours are not booking her for parties or referring her to potential clients, nor is she providing

networking services to them. Instead, like the woman finishing up her LPN coursework, she has taken advantage of programmes offered by site management or community partners. Most crucial to this process of achievement has been the affordable rent, indicating again that the subsidised rent at HOPE VI is perhaps the most important component in promoting upward mobility. Unlike the previous example, however, this woman was pursuing this trajectory even before she moved to HOPE VI. She outlines an education process that took 11 years to complete as motherhood, changing schools and financial challenges created delays. She had nearly completed her degree prior to moving to HOPE VI and had a clear plan to start a business; HOPE VI provided the financial stability to accelerate her achievements. A significant number of people in our sample had similar narratives: they had a clear agenda for personal growth and identified HOPE VI as a means of achieving their goals. They pick HOPE VI as a place to live because it provides safe, clean and relatively cheap accommodation, combined with structural support for the self-improvement process, which they cannot find on the private rental market for affordable prices. The mixed-income nature of HOPE VI seemingly plays no consideration in these choices, nor are residents able to articulate how the diversity of income in their communities enhances the opportunities for self-improvement.

Over and over again, residents told us that they were pleased with the calm, quiet and safe environment that HOPE VI provided. For the most part, they felt confident raising their children here, felt confident walking around the community at night, and felt safe in their homes. So says a former resident who was moved to another public housing complex during the redevelopment and then returned to his mixed-income site:

I: "So could you compare Sam Levy now to where you used to live, I guess the one before?"

R: "Well before they tore it down and rebuilt it, it was violent. They were shooting and killing up each other, and it's just peaceful now. Before the rebuild, I wouldn't sit outside and stuff. I would stay in the house and try to stay calm, and now I can sit outside and have peace of mind at night so it's a great here."

These changes are drastic, and the anecdotal evidence provided by residents is confirmed by MDHA analysis, which shows that the

HOPE VI sites went from being the public housing complexes in Nashville with the highest crime rates to having the lowest crime rates in their portfolio post-redevelopment. But how are these changes sustained? Does the presence of a mix of incomes in the neighbourhood automatically lead to less social disorder? We have very little empirical data with which to form any opinion, but some of the residents appear to have been asking themselves similar questions. This man, a single father and a medical student at a nearby university, summed it up as follows:

> R: "I knew of a person who lived in another HOPE VI. I didn't know them personally; it was a friend of a friend who had explained to me basically what HOPE VI was all about, the premise behind it. I know my concern was I didn't grow up in public housing. Before this place was built it was the projects. When they knocked down the projects they gave the old residents an opportunity to come back.... Before I thought about moving into public housing it was my concern as to the type of people I would be living around, not that I think I'm better or nothing of that nature, [but] it's just a legitimate concern of mine. When I sat down with the manager she explained to me you know what they were doing. You know they were only looking for people that were in school or working which you know when you pull in a group of people like that, it changes the dynamics of you know everyday living and it was true."

This man attributes the changes to a qualitatively different type of person being allowed to live in the neighbourhood. Intentionally, access to this housing has been restricted to people who are working or pursuing education; in addition, people with felony convictions, poor rental histories with MDHA, and other records of misdeeds can also be excluded. Site management made a claim to this man that this new type of person who would be allowed to live in the neighbourhood would change the dynamic of the place compared to the previous dynamics present in the projects, and he affirms that the change has taken place. But could this change have taken place without constructing HOPE VI sites as mixed-income communities? Does a high concentration of poverty necessarily lead to increased social disorder? Is it not possible to ensure that it is the most needy individuals and families who receive high quality subsidised housing, and then ensure that the communities in which they live remain safe?

Although theoretical claims do not necessarily connect to residents' experience in the way imagined by policy makers, we cannot discount the effect, in the discursive sense, of living in a mixed-income environment. The question, again, is not whether or not mixed income means anything to residents, but rather how it is made to mean. So, while many of the benefits of living in HOPE VI may be attributable primarily to affordability, or to site improvements above any claims to the effect of income mix, the fact that these are mixed-income sites remains significant. The mixed-income aspect makes it evident to residents, particularly those in market rent units, that HOPE VI is not only concerned with the provision of housing. When asked to compare living in a HOPE VI site with her experience renting in the private market, one resident reported:

> "I've been in the private market before and this is nothing like private market at all. And I don't see them acclimating us to be able to adjust to a private market because private market is nothing like the way that they are trying to run this."

Another resident explains:

> "I think people feel like ... it's just a part of being on public assistance, I think, to a certain extent. You don't have full control ... because you're under a programme, you know?"

Residents are aware, then, of mixed income in terms of each site representing a mix of housing and programmatic aspects. Mixed income serves to differentiate residents in terms of who is, as this resident put it, "under a programme", and who is simply a tenant. Living under a programme, however, means more than service utilisation, or fulfilling one's contractual obligation to the housing authority under the terms of QWHRA (Quality Work and Housing Responsibility Act). As a perceived benefit of a mixed-income environment, living under a programme can also mean having one's own opportunity structure revitalised in a process parallelling the redevelopment of the site. A number of residents, in subsidised and market rate units alike, summarise mixed income in this way. As one market rate renter explains:

> "If you have someone like me and my neighbour, who are market rate, it kind of takes away the stigma of, 'Oh, this is just for people, Section 8 people, or this is just for people

> who left the projects, so it's going to be the same thing'. If you can say, 'Well, now we have people that are' ... that society would say are successful, or people who are working people, then you have people will say 'OK', and they have no problem with that over here, if you have a mixture ... you are not saturated with people who have a Section 8 mentality."

The income mix is interpreted as having an intercessory effect, improving relationships between residents at each site, as well as between the sites, given their history as traditional public housing, and the community-at-large. Mixed income is the new face of the projects. As a resident in a subsidised unit states:

> "[The presence of market rate tenants] helps the neighbourhood to bring value because of the people that come in. If they are paying market rent, they aren't hanging out with hoodlums. To me, it makes me feel that I'm not just living in the projects."

Another resident makes clear that opportunity is the product of aesthetic improvements that have been designed principally to attract tenants of higher socioeconomic status:

> "You can see how the neighbourhood is going up over here, it makes people just want to do more, and you can, you know, anticipate better things happening in the neighbourhood. I mean like ... this neighbourhood grocery store that looks run down, they are finally actually redoing it on the outside, where it kind of goes with the neighbourhood, and you can see some of the street signs now ... and they are doing the lampposts and, I mean, when you do that for neighbourhoods I think it gives people hope that it's going to be better."

There may be agreement between theory and practice as to the role of aesthetic improvements in attracting higher income tenants, but we find after this point that there is a parting of ways. In practice, aesthetics is not the precursor to economic mobility in the way that it may be hypothesised. Rather, it is made to be the very substance of mobility, or at least, perceived mobility. It is possible, even likely, that if HOPE VI were designed only to make site improvements and did not

include the mixed-income model, that residents might make a similar connection between aesthetics and opportunity, but this is not the HOPE VI that we have. The policy as it is has the discursive function of making site improvements presuppose income mix such that the two are interpreted as equivalent; the physical spaces are made nicer because middle-class people live there.

Beyond the fences: mixed-income complexes and neighbourhood change

Resident interviews also provide some information on how HOPE VI might change a neighbourhood. One resident noted that there were early signs of gentrification around Sam Levy, as white residents started moving into a predominantly African American neighbourhood:

> "I've gone and talked to the neighbours who are buying and redoing the houses. I would say that they're neighbours you don't normally expect. I will admit that this is a predominately black neighbourhood. Now it is kind of weird because you see white people. That's what people are starting to do over here. It's not just a black neighbourhood any more."

Certainly there are signs of neighbourhood change around Sam Levy, but it is limited in scope. Our own neighbourhood audits have identified three blocks directly adjacent to the complex where a number of homes have been refurbished, but we estimate that there are no more than approximately 30 homes that show outward signs of significant investment, despite Sam Levy having been rebuilt five years ago. Certainly the neighbourhood is changing, but it has not substantially changed.

This respondent identified that higher-income residents are often able to demand change from governmental and other authorities, but noted that the change she saw around Sam Levy was limited in scope:

> R: "I'm very familiar with the neighbourhood. The only problem I would say over here is because of the way the neighbourhood was before this, I think people are just stuck that they only have to provide simple services to cater to the people who were here before. And I just don't feel like because you live in low income housing that everything around you has to cater to low-income people. You know,

> not saying that you are better than anybody like that, but a lot of the work that I do is in Brentwood and Franklin so when you are around other people and you see a better quality of life and that's what I'm used to even though I can't afford it. That's what I'm used to so when I try to find services around here you see that they still cater to what was here before and that's just kind of hard for me to deal with...."

She compares the services and amenities available at Sam Levy to Brentwood and Franklin, two areas of the city that are quite wealthy. While she herself would like to have some of the same services available to her, she notes that that the neighbourhood currently houses services and amenities for a low income population – perhaps because the number of middle-income residents in this neighbourhood is still too low to provide sufficient demand for different services and amenities.

Conclusion

Examination of the HOPE VI sites in Nashville challenges one of the major theoretical justifications for mixed-income developments, namely that the lower-income residents will benefit from the social and cultural capital of the higher-income residents. While we have documented a willingness on the part of both lower-income and higher-income HOPE VI residents to participate in such exchanges (a willingness, it must be said, which has been untested by their actual participation in such an exchange), we have found very little evidence to suggest that they actually do. The narratives of personal success and improvement that are present in our interviews with residents attribute success to the provision of affordable housing and programmatic supports like credit counselling, savings programmes and occupational training. What is remarkable in these sites is a systemic lack of resident interaction, particularly in regard to networking towards opportunity.

There are a number of reasons for this lack of interaction around opportunity. Residents themselves frequently cite the obligations of their pre-existing job or schooling commitments, combined with the need to raise their families, as precluding wider contact with their neighbours. As such, the very requirements of residence at HOPE VI, namely that one must work or be enrolled full time in an educational programme, preclude the possibility of self-improvement through networking with one's neighbours. Some residents also feel hostile towards their neighbours, in some cases a class-oriented antagonism

based on the fact that residents receive similar housing despite vastly different rent payments or perceptions that the scarce spaces reserved for the very poor are being invaded by higher-income residents who are unable or unwilling to understand their needs and wants. Other residents are suspicious of their neighbours, worried that their behaviour is being constantly monitored and infractions reported to management, which then endangers their tenancy. Management itself promotes a culture that simultaneously discourages resident interactions beyond sanctioned (and perhaps controlled) social events while wanting residents to survey each other's behaviour.

It is clear from these communities that, in pursuit of promoting personal improvement among lower-income residents, it is not sufficient to simply sprinkle a limited number of higher-income residents in a historically poor community and then expect that the lower income residents, either through indirect observation of their more affluent neighbours' behaviours or through direct mentoring, will somehow become more like the higher income residents. What is less clear, however, is where the fault lies in the programme model. One could argue that there are simply not enough higher-income residents in the four Nashville HOPE VI communities, where the maximum concentration of market rate renters never exceeds 20%. Many residents reported that they interacted most with their two or three immediate neighbours, and the probability of having a market rate renter in that mix is less than 50%. Another possibility is that site management has not promoted a structure in which residents know how to find the neighbours, which could be most useful in providing resources. While residents reported participating in social events and meetings around neighbourhood problems (primarily infrastructure and nuisance concerns), opportunities for career networking through a neighbourhood directory which includes people's occupations, through formal mentoring mechanisms or through panel presentations in which successful residents talk about how they pursued their educational or career goals seemed to be non-existent.

Our study finds that living in a mixed-income environment, at least in the case of HOPE VI, has provided low-income residents with benefits, although the vast majority of these are not directly related to the income mix. Rather, in the case of public housing transformation – which has certainly had pernicious effects on displaced populations and those who cannot access the rebuilt housing – residents have benefited in a myriad of modest, yet important, ways. Alternatively, one could conclude that there was a lack of intentionality on the part of HOPE VI administrators in Nashville to promote better outcomes

for residents by leveraging neighbour-based assets and creating the enabling conditions for spillover effects. A different reading of this might be that mixed income, as it has been deployed to promote urban transformation of public housing sites around the US, has occurred in places where other development pressures do not exist, and HOPE VI administrators were aware that even modest improvement as measured by a range of people and place-based indicators would be sufficient. This does not deny that HOPE VI, or mixed-income models in general, are deeply disadvantaging to some, especially very low-income people. Mixed-income housing development may very well be neoliberal in intent by seeking to recreate urban space in a manner that increases the economic 'entrance' requirements to targeted neighbourhoods and in non-HOPE VI efforts it is likely that gentrification might occur, but mixed income as a discourse and practice is not autonomous and it operates under already existing conditions that moderate what it can produce.

Over the past 20 years there has been an urban policy emphasis on creating 'mixed-income' neighbourhoods out of ones that 'experts' have characterised, largely, as unhealthy environments. The use of mixed income to justify the wholesale displacement of former public housing residents is problematic in a variety of ways that scholars and activists alike have documented. In tandem, building on other critiques of mixed income promoting 'gentrification by stealth', our previous work highlights the ways in which people living in poverty are marginalised in mixed-income development schemes, primarily through the tendency of policy makers to conflate harsh neighbourhood conditions with the dominant discourse that concentrations of the poor are the problem. This conceptual slippage, in our estimation, is not surprising because virtually none of the literature hints at how low-income people have value in mixed-income housing development initiatives (DeFilippis and Fraser, 2010). The findings we present do not discount the possibility that many stakeholders in the city would like to see the HOPE VI, mixed-income, areas gentrify. Our goal has been to show that the narratives of those residents who were able to gain entrée to the new HOPE VI developments speak of the tangible – if modest – benefits they have experienced as a result of being able to live in quality housing; yet, these benefits have come at a cost to the 'truly disadvantaged'. Our respondents, in parallel form to promoters of HOPE VI in Nashville, largely support the displacement or exclusion of former public housing residents who once lived in the area by constructing these prior inhabitants as the problem, as rational actors who somehow could have singlehandedly improved their public housing development even in the

face of decades of government neglect and negative public sentiment toward allocating the needed resources to address systemic poverty.

It would be difficult to make the case that these new residents, or the population shifts in neighbourhoods surrounding these redeveloped housing estates, constitute gentrification. This is because the socioeconomic 'mix' that HOPE VI has generated is truly modest. We suggest that the more significant aspect of these initiatives to transform urban space is the hegemony of mixed-income policies. Even in the face of growing evidence that mixed-income housing development does not ameliorate poverty for very low-income households, policy makers enthusiastically support it as a strategy. More importantly for our case study, low-income residents who have been able to move into these redeveloped areas (whether they be market rate or subsidised units) provide narratives suggesting that the mixed-income component of their new environment is inoperative in any sense of providing a public good that individuals can access. Alternatively, the effectiveness of using mixed-income approaches to frame the transformation of urban space is evidenced in the ways in which the same residents distinguish themselves as being different from the prior residents. Their accounts suggest an alignment with the state in that current residents view themselves as legitimate rights-bearers to this improved housing and environment, and many of them identify the prior residents in much the same way as the prior housing, out of place. While gentrification may be the desire and outcome of many urban redevelopment efforts operating under the banner of mixed-income, context is important to recognise the multitude of ways that it operates to provide advantage for some while erasing the citizenship rights of others.