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There goes our family friendly neighborhood: residents' perceptions of institutionally driven inner-city revitalization in Buffalo, NY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines residents' perceptions of inner-city revitalization in legacy cities. The analysis focuses on neighborhoods undergoing revitalization in a legacy city, Buffalo, NY. The article draws from data for a larger research project called Turning the Corner which was sponsored by the Urban Institute. The focus of that project was to identify planning strategies to address negative externalities caused by neighborhood change and heightened risks of displacement due to revitalization. Data were collected through a series of focus groups with residents and stakeholders in working-class, minority neighborhoods which were identified as being in the early stages of revitalization. Two findings emerged from the analysis. First, residents perceived urban revitalization to have a destabilizing effect on traditional neighborhoods. Second, residents perceived revitalization as detrimental to the sustainability of family-friendly neighborhoods. Insights from the analysis are used to prompt planners' advocacy for revitalization strategies aimed at protecting minority, working-class neighborhoods when institutionally driven revitalization occurs.

KEYWORDS

Neighborhood revitalization; eds and meds; residential displacement; family friendliness

Introduction

This article builds on prior research examining processes of core city revitalization and gentrification. In particular, it focuses on residents' perceptions of the neighborhood revitalization process. Prior research has argued that anchor institutions, like large non-profit hospitals and universities, play a growing role in the revitalization and gentrification of core city neighborhoods (Adams, 2003, 2014; Bartik & Erickcek, 2008; Mallach & Brachman, 2013; Sterrett, 2009). Although some of the initial discussions of institutionally driven urban revitalization focus on the synergies and benefits of university and hospital expansion in core city neighborhoods impacted by decades of disinvestment, subsequent scholarship has argued that institutional investments in inner-city neighborhoods can also result in neighborhood disruption and residential displacement

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(Ehlenz, 2016; Hyra, 2015; Silverman, Lewis, & Patterson, 2014; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2018). This research offers extensions to this line of inquiry by examining how renters, homeowners and other neighborhood stakeholders perceive the dynamics of anchor-driven revitalization in core city neighborhoods.

This article argues that anchor-driven revitalization heightens residents' concerns about changes in the structure and function of neighborhoods. In particular, this form of revitalization, which focuses on mixed-use development and attracting new residents, such as college students and members of the creative class, transforms core city neighborhoods from affordable, working-class residential spaces to places that accommodate the needs of more footloose and transient constituencies. With this transformation, the function of traditional core city neighborhoods is supplanted. This shift is most pronounced in residents' descriptions of the decline of family friendliness resulting from anchor-driven revitalization.

The analysis focuses on core city neighborhoods undergoing revitalization in Buffalo, NY. Like other legacy cities, Buffalo is a city that has experienced decades of population decline, employment losses, housing abandonment, and property demolition (Silverman, Patterson, Yin, Ranahan, & Wu, 2016; Silverman, Yin, & Patterson, 2013; Weaver, Bagchi-Sen, Knight, & Frazier, 2017). Against this backdrop, there has been growing boosterism in recent years among city officials, and local development interests fed by, "nascent revitalization in select urban neighborhoods [that] has prompted a flurry of articles depicting the city as a paradise for young, hip millennials" (Renn, 2015). City boosters point to investments by local hospitals, universities and other anchor institutions as evidence of revitalization in Buffalo's core city neighborhoods. Despite the presence of a new investment in and near downtown Buffalo, the long-term trajectory of the city and the region remains unchanged. Buffalo is projected to continue to lose population and housing stock into the future, raising questions about the implications of anchor-driven revitalization on the sustainability of traditional, family-friendly neighborhoods adjacent to their campuses and physical plants. This issue is examined in this paper, and it concludes with a discussion of the need for planners to take the lead in addressing it.

Literature review

From traditional neighborhoods to chic 24/7 enclaves

In her classic work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) describes the social function of traditional, core city neighborhoods. She coins the phrase *eyes on the street* to capture the ways that residents in these neighborhoods surveille their surroundings, monitor the activities of children, and serve as watch posts against strangers. The eyes on the street

role of residents in traditional neighborhoods fills a social control function similar to the one based on primordial ties described by Suttles (1968). In many respects, core city neighborhoods that are in the process of revitalizing in legacy cities were once like the traditional neighborhoods described by Jacobs and Suttles. However, their revitalization entails a transformation of their form and social function. The reimagined traditional core city neighborhood is a chic 24/7 enclave where residents live, work, and play. As Birch (2009) describes, it is a mixed-use environment with a diverse employment base built around anchor institutions, commercial activities, cultural and entertainment venues, and housing marketed toward empty nesters, knowledge workers, and college students.

Chic 24/7 enclaves diverge from traditional, core city neighborhoods, since they are no longer working-class, family-centric, and residential in character. Instead, they place the veneer of a traditional neighborhood on one built to satisfy the tastes and consumption patterns of what Florida (2002) has described as the *creative class*. As neighborhoods transition, there is a cultural shift and new consumption patterns emerged. This is typified by the emergence of new businesses like gourmet coffee shops, yoga studios, trendy restaurants, jazz clubs, and other establishments catering to the tastes of new residents and commuters from outside the area. Through the revitalization process, traditional neighborhoods have changed in a manner that has weakened their social control function. As new more footloose residents arrive and participate in the emerging consumption culture, long-term residents lose their sense of place and the ability to effectively put their eyes on the street and monitor neighborhood conditions.

At the same time, the balance between what Logan and Molotch (1987) call *use and exchange values* have shifted. In traditional neighborhoods, the emphasis was on the use value that residents derived from their neighborhoods and the amenities that they provided. Amenities like parks, recreational spaces, public schools, religious institutions, and police and fire protection were central to the maintenance of residents' quality of life and their ability to access opportunities for intergenerational mobility. In chic 24/7 enclaves, greater emphasis is placed on exchange values that new residents, anchor institutions, and other stakeholders derive from neighborhoods. In these settings, relations are more transactional, and public amenities are increasingly privatized. This transformation makes it increasingly difficult for working-class families to carve out a niche in revitalizing core city neighborhoods. This transformation is not the result of a passive response to market demand. Instead, scholars like Baldwin (2015) point out that the transformation of neighborhood life and consumption patterns is the result of active intervention by anchor institutions. He argues that this process has produced a new neighborhood form called "UniverCities" which intentionally create chic 24/7 enclaves that support the expansion of the arts and media economy (Baldwin, 2015, p. 83).

The search for family friendliness in transitioning neighborhoods

There has been a sea change in the way urban planners fit family friendliness into neighborhood revitalization strategies. Before the advent of planning for chic 24/7 enclaves, family friendliness was a central focus of revitalization efforts in core city neighborhoods. This earlier approach was epitomized by Varady and Raffel (1995) who laid out a strategy for neighborhood revitalization based on attracting homebuyers through schools and housing programs. This strategy focused on attracting middle-class families to cities by increasing opportunities for homeownership and improving the quality of public schools. Silverman (2014) offered extensions to this planning approach by recommending additional policies aimed at retaining working-class households such as expanded affordable housing programs and wraparound services for families. However, the centrality of family-friendliness in core city neighborhood revitalization has faded with the advent of planning for chic 24/7 enclaves. Scholars can debate why family friendliness is no longer a central component of neighborhood planning in core cities, but the model for anchor-based revitalization represents a paradigm shift from prior frameworks for neighborhood planning influenced by Jacobs (1961) and policies articulated by Varady and Raffel (1995).

In response to this shift, there have been emergent calls to reassert the role of planning for family friendliness in core city revitalization. These calls are primarily found in studies of cities outside of the United States where core city revitalization has been underway for several decades. Drianda (2018), who is based in Tokyo, reviewed the literature on family-friendly cities and offers a generally applicable definition of the characteristics of family friendliness that can be applied to a variety of urban contexts. She argues that, “[a] city that is affordable, safe, and offers good education quality for children can be defined as the simplest version of what a family friendly city should be – regardless of size and density” (Drianda, 2018, p. 9). These three pillars of family friendliness (housing affordability, safety, and quality schools) echo the characteristics of traditional, core city neighborhoods. The reemergence of these themes in the literature reflects a growing schism between proponents of revitalization focused on creating chic 24/7 enclaves and those advocating for the development of traditional neighborhoods in core cities.

This schism is also reflected in Karsten’s (2014) analysis of growing demands for family-centric revitalization in Amsterdam as younger childless households enter their family formation years. Although Karsten focuses on middle-class gentrifiers, her conclusions have resonance for a broader cross-section of households. She finds that as this cohort moves into its family formation years, demand increases for parks and recreational spaces, improved schools, and services that cater to the needs of families with children. This cohort effect results in the need for urban planners to transition from an emphasis on creating chic 24/7 enclaves to a more sustainable approach built on traditional neighborhood amenities.

Van Den Berg (2013) expands on these insights in her analysis of growing demand for family-friendly policies in Rotterdam. She points out that current discussions of family friendliness often entail planning strategies that differentiate between retaining *high-potential* families and displacing *opportunity-poor* families in core city neighborhoods. In essence, she critiques contemporary family friendly planning that focuses on strategies for revitalization that caters to middle-class, high-potential families while underserving working-class and poor families. She concludes that in contemporary planning frameworks, “child friendly” means “middle-class friendly” and revitalization plans driven by these frameworks benefit the middle-class while further marginalizing the poor (Van Den Berg, 2013, p. 534). As a result, she calls for the erasure of distinctions between high-potential and opportunity-poor families and the adoption of more encompassing family friendly plans that focus on producing equitable outcomes for long-term, working-class residents in transitioning communities.

This sentiment is echoed in Nethercote’s (2017) analysis of life-stage specific displacement pressures that families encounter due to concerns about substandard schools in Melbourne’s urban core. She argues that the lack of family-friendly elements in Melbourne’s core city revitalization strategies has resulted in the displacement of families. Her focus is on how the nexus between the unavailability of public investments in family friendly housing, neighborhood amenities, and quality schools leads to the displacement of families from the urban core. Nethercote’s critique is potent, because it highlights how planning inaction and disinvestment in social infrastructure produces an unsustainable environment for families in core city neighborhoods. Like other scholars, she advocates for a retreat from policies where revitalization focuses on the creation of chic 24/7 enclaves and a return to planning for traditional neighborhoods that offer a mix of public amenities and services that are accessible to residents across the income spectrum.

Although the literature identifying the need for family-friendly revitalization in the urban core is more focused on the experiences of core cities outside of the United States. The issue of family friendliness is an emergent theme in domestic scholarship. For instance, Goodsell (2013) discussed how a city in Utah departed from strategies to pursue revitalization emphasizing the development of chic 24/7 enclaves and opted to pursue revitalization focused on family-based development. Similarly, Mallach (2018) has identified the growing need for family-friendly revitalization in urban core areas to address accelerating black middle-class flight from cities across the U.S.¹

Methods

This article draws from data collected in Buffalo for a larger research project called Turning the Corner, which was done in collaboration with the Urban Institute and partners from other cities across the United States. The project applied

a community-driven methodology designed to amplify the voices of minority and working-class residents. It paralleled some of the tools and techniques applied in other community-based analyses (Keita, Hannon, Buys, Casazza, & Clay, 2016; Sandoval & Rongerude, 2015; Walker & East, 2014). The focus of that project was to identify planning strategies to address negative externalities caused by neighborhood change and heightened risks of displacement due to revitalization. Data used in this analysis were collected through a series of focus groups with renters, homeowners, and other stakeholders in three working-class, minority neighborhoods in Buffalo that were identified as being in the early stages of neighborhood revitalization. The three neighborhoods examined in this analysis were identified in collaboration with citywide stakeholders from local government, the non-profit development community, and higher education using an adaptation of the methodology developed by Lisa Bates (2013) to identify neighborhoods at risk of gentrification and displacement. That methodology involved the examination of neighborhood indicators and the ranking of neighborhoods in collaboration with community-based stakeholders.

After selecting the three study neighborhood, the research team worked with a community advisory panel composed of representatives from each of the study neighborhoods to identify renters, homeowners, and other neighborhood stakeholders to recruit for focus groups. A total of nine focus groups were held across the three neighborhoods experiencing encroachment due to institutional investments. Separate focus group were held in each neighborhood with renters, homeowners, and other stakeholders. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the focus group participants. The focus groups were held during the fall of 2017, each had an average of 6.4 participants, and each lasted approximately 2 h. Each focus group was asked questions from an interview guide that included three grand tour questions and 15 probes. The questions asked about participants' perceptions of changes occurring in their neighborhoods, institutions driving those changes, and their effects on the quality of neighborhood life. The data collected from the focus groups were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using

Table 1. Characteristics of the focus group participants (N = 58).

Variable	Value
Average focus group size	6.4
Percent homeowners	34.5
Percent renters	29.3
Percent other stakeholders	36.2
Percent male	38
Percent female	62
Percent age 18–35	8
Percent age 36–64	32
Percent age 65 and over	60
Percent white	22.5
Percent black	63.3
Percent Latino	10.2
Percent other	4

ATLAS.ti software. The analysis was guided by standpoint theory, which focuses on amplifying the voices of groups traditionally disenfranchised from the planning and policy processes (Adler & Jermier, 2005; Anderson, 2017).

Family friendliness in Buffalo's transitioning neighborhoods

The shift from traditional, core city neighborhoods to chic 24/7 enclaves is expressed in a specific manner in legacy cities. Like other cities, these changes are characterized by a loss of families in transitioning neighborhoods. However, the loss of families in legacy cities is also embedded in broader patterns of population decline that characterize these places. One way to understand this transition is to examine demographic trends using data from the United States Census. After examining these data, they are contextualized through a discussion of residents' perceptions of neighborhood revitalization processes.

Demographic change

The three neighborhoods (Fruit Belt, Lower West Side, and Ellicott) where focus group data were collected for this analysis are shown in [Figure 1](#). The neighborhoods are all located adjacent to downtown Buffalo and large anchor institutions. In each neighborhood, anchor driven revitalization is occurring. For instance, the Fruit Belt neighborhood is impacted by the expansion of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) and the University at Buffalo Medical School. This expansion was underway for over a decade by the time this research was initiated. The expansion entailed the construction of two hospitals and new medical school, as well as ancillary development in the Fruit Belt neighborhood. The Lower West Side is impacted by the recent expansion of D'Youville College and development in downtown Buffalo. Similarly, the Ellicott neighborhood is impacted by development adjacent to downtown Buffalo and other spillover effects from eds and meds development in the other neighborhoods. In all three neighborhoods, private real estate development has followed larger institutions' investments. These development activities have been guided by an eds and meds strategy embraced by local universities, hospitals, and governmental agencies. At the heart of this strategy is the goal of transforming the region's declining twentieth-century industrial economy into a knowledge-based economy driven by medical research, biomedical technology, and regional health-care services.

[Table 2](#) displays the population and housing characteristics of the study neighborhoods, the city of Buffalo, and Erie County, NY. [Table 3](#) summarizes trends between 2010 and 2016 in the data across the three geographies. Examining the data for these three geographies allows for an analysis of core city neighborhood change within the municipal and regional contexts in which it is embedded. Several things stand out about population trends in

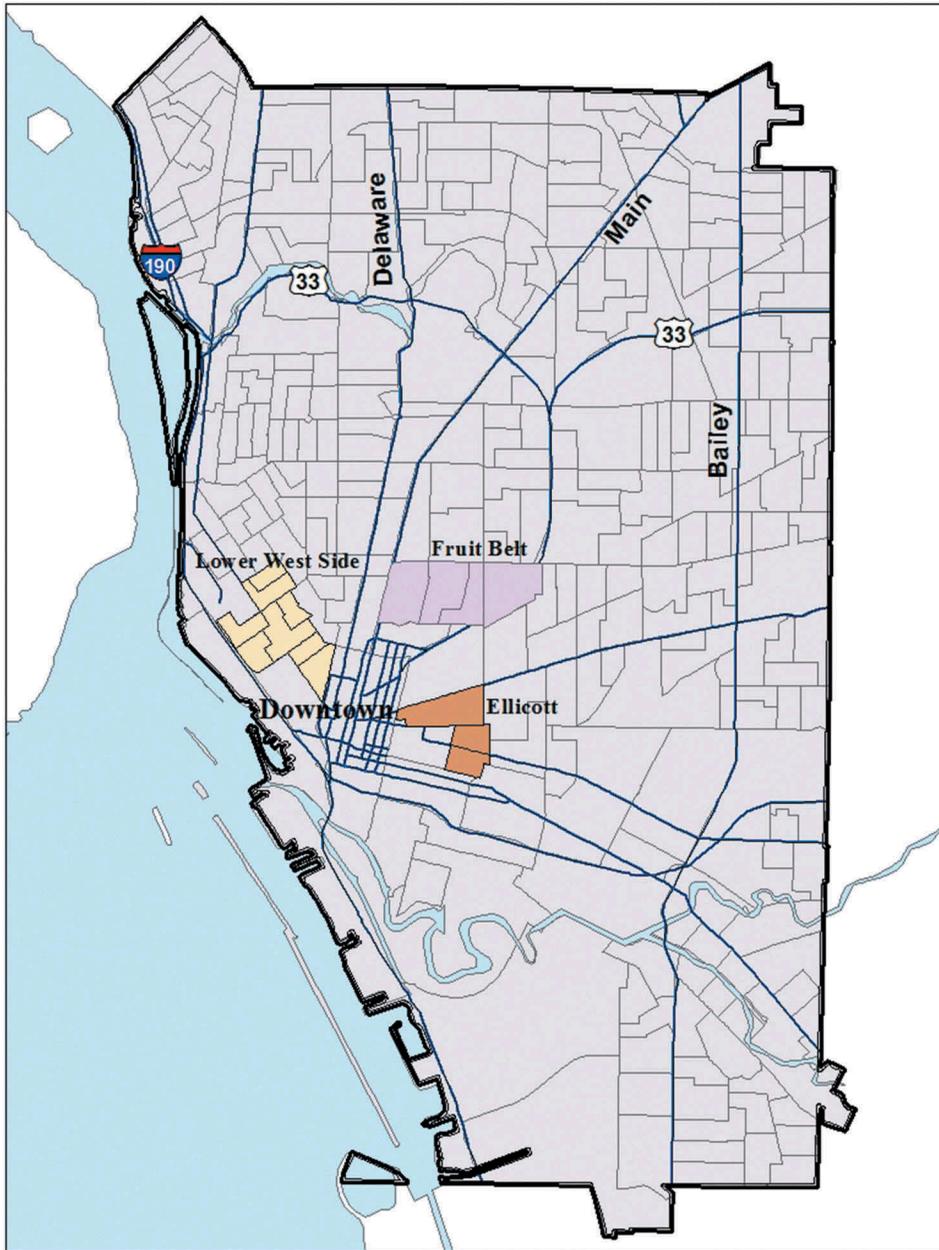


Figure 1. Three study neighborhoods where focus groups were held.

Tables 2 and 3. First, the overall population declined most dramatically in the study neighborhoods where 15.7% of the population was lost between 2010 and 2016. This decline was largely attributed to the loss of residents under the age of 18, resulting in a noticeable increase in the median age of the population between 2010 and 2016. The racial composition also shifted most dramatically in the study neighborhoods where the largest racial group,

Table 2. Population and housing characteristics of the study neighborhoods, the City of Buffalo, and Erie County.

	2010			2016		
	Neighborhoods		Erie county	Neighborhoods		Erie county
	Neighborhoods	Buffalo	921,202	Neighborhoods	Buffalo	922,129
TOTAL POPULATION	12,494	266,012	921,202	10,528	258,989	922,129
AGE						
Under 18yrs	3,298	64,961	204,786	2,255	59,181	191,332
<i>Percent Under 18yrs</i>	26.4	24.4	22.2	21.4	22.9	20.7
Median Age	33.1	33.9	40.0	36.0	32.9	40.4
RACE						
White	4,012	137,897	741,195	3,656	124,581	722,667
<i>Percent White</i>	32.1	51.8	80.5	34.7	48.1	78.4
Black	6,170	102,236	123,134	4,324	96,576	123,382
<i>Percent Black</i>	49.4	38.4	13.4	41.1	37.3	13.4
American Indian	161	1,721	4,979	51	1,094	4,353
<i>Percent American Indian</i>	1.3	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5
Asian	117	6,686	22,858	97	12,611	30,607
<i>Percent Asian</i>	0.9	2.5	2.5	0.9	4.9	3.3
HISPANIC ETHNICITY						
Hispanic	3,443	24,177	39,332	3,481	28,118	46,752
<i>Percent Hispanic</i>	27.6	9.1	4.3	33.1	10.9	5.1
HOUSEHOLDS	5,556	112,844	378,080	5,012	109,668	382,822
Households with Children	1,745	33,550	110,925	1,420	30,885	103,754
<i>Percent with Children Under 18yrs</i>	31.4	29.7	29.3	28.3	28.2	27.1
Single Parent Households	1,335	21,614	41,144	1,038	19,774	41,258
<i>Percent with Children Under 18yrs</i>	24.0	19.2	10.9	20.7	18.0	10.8
3YRS & OVER ENROLLED IN SCHOOL	3,918	79,344	246,718	2,571	71,310	226,938
Pre-School to 12th Grade	2,789	53,206	170,508	1,834	46,296	154,331
<i>Percent Pre-School to 12th Grade</i>	71.2	67.1	69.1	71.3	64.9	68.0
College	1,129	26,138	76,210	737	25,014	72,607
<i>Percent College</i>	28.8	32.9	30.9	28.7	35.1	32.0
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	7,098	139,174	420,432	6,312	130,977	421,361
Vacant	1,542	26,330	42,352	1,300	21,309	38,539
<i>Percent Vacant</i>	21.7	18.9	10.1	20.6	16.3	9.2
OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	5,556	112,844	378,080	5,012	109,668	382,822
Renter Occupied	4,049	64,017	127,842	3,642	64,274	133,007
<i>Percent Renter Occupied</i>	72.9	56.7	33.8	72.7	58.6	34.7
MEDIAN VALUE	\$60,751	\$65,700	\$117,700	\$92,370	\$72,600	\$134,600
MEDIAN GROSS RENT	\$493	\$646	\$686	\$584	\$710	\$752

Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2010 and 2016 five-year estimates



Table 3. Change in the study neighborhoods, the City of Buffalo, and Erie County, 2010–2016.

	Change 2010–2016			Percent Change 2010–2016		
	Neighborhoods	Buffalo	Erie County	Neighborhoods	Buffalo	Erie County
TOTAL POPULATION						
AGE						
Under 18yrs	-1,043	-5,780	-13,454	-31.6	-9.8	-7.0
Median Age	2.9	-1.0	0.4	8.8	-3.0	1.0
RACE						
White	-356	-13,316	-18,528	-8.9	-10.7	-2.6
Black	-1,846	-5,660	248	-29.9	-5.9	0.2
American Indian	-110	-627	-626	-68.3	-57.3	-14.4
Asian	-20	5,925	7,749	-17.1	47.0	25.3
HISPANIC ETHNICITY						
Hispanic	38	3,941	7,420	1.1	14.0	15.9
HOUSEHOLDS						
Households with Children	-544	-3,176	4,742	-9.8	-2.9	1.2
Single Parent Households	-325	-2,665	-7,171	-18.6	-8.6	-6.9
	-297	-1,840	114	-22.2	-9.3	0.3
3YRS & OVER ENROLLED IN SCHOOL						
Pre-School to 12th Grade	-1,347	-8,034	-19,780	-34.4	-10.1	-8.0
College	-955	-6,910	-16,177	-34.2	-14.9	-10.5
	-392	-1,124	-3,603	-34.7	-4.5	-5.0
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS						
Vacant	-786	-8,197	929	-11.1	-5.9	0.2
Occupied	-242	-5,021	-3,813	-15.7	-19.1	-9.0
OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS						
Renter Occupied	-544	-3,176	4,742	-9.8	-2.8	1.3
Owner Occupied	-407	257	5,165	-10.1	0.4	4.0
MEDIAN VALUE						
	\$31,619	\$6,900	\$16,900	52.0	10.5	14.4
MEDIAN GROSS RENT						
	\$91	\$64	\$66	18.5	9.9	9.6

Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2010 and 2016 five-year estimates

African Americans, declined by 29.9% between 2010 and 2016. These shifts were also reflected in the accelerated rates of decline in the study neighborhoods in terms of: the total number of households, households with children under 18yrs, single-parent households, and school enrollment.

Some distinct trends related to housing characteristics were also visible in [Tables 2](#) and [3](#). First, the number of housing units declined most dramatically, by 11.1%, in the study neighborhoods. Moreover, despite losing 15.7% of its vacant units between 2010 and 2016, the vacancy rate remained higher than the city and county at 20.6% in 2016. The study area was predominantly renter-occupied, even though the number of rental units declined by 10.1% between 2010 and 2016. Most noticeable, the study neighborhood experienced the highest increases in median property values and rents of the three geographies, with property values increasing by 52.0%, and rents increasing by 18.5% between 2010 and 2016.

The data in [Tables 2](#) and [3](#) suggest that the study neighborhoods were becoming less family friendly as anchor-based revitalization unfolded between 2010 and 2016. Although similar demographic trends were observable in Buffalo and Erie County, they were most pronounced in neighborhoods undergoing revitalization. Residents perceived that this revitalization emphasized the creation of a chic 24/7 enclave as opposed to a focus on amenities and services that sustain traditional neighborhoods. This emphasis was considered detrimental to family friendliness. An analysis of residents' perceptions highlights this issue.

Residents' perceptions

Quiet residential neighborhoods

A recurrent theme emerged across the focus groups. Residents perceived their neighborhoods as quiet residential areas. This was expressed in a number of ways. For example, one homeowner described his neighborhood in this manner, "it is a really quiet neighborhood, it's an aging neighborhood, and it is a very quiet neighborhood and a lot of people feel comfortable." Other residents describe their neighborhoods in similar terms, as being: "peaceful," places where there was "quiet in the streets," places characterized by "peace and quiet," and "a getaway" from the problems of the city. The perception of the neighborhoods as a quiet residential area were not just held by long-term residents. Newcomers to the areas gravitated toward them because of their reputation as traditional residential neighborhoods insulated from the rest of the city. For instance, a newcomer to one neighborhood made this comment about why she chose to move to her neighborhood from other areas of the city that had gentrified earlier:

I moved here because I had rented in places like Allentown, Bryant, Elmwood, West Side, and I was ready to buy a house. I could afford those places, [but] I kind of didn't want to live there anymore, because I didn't like the neighborhoods anymore. Like people weren't nice. Too many snooty restaurants. Nowhere to just

park my one tiny, little car. The people here are friendly. There's a little bit of space. It's quiet. But, you're still in the city.

This resident expresses a preference for a traditional neighborhood because it offered a different mix of amenities and a social environment that was less pretentious and more affable.

Focus group participants also described the traditional neighborhood context of the areas where they lived in relation to a sense of neighborliness and social controls. A number of residents described how Jacob's (1961) concept of eyes on street was functioning in their neighborhoods. One homeowner said, "I love the block that I live on because I've met almost everyone in the houses there, I know their names, we talk to each other." Another pointed out that, "people are out on the street in a walkable, safe community where people recognize what's going on." A rented made this comment, describing how eyes on the street functioned in his neighborhood:

I'm a retired person. My wife and I are both retired. So I always have my antennas up to make sure everything, my family is safe, my neighbors are safe. I've been in Buffalo all my life, but I just transitioned here about, maybe, five years ago. The neighbors in our neighborhood are very courteous and very kind. They look out for each other. Which I really appreciate.

The characterization of the neighborhoods as quiet residential places with eyes on the street highlights how residents valued traditional neighborhoods and the quality of life provided by this type of residential setting. However, residents expressed concerns about how their neighborhoods' identities were changing as anchor-driven revitalization accelerated and a new mix of people entered them. These concerns were often framed in discussions of how eds and meds revitalization focused on attracting empty nesters, the creative class, college students, and childless millennials had made the neighborhoods less family friendly.

Displacing families by design. Across the focus groups residents describe how families were being replaced by newcomers. In some cases, residents attributed this shift to the aging population in their neighborhoods. For instance, a stakeholder in one neighborhood pointed out that:

I think one of our major issues, in terms of the housing, is we have a lot of senior owners who are dying off and the properties are becoming dormant. I guess the millennials are not taking ownership of those properties. So they either go into foreclosure or they go to demolition.

Revitalization in legacy cities is somewhat paradoxical. It occurs against the backdrop of population decline, demolition, and repurposing of properties for an emerging eds and meds economy. Through this process, there is a loss of housing inventory that was previously occupied by families. Replacement

housing is often composed of smaller units with fewer bedrooms and it is marketed toward different demographic groups.

As long-term residents age out of traditional neighborhoods, remaining housing is occupied by newcomers. One homeowner reflected on how the process of neighborhood change unfolds:

The neighborhood is somewhat opening up to the city in terms of people moving in. Prior to that, it was family based. You know. We knew everyone. Everyone that basically moved into the area was a member of a family. There were a lot of those clusters. Now there are people who are here that are from other parts of the city, and other parts of the country, and the world. So, it is very diverse, or becoming very diverse.

Growing diversity in the neighborhoods reflected the shift from traditional neighborhoods to revitalization focused on creating a chic 24/7 enclave. One stakeholder observed that this shift included the replacement of families with student renter. He said that in apartments in his neighborhood, “it used to be families, now it’s all students.” He went on to describe how these newcomers to the community had change the fabric of neighborhood life, saying that student renters had, “thrown a few parties here and there, like on Halloween I was walking to my house and I was like, ‘please tell me this music is going to stop soon’.” Demographic change in the neighborhoods was accompanied by a change in the character of residential life. Transitioning neighborhoods were no longer quiet, residential areas.

Declining inventory and the entrance of newcomers led to increased housing costs for neighborhood residents. Across the neighborhoods, residents expressed concerns about rising rents and home values. A stakeholder working for a community-based organization who was interested in moving to one of the neighborhoods made this comment about rising housing costs:

[When] you start looking into the prices, the rents, you’re like, “you’ve got to have lost your mind. I’m not paying \$1,300 for a one- or two-bedroom apartment.” You can go luxury all you want, but it’s certainly not my luxury. I thought it was ridiculous. I’m coming from a suburb and my mortgage is lower than that, and I have 2,400 square feet of house with a backyard that is half the size of the Buffalo Bills’ [field]. So it’s like how would I pay \$1,300 for a two-bedroom apartment? Because you have a nice dishwasher? It was really disturbing for me to see that. Because I’m like, “they’re pushing everybody out. They are pushing the people that make this community what it is out.”

Another stakeholder who works at a community center discussed similar frustrations when she searched for housing in one of the neighborhoods. She described how her efforts to purchase a house in the neighborhood where she worked were thwarted due to rising property values:

I’m a single mom, so I have a standard that I would like to have [for] my daughter where we’re going to be. Understand that I would love to be in my community, but

unfortunately I cannot afford the rates that they're asking for now, for a house that's livable. I had to enter into a contract for a home that is not in the city of Buffalo, so I feel that I have been betrayed by a city that I know and love, and I've lived here for over 10 years.

For renters and prospective homeowners, revitalization has led to higher housing prices and barriers to entry. It is noteworthy that in the two examples given above, the stakeholders' searching for housing lived in households with school-age children. They faced a similar dilemma of weighing relative costs and benefits of neighborhood amenities in the city and suburbs as described by Mallach (2018). Like households with children, older homeowners and renters expressed similar concerns about the effects of institutional investment and real estate speculation on housing affordability.

In addition to rising housing prices, rehabilitated and new replacement housing units developed as a result of the revitalization process were perceived to have less living space. As one stakeholder observed, "I would like to see more two-, three-, and four-bedrooms family rental units, but 90% of the new units coming into the neighborhood are one-bedrooms which only helps, and only targets, a certain market." Another stakeholder shared the same sentiment, pointing out that, "we need more housing in reference to people with families." A renter from another neighborhood concurred saying that, "it's hard for a family to have a nice home" in her area. As the availability of larger homes became more scarce, the composition of households changed and the neighborhoods were perceived as less welcoming to families.

Dismantling family friendly social infrastructure

Rising housing costs and the loss of larger units contributes to family unfriendliness in neighborhoods, but it also results in neighborhood-wide changes in social infrastructure. One homeowner made this statement about how the lack of community centers, youth programs, and other social infrastructure made his neighborhood appear family unfriendly:

[T]here was a very clear realization that there wasn't anything here for [neighborhood youth] other than to go to school and live in a house. Seeing that there weren't any job opportunities. You know. All of the things that should have been in place for our young people to say to them, "we are investing in you because we want you to stay in Buffalo, and we want you to grow up and work here, and stay here, and build a life here." There wasn't any of that. So it's difficult to try to get a response back from somebody who you're not investing in who says, "I'm going to pick up the litter," or "I'm not going to take something from down the street if I like it," or "I'm not going to take something from down the street and walk away." You know what I'm saying? We haven't done anything in terms of the leadership in this city that's in place. We haven't seen or done anything that says, "we're investing in our kids in this community."

Other residents made similar statements, pointing out that public and philanthropic investments in the renovation and upkeep of community centers and other neighborhood amenities lagged behind other parts of the city. In addition, residents indicated that there were not enough programs and organized activities for youth. As one stakeholder who worked at a community center put it, “we have a little program, a little room, and there should be more happening for the people that live here.”

One of the most impactful forms of social infrastructure on family friendliness is public education. The quality of Buffalo’s public school systems was repeatedly mentioned as an influential factor contributing to residential outmigration from the neighborhoods and the city. Although a citywide issue, the prioritization of investments in the public school system is undercut when the economic development strategy embraced by institutions does not prioritize the development of family-oriented infrastructure. To some degree, an eds and meds strategy focused on attracting empty nesters, the creative class, college students, and childless millennials to the city pushes development that benefit families to the periphery. In this policy milieu, inattention to the quality of the public school system served as a trigger for outmigration when younger residents reached their family formation years. This is reflected in the following comment made by a renter:

When somebody comes into a neighborhood, they are new, and they are freshly married, and everything is good. They are happy because there is a lot of action in the city. A lot of places to go, a lot of places to have fun. [Then they have] children and the education system isn’t what they hoped it would be. The education system that we have actually forces people that come in before they have kids, now to seek education elsewhere. Whether it’s private school or back to the suburbs.

This pattern was elaborated upon in the following comment made by a homeowner:

Young people. They’re having kids. And we all see what happens with the public school system. If the Buffalo Public Schools don’t get their act together. I don’t know. We’re going to see a migration back out again. What happened next door to me. A young woman bought the house and she quickly married and had two kids, and then moved to Williamsville and was an absentee landlord. So that’s a phenomenon that we’re alert to. That these young couples could become absentee landlords. We do not want that in the neighborhood.

Disinvestment in public education has ripple effects on neighborhoods. Low-quality public schools are perceived as a sign of family unfriendliness, households with children are more prone to outmigration, and this results in less stable residential patterns in the neighborhoods they leave. Another homeowner summed up the cumulative impact that disinvesting in family-friendly social

infrastructure had on transitioning neighborhoods. He said that, “we haven’t seen or done anything that says we’re investing in our kids in this community.”

Conclusions

This article has examined residents’ perceptions of urban revitalization in core city neighborhoods adjacent to anchor institutions. It is argued that this type of revitalization focuses on transforming traditional neighborhoods into chic 24/7 urban enclaves that support the eds and meds economy and that this creates a less family-friendly environment. Residents perceived revitalization as disruptive to traditional social control mechanisms in residential settings, like the eyes on the street phenomenon described by Jacobs (1961). As revitalization unfolds: families compete for housing with newcomers who change the quiet neighborhood character of areas, housing costs rise and become unaffordable to working-class families, and public investments in family-friendly social infrastructure wane.

An important driver of the trajectory for neighborhood revitalization in older core cities is the eds and meds strategy that places an emphasis on reshaping the built environment in order to attract empty nesters, the creative class, college students, and childless millennials. Traditional working-class families are not central to this revitalization strategy. Thus, the revitalization and development of housing that accommodates these families, and investments in supportive infrastructure linked to schools, recreation centers, and other traditional neighborhood amenities are deemphasized in revitalization strategies endorsed by anchor institutions and the public sector. Reform-minded members of the public sector can fill a pivotal role in advocating for working-class residents in this context. In particular, they can exert greater pressure on anchor institutions and real estate developers to link the preservation of affordable, family housing into their development strategies. In addition to advocating for affordable housing for working-class families, reform-minded public officials can become more engaged in planning related to public schools and traditional neighborhood amenities.

These points are particularly relevant to planners. Insights from this analysis can be used to identify and develop planning tools that can be applied to future revitalization aimed at protecting minority, working-class neighborhoods when anchor-driven revitalization occurs. In particular, planners need to expand the scope of considerations for family-friendly social infrastructure in urban revitalization strategies. This would ensure that neighborhood revitalization is family friendly and fosters the creation of sustainable traditional neighborhoods in legacy cities. Cushing (2016) came to similar conclusions in her analysis of youth master planning efforts in cities across the United States. She found that efforts to make cities family friendly were not well integrated into broader urban plans, and urban planners were not heavily engaged in these planning exercises.

Planners need to consider the finding from this analysis and reflect on the long-term outcomes that they aspire to generate through urban revitalization. The results from this analysis suggest that family friendliness is not a core component of anchor-driven revitalization strategies. A range of factors contributes to the nature of revitalization, changing neighborhood trajectories, underperforming public schools, and other changes that result in traditional core city neighborhoods being perceived as increasingly family unfriendly. However, the absence of a discussion of the preservation of traditional, working-class neighborhoods reflects the degree to which today's institutional leaders have adopted a more circumscribed vision of what constitutes neighborhood life in a city. From the perspective of anchor-based strategies, the emerging vision of an urban neighborhood is the chic 24/7 enclave inhabited by empty nesters, the creative class, college students, and childless millennials. Absent from this vision are places for working-class families and their children. As the eds and meds economy expands in older core cities, younger households entering their family formation years will increasingly confront the contradiction between their demand for traditional neighborhoods and the chic 24/7 enclaves where they reside. Planners need to act with foresight and advocate more strongly for traditional, family-friendly neighborhoods. These types of neighborhoods, which constitute what Jacobs (1961) depicted as the life of great American cities, are essential if older core cities are to become family friendly again.

Note

1. Mallach (2018) attributes black middle-class flight to the relative differences in the quality of housing and public schools between core cities and suburbs. The analysis in this article identifies similar considerations, along with related neighborhood amenities, that feed into perceptions of family unfriendliness. Although the issue of family unfriendliness that emerged in this analysis was based on the perceptions of respondents who were predominantly minority group members, it is beyond the scope of this article's finding to specify its racial and ethnic dimensions. Future research is necessary to measure variability across racial and ethnic groups related to community perceptions of family friendliness as it pertains to the neighborhood revitalization process.

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research to understand neighborhood change and displacement risk in their communities. The Urban Institute, funded by the Kresge Foundation, is synthesizing lessons across the five cities. For more information, see <http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/turningthecorner>.

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