

Chapter 2: Overview of the 14 Neighborhoods Studied

Philip Nyden
Loyola University, Chicago

John Lukehart
Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities

Michael T. Maly
Roosevelt University

William Peterman
Chicago State University

The 14 communities studied vary significantly in both the nature of their diversity and the context within which diversity was achieved and is maintained. In the initial stages of the project, 14 neighborhoods were chosen from a pool of 77 neighborhoods in more than 20 cities. To select the final 14 neighborhoods to research, care was given to choose those that varied in relation to the following characteristics:

- Racial composition.
- The level of segregation in the city.
- The age of the city.
- The regional location of the city.
- The consistency with which informants identified the areas as diverse.
- The presence or absence of community organizations committed to sustaining diversity.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of each neighborhood and place it in the context of our diverse-by-direction and diverse-by-circumstance models. We are not rigidly classifying each community into one of the models, but rather we use the models as analytical tools for understanding what produces diversity in contemporary U.S. cities.

Model One: Diversity by Direction

In this section, four neighborhoods are introduced. Each neighborhood generally fits with the diverse-by-direction model described in chapter one. According to this model, neighborhoods became racially and ethnically diverse through conscious, directed, goal-oriented action. Biracial coalitions generally work together both to promote the benefits

of diversity and to challenge the forces perceived to be involved in pushing the community toward resegregation.

Although the communities differ from one another and have unique characteristics, they have all developed an array of community organizations, social networks, and institutional accommodations focused directly on the issue of diversity. The residents and organizations in these communities intend to welcome minority in-migrants, as well as prevent panic by the existing White households, and to reduce the power of forces that potentially undermine community stability.

Sherman Park—Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Located on Milwaukee's northwest side, Sherman Park has approximately 60,000 residents. Milwaukee was once one of the Nation's leading industrial centers, but it has experienced the negative effects of deindustrialization and inner-city disinvestment during the past 30 years. Milwaukee's racial residential patterns are characterized by intense segregation. Since the 1920s, deliberate attempts at racial exclusion and steering of African-American renters and homebuyers have led to substantial racial isolation.

In the late 1960s, Sherman Park established a record of promoting diversity and inclusivity within the neighborhood. The Sherman Park Community Association (SPCA) was formed in response to racial change occurring in surrounding neighborhoods. The neighborhood borders a low-income African-American community. Despite the changes in the Milwaukee metropolitan area, Sherman Park possesses strengths that have allowed it to continue to attract middle-class homeseekers. A mix of middle-income and affordable housing, easy access to jobs and commercial shopping, proximity to cultural attractions and events, and available public transportation all contribute to the neighborhood's attractiveness.

The positive image of Sherman Park is largely a product of efforts of SPCA. The association has been a strong force in challenging banks, developers, real estate agents, and other institutions threatening the area's diversity. SPCA's statement of purpose, developed in 1976, explains that the goal of the organization is to encourage people of "all races, religions, and national origins" to work together in creating good-quality schools, maintaining and repairing housing, and building a diverse, attractive, and convenient community.

Some factors outside Sherman Park's control have contributed to the community's ability to sustain its diversity. For example, citywide school choice eliminated many of the fears that Sherman Park's children would not have access to good-quality schools if the stereotypical pattern of African-American "invasion" took place along with the expected decline in school quality. Correct or incorrect, this type of belief could have provided the stimulus for White flight.

Over 30 years, Sherman Park has been transformed from a community that had little discernible identity and seemed fated for racial change and urban blight to a self-conscious, proactively integrated community. Credit for preventing neighborhood decline can be attributed to local efforts to marshal resources in the name of neighborhood improvement and maintenance of diversity.

Vollintine-Evergreen—Memphis, Tennessee

Vollintine-Evergreen, a neighborhood of nearly 11,000 residents 20 minutes from downtown Memphis, has a history of racial and ethnic diversity dating back to the 1960s. With its location in a medium-size Southern city, Vollintine-Evergreen contrasts with other neighborhoods in the study. A history of race relations characteristic of a Southern city and a much closer relationship between neighborhood and city leaders and institutions distinguishes Vollintine-Evergreen.

The neighborhood was evenly split between African-American and White residents in 1990. With a median income equal to that of the city and a relatively stable population, Vollintine-Evergreen has remained a viable, racially mixed community for more than 25 years. Like Sherman Park, the diversity in Vollintine-Evergreen was directed. From 1970 to 1972, ministers and churches, neighborhood organizations, and residents became actively involved in challenging practices that might have led to resegregation and undermined diversity. The Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association (VECA) was founded out of these efforts and has been the key player for maintaining racial diversity and inclusivity in the area. In addition to VECA, Rhodes College, located within Vollintine-Evergreen's boundaries, has also played an active role in maintaining the racial diversity of the neighborhood.

Vollintine-Evergreen best fits the diversity-by-design model. In the early 1970s, African-American in-migration began to occur. As in other neighborhoods, this migration led to blockbusting, fear of lower real estate values, and White flight. VECA was born as a formal organization during this period. African-American and White resident volunteers, largely church members and ministers, formed VECA to “articulate a set of values that stressed the diverse nature of the neighborhood.” The organization has maintained a diverse membership over time, and today it has a significant volunteer network that is actively involved in community-building activities. Recently, VECA received a major grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts through the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative to support community development. A principal reason VECA received the grant money was because of its long history of volunteerism and diversity.

In the past 2 years, VECA has changed, both as an organization and in the activities in which it has been engaged. The foundation money has stimulated numerous neighborhood development activities. Recognizing the success in Vollintine-Evergreen, the city of Memphis has provided new fiscal and political support for the diversity efforts.

West Mount Airy—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

West Mount Airy, a neighborhood in the northwest section of Philadelphia with a population of 14,000 in 1990, has achieved national acclaim as a model of stable racial diversity. Well-known for its maintenance of racial and ethnic diversity, the neighborhood was a logical choice for closer examination. The racial composition of the area remained almost equally split between Whites and African-Americans during the 1980s. West Mount Airy is a middle-class community with a mix of owner- and renter-occupied housing. And while the neighborhood can be termed *economically mixed*, even at the low end its median household income is higher than that of the city. Like Sherman Park and Vollintine-Evergreen, West Mount Airy has made a conscious effort to promote and channel racial and social inclusivity, thus fitting the diverse-by-direction model of urban diversity.

West Mount Airy was almost entirely White until the 1950s, when it began to experience racial change. In contrast to other areas, the neighborhood did not resegregate. Abstractly, several reasons account for the maintenance of the racial mix. Demographically, incoming African-Americans were not seen as threatening to incumbent Whites, given the social status of each group. The African-Americans moving in had relatively high incomes, occupational prestige, and overall socioeconomic status. White residents had high levels of income, education, financial stability, and liberal values. Together, these factors created a less alarming atmosphere for Whites, and as a result, White residents did not move en masse. Also, the social status of each group was buoyed by a diverse housing stock, which continues to be open to a range of income groups. Finally, its proximity to Fairmount Park, a suburbanlike atmosphere, and relative low density make West Mount Airy one of the most attractive neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

However, an even greater factor in preserving the neighborhood's diversity has been the efforts of residents and organizations to promote and sustain racial diversity. When more African-Americans started purchasing homes in West Mount Airy in the 1960s, religious congregations and resident activists responded quickly by organizing door-to-door campaigns to calm any fears that residents might have had about resegregation. At this time leaders created neighborhoodwide organizations to address a variety of issues. These initial efforts have been expanded and have led to a sustained organizational framework that promotes stable diversity. West Mount Airy is a good example of how early intervention in the process of racial change can maintain diversity.

West Mount Airy has remained diverse for nearly four decades. In many ways, the neighborhood is the typical diverse-by-direction community. Nearly all White, the neighborhood experienced in-migration of African-American households. Stable racial diversity resulted from conscious, directed, and goal-oriented actions to fight those entities that were perceived to be involved in pushing the community toward resegregation.

Park Hill—Denver, Colorado

The Greater Park Hill neighborhood, adjacent to the recently closed old Denver airport, is a community of approximately 25,000 people in the central north section of Denver. Largely residential, Park Hill's median income in 1980 was 48 percent greater than that of the city, making it solidly middle class. Like Sherman Park, Vollintine-Evergreen, and West Mount Airy, the racial diversity of Park Hill consists of the mixing of White and African-American residents. In 1990 Park Hill's population was characterized by equal percentages of each group, which had also been the case for the two preceding decades. Internally, the community is split into three sections, each marked by various degrees of racial homogeneity. However, there has been an effort to maintain the diversity of the overall neighborhood by a variety of organizations. For 34 years, a multiracial community organization dedicated to promoting inclusivity for all people has served the community. Given this long history of locally based activism focusing on maintaining its diversity, Park Hill was a good choice for in-depth study.

Park Hill's racial history is a familiar one. Park Hill was majority White until the 1950s. At that time, a community adjacent to Park Hill began to resegregate. As real estate agents used a "fill-the-block" approach, demand for more housing brought the first African-American families into Park Hill in 1956. Seven of Park Hill's largest churches joined on May 6, 1956, to urge Park Hill residents to welcome people of all colors to the neighborhood and churches. However, a White panic, largely resulting from real estate-inspired panic-peddling and blockbusting techniques, began to spread.

Park Hill residents organized to stabilize the racial diversity, and they successfully campaigned for Colorado's first statewide fair housing law. They initiated an organizing and community newspaper campaign to welcome new African-American residents and reassure White residents that their property values would not suffer. Local activists allied with resident real estate agents and created cooperative advertisements that featured Park Hill's attractions: good-quality schools, a nearby zoo, parks, and a large number of professionals (lawyers, teachers, and doctors) residing in the neighborhood. Ultimately, this activity produced the now prominent Greater Park Hill Community.

Model Two: Diversity by Circumstance

Unlike the 4 neighborhoods introduced above, the 10 other neighborhoods in our study are diverse by circumstance. Diversity in these neighborhoods was not planned, but rather resulted from forces not directly related to either resident or community organization action. Stalled real estate markets, revitalization of areas adjacent to the community, informal establishment of a community as an immigrant port of entry, and the development of affordable housing projects have all helped to produce diversity in these communities. Diverse-by-circumstance neighborhoods did not seek out diversity. Yet no one stopped or resisted their increased diversity. As residents and organizations in these neighborhoods began to recognize their growing diversity, they have often come to value it as a positive attribute worth promoting.

Rogers Park, Edgewater, Uptown, and Chicago Lawn— Chicago, Illinois

Although Chicago remains one of the Nation's most segregated cities, there are neighborhoods in the city that have maintained racial, ethnic, economic, and even cultural diversity over time. The development of this diversity has often been the result of circumstances outside the efforts of local groups. However, community organizations and civic leaders now recognize the challenge to intervene and sustain stable diverse communities.

Rogers Park. Located along Lake Michigan at the northern edge of Chicago, Rogers Park is characterized by a dense population, with 85 percent of its 60,000 residents living in rental units. Almost one-third of its residents are foreign born. In addition to a more established White ethnic older population, in-migrants during the past 20 years have included Russian Jews, Pakistanis, and Asian-Indians, as well as younger African-Americans and Hispanics from other Chicago communities.

Racial change has occurred in Rogers Park. However, "flight" or "panic" by White residents is not occurring. Amenities such as an excellent transportation system, a neighboring university, and beaches along Lake Michigan have kept the community attractive to current residents. Good housing value is another key factor. Also, as the community has experienced racial change, organizations have come forward to help promote diversity and reduce tensions among its various racial and ethnic groups.

Edgewater and Uptown. Just south of Rogers Park along the lakefront, Edgewater and Uptown are also established diverse communities. The public high school serving this area reports that students come from families speaking 65 different languages and dialects. In 1990, close to one-third of the 120,000 residents of these two communities were foreign born, compared with 17 percent of the entire city. Ethnic groups include older Irish and Swedish homeowners along with more recent Nigerian, Ethiopian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Romanian, and Mexican residents. There is also a significant number of African-American residents. Although culturally mixed since the 1920s,

the communities were mainly White until the 1960s. The presence of rental and multifamily housing in both Uptown and Edgewater has enabled new groups to move into these neighborhoods more easily. The area has been a port of entry, and many social service agencies have sprung up to serve the needs of the population. This support network has attracted additional immigrants, who see this as an immigrant-friendly community.

Uptown and Edgewater also have a remarkable mix of income groups. Both communities have a high concentration of government-subsidized affordable housing, as well as a significant concentration of middle- to upper-income homes. Affluent residents living in either single-family homes and lakefront highrise condominiums are in close proximity to low-income residents in multifamily housing. The socioeconomic mix has created some tension, particularly over the possibility of gentrification. However, prodevelopment forces have been tempered by a strong coalition of groups concerned about the needs of less affluent residents.

Both Edgewater and Uptown have significant community-based and social service organizations serving them, some of which actively promote and help maintain its diverse population. For example, in Uptown 10 buildings constructed under a public-private partnership now provide affordable housing to 11,000 residents who represent numerous racial and ethnic groups. During the past 5 years, the residents have been threatened with the loss of their apartments as developers of these buildings attempted to prepay their mortgages, converting units to market-rate apartments. As a measure of Uptown's community organization network, tenant and community organizing efforts were highly successful in preserving this below-market-rate rental housing, effectively locking in affordable housing in the area.

Chicago Lawn. In contrast to the lakefront communities, Chicago Lawn, on the city's southwest side, is a working-class neighborhood with moderately priced, lowrise, single-family housing stock. The neighborhood, located in the "bungalow belt," has a history steeped in racial tension and conflict. In the 1960s Chicago Lawn was viewed as one of the strongest centers of White resistance to African-American "infiltration." Also known as Marquette Park, this community became the focus of national media attention when Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. attempted to confront Chicago's segregationist housing practices in the 1960s. There is still a dramatic contrast between Chicago Lawn and the very poor, virtually all-Black community on the other side of Western Avenue to the east, but the community in recent years has come to include a mixture of White, Hispanic, and African-American residents.

Chicago Lawn is a struggling community in an old industrial area that has experienced a significant shift from an industrial to a service employment base. Strong economic development efforts by local leaders have helped the neighborhood maintain its racial and ethnic diversity in the face of economic pressures that could have exacerbated racial tensions. Church-based organizations, working on everything from developing block club networks and establishing multiethnic youth programs to marketing the area for economic development, have been crucial in maintaining diversity. The extension of the Chicago Transit Authority's rapid transit service to the southwest side has also provided Chicago Lawn with a boost as a viable alternative to the more expensive north side.

Jackson Heights (Queens) and Fort Greene (Brooklyn)— New York City, New York

Jackson Heights. In northern Queens, Jackson Heights is a community of approximately 89,000 residents. The neighborhood, south of La Guardia Airport, lies between Astoria to the east, Elmhurst to the south, and Corona to the north and northeast. Present-day Jackson Heights is the product of an investor, Edward McDougall, who envisioned the creation of a unified community, based on the Garden City model. The block-long apartment complexes with large interior gardens still stand today. Ironically, McDougall's vision was not to create a racially and ethnically inclusive community. Instead, it barred Jews and African-Americans from owning and renting until legal challenges in the 1960s eliminated the discriminatory practices.

In the late 1960s, Jackson Heights faced disinvestment and decay as postwar suburban housing and highway building made the area less attractive to young middle-class families. At the same time, changes in U.S. immigration laws enabled émigrés from Latin America and Asia to enter the country and settle in neighborhoods like Jackson Heights. The presence of a large immigrant population remains a distinguishing feature of Jackson Heights. In 1990, 54 percent of the residents were foreign born. The school population also reflects the intensity of the immigration. For example, a middle school serving the area reports that, of its 1,976 students, 26 percent had immigrated in the last 3 years; 31 percent were classified as having a limited proficiency in English.

Jackson Heights contains two viable ethnically based commercial strips, one known as Little Bombay and the other as Little Colombia. As these shopping areas have prospered, many empty storefronts have been reopened. Ethnic businesses have played a key role in shaping the commercial development of the area. At the same time, White middle-class, U.S.-born residents have been working to revive Jackson Heights' historic district status. This has produced a contested terrain of ethnic and historical identities. The accommodation of these tensions has effectively produced a stable, even if unplanned, diversity.

Fort Greene. A neighborhood of approximately 57,000 people, Fort Greene remained relatively African-American and lower working class in character during the 1980s. While Fort Greene has shifted from a majority White to majority African-American population, property values have increased, and many White residents have remained. The dividing line of race has been supplanted by the social-class divide. Black and White gentrifiers in the neighborhood's south end contrast with the low-income residents concentrated in public housing projects in the north end.

Fort Greene lost more than 10,000 White residents from 1950 to 1970. Suburbanization and economic dislocation (for example, in 1966 the Naval Yard was decommissioned) hastened White flight. In the 1960s community organizations coalesced to halt racial resegregation from White to Black and reverse the deterioration of the neighborhood. Members of a growing African-American middle class joined White "pioneer" gentrifiers in buying the beautiful homes in the south end. African-American residents began to outnumber White residents. During the 1980s Fort Greene's population remained approximately 68 percent African-American, with slight increases in the number of Whites, Hispanics, and Asians. Although Fort Greene has organizations and institutional efforts that appear to promote diversity, external forces have had more weight in creating and maintaining current diversity. Economic forces, the housing market, government action toward public housing, and efforts at community vitality have all played a role in stabilizing the area.

Southeast Seattle—Seattle, Washington

Unlike most of the cities in which our case study neighborhoods are located, Seattle has a majority White population. It has equal percentages of Asians and African-Americans. Southeast Seattle, with a 1990 population of 69,000, has a significant Asian population, many of whom are recent immigrants. As the study shows, the researchers were initially skeptical about the diversity, suspecting that it was merely a statistical artifact. However, a close examination at the block level in Southeast Seattle indicated that 83 percent of the block groups contain at least 20 percent of two of the three major ethnic groups (African-American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and White).

The stable diversity in Seattle is somewhat anomalous. There is no strong indication of conscious efforts to create a racially diverse, inclusive neighborhood. Conversely, the culture of Seattle is very different from that of other cities, particularly northern industrial cities like Chicago, Milwaukee, New York, or Philadelphia. City officials have proactively promoted diversity in Southeast Seattle. For example, city government department directors are bound by a mayoral “accountability contract,” which specifies that the directors must detail the “activities/projects/collaborations” in which the department will participate to ensure that diversity is maintained. The Seattle research team strongly suggests that a “positive tipping point” is operating in Southeast Seattle—a dynamism and commitment to the community associated with its increasing diversity. The level of social capital in this area is significant enough to ensure an ongoing effort required to keep its neighborhoods diverse.¹

San Antonio and Fruitvale—Oakland, California

Oakland, California, located on the east side of the Bay across from San Francisco, is sometimes described as a “Black city”—that is, a city where leaders in government and other citywide nongovernmental agencies are primarily African-Americans. While the city touts itself as one of the most diverse cities in the Nation, close examination reveals dramatic disparities, particularly between the “hills” and the “flats”—residential sections near the harbor. However, the two communities profiled in this study are diverse, fitting our diverse-by-circumstance model.

San Antonio. Southeast of the city center and across Lake Merritt, San Antonio is a largely residential community of 59,000 residents. It is well endowed, with turn-of-the-century homes interspersed with apartment complexes in various states of repair. The quality of the housing improves as one moves from the Bay and closer to the hills—areas of predominantly White residence. San Antonio’s proximity to the central business district and the lake have made its northern sections likely targets for gentrification. The two largest population groups are African-American and Asian, each accounting for one-third of the population. Currently, however, San Antonio’s racial and ethnic composition is changing, as Asians from Chinatown and Hispanics from Fruitvale have begun to migrate into the community. Community action is not as vigorous as in Fruitvale, although there are groups active in the area. As with Fruitvale, community action is aimed primarily at community vitality. Maintaining diversity is secondary.

Fruitvale. Located in the flatland area southeast of Lake Merritt and contiguous to San Antonio, Fruitvale has historically been a center of Hispanic community and culture. The district is dominated by four main commercial strips. The departure of middle-class homeowners and businesses for the suburbs has had a detrimental effect on both its

residential and its commercial status. Of Fruitvale's 36,000 residents, Hispanics comprise one-third, African-Americans one-fourth, and Asians and Whites the remainder. Fruitvale is marked by vigorous and extensive community-initiated activity. This community action is primarily concerned with quality-of-life issues, such as youth programs, healthcare providers, economic development, and job creation. Diversity is an ancillary concern of community goals.

Houston Heights—Houston, Texas

Houston Heights, with a population of 36,000, was initially settled by some of Houston's wealthiest industrial families and is one of the oldest planned communities in the State. Throughout the 20th century, with the expansion of Houston and the development of new suburbs, the community has lost significant population and commercial and industrial investment, along with its attractiveness to upper- and middle-class residents. However, the Heights today is recognized as one of Houston's most stable yet diverse communities. The Heights is home mostly to Hispanics (52 percent) and Whites (42 percent).

In this city, the absence of centralized planning, the maintenance of moderate tax rates, and the longstanding lack of zoning have provided the foundation for this new diversity. The combination of older, larger homes in the same block as newer, less expensive apartment buildings has created a mixture of low- and moderate-income housing stock in a small geographic area. The diversity of Houston Heights is also due to the out-migration of Whites to the suburbs, which has made a good deal of rental property available to newly arriving and existing immigrants from neighboring, predominantly Latino, communities. Racial succession in the Heights has been halted by the return migration of well-to-do Anglos. This migration has fueled speculation that gentrification may occur. However, at this point, neither racial succession nor gentrification has occurred in Houston Heights.

Organization of the Report

In the following chapters, indepth descriptions of the communities introduced above are provided, along with an analysis of what the collaborative teams of researchers have determined to be the factors in producing the stable diversity in their cities. These descriptions are followed by conclusions and recommendations for how diverse communities can be developed and sustained in U.S. cities.

Note

1. *Social capital* refers to organizational resources (for example, community-based organizations, religious congregations, ethnic associations, and block clubs), as well as individual expertise (for example, organizing experience, professional skills, knowledge of neighborhood networks, and political experience) that can be tapped to benefit the community. More discussion of this can be found in Nyden et al. (1997).

Reference

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