

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall Question:

How do residents perceive the early experience of living in a mixed-income development?

Research Overview:

Two developments: Oakwood Shores, Westhaven Park

In-depth interviews: 65 residents (June to October 2007); follow-up with 53 residents (June to October 2008)

Findings:

Physical environment and quality of life

- Former public housing residents express strong satisfaction with their new physical environment
- Market-rate renters and owners all mention location as a benefit
- Lack of retail and amenities seen as a downside by most residents

Emotional health and stress

- Most former public housing residents report decreased stress and increased peace of mind, largely due to the increased level of safety and order in the new developments.
- Some former public housing residents express a sense of increased self-esteem and accomplishment, and increased motivation to continue to make advancements in their lives.
- Some former public housing residents report increased stress from more stringent rules and monitoring, and sense of stigma

Social relations among residents

- Some residents appreciate the population diversity, some mention the chance to learn from others
- Problematic conduct by some neighbors (noise, loitering, littering, etc.) mentioned by many residents
- Some residents disappointed in the general lack of social interaction and the sense of social isolation, others liked the privacy and detachment

Financial implications for residents

- Most former public housing residents reported the need to learn how to better manage household finances
- Many homeowners were attracted by investment opportunity but now concerned about depreciation

Implications for Consideration:

- Improving the quality of life and decreasing emotional stress due to improvements in the environment appears to be an early and important benefit of a move to mixed-income developments for former public housing residents and a substantial number of former public housing residents describe feeling an increased sense of motivation and esteem. How can these initial improvements best be leveraged to generate concrete and sustained changes in the economic circumstances and self-sufficiency of as many of these residents as possible?
- Social distance and some social friction seem more prevalent in this early stage than constructive, engaged neighboring that could lead to collective problem-solving and a sense of shared community. What existing and potential approaches to issues like formal and informal social control, governance, property management, and community building might help address this?

¹ This summary is based on a longer paper, "Living in a Mixed-Income Development: Resident Perceptions of the Benefits and Disadvantages of Two Developments in Chicago" (Joseph and Chaskin, 2010, *Urban Studies* 47(11): 2347-2366). For more information about the Mixed-Income Development Study at the University of Chicago, please contact svoelker@uchicago.edu. This study is funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.