BUILDING MIXED-INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS

Findings from an Evaluation of Purpose Built Communities

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TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

This report was revised in June 2025 to clarify text used to interpret the 90 percent and 75 percent margins of error calculated for estimates of neighborhood outcomes examined for this study. These clarifications mainly appear in text related to Box ES.1 and Box 3.1. These revisions do not affect any of the results — or the interpretation of results — in the report.

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OVERVIEW

Historically disinvested neighborhoods, shaped by harmful public policy and industry practices, have long been a part of the urban landscape in the United States. This report examines one approach to addressing that problem, known as Purpose Built Communities. It currently operates in 28 locations around the country and aims to foster thriving, mixed-income communities by focusing on small geographic areas and three domains: mixed-income housing, education, and community wellness. A nonprofit organization called a "Community Quarterback," or CQB, operates the model, in collaboration with local partners, in each neighborhood.

In 2020, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation selected MDRC to evaluate the model in five communities that were among the first to adopt it. The study combines qualitative research and quantitative outcomes analysis and covers roughly the first 10 years after these CQBs began operations—a relatively short timeframe for such efforts. The study illustrates a novel way of addressing the important issue of statistical uncertainty in measuring change over time in small areas.

Key Findings

- The CQBs established themselves as enduring institutions in their communities. They built strategic partnerships, secured funding, and centered residents in their efforts.
- The CQBs and their partners implemented diverse initiatives: housing redevelopment, land banking, building early childhood learning centers and new schools, introducing new curricula into schools, training school leaders and teachers, expanding access to health care and quality food in the community, and enhancing community cohesion, among others.
- The quantitative data show some limited but encouraging evidence to suggest that the neighborhoods were becoming more mixed in terms of residents' incomes—and without displacing residents with poverty-level incomes or an influx of higher-income White residents.
- At the same time, overall housing supply and housing values did not increase appreciably during the study period, although new units were getting built and some programs to improve the conditions of existing housing were launched.
- Reading and math test scores among students in elementary and middle schools serving the study neighborhoods were substantially below national standards at the beginning of the study period and had not reached national standards by the end of that period.
- Some changes in quantitative indicators in the study neighborhoods mirrored changes occurring citywide and in other persistently high poverty areas, highlighting the influence of broader external forces.

Overall, the evaluation shows that the model can be operated well in communities with different starting contexts, and that the CQBs and their partners have laid a foundation for longer-term change. It highlights practices that other organizations may want to emulate—or modify—as they engage in complex community revitalization efforts. It also underscores the importance of long-term public and private investments in these neighborhoods to substantially improve housing conditions, schools, and the overall quality of life.

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The Authors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Historically disinvested neighborhoods — places with high concentrations of poverty that are typically segregated by race and income relative to the wider city or region — have long been a part of the American urban landscape. The persistent disinvestment in such places is a long-standing public policy concern, one that has been heightened by research showing that local communities matter deeply to the current and future well-being of individuals and families, including to children's social and economic mobility. To an important extent, the fates of people and place are intertwined.

A wide variety of place-based revitalization interventions have sought to transform historically disinvested neighborhoods into economically vibrant communities.[1] This report presents findings from an evaluation of one such approach, known as Purpose Built Communities, which is currently operating in 28 locations around the country. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation commissioned this evaluation and selected MDRC to lead it.

The Purpose Built Communities model focuses on relatively small geographic areas and, until recently, concentrated on three main domains or "pillars": (1) developing mixed-income housing, (2) strengthening a "cradle-to-college" educational pipeline, and (3) improving the health and social well-being of residents through a variety of initiatives. After the study began, designers added a fourth pillar, "economic vitality," to the model. Nonprofit organizations called "Community Quarterbacks," or CQBs, in collaboration with local partners, are tasked with implementing the model in designated neighborhoods. The overall expectation is that the work across these pillars will be mutually reinforcing and help build vibrant, mixed-income communities.

The study was structured around two phases, a design phase and a full evaluation phase.[2] In consultation with an evaluation advisory committee convened by the foundation, the MDRC team finalized the scope of the study, which would focus on documenting the implementation and early outcomes and, because of methodological constraints, would not make causal inferences about the model's effects on community-level outcomes. Five CQBs that were among the first to replicate the model agreed to participate in the study.[3]

The study covers roughly the first 10 years after the five CQBs launched their interventions (depending on the site and type of data). These CQBs forged strong partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders, and together they implemented a wide range of initiatives

1. The terms "neighborhoods" and "communities" are used interchangeably in this report.
2. The National Initiative for Mixed-Income Communities at Case Western Reserve University participated in the evaluation's design phase.
3. At the time these organizations were formed, they were composed of two to three staff members.

in each of the three pillars: housing, education, and community wellness. Through their efforts on the ground, these early adopters of the Purpose Built Communities model became sustainable institutions in their respective communities. Collectively, their experiences suggest that the model is feasible and replicable in quite varied places.

Many factors, not just actions on the part of the CQBs and their partners, could have influenced the progress or lack of progress that the communities made toward the vision inherent in the Purpose Built Communities model. Although the evaluation cannot determine the causal influence of any particular factor, it can provide evidence on some important community trends. For example, it finds (in four of the five sites) some encouraging reductions in neighborhood-level rates of poverty, extreme poverty, or both, pointing to some limited progress toward increasing the mix of incomes among residents, and with little evidence of systematic exclusion of people with lower incomes and a large influx of White residents. Yet, the study reveals little evidence of large-scale improvement in key quantitative indicators of housing market conditions and school performance.

THE PURPOSE BUILT COMMUNITIES MODEL

The Purpose Built Communities Foundation (referred to here as "Purpose Built") was founded in 2009 to replicate the success of a transformative community rebuilding effort in the East Lake neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia, which began in the mid-1990s. Purpose Built soon designed the Purpose Built Communities model to address intergenerational poverty in historically disinvested neighborhoods and set out to help communities around the United States implement it. The original design of the model, which was in effect for most of the study period, calls for investments in three core pillars to reverse decades of systemic community disinvestment.[4] They are as follows:

1. **Mixed-income housing.** This pillar focuses on creating and preserving housing for households at all income levels, including permanent affordable housing for current and future residents with very low incomes, and without displacing long-term or "legacy" residents.

2. **A cradle-to-college education pipeline.** To address disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes, this strategy focuses on creating a high-quality educational environment for children in the neighborhood, including pathways from early learning through twelfth grade, to foster children's development and prepare them for college or their chosen path after high school.

3. **Community wellness.** This pillar prioritizes other essentials of thriving neighborhoods, including improved access to health care, quality food, green space, recreation, arts, and community meeting and event spaces, all of which may improve personal well-being.

4. The study period, also referred to as the "analysis period" in the report, was roughly 10 years and generally focused on the 2010–2023 period, depending somewhat on the study component.

Central to the model's theory of change is the idea that changes in one pillar may shape and be shaped by changes in the other pillars. For example, improvements in the education and community wellness pillars may lead to improvements in the housing pillar (e.g., increased housing values and residential stability), and vice versa. Thus, the model assumes that improvements in each of the three pillars will be mutually reinforcing and, together, will help transform the communities and reduce intergenerational poverty.

The model calls for a single nonprofit in each neighborhood, the CQB, to lead the local revitalization efforts in collaboration with other local organizations and government agencies. Purpose Built, drawing on independent resources, provides pro-bono consulting services and technical assistance to the CQBs. It also supports a national network of organizations — in 28 communities in 24 cities — that are implementing the model.

THIS EVALUATION

Community revitalization initiatives are complex endeavors, raising important questions about how they operate, what they accomplish, and how the communities they serve change over time. This evaluation of the Purpose Built Communities model attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How did the CQBs — the critical "backbone" agencies leading the transformation efforts — operate across a range of neighborhoods with different local circumstances, and how did they evolve over time?

2. What strategies were planned and implemented in the three main pillars (housing, education, and wellness)? What considerations did the CQBs take into account when setting the priorities and undertaking activities across the three pillars to advance the model's goals?

3. Do trends on a range of quantitative neighborhood indicators suggest that the communities were changing in the ways envisioned by the model?

The study captures implementation experiences and changes in outcomes from about 2010 to 2023, with the exact period varying by study component. This is understandably a short timeframe for revitalization initiatives to achieve scale and visibly "move the needle" on community conditions. It might therefore be appropriate to view this period as one in which the CQBs and their partners were laying the foundation for achieving the kinds of changes in the neighborhoods envisioned in the model over a longer term.

The study's implementation analysis relies on interviews and focus groups that the research team conducted with CBQ staff, community leaders, and other actors, and on an organizational survey it administered to the CQBs. The study's quantitative component, which examines change over time in neighborhood-level conditions, relies on various publicly available datasets with information about, for example, housing values, academic performance among students in local schools, income and poverty rates, population size and characteristics,

employment, and other measures, reflecting different dimensions of neighborhood vitality.[5] The analysis uses census geographies (census tracts or block groups) associated with the neighborhoods served by the CQBs.[6]

More so than is typical in studies of community change, this evaluation explicitly describes the statistical uncertainty that accompanies quantitative estimates of neighborhood conditions and the change in those conditions. In studies focused on small geographical areas, this statistical uncertainty is a particular concern when trying to learn the most about community change patterns from these data without drawing misleading conclusions.

THE SITES IN THE EVALUATION

Five CQBs implementing the Purpose Built Communities model in different cities and states agreed to participate in this study.[7] (See Table ES.1.)The neighborhoods they serve are relatively small, with between 1,700 and 7,000 residents. Three of the five neighborhoods are located in formerly redlined areas; as such, they have been historically subjected to exclusionary lending tactics, which have denied residents access to capital that might have improved their housing and economic opportunities.[8]

The CQBs in the evaluation were established between 2010 and 2013 to spearhead emerging community-led efforts to revitalize their respective neighborhoods. They all joined the Purpose Built Communities Network by 2013, adopting the Purpose Built Communities model to help guide and expand those efforts in collaboration with local partners and funders.

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE COMMUNITY QUARTERBACKS

The Purpose Built Communities model positions the CQBs as the primary node in a collaborative network whose purpose is to improve neighborhood conditions in three distinct but mutually reinforcing domains. Much depends on the CQBs' ability to operate as envisioned in the model.

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5. The quantitative analysis relies on the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics Primary Jobs, Infutor Consumer History, Stanford Education Data Archive Version 4.1, and CoreLogic.
6. As discussed in Chapter 2, the alignment between the neighborhood footprints and the associated census tracts is not always perfect, but it provides a reasonable approximation of the relevant geographical areas.
7. The site in Omaha, however, had recently taken part in another evaluation and thus did not participate in the interviews conducted as part of the process study. The site is included in the quantitative analysis.
8. The real estate creditworthiness of these areas was classified as "hazardous" or "definitely declining" in the mid-1900s by the federal Home Owner Loan Corporation program. This classification was not available for two neighborhoods.

Table ES.1

The Community Quarterbacks and Neighborhoods in the Evaluation

Community Quarterback and Neighborhood	Ruling Year[a]	Triggering Event	Local Champion(s) Supporting the Formation of the Community Quarterback
Woodlawn United in Woodlawn, Birmingham, Alabama	2011	Local interest in revitalizing the neighborhood and support from a family foundation	Goodrich Foundation and existing coalition
Renaissance West Community Initiative in Boulevard West, Charlotte, North Carolina	2010	Redevelopment of Boulevard Homes with a HOPE VI grant (2010)	Charlotte Housing Authority and local nonprofit leaders
Partners Achieving Community Transformation in Near East Side, Columbus, Ohio	2014	Planning process with a Choice Neighborhood grant (2010–2012)	The Ohio State University and Waxner Medical Center in Columbus, housing authority, and city government
Northside Development Group in Northside, Spartanburg, South Carolina	2013	Establishment of a medical school campus (2010), and receipt of a Choice Neighborhoods planning grant (2012)	Local leaders and the Mary Black Foundation
Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation in Highlander, Omaha, NE	2011	Tearing down of a public housing development, leading to the sale of the land and its redevelopment	Local philanthropic community

NOTE: [a]This represents the year that the organization's tax exempt status was awarded.

- **The newly formed CQBs successfully built their own internal capacity and became enduring local institutions in their communities.**

As newly formed organizations, the CQBs had to build the capacity of their staff to undertake activities in all three of the model's pillars, which they successfully did. Early on, some of the CQBs hired consultants with relevant expertise in the different domains to train staff, build their technical knowledge, and support their work. Local community foundations provided much of the CQBs' funding and were also instrumental in helping them meet their early staffing needs. In the Spartanburg site, for instance, a local community foundation "loaned" to the CQB a staff member who assisted the organization with its land banking activities.

The CQBs' founders as well as local foundations also took some of the burden off the shoulders of the leaders of these nascent organizations. For some of the CQBs, their founders and board members played vital roles connecting them with potential partners and the philanthropic community, which often resulted in strategic ties that the CQBs leveraged to advance their revitalization initiatives.

- **The CQBs fostered robust strategic partnerships that helped them to advance and execute initiatives across the model's distinct pillars. These partnerships allowed them to act as effective conveners and coordinators of diverse activities.**

The CQBs forged strategic partnerships with a wide range of actors, including housing authorities, city agencies, community colleges and universities, local hospitals and health care providers, social service providers, school districts, grassroots organizations, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood associations. In some cases, they contracted with direct service providers to operate a program, such as early childhood learning providers or organizations that offered specialized training for teachers. In other cases, they built partnerships in which each partner implemented a component of a program or initiative. In still other cases, partners simply provided referrals to the programs or activities.

Building strong and strategic partnerships was essential. These partnerships enabled the CQBs to expand their reach, capacity, and specialized expertise and thereby more effectively advance toward the goals in each of the model's pillars. They also allowed the CQBs to bring additional resources and services to their neighborhoods, such as after-school programs, mental health services, dental hygiene services, and academic supports in local district schools.

- **Guidance from Purpose Built helped the CQBs strengthen their internal capacity, nurture their local partnerships, plan projects, and develop strategies to secure resources for their organizations and activities.**

On a pro-bono basis, Purpose Built gave the CQBs hands-on support to bolster the organizational development of these newly formed entities, and to help them launch their initiatives. Purpose Built helped CQBs strategically plan, develop their boards of directors, establish staffing requirements, and strengthen their leadership skills.

Interviews with CQB staff suggest that, in general, this support was well received. As one CQB leader commented, "[T]hey brought their expertise, but also helped us identify local experts [who] really helped us understand what it would take in order to move the concept forward." Purpose Built helped the CQBs prepare grant proposals and draft agreements and offered guidance on fundraising. However, it did not provide them with direct financial support, which was a source of some tension. In more recent years, Purpose Built began exploring avenues to provide more fundraising assistance, including possibly hiring a staff member dedicated to that purpose.

PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED IN THE THREE PILLARS

- **From the start, the CQBs were intentional about centering residents and their needs and interests in the planning of initiatives.**

For these relatively new organizations, entering a civic space marked by past failed revitalization efforts and a distrust of institutions represented both a challenge and an opportunity to develop a different kind of relationship with residents. The CQBs recognized that earning residents' trust was fundamental to getting their buy-in for the work they would spearhead in the community. To this end, as they planned initiatives, the CQBs kept residents informed of the revitalization process and made sure their voices were heard throughout it, from planning to execution. They also cultivated leadership opportunities for residents and fostered a sense of resident "ownership" of the revitalization process. In some cases, feedback from residents led to course corrections and changes in strategies.

- **Early on, many of the CQBs prioritized housing and education initiatives, capitalizing on local projects that had already been launched in those pillars. Their attention to community wellness activities grew over time.**

Advancing multiple and often complex initiatives in each of the model's pillars is an ambitious undertaking, especially for small, newly formed organizations. Consequently, despite the model's holistic approach, the CQBs had to set priorities and stage their work. Many of them gave higher priority to housing and education activities early on. For several of the organizations, this was because, prior to becoming CQBs, they were already involved in revitalization projects that focused on housing redevelopment and constructing a new school, early childhood education facility, or both. However, over time, the CQBs increasingly turned their attention to activities in the community wellness pillar.

- **The CQBs advanced goals in the housing pillar by helping to build new housing, supporting homeowners, and pursuing land banking strategies to control future development.**

In the first 10 years, the CQBs undertook a range of housing-related activities focused on improving housing for current residents as well as to attract new residents. The initiatives

varied in scale, with the largest involving the redevelopment of entire public housing complexes. In two study neighborhoods (in Charlotte and Columbus), public housing agencies had been awarded HOPE VI or Choice Neighborhood grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and they formed partnerships with the CQBs. The CQBs advised on the physical structure and amenities it would include and on the relocation services that families displaced during construction would receive. After the development was completed in the Charlotte site, the CQB there began assisting residents with the process of applying for the new units and connecting them to social services they might need to remain in stable housing.

CQBs in several sites implemented other programs to help residents preserve existing housing or become homeowners for the first time. For example, several offered financial assistance to current homeowners for interior and exterior repairs, enabling those homeowners to undertake projects they could not have otherwise financially or physically carried out on their own. Some CQBs supported prospective homebuyers by providing down payment assistance grants (with conditions that discouraged quick resale). These types of programs were intended to encourage residents to invest in their homes as either existing or new homeowners and thereby remain in the neighborhood. They were also intended to help residents build wealth through homeownership.

Two CQBs (in Birmingham and Spartanburg) used land banking as a housing strategy, acquiring land parcels as a way to take control over and shape their neighborhood's long-term housing landscape. Land banking allowed them to determine the location, type, and pace of housing development, and to give residents a say in those decisions. Land banking also helped the CQBs manage how residents experienced or perceived redevelopment in their neighborhoods. Similarly, the high visibility of the first redevelopment project in the Birmingham site sent the message that the CQB's talk about improving the neighborhood was turning into action.

- **The CQBs advanced goals in the education pillar in part by expanding access to quality early childhood education.**

As a core strategy in building a cradle-to-college pipeline, all five CQBs created more opportunities for young children to enroll in early education programs. In four of the study neighborhoods (those in Spartanburg, Charlotte, Birmingham, and Omaha), the CQBs were instrumental in getting new early childhood learning centers built, and in the fifth (in Columbus), the CQB worked with an existing center to implement a new early education instructional model.

Where new centers were built (at a cost ranging from $7 million to $10 million), the CQBs helped to secure funding for the construction. Notably, it took several years of effort to bring the new centers to fruition, and some centers only opened in 2018 or later. Further, given the complex state regulations governing early childhood learning centers, the CQBs had to partner with organizations that had expertise in operating such centers. They included Head Start programs, YMCAs, and other experienced providers. All the centers sought to obscure income differences among the children and create an inclusive environment by organizing

classes by children's ages, building common spaces for children to intermingle, and creating opportunities for all families to come together.

- **The CQBs sought to improve nearby elementary and middle schools or build new schools. Proposals for building charter schools raised some tensions.**

The CQBs recognized that improving schools was fundamental to the Purpose Built Communities model's goal of reducing intergenerational poverty and building a more mixed-income community. The schools that the children in the neighborhoods attended should not only provide better educational opportunities to those children, they should also attract new residents, including those with higher incomes who have more options when deciding where to live. As a community leader in the Columbus site stated in an interview, "[W]e thought in order for individuals and families to come to the Near East Side, we had to really look at the education that was being offered in the schools there, because no one is going to reside in an area with failing schools."

At the time the CQBs launched their education initiatives, the local elementary and middle schools in their neighborhoods were vastly underperforming, according to standardized test data.[9] As such, the task of improving these schools was a daunting one, and no solution was entirely straightforward. In some study neighborhoods, competing views among CQB leaders and partners were strongly held and debated, with some favoring collaboration with local district schools and others pushing to create a charter school. During these and similar deliberations, Purpose Built was a consistent supporter of charter schools, based on its positive experience with the Drew Charter School in Atlanta's East Lake neighborhood. In some cases, this became a source of tension between the national organization and the local CQBs.

The reform initiatives that the CQBs undertook at local district schools fell into four basic categories: (1) those aimed at improving teacher training and school staff leadership skills; (2) those supporting stronger programming (e.g., project-based learning and aligning curricula with the labor market); (3) those creating new school options (such as new schools or academic programs); and (4) those increasing access to quality support services in partnership with local organizations. In addition, one study site (in Birmingham) opened a charter school in 2020, after the CQB ceased working with district schools.

To advance these initiatives in the educational pillar, the CQBs devoted time and energy to building relationships with district leaders, school leaders, and nonprofit support service organizations. The tenor of these relationships varied across the neighborhoods. In some cases, district leaders worried that these reform efforts would lead to the creation of charter schools that would compete for resources and students in their districts. In other cases, school district leaders were quickly brought on board, which helped move the initiatives along. At the same time, the CQBs' efforts to advance their educational initiatives were routinely set back by frequent turnover among leaders in the targeted schools as well as the school districts.

9. These findings are based on the research team's quantitative analysis of student academic performance, which was conducted using Stanford Education Data Archive Version 4.1 data and is described further in Chapter 4 of this report.

- **In the community wellness pillar, the CQBs prioritized initiatives to expand access to health care and quality food, and also launched others intended to support residents' personal growth and improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.**

The community wellness pillar encompasses efforts to promote residents' physical, mental, and social well-being. These efforts should respond to the needs and interests of residents in each community, as expressed by them. In many of the study neighborhoods, expanding access to health care was a high priority. In some cases, this meant increasing the supply of health care services, such as bringing new providers into the community, helping existing providers better coordinate their services to fill important gaps (for instance, those in mental health services), and expanding access to health care services through the school system. In others, it meant informing residents about available services and encouraging them to take advantage of those services. Accordingly, the CQBs undertook initiatives that helped residents navigate complex health care systems; informed them about clinics and other service providers in the area and affordable options to access them, such as sliding scale payment plans; and helped restore trust between residents and local health care institutions.

Expanding access to quality food was another high priority for residents in the study sites. These neighborhoods were (and continue to be) considered "food deserts" — that is, places where grocery stores are either nonexistent or several miles away and not easily accessible without a car. To address this problem, the CQBs and their partners advocated for supermarket chains to open stores in or near their neighborhoods, but with little success during the study period. Consequently, they explored other options. These included creating food co-ops that distributed or sold fresh food (e.g., fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and other groceries), supporting community gardens tended by residents, organizing farmers' markets, and changing bus routes to more directly connect residents to food markets in nearby neighborhoods. Although relatively small in scale, these initiatives were considered steps in the right direction.

The CQBs also implemented a wide range of other activities of interest to residents. For example, they supported, sponsored, or organized activities to help residents improve their employment opportunities, manage their personal finances, and get involved in the neighborhood as a volunteer or advocate. In all of this work, the CQBs strongly emphasized that community members should have control over which activities are pursued, and they aimed to promote social cohesion and a deeper sense of belonging among residents — outcomes that transcended the specific activities and were important in their own right.

QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE OF CHANGE OVER TIME IN NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS

Another core component of the study is to examine how neighborhood conditions changed over the roughly 10-year period. The Purpose Built Communities model assumes that investments across its three pillars can drive changes that will lead to improvements in housing,

education, and community wellness, and that these will ultimately produce more mixed-income, thriving neighborhoods. This study's quantitative analyses track changes over time on a broad set of neighborhood indicators relevant to that vision.[10] Although it is not a causal analysis and cannot determine how much the actions of the CQBs may have contributed to any of the changes observed, it can show whether the communities were changing in ways that were consistent with the model's goals over the roughly first decade the CQBs were in operation.

The quantitative analyses rely on census geographies (census tracts or block groups) that reasonably approximate the neighborhoods the CQBs served (i.e., their target areas or footprints).[11] For each of these areas, the analyses estimate mean values, and changes in those values over time, on indictors relevant to the housing and education pillars and to a number of cross-cutting measures. Many of these indicators are commonly used in community change studies to assess community vitality. (Quantitative data suitable for a change-over-time analysis were not available for indicators of community wellness.)

Change in Housing Stock and Values

- **Property values for single-family homes declined in four of the five study neighborhoods during the study period.**

The market value of single-family homes is one of the most commonly used measures in studies of neighborhood change because it is believed to reflect housing demand that is driven not only by the conditions and features of the residential properties themselves, but also by attributes of the neighborhood and the quality of life it offers. A property's sale price is typically considered the best estimate of what a property is worth. However, properties do not turn over often enough within small areas to make sale prices a reliable indicator for assessing overall neighborhood trends. Therefore, this evaluation examines housing value trends based on tax assessors' estimated market value of single-family homes (in 2019 dollars).

Box ES.1 describes the methods used in this report to estimate the change over time in property values and other quantitative outcome measures, and to assess the strength of the statistical evidence of each change estimate. Figure ES.1 illustrates the findings for three key measures examined in this report. In this figure, for each outcome measure for each site, a solid line depicts the 90 percent margin of error or confidence interval associated with an estimated change in mean value of the measure. It implies that there is a good

10. The quantitative change-over-time analyses in this report estimated averages based on several years of data collected during the "initial period" and on several years of data collected during the "final period." The exact dates the research team used to define the initial and final periods differ somewhat for some data sources and for some sites.

11. The research team consulted Purpose Built and the CQBs to determine the census geography for each study neighborhood. In some cases, a CQB's footprint included areas that fell outside the census tract or block group used for this report's analyses. The omitted areas are primarily nonresidential or places of more recent focus for the CQB.

BOX ES.1

Approach Used to Estimate Change Over Time

To assess change, the quantitative analysis examines the amount of change that occurred in the study neighborhoods on a range of indicators. Measures were constructed for the beginning of the follow-up period (initial period) and near the end of the follow-up period (final period) as permitted by the data, plus the estimated change in the mean estimates between those two periods.

Given the small areas that are the focus of this study, the estimates for each neighborhood are subject to some random variation. To account for this variation, the analysis includes the margin of error (MOE) that is associated with each estimate of a mean value for an outcome variable (such as the neighborhood pipeline schools' mean math test score). For the estimates of change over time in the mean value, the analysis uses two benchmarks related to uncertainty: a 90 percent MOE, which is a conventional benchmark used in many studies, and a 75 percent MOE, which represents a lower standard of evidence.

For a 90 percent MOE, there is a good chance that the *true value* of what is being estimated falls somewhere within the 90 percent confidence interval defined as its estimate plus or minus its 90 percent MOE.* Thus, if a 90 percent confidence interval for an estimated change falls entirely above zero, there is a good chance that a *positive* change occurred; if that confidence interval falls entirely below zero, there is a good chance that a *negative* change occurred.

As noted, the 75 percent benchmark represents a lower standard of evidence. Thus, when a 75 percent confidence interval for a change estimate falls fully above or below zero, but the corresponding 90 percent confidence interval does not, the present analysis considers the finding to be "suggestive evidence" about the direction of change. Last, if neither the 90 percent nor the 75 percent confidence interval falls fully above or below zero, the evidence about the direction of change is considered "inconclusive.

NOTE: *Strictly speaking, without further information, it is not possible to determine the probability that a specific estimated confidence interval includes the true value of what is being estimated. However, the concept of confidence is generally used in applied research.

chance the *true value* of the change in that measure lies somewhere between the endpoints of the solid line. The shaded segment depicts the 75 percent margin of error or confidence interval associated with an estimated change in the mean value of the measure, and implies that the true value of what is being estimated may fall somewhere between the upper and lower bound of the 75 percent confidence interval (considered in this report to be *suggestive* statistical evidence).

The analysis found that, during this study's analysis period, the median value of single-family homes fell (based on conventional statistical evidence) in three of the five sites; in the other two sites, the evidence on the direction of change is inconclusive. As shown in Figure ES.1, for three sites, the solid line is fully to the left of zero, which means there is conventional statistical evidence that the median value of single-family homes truly did decline, although the exact magnitude of the decline cannot be pinpointed. For the two remaining sites, neither the solid bar nor the shaded segment is fully to the right or left of zero; thus, the evidence of the direction of change is considered inconclusive. Other data (not shown in the figure) indicate that, across most of the sites, properties valued in the initial period at the lower end of the spectrum (the 25th percentile) also lost value. Similarly, values fell among properties that were initially valued at a higher level (the 75th percentile) in two neighborhoods.

In the study neighborhoods where median home values fell, they also fell citywide and in other persistently high-poverty census tracts in those cities. This suggests that larger regional forces may have influenced the direction of change within the study neighborhoods — forces that, of course, were not in the control of the CQBs and their partners, and that may have made their work even harder.

Closer to the end of the study, the CQBs and their partners voiced concerns about the tightening housing market, soaring housing prices, and the implications for redeveloping and preserving affordable housing in their communities. Their observations suggest that housing values may have begun rising during the COVID-19 pandemic (after the study's follow-up period), mirroring national trends during and after the period.

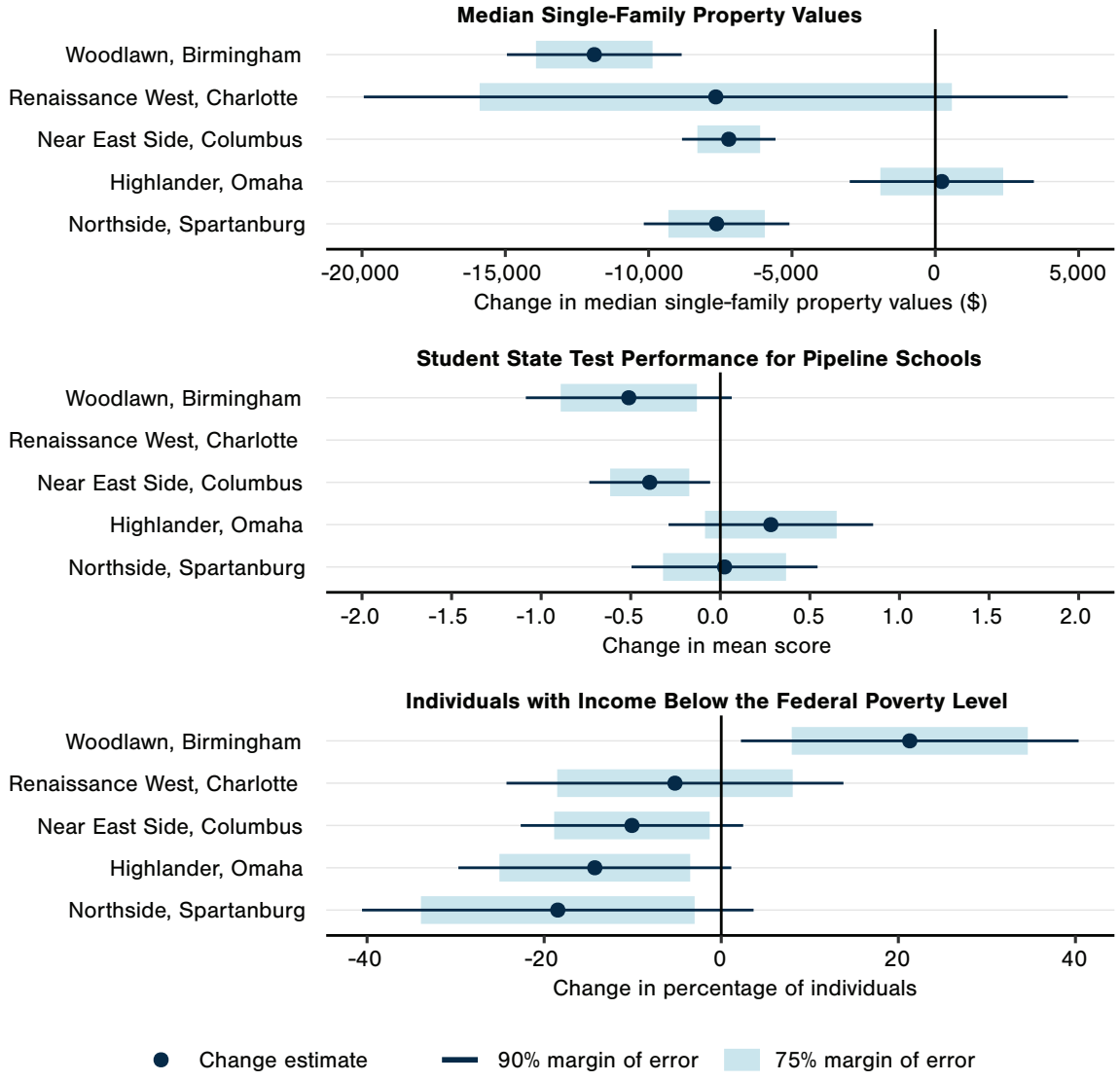
- **The total number of residential parcels, parcels for single-family homes, or both declined somewhat in most sites during the study period, in part because distressed housing was torn down.**

By the final analysis period, four of the five study neighborhoods experienced a modest decline in either the total number of residential parcels, the total number of single-family parcels, or, in most cases, both (based on conventional or suggestive statistical evidence). This trend suggests that, despite the CQBs' considerable efforts to build new housing, neither those efforts nor those of any other developers who may have been operating independently increased the housing supply significantly by the final period.

These results may not be surprising. First, new large-scale housing development takes time to build. Second, the CQBs and their actors also focused on replacing or upgrading the existing housing stock, and, in some cases, acquiring properties through land banking and razing vacant, uninhabitable homes, and holding the land for future development. Thus, it is possible that the trends observed during the study period may reverse in the coming years. Moreover, these trends do not negate all that the CQBs and their partners accomplished in the first 10 years or so of the Purpose Built Communities interventions: the new housing that did get built, the programs to support homeowners and repair existing homes, and the groundwork that was laid for future development. These efforts represent steps toward achieving the model's goal of increasing the supply of quality affordable and mixed-income

Figure ES.1

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods



SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on CoreLogic historic property data, Stanford Education Data Archive Version 4.1 data and American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: A Student State Test Performance mean score of +/- 1.0 unit can be interpreted as indicating that students scored roughly one grade level above or below the national student average on state standardized tests.

Student State Test Performance data are not available for pipeline schools in the Charlotte site over the study's time frame. The neighborhood's only pipeline school, Renaissance West STEAM Academy, opened later, during the 2017–2018 school year.

housing, even if they did not influence quantitatively measurable change on the indicators used in this study.

Change in School Performance and Characteristics

The study's quantitative analysis of change over time in the education domain focuses on scores from standardized tests in reading or English Language Arts and math obtained from the Stanford Education Data Archive, which compiles state test score data for public elementary and middle schools (third through eighth grades) across the country.[12] The analysis assumes that schools with higher test scores offer better learning opportunities for their students than schools with lower test scores. Using those data, the research team analyzed test scores in what this study refers to as "pipeline schools" (i.e., the schools where the CQBs implemented their educational reform initiatives), as well as in *all* "nearby" schools, a category that includes the pipeline schools plus all other public schools that, based on their attendance zones, children in the study neighborhoods could have attended. For most sites, this analysis combines student test results from the spring semesters of 2009 and 2010 to construct estimates of scores for the initial segment of the analysis period, which was just before the CQBs began working with their pipeline schools. The final segment of the analysis period uses test results from spring 2017 and spring 2018 combined. (The pipeline school in the Charlotte site opened in 2017, and thus it was not subject to a change-over-time analysis.) It is important to note that the test scores were those of all students in those schools, many of whom came from surrounding neighborhoods in addition to those the CQBs served, and they pertain to their achievement at the school level.

- **In the pipeline schools where the CQBs implemented their educational reform initiatives, student academic performance on state tests did not change appreciably during the study period.**

Across the four study neighborhoods included in this analysis, the average student scores on state tests in reading and math combined were roughly three grade levels below the national average in the initial period. In addition, average test scores for their entire school districts ranged from about one to two grade levels below the national average. The CQBs were thus working with schools that were not only on their own very low performing, but part of school districts that were also low or very low performing. By the end of the analysis period, student test scores had declined further in two study sites (in Birmingham and Columbus), based on conventional or suggestive evidence. (See Figure ES.1, middle panel.) The direction of change in test scores for the other two sites (in Omaha and Spartanburg), which each had a single pipeline school, is inconclusive. However, the data suggest that, if the scores did change, they did not change by very much. These patterns were similar across the Birmingham and Columbus school districts.

12. Although the CQBs created early childhood learning centers as part of their cradle-to-college strategy for educational reform, the research team was unable to acquire systematic data on these centers that could be used for a change-over-time analysis.

At the start of the follow-up period, students in the pipeline schools for which data are available were disproportionately Black (an indicator of racial segregation), and most of them were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (an indicator of economic segregation). This remained true at the end of the follow-up period for the pipeline schools in all the study sites, with one exception: the Northside neighborhood in Spartanburg. Qualitative research findings for Spartanburg's Northside (later confirmed by state school report card data) indicate that, in spring 2022 (after the study period had ended), the pipeline school received a state passing grade for the first time since its inception in 1999.[13] This encouraging result followed a decade of continuous educational reform efforts led by the local CQB and its partners.

- **Across most sites, test score results for all nearby schools were similar to those for pipeline schools.**

In addition to the educational opportunity that pipeline schools afforded children in the study sites, the evaluation examines the academic performance outcomes for all nearby elementary and middle schools that these children might have attended. The findings show that the estimated initial student test scores for all nearby schools were almost three grade levels below the national average for the study neighborhoods in Birmingham, Columbus, and Omaha, and almost two grade levels below the national average for those in Charlotte and Spartanburg. Thus, it appears that, in all study sites, all nearby schools afforded limited educational opportunity to children living in the Purpose Built Community neighborhoods at the beginning of the analysis period. Conventional or suggestive statistical evidence (not shown in Figure ES.1) points to a further decline in test scores over time — and thus a further decline in educational opportunity — in all nearby schools in three sites. Only in the Omaha site was there statistical evidence (based on test score data) indicating some improvement in educational opportunity afforded by nearby schools.

Overall, the CQBs set out to improve neighborhood schools that, for a long time, had lagged behind their school district and far behind the national average. These schools were also segregated by race and income relative to schools districtwide and remained that way by the end of the analysis period. As such, the task they set out to accomplish was a daunting one. Moreover, as outside organizations with limited decision-making power, their efforts to advance their educational initiatives were routinely undercut by frequent turnover among leaders in the schools and school districts, which often meant the loss of longstanding and hard-earned allies and partnerships.

Progress Toward Becoming More Mixed-Income Communities

- **Some strides toward lower poverty rates and a broader mix of incomes were made in most of the neighborhoods in the study.**

13. Still more recent state school report card data from outside the time period of this study indicate that the pipeline school in the Charlotte site also showed improvement, receiving a higher overall state rating for the 2022–2023 school year as compared with its overall state rating in the 2021–2022 school year.

Initiatives in the three core pillars of the Purpose Built Communities model (mixed-income housing, education, and community wellness) are intended to help achieve a larger vision: reducing intergenerational poverty and creating thriving, mixed-income neighborhoods. Cross-cutting community-level measures, not pertaining to any one pillar but rather to that larger vision, indicate that four of the five neighborhoods experienced reductions in overall poverty, extreme poverty, or both (based on conventional or suggestive statistical evidence). The bottom panel in Figure ES.1 illustrates the change in overall poverty. In the neighborhood in Charlotte, other data show that rates of extreme poverty fell (according to conventional statistical evidence). These results suggest that in most of the neighborhoods some progress was made toward becoming more mixed-income communities. Increases in the proportion of residents employed in several of the sites may also reflect that progress. Moreover, demographic data (not shown in Figure ES.1) make clear that these changes were not driven by an influx of White residents with higher incomes, which is often a concern with community revitalization initiatives. Change in Woodlawn in Birmingham moved in the opposite direction, however, with evidence pointing to an increase in overall poverty and extreme poverty. However, it had a lower poverty rate (but still high) in the initial period than the other study sites.

Progress in increasing the representation of households with higher incomes in the neighborhoods was more limited during the study period. For example, most of the neighborhoods did not experience substantial increases in the share of people with incomes at or above 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold (with the exception of the Northside in Spartanburg).

- **The trends in the study neighborhoods were largely consistent in their direction with those occurring citywide and in other persistently high-poverty census tracts, suggesting that broader forces may have been at work.**

Although the Purpose Built Communities model does not include specific targets for achieving an "ideal" mix of household incomes, reducing poverty to a level that is closer to a citywide average, and certainly below the 30 percent level commonly viewed as indicative of concentrated poverty, would align with the model's goals on this measure. Except for Woodlawn in Birmingham, the neighborhoods in the study had much higher estimated rates of poverty than their cities in the initial period. During the study period, citywide poverty rates were generally stable or declined slightly across the five cities. In each of the three neighborhoods where there is at least suggestive statistical evidence that the overall poverty rate dropped (in Columbus, Omaha, and Spartanburg), the citywide rate had also dropped.

For additional context, the evaluation compares the study neighborhoods with other persistently high-poverty census tracts located in the same cities on these measures. The findings suggest that the four study neighborhoods (excluding Woodlawn in Birmingham) were not unique among high-poverty areas in making at least some progress in reducing poverty. According to conventional or suggestive statistical evidence, declines in overall poverty or extreme poverty rates may have occurred in those other persistently high-poverty areas as well.

- **Some evidence suggests that the populations of three neighborhoods declined over the study period, which may have had important implications for neighborhood vitality.**

A neighborhood's loss of population may be a symptom of worsening economic vitality and may even exacerbate that decline. Whatever the reasons the three study neighborhoods experienced a net population loss, it appears that the strides the CQBs and their partners made in the model's three core pillars (mixed-income housing, education, and community wellness) were not sufficient to stop or reverse that decline, at least during the study period. Of course, it is also possible that the population losses would have been even greater in the absence of the Purpose Built Communities interventions.

Only one neighborhood in the study (in Omaha) experienced population growth. This neighborhood followed a pattern observed in the city overall and in its other persistently high-poverty areas — perhaps, again, signaling the importance of factors external to the neighborhood in driving change.

- **A high proportion of legacy residents were no longer living in their neighborhoods 5 or 10 years after Purpose Built Communities interventions were launched. However, there is little evidence that residents with low incomes had been systematically excluded.**

The CQBs aimed to avoid displacing legacy residents (people who lived in the neighborhoods before the Purpose Built Communities interventions were launched) as they endeavored to revitalize their communities. It is therefore noteworthy that data show that many legacy residents left their neighborhoods during the study period. Across the five sites, the proportion of residents who were living in the neighborhoods in 2008 and still living there five years later ranged from 40 percent to 59 percent. In all but one neighborhood, the retention rate continued to drop substantially — to around between 23 percent and 32 percent 10 years later. The reasons why some residents moved cannot be discerned from the data available for this study. However, it is clear that by the final segment of the analysis period, residents with poverty-level incomes still accounted for a high proportion of all residents. Thus, despite the reductions in poverty rates in four of the five neighborhoods and the high move-out rates among legacy residents, all study sites were still far from becoming places that systematically excluded households with low incomes.

Qualitative data collected in 2022–2023 suggest that some residents perceived that wealthier individuals and families were increasingly moving into their neighborhoods in more recent years. To some residents, this change felt palpable, but it may not have occurred during the period captured by the quantitative indicators or on a scale large enough to influence the level of change captured by these data.

CONCLUSION

The Purpose Built Communities model represents a distinct approach to neighborhood revitalization. From the study's findings, it is clear that the CQBs became enduring institutions,

deeply embedded in their communities, and that they and their strategic partners were able to implement initiatives across quite disparate and complex domains and meaningfully engage local residents in setting priorities and planning activities. This in itself represents important progress in what the local organizations and champions hoped to accomplish by adopting the Purpose Built Communities model. At the same time, the study shows what it takes to get important initiatives off the ground, and that changes in strategy or course corrections were often necessary along the way.

Although this study does not provide a causal assessment of the effectiveness of the Purpose Built Communities model, it does provide important information to help gauge whether the study sites experienced changes that are consistent with the model's vision. On the one hand, the analysis does not paint a clear and consistent picture of progress in that regard, although there are exceptions in some neighborhoods on some indicators. On the other hand, some evidence suggests that small progress had been made in the neighborhoods toward becoming lower-poverty, more mixed-income communities — and without those changes having been driven by an influx of White newcomers with higher incomes or by excluding residents with lower incomes. Qualitative data also point to a variety of possible quality-of-life improvements that may not be reflected in the quantitative indicators. It is also important to keep in mind that many of the initiatives launched by the CQBs did not come into play until about mid-way through the follow-up period or later. Moreover, factors well beyond the control of the CQBs, including citywide changes in economic conditions, real estate markets, population shifts, and districtwide school policies may have influenced the change-over-time findings in the study neighborhoods.

This study also acknowledges the inherent uncertainty involved in measuring change in small geographic areas. Large margins of error are associated with many estimates, which often made it difficult to discern the true direction of change on those indicators. The research team used a 75 percent margin of error in addition to a 90 percent margin of error, which is unconventional in studies of this kind. However, the team offered a 75 percent margin of error in the belief that it might reveal valuable insights about the direction of change in important neighborhood indicators, even if the evidence is only suggestive. The study also avoids concluding that an absence of statistical significance *necessarily* means that no change occurred; in many cases, the evidence is in fact inconclusive.

Finally, it is important to stress that the Purpose Built Communities model is evolving. Recent modifications to the model include adding "economic vitality" as a fourth pillar and focusing more explicitly on issues of racial equity. In addition, the CQBs continue to gain experience with the model. In many respects, the first decade of the model's implementation covered by this evaluation might be properly viewed as a period in which the foundation was set for a long-term process of community change.

1

Introduction

Historically disinvested neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty, and many of the health and social problems that typically accompany poverty, have long been a part of the American urban landscape. The persistent disinvestment in such places, which are also usually segregated by race and income relative to the wider city or region, is a longstanding public policy concern. That concern is bolstered by a growing body of research showing that local communities matter deeply to the current and future well-being of individuals and families, including children's social and economic mobility.[1] To an important extent, the fates of people and place are intertwined.

Over many decades, a wide variety of place-based revitalization interventions aimed at turning the tide and helping these areas transform into economically and socially thriving communities have been implemented. (See Box 1.1.) Many of those interventions, often referred to as "comprehensive community initiatives," have sought to effect change in multiple dimensions of community life simultaneously.[2] Many of them share a common thread: a goal to attract new residents with higher incomes while avoiding large-scale gentrification and the displacement of existing residents with low incomes. Whether such a balance can be achieved and maintained in the face of market forces and social and cultural change has been a matter of debate.[3]

This report presents the findings from an evaluation, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and led by MDRC, of one prominent approach, known as Purpose Built Communities.[4] This model for community transformation focuses on relatively small geographical areas, usually covering a few square miles. It concentrates on neighborhood revitalization efforts in three main domains or "pillars": (1) developing mixed-income housing, (2) strengthening a "cradle-to-college" educational pipeline, and (3) improving the health and social well-being of residents through a variety of initiatives in a "community wellness"

1. The terms "neighborhoods" and "communities" are used interchangeably in this report.
2. See Fulbright-Anderson and Auspos (2006).
3. Joseph and Khare (2020).
4. The National Initiative for Mixed-Income Communities at Case Western Reserve University participated in the evaluation's design phase, described later in this chapter.

BOX 1.1

Concentrated Poverty and Place-Based Initiatives

Decades of ever-growing disparity in wealth and prosperity in the United States has contributed to the segregation of residential communities by household income in the nation's major metropolitan areas.* Segregation by race also remains pervasive, even though it has declined over several decades. Extensive research has documented large increases in the number of neighborhoods with deep poverty over many decades,† caused in part by the migration of the middle class residents out of these communities. Studies have also recorded the devastating losses in economic opportunity and social organization for the residents in these neighborhoods, especially those with high concentrations of Black or African American families,‡ and shown the negative effects of urban decline and concentrated poverty on the health and life chances of individuals growing up in these environments.§

Policy decisions at both the federal and local levels, particularly those related to housing, have facilitated this economic and racial segregation. Racially discriminatory decisions about where to locate subsidized housing, zoning policies such as restrictive covenants (many of which remain in place to this day), and banking lending practices such as redlining and have all played a role.** Together they have created a separate and unequal landscape in American neighborhoods; propagated multigenerational negative impacts on health, social mobility, and wealth for people of color; and exacerbated harmful divisions in our economy and society.†† Disparate life outcomes along lines of race and ethnicity regularly expose these systemic inequities.

In response, philanthropic organizations, federal and state agencies, financial institutions, and local community organizations have sponsored or helped implement numerous place-based interventions to address the negative consequences of concentrated poverty and discrimination and to advance racial justice. Many of the communities chosen for these interventions were historically subjected to redlining practices and had majority Black or Latino populations. The interventions were part of broad efforts to revitalize some of the most highly disinvested communities in the country and were often carried out in conjunction with local or federal public housing redevelopment projects or other related programs.‡‡ While diverse in type and scope, these interventions all involved the building of partnerships with local stakeholders and organizations and the implementation of activities across multiple domains, such as housing, education, employment, transportation, and health. They also made concerted efforts to coordinate with and solicit input from community leaders and residents, although to varying degrees.§§

NOTES: *See Fry and Taylor (2012) and Kneebone, Reid, and Holmes (2020).

†Jargowsky (1997). Analysis shows that the number of high-poverty neighborhoods is holding constant after a short-lived decline (Benzow and Fikri, 2020). These neighborhoods increased dramatically across U.S. metropolitan areas from 1980 to 1990. Robust economic growth in the 1990s succeeded in partially reversing this trend, leading to a 4 percent reduction in the number of high-poverty neighborhoods by 2000. This modest improvement, however, turned out to be short lived.

‡Wilson (2012).

§For example, see Chetty and Hendren (2018); Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush (2008); Sharkey (2008).

**Rothstein (2017).

††Loh, Coes, and Buthe (2020).

‡‡The Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods program, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods (formerly HOPE VI) program exemplify these sorts of federal investments.

§§See Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, and Dewar (2010a); Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, and Dewar (2010b); and Lambe (2015) for practices and features associated with such initiatives.

domain. (More recently, designers have added a fourth pillar, "economic vitality," to the model.) Small nonprofit organizations called "Community Quarterbacks," or CQBs, in collaboration with local partners, are tasked with implementing the model in each designated neighborhood. The overall expectation is that the intensive work carried out across these pillars will be mutually reinforcing and together will help achieve the model's ultimate objective: transforming disinvested neighborhoods into more mixed-income and vibrant communities where the cycle of intergenerational poverty common to them is broken and people of all income levels can thrive.

In 2009, the Purpose Built Communities Foundation (referred to as "Purpose Built" in this report) was founded to replicate the success of a vast community revitalization effort in the East Lake neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia, which began in the mid-1990s. Philanthropists Tom Cousins, Julian Robertson, and Warren Buffett, who had contributed substantial funding to the East Lake initiative, believed that the Purpose Built Communities model could succeed in other disinvested neighborhoods and influence the way policymakers in the United States address issues of neighborhood decline and urban poverty.[5] Today, the model is operating in 28 communities across 13 states.

Given the importance of reducing concentrated poverty in these neighborhoods and undoing decades of disinvestment, there is strong interest in determining whether the place-based interventions that have been implemented have had positive effects or impacts on the communities they were intended to help. However, for methodological reasons discussed later in this report, it is extremely difficult to obtain credible estimates of the causal effects of place-based interventions.[6] Most evaluations of place-based initiatives describe the initiatives, the local contexts and their needs, institutional structures, the stakeholders, the resources committed, and the strategies adopted. Few, however, have been able to estimate causal impacts in a credible way.[7]

The prominence, perceived promise, and expansion of the Purpose Built Communities model prompted the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ("foundation") to provide a grant to Purpose Built to support its efforts to replicate the model in other communities. In addition, in 2020, the foundation commissioned MDRC to evaluate the model, initially requesting a rigorous impact study. The MDRC team proceeded in two phases: a design phase, which included soliciting input from an independent advisory panel of scholars and practitioners, and a

5. The East Lake initiative invested or leveraged more than $600 million into the community. This investment was structured around the model's three pillars. A recent evaluation found that the initiative led to some noticeable community-level changes, including reductions in poverty and increases in income, college degree attainment, and home values (Theodos, Coulton, and Pitingolo, 2015). These effects, though, may strongly reflect changes in the composition of the people living in the community. The study showed that the share of the population that was Black decreased, while the share that was White increased. The size of population, housing tenure, and gross rents were unchanged

6. See Congdon, Simms, and De Vita (2021) for a fuller discussion of the challenges these types of evaluation encounter.

7. Bratt (2020).

full evaluation phase, during which the team conducted the research.[8] The team carefully explored various design options for a causal impact assessment. After conferring with the advisory panel and the foundation, the team concluded that an impact assessment was not feasible; that is, the available data and quantitative analytic methods were unlikely to yield valid and precise estimates of the model's effects on important outcomes related to change in a neighborhood. As an alternative, it was agreed that the research team would instead conduct an implementation and outcomes study that focused on change over time, but that did not make causal inferences. Five CQBs that were among the first to replicate the Purpose Built Communities model agreed to participate in the evaluation. The study covers roughly the first 10 or so years of each intervention's operation (depending on the site and type of data available).

The implementation study relies on qualitative research and examines whether the CQBs consistently implemented the Purpose Built Communities model, which calls for effective collaboration with local organizations, and whether they undertook important activities in each of the model's three pillars. Although the quantitative analysis cannot draw a direct causal link between the intervention and changes over time in neighborhood indicators, it can assess whether, according to those indicators, the communities had begun making progress aligned with the model's goals.

The study's findings suggest that the Purpose Built Communities model can be replicated in a wide range of neighborhoods with quite different starting conditions. In the first decade after the initiatives were launched, the respective CQBs, which were early adopters of the model, had built up their organizations, developed internal capacity, established partnerships with other local organizations, secured philanthropic and federal investments, planned and implemented initiatives in each of the model's three pillars, and engaged with residents to help identify priorities and make certain key decisions. How the model was implemented and what was prioritized varied across communities, in part due to differing local needs, challenges, and opportunities. Moreover, some initiatives ramped up over time, while others did not work out as intended and required a shift in strategy. In some communities, reforming schools and increasing access to food proved to be especially challenging.

Meaningful change in a community usually takes much longer than 10 years to realize. Therefore, it is reasonable to view the period covered by this study as one in which local organizations were laying the foundation for the revitalization of their neighborhoods over a longer term. The quantitative analysis found that, over the study period, school performance measures had not improved (with at least one possible exception) and some housing market indicators had not changed as expected. However, it should be noted that some of the initiatives in these domains (e.g., new schools in some sites) were not operational until late in the study period, and thus these findings may not reflect their full impact. In addition, factors beyond the control of the CQBs could have affected the direction or magnitude of change.

8. The advisory panel for this study was chaired by professors Ingrid Gould Ellen of New York University and Mariana Arcaya of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, under the direction of the foundation.

Still, the quantitative analysis did indicate some encouraging, albeit limited, progress with respect to the study neighborhoods (referred to as "Purpose Built Neighborhoods" in this report) becoming less poor. Residents had a somewhat greater mix of incomes by the end of the study period, while there was little evidence of systematic displacement of individuals and families with poverty-level incomes. In some cases, changes related to a number of variables mirrored those that occurred citywide and in other persistently high poverty areas. In other cases, the changes in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were more distinctive. That said, there was an absence of a clear and consistent pattern of improvements across a wide range of neighborhood indicators. This finding further underscores the need for a long-term commitment to these neighborhoods and possibly additional supports for the organizations implementing the intervention.

The next sections describe the Purpose Built Communities model and the evaluation in greater detail.

PURPOSE BUILT COMMUNITIES: FRAMEWORK AND KEY FEATURES

According to the Purpose Built Communities model, "neighborhoods of concentrated poverty are rooted in systemic policies and practices — both past and present — that feed off and fuel entrenched racist conditions, beliefs and stereotypes." [9] The model presents a holistic approach to helping neighborhoods overcome longstanding disadvantages and disinvestment.

As mentioned earlier, the original model (which was in effect for most of the study period) calls for investment in three core pillars. (See Figure 1.1.) They are as follows:

1. **Mixed-income housing.** This pillar focuses on creating and preserving housing for households at all income levels, including permanent affordable housing for current and future residents with very low incomes, and without displacing long-term or "legacy" residents.

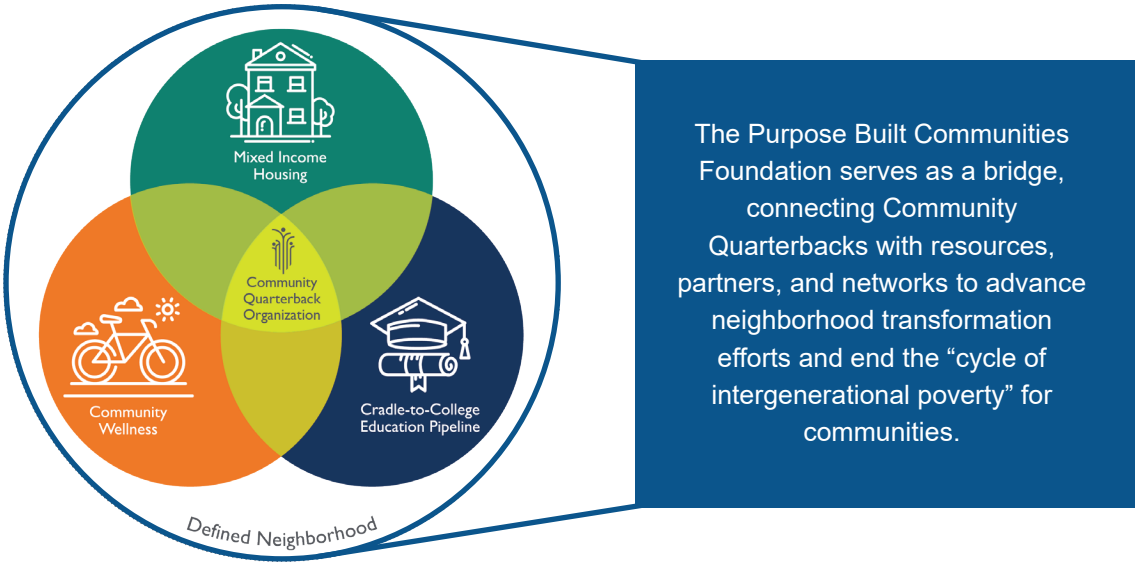
2. **A cradle-to-college education pipeline.** To address disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes, this strategy focuses on creating a high-quality educational environment for children in the neighborhood, including pathways from early learning through the twelfth grade, to foster children's development and prepare them for college or their chosen path after high school.

3. **Community wellness.** This pillar prioritizes other essentials for a thriving neighborhood, including expanded access to health care, quality food, green space, recreation, arts, community meeting and event spaces, and other amenities and services, all of which may improve personal well-being.

9. See Purpose Built Communities (2019).

Figure 1.1

Purpose Built Communities Model, Version 1.0



SOURCE: Purpose Built Communities (2021).

NOTE: This figure is a slightly modified reproduction of the original presented in Purpose Built Communities (2021).

The model assumes that improving conditions in each of these domains will be *mutually reinforcing* and combined will reduce disinvestment and multigenerational poverty and enhance residents' economic mobility, health, and well-being. This holistic view also underscores a central tenet of the model's theory of change: Outcomes in one pillar may be shaped by changes in another pillar. (For example, home values may be affected by initiatives in the housing sector, but they could also be affected by investments in local schools and improved educational outcomes for neighborhood children.)

The model's other key features include the following:

- **A newly formed Community Quarterback (CQB) organization in the lead.** The model calls for a single nonprofit to lead the holistic community revitalization effort, forging strategic partnerships with other organizations and government agencies, as needed. The rationale for creating a new organization is the belief that the CQB must play a role that is broader than that of any other existing organizations in the neighborhood. For instance, community development corporations may be actively involved in building and preserving affordable housing in the community, but they may not be actively engaged in wellness or education reform initiatives. In this way, the CQBs are expected to steer an agenda that encompasses a wider range of goals and activities.

- **Strategic input from the Purpose Built Communities Foundation.** Purpose Built provides pro-bono consulting services and technical assistance to the CQBs. Their engagement with CQBs is intended to be the most intensive in the first few years, and then scaled back as CQB staff build their own capacity and require less strategic guidance or support. Purpose Built does not assume fiscal responsibility over the initiatives planned or implemented by the CQBs and its partners, and it does not directly fund the CQBs or local projects, though it may strategize with the CQBs about funding sources and opportunities. Later sections of the report will describe the ways in which the CQBs sought support or received assistance from Purpose Built.

- **A national network to support local community revitalization efforts.** The Purpose Built Communities Network has grown to include 28 CQB organizations ("network members") across 24 cities and 13 states, with more potential network members in the pipeline. Over its first 10 years, Purpose Built staff generally offered one-on-one consulting support to individual CQBs. In 2019, funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation enabled Purpose Built to shift from a "hub-and-spokes" structure (with Purpose Built serving as the hub) to a "community of practice" model.[10] This shift was intended to allow Purpose Built to better support the CQBs, accelerate knowledge-sharing, shorten learning curves, and potentially lead to more successful implementation of initiatives. Chapter 2 describes how Purpose Built worked with the CQBs in this study in more detail.

- **A defined geographic "footprint."** The Purpose Built Communities model targets small geographic areas. These areas range from a couple census blocks to a few census tracts, typically containing between 1,700 to 7,000 people. They constitute a defined "footprint" for thinking about both where local efforts will be concentrated and the potential reach of these efforts (i.e., where the benefits of the investments might be experienced).[11] Some other community revitalization initiatives spread their efforts over multiple neighborhoods and cover much larger geographic areas within a city.[12] In contrast, the Purpose Built Communities model focuses on smaller areas, where meaningful change can be realized.

EVALUATION GOALS AND APPROACH

The evaluation of the Purpose Built Communities model attempts to answer the following sets of questions:

1. How did the CQBs operate across a range of neighborhoods with different local circumstances, and how did they evolve over time?

10. Purpose Built Communities (2021).
11. Block groups are typically segments of census tracts.
12. The Chicago New Communities Program evaluation is one example. See Greenberg, Verma, Dillman, and Chaskin (2010).

2. What strategies were planned and implemented in the three main pillars (housing, education, and community wellness)? What considerations did the CQBs take into account when setting the priorities and undertaking activities to advance the model's goals?

3. Do trends on a range of quantitative neighborhood indicators suggest that the communities were changing in the ways envisioned by the model?

This evaluation draws on a variety of methods, analytic approaches, and data to address these questions and distill lessons from the efforts to replicate the Purpose Built Communities model. It explores those efforts in five neighborhoods that all had high poverty rates, were highly segregated relative to the wider city or region, and were historically disinvested, but that also varied in important ways, including in terms of the available local assets and opportunities on which they could build. It also tracks changes over time in key neighborhood indicators, while paying careful attention to the uncertainty of estimates based on data from small geographic areas. Although the study does not include an analysis of causal impacts, the findings should still be relevant to many stakeholders interested in the potential of this model as a whole; the particular on-the-ground housing, education, and wellness initiatives the CQBs put in motion; the local partnerships that were forged to improve a neighborhood and engage residents in the decision-making process; and quantitative evidence of change in persistently high poverty communities. The following features are central to the evaluation and shape its findings:

- **It looks back in time** to describe the origins of the CQBs, their initiatives, their planning processes and early implementation, and the patterns of change in their communities over an approximately 10-year period. In this sense, the study is largely retrospective, focusing mostly on implementation activities and community conditions starting around 2010.

- **It includes neighborhoods in multiple cities,** reflecting different roll-out and implementation timeframes across these locations. Unlike many evaluations of community initiatives that have focused on one or more neighborhood in a single city, this evaluation looks at the experiences of and outcomes for five neighborhoods in different cities across the country. It offers lessons and observations that are sensitive to the unique contexts of each community and that account for variation across them. This multi-site approach also means that the analysis contends with the implications of variation in local contexts, priorities, and timelines when making sense of the patterns in the findings.

- **It offers insights from the field, including the perspectives of different types of stakeholders.** Using a range of qualitative research methods, the evaluation takes a close look at how the model takes shape on the ground in different settings. (See Table 1.1.) It traces the history and evolution of the CQBs and describes their goals and activities in each of the model's pillars, the partners with whom they collaborated, the internal and external challenges they faced in implementing initiatives to advance neighborhood revitalization, and the capacities built in the process. To provide rich narratives, as well as draw broader generalizations from the sites' experiences, the qualitative study is structured around three phases of data collection and combines data from interviews with CQB staff and

Table 1.1

Data Collection Methods Used in the Process Study

Method	Respondents
In-depth interviews	Over 75 interviews with Community Quarterback leaders and staff, community leaders, staff at partner organizations, Purpose Built Communities Foundation staff, and other key actors
Focus groups	About 40 residents in Birmingham, Spartanburg, and Charlotte
Organizational survey	All five Community Quarterbacks
Document review	Strategic plans, annual reports, and other relevant documents on plans and initiatives

other community leaders, focus groups with residents, an online survey completed by the CQBs, and documents and other materials (such as strategic plans and annual reports). The stakeholders' observations collected in the qualitative research illustrate the types of initiatives implemented, what was accomplished, and the issues they encountered.

- **It focuses on change over time in neighborhood indicators.** The study draws on an array of quantitative indicators to track progress toward goals that are consistent with the Purpose Built Communities model's broad vision for thriving communities. It measures community conditions in an initial period, before the CQB's formally launched the intervention (generally around 2009), and estimates how those conditions changed through 2019. The analysis uses quantitative indicators that could be captured for small geographic areas (block groups and census tracts) and for the study period. (See Table 1.2.) Because the potential sources of change in a community are many, the analysis stops short of inferring that the CQBs' activities per se had *causal effects* on neighborhood conditions. It is also important to keep in mind that the roughly 10-year period covered by this study is a relatively short timeframe for substantial transformation to occur in a community. Therefore, it may be helpful to view the quantitative analysis as showing how the communities were changing during the early stages of the model's implementation, as the CQBs laid a foundation for achieving longer-term neighborhood revitalization.

- **It emphasizes comparison.** Where possible, the evaluation compares implementation strategies and neighborhood changes, both across places and over time. For example, the research team conducted three comparisons using quantitative data over the study period: (1) a comparison of changes over time in neighborhood indicators across the five Purpose Built Neighborhoods; (2) on selected indicators, a comparison of changes over time in each neighborhood with changes over time in the larger city where the neighbor-

Table 1.2

Quantitative Data Sources, by Domain

Domain	Data Source	Selected Measures[a]	Analysis Time Period[b]
Housing (Chapter 3)	American Community Survey	Vacant housing units, contract rent	2006–2019
	CoreLogic	Single-family housing stock, owner occupancy, property values	2008–2019
Education (Chapter 4)	National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data	Racial concentration in schools, receipt of free or reduced-price lunch, student-teacher ratios	2008–2019
	Civil Rights Data Collection	Expenditures per student	2009–2018
	State Report Cards	State test scores	2018–2022
	Stanford Education Data Archive	Student test performance	2008–2018
Income and population (Chapter 6)	American Community Survey	Total population, income and poverty, race and ethnicity, rent burden	2006–2019
	Infutor	Mobility rates, outflow of legacy residents	2008–2018
	Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics	Employment in unemployment insurance-covered jobs	2008–2019

NOTES: [a]Measures are defined in the chapters where they are examined. Relevant quantitative indicators were not available for the wellness domain.
[b]The chapters indicate whether measures examined for particular sites use different time segments of the analysis.

hood is located; and (3) on selected indicators, a comparison of changes over time in each Purpose Built Neighborhood with changes over time in other census tracts in the city that also experienced persistently high poverty rates before the study period began. The first comparison shows whether changes in certain indicators are common across the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. The second and third comparisons shed light on whether the changes observed in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods follow broader trends in their respective cities or are distinctively more positive or negative.

- **It assumes drivers of change are mutually reinforcing.** The Purpose Built Communities model recognizes that community-level improvements in one domain may contribute to improvement in other domains. For example, improved performance of local schools may create more demand for housing in the neighborhood and thereby contribute to an increase in home values. Thus, the evaluation does not assume observed changes in quantitative indicators for a given domain are only due to the initiatives' activities in that domain.

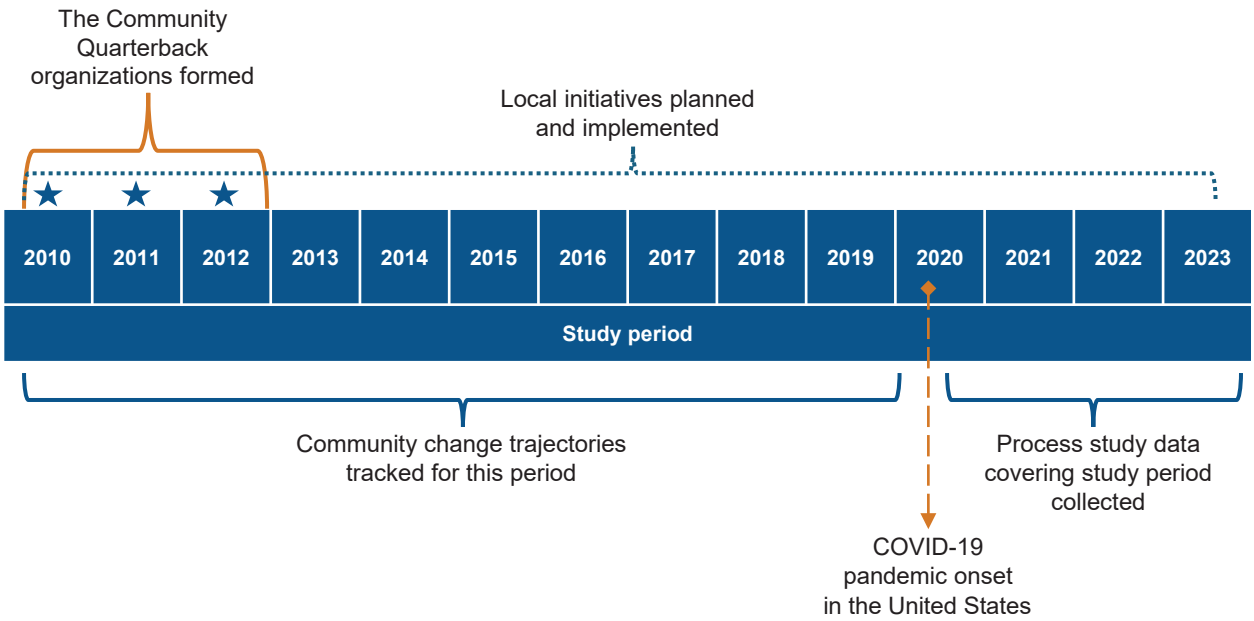
- **It applies an equity lens to community change.** The mission of Purpose Built is to achieve "greater racial equity, better health outcomes, and economic mobility" in targeted neigh-

borhoods, with the overarching goal of "breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty."[13] These equity-focused goals align with those embraced by the CQBs, as indicated by their choice to implement the Purpose Built Communities model. The evaluation's quantitative analysis measures each Purpose Built Neighborhood's progress toward its equity-focused goals in relevant outcomes, relative to other historically disinvested communities and to the respective city as a whole. The evaluation's implementation analysis also examines the CQBs' strategies to achieve these goals, their experiences, and the obstacles they encounter on the ground. Finally, the study considers the question of who in the community benefits from the changes taking place from an equity standpoint — specifically, whether legacy residents are among the beneficiaries.

Figure 1.2 provides a high-level overview of the evaluation's timeline and relevant programmatic milestones. All CQBs in the study were formed between 2010 and 2013 and had joined the Purpose Built Communities Network by 2013. The research team conducted the evaluation over three years, from mid-2021 to early 2023, and generally focused on the 2010–2023 period, depending somewhat on the study component. Until late 2022, the team conducted much of the qualitative research remotely (over the phone and via Zoom meetings), since visits to the communities were only possible toward the end of the data collection period

Figure 1.2

Evaluation Timeline and Program Milestones



13. Purpose Built Communities (2024a).

when COVID-19 pandemic-related travel restrictions were lifted. The quantitative data collected and analyzed in this study generally cover the period from 2010 through 2019.

SELECTING SITES FOR THE EVALUATION

In order to better understand the CQB's efforts to replicate and adapt the Purpose Built Communities model, it was important for the research team to focus on places where the CQBs already had some years of experience operating the model. Thus, the length of time the CQBs had been part of the Purpose Built Communities Network was a key consideration in selecting sites for the evaluation.

The research team identified six members of the Purpose Built Communities Network, all of which were early adopters of the model, as potential candidates for the study. To assess their suitability and interest, the team solicited input from Purpose Built, reviewed online and other information about the CQBs and their programs, and spoke with members of their staff. The team initiated this stage of work in early 2020, right about the time the nationwide COVID-19 pandemic-related travel and other restrictions went into effect, preventing the team from visiting the CQBs and their communities.[14] By the end of the site reconnaissance process, five of the six CQBs agreed to participate in the evaluation. (See Box 1.2.) The CQB in Omaha, the Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation, had recently participated in another study and therefore declined to take part in the present evaluation's full qualitative component, although it did agree to provide some information on its experiences and to be part of the quantitative analysis. Chapter 2 describes the participating CQBs and their communities in more detail. A sixth network member, Bayou

BOX 1.2

The Community Quarterbacks and Their Neighborhoods

1. **Woodlawn United** (formerly Woodlawn Foundation), Woodlawn, Birmingham, Alabama
2. **Renaissance West Community Initiative,** Renaissance West, Charlotte, North Carolina
3. **Partners Achieving Community Transformation,** Near East Side, Columbus, Ohio
4. **Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation,** Highlander, Omaha, Nebraska
5. **The Northside Development Group,** Northside, Spartanburg, South Carolina

14. The CQBs, too, paused many of their initiatives in order to prioritize and respond to pandemic-related needs arising in the community.

District Initiative in New Orleans, was juggling other priorities and decided that the time was not right for it to participate in a multi-year evaluation.

HOW THIS REPORT IS ORGANIZED

This report includes seven chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the CQBs; the neighborhood footprints designated for their Purpose Built Communities initiatives; and how they built their capacity to implement the model, forge partnerships, and set programmatic priorities. Chapters 3 through 5 explore the CQBs' and their partners' experiences implementing the model and their activities in each of its three main pillars (housing, education, and community wellness), as well as changes over time in key neighborhood indicators. Chapter 6 examines change over time in a range of neighborhood indicators related to the model's overarching goals (e.g., creating more mixed-income communities). The perspectives of CQB staff members, residents, and other key stakeholders on relevant themes, drawn from the qualitative data, are woven throughout these chapters. Chapter 7 offers a brief epilogue to the study.

2

The Community Quarterbacks and the Neighborhoods They Served

A lot of the organizations that come to see us, they have these great ideas, but they're not doing it with *the community, they're doing it* to *them or* for *them. And there's a big difference.*

Resident leader

The Purpose Built Communities model is intended to help revitalize historically disinvested communities within relatively small geographic areas. It relies on a newly created local nonprofit organization, referred to as the Community Quarterback (CQB), to lead these revitalization efforts in a designated neighborhood. As the lead organization, the CQB is expected to collaborate with local organizations, neighborhood residents, and other actors to design and implement initiatives aimed at achieving the model's goals across its three main domains or "pillars"—mixed-income housing, education, and community wellness.[1]

Given the central role that CQBs play, any assessment of the Purpose Built Communities model should take into account how these organizations operated and what they have achieved. This chapter focuses on how the CQBs participating in the MDRC-led evaluation were organized and how they built their capacity to implement the model, forged partnerships, engaged with local residents, and set programmatic priorities. It also compares the CQBs, their choices, and their experiences in their respective neighborhoods. Later chapters in the report describe the initiatives that the CQBs helped launch in each of the model's three pillars and what they accomplished.

This chapter first introduces the neighborhoods that the CQBs served, giving an overview of their geographic scope, historical conditions, and demographic characteristics at the time Purpose Built Communities initiatives were launched. The chapter also describes the role of Purpose Built Communities Foundation (referred to as "Purpose Built" in this report),

1. Purpose Built Communities (2024b).

the national organization that provides strategic support to organizations implementing the model and helps build their capacity and undertake certain initiatives. Qualitative data from field research conducted at four of the five study sites (excluding the Omaha site), and from an organizational survey completed by all five CQBs, inform the presentation.[2]

THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE STUDY

Defining Neighborhood Boundaries

This section describes the neighborhoods that the five CQBs in the study serve. (See Box 2.1.) Figure 2.1 depicts these neighborhoods on maps. Each map shows two sets of boundaries: The area outlined with a *pink line* represents the neighborhood "footprints," or areas, served by the CQBs' initiatives. The area outlined with a *blue line* represents the neighborhood footprints used by the research team to characterize and quantitatively measure neighborhood conditions.

As with most quantitative analyses of community-level outcomes, this study relies on census tracts or block groups to define neighborhoods for research purposes. The maps in Figure 2.1 show that the two neighborhood footprints (one outlined in pink, and the other in blue) do not coincide perfectly in any of the five neighborhoods, although they do so better in some neighborhoods than others.

In some cases, the research area (outlined in blue) encompasses sections of census tracts where the CQBs do not operate. Furthermore, the boundaries around the areas served by the CQBs (outlined in pink) are fluid in some places. Therefore, it is possible that the Purpose Built Communities efforts affected some people living in ostensibly excluded areas in one way or another. For example, an increase (or decline) in home values in the study neighborhoods, or "Purpose Built Neighborhoods," may spur a similar change in home values in adjacent neighborhoods (known as a "spillover effect"). Similarly, the children in adjacent neighborhoods may attend the same schools as children in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods, residents of adjacent neighborhoods may participate in some of the community events held in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods or enjoy amenities located there but that are open to everyone in the area (e.g., a farmer's market or green space), and so on.

In other cases, the research footprint excludes a small section of the neighborhood served by the CQB. However, in those cases, the research footprint still covers the area most intensively served by the CQB and its activities. Bearing these discrepancies in mind, the geographical areas that the research team uses in the change-over-time analyses should be considered

2. The research team fielded the online survey from November 2022 to February 2023, and all the CQBs in the study completed it. It included questions about the CQB's initiatives and projects, resources, capacities, and supports received from Purpose Built.

close approximations of those where the Purpose Built Communities interventions operated and thus relevant for such calculations.[3]

BOX 2.1

The Purpose Built Neighborhoods' Service and Analysis Footprints

Woodlawn United (Birmingham, AL) serves the neighborhoods of Woodlawn, South Woodlawn, Oak Ridge Park, and East Avondale. For the quantitative analyses, this report focused on the census tract covering the southern portion of Woodlawn, excluding the area encompassing Birmingham-Shuttlesworth Airport.

Partners Achieving Community Transformation (Columbus, OH) serves the Near East Side of Columbus, focusing on a neighborhood that is bounded by I-670 to the north and I-71 to the west. To study this area, the quantitative analyses used data from three census tracts that cover the majority of the neighborhood's footprint.

Renaissance West Community Initiative (Charlotte, NC) serves a "primary service area" centered around two housing developments, and a larger "home school area" that represents the reach of its education initiatives. The primary service area, referred to as "Renaissance West" in this report, is adjacent to the Charlotte International Airport on its west side, and bounded by North Carolina Highway 160 to the south. The quantitative analyses focused on one census tract that encompasses the primary service area.

Seventy-Five North Revitalization Corporation (Omaha, NE) serves the Highlander neighborhood, located in Omaha's emerging midtown area and bounded by U.S. Route 75 (also known as the North Freeway) to the east.* For this study, the quantitative analyses drew from data on two census tracts that encompass this neighborhood.

The Northside Development Group (Spartanburg, SC) serves the Northside neighborhood, which has an industrial past and is located half a mile from downtown Spartanburg and adjacent to railroad lines.† To study this neighborhood, the quantitative analyses focused on data from two census block groups that cover the majority of Northside's footprint.

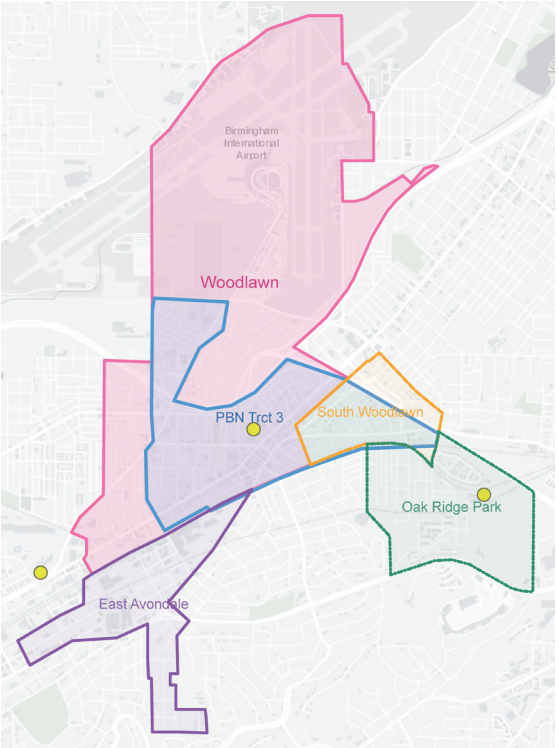
NOTES: *Purpose Built Communities (2024d).
†Purpose Built Communities (2024c); Northside Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan (2014).

3. The research team consulted with Purpose Built and the CQBs to understand the geographical boundaries and census data definitions they use for their own analysis of patterns of neighborhood change. This information informed the team's approach to defining the neighborhoods and constructing quantitative indicators that reasonably approximate the geographic areas served by these organizations. As part of this process, the research team also examined the areas that were part of the CQB's target neighborhoods but that fell outside the census tracts or block groups used in the study's analyses. For the most part, these areas were primarily nonresidential, or they were areas on which a CQB focused more recently.

Figure 2.1

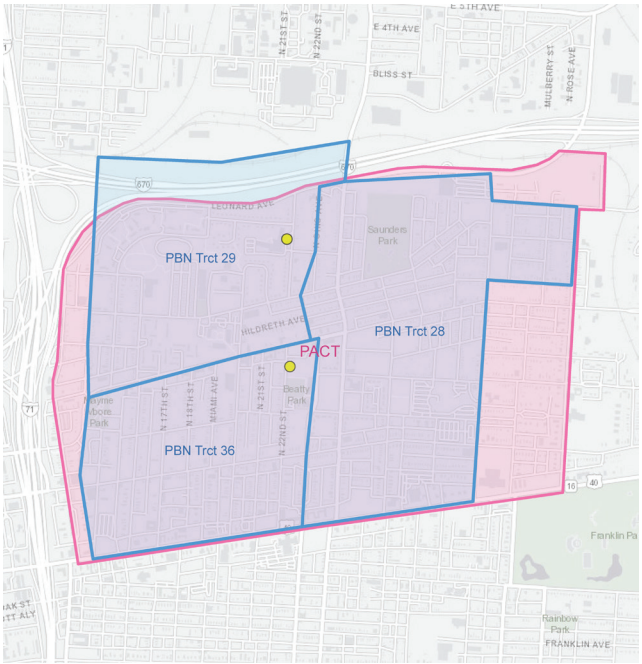
Purpose Built Neighborhood Footprints and Census Areas Used for the Quantitative Analysis

Woodlawn (Birmingham, AL)



Woodlawn
South Woodlawn
Oak Ridge Park
East Avondale
Census area (Tract 3)
Pipeline schools

Near East Side (Columbus, OH)



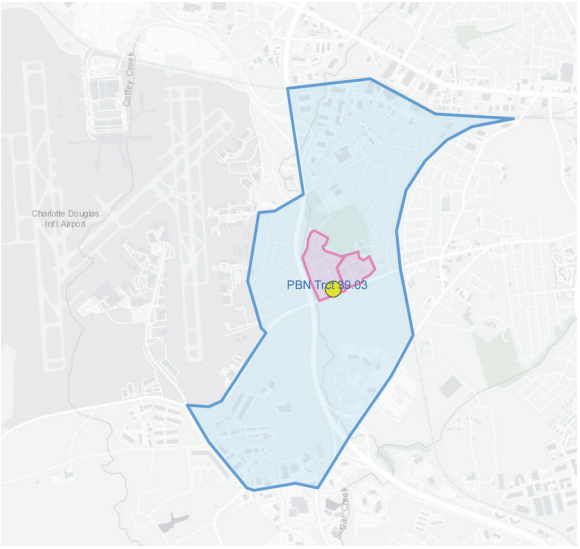
Near East Side
Pipeline schools
Census area (Tracts 28, 29, 36)

SOURCES: Decennial Census Shapefiles Data and other materials shared by the Community Quarterback Organizations.

(continued)

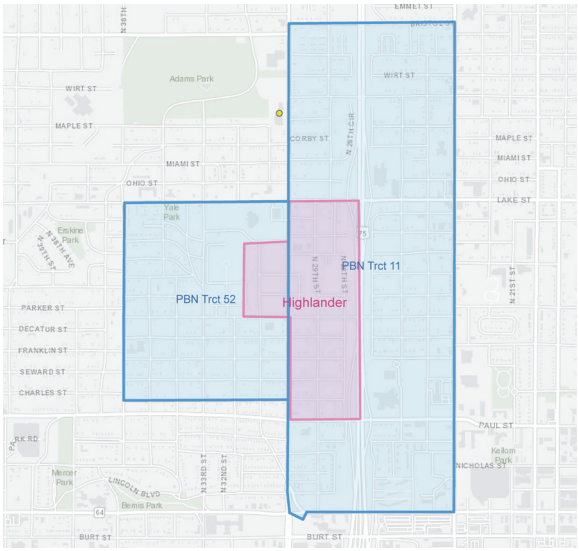
Figure 2.1 (continued)

Renaissance West (Charlotte, NC)



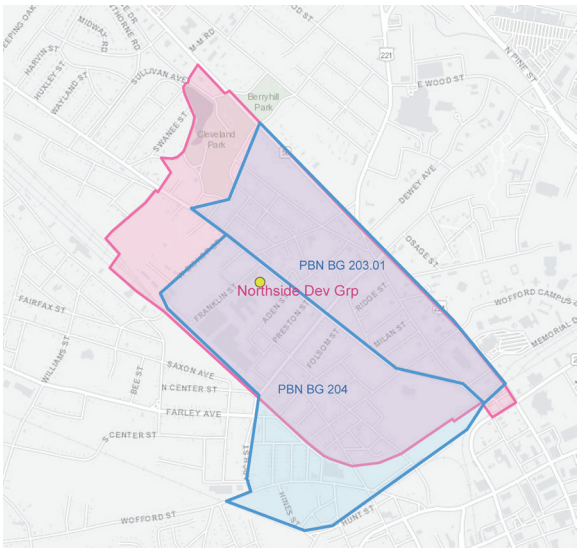
Renaissance West | Pipeline schools
Census area (Tract 39.03)

Highlander (Omaha, NE)



Highlander | Pipeline schools
Census area (Tracts 11 and 52)

Northside (Spartanburg, SC)



Northside | Pipeline schools
Census area (Tract 203.1, Block Group 1; Tract 204, Block Group 1)

SOURCES: Decennial Census Shapefiles Data and other materials shared by the Community Quarterback Organizations.

NOTES: Census tracts and block groups are identified in terms of the 2010 Census areas.
For the Omaha site, it may seem the quantitative analysis area (shown with the blue boundary) extends beyond the Highlander neighborhood itself. This reflects previous findings that suggest the reach of the Community Quarterback extends beyond the narrower neighborhood boundaries in this city. See The Improve Group (2019) and Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation (2019).

Each map also includes a yellow dot indicating the location of a "pipeline school." As Chapter 4 describes, pipelines schools are either existing schools where the CQBs and their partners introduced various school reform initiatives or new schools that the CQBs helped build. In some cases, the school is located in area served by the CQB, and in other cases it is located outside the area but nearby.

Neighborhood Conditions at the Time the Community Quarterbacks Were Formed

Three of the five neighborhoods in the study are located in areas whose real estate creditworthiness was classified as "hazardous" or "definitely declining" by the federal Home Owner Loan Corporation program in the mid-1900s.[4] Residents of these redlined areas faced exclusionary lending tactics, which denied them access to capital that could have helped improve their housing and economic circumstances. Research shows that, in general, nearly three-quarters of neighborhoods that were classified as "hazardous" by the Home Owner Loan Corporation at that time are low-to-moderate income neighborhoods today.[5] Additionally, most (nearly 64 percent) of the areas classified as "hazardous" are now predominantly minority neighborhoods.[6]

As mentioned earlier, the CQBs by design focused on relatively small neighborhoods — both geographically, as seen in the Figure 2.1 maps, and demographically. Four of the five neighborhoods in the study had estimated populations ranging from 1,700 to 4,200 residents at about the time the Purpose Built Communities interventions were launched, based on American Community Survey data.[7] The Near East Side neighborhood in Columbus had the largest population, with about 6,700 residents. The majority of residents in the five neighborhoods were Black, with their share of the population ranging from an estimated 59 percent to 86 percent. Only the Northside neighborhood in Spartanburg had a substantial number of White residents, who made up about one-quarter of the total population. Latinx

4. Designations for the other two neighborhoods were not available. The Home Owner Loan Corporation was a temporary agency tasked with drawing "residential security" maps that guided how loan officers, appraisers, and real estate professionals would rate the real estate credit risk for different neighborhoods in major American cities. The maps rated neighborhoods in one of four categories: (a) best, (b) still desirable, (c) definitely declining, or (d) hazardous. Maps in Appendix A display risk ratings for the study neighborhoods and their greater cities. The Woodlawn neighborhood in Birmingham, as well as areas to its west and east, were all rated as a "hazardous" mortgage-lending risk. Eight decades ago, much of the northern part of the Near East Side neighborhood in Columbus was rated as "hazardous," while the southern portion was given the more moderate rating of "definitely declining." The Highlander neighborhood in Omaha was adjacent to a "still desirable" area to its west, and to "definitely declining" areas to its north, east, and south. The western half of this neighborhood was rated "definitely declining," while its eastern half was rated "hazardous."
5. Mitchell and Franco (2018).
6. Mitchell and Franco (2018).
7. The estimates of the population size and other neighborhood characteristics presented here are mean estimates, which are appropriate for a general characterization of study areas. Later chapters in this report that present estimates on similar measures include margins of error, which illustrate the degree of uncertainty that applies to those mean estimates.

or Hispanic residents made up an estimated 22 percent of the population in the Woodlawn neighborhood in Birmingham, and about 14 percent of the population in the Renaissance West neighborhood in Charlotte.

Across the five neighborhoods, most residents (between half and two-thirds) were working age (18 to 64 years old) around the time Purpose Built Communities was launched. School-aged children (5 to 17 years old) and young children (5 years old and under) together made up the next largest group, while seniors were the smallest group in all neighborhoods (less than 10 percent).

Four of the neighborhoods had extremely high poverty levels, in which a majority of residents (between about 50 percent and 65 percent) had annual incomes that fell below the federal poverty level. In the fifth neighborhood, Woodlawn in Birmingham, about one-quarter of residents had incomes below the federal poverty level. Across the four neighborhoods with employment data, employment rates among working age adults ranged from 50 percent to 60 percent.

The CQBs had to contend with low home values in the neighborhood and account for this factor in their initiatives. In three of the five neighborhoods, single-family homes made up the vast majority of the housing stock, but fewer than half of those homes were occupied by their owners — a fairly low rate by national standards. Across the five neighborhoods, approximate average monthly contract rents around the time Purpose Built Communities was launched ranged from $314 to $526. The highest rents were in Highlander in Omaha, which also had the highest proportion of households experiencing "extreme rent burden," a measure discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. The Northside in Spartanburg had the lowest rents.

The schools that serve the five neighborhoods had underperformed for years. A key tenet of the Purpose Built Communities model was to create a "cradle-to-college pipeline" for local children, a feature that resonated with and appealed to the CQBs.

Later chapters of this report revisit some of these baseline neighborhood and resident characteristics, and assess how, if at all, they changed over the study period.

THE COMMUNITY QUARTERBACKS AND THEIR ORIGINS

The five CQBs in this evaluation were formed against a backdrop of redevelopment efforts that were already underway in their communities. Local champions, both individuals and institutions, served as initial conveners, bringing together local actors interested in neighborhood revitalization. They saw the need for an organization, embedded in the community, to lead local neighborhood revitalization efforts. Champions included family foundations, such as the Mike and Gillian Foundation in Birmingham and the Mary Black Foundation in Spartanburg; anchor organizations, such as the Ohio State University and Wexner Medical Center in Columbus; and city leaders, such as former mayor Bill Barnett in Spartanburg. These champions provided seed funds to start new organizations that became the CQBs, set

out an initial vision for the new CQBs, and forged connections to the city government and other institutions. While the CQBs in this study were formed before they formally adopted the Purpose Built Communities model, they had already been engaged in revitalization efforts in their communities and were thus primed to assume the role.

Soon after their formation, the newly formed local organizations began discussions with Purpose Built. Once Purpose Built and the local organizations agreed that their missions aligned, the local organizations officially joined the Purpose Built Communities Network. (The network currently includes 28 member organizations, or "network members.") Table 2.1 presents key background information on the five CQBs, including when they were formed, when they joined the Purpose Built Communities Network, and what triggered their formation. It shows that all the CQBs were founded between 2010 and 2013, and four of the five became part of the Purpose Built Communities Network between 2013 and 2014.

In all cases, the formation of these organizations was prompted by an important community development activity that encouraged local actors to consider broader revitalization efforts. For example, in Spartanburg, the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) established a new campus in the abandoned mill that had been the center of economic life in the Northside neighborhood in the 1900s. Taking advantage of nearby hospitals and colleges, including Wofford College, VCOM opened its new campus in 2011. Spartanburg city officials, who encouraged the opening of VCOM, saw an opportunity to revitalize the surrounding the Northside neighborhood, inspired by previous conversations about revitalizing the area. The Northside Development Group, originally created as a land bank to acquire property in the Northside and support local revitalization efforts, became the CQB in the neighborhood.

In Charlotte, the redevelopment of a public housing complex, Boulevard Homes, similarly led to the formation of the CQB in Renaissance West. In 2009, when the Charlotte Housing Authority decided to redevelop Boulevard Homes, members of an education organization, Cornerstone Children's Initiative, saw an opportunity to support education in the neighborhood as part of the project. The group collaborated with the housing authority to develop the concept of an "education village" located within the new public housing development. The partnership applied for a federal HOPE VI redevelopment grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which it was awarded in 2010. Soon after, the Renaissance West Community Initiative was formally created.

Woodlawn United in Birmingham emerged out of a collaboration among local organizations committed to breaking the cycle of poverty. In 2008, Mike and Gillian Goodrich founded the Goodrich Foundation, a community foundation which supported place-based initiatives as a strategic priority.[8] Members of the Goodrich family also had a personal connection to Tom Cousins, one of the founders of Purpose Built Communities in Atlanta, and visited the East Lake neighborhood to learn about the model. In 2010, the Goodrich Foundation championed the creation of the Woodlawn Foundation to serve as the CQB for the Woodlawn neighbor-

8. See Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation (2024).

Table 2.1

Formation of the Community Quarterbacks

Community Quarterback	Neighborhood	Ruling Year[a]	Year joined Purpose Built Communities Network	Triggering Event	Champion	Planning Processes
Woodlawn United	Woodlawn, Birmingham, AL	2011	2010	Local interest in revitalizing the neighborhood and support from a family foundation	Community foundation and existing coalition	Series of meetings with local organizations and residents led by Community Quarterback
Renaissance West Community Initiative	Boulevard West, Charlotte, NC	2010	2013	Redevelopment of Boulevard Homes with a HOPE VI grant (2010)	Housing authority and local nonprofit leaders	Series of charrettes with some resident engagement led by developer
Partners Achieving Community Transformation	Near East Side, Columbus, OH	2014	2014	Planning process with a Choice Neighborhood grant (2010–2012)	Anchor institution, housing authority, and city government	Two-year process with widespread resident engagement led by Community Quarterback
Northside Development Group	Northside, Spartanburg, SC	2013	2013	Establishment of Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in the former Spartan Mill site (2010) and receipt of a Choice Neighborhood planning grant (2012)	Local leader and community foundation	One-year process with widespread resident engagement led by Community Quarterback and partners
Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation	Highlander, Omaha, NE	2011	2013	Tearing down of a public housing development, leading to the sale of the land and its redevelopment	Local philanthropic community	Not available

NOTE: [a]This represents the year that the organization's tax exempt status was awarded.

hood. The Goodrich Foundation provided seed funds and other support to the newly created organization.[9]

Similarly, in Columbus, the creation of the CQB was tied to revitalization efforts led by the City of Columbus, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, and the Ohio State University. Receiving a Choice Neighborhood grant from HUD, these institutions embarked on a community process to develop a plan to revitalize the Near East Side neighborhood. This partnership gave birth in 2010 to Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT), which would serve as the CQB and lead the revitalization plan's implementation. As an affiliate of the Ohio State University, PACT has been able to access its resources, including benefits for its employees.

In Omaha, the demolition of Pleasantview Homes in 2009 left a vast area of land (23 acres) vacant in the heart of Omaha's north side.[10] In addition, the community around Pleasantview Homes had deteriorated, including the Highlander neighborhood where there were wide swaths of condemned homes and vacant land. In 2011, Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation (75 North) was launched to respond to systemic disinvestment in Highlander and catalyze its revitalization. In partnership with a local philanthropist, 75 North purchased the 23-acre parcel of land in the neighborhood and began a process of acquiring more property to allow for large-scale redevelopment of the area. It subsequently became a CQB and joined the Purpose Built Communities Network in 2013.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE PURPOSE BUILT COMMUNITIES MODEL

The CQBs have played a leading role in the collaborative process to revitalize neighborhoods and foster thriving, mixed-income communities. But, as new organizations, they also had to build their own capacity to implement the Purpose Built Communities model and advance its goals across the three pillars. This section examines the capacities they needed to develop and the progress they made in that regard in their roughly first 10 years of operation.[11]

Staffing Capacity

In their early days, the CQBs were relatively small organizations committed to implement activities in each pillar, which required different types of specialized knowledge.[12] The CQBs

9. Later, the Woodlawn Foundation changed its name to Woodlawn United to better reflect its history of collaboration.
10. See Purpose Built Communities (2024d).
11. Interviews with CQB staff members and an organizational survey completed by each CQB inform this presentation.
12. At the time these organizations were formed, they were composed of two to three staff members.

understandably engaged some consultants with this expertise, especially in the early years. Local community foundations were instrumental in helping the CQBs' meet their early staffing needs. In the Spartanburg site, for instance, a local community foundation "loaned" a staff member to the CQB who helped the organization undertake land banking activities and then managed programs.

Purpose Built also helped some CBQs develop their staffing capacity in their formative years. As a Purpose Built staff member noted, "I think a lot of network members need, like, augmented staff, which is what we were doing at the very beginning of Purpose Built . . . [Purpose Built staff would] do a lot of the grunt work to get an initiative started up with the different partners that existed."

This support included assistance with strategic planning, developing a board of directors, establishing a staffing structure, drafting descriptions of leadership positions, and drafting agreements. (A later section in this chapter describes Purpose Built's role more fully.)

Fundraising Capacity

CQBs do not receive funding from Purpose Built; they are expected to raise funds on their own to cover the costs of their operations and initiatives. While Purpose Built provided the CQBs with consulting services at no cost, several CQB staff members said that they wished Purpose Built had provided some funding or more support for their fundraising efforts, given how challenging fundraising (both for operational costs and projects) can be for relatively new organizations. More recently, in 2020, Purpose Built started to direct some funds to network members.

Over time, the CQBs developed their fundraising capacity and were successful in raising millions of dollars for their initiatives. Especially in the early years, most of the CQBs relied primarily on contributions from local foundations and, to a lesser extent, private sources, local government, and federal funding. By 2020, some CQBs had diversified their funding streams. However, all of them continued to rely heavily on local foundations; for some CQBs, these foundations were their main source of funding. Funding from private sources (local donors and businesses) grew over time for all CQBs, and it represented the primary funding source for one of them. Funding from the federal government, which was tied mostly to the housing redevelopment projects, decreased relative to other funding sources by 2020. Funding from national foundations was not available.

Not all the CQBs had strong philanthropic ties with local foundations, however. Renaissance West Community Initiative in Charlotte is a case in point. Its main source of funding early on came from pass-through dollars from a HUD HOPE VI grant to the Charlotte Housing Authority (now called INLIVIAN) to redevelop the Boulevard Homes public housing complex. As one community member noted:

> That's one thing that we lacked in Charlotte is that continuous revenue stream. Therefore, for us, it's even more important that we develop these relationships

> to really fund our initiative . . . Now we've been extremely successful in building relationships and obtaining support through fundraising, but, you know, it's a lot easier if you have those funds and you can budget around those funds on an annual basis. It's extremely helpful.

The CQBs' boards of directors helped the CQBs build philanthropic relationships, and having board members who were well connected in that regard proved to be a big advantage for fundraising. As one CQB leader said:

> [O]ur founding board members have . . . a lot of relationships with other foundations in town . . . they were able to connect us and start us. . . And then board members that were part of different companies . . . that's how we would get connected and then just form the relationship from there.

Finally, some CQBs helped strengthen the fundraising capacity of smaller nonprofits in the community. In some cases, CQBs served as fiscal sponsors for organizations lacking tax-exempt status, helped organizations write grant proposals, and provided some funding and resources to organizations whose missions aligned with the CQB's goals and the Purpose Built Communities model.

Building Partnerships

Often with help from the CQBs' founders and board members as well as staff at local foundations, CQBs forged partnerships with a wide range of organizations, including public housing authorities, city agencies, community colleges and universities, service providers, school districts, grassroots organizations, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood associations. These partnerships took different forms. In some cases, the CQBs contracted with direct service providers, such as early childhood learning providers or those offering specialized training for teachers. In other cases, the CQBs collaborated with partners on projects, in which each partner implemented one or more components. In still other cases, the CQBs and partners simply provided referrals to each other's programs or activities.

These partnerships allowed the CQBs to leverage the expertise of other organizations and actors to implement ambitious and transformative neighborhood revitalization initiatives in all three pillars. The partners contributed invaluable knowledge, experience, and expertise to the CQBs' diverse activities such as early childhood learning programs, school curriculum development, affordable housing construction, and community gardening. These contributions allowed the CQBs to act as effective conveners and coordinators for a wide range of initiatives. A CQB leader said:

> [The CQB] grew into a leadership position in the community . . . we brought in dozens of partners into the community. Our role is to help actualize this vision of helping people break the cycle of intergenerational poverty in this place-based initiative . . . our partners, agencies that we brought in . . . accepted our role as the Community Quarterback or the leader."

The partnerships also permitted the CQBs to attract new resources and services to their neighborhoods. All CQBs, for example, and as discussed in Chapter 4, partnered with service providers to bring resources to local district schools such as after-school programs, mental health services, dental hygiene services, and academic supports.

Setting Priorities Across Pillars

Advancing multiple and often complex initiatives in each of the model's three pillars was an ambitious undertaking, especially for these small, newly formed organizations. Consequently, despite the model's holistic approach, the CQBs had to set priorities and sequence their work. Understanding how the CQBs prioritized their goals and organized their tasks offers some insight into what it means to put this multi-faceted model into practice.

To learn more, the research team administered an organizational survey to CQB staff members that asked respondents to rate the extent to which they prioritized and sequenced activities in each domain. Three of the five CQBs indicated that housing and education activities received highest priority early on. This can be attributed in part to the fact that, as previously mentioned, these organizations were already involved in redevelopment projects before becoming CQBs. Some of the projects included constructing a new housing or early childhood education facility. However, over the course of the 10-year study period, as those early major projects were completed, initiatives in the community wellness domain became more prominent among the CQBs' activities. In general, when setting priorities, the CQBs took into account the needs and interests of their neighborhoods, but they were also influenced by the types of funding available, which varied across the sites.

Although precise data on the CQBs' expenditures were not available for this study, the organizational survey shed some light on the amount of financial resources the CQBs invested in each domain over the first 10 years of implementation. Overall, CQB staff reported that spending in the housing pillar was much higher than it was in the education and community wellness pillars. For example, some estimates indicate that four of the five neighborhood interventions spent at least $20 million on housing initiatives, and at least $10 million on education initiatives during that period. The CQBs spent much less on community wellness initiatives.[13]

13. These figures reflect estimated costs known to the CQBs and do not necessarily include costs incurred by partner organizations that contributed staff time and other in-kind resources that were not indicated in grants or contracts known to or managed by the CQBs.

THE ROLE OF PURPOSE BUILT IN SUPPORTING THE CQBs

As mentioned earlier, the CQBs had to contend with their own internal growth as organizations while also launching activities in each of the model's three pillars. Purpose Built played a supportive role in this process. On a pro-bono basis, it helped the CQBs with their organizational development as well as in planning and getting specific initiatives off the ground. Some of this investment was also made before an organization was formally part of the Purpose Built Communities Network. According to a Purpose Built staff member, "If we [Purpose Built] feel like, well, they're not ready yet, but there could be . . . there's lot of potential there, we'll invest some of our time and resources in getting them there. That's our core business. That has been our core business."

Most of the assistance Purpose Built offered to the CQBs during the study period fell into four main categories: (1) facilitating collaboration with other local organizations, (2) providing leadership coaching and support, (3) supporting project development, and (4) helping with fundraising.

Facilitating local collaboration. Purpose Built helped connect the CQBs with other organizations and institutions that could provide expertise and resources. CQBs leaders noted that Purpose Built's assistance was especially beneficial in helping them navigate relationships with other local entities, particularly large government systems such as housing authorities, local government agencies, and public school districts. A leader at Purpose Built explained the fundamental importance of facilitating local collaboration, saying, "It really is about how do you bring the collectives to the table to make it all work for your community. And that is really the crux of what Purpose Built really kind of does for Community Quarterbacks."

For instance, when one of the CQBs in the study was working to get an early childhood learning center constructed, Purpose Built staff helped it partner with an organization specializing in early childhood education, which provided crucial expertise to the project. The CQB staff member noted, "None of us came to the table with a depth of knowledge in early learning. So, they really helped us tap experts and brought their expertise, but also helped us identify local experts that really helped us understand what it would take in order to move the concept forward."

Purpose Built also helped CQBs draft effective cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding with partners that adequately protected their interests and advanced their goals. For instance, Purpose Built assisted with the contract between the Renaissance West Community Initiative (the CQB in Charlotte) and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district regarding the construction of the new school that was part of the public housing redevelopment project in the neighborhood. Purpose Built ensured that the terms of the agreement accommodated the interests of the CQB and defined a role for the CQB on the

new School Leadership Council, which would help govern what became the Renaissance West STEAM Academy.

In more recent years, and as part of its evolution, Purpose Built has been more intentional about nurturing connections among its network members. Some interviewees thought that, in the early years, Purpose Built focused more on growing its network of CQBs than on strengthening the capacity of existing CQBs or connecting them to others in the network. In addition, some Purpose Built staff members admitted that they approached their work in a checklist-like manner. That is, they mainly reviewed the activities the CQBs undertook in the model's three pillars to make sure they were similar to those in the East Lake neighborhood of Atlanta, where the original intervention operated. Purpose Built later recognized this approach did not always sufficiently help CQBs implement the model in different communities with different local conditions. As a result, Purpose Built has approached its work in a more responsive fashion.

In 2018, Purpose Built created a "community of practice" to bring network members together and to learn from one other. It convened in-person meetings for CQB leaders where they could exchange ideas, lessons learned, and experiences. It also created a digital platform to allow CQB leaders to learn from and support one other on an ongoing basis. As a Purpose Built staff member noted:

> I think we [Purpose Built] did not accurately understand the value of a network. Like, we called ourselves a network. But a network as a noun and a network as a verb are very different things . . . we were just calling ourselves that [a network] . . . And now, we act as a network, too.

Leadership coaching and support. Purpose Built helped to improve the leadership skills of the CQBs' executive directors and boards of directors, particularly in the early years after these organizations joined the network. Purpose Built staff attended board meetings, provided board members training, and offered CQB leaders individual coaching. In some cases, Purpose Built staff served as a neutral party and sounding board, asked difficult questions, helped leaders strategize, and acted as a thought partner. On occasion, Purpose Built staff even weighed in on the nitty-gritty details of an issue with which a CQB was grappling. A CQB leader described this support as follows:

> [Purpose Built staff] would come down and we would meet at somebody's kitchen table. And we would really try to flesh out the theory of change, the definition of our place-based initiative, and what the definition of the area was gonna be, and kind of the baseline concept around what ultimately evolved into [our organization].

Project development and technical support. Purpose Built typically shared its own in-house technical expertise with the CQBs. Describing the education-related technical support that Purpose Built provided, one CQB leader said:

> We were able to lean on the people from Purpose Built schools because they were the folks who helped set up Drew Charter School [in Atlanta's East Lake neighborhood]. So, there were a lot of lessons learned from Drew's start and some of the iterations that they went through before they finalized their model.

CQB leaders also noted Purpose Built's experience working with housing authorities, housing developers, and other institutions in the housing sector. They explained that Purpose Built staff helped guide them in important aspects of their initiatives by asking critical questions, sharing examples of other CQBs implementing similar initiatives, and ensuring key pieces of an initiative were in place. This guidance allowed CQBs, particularly early on, to avoid "reinventing the wheel."

Purpose Built staff helped several CQBs develop their strategic plans. They offered direction on how to approach the planning process, facilitated meetings, offered substantive input, and prepared notes from the meetings. CQB leaders credited Purpose Built with helping them stay focused, create realistic benchmarks, and tailor the work in each of the model's pillars to their neighborhood's specific context and needs.

Fundraising. Although Purpose Built does not directly fund the CQBs or their initiatives, it has supported some of their fundraising activities. For example, some CQB leaders mentioned in interviews that Purpose Built helped them prepare grant proposals and guided their fundraising efforts. Still, fundraising has not been central to Purpose Built's work with the CQBs, which has been a source of some tension. In more recent years, however, Purpose Built began exploring opportunities to provide more assistance in this area, and at the time of data collection for this project, the organization was considering hiring a staff person dedicated to fundraising.

HOW THE CQBs ENGAGED COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Across the neighborhoods in the study, some residents expressed skepticism before the Purpose Built Communities model was launched. Community leaders noted that residents remembered well the broken promises of past neighborhood revitalization projects. For example, in the Northside neighborhood in Spartanburg, the newly formed CQB was very sensitive to the issues of distrust and the failures of the past. As one leader noted:

> [T]here are a couple of dynamics that I think we would be remised if we didn't discuss them, specifically like the history of race and class. . . . A lot of the Black people, I think, were naturally distrusting systems, and that systems were investing in this, and systems had never done well by them. And so, there was just this natural distrust of systems in large organizations. I think the other dynamic to that . . . this neighborhood . . . had been parts of other revitalization efforts . . . Well, what ended up happening in 2008 is the market crash, and so, that type of work didn't gain momentum, and so people were disappointed . . .

Referring to similar challenges that the Northside Development Group in Spartanburg encountered in its early years, a community leader said, "We gotta do this different. We know what happened on the Southside. Lots of development, but the residents of the Southside still don't believe it was theirs. . . . And I was like, "You know, we've gotta start with the community."

Another community leader noted:

> Outside organizations have a lot of work to do to establish credibility and trust . . . [T]here is oftentimes an initial reaction to outsiders stepping into these neighborhoods and . . . what revitalization and rebirth might mean to me doesn't necessarily resonate with the existing residents.

Multiple interviewees emphasized the importance of not overpromising and underdelivering. As one community leader asserted:

> [W]e knew . . . the way to build trust is through honesty and doing what you say you're gonna do . . . if we were gonna do what we said we were gonna do, which is transform that community with mixed-income housing and all sorts of new things, then we needed to be able to do it.

For these relatively new organizations, entering a civic space marked by past failed revitalization efforts and a distrust of institutions represented both a challenge and an opportunity to develop a different kind of relationship with residents. The CQBs recognized that earning residents' trust was fundamental to securing their buy-in and the legitimacy required for the work they would spearhead in the community. To this end, the CQBs took the following actions: They intentionally kept residents informed about the revitalization efforts, they made sure the voices of residents were heard in the planning and execution of the revitalization process, and they cultivated leadership opportunities for residents and fostered a sense of resident "ownership" of the revitalization process.

Keeping Residents Informed and Including Residents' Voices

The CQBs implemented strategies to inform residents about revitalization efforts. They organized public hearings, held informational sessions, and convened community forums. For example, in 2015, the City of Spartanburg condemned a building in the Northside neighborhood's Oakview Apartments complex. When the CQB later purchased the property with plans to redevelop it, it made sure to notify residents early on of the property's status, the revitalization plans, and their housing options by holding informational sessions in the community. Similarly, when Woodlawn United in Birmingham decided to open a charter school, it held a public hearing to inform residents about it. Keeping residents informed in this way helped bring transparency to their work, build trust, and ensure residents could make informed decisions. As one partner explained:

> We're trying to empower those folks with information, you know. Know what it is that's happening in your community. Be aware of some of the influencers, the

> things that are making this change occur so that at least you can be conversant and hopefully that knowledge brings with it, you know, more useful decision making.

CQBs also made intentional efforts to listen to residents, consider their input, and let it guide their work. Staff members conducted surveys and focus groups, held one-on-one conversations with residents, canvassed the neighborhoods, organized pop-up events, and set up information tables at community events where they asked residents about their views, preferences, and needs. They also engaged residents in participatory planning processes, sometimes organizing charrettes to discuss problems and develop solutions.[14]

The Life Navigator program in Charlotte's Renaissance West neighborhood offers an example of a systematic approach for involving residents. This resident-driven initiative conducts outreach in the community, works with residents to set life goals (e.g., getting a job or earning a degree), and helps them achieve these goals by providing referrals to appropriate service providers and personalized coaching. By working with residents in this way, Life Navigators have been able to identify the kinds of services residents need and want in the community, which, in turn, has helped inform the local CQB's work. One CQB staff member described the Life Navigator program as follows:

> [Life Navigators] funnel that information up, and then the decision makers and the program designers and all that organize programs and organize partners and reach out to people and try and funnel back down the services partners, the partnerships, the different services, the different complementary things that go on here onsite that help meet the needs that are being communicated [by residents].

In Woodlawn in Birmingham, the CQB introduced a home repair program in the neighborhood. The program similarly offered another avenue for the CQB to connect with residents, hear their perspectives, and learn about their needs. In reaching out to homeowners and helping them repair their homes, CQB staff were able to build a personal relationship with them, which the staff could leverage to discuss other issues important to these residents and the community.

Cultivating Residents' Leadership and Influence

Finally, CQBs involved residents in decision-making processes, helped develop their leadership skills, and created opportunities for them to lead revitalization efforts. For instance, the boards of directors of Woodlawn United, Renaissance West, and the Northside Development Group all have members who are residents. As board members, they are able channel the voices of their neighbors and make sure their perspectives and desires or aspirations are

14. In some cases, these planning processes predated the adoption of the Purpose Built Communities model.

included in these spaces and that they have a say on the direction of the CQBs' work. Some CQBs created special committees to tackle issues important for residents. For instance, in Columbus's Near East Side neighborhood, PACT established a safety committee and invited residents and community leaders to join it. The committee not only served as an opportunity for the resident members to come together to voice concerns and come up with solutions, it offered these members an opportunity to develop their leadership skills and potentially take ownership of the change happening in the neighborhood. A CQB staff member described these initiatives to cultivate resident leadership as follows:

> We were trying to basically have residents to come and take ownership of the community, and they would have a buy-in into it. Getting them to volunteer and to give back, so that way, you know, eventually, it should be residents really and solely because they're the ones that live here, so they know and they can see what's needed and how they would like to see the community evolve, and, really, to be able to build leaders within the community.

The CQBs' efforts to engage with residents from the outset resonated with those residents who participated in focus groups. For example, in Spartanburg, a resident described the local CQB's approach as follows:

> [The CQB staff say] "I don't have the answers. It's your community. I don't live here. You live here. You know what you need better than I do." Those are the things we like to hear. Because it lets us know that somebody is thinking, and they care about it. Because in the past, things were done for us and not with us, you know, and so we have to know that, when people come in, what their intentions are.

Another resident of Spartanburg said, "[T]hey brought us to the table and talked to us. And when they did, they asked us what we wanted. And that made a huge . . . a tremendous difference, when you come to somebody and ask them what they want."

The CQBs intentionally built relationships with residents by listening to them, turning to them for advice, and including them in the planning process. In doing so, the CQBs made strides in restoring trust and in establishing a new kind of relationship with residents — different from the one they had with institutional actors in the past. As one community leader observed:

> [A] huge part of our work from the very beginning was to form new and partnership-like relationships, and [so it's] not just these large entities are making this investment and it's happening to you. I would say we quickly were able to form very strong and trusting relationships with the residents . . .

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, the CQBs successfully built their internal capacity and raised the funds needed to sustain their operations and their planned neighborhood revitalization initiatives. They also forged robust partnerships with organizations and other actors in the community with expertise in the Purpose Built Communities model's three pillars: housing, education, and community wellness. In collaboration with their partners, community leaders, and residents, they have designed and carried out impactful neighborhood projects.

The next three chapters describe in greater detail how the CQBs implemented the model, their initiatives in the three pillars, what they accomplished, and the progress they made toward their goals for neighborhood change. This account will show the breadth of the CQBs' initiatives, which is noteworthy considering the size of these organizations and the intensive resources required to design and implement any one activity.

3

Mixed-Income Housing: Local Initiatives and Change Over Time in Key Indicators

In many cities in the United States, historic, racially discriminatory policies and practices in bank lending, land use, and housing have contributed to racial segregation and high levels of economic disinvestment and concentrated poverty in certain neighborhoods, especially those with majority Black populations. These factors have often taken a heavy toll on the housing stock in these communities, with many of the residential buildings falling into a state of disrepair and some of them being abandoned. Those individuals and families with sufficient financial resources are likely to move out of such neighborhoods or avoid settling in them in the first place, reinforcing disinvestment. Such were the conditions in this study's five neighborhoods (or "Purpose Built Neighborhoods") when the intervention was launched.

As described in Chapter 1, the designers of Purpose Built Communities model sought to address these realities in disinvested communities. The model's overarching goal is to foster more mixed-income communities and one of its three fundamental pillars is transformative change in housing. As such, it seeks to increase and improve the overall supply of high-quality mixed-income housing. As Purpose Built puts it, "The strategy begins by enhancing a community's residential foundation through safe, high-quality housing for all income levels, ensuring a significant portion is dedicated to long-term, permanent affordability to reduce displacement in the neighborhood."[1] In other words, it aims to make the available housing appealing to residents with moderate and higher incomes, while also providing decent, *permanently* affordable housing to current and future residents with low incomes.

The first part of this chapter describes the range of initiatives that the Community Quarterbacks (CQBs) implemented in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods to improve housing quality, preserve housing affordability, and build new housing for families at different income levels, highlighting the successes and challenges they encountered. The findings show that the CQBs got a good deal done during the early implementation period covered in this study, although the scale of their activities varied.

1. Purpose Built Communities (2024b).

The second part of the chapter focuses on key quantitative housing-related indicators, such as the number of housing parcels and the median value of single-family homes, among others, and how these changed over the roughly 10-year study period. Although the analysis is not causal and cannot determine how much of any change (positive or negative) can be attributed specifically to the initiatives of the CQBs and their partners, it can show whether these indicators changed in ways consistent with the model's goals. It is important to keep in mind that activities in the housing pillar are not the only factors that can influence change in housing indicators. Activities in the education and community wellness pillars can also have an effect on a community's housing market. For example, perceptions of the local schools' quality can affect housing prices in an area. Moreover, housing and other conditions in nearby areas may also influence a given neighborhood's housing market.

By the end of the study period, there was no clear and consistent quantitative evidence showing that the overall housing market in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods had changed in ways consistent with the model's goals. However, the CQBs undertook numerous important projects which appear to have laid a foundation for future progress.

DIVERSE HOUSING STRATEGIES

As the CQBs sought to improve and diversify the housing stock in their neighborhoods, they made concerted efforts to balance the needs and concerns of current residents with the aspiration of attracting new residents, including those with higher incomes. Across the four Purpose Built Neighborhoods where the research team conducted full qualitative research (excluding the Omaha site), the CQBs' housing-related activities fell into four main categories: (1) acquiring parcels of land through land banking for the future construction of new homes, (2) collaborating with local public housing agencies to redevelop public housing, (3) offering residents home repair programs and funds to preserve and upgrade existing housing, and (4) providing prospective homebuyers with new homebuyer education programs or down payment assistance grants to purchase homes in the neighborhood. Table 3.1 shows the different strategies used by the CQBs.

To varying degrees, all CQBs devoted some of their efforts to building new housing. Across the four Purpose Built Neighborhoods, over 1,000 new apartments, townhomes, and single-family homes were built during the 2009–2021 period. Apartment and townhome complexes that included both subsidized and market rate units constituted much of this new housing, reflecting the interventions' focus on mixed-income development.

The CQBs developed a deep understanding of their neighborhoods' physical landscape and took into account the perspectives and experiences of current residents. They carried out landscape analyses, which included everything from drawing maps to driving and walking around the neighborhood. As one CQB leader explained:

> [W]e did a lot of assessment on the community, and we knew what areas were hardest hit by vacant and dilapidated properties. We knew where there was

Table 3.1

Housing Strategies of the Community Quarterbacks

Strategies	Description	Community Quarterback			
		Woodlawn United, Birmingham	Renaissance West Community Initiative, Charlotte	Partners for Achieving Community Transformation, Columbus	Northside Development Group, Spartanburg
Home building and land banking	Purchased properties to build new housing	X		X	X
Public housing redevelopment	Partnered with local housing authority to plan or build, utilizing HUD grants		X	X	
Home repair program	Provided support to repair current residents' homes	X		X	X
Down payment program	Provided down payment assistance for purchasing a home in the neighborhood			X	X
Homeowner literacy	Conducted educational classes related to homebuying and homeownership	X			X

NOTES: "X" indicates the activity was conducted.
Blank cells indicate that the activity was not conducted.

> heavy residential that was rental. And we also knew where there was heavy residential that also might possibly have a high concentration of owner occupied [homes].

In some cases, the CQBs were able to capitalize on what they referred to as "anchor institutions"—existing organizations or landmarks that could attract new residents and help improve the neighborhood for current residents. For example, in Columbus, the CQB envisioned an existing nearby hospital as being an anchor for new housing because it consistently brought new employees, including teachers and nurses, to the neighborhood. Similarly, when the CQB in Birmingham built a new charter school, it decided that it wanted to focus its housing redevelopment efforts in the area surrounding the new school.

Land Banking and Home Building

Land banks are quasi-governmental entities or nonprofit organizations that acquire land parcels, typically ones that are underutilized, abandoned, or tax delinquent, with the goal of repurposing the land for productive uses. Two CQBs — Woodlawn United in Birmingham and the Northside Development Group in Spartanburg — used land banking as a core housing strategy. Both established land banks early on. The Northside Development Group was originally created in 2010 for the purpose of acquiring land, even before it become a CQB. In 2011, Woodlawn United founded the land bank Main Street Birmingham Woodlawn United Properties, LLC. Tapping into the social networks of their board members, staff members, and supporters, the CBQs raised the seed funds to help them buy various neighborhood properties. Inspired by Woodlawn United, the City of Birmingham created the Birmingham Land Bank Authority (BLBA), which provides funds to clear property titles (such as freeing them from liens or other claims of ownership) and encourages the practice of land banking throughout the city.

Leaders of these CQBs saw land banking as a way to take some control over their neighborhood's long-term housing landscape. Owning and managing the land provided them with an opportunity to decide, with local input, the location, type, and pace of housing development. They could direct how the property was used and how new homeowners and residents were treated. In the words of one CQB leader, "if [they] wanted to keep a fairly mixed ratio of capital, affordable housing, and then market-rate housing, [they] needed to control enough land to help balance that." As property owners, the CQBs could act as developers, hiring and working directly with architects, builders, and others. They could also accept purchase offers for the property from private developers and choose entities that were willing to align with their mission and goals.

The two CQBs focused on acquiring land by city block, depending on the neighborhood's context. For the Northside Development Group in Spartanburg, this strategy meant owning many successive blocks along one street or concentrated around a set of multiple cross streets. From 2011 to 2021, the Northside Development Group purchased nearly 30 acres of land, primarily parcels closest to the city center. It was able to pursue this "long-stretch" block approach because of the high concentration of poor-quality and abandoned housing stock surrounding the city center. One respondent explained, "We're only like three blocks away from downtown and it is sort of like, you know, how could a community like this exist so close to downtown . . . this kind of poverty shouldn't exist, period, but especially not in the proximity to our downtown."

The Northside Development Group in Spartanburg sought to bridge a highly impoverished section of the neighborhood with a wealthier area immediately adjacent to it. Doing so, it reasoned, could serve two purposes: It could help integrate groups with various incomes, and it could increase the value of new housing.

In contrast, Woodlawn United in Birmingham acquired land block by block by purchasing smaller plots spread throughout the neighborhood. For example, it built its first market-rate home development project on fewer than two blocks and in an area close to a common throughway and surrounded by blocks with existing residential housing. It planned to build affordable housing several blocks from this project, with the aim of dispersing new homes across multiple areas of the neighborhood.

Land banking also enabled the CQBs to positively influence residents' experience with redevelopment in their neighborhoods. Woodlawn United's highly visible first housing development clearly demonstrated to residents that it was taking action to fulfill its promise to improve the neighborhood. At the same time, its strategy to disperse the new housing developments throughout the neighborhood may have made the pace and scope of the revitalization process less jarring for residents and helped gain their trust and support.

The CQBs paid careful attention to how homeowners and residents were treated throughout the housing development process. For example, the Northside Development Group wanted to ensure that it acquired properties fairly. To that end, it created the "90, 60, 30 plan." That is, the CQB gave property owners 90 days to respond to a request for purchase, then 60 days, and finally another 30 days, at which point it sent out a last notice. Rather than pressuring owners, the CQB gave them ample time to sort through liens, late taxes, and so on, and a chance to keep their houses. Additionally, the CQBs were intentional about not acquiring occupied properties. In one case, after purchasing a property, Woodlawn United discovered that someone was still living in it. They worked with the resident for many months, allowing the resident to stay and pay rent and then helping the person find suitable and sustainable alternative housing.

The CQBs casted a wide fundraising net and were able draw on support from a wide range of partners to finance their growing land banks. The Northside Development Group engaged its friends and institutions. In 2014, Woodlawn United partnered with BLBA, which made it easier for the CQB to purchase properties, in part by providing funds to clear property titles.

The Northside Development Group and Woodlawn United built nearly 240 housing units combined, which included detached single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments — a notable achievement, given that each had between only three and six staff members. Overall, the experiences of these two CQBs suggest that operating land banks was a productive strategy to achieving the Purpose Built Communities model's mixed-income housing goals.

Supporting Public Housing Redevelopment

Renaissance West Community Initiative in Charlotte and Partners for Achieving Community Transformation (PACT) in Columbus partnered with local public housing agencies (PHAs) that had been awarded HOPE VI or Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to redevelop public housing complexes. In both neighborhoods, the CQBs provided input on the development process, thanks to the planning periods associated with applying for and receiving a HUD grant. As the central

organization leading efforts to revitalize the neighborhood and address its housing needs, each CQB coordinated with concerned local organizations, community leaders, and residents and gathered their input. After all, these residents and groups had a vested interest in what development projects moved forward, especially given the large scale and high profile of many of them.

In Columbus's Near East Side neighborhood, the formation of the CQB was a direct result of efforts by the City of Columbus, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, and the Ohio State University to redevelop an old public housing complex, Pointdexter Village, that had fallen into disrepair. Developed in 1940, Pointdexter Village covered 26-acres and included over 400 low-income units. These institutions received a HUD Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grant, which provided the funds to plan the revitalization of the entire Near East Side neighborhood, which encompassed the old housing project. Over the next year, these institutions met with residents and held planning meetings. As a result, they created PACT to lead the neighborhood's revitalization. From 2010 to 2014, with a multi-million-dollar infusion of HUD funds, PACT built 400 mixed-income housing units, including some units set aside for seniors.

In Charlotte's Renaissance West neighborhood, the redevelopment of an old public housing complex, the Boulevard Homes, similarly led to the formation of the CQB. In three construction phases from 2010 to 2016, Boulevard Homes was transformed into a sprawling new development featuring 224 townhomes and apartments, 110 units for seniors and people with disabilities, a resident community center, a school and early childhood learning center, a garden and other green spaces, a playground, and a pool.

The planning phases of these large-scale redevelopments offered important opportunities for the CQBs to solicit input from local residents. In Renaissance West, a group of three or four volunteer community leaders were highly engaged in the planning for the redevelopment of Boulevard Homes and ensured that residents' perspectives were considered. As one CQB leader explained:

> We tried to get neighborhood and community input into what would the Renaissance [neighborhood] become . . . typical charrette-type meetings where we were brainstorming ideas, trying to get people to tell us what would be important, what would they value the most about in the new community, things of that nature that helped us think about what assets the new community needed to have, what amenities we needed to have, what services we needed to include and what would make the community feel welcoming for those residents of the former Boulevard Homes.

In general, these HUD-funded redevelopment initiatives, co-led by local PHAs, provided an opportunity for the CQBs to shape large-scale, transformative housing projects in their neighborhoods. However, after the planning phase, the CQBs' role shifted. One respondent noted that "early on, we were involved in the planning, but once the housing was completed [our] voice is gone. We don't have any control over the housing." In Renaissance West in Charlotte, the CQB started considering whether to become a housing developer in its own

right. In the meantime, it pivoted and began to focus its efforts on housing stability. For example, it provided relocation services to residents who were expected to be displaced by the demolition of the original Boulevard Homes complex. Once the new complex, renamed Residences at Renaissance, was completed, the CQB found a role, according to a leader, helping "[residents] stay here when it makes sense for them to stay here." Residents turned to the CQB for assistance navigating everything, from rental applications and leases to social support services. The CQB also reached out to seniors living in the new property and engaged them in various activities to promote their well-being. In the Near East Side in Columbus, the CQB did not play any further role with the redevelopment of Pointdexter Village. Instead, it put its energies toward improving the local housing stock and encouraging homeownership among residents.[2]

Home Repair and Housing Preservation

To help preserve their neighborhoods' housing stock, several CQBs offered resources to current homeowners to maintain or improve the physical quality of their homes. These programs offered financial assistance for interior and exterior repairs, enabling residents to undertake projects they could not have otherwise financially or physically carried out on their own. Not only did these repairs cost less than building new houses, they created change that existing homeowners and the community at large more immediately saw and felt.

In the Near East Side in Columbus, the CQB created an exterior home repair program. The program aided residents with exterior aspects of their homes, such as lawn care, decks, and fences. This program was open to all residents in the community and had no income limits, although the funds available each year determined the number of projects it could support. To determine who received assistance, the CQB scored all applicants on a standardized set of criteria.

Woodlawn United in Birmingham implemented an interior repair program paired with educational programming. This CQB viewed its program as "homeownership stabilization," because it stabilized the structural soundness and health of the home, which increased the likelihood current residents could stay in their homes and even potentially pass it down to children or relatives as a family asset.

As part of the program, Woodlawn residents could receive up to $10,000 for renovations such as fixing floors and electrical wiring and installing new appliances. Recipients were also required to attend two to three workshops on topics ranging from do-it-yourself projects to homeowner's insurance. Woodlawn United spent over a million dollars on this initiative over the course of two to three years.

2. The redevelopment of Pointdexter Village was controversial. A group organized to preserve some of the old houses. After years of fighting, the group succeeded and a few houses were turned into a museum.

Support for First-Time Homebuyers

Another way in which the CQBs sought to stabilize their neighborhoods was by providing down payment assistance to new homebuyers. These programs served both new and existing residents and were intended to encourage residents to buy homes in the neighborhood and to remain in those homes. For example, the CQB in Columbus partnered with the Ohio State University to provide 48 university employees each $8,000 down payment assistance grants to help them purchase a home in the Near East Side neighborhood. To persuade these homebuyers to stay in the neighborhood, the program required those who left it within five years to pay back a portion of the assistance, at a rate of 20 percent of the grant per year short of the five. So, for example, a homebuyer who left after just one year would have to repay 80 percent of the grant. In Spartanburg, the Northside Development Group worked in concert with a school district and hospital to provide teachers and nurses who wished to move to the Northside neighborhood between $10,000 and $20,000 down payment assistance grants. As in the Columbus, these homebuyers had to commit to staying in the home for at least five years, otherwise they would have to repay the grants.

The CQBs in Woodlawn in Birmingham and in the Northside in Spartanburg offered homeowner education classes for residents interested in purchasing a home. These classes taught participants about the steps involved in purchasing a home, the financial and other requirements necessary for securing a mortgage, and how to keep their homes on a sound financial footing after purchasing them.

CHANGES OVER TIME IN KEY HOUSING METRICS

This chapter has so far described the various activities that the CQBs undertook in the Purpose Built Communities model's housing pillar during their first decade of operation. The following sections examine how the neighborhoods in this study fared on a set of quantitative indicators used to assess whether the housing markets in these communities improved.

The analysis focuses on indicators measuring changes in the number and types of residential properties, whether the housing units were owner-occupied or rental units, the neighborhoods' vacancy and foreclosure rates, the monthly rents of rental units, and the market value of single-family homes. Although these indicators pertain to the strength of a neighborhood's housing market *in general*, they do not directly measure the mix of household incomes of those living in the residential properties. Thus, by themselves, they cannot sufficiently assess whether the neighborhoods' housing markets were changing in ways consistent with the model's goal of "ensuring high-quality housing for all income levels." In other words, they do not directly measure the mix of household incomes of those living in the residential properties. Nor do they indicate the *distribution* of rental costs or home values.[3] Thus, by

3. The research team considered analyzing indices commonly used to measure variation in housing values and, as examined in Chapter 6, the diversity of neighborhood residents' income. However, the

themselves, these measures cannot be used to determine whether the study neighborhoods' housing markets were changing in ways consistent with the Purpose Built Communities aspirational standard of "ensuring high-quality housing for all income levels."

That said, however, for historically disinvested neighborhoods, any evidence of a strengthening housing market would generally seem to suggest movement in the right direction. Indeed, it would be difficult to contend that a disinvested neighborhood is making substantial strides toward more mixed-income housing *without* showing some signs of a general strengthening in the housing market. The findings presented below should therefore be considered with this perspective in mind. It is also important to recall that the qualitative findings presented earlier in this chapter offer examples of some progress that was made in the study neighborhoods toward developing a more diverse housing stock and in improving the quality of existing housing.

Data Sources, Timeframe, and Analytical Approach

To assess changes in housing and other outcomes in the study neighborhoods, the research team needed to obtain relevant longitudinal data that it could compile for small, geographically defined areas. As described in Chapter 2, the analysis defined those areas as the census tracts or block groups that best approximated the respective geographical "footprints" that each CQBs served. This report thus refers to each of those areas by the name of the neighborhood the CQB served or as a Purpose Built Neighborhood. However, it should be kept in mind that the boundaries of the neighborhoods and the associated census tracts and block groups do not align perfectly.

The measures in this report generally cover the time period from 2006 (before the CQB organizations were incorporated and before they joined the Purpose Built Communities Network) through 2019 (the final time period for which quantitative data were available at the point of data collection). Estimates of community conditions are generally more reliable when they encompass several years, rather than a single year. Therefore, most of the quantitative change-over-time analyses presented in this report estimate averages based on several years of data collected during the "initial period" and on several years of data collected during the "final period." The exact dates the research team used to define the initial and final periods differ somewhat for some data sources and for some sites. For data from the American Community Survey (ACS), the initial period is defined as the five-year period from 2006 to 2010 for all sites except the one in Spartanburg, where the initial period is defined as 2009 to 2013 due to lack of data in earlier years. For all five sites, the final period is defined as the five-year period from 2015 to 2019. For data from CoreLogic, the data source used to examine housing stock and property values, the initial period is defined as the three-year period from 2008 to 2010 for all sites except the one in Spartanburg, where the initial period is defined as 2009 to 2010 due to lack of data in earlier years. For all five sites, the final period is defined as 2017 to 2019. The overall goal of these analyses was to

team made a decision not to analyze the indices because of the difficulty in determining the degree of statistical uncertainty pertaining to estimated changes over time in those indices.

estimate the amount of change that occurred on a range of relevant indicators, from the initial period to the final period.

It is important to note that these change-over-time analyses are not causal: In other words, it is not possible to attribute the changes observed, or even the absence of change, to the Purpose Built Communities interventions. This is because constructing a comparison group or counterfactual for the quantitative change analysis was not feasible, making it impossible to distinguish the influence of the CQBs' housing-specific initiatives from that of other relevant factors. For example, changes in the neighborhood related to population characteristics, the perceived quality of local schools, local economy and mortgage rates, perceptions of crime and safety, and perceptions of community amenities, as well as changes in nearby communities related to housing prices, housing vacancies, and other conditions may all influence the neighborhood's housing outcomes, such as the value of single-family homes. Despite these limitations, the findings presented in this report can help assess whether any of the observed changes were aligned with the goals of the Purpose Built Communities model.

Measurement Uncertainty

Measuring change over time on a given indicator, and a community's ranking on that indicator, involves a great deal of statistical uncertainty when the analysis focuses on a relatively small geographical area. Looking only at mean estimates may be misleading. Small sample sizes, measurement errors that affect many data sets, and random variation in a phenomenon over time can contribute to an estimated average value on a particular indicator that is considerably larger or smaller than the "true" value. For example, suppose a study estimates that the average age of residents in a neighborhood is 35 years. It is possible that the *true* average age may be considerably higher or lower than that estimate. For that reason, it is helpful to include margins of error (MOEs) or confidence intervals associated with estimated mean values. A 90 percent MOE implies that there is a good chance the true value of what is being estimated falls somewhere within the upper bound and lower bound of the 90 percent confidence interval. Expanding on that example, a study might find that the MOE for the estimated age, at the 90 percent level, is ± 10 years. That would mean that there is a good chance that the true average age falls somewhere between ages 25 and 45 years — which would represent the lower and upper bounds of the confidence interval for that mean estimate, respectively. This would suggest considerable uncertainty in the estimate of the true average age.

The same logic applies to estimates of change over time. For example, if the estimated mean age of residents in a neighborhood increased, it would be important to know the MOE that applies to that estimate in order to draw conclusions about the direction of change — e.g., whether the average age of residents was truly likely to have increased. If, for instance, the mean age is estimated as 35 years at Time 1 and 39 years at Time 2 (an estimated increase of 4 years) but the MOE of that change is ±8 years (at the 90 percent level), that implies that there is a good chance the true change in average age falls anywhere from -4 years to +12 years. In other words, the direction of change is uncertain: The average age may have increased or fallen. However, if the MOE were, say, only ±1 year, it would imply that the true

change is probably between +3 years and +5 years. Because both of these ends of the confidence interval are above zero, it would also imply that the direction of change is positive, signifying that the average age likely increased over time.

To avoid drawing misleading conclusions, this study is explicit about the level of uncertainty associated with various estimates. It does so by indicating the MOEs that apply to its estimates of mean values for each indicator and its estimates of change in a mean value between the initial and final periods over the roughly 10-year study period. Moreover, in addition to calculating a 90 percent MOE for those change estimates, which is a conventional benchmark used in many studies, it also considers the results when a 75 percent MOE is applied. This calculation represents a lower standard of evidence.[4] In cases where that standard is met, the study considers the finding as "suggestive evidence" about the direction of change. A change estimate that does not meet even the 75 percent standard is considered "inconclusive," because there is too much uncertainty to draw a conclusion about the direction of change.

Box 3.1 summarizes the approach used in this report to estimate change over time in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. It uses the measure of single-family parcels to explain how to read the statistical tables in this and later chapters, including how to interpret the 90 percent and 75 percent MOEs. Appendix B offers more details on the analytic approach used to estimate the change over time, which differs depending on the type of data available.

Figure 3.1 provides an illustration of the application of the 90 percent and 75 percent MOEs, as it pertains to the change in median property values for single-family homes. The figure plots the estimated change on that measure for each Purpose Built Neighborhood, represented by the large dark blue dot. It also shows the confidence intervals around each estimate. The solid line through each dot represents the confidence interval associated with a 90 percent MOE. The shaded portion of the solid line represents the confidence interval associated with a 75 percent MOE.

The figure shows that for the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in Birmingham, Columbus, and Spartanburg, the 90 percent confidence interval (the solid line) lies entirely to the left of zero (which is equivalent to the downward-pointing solid triangles in Box 3.1). This illustrates that there is *conventional statistical evidence* that a decline occurred in median single-family property values over the study period. In other words, although the exact true value of the change is unknown, it is highly likely to be less than zero, signifying that the direction of change is negative (meaning that the true median value fell between the initial and the final periods). The shaded portion of those lines shows the 75 percent confidence interval, indicating that there is *suggestive statistical evidence* that the true median value is somewhere within a narrower negative range. For the Charlotte and Omaha study sites, the 90 percent

4. With a 75 percent MOE, the distance between the upper bound and lower bound of the confidence interval is smaller. This increases the chances that both those bounds will be on the positive or negative side of zero, but implies that one would have less confidence that the true value of the change fell within this narrower range than one would have for a 90 percent confidence interval.

BOX 3.1

How to Interpret the Change Estimates for Purpose Built Neighborhoods

The example here focuses on one measure (the percentage of residential land parcels that are for single-family homes) for three neighborhoods in the study. It explains how to read and interpret tables throughout this report that use the following format.

Change Over Time: Percentage of Residential Parcels That Are Single Family					
	Initial Time Period		Initial to Final Time Period Change		
Site	Estimate	90% Margin of Error	Estimate	90% Margin of Error	Direction of Change
Woodlawn, Birmingham	96	± 0	-1	± 1	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	67	± 3	-2	± 4	?
Near East Side, Columbus	70	± 24	-1	± 1	▽

Three important features about this table should be noted. They are the following:

The table reports estimates for two parameters: (1) the percentage of single-family parcels in the *initial* analysis period, before the CQBs' initiatives were launched, and (2) the change in this percentage between the evaluation's *initial* and *final* analysis periods.

The table provides a 90 percent margin of error (MOE) for each estimate, which reflects its uncertainty (similar to MOEs reported for political polls). A 90 percent MOE (a conventional threshold in many fields), implies that there is a good chance that the mean initial estimate for the Columbus site was 70 percent, ± 24 percentage points (p.p.)—or, in other words, that the true mean value fell somewhere between 46 percent and 94 percent.*

The table summarizes evidence on the direction of change using 90 percent and 75 percent MOEs. As shown, the estimated change in the percentage of single-family homes in the Columbus site is -1 p.p. The 90 percent MOE for that change (-1 p.p., ± 1 p.p.) implies a 90 percent confidence interval of -2 p.p. to 0 p.p., and does not provide *conventional* statistical evidence of the *direction* of change.

To learn more from the data about this change, the study also used a 75 percent MOE (not displayed in these tables) to determine whether there was at least *suggestive* statistical evidence about the direction of the change being estimated. Because a 75 percent MOE implies a confidence interval that is narrower than one based on a 90 percent MOE, a 75 percent confidence interval is more likely to fall on one side of zero or the other, which would indicate either a positive or negative change. However, one would have less confidence that the true mean value fell within that narrower range than one would have for a 90 percent confidence interval.

A 90 percent MOE and a 75 percent MOE together provide a more complete understanding of what the data do and do not say. For example, the 75 percent MOE for the change estimate at the Columbus site implies a 75 percent confidence interval that is narrow enough to specify the direction of change, and thereby provides suggestive statistical evidence that this *direction* was negative.

The symbols in the table (defined below) summarize conclusions about the direction of change.

- **A solid triangle (▲ ▼):** Conventional statistical evidence (based on a 90 percent and a 75 percent MOE).

(continued)

Box 3.1 (continued)

- **A hollow triangle (△▽):** Suggestive statistical evidence only (based only on a 75 percent MOE).
- **A question mark (?):** Inconclusive evidence. (A change estimate does not meet a 75 percent MOE.)

In this way, the table conveys what is learned about the direction of change from the 75 percent MOEs, but, for simplicity's sake, does not show their values. The symbols for the estimates in the above table indicate (1) *conventional* statistical evidence of a decrease in the Birmingham site, (2) *suggestive* statistical evidence of a decrease in the Columbus site, and (3) *inconclusive* statistical evidence of the direction of change in the Charlotte site. It is important to note that inconclusive evidence is not proof that *no* change occurred.

NOTE: * Strictly speaking, without further information, it is not possible to determine the probability that a specific estimated confidence interval includes the true value of what is being estimated. However, the concept of confidence is generally used in applied research

and 75 percent confidence intervals lie on both sides of zero, meaning that the true change in the median property value could be positive or it could be negative in each of those sites. In other words, there is *inconclusive evidence* (as this study defines it) of the direction of change in median single-family property value for these sites.

The next few sections of this chapter apply this analytical framework to a set of variables related to housing indicators. Chapter 4 then applies the framework to changes in educational measures, and Chapter 6 applies it to changes in income, poverty, population, and other relevant indicators.

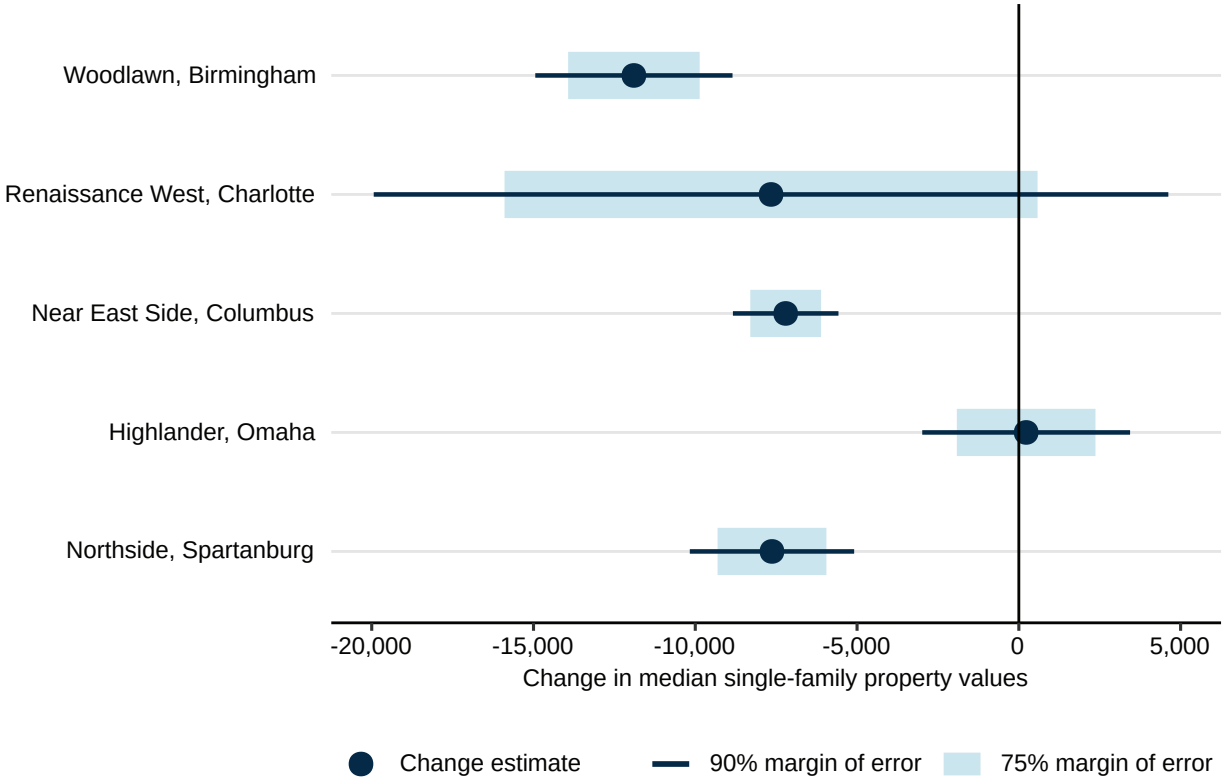
Changes in the Housing Stock and Owner-Occupancy Rates

This analysis uses data from local property records compiled by CoreLogic to examine how particular features of housing stock varied across the five study neighborhoods at the time the study period began, and how they had changed by the end of that period.[5] The first col-

5. Several measures in this chapter are based on data obtained from CoreLogic, a commercial source that compiles detailed annual information on residential properties in the United States using a variety of local property records. Using geocoordinates and census information provided by CoreLogic, the research team aggregated these records into census tracts or block groups that best approximate the neighborhoods in the study. The team identified records corresponding to public housing authorities based on whether a housing authority was found in the "owner name" field. Such records were present in the data for the Charlotte, Columbus, and Spartanburg sites, ranging from 1 percent to 5 percent of each site's residential parcel sample, and appearing for a variety of property types (single-family homes, multi-family homes, and apartments). The team excluded such records from property value measures, but included them in other measures such as the counts of residential parcels. For a fuller discussion of how the team processed CoreLogic data, see Appendix B.

Figure 3.1

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Median Single-Family Property Values



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on CoreLogic historic property data.

umn of Table 3.2 shows that the estimated number of residential parcels in the initial period ranged from several hundred to almost 2,000 across the study neighborhoods. It also shows that in all Purpose Built Neighborhoods, most of the residential parcels were for single-family homes, and in several sites nearly *all* parcels were for such housing.

By the final period, all five Purpose Built Neighborhoods experienced a modest decline (based on conventional or suggestive statistical evidence) in the total number of residential parcels, the total number of single-family parcels, or (in most cases) both. This suggests that, despite the considerable efforts to build new housing described earlier in this chapter, neither they nor any other housing development-related efforts that may have been undertaken appear to have increased the housing supply by the final period. This may not be surprising, partly because new large-scale housing developments take time to build, but also because the CQBs and other actors focused much of their efforts on replacing or upgrading the existing housing stock, and, in some cases, acquiring properties through land banking, razing vacant or uninhabitable homes, and holding the land for future development.

Table 3.2

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Housing Stock

Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Direction of Change
Total number of residential parcels					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	889	± 37	-88	± 53	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	360	± 24	39	± 33	▲
Near East Side, Columbus	1,851	± 627	-75	± 83	▽
Highlander, Omaha	1,705	± 31	-197	± 43	▼
Northside, Spartanburg	575	± 35	-29	± 45	?
Total number of single-family parcels					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	854	± 37	-94	± 53	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	241	± 19	16	± 27	?
Near East Side, Columbus	1,304	± 434	-68	± 63	▼
Highlander, Omaha	1,662	± 28	-184	± 39	▼
Northside, Spartanburg	560	± 37	-37	± 48	▽
Percentage of residential parcels that are single family (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	96	± 0	-1	± 1	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	67	± 3	-2	± 4	?
Near East Side, Columbus	70	± 24	-1	± 1	▽
Highlander, Omaha	97	± 0	1	± 0	▲
Northside, Spartanburg	97	± 1	-2	± 1	▼
Owner-occupancy rate of single-family parcels (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	41	± 2	-2	± 3	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	30	± 2	-1	± 2	?
Near East Side, Columbus	62	± 21	0	± 2	?
Highlander, Omaha	34	± 2	8	± 3	▲
Northside, Spartanburg	45	± 6	0	± 8	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on CoreLogic historic property data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2010 for the Spartanburg site, and 2008–2010 for the other sites. The final period for all sites is 2017–2019.
Residential parcels include single-family, duplex, triplex, multi-family, apartment, and condominium property types.
The owner-occupancy rate is calculated by dividing the number of owner-occupied single-family parcels by the total number of single-family parcels in each year. Owner occupancy is determined using a CoreLogic proprietary inference code based on assessor information. For instance, an owner is considered absentee if mail and situs addresses are not equal.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

The percentage of the housing stock made up of single-family homes also did not change substantially in any of the sites. The average change estimates and MOEs were all quite small, even where the direction of change is inconclusive (denoted by question marks in Table 3.2).

Because most residential parcels were and remained single-family homes, it is important to consider the proportion of those homes that were owner occupied. Generally speaking, it is reasonable to expect that owners living in their own homes may have a greater stake in their neighborhoods and may be more involved in efforts to preserve or improve them than absentee landlords. Moreover, if community revitalization causes home values to increase,

residents who own and live in their homes may see their wealth increase, adding to the collective wealth of the neighborhood and possibly increasing intergenerational wealth. This consideration is particularly important in historically disinvested neighborhoods. Thus, an increase in the home ownership rate would be consistent with the kind of community change envisioned by the Purpose Built Communities model.

As Table 3.2 shows, fewer than half of the single-family homes in four of the five Purpose Built Neighborhoods were occupied by their owners — a fairly low rate by national standards — and this figure did not change very much by the final period.[6] Despite the question marks in the table on this measure in the last column for most of the sites (signaling uncertainty about the direction of change), the mean estimates of change and their MOEs did not exceed 2 percentage points — except in the Omaha site, where the owner-occupancy rate increased by an estimated 8 percentage points (± 3 percentage points). Overall, though, boosting the homeownership rate continued to be a considerable challenge for the CQBs and their partners.

Changes in Vacancy and Foreclosure Rates

In all the study neighborhoods, the CQBs recognized the importance of addressing long-term vacancies and property foreclosures and sought to do so as part of their housing revitalization and stabilization efforts. Vacant properties are often magnets for disorder and a nuisance for neighbors, and they can cause further disinvestment if they persist for a long time. While short-term vacancies are to be expected in a dynamic housing market as occupants move out and new tenants and owners quickly replace them, long-term vacancy is a sign of weak housing demand and can contribute to a property's deterioration and a depreciation of housing values throughout the neighborhood.

Mortgage foreclosures can also signal trouble in the housing market. Following the nationwide 2007–2010 foreclosure crisis, a significant proportion of homes in many neighborhoods were reverted to the lenders, commonly referred to as "real estate owned," or REO. Such properties were often at risk of deterioration, loss of value, or becoming a nuisance to neighbors. A high number of foreclosed properties that are not sold at auction and enter into REO status can also indicate a soft housing market (i.e., where demand for units is weak) or distressed property conditions.

As Table 3.3 shows, estimated vacancy rates across most of the study neighborhoods were relatively high (in the double digits), with the exception of Renaissance West in Charlotte.[7]

6. Nationally, about 71 percent of all single-family homes in 2011 were owner-occupied. Chang, Tirupattur, and Egan (2011). Property records have information on owner occupancy that is used by the tax assessor mainly to determine whether the property is eligible for an owner-occupancy tax credit. For a fuller discussion of how the research team processed the CoreLogic data, see Appendix B.

7. The ACS determines vacancy based upon whether a sampled housing unit has been or will be occupied for more than two months at the time of the survey. The ACS provides small area estimates for data on population and housing averaged over five-year periods, based on samples of household that are surveyed each year. Similar to the CoreLogic data, the research team compiled ACS-based measures for this study for the census tracts or block groups that make up the study neighborhoods.

Table 3.3

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Vacant Housing Units

Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Direction of Change
Vacant housing units (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	28	± 10	2	± 15	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	5	± 5	5	± 7	△
Near East Side, Columbus	30	± 5	-3	± 6	?
Highlander, Omaha	14	± 5	-2	± 7	?
Northside, Spartanburg	25	±12	-8	± 14	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

Unfortunately, the evidence on the direction of change in these rates is mostly inconclusive, although in Renaissance West the vacancy rate may have climbed from its low starting point (based on suggestive evidence).

Clearer trends for foreclosures are evident in at least three Purpose Built Neighborhoods. Table 3.4 presents findings from the CoreLogic data on REO properties in the study neighborhoods. Although the total estimated number of REO properties were relatively low in all sites, they decreased in the study neighborhoods in Charlotte, Columbus, and Spartanburg (based on conventional statistical evidence), suggesting some housing market stabilization. (Evidence is not available for the neighborhood in Birmingham, and it is inconclusive for the neighborhood in Omaha.)

Table 3.4

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Foreclosures

Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Direction of Change
Number of foreclosed single-family parcels (REO or REO sale)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Renaissance West, Charlotte	4	± 1	-3	± 2	▼
Near East Side, Columbus	79	± 31	-73	± 10	▼
Highlander, Omaha	41	± 26	14	± 36	?
Northside, Spartanburg	26	± 5	-24	± 6	▼

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on CoreLogic owner transfer data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error; REO = real estate owned.
The initial period is 2009–2010 for the Spartanburg site, and 2008–2010 for the other sites. The final period for all sites is 2017–2019.
Foreclosures are based on CoreLogic proprietary indicators that show whether the parcel had a transaction with a completed foreclosure where the bank took back ownership of the property (REO) or the bank sold the REO to a third party.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

Changes in Contract Rents

Contract rental costs (or, the amount of rent charged by the property owner) are another indicator of housing market conditions. In the Purpose Built Neighborhoods, those rents largely pertain to the rental costs of single-family homes — the predominant housing type, as mentioned earlier. Table 3.5 presents estimated changes in those rents based on ACS data and reported in 2019 dollars. These rent estimates are *approximate* and may be underestimated because residents of public housing or those receiving Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers may have reported on the survey the rent they actually pay (excluding their rental subsidy) and not the unit's market-rate rent. Residents in public housing, in particular, are unlikely to know their unit's market-rate rent. (Chapter 6 further discusses this issue.) Bearing this caveat in mind, there is at least suggestive evidence that contract rent costs increased in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in Charlotte and Columbus, which could indicate a firming up of the housing market. In the other study neighborhoods, during the study period, the statistical evidence of change is inconclusive.

Table 3.5

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Average Approximate Contract Rent

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change		
Measure and Site	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change
Average contract rent ($)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	423	± 135	46	± 212	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	370	± 88	126	± 126	△
Near East Side, Columbus	381	± 74	145	± 113	▲
Highlander, Omaha	526	± 130	49	± 158	?
Northside, Spartanburg	314	± 159	127	± 226	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
Average contract rents are shown in 2019 dollars.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

Changes in Property Values

The market value for single-family homes is one of the most commonly used metrics for assessing change in a neighborhood. It reflects housing demand that is driven by not only the qualities of the properties, but also the appeal of the neighborhood where they are located, including such factors as perceived safety, perceived quality of the local schools, access to jobs, the transportation infrastructure, and access to stores and amenities. Property sale prices may be the best estimate of what properties are worth, but properties in small areas do not turn over often enough to make that a reliable measure of trends. Therefore, this analysis uses market values of single-family homes estimated by tax assessors and compiled by CoreLogic. Table 3.6 presents the findings, with market values reported in 2019 dollars.

Table 3.6

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Single-Family Property Values

Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Direction of Change
Median property value ($)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	55,282	± 2,155	-11,897	± 3,048	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	56,785	± 8,683	-7,659	± 12,279	?
Near East Side, Columbus	55,219	± 19,919	-7,206	± 1,631	▼
Highlander, Omaha	29,463	± 2,271	226	± 3,212	?
Northside, Spartanburg	51,067	± 1,967	-7,630	± 2,540	▼
Property value—25th percentile ($)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	40,679	± 1,967	-15,962	± 2,782	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	30,109	± 5,432	-9,723	± 7,681	▼
Near East Side, Columbus	42,326	± 15,473	-5,850	± 1,694	▼
Highlander, Omaha	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Northside, Spartanburg	37,659	± 2,281	-16,760	± 2,945	▼
Property value—75th percentile ($)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	69,414	± 2,529	-10,188	± 3,577	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	85,595	± 8,189	-2,148	± 11,580	?
Near East Side, Columbus	80,212	± 27,720	1,002	± 6,403	?
Highlander, Omaha	51,021	± 1,753	-5,927	± 2,479	▼
Northside, Spartanburg	66,058	± 3,427	-1,089	± 4,425	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on CoreLogic historic property data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2010 for the Spartanburg site, and 2008–2010 for the other sites. The final period for all sites is 2017–2019.
The top and bottom 3 percent of values were discarded prior to constructing these measures, as well as any properties with a housing authority listed as the owner. Property values are shown in 2019 dollars.
Single-family property values are based on a CoreLogic derived measure that draws on county-supplied market, appraised, and assessed values (in that order) to construct the value closest to the true market value maintained by the county assessor.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

The first panel shows the median (or 50th percentile) of the estimated market value for single-family homes by site. Four of the five Purpose Built Neighborhoods had estimated median home values in the $50,000 range in the initial period. The median value in the Highlander neighborhood in Omaha was considerably lower. By the final period, the inflation-adjusted median value fell in three study neighborhoods (those in Birmingham, Columbus, and Spartanburg), based on conventional statistical evidence. In the other sites, the evidence for the direction of change is inconclusive. (Figure 3.1 graphically depicts the estimated change over time and confidence intervals for median property values.)

Table 3.6 also displays changes in values among properties that were at the lower range (the 25th percentile) or the upper range (75th percentile) in the initial period. Although the direction of change is unclear for certain initial property value ranges in some neighborhoods, the overall pattern suggests declining values during the study period. In none of the sites is

there statistical evidence pointing to an increase in value among properties initially priced in the lower, median, or higher percentile ranges.

The CQBs generally confronted low housing values at the start of the study period, when they began implementing the Purpose Built Communities model.[8] Although the evidence on the direction of change in housing values is not positive, there is a flip side. The low and falling values created important opportunities: They allowed developers or the CQBs themselves to purchase homes and land at low prices, laying the groundwork to transform the housing stock, including upgrading existing or building new affordable and mixed-income housing. This, in turn, could help build a more mixed-income community.

A Comparative Perspective on Property Value Trends

Trends in property values and other housing market indicators depend only in part on the conditions in the neighborhood where the properties are located. Conditions in surrounding neighborhoods and even in the city or region as a whole may also affect these trends. Thus, when interpreting the study's findings, it is helpful to consider changes in other relevant locations. To that end, the present analysis compares trends within the study neighborhoods with (1) trends in the cities where they are located and (2) trends in other persistently high-poverty census tracts in those cities. For this study, persistently high-poverty census tracts are defined as census tracts where 30 percent or more of residents were living below the federal poverty level in 1990, 2000, and 2010. The comparisons with those areas and the city as a whole provide context for interpreting housing market changes in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. (However, they do not provide a basis for determining estimates of causal impacts of the CQBs' activities.)

Table 3.7 presents the findings for these comparisons. It displays the estimated trajectory of median single-family home values across the three geographic areas, following the format used in previous tables to show estimates of change for the Purpose Built Neighborhoods alone.

The table's last column indicates whether there is statistical evidence that a difference *truly* exists between the estimated change in the Purpose Built Neighborhood and the estimated change in each of those other two compared areas. The first comparison is between the Purpose Built Neighborhood and the city, and the second is between the Purpose Built Neighborhood and other persistently high-poverty census tracts within the city. The table uses a solid diamond, hollow diamond, or a question mark to indicate whether there is conventional, suggestive, or inconclusive statistical evidence, respectively, that a true difference exists between the estimated change over time in the specified Purpose Built Neighborhood and the estimated change in each of its two compared areas. (See Box 3.2 for further information on interpreting the differences in change between the areas.)

8. As shown later, the median values within the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were much lower than the corresponding citywide values.

Table 3.7

Comparison of Change Over Time Between Purpose Built Neighborhoods, Their Cities, and Other Persistently High-Poverty Tracts: Single-Family Median Property Values

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change			
Site (%)	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	PBN Change Differs from Reference-Area Change
Birmingham						
Woodlawn	55,282	± 2,155	-11,897	± 3,048	▼	
City	117,437	± 1,876	-15,728	± 2,652	▼	◆
PHPT	61,311	± 2,455	-9,600	± 3,472	▼	◆
Charlotte						
Renaissance West	56,785	± 8,683	-7,659	± 12,279	?	
City	158,946	± 20,890	10,017	± 29,543	?	◇
PHPT	69,672	± 11,933	6,534	± 16,876	?	◆
Columbus						
Near East Side	55,219	± 19,919	-7,206	± 1,631	▼	
City	160,354	± 58,778	-23,041	± 4,833	▼	◆
PHPT	71,639	± 27,389	-5,024	± 3,766	▼	◇
Omaha						
Highlander	29,463	± 2,271	226	± 3,212	?	
City	142,910	± 4,479	-1,453	± 6,335	?	?
PHPT	43,393	± 4,065	-9,788	± 5,749	▼	◆
Spartanburg						
Northside	51,067	± 1,967	-7,630	± 2,540	▼	
City	115,884	± 6,752	-9,281	± 8,717	▼	?
PHPT	64,999	± 3,956	-12,573	± 5,107	▼	◆

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on CoreLogic historic property data.

NOTES: PBN = Purpose Built Neighborhood; PHPT = persistently high-poverty census tracts; MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2010 for the Spartanburg site, and 2008–2010 for the other sites. The final period for all sites is 2017–2019.
The top and bottom 3 percent of values were discarded prior to constructing these measures, as well as any properties with a housing authority listed as the owner. Property values are shown in 2019 dollars.
Single-family property values are based on a CoreLogic derived measure that draws on county-supplied market, appraised, and assessed values (in that order) to construct the value closest to the true market value maintained by the county assessor.
Legends describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1 and 3.2.

BOX 3.2

Understanding Change Estimates and Change Comparisons

Several quantitative analyses in this report compare the changes observed in Purpose Built Neighborhoods with changes on the same measures observed in (1) the city as a whole and (2) other persistently high-poverty census tracts within the city. These two geographical categories are referred to as "reference areas" for the comparative analysis. The other persistently high-poverty census tracts are located in the same cities and are places where, in 1990, 2000, and 2010, 30 percent or more of households were living under the federal poverty level.

The tables used to present findings from these comparisons include a rightmost column that summarizes the statistical conclusions about the comparison. Symbols in that column indicate whether there is a difference between the *change* in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods and the *change* in the specified reference area (either the city or the persistently high-poverty census tracts). Such conclusions are based on an estimate of the difference between the two changes and the 90 percent margin of error (MOE) and 75 percent MOE for that estimate.

For simplicity's sake, the tables do not display the estimated values. Instead, they use symbols to summarize the conclusions. When the estimated difference in the change estimates is large enough to meet a *conventional* statistical evidence standard (a 90 percent probability that a difference truly does exist) the table shows a solid diamond (◆). If the difference only meets a *suggestive* statistical evidence standard (only a 75 percent probability that a difference truly exists), the table displays a hollow diamond (◇). If the statistical evidence about whether a difference in change truly exists is *inconclusive*, the table shows a question mark (?).

As can be seen, median home values in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in the initial time period were strikingly low, both in absolute terms, and relative to prevailing citywide values. Estimates for these values (in 2019 dollars) in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods ranged from about $29,000 (in Omaha) to about $57,000 (in Charlotte). In relative terms, these values ranged from about 21 percent of the citywide median home value in Omaha, to 47 percent of the citywide median value in Birmingham. The Purpose Built Neighborhoods were not alone. Their estimated median home values were much closer to — although still lower than — the values in other persistently high-poverty census tracts in all five localities. Overall, these comparisons clearly underscore the status of the Purpose Built Neighborhoods as especially highly disinvested neighborhoods in their respective cities in the initial period — a fact consistent with the justification for implementing the Purpose Build Communities model in those communities.

As previously mentioned, in the three Purpose Built Neighborhoods where the direction of change during the study period could be determined according to conventional statistical evidence (in Birmingham, Columbus, and Spartanburg), home values fell over time. What is also striking is that in each of those cases, median home values in the city as a whole,

as well as in other persistently high-poverty census tracts, also fell. This suggests that larger regional forces may have influenced the direction of change in these Purpose Built Neighborhoods — forces that, of course, were not in the control of the CQBs and their partners, and that may have made their work even harder. (At the same time, hypothetically, at least one cannot rule out the possibility that the decline in home values in these Purpose Built Neighborhoods may have been even steeper in the absence of the CQBs' activities across the model's three pillars.)

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RECENT CHANGES IN HOUSING VALUES AND FEARS OF DISPLACEMENT

The qualitative interviews conducted in each of the Purpose Built Neighborhoods provide some local observations that housing prices may have increased since the final analysis period ended (after 2019) — especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when home values rose throughout the country. In this study, it is not possible to show quantitatively how much property values may have changed more recently. Still, it is important to recognize some implications of an increase in those values when they occur.

Rising home values can impede efforts of the CQBs (and other developers) to build affordable housing. As described earlier, some CQBs purchased homes for renovation as well as other properties in which they razed existing structures and put the land in a land bank for future development. According to some CQB staff members, rising home values made it more difficult for them to pursue these activities because of increased competition for the properties from other developers. For example, one CQB found a duplex that needed to be gutted. It had planned to offer $20,000 to purchase the property, with the goal of razing the house and eventually using the land to build new affordable housing. However, CQB staff members said another developer outbid them by $80,000.[9]

A sharp increase in property values can also create tension between owners and renters, and even among owners at different income levels. For example, increased home prices may present wealth-building opportunities for some current residents. However, they can also lead to increased property taxes and maintenance costs that can put pressure on households with constrained budgets. For renters, rising home values likely mean higher rental costs, with which they may struggle to keep up.[10]

An example from the qualitative interviews illustrates another potential implication of rising property values. Early on in one Purpose Built Neighborhood, a family purchased an affordable

9. It is worth noting that the tax assessor home values reported in this chapter lagged home sale prices, which were more volatile. Only a small portion of the housing stock was sold in any given year, and the properties that were sold may not necessarily have been a representative sample of the housing stock.

10. Theodos, Coulton, and Pitingolo (2015).

single-family home owned by the CQB for about $120,000. A couple of years later, the same family decided to sell the home after the its market value increased to nearly $300,000. The family profited from the sale; the house served as a wealth-generating asset for the family. However, this benefit came at cost to the neighborhood, that of a wealthier household moving in and making the property unavailable in the future to a household of more modest means. On the other hand, attracting families with higher incomes to the neighborhood to help build a more mixed-income community was a goal of Purpose Built Communities. Still, this goal must be balanced with the goal of ensuring residents with lower incomes have access to quality housing. Striking this balance becomes more difficult without government subsidies.

A number of CQB staff observed population shifts occurring in their neighborhoods that were driving up the housing prices. One staff member noted:

> What we're seeing are a lot of people coming from out of town from the bigger cities, like New York, Atlanta, and they want to return to the South. And it's a lot cheaper here . . . and so they're willing to pay a lot more money than we would. We'll go by the market value, the appraisal value. But for example, we had an individual say he was selling this home. And we said, "Well, we'll do this, go through it and give you a great price for it . . ." He said, "Well, I'm not interested right now because I've got a bidding war going on. I'm up to $137,000." And this house is not quite nearly worth that, but these are the things that are happening, that we have to work with.

Although it is unclear how widespread such scenarios were in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods, the tension between bringing more wealth into the community and not displacing longstanding residents was identified as an issue by residents in focus groups, especially those in the neighborhoods in Spartanburg and Birmingham. While residents acknowledged it is great that the neighborhood's wealth was growing, they expressed concern about being able to continue to afford their homes. Some felt anxiety about the people moving in and whether they themselves would be able to stay. One resident said, "Some of the houses, and they're very nice . . . I'm watching them be done. And my question is . . . What kind of price are you gonna put on and how is it going affect me?"

Residents expressed both excitement about the new housing and investments in their neighborhoods and concern about how these changes would affect their own finances and ability to stay in their neighborhoods. (See Chapter 6 for findings related to displacement.) One resident in the Woodlawn neighborhood in Birmingham spoke about the importance of residents having a voice in the revitalization process, saying:

> [W]hen you bring so many different, like, people of different ages, you bring different incomes . . . there's always gonna be pros and cons. . . . I think we have an advantage as far as with Woodlawn Foundation; I think they've been very intentional as far as trying to, I would say for us personally, trying to get us connected with more people trying to get voices out.

Another resident stressed the importance of honoring neighborhood histories, saying, "We can't forget the history is what a lot of our older residents who've been here for a long time keep saying. You know, let's not forget the history, the people who are here."

These responses speak to the fact that residents are very aware of and attentive to the physical changes in their neighborhoods. Some newer residents noted that they moved to the area because of the changes. As one newcomer explained, "I never would have went for Woodlawn. I don't even know . . . But when I saw the home, the renovation of it, and I got in there, that's what changed my mind." Some residents saw the changes as a return to the original healthy neighborhoods before predatory redlining practices. As one resident said, "So it feels great to see it coming back to where when we grew up, we can play in the street, children everywhere. You don't have to worry about nobody bothering you."

In reflecting on the changes associated with housing redevelopment, some residents raised the issue of "belonging," that is, who belongs in the neighborhood and what belonging and what home feel like. In Renaissance West in Charlotte, for example, some residents of the new housing development said that the new building and their units did not particularly feel like "home." "Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Never really felt like home. Even in the niceness, the school right there, this never . . . Just feel like a step up to get out."

Some residents worried about the sense of belonging in the neighborhood when redevelopment was uneven and divided the community into different subareas with different the types of people. As one resident commented:

> Right now, a lot of us are confused on where do we belong. Okay. Because we have a new development here. We have the ones who have been here, and we have a new townhouse apartments there. And so, and then you have, like you said, the average developments that are here. So belonging is where do they belong? You know, we can't grow if we are in silos.

CONCLUSION

Enhancing mixed-income housing options in historically disinvested neighborhoods is a central goal of the Purpose Built Communities model. However, making measurable changes in the housing landscape of such neighborhoods is an enormous undertaking involving multiple agencies and many resources. It takes considerable time and expertise, and progress is subject to the vicissitudes of government policies, economic conditions, and the broader housing market in the surrounding region. Yet, despite the enormity of the challenge, the CQBs in this study succeeded in implementing a variety of strategies to improve their neighborhood's housing conditions and affordability.

The neighborhoods in the study varied markedly in the size of their geographic footprints, the number of properties and housing units, and the scale of the housing development initiatives the respective CQBs undertook. In the larger neighborhoods with more housing units, the

CQBs may have targeted their strategies more locally, and therefore their impact may have been less detectable across the entire geographic footprint used for the quantitative analysis.

The numbers of housing units declined somewhat in most sites during the study period, in part because distressed housing was torn down. However, the neighborhoods varied in terms of how much of their housing stock was demolished and how much new construction was built to replace it. Owner-occupancy rates varied across sites but were below national averages and did not change appreciably in most of them, except the Highlander neighborhood in Omaha, where this rate increased by an estimated 8 percentage points.

The study period began after the peak of the foreclosure crisis, and there were relatively few properties in any site that were still real estate owned (REO). Still, three of the five sites saw a decrease in REO properties, suggesting some stabilization.

Overall, during the 10-year study period, there appears to have been some progress toward creating more mixed-income housing in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods, as reflected in new housing that was built and the preparations for future construction (namely, the demolition of derelict properties and land banking). However, this progress may not have been at a large enough scale to increase property values across the neighborhoods by the end of the final analysis period in 2019. In fact, property values for single-family homes at the median, higher end (75th percentile), or both declined in four of the five study sites.

In three of the five sites, the negative trends in median property values were consistent with trends observed citywide and in other persistently high-poverty census tracts during the same period. This suggests that larger forces beyond the immediate control of the CQBs may have influenced the decline in property values and made the CQBs' work of creating more mixed-income communities even harder.

After the final analysis period covered by the quantitative data ended, the CQBs and their partners voiced concerns about a tightening housing market, soaring housing prices, and the implications for preserving housing affordability in the community. It is possible that these observations are harbingers of a changing housing market, mirroring national trends during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. If that is the case, those changes may have important implications for the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in the next decade. Thus, it may be important to monitor the mix of rental prices and housing values going forward to determine whether a meaningful portion of the properties remain affordable for existing residents with lower incomes, while other properties attract newcomers with higher incomes. It may also be important to pursue additional strategies to finance and preserve affordable housing and find novel methods to expand homeownership opportunities.

4

Education: Local Initiatives and Change Over Time in School Performance

The emphasis of the Purpose Built Communities' model on building a "cradle-to-college pipeline" resonated with the community leaders in the study's five neighborhoods (or "Purpose Built Neighborhoods") and constituted a part of what appealed to them about the model. The schools that the children in these neighborhoods attended had been underperforming for years. Turning them around would be a daunting challenge, but community leaders saw it as one they needed to tackle. As one community leader put it in an interview:

> For 23 years, [the public school] has had a below average or unsatisfactory state report card rating . . . Whether they designed it that way intentionally or unintentionally makes no difference to the families that I serve. What they were dealing with were decades of systematic breakdown and failure of a public school. And so, it was our responsibility to come up with a way to fix it.

Community leaders also recognized that improving schools was fundamental to achieving the Purpose Built Communities model's larger goal of building a mixed-income community. Schools should not only satisfy current residents, they should also attract new residents, including those who have higher incomes and more options when deciding where to live. One Community Quarterback (CQB) leader in Columbus noted:

> [W]e thought in order for individuals and families to come to the Near East Side, we had to really look at the education that was being offered in the schools there, because no one is going to reside in an area with failing schools . . . we thought it best to look at how we can we work with the district, Columbus City Schools, in order to really make a difference in that particular feeder pattern.

Data presented later in this chapter show that when the CQB started working with local public schools (between 2010 and 2012), students in those schools were scoring well below the national average on standardized tests of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Moreover, the public school system was highly segregated by race and household income. Black students made up the vast majority of the student body in the local schools serving the neighborhood. A majority of the students were also eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

To address these problems, the CQBs in this study pursued two broad strategic goals in the model's education domain, or "pillar:" (1) expand access to early childhood education and (2) support investments to improve educational opportunities at local elementary and middle schools. The first part of this chapter describes the main initiatives the CQBs carried out to achieve these two strategic goals. It discusses the choices CQBs made as they planned and implemented those initiatives. It also highlights challenges they encountered and what they accomplished.

The second part of the chapter examines the change over time in student academic performance and other key features of local elementary and middle schools in the study neighborhoods during roughly the first decade after launching the Purpose Built Communities model. It examines patterns of change in "pipeline schools" (those with which CQBs collaborated to improve education) and also all "nearby schools" (those to which children living in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were believed to have access, including but not limited to the pipeline schools). The findings are intended to document whether the pipeline and nearby schools had changed in ways that suggest the educational opportunity they offered their students, including students from study neighborhoods, had improved. (Quantitative data on early childhood education initiatives were not available, so it was not possible to document changes they underwent over time.)

Overall, this chapter shows that the CQBs helped to create new early childhood learning centers in four neighborhoods. They also spent considerable time and effort building relationships with local elementary and middle schools, school districts, nonprofit partners, and other organizations to strengthen the capacity of school leaders and teachers, improve curricula, provide support services to students, and, in some cases, to get new schools built. In several neighborhoods, there was tense disagreement among the different parties involved about whether to establish a charter school or work with the existing public school system. Most of the education initiatives did not come to fruition until about the middle or latter part of the study period. Over the full study period, there is no statistical evidence of improvement in student academic performance for pipeline schools or nearby schools, with one possible exception. There is also no systematic evidence of reductions in the disproportionate concentration of Black students or students from families with very low incomes in the local schools (both measured against the composition of the wider school district's student body).

EXPANDING ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A core part of the CQBs' strategy to expand access to early childhood education was to invest in new early childhood learning centers. They reasoned that doing so would improve the educational prospects of the children in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. As a leader of a CQB commented:

> You know a lot about where a child is headed by the age of 2 when it comes to academically and socially . . . So we knew that we could get an early childhood focus in this community that would help our community in ways immeasurably . . . [W]e were thinking early childhood, you know, cradle to career . . .

The CQBs helped establish new early childhood learning centers in four neighborhoods (the Northside in Spartanburg, Renaissance West in Charlotte, Woodlawn in Birmingham, and Highlander in Omaha). The CQB in the Near East Side neighborhood in Columbus collaborated with an existing center to implement a new early childhood education model. (See Table 4.1.) Among the initial tasks, the CQBs had to secure funding for the construction of the new centers, which called for investments ranging from $7 million to $10 million. In the Northside in Spartanburg, a local community foundation, the Mary Black Foundation, stepped in to provide seed funding and later helped raise additional funds. In Renaissance West in Charlotte, the early childhood learning center was part of a broader plan to redevelop Boulevard Homes, with some funding for the center coming from a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOPE VI grant for public housing transformation. The CQB in Renaissance West negotiated with the local housing authority to set aside some of the funding allocated for construction for operating costs. This made it easier for the CQB's board of directors to design a fundraising campaign to help build the center. Notably, it took several years of concerted effort to establish the new centers, and some centers only opened in 2018 or later.

Table 4.1

Main Activities of Early Childhood Learning Centers, by Purpose Built Neighborhood

Community Quarterback	Name of Early Childhood Learning Center	Main Activities
Woodlawn United, Birmingham	James Rushton Early Learning and Family Success Center	New facility built
Renaissance West Community Initiative, Charlotte	Howard Levine Child Development Center	New facility built
Partners Achieving Community Transformation, Columbus	Local early learning center	Developed an intergenerational care center offering child day care, adult care, joint programming, and service and educational opportunities
Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation, Omaha	Early Learning Center at Kennedy	New facility built
Northside Development Group, Spartanburg	Franklin School	New facility built

Given the complex state regulations governing early childhood learning centers, the CQBs had to partner with organizations that had expertise in operating such centers. These partners also had to share their vision for community revitalization. They included Head Start programs, YMCAs, and other experienced providers.

The CQBs worked to ensure that the new centers attracted families with different income levels. Given the often high costs of early childhood services, they were especially sensitive to families with the lowest incomes and making sure they as well as those with more

resources could benefit from this important new community investment. Partnering with federally subsidized programs, such as Early Head Start and Head Start, or locally funded kindergarten programs helped them accomplish this objective. CQBs also offered privately funded scholarships and created sliding-scale pricing schemes to attract families with different income levels.

At the same time, the CQBs and their partners wanted to ensure that students receiving subsidies were not singled out or otherwise stigmatized. Referring to the various programs housed within an early learning center, one community leader said:

> We didn't want to be in little silos in the building . . . you don't stand in the hall and say . . . and this is Early Head Start, and these are Head Start. You just don't do that. . . . these are our children. These are our 3-year-olds. These are our 4-year-olds. We don't want labels on our kiddos. Right? We really want people to be able to come into the building and not be able to pick out who has a subsidized education and who does not.

In general, the early childhood learning centers sought to obscure income differences among the children and create an inclusive environment by organizing classes by children's ages, building common spaces for children to move around the center in a seamless way, and providing opportunities for all families to come together.

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Further along the cradle-to-college pipeline, the CQBs also sought to improve the local schools that children in the Purpose Built Neighborhood were likely to attend. (Those schools were not always located within the geographical boundaries of the Purpose Built Neighborhood.) Their strategies included three main components: (1) introducing new learning approaches into existing schools, (2) creating new school options by building new schools, and (3) increasing access to higher-quality support services in partnership with local organizations.

New Learning Approaches in Local Schools

The four CQBs for which the research team gathered qualitative data collaborated with existing district public schools to introduce new learning approaches into the curricula. As Box 4.1 shows, these strategies varied across the study neighborhoods.

Woodlawn United in Birmingham established the Woodlawn Innovation Network (WIN) that included five local public schools that served their neighborhood and acted as feeder schools

BOX 4.1

Approaches to Improving Local Schools in Purpose Built Neighborhoods

Woodlawn United in Woodlawn, Birmingham

In 2014, Woodlawn United and its partners created the Woodlawn Innovation Network (WIN) that included five local public schools that served their neighborhood and together formed a high feeder pattern. WIN gave the five schools some flexibility and autonomy to make decisions. In 2014, Alabama passed new legislation on charter schools. Soon after, Woodlawn United began discussions with its board about creating a charter school in the neighborhood, which it ultimately did. The school, named the I3 Academy, opened in 2020 and includes pre-K through fifth grades. Woodlawn United collaborates with the academy on an ongoing basis.

Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT) in the Near East Side, Columbus

PACT worked with six district schools, which together formed a high school feeder pattern. It introduced health science academies in the schools in partnership with the Ohio State University Hospital East. PACT began collaborating with these schools in 2014 and started to wind down its engagement with them around 2017.

Renaissance West Community Initiative in Renaissance West, Charlotte

The Renaissance West Community Initiative helped create a new district school called the Renaissance West STEAM Academy (Pre-K–eighth grades), which was part of a larger redevelopment of public housing in the Renaissance West neighborhood. Construction of the building began in 2015, and the school opened in 2017. The organization's collaboration with the school is ongoing.

The Northside Development Group (NDG) in the Northside, Spartanburg

In Spartanburg's Northside, NDG chose to help turn around a failing district school, the Cleveland Academy of Leadership (kindergarten–fifth grades). (See Box 4.2.) NDG began working with the school in 2012, and the collaboration is ongoing.

Seventy Five North Revitalization Corporation (75 North) in Highlander, Omaha

In Omaha's Highlander neighborhood, 75 North focused its efforts on improving student outcomes in one district school, Howard Kennedy Elementary (pre-K–fifth grades).

for the area high school.[1] Woodlawn United hired coaches for each of the schools who worked directly with school leaders and teachers, and it recruited a Cincinnati-based organization to help schools implement a new educational approach that emphasized project-based instruction. This teaching method engages students by encouraging them to investigate and learn from a particular topic or challenging problem. A leader of a partner organization listed the types of supports that the WIN schools received as follows:

> Leadership coaching . . . instituted instructional rounds . . . classroom observations . . . Embedded professional learning . . . helped with and supported the principals with their strategic plans . . . coached at the classroom level, [including] group coaching, small group, one-on-one . . . ran those specialized trainings . . . looked at curriculum . . . at instruction, and . . . at assessment practices. And . . . looped that all in around the flexible learning environments, safe and purposeful classroom, environments, and spaces . . .

In Columbus' Near East Side neighborhood, the CQB leveraged its relationship and proximity to the Ohio State University Wexner Medial Center East to introduce health science academies in six local schools.[2] The goal was to connect these schools with local health care institutions to interest students in and prepare them for careers in the health sciences field — a growing field in the region. The initiative involved working with the staff in the six local schools and at the district level to develop a K-12 curriculum focused on health sciences. One hope was that that curriculum would also help high school students earn college credits in health-related fields.

The CQB in Spartanburg's Northside neighborhood collaborated with a local school, the Cleveland Academy of Leadership, to implement a leadership development program (based on the Leader-in-Me model).[3] Among other things, the approach had students and their families create a vision for each student's future, acknowledged individual students' experiences, provided explicit and direct instruction, and used arts to teach literacy. Additionally, the state and the local school district hired coaches to support the school's principal. Finally, inspiring quotes to encourage student leadership were placed throughout the school building, and several student clubs were created to promote leadership.

1. The WIN schools included Avondale Elementary School, Oliver Elementary School, Hayes School (kindergarten–eighth grades), Putnam Middle School (sixth–eighth grades), and Woodlawn High School.
2. The academies were introduced into Beatty Park Elementary School (kindergarten–fifth grades), East Columbus Elementary School (Pre-K–fifth grades), Eastgate Elementary School (Pre-K–fifth grades), Ohio Avenue Elementary School (Pre-K–fifth grades), Trevitt Elementary School (Pre-K–fifth grades), and Champion Middle School (sixth–eighth grades).
3. Leader In Me (2024).

New School Options and Charter Schools

An important strategic choice that CQBs had to make was whether to work with existing district public schools or, replicating the approach taken in Atlanta's East Lake neighborhood (the original Purpose Built Communities site), build a new charter school. The CQB leaders and partners had strongly held and often competing views about the best way to improve education in their neighborhoods, with some people favoring collaboration with local public schools and others pushing to create a charter school. For example, in Renaissance West in Charlotte, local pride in district schools, local philanthropic support for them, and ongoing school district plans to build a new school ultimately convinced the CQB to collaborate with the district public school system. In Columbus, the CQB's education planning committee was split 50-50 over the issue, although it, too, ultimately decided to work with the district public schools.

During these and similar deliberations, Purpose Built was a consistent supporter of charter schools, based on its positive experience with the Drew Charter School in Atlanta's East Lake neighborhood. In some cases, this support became a source of tension between the national organization and the local CQBs.

In Woodlawn in Birmingham, the CQB had initially worked with district public schools. However, it encountered a number of challenges in that experience and decided to switch gears when Alabama passed new state legislation on charter schools in 2015. In 2018, it scaled back its engagement with the local public schools and began taking steps to build a new charter school. One of its funders, the Goodrich Community Foundation, which had supported the new legislation, raised $10.6 million from members of the local philanthropic community, which was used primarily to build a new facility in an old neighborhood church. In the 2019–2020 school year, the new charter school, named the i3 Academy (short for Imagine, Investigate, Innovate Academy), opened its doors to an initial 420 students in pre-K through sixth grades.[4]

In Renaissance West in Charlotte, the CQB was instrumental in establishing a new local public school called the Renaissance West STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Academy. The school opened in 2017–2018 academic year and currently serves students in pre-K through eighth grades. The school along with an early childhood learning center (describe earlier) were part of a local public housing agency-led project to redevelop the Boulevard Homes public housing complex, funded in part through a HUD HOPE VI grant. The local public housing agency set aside land for the new school, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district made a $35 million investment to build it. Although not a charter school, the CQB negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the school district that allowed the academy to operate in many ways like the Drew Charter School in Atlanta, and that gave community members, the CQB, and the school district shared responsibility in governing it.

4. i3 Academy (2024).

Increasing Access to Quality Support Services

All CQBs collaborated closely with their local schools, whether existing or new, to increase children and families' access to quality support services. CQBs partnered with local nonprofit organizations and institutions (e.g., local hospitals, clinics, food banks) to introduce, enhance, and broaden access to support services available to children and families. The services included academic support services such as math tutoring, reading assistance, and programs for English-language learners. The CQBs fostered connections to local educational institutions (e.g., the Center for Science and Industry in Columbus) and supported school field trips. They also offered student memberships to the local YMCA to encourage exercise and uniforms for school athletic teams. One CQB created a mobile library accessible to children and their families.

All CQBs also brought social services to their local schools, including on-site mental health services, dental and vision screenings, food assistance, and even laundry facilities for families experiencing homelessness. The CQBs in Renaissance West in Charlotte and Woodlawn in Birmingham placed staff in the local schools to help identify children and families in need of assistance and refer them to appropriate service providers. In Renaissance West, staff called "Life Navigators" (described in Chapters 2 and 5) worked with families in the neighborhood to build life plans and referred them to services and training that could help them reach their goals. The CQB in the Near East Side in Columbus launched a program called Parent University, which aimed to strengthen the relationship between families and schools and improve children's educational outcomes by encouraging parents to get more involved in their local schools and helping them become better advocates for their children.

These initiatives were part of the CQBs' holistic approach to implementing the multidimensional Purpose Built Communities model. They sought to counter some of the negative effects of living in a disinvested neighborhood. It should be noted, however, that since some cities offered school choice, the supportive services did not always reach children and families living in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods.

Building Leadership Capacity in Public Schools

Early in the implementation of their education initiatives, CQBs acknowledged the instrumental role that school leaders, particularly principals, can play in improving their schools. As a CQB staff member noted:

> So, what we constantly discussed with the district is that leadership matters, and that's about the principal. Because the principal models the behavior and activities that they wish their staff to follow. And if you don't have a strong leader, all the money and work we put into this, or training, is for nothing.

The CQBs partnered with organizations that specialized in leadership development and capacity building to coach principals and train teachers and other school staff. This training could be wide ranging and intensive. As one of these service providers described:

> We had a leadership cohort, where we brought in the principals and the assistant principals . . . And we had a consistent ongoing cycle of professional learning, of implementation, and application, and then feedback, reflection, and feedback around . . . to improve their practice as instructional leaders . . . school law, how to manage the building, how to allocate your funding, how to support your staff, just kind of leadership 101, if you will.

School leaders were indispensable in bringing teachers and other staff on board with the initiatives. When introducing a new educational approach, such as the project-based instruction in the WIN schools in Woodlawn in Birmingham or the health sciences curriculum in the schools in the Near East Side in Columbus, school leaders had to get buy-in from teachers, train them on the new approach, and help them put it into practice.[5] Some principals hired new teachers and leadership staff to help implement their vision for change. As one school leader explained:

> I hired two brand new assistant principals who had no prior experience as administrators because . . . I needed someone to come in who in many ways had a blank slate so that I could show them and teach them the unique dynamics that exist in this school and around the school so that they would be free enough mentally to help me imagine a system that will work for these children. And we were able to create that.

In some cases, the new teacher training ran counter to existing professional development requirements for teachers, which created an additional obstacle.

Collaborating with School Systems: Trust, Turnover, and Timeframe

To advance their work in the model's education pillar, the CQBs had to devote much time and energy to building relationships with district leaders, school leaders, and nonprofit support service organizations. The CQBs played an essential role in creating a vision for school reform and forged relationships with key actors in this network of institutions to carry it out.

The tenor of these relationships varied across the neighborhoods. In some cases, differing perceptions of the intent of the educational initiatives created tension. For example, some district leaders worried that the initiatives would lead to the creation of charter schools that would compete for resources and students in their districts. In other cases, school district

5. Because the research team did not have the opportunity to interview teachers, this statement only reflects the perspectives of school leaders.

leaders were quickly brought on board, which helped move the initiatives forward. A leader of a partner organization stressed the importance of well-established relationships in facilitating collaboration, saying:

> Relationships in our city matters. If you don't have relationships, it is really hard to drive anything . . . I've had lots of relationships . . . I had the trust of the school district that we were trying to partner with . . . So, getting them to the table was easier because I already had relationships with the district.

Trust was central to these relationships, and the CQBs used various strategies to build trust with school and district leaders, such as involving them in planning, scheduling regular meetings, providing frequent updates, and meeting commitments. One leader of a partner organization noted:

> We had to draw them in and bring them [district leaders] in as a viable partner in the work . . . And so, we really asked them to be partners in the planning. And again, have those, you know, calendar meetings, they'd come out to [the neighborhood], we go downtown. And again, we do dinner, anything we could to try to establish those relationships, and build trust with folks so that we could do that work.

Another challenge was getting the schools and nonprofit partners to come together and formally define and agree to the terms of their collaboration. These agreements took a great deal of time to negotiate, both because of normal bureaucratic processes and because they required public school districts and the local schools to rethink how to work together as well as with their nonprofit partners including the CQB. In particular, the agreements often called for districts to give more decision-making authority to local schools and, in some cases, to include a nonprofit partner in decision-making processes. Describing those negotiations with the school district in Charlotte, one education leader said:

> And CMS [the school district], you know, I mean, it really did take us almost two years to get the agreement over because what we wanted ultimately to do was to carve out an agreement with the district that gave us charter-like flexibility, but with the capital resources that the district had to offer. And I think we got to something like that.

District leaders and school principals assumed leading roles in implementing the initiatives. However, frequent change in leadership at both the district and school levels was a major hurdle. During the decade covered by this study, all schools saw at least one change of principal. Some schools changed principals four times in that period. The reasons for this turnover among principals included reaching retirement age, career advancement, moving out of the city or state, and personal matters. Each time it occurred, the local CQB had to, again, build a relationship with the new leader and bring the person on board.

All five CQBs had to deal with leadership change at the school district level, particularly with respect to school superintendents and school board members. For example, one local education leader said:

> It was always having to explain where we are . . . because we had new people coming in. So, I think it probably affected some of the continuity of all the support. Because with each superintendent, the priority for [the education initiative] may have changed. You know, with [the initial superintendent], it was clearly a priority. But other superintendents may have had other, more pressing issues, and they may not have seen it [the initiative] as at the top of their list . . .

Similarly, turnover among superintendents frequently slowed down or deprioritized the educational initiative that was underway. In some cases, it simply ended it.

The timetables for launching these educational initiatives were often delayed by lengthy planning phases, relationship building, negotiating and putting into effect agreements, and occasionally switching strategies midstream. The CQBs and their partners also spent considerable time designing the initiatives. Figure 4.1 presents the timelines for the planning and implementation of educational initiatives in the four sites for which data were available. As this figure shows, most of the CQB-led initiatives were not fully implemented until midway or near the end of the study period. Consequently, any impact they may have had on school performance over the longer term would not be captured by the quantitative findings discussed in the next section.

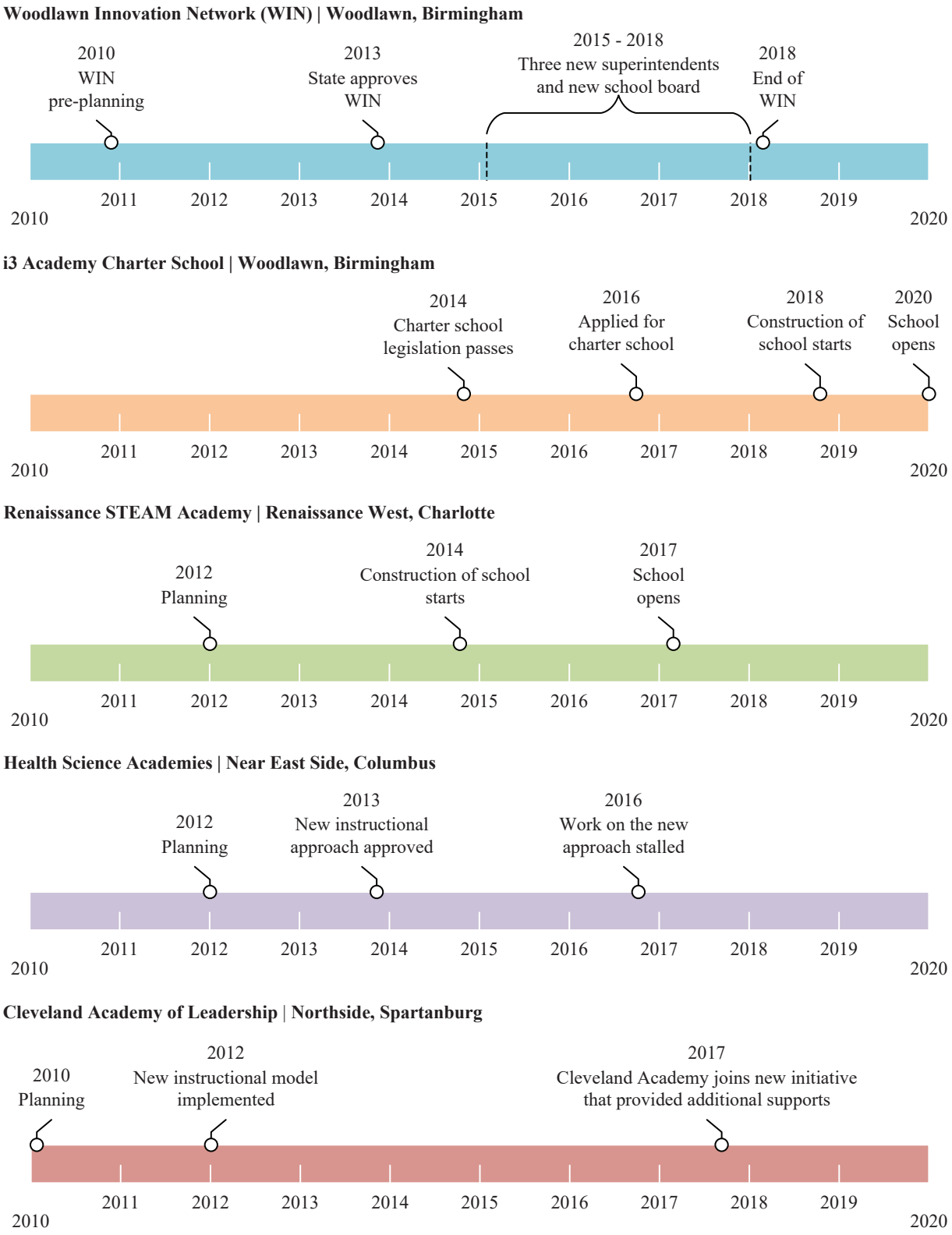
STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT PIPELINE SCHOOLS

As this chapter has shown so far, the CQBs' efforts to expand access to early childhood learning, introduce reforms in local schools attended by neighborhood children, and, in some cases, help build new schools were all part of their mission to strengthen the cradle-to-college pipeline for children in their neighborhoods, in accordance with the Purpose Built Communities model. The chapter now turns to a quantitative analysis of student academic performance in elementary and middle schools.[6] It begins by examining the pipeline schools where the CQBs concentrated their reform efforts. It then expands the analysis to other nearby schools where some neighborhood students were likely to have attended. In both cases, it examines the academic performance of students enrolled between the 2008–2009 school year (several years before CQBs began working with local schools) and the 2021–2022 school year (the most recent year for which student performance data were available at the time of these

6. The analyses using the Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) data focus on schools with students in third through eighth grades. Some high schools that also serve seventh and eighth grades, in addition to ninth through twelfth grades, were included.

Figure 4.1

Timelines for the Collaboration of Community Quarterbacks with Local Public Schools



analyses). The goal of this analysis is to determine whether student performance at pipeline and nearby schools changed after the Purpose Built Communities initiatives were introduced.

Measuring Student Academic Performance

The best source of data for estimating change over time in student performance is the Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA). SEDA provides standardized average annual state test scores in reading or ELA and math by school, state, year, grade, and subject. The data cover public schools throughout the United States, including public charter schools and magnet schools. These scores are based on standardized test results for all grades third through eighth, which is the grade range for federally mandated state testing.[7] Consequently, high schools are generally not part of the analysis.[8]

To facilitate interpretation of SEDA test-score findings, which are somewhat technical, the research team translated test scores into grade-level equivalents, which are more intuitive.[9] Annual SEDA data used for the present analysis span 10 academic years.[10] The team defined the first two school years (2010–2011 and 2011–2012 for the Omaha site and 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 for all other sites) as the analysis' initial time period. It defined the last two years (2016–2017 and 2017–2018) as the final time period. Appendix C provides more detail about how the team created SEDA test scores and how they transformed them into grade-level equivalents for the present analysis.[11]

In addition, the research team accessed annual School Report Cards for Alabama, North Carolina, Ohio, Nebraska, and South Carolina to update these findings to the most recent year for which school-level state test-score data are publicly available (the 2021–2022 academic year). Among other things, these data sources report the percentage of students in a school, a school district, and a state that scored at or above the designated proficiency level

7. As required by law through the federal Common Core of Data program, states report these test-score data annually to the U.S. Department of Education, which maintains them in its EDFACTS database, which is SEDA's source of state test scores.

8. The analyses using SEDA focus on schools with students in third through eighth grades. Some high schools that also serve seventh and eighth grades, in addition to ninth through twelfth grades, were included.

9. To facilitate interpretation, the study team transformed SEDA test-score findings (measured in national student standard deviations) to grade-level equivalents based on the fact that—according to SEDA documentation (Fahle et al., 2021) and further analysis of published research by one of the present authors and his colleagues (Bloom, Hill, Black, and Lipsey, 2008)—a difference of one national student standard deviation is approximately equivalent to a difference of three grade levels. Thus, for example, if the SEDA "completed satisfactorily" mid-point grade score for a given school in a given year equals -1.0 national standard deviations, the average student in that school and that year performed approximately three grade levels below the national student average.

10. The present analyses use SEDA Version 4.1 data.

11. As it did for all annual time-series data in the present analysis, the research team estimated change over time in SEDA test scores by a discrete change regression, similar to the one described in Appendix C.

on state tests in reading or ELA and math.[12] Although these student proficiency rates are not comparable across states, they support valid districtwide and statewide comparisons.

Initial Results and Change Over Time

Table 4.2 presents estimates of the change over time in mean student test scores for pipeline schools and their school district by study site. The format of this table is the same as that for other change-over-time analyses in this report. (For more guidance on how to read tables in this format, see Box 3.1 and Chapter 3 more generally.) The first two columns list the estimated initial mean score and its 90 percent margin of error (MOE). The next two columns list the estimated change over time in mean scores and its 90 percent MOE.

The "Direction of Change" column reports either: (1) a solid upward-pointing or downward-pointing triangle to indicate the presence of *conventional* statistical evidence about the direction of change, (2) a hollow upward-pointing or downward-pointing triangle to indicate the presence of *suggestive* statistical evidence about the direction of change, or (3) a question mark to indicate *inconclusive* statistical evidence about the direction of change.

The final column in the table reports whether there is conventional evidence (a solid diamond), suggestive evidence (a hollow diamond), or inconclusive statistical evidence (a question mark) related to any difference between the test-score change in pipeline schools and the test-score change for the school district as a whole. The specific nature of this difference (e.g., whether a change in scores is greater for the pipeline schools or the district as a whole) can be easily determined by comparing the two relevant change estimates.

It is important to note that inconclusive evidence about the direction of a change or inconclusive evidence about a difference between two change estimates does not necessarily mean evidence of no change or no difference.

Initial Student Performance

During the initial period, before the CQBs began working with pipeline schools, the students in these schools scored roughly three grade levels below the national average in all four Purpose Built Neighborhoods where the analysis was conducted.[13] Moreover, two sites (those in Birmingham and Columbus) were located in very low-performing schools districts;

12. The federal Office of Elementary and Secondary Education requires every state to develop a concise and easily understandable "State Report Card" that is accessible online and provides parents important information on test performance in reading, math, and science. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (2020). The present analyses relied on report cards for Alabama, Nebraska, Ohio, and South Carolina. See Alabama State Department of Education Report Card (2024), North Carolina School Report Cards (2024), Nebraska Department of Education (2024), Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (2024), and SC School Report Cards (2024), respectively.

13. Because the pipeline school in the Charlotte site opened in 2017, it was not part of the present change-over-time analysis.

Table 4.2

Student State Test Performance in Pipeline Schools and Their School Districts: Difference from the National Average in Grade-Level Equivalents

	Initial Mean Score		Change in Mean Score			
Site and School Group	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	Pipeline School Change Differs from District Change
Woodlawn, Birmingham						
Pipeline schools	-2.8	± 0.4	-0.5	± 0.6	▽	◇
School district	-1.9	± 0.4	-0.8	± 0.5	▼	
Renaissance West, Charlotte						
Pipeline schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
School district	0.3	± 0.1	0.1	± 0.1	△	
Near East Side, Columbus						
Pipeline schools	-2.9	± 0.2	-0.4	± 0.3	▼	?
School district	-1.7	± 0.1	-0.3	± 0.1	▼	
Highlander, Omaha						
Pipeline schools	-2.8	± 0.4	0.3	± 0.6	?	?
School district	-1.2	± 0.2	0.1	± 0.3	?	
Northside, Spartanburg						
Pipeline schools	-2.7	± 0.4	0.0	± 0.5	?	◇
School district	-0.7	± 0.1	-0.3	± 0.2	▼	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) Version 4.1 data, with measures on the SEDA Cohort Standardized Scale (CSS).

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.

SEDA mean test scores, which are available for grades three through eight, are pooled across all grades (centered at the middle grade of each school) and subjects (math and reading or English language arts).

This analysis relies on nationally normed test scores that are reported on the SEDA CSS, where units of interpretation are in standard deviation units. For readability, MDRC estimates based on these CSS measures are multiplied by three prior to being reported in this table so that each unit can be interpreted as representing one grade level. Per SEDA's technical documentation, one CSS standard deviation unit is approximately three grade levels.

The initial time segment for all sites but the Omaha site is spring 2009 to spring 2010; for the Omaha site, it is spring 2011 to 2012. The final time segment for all sites is spring 2017 to spring 2018.

Renaissance West STEAM Academy is the only pipeline school in the Charlotte site. Since it is a new school that opened during the 2017–2018 academic year, there are no SEDA data for pipeline schools in the Charlotte site that fall within the study's timeframe.

For the Birmingham, Charlotte, Omaha, and Spartanburg sites, schools flagged as "other nearby school" are local schools with students in grades three through eight whose 2015–2016 (or 2009–2010, for the Birmingham site) attendance zones overlap the current census-based Purpose Built Neighborhood footprint.

For the Columbus site, "nearby schools" include pipeline schools and other local schools with students in grades three through eight whose attendance zones either overlap or abut the footprint.

A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

two sites (those in Omaha and Spartanburg) were in low-performing districts; and one site (the neighborhood in Charlotte) was in an average-performing district. The CQBs were thus working with schools that were not only on their own very low performing, but, with one exception, part of school districts that were also very low or low performing. In addition, in each of the four sites where the analysis was conducted, the initial student performance in the pipeline schools was well below the respective school district average. These findings further highlight the academic disadvantages children in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods faced.[14]

Change in Student Performance

Table 4.2 presents the following important findings on the change in mean score between the initial and final periods from the SEDA test-score analysis:

- Estimated mean scores in the Purpose Built Neighborhood pipeline schools declined (based on conventional or suggestive statistical evidence) in the Birmingham and Columbus sites, the two study sites with multiple pipeline schools.

- Change estimates for the pipeline school in the Omaha site and the one in the Spartanburg site were quite small and provide inconclusive evidence about the direction of change. However, taking into account the confidence intervals of the estimates, even a highly optimistic interpretation of the findings indicates that the pipeline school in each of these sites was still performing well below the national average at the end of the analysis period.[15]

To help clarify these findings, Figure 4.2 illustrates them visually by plotting the change estimate for the pipeline school or schools in each Purpose Built Neighborhood (designated by a large dot), the confidence interval representing its 90 percent MOE (the solid line through each dot), and the confidence interval representing its 75 percent MOE (the shaded portion of the solid line).

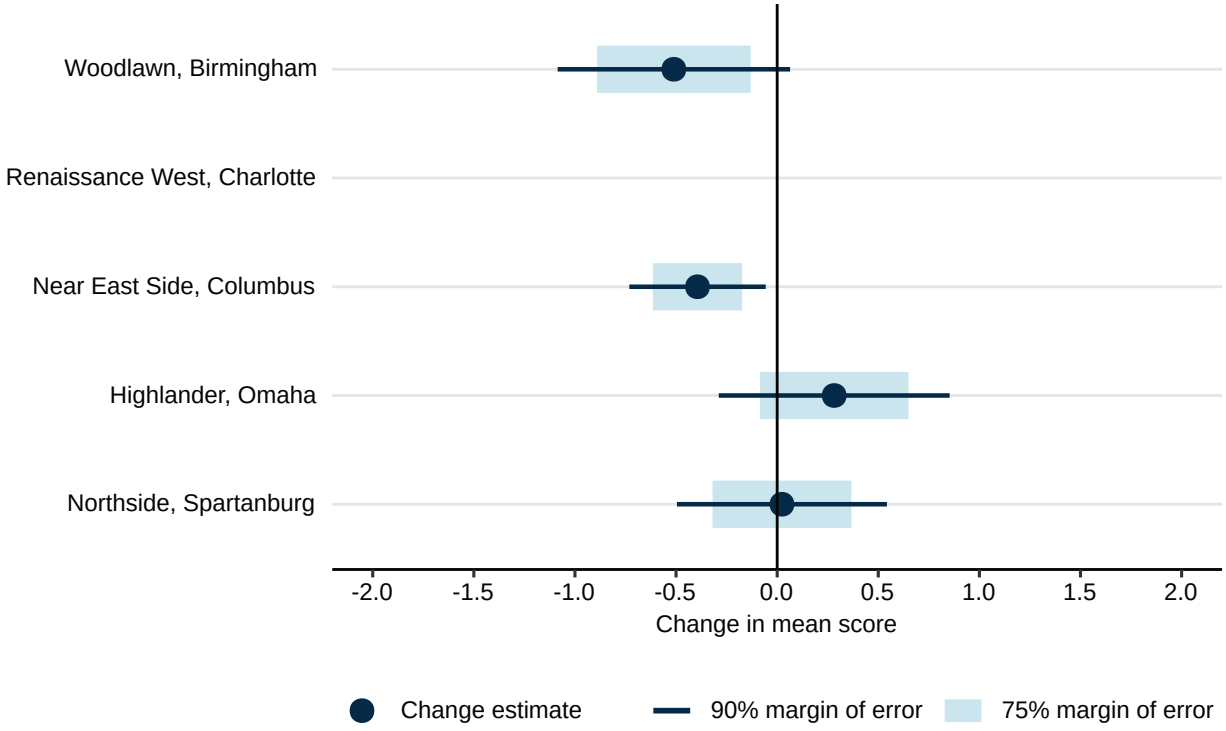
For the Columbus site, both the 90 percent and 75 percent confidence intervals lie entirely to the left of zero (which is equivalent to the downward-pointing solid triangle in Table 4.2). This illustrates that there is *conventional* statistical evidence of a decline over time in student academic performance at the pipeline schools. For the Birmingham site, only the 75 percent confidence interval lies entirely to the left of zero (which is equivalent to the downward-pointing hollow triangle in Table 4.2). This illustrates that there is *suggestive* statistical evidence of a decline over time in student academic performance at the pipeline schools. For the Omaha and Spartanburg sites, the 90 percent and 75 percent confidence intervals lie on both sides

14. These estimated differences were much larger than their 90 percent MOEs.

15. One highly optimistic estimate of these final period findings is calculated by adding the most positive estimate of the change over time in mean test scores (indicated by its 90 percent confidence interval) to the most positive estimate of the initial mean test score (indicated by its 90 percent confidence interval). This result suggests that final mean tests scores for the two schools were 1.5 to 1.8 grade levels below the national average, respectively.

Figure 4.2

Change Over Time in Student State Test Performance in Pipeline Schools



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) Version 4.1 data, with measures on the SEDA Cohort Standardized Scale.
NOTE: Student State Test Performance data are not available for pipeline schools in the Charlotte site over the study's time frame. The neighborhood's only pipeline school, Renaissance West STEAM Academy, opened later, during the 2017–2018 school year.

of zero. This illustrates that there is inconclusive evidence (as defined in the present evaluation) of the direction of change in student academic performance at the pipeline schools (as indicated by a question mark in Table 4.2). However, the confidence intervals for those two sites suggest that, if a positive change did occur, it was not very large and would not have closed the gap with the national average. In sum, the present analysis did not find evidence of substantial improvement in student academic performance at pipeline schools for any site between the initial and final analysis periods.

More recent data from state School Report Cards indicate the following in the 2021–2022 school year:[16]

16. The research team collected this additional data out of a desire to verify and quantify findings from interviews with leaders of local schools near the Spartanburg site about the recent success of the site's pipeline school. To do so, the team thus needed to collect corresponding data for all other study sites. It is important to note that State Report Cards guidance cautions that data for recent years may not be comparable to data for earlier years, due to testing disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The average student proficiency rate in reading or ELA and math for the four original pipeline schools in the Birmingham site (which ceased being pipeline schools in 2018) was about half of the proficiency rate in schools statewide.[17] Proficiency rates in reading or ELA and math for the site's new charter pipeline school (which had only opened in 2020) were about two-thirds and one-third of the statewide proficiency rates, respectively.

- Student proficiency rates by grade in reading or ELA and math for the six pipeline schools in the Columbus site ranged from zero to about half of the corresponding rates in schools statewide.

- Student proficiency rates in reading or ELA and math for the pipeline school in the Omaha site were less than half of the rates in schools statewide. However, the school's overall state rating (based on a number of different factors) increased from a recent previous rating of "needs support to improve" to "good."[18]

- The pipeline school in the Charlotte site (which opened in 2017–2018) had an overall state rating of "F." In addition, student proficiency rates in reading or ELA and math were about one-third of the rates in schools statewide.[19]

- In contrast, the pipeline school in the Spartanburg site received an overall passing grade in 2021–2022 for the first time since its inception in 1999.[20]

The Spartanburg experience deserves further comment. The pipeline school's student proficiency rate in math was above the rate in schools statewide, and its student proficiency rate in reading or ELA was two-thirds of the rate statewide. These results followed a decade of continuous collaboration among the CQB, the school, the school district, and other local partners, and were achieved in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. (See Box 4.2.) Only time will tell whether the school will maintain or improve upon this success.

17. This finding is an unweighted mean of the subject-specific percentages for the four schools.

18. Nebraska Department of Education (2024).

19. Still more recent data following the time period of this study indicates that the pipeline school in the Charlotte site continued to improve, receiving an overall state rating of "D" for the 2022–2023 school year. North Carolina School Report Cards (2024).

20. Specifically, the school received an overall state rating of "average," as opposed to the "below average" rating it receive in previous years. A local education leader indicated in an interview that the school had never before received a passing grade from the state.

BOX 4.2

The Cleveland Academy of Leadership in Spartanburg's Northside

In 2012, Spartanburg's Northside Development Group (NDG) began working with the Cleveland Academy of Leadership (previously called Cleveland Elementary School), and its school district (Spartanburg District 7), to improve school conditions and student performance. At that time, the school had not received a passing grade in over a decade from the State of South Carolina.

Since then, according to interviews with local leaders, there has been a close working relationship, characterized by mutual trust and continuity of leadership, among NDG, the school, the school district, and other local partners. The current school principal and district superintendent were part of the initial planning for this initiative, though in different positions at the time, and remain involved with it to this day. As part of this partnership, District 7 introduced an extended calendar year for the school, committed funding for additional support services, and helped implement a leadership development program (based on the Leader-in-Me model). Trust has been at the center of the partnership. Leaders and other staff described this trust in the following ways: "Being there when you say you're going to be there," "stepping up to provide support," and "meeting commitments."

NDG and its partners provided financial assistance for student and family support services (about $270,000 per year) and ongoing staff coaching, which they have done since the initiative's early days. They also participated in a continuous school improvement program: In 2018, the Spartanburg Academic Movement, in partnership with Strive Together, launched a school improvement pilot, Four Schools Project, in four Spartanburg schools, including the Cleveland Academy of Leadership. This pilot added staff development supports to the school.

In 2022, the Cleveland Academy of Leadership received its first passing grade from the state. One leader attributed this success to NDG, saying, "Cleveland is not able to obtain its very first average report card rating in the school's history without NDG. It does not happen without their equitable support, their engagement to move the school. If not for NDG . . . the Cleveland Academy of Leadership is well positioned to experience another 23 years of systematic failure, if it's not for them." While it is not possible to know what the future holds for this school, this breakthrough passing grade from the states offers considerable hope.

STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT NEARBY SCHOOLS

This section examines the educational opportunity that the local public schools afforded to children in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. To do so, it expands on the preceding analysis, casting a wider net to include nearby schools, the broader group of schools in the area (including the pipeline schools) that these children might have attended.

Defining Nearby Schools

Because it was not possible to determine which schools the children in the study neighborhoods actually attended, the present analysis focuses on public schools that these children in principle could have attended, based on school attendance zones for the 2015–2016 school year in four of the five sites, which is near the middle of the analysis period.[21] Due to data availability limitations, the study team used attendance zones for the 2009–2010 school year in its analysis for the Birmingham site. The team thus defined nearby schools for each Purpose Built Neighborhood to include all of its pipeline schools, as well as all other local schools with students in the third through eighth grades whose attendance zones *overlapped* with the neighborhood's approximate geographic footprint.[22] Table 4.3 lists the number of pipeline schools and nearby schools for each site.

Table 4.3

The Number of Pipeline Schools and Nearby Schools, by Study Site

Site	Pipeline Schools	Other Nearby Schools	All Nearby Schools
Woodlawn, Birmingham	4	2	6
Renaissance West, Charlotte	1	3	4
Near East Side, Columbus	6	5	11
Highlander, Omaha	1	10	11
Northside, Spartanburg	1	2	3

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) Version 4.1 data.

NOTES: Pipeline schools are local public schools that the Community Quarterback organization in each Purpose Built Neighborhood targeted for improvement.

Renaissance West STEAM Academy is the only pipeline school in Charlotte. Since it is a new school that opened during the 2017–2018 school year, there are no SEDA test score data for pipeline schools in the Charlotte site that fall within the study's time frame.

For the Birmingham, Charlotte, Omaha, and Spartanburg sites, schools flagged as "other nearby school" are local schools with students in grades three through eight whose 2015–2016 (or 2009–2010, for Birmingham) attendance zones overlap the current census-based Purpose Built Neighborhood footprint.

For Columbus, schools flagged as "other nearby school" are local schools with students in grades three through eight whose 2015–2016 attendance zones either overlap or abut the current census-based footprint.

One pipeline school (i3 Academy) in the Birmingham site was not included in quantitative analyses, as it opened in 2020—after the final period defined for this research. It has also been omitted from this table.

21. School attendance zone data were sourced from both the School Attendance Boundary Survey (covering the 2013–2014 and 201–2016 school years) and the School Attendance Boundary Information System (covering the 2009–2010, 2010–2011, and 2011–2012 school years). National Historical GIS (2024), National Center for Education Statistics (2024b).

22. Because the Columbus public school system has a districtwide school choice program, the research team used a less restrictive selection criterion. It includes all pipeline schools plus all other schools whose 2015–016 attendance zone overlapped or abutted the Columbus Purpose Built Neighborhood footprint. Figure 2.1 shows the neighborhood's approximate footprint.

Student Academic Performance Findings for All Nearby Schools

Table 4.4 presents findings from the SEDA test-score analysis by site of for all nearby schools (including pipeline schools). The table displays these findings in a similar manner as does Table 4.2 for the findings on pipeline schools. However, Table 4.4 does not repeat the results for the school districts.

Table 4.4

Student State Test Performance in Nearby Schools: Difference from the National Average in Grade-Level Equivalents

	Initial Mean Score		Change in Mean Score		
Site	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change
Woodlawn, Birmingham	-2.8	± 0.3	-0.5	± 0.5	▽
Renaissance West, Charlotte	-1.6	± 0.2	0.2	± 0.3	?
Near East Side, Columbus	-2.7	± 0.1	-0.2	± 0.2	▽
Highlander, Omaha	-2.4	± 0.2	0.4	± 0.3	▲
Northside, Spartanburg	-1.8	± 0.2	-0.6	± 0.2	▼

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) Version 4.1 data, with measures on the SEDA Cohort Standardized Scale (CSS).

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.

SEDA mean test scores, which are available for grades three through eight, are pooled across all grades (centered at the middle grade of each school) and subjects (math and reading or English language arts).

This analysis relies on nationally normed test scores that are reported on the SEDA CSS, where units of interpretation are in standard deviation units. For readability, MDRC estimates based on these CSS measures are multiplied by three prior to being reported in this table so that each unit can be interpreted as representing one grade level. Per SEDA's technical documentation, one CSS standard deviation unit is approximately three grade levels.

The initial time segment for all sites but the Omaha site is spring 2009 to spring 2010; for the Omaha site, it is spring 2011 to 2012. The final time segment for all sites is spring 2017 to spring 2018.

Renaissance West STEAM Academy is the only pipeline school in the Charlotte site. Since it is a new school that opened during the 2017–2018 academic year, there are no SEDA data for pipeline schools in the Charlotte site that fall within the study's time frame.

For the Birmingham, Charlotte, Omaha, and Spartanburg sites, schools flagged as "other nearby school" are local schools with students in grades three through eight whose 2015–2016 (or 2009–2010, for the Birmingham site) attendance zones overlap the current census-based Purpose Built Neighborhood footprint.

For the Columbus site, schools flagged as "other nearby school" are local schools with students in grades three through eight whose 2015–2016 attendance zones either overlap or abut the current census-based footprint.

A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

Table 4.4 shows that the estimated initial student test scores for all nearby schools were almost three grade levels below the national average for the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in Birmingham, Columbus, and Omaha, and almost two grade levels below the national average for those in Charlotte and Spartanburg. Thus, it appears that all the nearby schools in all five Purpose Built Neighborhoods afforded limited educational opportunity to the resident children at the beginning of the analysis period.

The table also indicates conventional or suggestive statistical evidence of a further decline in test scores — and thus a further decline in educational opportunity for Purpose Built Neighborhood children — in all nearby schools for the Birmingham, Columbus, and Spartanburg sites; a modest increase in test scores in all nearby schools for the Omaha site; and no conclusive change in test scores in all nearby schools for the Charlotte site. Hence, over the course of the analysis period, the research team only found statistical evidence of an improvement in the educational opportunity that nearby schools afforded to children for the Purpose Built Neighborhood in Omaha.

CHANGES IN KEY FEATURES OF PIPELINE SCHOOLS AND NEARBY SCHOOLS: RACE, POVERTY, AND RESOURCES

This section explores the extent to which pipeline and nearby schools were segregated by race or income (that is, had a disproportionate concentration of a particular group within the pipeline or nearby schools and relative to schools districtwide); the relative allocation of resources to each student; and whether these indicators changed over time. The study focused on the following indicators, which are commonly used to measure educational opportunity in schools:

- the percentage of students who were Black (an indicator of racial segregation for this population),
- the percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced priced lunch (an indicator of income segregation), and
- student-teacher ratios (an indicator of a school's teaching resources).

The research team obtained annual time-series data on these measures for each pertinent school and school district from the Common Core of Data maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. The analysis period for these data spans the 2008–2009 to 2018–2019 school years, although data for specific measures in specific years are missing for some schools and school districts.

Wherever possible, the initial period for the analyses of change over time in these measures included the 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 school years, and the final time period included the 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 school years. For each Purpose Built Neighborhood, the study presents estimates for the mean value (and corresponding MOE) of each measure during the initial period, and for the change in mean values between the initial and final periods. It also compares the results with the changes observed for the entire school district in each city where these schools are located.

Percentage of Students Who Are Black

Table 4.5 shows the initial percentage and the change in that value over time of students who were Black in pipeline schools, nearby schools, and all district schools. In the initial period, estimates ranged across the study sites from 84 to 93 percent of students in pipeline schools, and from 61 percent to 90 percent of students in nearby schools. (The MOEs for these estimates were generally small.) In four of the five sites, the percentage was markedly higher than that of the respective districtwide percentage. In the most extreme example, the site in Omaha, Black students made up 84 percent of the pipeline school population, but only 32 percent of districtwide population — a difference of 52 percentage points. In general, this high initial concentration of Black students in pipeline and nearby schools indicates substantial racial segregation of students within the school districts. In contrast, in the Birmingham site, almost all students (90 percent of higher) in the pipeline, nearby, districtwide schools were Black.

Table 4.5

Percentage of Black Students in Pipeline Schools, Nearby Schools, and Their School Districts

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change			
Site and School Group	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	Pipeline (or Nearby) School Change Differs from District Change
Woodlawn, Birmingham						
Pipeline schools	93	±3	-5	±4	▼	?
Nearby schools	90	±2	-2	±2	▽	◆
School district	95	±2	-6	±3	▼	
Renaissance West, Charlotte						
Pipeline schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nearby schools	69	± 3	-10	± 4	▼	◇
School district	45	± 1	-8	± 2	▼	
Near East Side, Columbus						
Pipeline schools	84	± 3	-6	± 4	▼	?
Nearby schools	88	± 2	-7	± 3	▼	◆
School district	59	± 2	-5	± 2	▼	
Highlander, Omaha						
Pipeline schools	84	±10	-39	±15	▼	◆
Nearby schools	61	± 3	-14	± 4	▼	◆
School district	32	± 1	-6	± 1	▼	
Northside, Spartanburg						
Pipeline schools	89	± 3	-10	± 5	▼	◆
Nearby schools	73	± 3	-1	± 4	?	?
School district	58	± 1	-3	± 1	▼	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period for Birmingham schools is 2009–2010 through 2010–2011, and 2008–2009 through 2009–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2017–2018 through 2018–2019.
The sets of nearby and district schools are similar to those used for the Stanford Education Data Archive analyses.
Due to missing data, not all schools in the present analysis are represented in all years of the analysis.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

In nearly all cases, estimates of the change over time in the percentage of students who were Black declined, based on conventional statistical evidence. (In Table 4.5, a solid downward-pointing arrow indicates this change.) These declines were generally small or modest (taking into account the MOEs as well as the change estimates) and consistent with the direction of change in school districts as a whole, perhaps reflecting some changes in the regional population. The largest decline — 39 percentage points (±15 points) — occurred in pipeline schools in the Omaha site. This decline exceeded the districtwide decline. (Note the solid diamond in the table.) It may reflect a larger demographic shift in the area, including a substantial increase in the neighborhood's Hispanic population. (See Chapter 6.) Apart from this exception and some decrease in overall racial segregation elsewhere, Black students remained a majority or supermajority of all students in pipeline schools and nearby schools in the other study sites throughout the analysis period.

Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch

Table 4.6 reports corresponding findings for the percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and thus living in families with incomes below or above but close to the federal poverty level.[23] Unfortunately, data on this indicator are not available in all sites for the pipeline schools, nearby schools, or both, so it is not possible to draw clear conclusions about overall patterns of change across all locations. However, where these data are available for either pipeline or nearby schools, they show that the majority or super majority of students were from very low-income families in the initial period.[24]

In the few cases where there is conventional statistical evidence of the direction of change (namely, in the Charlotte and Spartanburg sites), the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch in pipeline or nearby schools *increased* during the study period, as it did in the district as a whole. This estimated large increase in the Charlotte and Spartanburg sites from their initial high rate indicates that nearly *all* students in these schools were or had become eligible for the free or reduced-price school lunch program. This increase probably reflects the change that occurred in how program eligibility was determined, from an individual to schoolwide basis.[25] Overall, however, there is little reason to believe that economic segregation diminished in these localities during the analysis period, at least according to this single measure. In contrast, there is suggestive statistical evidence that the

23. Students living in households with incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty level were eligible for free school lunch, and students living in families with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty level were eligible for reduced-price lunch.

24. U.S. Department of Education designates a school as a high-poverty school if 75 percent or more of its students receive free or reduced-price school lunches.

25. In the 2014–2015 school year, the Federal Community Eligibility Provision of the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture came into effect nationwide. This provision made it possible for eligible schools from all states to apply for schoolwide eligibility for free and reduced-price student meals, based on the percentage of their students who were eligible individually.

Table 4.6

Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch in Pipeline Schools, Nearby Schools, and Their School Districts

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change			
Site and School Group	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	Pipeline (or Nearby) School Change Differs from District Change
Woodlawn, Birmingham						
Pipeline schools	80	±14	9	±19	?	?
Nearby schools	84	±13	5	±19	?	◆
School district	75	±16	9	±23	?	
Renaissance West, Charlotte						
Pipeline schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nearby schools	89	± 5	10	± 7	▲	?
School district	51	± 5	11	± 7	▲	
Near East Side, Columbus						
Pipeline schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nearby schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
School district	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Highlander, Omaha						
Pipeline schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nearby schools	81	± 17	-22	± 25	▽	◆
School district	66	± 4	5	± 5	△	
Northside, Spartanburg						
Pipeline schools	90	± 11	10	± 16	?	◇
Nearby schools	85	± 6	15	± 9	▲	◆
School district	67	± 4	20	± 6	▲	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period for Birmingham schools is 2009–2010 through 2010–2011, and 2008–2009 through 2009–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2017–2018 through 2018-–2019.
The sets of nearby and district schools are similar to those used for the Stanford Education Data Archive analyses.
Due to missing data, not all schools in the present analysis are represented in all years of the analysis.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

economic segregation based on this measure may have declined in the nearby schools in the Omaha site to a level approaching that of the district as a whole.

Student-Teacher Ratios

Student-to-teacher ratios are one indicator of a school's resource investment in students, and lower ratios are presumed to be more advantageous for pupils. Estimates for the initial period for Purpose Built Neighborhood pipeline schools range from a low ratio of 13 to 1 in Spartanburg (which Table 4.7 shows as simply 13) to a high ratio of 17 to 1 in Columbus.[26] To

26. The pipeline school in the Charlotte site opened too recently for inclusion in the present analysis.

Table 4.7

Student-Teacher Ratios in Pipeline Schools, Nearby Schools, and Their School Districts

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change			
Site and School Group	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	Pipeline (or Nearby) School Change Differs from District Change
Woodlawn, Birmingham						
Pipeline schools	16	±1	2	±2	▲	?
Nearby schools	16	±1	2	±2	▲	?
School district	16	±2	3	±3	△	
Renaissance West, Charlotte						
Pipeline schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nearby schools	13	± 1	1	± 2	?	?
School district	15	± 0	1	± 1	▲	
Near East Side, Columbus						
Pipeline schools	17	± 2	0	± 3	?	?
Nearby schools	17	± 2	0	± 3	?	?
School district	18	± 1	0	± 2	?	
Highlander, Omaha						
Pipeline schools	14	± 3	-5	± 4	▼	◆
Nearby schools	12	± 1	1	± 1	△	◆
School district	14	± 1	0	± 1	?	
Northside, Spartanburg						
Pipeline schools	13	± 2	0	± 2	?	?
Nearby schools	13	± 1	0	± 1	?	?
School district	13	± 0	-1	± 1	▽	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period for Birmingham schools is 2009–2010 through 2010–2011, and 2008–2009 through 2009–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2017–2018 through 2018–2019.
The sets of nearby and district schools are similar to those used for the Stanford Education Data Archive analyses.
Due to missing data, not all schools in the present analysis are represented in all years of the analysis.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

put these estimates in context, the national student-teacher ratio at around the same time was 15 to 1.[27] Hence, estimated initial ratios for pipeline schools were just above or just below the national average. It is important to note that a student-to-teacher ratio is not the same as class size per teacher, because the two measures are calculated differently. Class size is calculated by dividing the number of students by the number of classes, while the student-to-teacher ratio is calculated by dividing the number of students by the number of

27. This finding was obtained from Table 208.40 in the 2016 Digest of Education Statistics. See National Center for Education Statistics (2024a). The table was prepared in January 2017 and uses the Common Core of Data of U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," from 2000–2001 through 2014–2015.

"full-time equivalent" classroom teachers. (Typically, the number of students per classroom is higher than the number of students per teacher because other teachers may also provide supplementary instruction inside or outside a regular classroom.)

In each locality, the estimated student-teacher ratio in the pipeline schools, in all nearby schools, and for their school district were quite close, differing only by one or two students, if at all. Thus, it does not appear that pipeline or nearby schools were distinctively disadvantaged in terms of student-teacher ratios.

With respect to change over time, Table 4.7 indicates that the student-teacher ratio increased somewhat for the pipeline and nearby schools in the Birmingham site and decreased markedly for the pipeline school in the Omaha site (based on conventional statistical evidence). Evidence on the direction of change in most other pipeline and nearby schools and districts was either suggestive or inconclusive, but, overall, the patterns suggest that in most cases the changes were not large.

Expenditures Per Student

Another indicator of school investments is the average amount of money a school spends per student. Table 4.8 reports expenditures at the local, state, and national levels (in 2019 dollars) during the 2017–2018 school year for pipeline schools and nearby schools in each study site, as well as expenditures for the average school in each site's respective school district and state and across the nation. The 2017–2018 school year is the only year for which school and school district data on this measure are available from the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).[28] Consequently, a change-over-time analysis is not possible. Nonetheless, these data tell an important and striking story about the financial resources available to schools targeted by the Purpose Built Communities interventions (pipeline schools) and schools to which Purpose Built Neighborhood children had access (all nearby schools) relative to schools across broader geographies.

First, the per-student expenditures in pipeline schools were higher than those for the respective school district in three locations and about the same as those for the respective school district in two locations. Thus, pipeline schools were not at a financial disadvantage at the local level.

However, the story is quite different relative to statewide and national school expenditures per student. In four of the sites, the per-student expenditure rate was *roughly half* of the respective statewide level, and in the fifth site (Highlander in Omaha), it was only 83 percent of the statewide level.[29] Hence, the pipeline schools — and the respective school districts — in

28. CRDC data on state-funded and locally funded expenditures per student are available biennially from the 2009–2010 through the 2017–2018 academic years for schools and school districts. However, data on federally funded expenditures are only available from the 2015–2016 school year onward.

29. Pipeline school expenditures per student for the fifth site (in Omaha) were only four-fifths of school expenditures per student statewide.

Table 4.8

Per Pupil Expenditures for the 2017–2018 School Year at the Local, State, and National Levels, by Purpose Built Neighborhood

School Group (Expenditures in 2019 dollars)	Woodlawn, Birmingham, AL	Renaissance West, Charlotte, NC	Near East Side, Columbus, OH	Highlander, Omaha, NE	Northside, Spartanburg, SC
Pipeline schools	4,839	4,463	7,424	12,381	7,174
Nearby schools	4,839	6,248	6,743	7,076	7,025
District schools	4,958	4,664	6,354	8,202	6,576
Schools across the state	11,027	10,280	14,659	14,916	13,234
Schools across the nation	14,624	14,624	14,624	14,624	14,624

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data and Civil Rights Data Collection.

NOTE: Due to missing data, not all schools in the present analysis are represented in all years of the analysis.

all study sites were at an extreme financial disadvantage at the state level. Furthermore, relative to expenditures per student nationwide, the financial disadvantage was even more extreme for the schools in three of the study sites, and about the same for the schools in the remaining two sites.

Thus, toward the end of the analysis period, the pipeline schools were at a serious financial disadvantage relative to schools in their respective state and the country. Furthermore, this financial disadvantage probably persisted throughout the analysis period based on the following: (1) Data from the Common Core of Data of National Center for Education Statistics for states and the United States (reported in Appendix Table C.2) indicate very little change in expenditures per student between the 2009–2010 and 2017–2018 school years, and (2) earlier expenditure rates for pipeline schools in the study sites were very unlikely to exceed the rates for later years.

The nearby schools in the study sites were similarly disadvantaged. Their expenditures per student ranged from 44 percent to 61 percent of the average school expenditures statewide. Thus, there is clear evidence that the schools targeted by the CQBs' interventions and the other schools to which the children living in Purpose Built Neighborhoods had access were at a serious financial disadvantage at the end of the analysis period — and most likely throughout that period.

CONCLUSION

As this chapter has shown, one top priority for the CQBs was improving opportunities for early childhood education for young children living in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. These efforts, of course, were aimed at the earlier end of the cradle-to-college pipeline that is central to the Purpose Built Communities model. In four of the five neighborhoods, the CQBs and their partners helped get new facilities built to expand those opportunities, while the CQB in the fifth fostered enhanced early childhood programs and services. These were notable accomplishments during the first decade or so of the model's implementation.

For older children, the CQBs focused most of their efforts on expanding school options, improving the capacity of local public schools and the quality of their instruction, or both, mostly at the elementary and middle school levels. This was no small challenge since they were working with local schools that had been disinvested for years and were vastly underperforming.

Specifically, the CQBs were working with schools where, on average, students were performing almost three grade levels below the national average in reading or ELA and math. In addition, these schools were highly segregated by race and income relative to schools districtwide. For example, schools' students were overwhelming Black, and, with one exception, disproportionately so relative to schools in their districts overall. Furthermore, students were overwhelmingly from families who were living in or near poverty. In some communities, stakeholders differed in their views about whether to invest in creating a charter school or collaborate with local public schools to improve those schools. In one site (in Birmingham), the CQB switched gears over the course of study period and helped get a new charter school built. Overall, several CQBs were part of efforts to get new schools built.

Over a roughly decade-long period, student academic performance did not change appreciably for the schools targeted by the CQB initiatives (pipeline schools), or in nearby schools overall (including the pipeline schools). With one possible exception, students were still performing close to three grade levels below the national average. In addition, schools continued to be segregated along racial and income lines. The percentage of students who were Black was very still high in both absolute terms and relative to their school district overall. Furthermore, students were still overwhelmingly from families living in or near poverty.

What explains this general lack of progress in students' academic performance at these schools, especially the pipeline schools where the CQBs and their partners devoted most of their efforts? In considering this question, it is important to remember that the analyses conducted here were not causal ones that could attribute progress — or lack of progress — specifically to the efforts made by the CQBs and their partners. There is no counterfactual (comparison group) for determining how the changes in school performance metrics in the pipeline schools would have differed in the absence of any Purpose Built Communities interventions. Hypothetically, the possibility that certain school indicators would have gotten *worse* in the absence of those interventions cannot be ruled out.

It is also important to remember that the schools attended by children living in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were also attended by children from other neighborhoods. Thus, this analysis could not ascertain whether the children from the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were performing better over time, since their individual test scores could not be isolated. Still, the performance and characteristics of the pipeline and nearby schools overall are important because they speak to changes in the educational opportunities available to the neighborhood children.

Bearing these caveats in mind, it is worth considering at least several possible reasons why more academic progress was not evident in the pipeline and nearby schools. The research team derived these possible reasons from the interviews it conducted with CQB leaders, partners, and local school leaders. For example, whether working with one or several district schools, the CQBs faced challenges that, to some extent, were out of their immediate control. First, their initiatives called for new ways of approaching learning, which required a change in culture and everyday practice within schools. Initial enthusiasm for this change may have provided the impetus for launching the initiatives. But, as stakeholders rolled out the implementation, hard reality rolled in. Training for teachers on a new approach sometimes had to be conducted in parallel with other district teacher training, and the changes in practice that were sought conflicted with existing institutional practices and policies.

In addition, change within neighborhood district schools was also contingent on steps actors take at the district, city, and state levels. Obtaining approvals from the state, for instance, to introduce innovation in schools in the Birmingham site took time and relationship building. Furthermore, frequent turnover of district superintendents and school principals usually meant that CQBs had to build new relationships and, again, get buy-in from and onboard new educational leaders. In short, the CQBs were trying to create major change in practice and policy within schools as outside organizations with limited decision-making power.

It is also important to recall that most of the educational reforms that the CQBs helped to advance did not get implemented until about midway or near the end of the period. This includes the new schools created in several Purpose Built Neighborhoods. Perhaps, these schools and the other reform initiatives will improve educational opportunities as they mature. The experiences of Spartanburg's Cleveland Academy of Leadership, an elementary school that received its first passing grade from the state after 23 years, is particularly encouraging.

5

Community Wellness: Strategies and Experiences

Many disinvested neighborhoods not only have weak housing markets and low-performing schools, they also lack access to basic amenities common to better-off neighborhoods. At the same time, all neighborhoods, even when they grapple with deep poverty and disinvestment, have important assets and strengths on which to build, and that, if tapped into effectively, can contribute to revitalization. To achieve the Purpose Built Communities model's goals in the community wellness pillar, the Community Quarterbacks (CQBs) sought to improve access to basic services and amenities and build on existing neighborhood assets, just as they had in their work in the housing and education pillars. The CQBs' community wellness-related activities thus round out their implementation of the model and its holistic approach to building and sustaining thriving, mixed-income communities.

The community wellness pillar broadly encompasses efforts to promote residents' physical, mental, and social well-being. This chapter examines activities within this domain in the four study sites (or "Purpose Built Neighborhoods") included in the evaluation's qualitative research. (The Omaha site was excluded, as explained earlier in the report). It describes the types of initiatives the CQBs and their partners, including residents, prioritized and implemented, the CQBs' role, and the types of issues with which they wrestled in the process. Unlike the prior analyses on housing and education, the examination of community wellness presented in this chapter was unable to draw on quantitative data. Instead, it relied entirely on information gathered through interviews with CQB staff and other local partners and focus groups with residents.

The qualitative data show that across the neighborhoods, the CQB's community wellness-focused activities fell into three main categories: (1) improving access to health care services, (2) improving access to food, and (3) creating a variety of opportunities for personal development, social connection, and engagement in other neighborhood improvement activities. Not every CQB, however, undertook activities in each category. The CQBs played a critical role in improving coordination among service providers, securing community spaces where services could be delivered and events could be held, connecting residents to those services and activities, and bridging the divide that sometimes separated service providers (especially health institutions) and residents. In all of this work, the CQBs strongly emphasized

that community members should determine which activities are pursued, and they aimed to promote a deeper sense of belonging among residents in the community — outcomes that transcended the particular activities and were important in their own right.

MAKING CONNECTIONS AND FOSTERING COMMUNITY CONTROL

Although the CQBs directly provided some community wellness-related services, that was not their main function. Rather, similar to their work in the housing and education pillars, their primary role was to advance initiatives in the community wellness pillar through collaboration with other organizations and local residents. Thus, they sought to build the capacity of service providers to operate effectively in the neighborhoods and fill gaps in the available community wellness-related services. They also sought to help residents forge trusting relationships with those organizations and take advantage of the services they offered. To achieve these goals, the CQBs had to nurture stronger connections among local organizations, among residents, and between organizations and residents. They understood the local residents and their needs, and they had close ties with relevant organizations in the community. They were able to use their knowledge of their neighborhoods to build bridges at these different levels.

Because community wellness has many dimensions, some CQBs first convened their partners to brainstorm and narrow down which aspects of community wellness neighborhood residents wished to address most. One community leader who worked for a health care provider in Woodlawn in Birmingham appreciated value of the monthly meetings the CQB convened with partners, saying, "We would kind of bounce what was happening in our organizations, but also what we need and how we can help another organization. And I thought that was real cool to have us all in one room, in one space, because you learn."

The CQBs worked hard to earn the trust of residents and sought to channel residents' interests and perspectives in their discussions with partners. However, they also involved residents in the planning process directly, and they strongly promoted resident "ownership" over the ideas considered and the activities undertaken. In some instances, residents' direct involvement revealed how certain partners, especially big health institutions, could act in ways that were out of tune with residents' interests. For example, when health care partners in the Renaissance West neighborhood in Charlotte gathered to discuss the service gaps in the neighborhood, they proposed initiatives related to cooking — an activity important to improving health outcomes, but, in the views of residents, not as pressing as other issues in the community wellness domain. As one staff member explained:

> And we presented over a series of eight months of meetings that the main need was mental health. And seven out of the eight partners wanted to do cooking demonstrations. And so, it was like, "That's great, that's a really nice program,

> but that's not what the community needs right now. We need resources for therapy and mental health and dealing with trauma."

In this example from Renaissance West, by directly engaging with residents, the CQB was able to identify an important need in the community, one for mental health services, and to start thinking about initiatives to respond to it. Across the study sites, the CQBs would communicate the residents' more urgent needs to partners and work together with them to address those needs.

In Woodlawn, a focus group participant said that the CQB's emphasis on resident control helped build trust with residents and made the CQB's efforts on behalf of the neighborhood "credible," saying, "[We] see the intentionality as being more credible. And also seeing that you are fully engaging the community to get their input, to find out what is working, what's not working, and how to best to move things forward."

A focus group participant in Spartanburg's Northside neighborhood echoed similar sentiment, saying, "One of our quarterbacks says, you know, it's your party. We're just guests."

The CQBs' efforts to coordinate and build bridges among stakeholders, and their emphasis on community control, can be seen in their initiatives to expand access to health care and quality food access and in their other community wellness activities, which are described in the following sections.

In the Northside in Spartanburg, a community leader described the responses that residents gave when asked at a community outreach event about where they received their health care, saying:

> It was church, it was neighbors and family. None of the initial answers were the hospital or health system or my doctor's office. Some people did say, you know, "I try to take care of myself at home before I go anywhere for care." Others said that they were connected either to Regenesis, which is our federally qualified health care center, some to the free clinic. Some said, "I just go to the emergency room when I'm sick."

Across the Purpose Built Neighborhoods, improving access to health care was a central focus of the CQBs' community wellness initiatives. Their approaches varied, however, depending on the needs of the community and the pre-existing health care resources available in the neighborhoods. The CQBs also had to contend with issues of distrust among residents of health care systems, which run deep in communities of color. The experience in Columbus' Near East Side neighborhood, as described by a local partner, illustrates this situation. The Ohio State University and its affiliated hospital were major community assets and key partners in the CQB's wellness initiatives. Yet, residents distrusted the hospital — a sentiment dating back to when the institution first arrived in the neighborhood and conducted interventions that did not necessarily benefit the residents. A community leader explained:

> [I]n this neighborhood, in particular, I think there have been some historical negatives, if I can say so, with OSU [the Ohio State University] in particular. And I think there's still some hurdles to get over because of that alignment, which may be different if it was a standalone or something.

Community distrust of institutions made it even more critical for the CQBs to sponsor initiatives that appealed to residents, directly confront historical tensions, and gradually restore residents' trust in systems and instill in them a sense of ownership over their own health. This process was an ongoing one.

Developing Partnerships with Health Care Providers

One way the CQBs sought to expand access to health care was by improving coordination with and among existing health care institutions that served the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. For example, the CQBs in three neighborhoods (Woodlawn in Birmingham, Renaissance West in Charlotte, and the Near East Side in Columbus) developed partnerships with existing hospitals that operated federally qualified health care centers and sought to connect these institutions with other local health care providers in ways that would benefit neighborhood residents. In Renaissance West, for example, the CQB convened the local health care providers to discuss "the needs of the community and figure out how we can work together to meet those needs without duplicating efforts and maximizing the resources available."

In some cases, the CQBs took steps to bring other providers into or closer to the neighborhoods. The CQB in Woodlawn, Birmingham, for example, helped a local health center find and secure office space in the neighborhood. The center's administrative office space had been previously located in one of the wealthiest zip codes in Birmingham, and the provider was looking to move it closer to the area it served. The CQB was able to negotiate rental space in a more conveniently located building in the neighborhood. Moving the center to the neighborhood benefited residents, because it reduced logistical barriers to them accessing health care services. One of the center's staff members described the CQB's role as follows, "And that's what they do a lot of times. They come along to you, they use their influence, and they help you do stuff like that. If they don't own a property, they can also still help you."

Sometimes, the CQBs recruited smaller-scale providers to the neighborhood. For example, in Woodlawn, the CQB recruited a dentist who provided dental care on a sliding scale. Many residents grew to trust this dentist, and, even after she left the neighborhood several years ago, residents still spoke highly of her.

Connecting Residents to Health Care Services

It is one thing to increase the health care services available in a neighborhood; it is quite another, of course, to get residents to use them. For example, in several neighborhoods, existing hospital systems operated health care clinics that accepted Medicare and Medicaid insurance plans and offered patients a sliding payment scale. However, many residents did not know about these clinics or that the cost of the services could be affordable to them,

and so did not use them. Moreover, as previously mentioned, many residents were distrustful of existing health care providers because of past discriminatory or harmful practices that adversely affected Black Americans.

Thus, a critical element of the CQBs' work was to raise awareness and build more trusting relationships between neighborhood residents and health care providers. To this end, the CQBs launched outreach programs to connect residents to those providers and tried to reassure residents that the providers had their best interests in mind. For example, one CQB organized an informational visit to the local hospital for a social group for elderly residents. During the visit, members of the group met and spoke with the hospital's CEO. One participant said, "She gave us literature on the different clinics and well checkup facilities, and it was just wonderful, and fed us lunch." CQBs also developed strategies to help residents navigate complicated health care systems. In the Near East Side neighborhood in Columbus, the CQB would sometimes even play a one-on-one intermediary role between residents and the local hospital. As one staff member noted:

> Even if they wanted to call OSU's [the Ohio State University's] East Hospital, they didn't know who to call. And so, we quickly filled a void for the residents . . . We would be like, "Are you sure you wanna call us for this? All right, we'll figure out. We'll find you a doctor." We'll find, you know, whatever was needed.

Two CQBs used the local public schools as a vehicle for expanding access to health care. For example, Woodlawn United in Birmingham capitalized on its partnership with the five schools in the Woodlawn Innovation Network, described in Chapter 4, to conduct targeted outreach to families. Each school had an assigned Woodlawn United staff member who worked with school staff to identify children needing health care and other services. They provided some services directly onsite, such as certain mental health supports and dental and vision screenings, and they referred families to other providers to address health care needs they could not address in the schools. In the Near East Side in Columbus, the CQB helped establish a similar school-based program, called the Adopt-a-Nurse program. Both programs brought health care services and referrals to residents into a familiar setting.

In Renaissance West in Charlotte, starting in 2017, the CQB implemented a community-wide program called the Life Navigator Program, which functioned as a type of case management program with a focus on health care and other supports. Staff called "Life Navigators" worked with residents to learn what they needed, provide them with referrals to relevant health care facilities and other services, and followed up with them to ensure they got the help they needed. As part of the program, the CQB conducted home visits to the families whose children attended local schools. The CQB developed formal agreements with wellness providers in the area and referred residents to those partners. As the program grew, it broadened its focus. For example, it helped connect residents to child care services, provided job search assistance, and helped them access the internet to manage their health care and other appointments and communicate with their doctors and other providers online. As one Life Navigator commented:

> If [they need] Loaves and Fishes [a food assistance organization in Mecklenburg County], if it's crisis, if it's, you know, something to do with the kids at school, so if it's one of those organizations and they're needing some assistance, yes, we're actually referring them to those organizations.

EXPANDING FOOD ACCESS

The Purpose Built Neighborhoods were considered "food deserts" — that is, places where grocery stores are either nonexistent or several miles away and not easily accessible without a car. Residents of such areas have difficulty accessing affordable healthy food.

Addressing this problem has been a high priority for the residents of these neighborhoods and thus a major focus of the CQBs' community wellness activities. The CQBs and their partners advocated for supermarket chains to open stores in their neighborhoods but had little success. Consequently, they explored other options. These included establishing food co-ops — organizations often owned or operated by members of a community that distribute or sell fresh food (e.g., fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and other groceries) — supporting community gardens, and organizing farmers' markets, as well as changing bus routes to more directly connect residents to food markets in nearby neighborhoods.

In the Near East Side in Columbus, when efforts to attract a major grocery store to the neighborhood failed, the CQB brought residents together to help them come to terms with that reality and consider other possible solutions to meet the need for healthy food in the community. The idea of creating a food co-op emerged from this collective brainstorming. As one staff member of a partner organization explained:

> I know [the CQB] has been really kind of convening interested individuals to talk about what possibilities might occur around if we can't get a large institution to come in . . . what are some of the other options. So, I know they've been kind of convening interested parties and we've been at that table as well to talk about, you know, is a food co-op possible.

The CQB in the Near East Side also supported community garden initiatives. For example, it connected six independent community garden programs, helping them form a coalition known as the Growing and Growth Collective, and the CQB then served as the fiscal agent for this coalition. The gardens now share a board of a directors that handles their collective resources, fundraising activities, administrative tasks, and volunteers. Near East Side residents can now get fresh produce from these gardens. Broad Street Presbyterian Church, whose garden is part of the coalition, also operates a food pantry that distributes its garden's produce.

In Renaissance West in Charlotte, in 2017, the CQB partnered with an organization called BULB to bring a green market to the neighborhood once a week. The market accepts EBT

cards. A previous attempt to set up a farmer's market, however, had failed because it did not align well with the community's culture. As one observer recalled:

> Previously, there had been a pop-up farmers' market, I think, maybe back in 2015. But the partner that . . . this was like before my time, but I know about it and got feedback from the residents, the food was organic . . . the residents didn't care about organic. They just wanted the fruits and vegetables, and, like, they weren't gonna pay for it because it was expensive. So, it didn't match what the community was looking for.

The CQB in Renaissance West also partnered with Seeds for Change (a program of the Boulevard West Neighborhood Coalition) to form the West Boulevard Food Market Board, along with Atrium Health, Novant Health, Mecklenburg County, two local churches, and the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. In 2020, key stakeholders in this collaboration began researching various community garden and co-op models. They purchased land in the neighborhood where the future food co-op would be built. Not incidentally, this plot of land sits next to a community garden, which will work with the co-op and provide it with fresh produce.

Similarly, in the Northside in Spartanburg, the CQB partnered with Hub City Urban Farm, a community garden in the neighborhood that offers fresh produce in the summer months.

In these ways, the CQB has helped forge new food security-related partnerships and initiatives. Although these projects operated on a small scale and did not obviate the need for grocery stores, they helped to increase and diversify fresh food options for residents as they worked toward an alternative solution for attracting grocery stores to the neighborhood. These initiatives could also generate additional benefits: They could foster a sense of community, social cohesion, and community ownership among residents. For example, community gardens gave residents some control over the land in their neighborhood. These gardens also served as green spaces and could help protect the property from unwanted development.[1] As one community leader noted:

> My big thing is, like, maintaining green spaces for the sake of not allowing just developers to come in and think they know what's best and take over the neighborhood and change the taste and fabric and feel of the neighborhood. So more of, like, a resistance perspective.

1. In a sense, these community gardens could be viewed as a form of land banking wherein the land has been preserved by the community to serve a specific purpose.

OTHER INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS

In addition to their efforts to increase access to quality health care and food, the CQBs undertook a wide range of other community wellness-related initiatives they believed could improve life outcomes for residents and the overall quality of life in the neighborhood. For example, they supported, sponsored, or organized activities to help residents improve their employment opportunities, manage their personal affairs, get involved in the neighborhood as a volunteer or advocate, and develop a deeper sense of belonging to the neighborhood.

Importantly, many of these activities required community spaces where residents could come together. These spaces were valued neighborhood assets and essential to community wellness-related initiatives as they helped make possible engagement with residents as well as facilitated social interaction among them. Consequently, the CQBs worked to build community spaces or collaborated with organizations that had space that could be used for events or planning purposes.

In some neighborhoods, CQBs built new or made use of existing community centers. For instance, the Near East Side in Columbus has a community center that is jointly run by the Ohio State University, the public housing authority, and local churches. The CQB started an intergenerational care program in collaboration with the center. The center works with the Ohio State University's Office of Geriatrics and School of Social Work and functions as a shared adult and child day care program. The center also offers volunteer opportunities and events for families.

In Woodlawn in Birmingham, a community center, the Dream Center, recently opened. Located in Church of the Highlands, it was created specifically as place where children could hang out after school. Similarly, the new public housing complex in Renaissance West in Charlotte, the Residences at Renaissance, has a community center. The CQB conducts computer training and adult literacy classes and hosts community events in this space.

In Spartanburg's Northside neighborhood, the CQB partnered with the City of Spartanburg to build the Dr. T.K. Gregg Community Center. The center has community rooms, a pool, a running track, and a fitness room. The idea to build the center originated in a community charrette, and it was designed with input from residents. The center offers a variety of programs for residents of all ages, including children and seniors. Among the center's intended purposes was to provide programming for elderly residents to help reduce their sense of isolation and loneliness. As one community leader explained:

> I had no idea that many seniors lived in this community because all I saw was young people all the time. But the seniors were so secluded in their homes. But since we built Dr. T.K. Gregg Community Center, we have senior time from 9 to 1 intentionally because we knew that that was the missing piece in our commu-

> nity. They didn't have a place where they belonged. And they come there and eat lunch that's catered every day for the senior groups.

In the Near East Side in Columbus, the CQB partnered with the local church, a pillar in the community and central to many residents' social and spiritual well-being, to hold events and meetings. Noting that community space is hard to find in the neighborhood, a member of the church said, "So, again, we try to leverage our building and our parking lot because it's unique in the neighborhood like this that we have this space. And so, we try to offer the space to the community as much as we can."

Near East Side residents also collaborated with the local hospital to use space in their facility for community meetings. As one community leader explained, "And so, you know, when we need things or, you know, we need meeting space, we go over and meet at the hospital. So, it's a really great relationship."

In all study sites, CQBs partnered with local nonprofits, faith-based organizations, schools, and community centers to organize a diverse neighborhood events, such as fairs and holiday food and gift giveaways. In the Northside in Spartanburg, for example, the CQB partnered with the Cleveland Academy of Leadership to organize "The Week of the Young Child," a community event held on the school's premises that brought together about 250 families and included food vendors, kickball matches, and other games. In Renaissance West in Charlotte, the CQB partnered with organizations that gave out food and gifts during the holidays.

The CQBs implemented other initiatives that offered residents opportunities to develop new skills to help them advance their careers or better manage their personal affairs, as well as get involved in community-led efforts to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. For example, in Renaissance West in Charlotte, the CQB collaborated with the Junior League to provide cooking classes, tax preparation services, adult education classes, and computer literacy classes. In the Near East Side in Columbus, the CQB partnered with the Ohio State University and its hospital to offer cooking classes, help residents access and use technology, and organize a community safety committee and neighborhood clean-ups. In Woodlawn in Birmingham, the CQB led efforts to create a quiet zone to eliminate the noise caused by a railroad that runs through the neighborhood. It also collaborated with Birmingham's police department to organize Citizens on Patrol, a neighborhood patrol in which residents volunteered with police department to help improve public safety.

In addition to their more project-specific goals, some of these initiatives sought to promote a sense of community belonging, social cohesion, and community ownership among residents. They also could have helped empower residents to shape what happened in their neighborhoods. For example, as a community leader in Woodlawn expressed in relation to the neighborhood patrol initiative, "I think that gave the neighborhood a sense of ownership in their own safety. And I think that really strengthened our relationship with them and their relationship with the city of Birmingham and with the police department."

CONCLUSION

The CQBs in this study pursued a wide range of activities within the Purpose Built Communities model's community wellness pillar. Their top priorities reflected the needs and interests of residents, whose input they solicited, and they leveraged existing assets in their neighborhoods. These included expanding access to health care and food, enhancing residents' skills, and improving the quality of life in the neighborhood. The work required that the CQBs forge many strategic partnerships with other organizations, secure community spaces for activities, build trust with residents, and help residents learn about and take advantage of services available to them. The CQBs envisioned that these activities would also strengthen social cohesion and a sense of neighborhood belonging among residents, and they pursued them in ways that emphasized community control or ownership over the priorities set and activities undertaken.

As with the housing and education activities, planning and implementing these community wellness initiatives took time, and some did not begin operating until late in the study period. Moreover, the CQBs and their partners had not achieved one important objective: bringing grocery stores to the neighborhoods, which were considered food deserts. However, they developed other creative, though smaller-scale, ways to improve the food options available to residents, such as establishing food co-ops and supporting community gardens.

Quantitative data were not available to measure neighborhood-level change in residents' access to health care or food, residents' engagement in these community wellness initiatives, or the initiatives' perceived benefits. In addition, the extent to which the views of residents presented in this chapter represent those of the community at large is not known. However, the voices shared in this chapter seem to suggest that the CQB-led activities were important steps toward achieving the model's goal of improving community wellness.

6

Change Over Time in Income, Poverty, and Population

The Purpose Built Communities model aims to help transform historically disinvested neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty and that are typically segregated by race and income relative to the wider city or region into thriving, stable, mixed-income communities. In communities that adopted the model, residents and others engaged in its efforts hoped to accomplish its multiple overarching goals: decrease the proportion of residents currently living in poverty; reduce intergenerational poverty; promote residents' economic mobility; attract newcomers with moderate and higher incomes; avoid displacing current residents with historical ties to the neighborhood; permanently maintain opportunities for people (including newcomers) with low incomes to live alongside those who are better off financially; and, in general, turn their neighborhoods into places where a mixed-income population benefits equally from community improvements and will want to remain for many years.

That the need for change was great was a perspective shared by residents, some of whom had lived in the communities for a long time and had witnessed the decline and disenfranchisement firsthand. One participant in the study's focus groups with residents said:

> I moved here in [the 1980s]. And the street that I moved on, dead ends to the trains. And my family was the first Black family to move on the street. It was wonderful. The neighbors came. They introduced themselves. It was wonderful. Systematically, they started moving out.[1]

Another resident added:

> It's a lot of things I would say we went through. From the time that I came in, we were able to play in the middle of the street without getting hit by a car, or dodge a bullet . . . then when I got into college, I would say all of our [commu-

1. All the quotes in this chapter are from focus groups with residents that the research team conducted in the study neighborhoods in Birmingham and Charlotte.

> nity] resources were drained . . . [The residents] . . . they kept fighting for those resources to come back into our community. And now we're at a point where we're seeing the fruits of their labor.

Initiatives in the Purpose Built Communities model's three core pillars — mixed-income housing, education, and community wellness — are intended to be mutually reinforcing and together help achieve the model's vision for community transformation. Prior chapters in this report examined initiatives in each of these three pillars and their progress in the five neighborhoods in this study (or "Purpose Built Neighborhoods"). This chapter focuses on how those neighborhoods changed on a set of cross-cutting neighborhood indicators not specific to any one domain, but that, instead, pertain to the model's larger vision of community change.

Drawing on data from the American Community Survey (ACS), Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data, and Infutor Consumer History data, this chapter explores changes in community-level household income, poverty, and employment rates in the study neighborhoods to assess their progress toward becoming more mixed-income communities. It also examines whether populations in those communities grew or shrank, which may reflect — and possibly amplify — positive or negative changes in a neighborhood's economic vitality, income diversity, and residential stability. Finally, the chapter considers whether the changes in household income, population, and residential stability were associated with displacement and a change in the racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood — important themes throughout this report.

As in prior chapters, the analysis examines change on key indicators over approximately the first decade of the Purpose Built Communities interventions in the five study neighborhoods. This is not a long time in the world of community revitalization, but trends over that time period can still offer insights into the neighborhoods' early experiences in a longer journey. It is also important to keep in mind that the Purpose Built Neighborhoods are not islands unto themselves or walled-off enclaves affected only by what the Community Quarterbacks (CQBs) and their partners do. Many factors external to the neighborhoods, and over which the CQBs have little control, can influence the direction and magnitude of community change. Therefore, as explained elsewhere, without a way to rule out alternative sources of influence, this evaluation could not isolate with confidence the causal effects of the Purpose Built Communities interventions per se. (See Chapter 1 and the section on analytic issues and methods in Appendix B.) However, it is possible to determine whether the early patterns of change in the study neighborhoods, whatever their causes, aligned with the Purpose Built Communities model's overall vision, and whether some progress had been made in those neighborhoods toward realizing that vision. That is what the analysis presented in this chapter attempts to do using a set of broad neighborhood indicators.

INCOME AND POVERTY

At the time the Purpose Built Communities interventions were launched, the five study neighborhoods had a long road to travel to achieve the goal of substantially lower poverty

and a broader mix of incomes among residents. As the following analysis shows, most of the communities in the evaluation began to make some limited strides toward reaching those aspirations during the 10-year study period.

Table 6.1 presents estimates for the quantitative measures related to income and poverty within each of the study neighborhoods. Using ACS data, it compares five-year averages on these measures for the initial segment of the analysis period (2009–2013 in the Spartanburg site and 2006–2010 in all other sites) and the final period (2015–2019 in all sites).

Table 6.1

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Income and Poverty

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change		
Measure and Site	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change
Average income among individuals ages 15 years or older (in 2019 dollars)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	16,080	± 4,591	2,610	± 7,885	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	16,196	± 4,803	5,796	± 9,324	?
Near East Side, Columbus	19,005	± 3,251	6,061	± 4,978	▲
Highlander, Omaha	17,009	± 3,377	2,604	± 4,927	?
Northside, Spartanburg	9,635	± 3,474	16,074	± 16,034	▲
Number of individuals with income below 100% of federal poverty line					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	619	± 231	237	± 424	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	1,681	± 426	-366	± 555	?
Near East Side, Columbus	3,735	± 749	-843	± 949	▽
Highlander, Omaha	2,088	± 581	-354	± 721	?
Northside, Spartanburg	819	± 285	-292	± 374	▽
Individuals with income below 100% of federal poverty line (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	26	± 8	21	± 19	▲
Renaissance West, Charlotte	65	± 13	-5	± 19	?
Near East Side, Columbus	56	± 10	-10	± 13	▽
Highlander, Omaha	50	± 13	-14	± 15	▽
Northside, Spartanburg	61	± 14	-18	± 22	▽
Individuals with income below 50% of federal poverty line (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	7	± 4	14	± 13	▲
Renaissance West, Charlotte	43	± 10	-25	± 14	▼
Near East Side, Columbus	33	± 8	-6	± 11	?
Highlander, Omaha	24	± 10	-6	± 12	?
Northside, Spartanburg	46	± 16	-30	± 19	▼
Individuals with income 100–199% of federal poverty line (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	44	± 17	-17	± 20	▽
Renaissance West, Charlotte	19	± 12	8	± 16	?
Near East Side, Columbus	20	± 6	6	± 9	?
Highlander, Omaha	26	± 8	10	± 12	△
Northside, Spartanburg	30	± 18	-4	± 22	?

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Direction of Change
Individuals with income 200% of federal poverty line or more (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	31	± 14	-5	± 17	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	16	± 7	-2	± 8	?
Near East Side, Columbus	24	± 6	4	± 7	?
Highlander, Omaha	25	± 8	4	± 11	?
Northside, Spartanburg	9	± 4	23	± 11	▲

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

The format of this table is the same as that used in other tables showing change-over-time estimates in this report. The first two columns list the estimated mean value for each variable in the initial period and its 90 percent margin of error (MOE). As previously explained, together the estimate and MOE indicate that there is a good chance that the true value of the measure lies somewhere between the mean estimate *minus* the MOE (the lower bound) and the mean estimate *plus* the MOE (the upper bound). The other columns in the table pertain to change-over-time estimates between the initial and final periods on the specified measures. (For more guidance on how to read these tables, see Chapter 3. For more technical details on the quantitative methods used in producing these estimates, see Appendix B.)

Average Income and Poverty Levels During the Initial Period

In the initial segment of the analysis period, the average annual income for residents 15 years of age or older (a classification used by the Census Bureau) in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods ranged from an estimated $9,635 (± $3,474) in the Northside in Spartanburg to $19,005 (± $3,251) in the Near East Side in Columbus in 2019 dollars. To put these estimates into perspective, the national average income per individual in the United States ($54,129 in 2019) was more than three times higher than it was in four of the five sites.[2] Bear in mind that the national median household income was $68,703 in 2019.[3] Clearly, when Purpose Built Communities was launched, the incomes of residents in the study neighborhoods, on average, were exceptionally low.

Residents' income levels can also be understood through the lens of federal poverty rates. To derive poverty rates for individuals, the Census Bureau simply considers an individual

2. U.S. Census Bureau (2020a).

3. Semega, Kollar, Shrider, and Creamer (2021).

to have a poverty-level income if the person lives in a family with a poverty-level income. Families meet that standard if they have a total income below a threshold that considers family size.[4] In 2019, for example, a three-person family with a total income under $20,335 would be deemed to be living in poverty.[5] It is also important to consider the depth of poverty. The Census Bureau considers families with an income that is less than 50 percent of its poverty threshold to be living in deep or extreme poverty.[6] Thus, a three-person family with an annual income less than $10,168 would fall into this category in 2019.

Table 6.1 shows that, in the initial period, all study neighborhoods except Woodlawn in Birmingham had estimated mean poverty rates that well exceeded the 30 percent standard commonly used to designate areas of *concentrated poverty*.[7] Indeed, those four neighborhoods could also be classified as having *extreme poverty concentration* (typically meaning that at least 40 percent of residents are poor), because about half or more of their residents had incomes below the poverty threshold. These conditions — a high level of poverty concentration with many residents experiencing deep poverty — illustrate the significant challenge that the CQBs and their partners faced in building more mixed-income communities.

Changes in Average Income and Poverty Rates Over Time

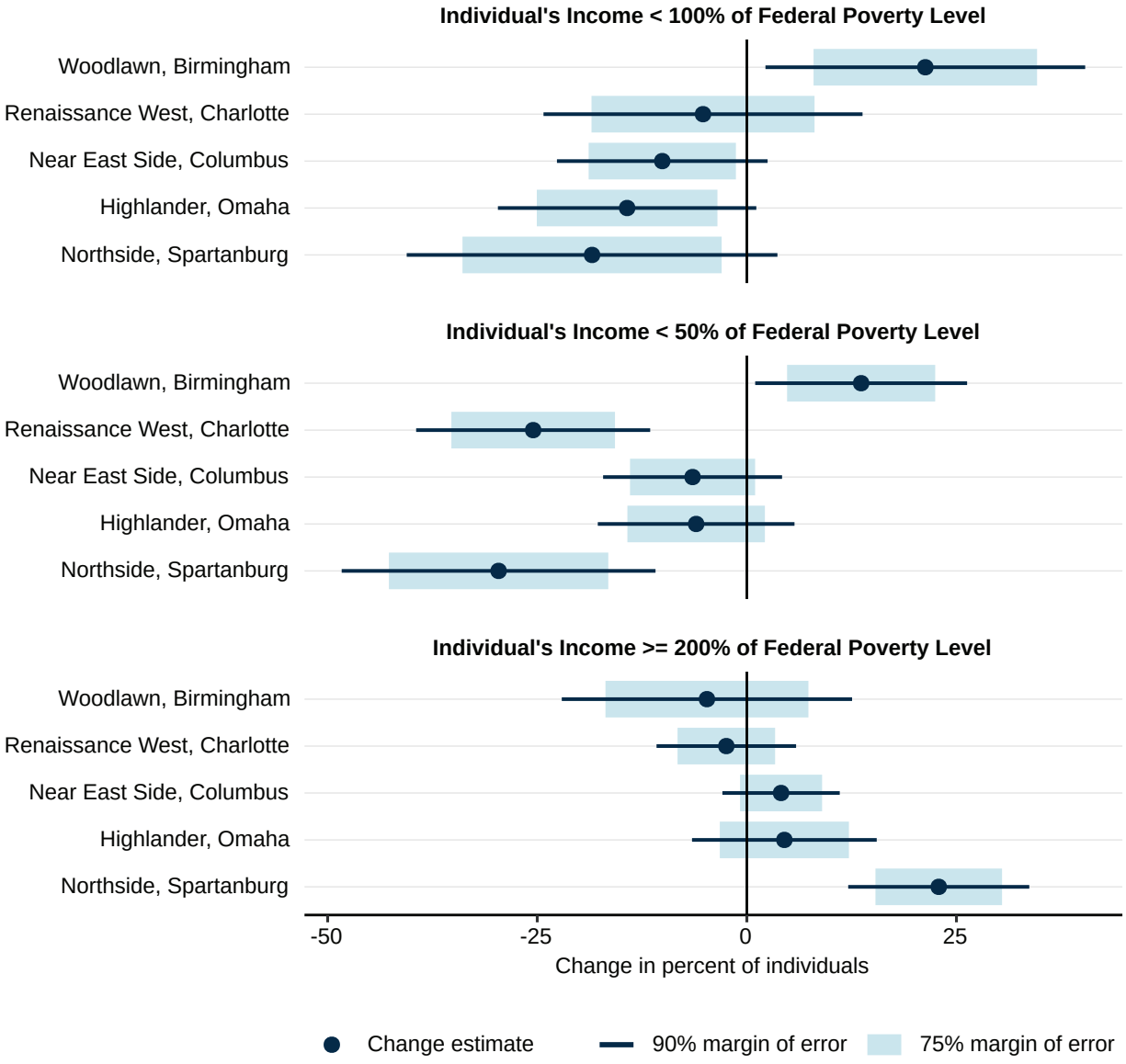
The last three columns of Table 6.1 present findings on changes in income and poverty between the initial and final analysis periods. The third column lists the estimated magnitude of change in the mean value of each measure, and the fourth column shows its 90 percent MOE. The final column reports (1) a solid upward-pointing or downward-pointing triangle to indicate the presence of *conventional* statistical evidence about the direction of change (based on the 90 percent MOE), (2) a hollow upward pointing or downward pointing triangle to indicate the presence of *suggestive* statistical evidence about the direction of change (based on a 75 percent MOE), or (3) a question mark to indicate *inconclusive* statistical evidence about the direction of change (because the MOE is less than 75 percent).

To help clarify these findings, Figure 6.1 illustrates them visually by plotting each measure's change estimate and its 90 percent and 75 percent MOEs for each Purpose Built Neighborhood. The solid line indicates the confidence interval for a 90 percent MOE, and the shaded portion denotes the confidence interval for a 75 percent MOE. When a solid line is fully to the right of zero (the vertical line), it means there is conventional statistical evidence of a positive change (equivalent to a solid upward-pointing arrow in Table 6.1). If the solid line crosses zero but the shaded portion is fully to the right of it, it means there is suggestive statistical evidence of a positive direction of change (equivalent to a hollow upward-pointing arrow in the table). When the solid bar or shaded segment is to the left of zero, it signifies conventional

4. The Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure is not available at the tract level.
5. U.S. Census Bureau (2023).
6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Service (2015).
7. Federal government agencies also consider a poverty rate of 20 percent as indicative of "high" poverty. See Dalaker (2023).

Figure 6.1

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Income and Poverty



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

or suggestive statistical evidence, respectively, of a negative change. When neither the solid bar nor the shaded segment is fully to the right or left of zero, it means there is inconclusive evidence (as defined in the present evaluation) of the direction of change (equivalent to a question mark in Table 6.1).

It can be seen from the change estimates in Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1 that all Purpose Built Neighborhoods except Woodlawn in Birmingham may have experienced some reduction in overall poverty, extreme poverty, or both, based on conventional statistical evidence, suggestive statistical evidence, or both. The change in Woodlawn moved in the opposite direction, however, showing evidence of an increase in overall poverty and extreme poverty, although the neighborhood had a lower (but still high) poverty rate in the initial period than the other study sites. Its poverty rate increased by an estimated 21 percentage points, although with a wide MOE (± 19 percentage points), and its estimated rate of deep poverty doubled.

Changes in Poverty Rates: A Comparative View

Implicit in the Purpose Built Communities model is the goal of transforming high-poverty areas into communities where the poverty rates are less exceptional relative to their cities and regions. That does not mean trying to push poverty rates to near zero (even if that could be achieved), since the model aims to create *mixed-income* communities where people with very low incomes will always have a place. And although the model does not include specific targets for what would constitute an "ideal" level of poverty, a rate closer to the citywide average, and below the 30 percent level commonly viewed as concentrated poverty — and certainly below the 40 percent benchmark of extreme concentrated poverty — would align with those aspirations.

Except for Woodlawn in Birmingham, the Purpose Built Neighborhoods had much higher estimated rates of poverty than those of their cities in the initial period. For example, in Charlotte, the estimated overall poverty rate in Renaissance West was more than four times higher than the citywide rate. In each of the other three locations, the estimated poverty rate for the Purpose Built Neighborhood was double or more than double the citywide rate. These were very large gaps to reduce.

Table 6.2 compares the change in poverty rates within each Purpose Built Neighborhood to the changes within its city and in other persistently high-poverty census tracts in the city. The final column in the table shows whether the estimated *difference* in the change over time between the Purpose Built neighborhood and its city and between that neighborhood and other persistently high-poverty tracts meets a standard for conventional statistical evidence (indicated by a solid diamond) or suggestive statistical evidence (indicated by a hollow diamond), or whether the statistical evidence is inconclusive (indicted by a question mark). The specific direction and estimated magnitude of the difference can be easily determined by comparing the two change estimates involved. (See Chapter 3 for further guidance on reading tables in this format.)

Table 6.2

Comparison of Change Over Time Between Purpose Built Neighborhoods, Their Cities, and Other Persistently High-Poverty Tracts: Individuals with Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Line

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change			
Site (%)	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	PBN Change Differs from Reference-Area Change
Birmingham						
Woodlawn	26	± 8	21	± 19	▲	
City	26	± 1	-1	± 2	?	◆
PHPT	42	± 3	1	± 5	?	◆
Charlotte						
Renaissance West	65	± 13	-5	± 19	?	
City	14	± 1	-1	± 1	▼	?
PHPT	58	± 9	-16	± 11	▼	?
Columbus						
Near East Side	56	± 10	-10	± 13	▽	
City	21	± 1	-2	± 1	▼	?
PHPT	52	± 3	-8	± 4	▼	?
Omaha						
Highlander	50	± 13	-14	± 15	▽	
City	15	± 1	-2	± 1	▼	◇
PHPT	36	± 5	-5	± 7	▽	?
Spartanburg						
Northside	61	± 14	-18	± 22	▽	
City	26	± 3	-3	± 4	▽	?
PHPT	54	± 10	-2	± 17	?	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: PBN = Purpose Built Neighborhood; PHPT = persistently high-poverty tracts; MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

Table 6.2 also shows that the overall citywide poverty rates were generally stable or declined slightly across the five cities. In most cases, the estimated decline varied from one to three percentage points, and the MOEs were also small (because of the large citywide populations).[8] In each of the three Purpose Built Neighborhoods (in Columbus, Omaha, Spartanburg) where the evidence of a decline in the overall poverty rate is at least suggestive, the direction of change matches the direction of change in the citywide rate. In other words, the directional trends were not unique to the Purpose Built Neighborhoods. Moreover, in Omaha, there is at least suggestive statistical evidence that the magnitude of the decline in overall poverty was larger in the Purpose Built Neighborhood than in the city as a whole (as indicated by the hollow diamond in the last column in Table 6.2).

8. Bishaw, Benson, Shrider, and Glassman (2020).

Table 6.3 shows that for the Charlotte and Spartanburg sites, the estimated decline in the rates of deep poverty is strikingly greater in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods than that in their respective cities overall. In other words, the reduction in deep poverty within these two study neighborhoods was not simply mirroring citywide trends in terms of the magnitude of change.

Table 6.3

Comparison of Change Over Time Between Purpose Built Neighborhoods, Their Cities, and Other Persistently High-Poverty Tracts: Individuals with Incomes Below 50 Percent of the Federal Poverty Line

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change			
Site (%)	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	PBN Change Differs from Reference-Area Change
Birmingham						
Woodlawn	7	± 4	14	± 13	▲	
City	11	± 1	1	± 1	△	◆
PHPT	18	± 2	3	± 3	△	◇
Charlotte						
Renaissance West	43	± 10	-25	± 14	▼	
City	6	± 0	0	± 0	▽	◆
PHPT	39	± 8	-15	± 10	▼	?
Columbus						
Near East Side	33	± 8	-6	± 11	?	
City	12	± 0	-3	± 1	▼	?
PHPT	32	± 3	-9	± 3	▼	?
Omaha						
Highlander	24	± 10	-6	± 12	?	
City	7	± 0	-1	± 1	▼	?
PHPT	19	± 4	-7	± 5	▼	?
Spartanburg						
Northside	46	± 16	-30	± 19	▼	
City	14	± 2	-2	± 3	▽	◆
PHPT	43	± 10	-21	± 14	▼	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: PBN = Purpose Built Neighborhood; PHPT = persistently high-poverty tracts; MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

For additional context, it is helpful to compare the Purpose Built Neighborhoods with other persistently high-poverty census tracts located in the same cities on these measures. These tracts are places where, in 1990, 2000, and 2010, 30 percent or more of households were living under the federal poverty level. (See Box 3.2.) The findings in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show that the four Purpose Built Neighborhoods excluding the one in Birmingham were not unique among high-poverty areas in their respective cities in experiencing at least some progress in poverty reduction. According to conventional or suggestive statistical evidence, declines in rates of either overall poverty or deep poverty may have occurred in those other persistently high-poverty areas as well. (Whether the *magnitude* of decline was larger or smaller

than those in other areas is statistically inconclusive, as indicated by the question marks in the last column.)

Woodlawn in Birmingham stands out: There, the large *increase* in the overall poverty rate contrasts with the minimal change in overall poverty rate citywide and in other persistently high-poverty tracts.[9] Similarly, Woodlawn may have experienced a larger increase in deep poverty relative to both the city and other persistently high-poverty tracts (Table 6.3). It may be that Woodlawn faced especially difficult challenges during this period.

Changes in the Prevalence of Higher-Income Residents

In assessing progress toward becoming more mixed-income communities, it is important to consider not only changes in rates of overall and deep poverty, but also changes in the prevalence of residents with substantially higher incomes. One benchmark for gauging the share of higher-income residents in an area is the proportion of individuals living in families with incomes well above the poverty threshold. When the Census Bureau routinely reports on the distribution of income relative to the poverty threshold, its highest category is 200 percent or more above the poverty threshold — in other words, income that is at least *twice* as high as the level that would define a family or individual as living in poverty. In 2019, individuals would fall into that top category if, for example, they were part of a three-person family with a total income of $40,670. Although much higher than the poverty thresholds, this income might be considered "modest" at best at the national level, given that the threshold still fell well below the national median household income at that time ($68,703).

Table 6.1 shows the results for the Purpose Built Neighborhoods using this measure. Just as four of the five study neighborhoods were outliers in their respective cities in terms of poverty rates, the neighborhoods were outliers on this measure as well. During the initial analysis period, the proportion of individuals with an income of 200 percent or more above the poverty threshold ranged from an estimated 9 percent (± 4 percentage points) in the Northside (Spartanburg) to 31 percent (± 14 percentage points) in Woodlawn (Birmingham). In contrast, at the city level, nearly half to two-thirds of residents had incomes in that higher category (not shown in tables). The gap was most stark in Charlotte, where an estimated 16 percent (± 7 percentage points) of residents in Renaissance West had an income in the higher category, compared with 68 percent (± 1 percentage points) of residents citywide — a difference of 52 percentage points.

Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1 also show that only for the Northside neighborhood in Spartanburg is there any statistical evidence that the proportion of residents at that higher income level increased by the final period. In addition, other data (not shown) indicate that only in the Northside is there statistical evidence that the share of residents with higher incomes increased more than it did in the city as a whole.

9. Although the direction of changes in the city of Birmingham and in other persistently high-poverty tracts is statistically inconclusive, the change estimates and MOEs are small.

The statistical evidence of change over time on this measure in the other four Purpose Built Neighborhoods is inconclusive (which also makes comparisons with the city as whole and other persistently high-poverty tracts difficult to interpret). However, the small estimates of change (ranging from -5 percentage points in Woodlawn in Birmingham to 4 percentage points in the Near East Side in Columbus and Highlander in Omaha) suggest that even if an increase in the proportion of higher-income residents did occur in those four neighborhoods during the study period, it was probably modest.

Another way to understand the prevalence of higher-income residents is to consider household income levels without adjusting for family size. Change estimates were not calculated on this measure, but, by the final period, only a small proportion of households in most of the study neighborhoods had incomes of at least $60,000 — an amount that would put them near but still below the 2019 national median household income ($68,703). Estimates of these rates in 2019 (not shown in the tables) were as follows: 7 percent in Woodlawn (Birmingham), 5 percent in Renaissance West (Charlotte), 12 percent in Highlander (Omaha), and 7 percent in the Northside (Spartanburg).[10] The rate was higher, at 20 percent, in the Near East Side (Columbus). Overall, though, the vast majority of households in these neighborhoods had incomes below the national median, even at the end of the analysis period.

It is also important to note that qualitative data collected in 2022–2023, after the final period of the quantitative analysis, suggest that some residents perceived that wealthier individuals and families were increasingly moving into their neighborhoods in more recent years. To some residents, this change felt palpable, but it may not have occurred on a scale large enough to influence the degree of change captured by the quantitative indicators.

CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT RATES

Mixed-income, economically vibrant communities are difficult to create and sustain if high proportions of the population are not working.[11] It is thus important to consider employment rates and changes in those rates. Data from the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, which collects information from state unemployment insurance wage records, can shed light on this indicator. These data are available for all the study neighborhoods except Spartanburg's Northside. This analysis compares an initial three-year period defined as 2008–2010 with a final two-year period defined as 2018–2019.

Table 6.4 shows that more than half of working age adults between 18 and 64 years old worked at some point in a year during the initial period — a period that overlaps with the Great Recession of 2008–2009. The employment rate estimates ranged from 52 percent (± 7 percentage points) in the Near East Side (Columbus) to 60 percent (± 15 percentage points) in Renaissance West (Charlotte). In three study neighborhoods (in Birmingham, Charlotte,

10. MOEs are not available for these estimates.

11. Wilson (1996).

Table 6.4

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Employment

Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Direction of Change
Employed in an unemployment insurance-covered job (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	56	± 10	19	± 15	▲
Renaissance West, Charlotte	60	± 15	23	± 24	△
Near East Side, Columbus	52	± 7	25	± 11	▲
Highlander, Omaha	54	± 6	-3	± 10	?
Northside, Spartanburg	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics Primary Jobs and American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates datasets.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
This analysis uses a three-year initial period (2008–2010), and a two-year final period (2018–2019).
Findings for the Spartanburg study neighborhood and other tracts experiencing persistently high-poverty rates are not reported. Estimates for the Spartanburg neighborhood appeared to be unduly affected by sampling error in the ACS data, likely due to its relatively smaller size.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

and Columbus), employment rates appear to have increased by the final period, based on conventional or suggestive statistical evidence. (In Omaha, the evidence is inconclusive.) The final period overlaps with the *aftermath* of the Great Recession, when unemployment rates fell throughout the country.[12] The same forces that caused unemployment rates to decline nationally may have influenced the increase in employment rates in three of the five Purpose Built Neighborhoods over the course of the study period.

It is not possible to know the extent to which the rise in employment rates was driven by population changes (e.g., working people moving into the neighborhoods, non-working people moving out, or both) or increases in the number of adults already living in those communities who began working. Nonetheless, the increase in those rates could be construed as progress consistent with the Purpose Built Communities model's goal of creating more mixed-income communities.

In the Charlotte and Columbus Purpose Built Neighborhoods, the employment gains may have contributed to the reductions in poverty or deep poverty in those sites. In Woodlawn in Birmingham, however, poverty and deep poverty rates rose, despite the increase in employment rates. Part of the explanation for that incongruous pattern may be that the employment gains reflected an increase in low-wage and possibly inconsistent employment. This finding is a reminder that an increase in employment rates is no guarantee that a community's overall poverty rate will decline.

12. Federal Reserve Economic Data (2023).

CHANGES IN POPULATION SIZE

In assessing the progress made toward transforming the Purpose Built Neighborhoods into more vibrant, stable, mixed-income communities, it is helpful to consider whether their populations were growing or shrinking. The change in population size can be a *side effect* of improving or declining economic vitality within a neighborhood, and, in some circumstances, may *contribute to or reinforce* those trends. It may also influence (positively or negatively) whether a neighborhood advances toward becoming a community with a greater mix of incomes.

Perceptions that a neighborhood is changing for the worse (that it is experiencing, for example, an increase in crime, a decline in the supply or quality of the housing, a decrease in access to good schools, or a reduction in access to appealing stores and public amenities) could drive some current residents away and discourage newcomers from moving in. Population loss may also contribute to a decline in a neighborhood's economic vitality if it means that businesses have fewer customers, causing some to close, and commercial and residential property owners have to contend with vacant rental unit for long periods or cannot charge rents high enough to maintain their properties. Some property owners may even abandon their properties altogether. These conditions may make it especially difficult for neighborhoods to both retain existing residents and attract newcomers with higher incomes who can afford better housing and community amenities and who have more choices about where to live. Thus, population loss may not only reflect, but also *amplify* the challenges involved in building a more mixed-income neighborhood.

Conversely, perceptions that neighborhood conditions are improving may contribute to a net increase in population — and in the mix of residents' household incomes — by making it more appealing for current residents to stay and for others to move in, including those with higher incomes. Up to a point, population growth might contribute to a positive trend in a community's economic vitality, and that improved vitality, in turn, may lead to a broader mix of household incomes by attracting people with higher incomes to the neighborhood.[13]

In the initial period of this analysis, the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were places with relatively small populations. As Table 6.5 shows, all except for the Near East Side in Columbus had fewer than 5,000 residents.

Over the course of the study period, the total populations of three Purpose Built Neighborhoods (in Birmingham, Charlotte, and Spartanburg) likely declined (based on conventional or suggestive statistical evidence). (See Table 6.5 and Figure 6.2.) The estimated change in average population size between the initial and final periods suggests that the decline exceeded 20 percent — a steep drop. This decline may not be surprising. As Chapter 3 showed, housing

13. Of course, at some point, population growth can also strain a community's resources and have undesired side effects, such as an increase in housing costs, traffic, noise, litter, and school crowding. It thus may be a highly contentious issue among longstanding residents.

Table 6.5

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Population Size

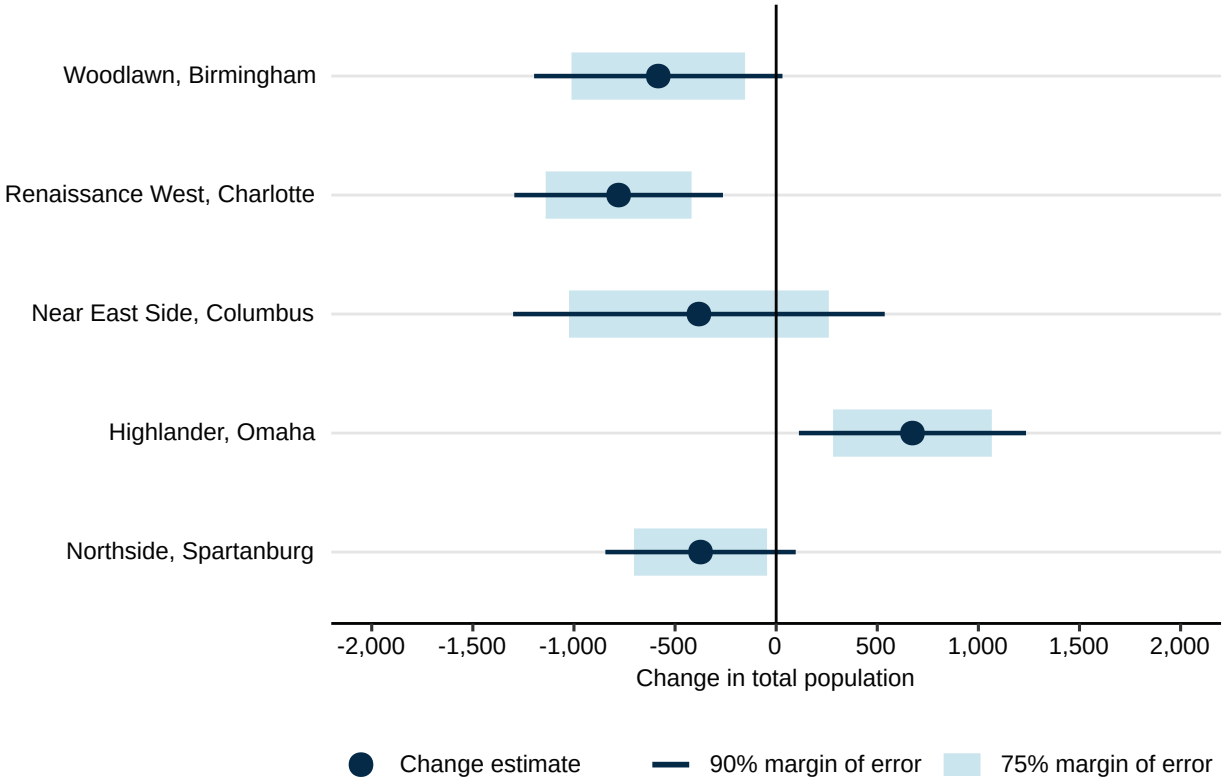
Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Direction of Change
Total population					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	2,402	± 506	-583	± 614	▽
Renaissance West, Charlotte	2,990	± 434	-779	± 516	▼
Near East Side, Columbus	6,724	± 661	-382	± 919	?
Highlander, Omaha	4,238	± 378	674	± 562	▲
Northside, Spartanburg	1,656	± 375	-374	± 471	▽

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

Figure 6.2

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Total Population



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

vacancy rates were fairly high initially in most of the study neighborhoods, and, generally, were still high in the final period; property values for single-family homes fell; and the number of residential parcels dropped in most locations.[14] Chapter 4 showed that pipeline schools in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were generally underperforming and (where evidence was available) remained highly segregated by race and income relative to district schools overall. Lastly, Chapter 5 showed that several neighborhoods persistently grappled with inadequate access to quality food (specifically, access to grocery stores). All of these conditions may have contributed to population losses. Conversely, the population losses may have exacerbated any of these conditions.

The possible net population decline in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in Birmingham and Spartanburg may not have been solely the result of conditions *within* those communities; regional factors may have also mattered. Indeed, in those localities, population losses are also evident in the city as a whole, other persistently high-poverty tracts, or both (Table 6.6).[15] Where a region is losing population overall (perhaps because of a decrease in economic opportunities or other factors), it may be especially challenging for a highly disinvested community in that region to buck the trend and increase its local population.

The population loss in Renaissance West in Charlotte may reflect a different pattern. Its loss contrasts with a population *growth* in the city of Charlotte as well as in Charlotte's other persistently high-poverty census tracts. In this case, changing conditions within Renaissance West may have been more important causes than regional factors.

Whatever the reasons the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in Birmingham, Charlotte, and Spartanburg may have experienced net population loss, it seems clear that any progress the CQBs and their partners made through their initiatives in the Purpose Built Communities model's three core pillars (mixed-income housing, education, and community well-being) was not sufficient to fully stop or reverse these losses, at least during the study period. Of course, it is also possible that the decline in population would have been *even worse* in the absence of the Purpose Built Communities intervention. For example, perhaps the various housing-related initiatives described in Chapter 3 were helping to prevent an even greater population loss.

Qualitative data from interviews conducted in 2022–2023 (after the period that the ACS data cover, which ended in 2019) offer some local perspectives indicating that, in some neighbor-

14. Birmingham, Columbus, Omaha, and Spartanburg experienced a decline in total residential parcels, single-family parcels, or both, while Charlotte experienced an increase in total residential parcels. See Chapter 4.

15. Across all study sites, the MOEs at the city level are smaller than those for the Purpose Built Neighborhoods and other persistently high-poverty census tracts. Because the citywide sample is so much larger, the point estimates have less statistical uncertainty. Thus, although the direction of change at the city level may be inconclusive on some measures, such as the change in population size in Spartanburg (indicated by a question mark in Table 6.6), the small MOEs suggests the that the true magnitude of the change in whichever direction was probably small.

Table 6.6

Comparison of Change Over Time Between Purpose Built Neighborhoods, Their Cities, and Other Persistently High-Poverty Tracts: Total Population

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change			
Site (%)	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	PBN Change Differs from Reference-Area Change
Birmingham						
Woodlawn	2,402	± 506	-583	± 614	▽	
City	216,392	± 336	-4,095	± 668	▼	◆
PHPT	47,631	± 1,778	-2,881	± 2,406	▼	◇
Charlotte						
Renaissance West	2,990	± 434	-779	± 516	▼	
City	705,896	± 83	151,529	± 134	▲	◆
PHPT	7,430	± 722	1,702	± 924	▲	◆
Columbus						
Near East Side	6,724	± 661	-382	± 919	?	
City	770,407	± 144	108,146	± 244	▲	◆
PHPT	75,406	± 2,737	5,992	± 3,489	▲	◆
Omaha						
Highlander	4,238	± 378	674	± 562	▲	
City	407,334	± 92	68,528	± 142	▲	◆
PHPT	22,898	± 1,168	3,845	± 1,642	▲	◆
Spartanburg						
Northside	1,656	± 375	-374	± 471	▽	
City	37,386	± 50	38	± 86	?	◇
PHPT	3,032	± 360	-460	± 441	▼	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: PBN = Purpose Built Neighborhood; PHPT = persistently high-poverty tracts; MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

hoods, housing prices and land values were increasing, which may have reflected a growing demand for housing. Indeed, residents who participated in focus group interviews reported that new residents were moving in. As one resident explained, "So since we moved to [where we live] now, there's a lot more density in that area. And I will tell you, we've actually, you know, done things to be able to find out who our neighbors are." This reflection may signify the beginning of an increase in new residents and in the overall population in some locations.

Only one Purpose Built Neighborhood (Highlander in Omaha) experienced a growth in population according to the study's quantitative analysis. This growth was in line with population increases in the city of Omaha overall and in other persistently high-poverty areas — perhaps, again, signaling the importance of factors external to the neighborhood in driving change.

MOVE-OUT RATES

Change in a neighborhood's total population is one indicator of its residential stability. The annual move-out rate is another. Even a community whose population is neither growing nor shrinking may nonetheless experience a high degree instability in the form of turnover or churn among its residents. It is possible to examine this type of residential instability using ACS and Infutor Consumer History data to measure the likelihood that residents living in a study neighborhood in a given year would move out of it the following year.[16]

According to this measure, the annual move-out rates appear not to have accelerated in any of the Purpose Built Neighborhoods during the study period. As Table 6.7 shows, among residents who were living in the neighborhoods during the initial analysis period, the likelihood of moving out by the following year was relatively modest, ranging from 6 percent (± 1 percentage point) in the Northside in Spartanburg to 14 percent (± 4 percentage points) in Renaissance West in Charlotte. In four of the five neighborhoods, the estimated annual move-out rate declined by the final period, according to conventional or suggestive statistical evidence. The evidence of the direction of change in the Near East Side in Columbus is inconclusive, but the magnitude of its change was likely to have been small. Overall, this pattern of evidence suggests that the populations in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods may have begun to stabilize during the study period.

Table 6.7

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Residential Stability

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change		
Location (%)	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change
Moved out of PBN within one year (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	7	±1	-3	±2	▼
Renaissance West, Charlotte	14	±4	-9	±6	▼
Near East Side, Columbus	10	±2	0	±3	?
Highlander, Omaha	9	±1	-2	±2	▽
Northside, Spartanburg	6	±1	-2	±2	▽

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Infutor Consumer History data.

NOTES: PBN = Purpose Built Neighborhood; MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2008–2010, and the final period is 2017–2018 for all sites.
In the context of this evaluation, the Infutor data are useful for giving a general sense of whether engaged residents are staying in place or moving around in relatively large or small proportions. Given how the data are prepared, there is a chance that there was no change between the initial and final periods in the proportion of residents moving out of the PBN.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

16. Infutor is a consumer identity data source which provided the entire address history of those identified as residents of a given U.S. state as of 2021. For each individual, it provided current and past street addresses and the dates when the individual was last "seen" at each address. See Infutor (2024). In this evaluation, it is used to construct a sense of whether residents are staying in place or moving out in relatively large or small proportions. For a more detailed discussion of the outcomes developed from the Infutor data, see Appendix D.

At the same time, even if the annual move-out rate in a neighborhood remains fairly stable or declines, newcomers must replace those who leave at a comparable rate for the total population size not to fall. (In other words, communities may still experience substantial overall population loss over time, despite having a low annual move-out rate.) Consequently, where overall population loss may have occurred (in the Birmingham, Charlotte, Spartanburg sites), the data suggest that those communities were having some difficulty attracting new residents during that period. However, as previously mentioned, qualitative interviews describing increases in home sale prices after 2019 in some neighborhoods hint that the tide may have begun to turn.

DISPLACEMENT

Reductions in poverty rates and declining populations raise concerns about displacement. As an indicator, displacement can be considered from at least two different perspectives. One is whether *particular individuals* who may be thought of as long-term or "legacy" residents — that is, the people who lived in the neighborhoods before Purpose Built Communities interventions had been fully launched — moved away due to direct pressure (such as loss of leases or higher living costs) or indirect pressure (such as no longer feeling welcomed) to leave. The other perspective looks beyond particular individuals to focus on "categorical exclusion," also referred to as "exclusionary displacement."[17] This form of displacement occurs when a category of people, such as those with low incomes, can no longer afford to live in an area, whether they are legacy residents or potential newcomers to the neighborhood. The Purpose Built Communities model aims to protect legacy residents with low incomes during a neighborhood's revitalization process as well as ensure they and future residents with low incomes have access to *permanent* affordable housing and are able to thrive in an eventual mixed-income community.

Legacy Residents and Displacement

Individuals living in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in 2008 (before the intervention was launched) can be considered legacy residents. However, as Table 6.8 shows, many of these residents appear to have no longer been living in their neighborhoods 5 or 10 years later. The research calculated the retention of legacy residents using data on individuals in the neighborhoods who were 25 to 75 years old in 2008.[18] At the low end, only 40 percent of

17. According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, "direct displacement" occurs when residents are forced to move because of rent increases, building renovations, or both. "Exclusionary displacement" occurs when housing choices for residents with low incomes are limited. "Displacement pressures" can occur when services and other supports on which residents with low incomes rely disappear from the neighborhood. See National Low Income Housing Coalition (2019), p. 2.

18. Infutor is a consumer identity data source which provided the entire address history of those identified as residents of a given U.S. state as of 2021. For each individual, it provided current and past street addresses and the dates when the individual was last "seen" at each address. See Infutor (2024). In this evaluation, it is used to construct a sense of whether residents are staying in place or moving out in relatively large or small proportions. For a more detailed discussion of the outcomes developed

Table 6.8

Outflow of Adult Legacy Residents from Purpose Built Neighborhoods

Site	Percentage of Residents Living in the PBN in 2008 and Still Living There	
	5 Years Later (%)	10 Years Later (%)
Woodlawn, Birmingham	59	27
Renaissance West, Charlotte	40	32
Near East Side, Columbus	48	23
Highlander, Omaha	57	26
Northside, Spartanburg	58	24

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Infutor Consumer History data.

NOTES: PBN = Purpose Built Neighborhood; MOE = margin of error.
Residents were between 25 and 75 years of age in 2008.
In the context of this evaluation, the Infutor data are useful for giving a general sense of whether engaged residents are staying in place or moving around in relatively large or small proportions. Given how the data are prepared, these numbers represent a lower bound on the proportion of legacy residents who remained 5 and 10 years later.

residents who were living in Renaissance West in Charlotte in 2008 were still in the neighborhood five years later. At the higher end, 59 percent of residents who were living in Woodlawn in Birmingham in 2008 were still there five years later. In all neighborhoods, the retention rate continued to drop substantially over the study period—to around 25 percent in all sites except Renaissance West in Charlotte, where the retention rate fell to 32 percent. As a sensitivity test, the research team conducted the same analysis for residents living in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods one year earlier (in 2007) and for those there one year later (in 2009). Although the estimates varied somewhat across these cohorts, the overall pattern was the same.

While many legacy residents left the neighborhoods, their reasons for doing so are not known but likely varied. Some may have left because they could no longer afford to live there, were forced out as result of housing redevelopment initiatives, or chose to pursue career or educational opportunities outside the area or to settle elsewhere with different living conditions (including young adults forming their own households). Some may have moved into nursing homes or passed away.

Falling Poverty Rates and Displacement

A decline in the poverty rate may be a welcome sign in communities with a historically high concentration of poverty. Or, it may also raise concerns about categorical or exclusionary displacement of residents living in poverty. By itself, however, a drop in the poverty rate does not indicate an increase in categorical displacement. For example, if a location with the same absolute number of people living in poverty experienced an increase in its total population, with much of that growth fueled by higher-income newcomers, the *percentage* of people in

from the Infutor data, see Appendix D.

poverty would fall, but the *number* would not. In contrast, where *both* the percentage and number of people in poverty fall (i.e., the decline in the poverty rate is disproportionally greater than the decline in population), it is possible that categorical displacement of people in poverty may have occurred.

Table 6.1 shows the estimated changes in both measures. For several neighborhoods, the statistical evidence is inconclusive, making it difficult to assess whether such displacement occurred. However, for the Purpose Built Neighborhoods in Columbus and Spartanburg, the evidence is at least suggestive. It indicates that they experienced a drop in both the number *and* percentage of residents who were poor, which implies that some categorical displacement may have occurred. However, if it did occur, it may not have been at a level that contradicted the Purpose Built Communities model's goal to foster mixed-income communities. It is consistent with that model that communities with high concentrations of poverty would see poverty rates fall over time, even as they maintain *permanent* housing options for a substantial number of people living in poverty. During the study period, none of the sites experienced reductions in their estimated poverty rates at levels where they would no longer be classified as high-poverty communities. Indeed, by the final period, poverty rates were still high everywhere. In other words, they were far from becoming communities that systematically excluded families with poverty-level incomes — even in the Northside in Spartanburg, where evidence of a jump in the prevalence of higher-income residents is clearest.

Rent Burden and Displacement

Community transformation initiatives typically raise fears that rents or home prices in a low-income community will increase and become too expensive for people with lower incomes — not only current residents, but also potential newcomers — to afford, creating displacement pressures. Chapter 3 explored changes in the housing market in the five Purpose Built Neighborhoods in more depth, including changes in monthly rents charged by property owners. This section considers whether the changes in renters' housing costs and household incomes together began to create a severe cost burden for renters that may have contributed to displacement pressures.

It is difficult to assess accurately whether rental costs and household rent burden in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were increasing. This is partly because, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the ACS data on what tenants pay in rent are ambiguous for subsidized tenants, especially those receiving Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. Some of those tenants receiving rental assistance may report the market rate of the unit, while others may report what they pay in rent not counting their subsidy. For those reporting the market rate, estimates of rent burden may be somewhat inflated, because that rent is higher than what they actually pay. However, if subsidized tenants are most likely to report the amount they pay (excluding the subsidy), if the way survey respondents answer the survey question is relatively constant over time, and if the vast majority of tenants in a community are not those receiving subsidies, then community-level change-over-time estimates in rent burden may be reasonably accurate.

Table 6.9 shows the estimated change in approximate extreme rental cost burden — or, the percentage of households spending 50 percent or more of their income to pay "gross

Table 6.9
Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Approximate Extreme Rent Burden

Measure and Site	Initial Period Estimate	Initial Period 90% MOE	Initial to Final Period Change Estimate	Initial to Final Period Change 90% MOE	Direction of Change
Paying 50% or more of household income in gross rent (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	24	± 12	18	± 20	△
Renaissance West, Charlotte	11	± 6	12	± 10	▲
Near East Side, Columbus	25	± 7	3	± 9	?
Highlander, Omaha	41	± 12	-12	± 14	▽
Northside, Spartanburg	35	± 16	-8	± 22	?

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The Initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

rent" (contract rent plus utilities). Extreme rent burden may have increased in Woodlawn in Birmingham (based on suggestive statistical evidence) and in Renaissance West in Charlotte (based on conventional statistical evidence), albeit for very different reasons.[19] Although this study could not determine the reasons why residents moved out, it is conceivable that an increase in extreme rent burden may have put some displacement pressure on legacy residents in those two neighborhoods.

In Highlander in Omaha, which had the highest approximate extreme rent burden in the initial period, that burden may have fallen over the study period, based on suggestive evidence. Perhaps rising incomes exceeded changes in rental costs in that community.

RACE, ETHNICITY, AND COLLEGE EDUCATION

Changes in population and resident turnover often bring with them changes in the demographic characteristics of a neighborhood. In highly disinvested neighborhoods undergoing a revitalization process, a major concern is whether the process will generate gentrification pressures that alter the racial and ethnic composition of the population that lives there.

19. The exact reasons cannot be determined from the available data. The increase in poverty in the Birmingham site may have meant that residents in the final period had more difficulty meeting their rent obligations than residents in the initial period because of falling incomes, not necessarily because of an increase in rents. In the Charlotte site, where deep poverty fell, it may be that, by the final period, rent increases, on average, outstripped those income gains. This insight is partly informed by suggestive evidence that Charlotte's contract rents had increased over the study period. (See Chapter 3.)

As previously mentioned, all five neighborhoods in this study were majority Black communities when Purpose Built Communities was launched. Table 6.10 shows that, in the initial analysis period, estimates of the percentage of residents who identified as Black alone ranged from 59 percent (± 3 percentage points) in the Charlotte site to 86 percent (± 5 percentage points) in the Columbus site. Residents who identified as White alone were relatively a small minority in most neighborhoods, but they made up 23 percent (± 7 percentage points) of the population in the Spartanburg site. Hispanic/Latino residents accounted for 22 percent (± 11 percentage points) of the population in the Birmingham site and 14 percent (± 10 percentage points) in the Charlotte site. Those identifying as other races (including more than one race) were most prevalent in the Omaha site (13 percent ± 7 percentage points) and the Charlotte site (17 percent ± 13 percentage points).

Table 6.10

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: Race and Ethnicity

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change		
Measure and Site	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change
Black or African American alone (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	71	± 13	7	± 15	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	59	± 3	22	± 10	▲
Near East Side, Columbus	86	± 5	-15	± 8	▼
Highlander, Omaha	69	± 9	-12	± 12	▼
Northside, Spartanburg	66	± 7	5	± 15	?
Hispanic or Latino (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	22	± 11	-11	± 15	▽
Renaissance West, Charlotte	14	± 10	-7	± 11	?
Near East Side, Columbus	1	± 1	2	± 3	?
Highlander, Omaha	5	± 5	11	± 7	▲
Northside, Spartanburg	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White alone (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	6	± 4	3	± 7	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	10	± 3	-4	± 5	▽
Near East Side, Columbus	8	± 2	11	± 4	▲
Highlander, Omaha	13	± 5	-1	± 6	?
Northside, Spartanburg	23	± 7	-10	± 9	▼
Other race (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Renaissance West, Charlotte	17	± 13	-11	± 14	▽
Near East Side, Columbus	5	± 3	2	± 4	?
Highlander, Omaha	13	± 7	2	± 9	?
Northside, Spartanburg	2	± 2	12	± 10	▲

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

Only in the Near East Side in Columbus did the proportion of White residents appear to grow appreciably, while only in Highlander in Omaha did the proportion of Hispanic/Latino residents appear to grow appreciably. Overall, all five neighborhoods remained majority Black communities despite the changes in population size in most of the neighborhoods, the substantial rates at which legacy residents moved out, and some shifts in the residents' racial or ethnic composition.

In addition, several Purpose Built Neighborhoods experienced changes in the percentage of their populations that had at least some college education. This measure refers to whether a person completed at least some college credits (not whether they had earned a degree). During the initial period, the prevalence of residents 25 years of age or older who had at least some college credits varied widely. Estimates ranged from only 15 percent (± 6 percentage points) in the Spartanburg site to 56 percent (± 11 percentage points) in the Omaha site. (See Table 6.11.) The two neighborhoods that had the lowest rates initially — the Spartanburg and Charlotte sites — experienced big increases in the percentage of residents with some college credits: an estimated 21 percentage points (± 13 percentage points) and 25 percentage points (± 12 percentage points), respectively.

Table 6.11

Change Over Time in Purpose Built Neighborhoods: College Education

	Initial Period		Initial to Final Period Change		
Measure and Site	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change
Residents ages 25 years or older who completed some college (%)					
Woodlawn, Birmingham	37	± 10	1	± 15	?
Renaissance West, Charlotte	20	± 7	25	± 12	▲
Near East Side, Columbus	43	± 6	6	± 8	?
Highlander, Omaha	56	± 11	-20	± 12	▼
Northside, Spartanburg	15	± 6	21	± 13	▲

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates data.

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.
The initial period is 2009–2013 for the Spartanburg site, and 2006–2010 for all other sites. The final period for all sites is 2015–2019.
"Some college" includes less than one year of college; one or more years of college, but no degree; associate's degree; bachelor's degree; master's degree; degree from a professional school; and doctorate degree.
A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

The current evaluation cannot determine the exact factors driving this demographic change in the Charlotte and Spartanburg Purpose Built Neighborhoods, but possible factors might include an increase in college attainment among young adults already living in the neighborhoods, a greater likelihood of individuals with college credits moving into the neighborhoods, a greater likelihood of neighborhood residents without college credits moving out of the neighborhood, or a combination of these and other factors. Whatever the reasons, the

typical association between college education and higher potential income may mean that the increase in the percentage of adult residents with some college credits may contribute to these neighborhoods becoming more mixed-income communities in the future.

In Spartanburg's Northside community, the increase in the proportion of residents with college credits occurred along with a reduction in deep poverty, an increase in the share of residents with higher incomes, and, interestingly, a decline in the percentage of residents identifying as White alone. Similarly, in Renaissance West in Charlotte, the increase in the percentage of residents with college credits occurred along with a reduction in the rate of deep poverty, a decline in the prevalence of White residents (based on suggestive evidence), and an increase in the percentage of residents identifying as Black alone. The patterns in these neighborhoods underscore an important point: Reducing poverty and building a more mixed-income community does not have to mean an influx of White residents with higher incomes, which is a common concern among residents of disinvested neighborhoods engaged in revitalization initiatives.

Highlander in Omaha had a contrasting experience. Its initial high proportion of adult residents with at least some college credits *dropped* by an estimated 20 percentage points (± 12 points). Although the reasons for this decline are not known, the reduction could reflect, in part, the increase in the proportion of Hispanic/Latino residents, who may have been more recent immigrants without advanced education.

CONCLUSION

At the time the Purpose Built Communities interventions were launched, all five neighborhoods in this study had high overall rates of poverty. Four of them (with the exception of Woodlawn in Birmingham) also had high rates of extreme or deep poverty. While not the only areas in their cities with high poverty rates, these four Purpose Built Neighborhoods had particularly high concentrations of poverty and stood out relative to their cities as a whole in the initial analysis period. Transforming them into communities with less poverty and a greater mix of household incomes was thus a daunting challenge. The present study focused only on the first decade or so of Purpose Built Communities model's implementation, and it could not determine how much, if at all, the actions of the CQBs and their partners contributed to the changes observed during this relatively short period of time. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that some improvement on quantitative indicators consistent with the model's vision had begun to occur.

For instance, four of the five Purpose Built Neighborhoods experienced reductions in overall poverty, deep poverty, or both (with the exception of Woodlawn in Birmingham). This suggests that, in most neighborhoods, there was some progress toward becoming a more mixed-income community — and not because of an influx of White residents with higher incomes. In some sites, these trends were consistent in their direction with trends citywide and in other persistently high-poverty census tracts, implying that larger forces in the area may have influenced the trends observed in these neighborhoods. However, in at least two

sites (in Renaissance West in Charlotte and the Northside in Spartanburg), the reductions in deep poverty were substantially greater than those citywide, indicating that factors within and specific to those two neighborhoods may have contributed to this narrowing of the city-neighborhood gap on this measure.

That said, most of the Purpose Built Neighborhoods did not experience large increases in the share of people with high incomes or with incomes at or above 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold during the study period (with the exception of the Northside in Spartanburg). This suggests that although some progress had been made toward becoming more mixed-income communities, changes at the higher end of the income spectrum were limited.

For three Purpose Built Neighborhoods (in Birmingham, Charlotte, and Spartanburg), there is at least suggestive evidence that the total population declined. At the same time, annual rates at which residents migrated out may have fallen somewhat over time. Although they may have struggled to attract new residents, the populations in these communities may have begun to stabilize by the study's final period.

Across all five neighborhoods, estimates suggest that approximately half of legacy residents had moved away by about the fifth year of the model's implementation. After 10 years, only about one-quarter of legacy residents were still living in those neighborhoods. Though the reasons for this outward migration are not known, there is little evidence of large-scale categorical or exclusionary displacement. By the end of final analysis period, most of the Purpose Built Neighborhoods still had a high proportion of residents with low or poverty-level incomes.

7

Epilogue

The Purpose Built Communities model represents a distinct approach to neighborhood revitalization. This evaluation explored how the model was implemented in various neighborhoods across the United States; what the local lead organizations (the Community Quarterbacks, or CQBs) and their partners did to lay a foundation for achieving the model's envisioned goals; and whether change was observed in those communities on various measures of neighborhood vitality during the first 10 years of implementation. The findings described in this report offer important insights about the approach's replicability, outcomes, and scalability, which are relevant to a broad range of entities investing in or undertaking similar neighborhood revitalization initiatives, including community organizations, philanthropic and federal funders, and the evaluation community looking to learn from these efforts.

The evaluation of the Purpose Built Communities model is also one of few comprehensive multi-site evaluations of a contemporary neighborhood revitalization initiative. It wrestled with many of the same methodological and analytic issues that have confronted place-based evaluations, and it used an innovative method to account for the level of uncertainty that is associated with quantitative estimates for small geographic areas. This study shows that a meaningful quantitative assessment of a place-based intervention's impact is not always possible for those that target small geographical areas, that multiple statistical evidence standards may be required to properly interpret estimates of change over time, that annual time-series data offer some promising possibilities for rigorous analysis of change-over-time estimates, and that comparing change estimates for communities where a place-based intervention is being implemented with those for local reference areas can provide important context for interpreting how the targeted communities change.

Although the evaluation is comprehensive and draws on a variety of data and perspectives, it leaves some important questions unanswered, such as whether the Purpose Built Communities model is effective at achieving its intended community change goals. While the study documents the first decade of the model's implementation and outcomes, this period is not a long time in the world of community revitalization. Nevertheless, the observations made over these 10 years offer insights into the Purpose Built Neighborhoods' early experiences in a longer journey toward community transformation. It also describes the context in which CQB-led initiatives were carried out, the progress these initiatives made during the study period, and the obstacles the CQBs and their partners encountered. That said, the study does not record

whether the organizations implementing the Purpose Built Communities model ultimately achieve their goals, as that is not possible for reasons discussed in the report.

Finally, as with most program models, the Purpose Built Communities model evolved over time. In 2022, the Purpose Built Communities Foundation (Purpose Built) expanded the model to incorporate a fourth pillar, encompassing initiatives that promote neighborhood economic vitality. This pillar elevates residents' economic advancement and wealth building and local business development, in line with Purpose Built's commitment to advancing equity and upward mobility for all. Purpose Built has also stated its intent to focus greater attention on issues of racial equity and the role that structural racism plays in communities of color, and it stresses the importance of putting residents at the center of community change initiatives. Overall, Purpose Built hopes to encourage policymakers and other stakeholders to make greater investments in initiatives that promise to mitigate racial harm, including those focused on community revitalization and economic development, and to leverage its national network to advocate for broad institutional reforms that stand to benefit the communities where this model is being implemented.

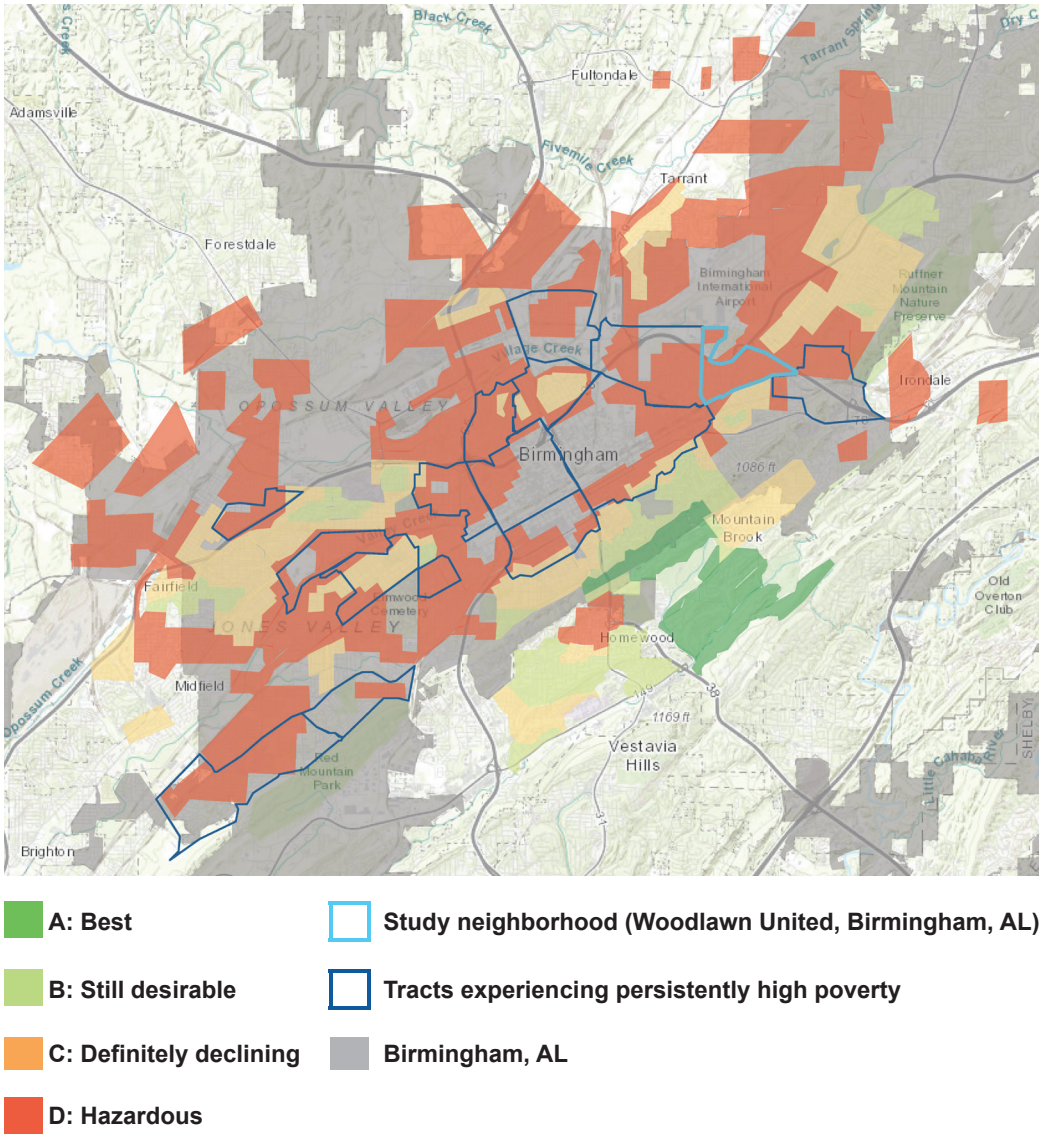
APPENDIX

A

Chapter 2 Supplementary Materials

Appendix Figure A.1

Historically Redlined Areas Superimposed on a Current Day Map of Birmingham, AL



SOURCES: Shapefiles data from the Decennial Census and Nelson et al. (2023).

NOTES: A (Best): Home Owner Loan Corporation (HOLC) generally characterized upper- or upper-middle-class White neighborhoods as posing minimal risk for banks and other mortgage lenders, considering them "ethnically homogeneous" with room to be further developed.

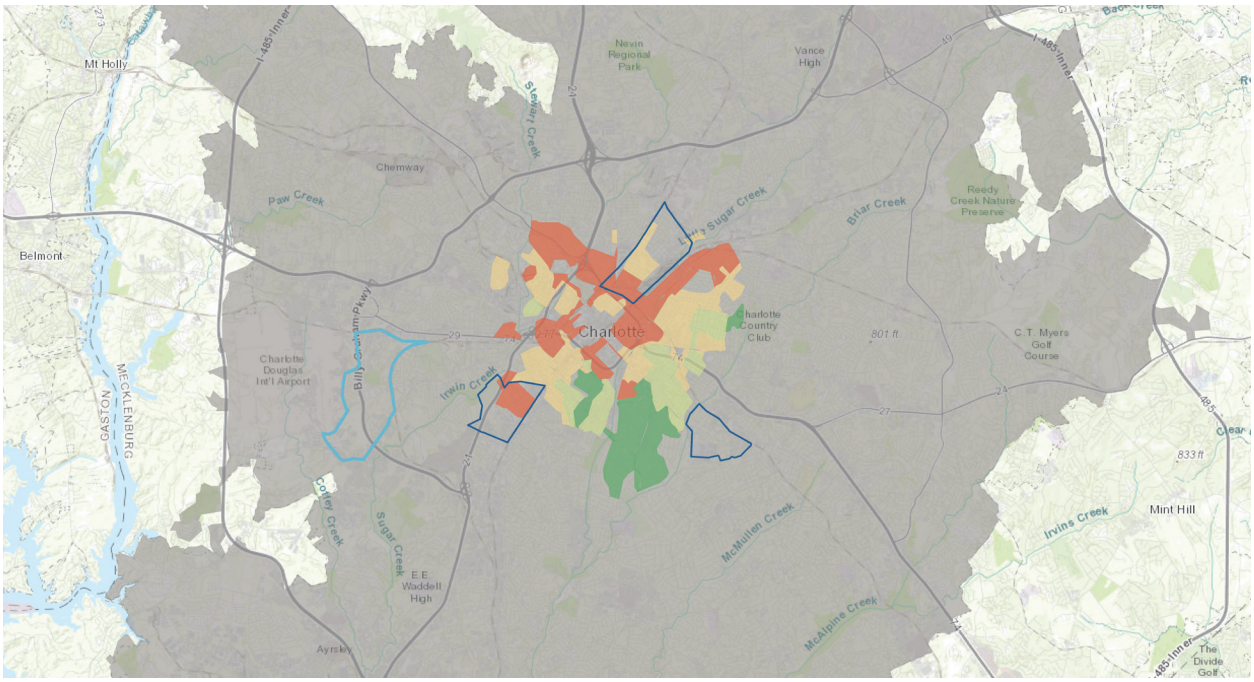
B (Still desirable): HOLC generally rated neighborhoods with all or nearly all White, U.S.-born residents as "still desirable" and sound investments for mortgage lenders.

C (Definitely declining): Residents of HOLC-rated “declining” neighborhoods often were working-class, first- or second-generation immigrants from Europe. These areas often lacked utilities and were characterized by older building stock.

D (Hazardous): Residents of HOLC-rated “hazardous” neighborhoods often included many Jewish, Asian, Mexican, or Black families. These areas were more likely to be close to industrial areas and to have older housing.

Appendix Figure A.2

Historically Redlined Areas Superimposed on a Current Day Map of Charlotte, NC



A: Best

B: Still desirable

C: Definitely declining

D: Hazardous

Study neighborhood (Renaissance West, Charlotte, NC)

Tracts experiencing persistently high poverty

Charlotte, NC

SOURCES: Shapefiles data from the Decennial Census and Nelson et al. (2023).

NOTES: A (Best): Home Owner Loan Corporation (HOLC) generally characterized upper- or upper-middle-class White neighborhoods as posing minimal risk for banks and other mortgage lenders, considering them "ethnically homogeneous" with room to be further developed.

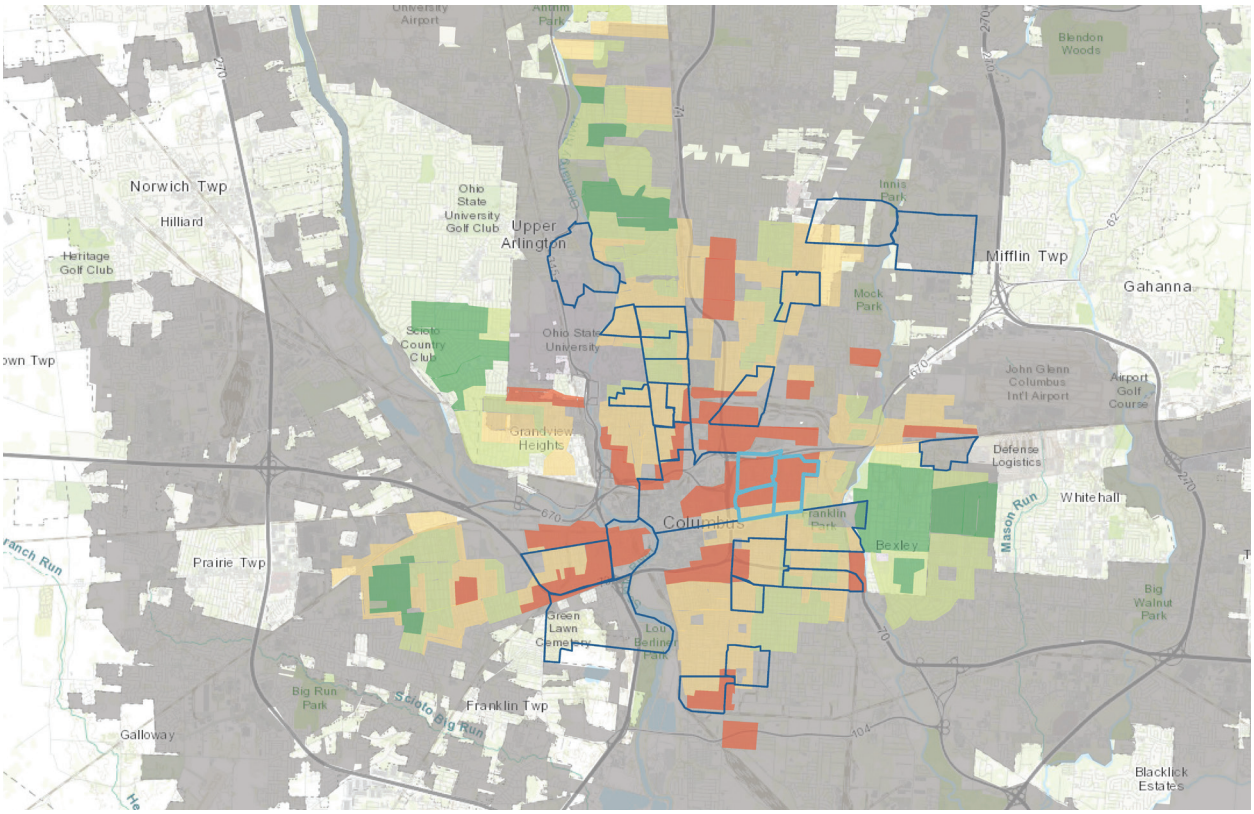
B (Still desirable): HOLC generally rated neighborhoods will all or nearly all White, U.S.-born residents as "still desirable" and sound investments for mortgage lenders.

C (Definitely declining): Residents of HOLC-rated “declining” neighborhoods often were working-class, first- or second-generation immigrants from Europe. These areas often lacked utilities and were characterized by older building stock.

D (Hazardous): Residents of HOLC-rated “hazardous” neighborhoods often included many Jewish, Asian, Mexican, or Black families. These areas were more likely to be close to industrial areas and to have older housing.

Appendix Figure A.3

Historically Redlined Areas Superimposed on a Current Day Map of Columbus, OH



A: Best

B: Still desirable

C: Definitely declining

D: Hazardous

Study neighborhood (Near East Side, Columbus, OH)

Tracts experiencing persistently high poverty

Columbus, OH

SOURCES: Shapefiles data from the Decennial Census and Nelson et al. (2023).

NOTES: A (Best): Home Owner Loan Corporation (HOLC) generally characterized upper- or upper-middle-class White neighborhoods as posing minimal risk for banks and other mortgage lenders, considering them "ethnically homogeneous" with room to be further developed.

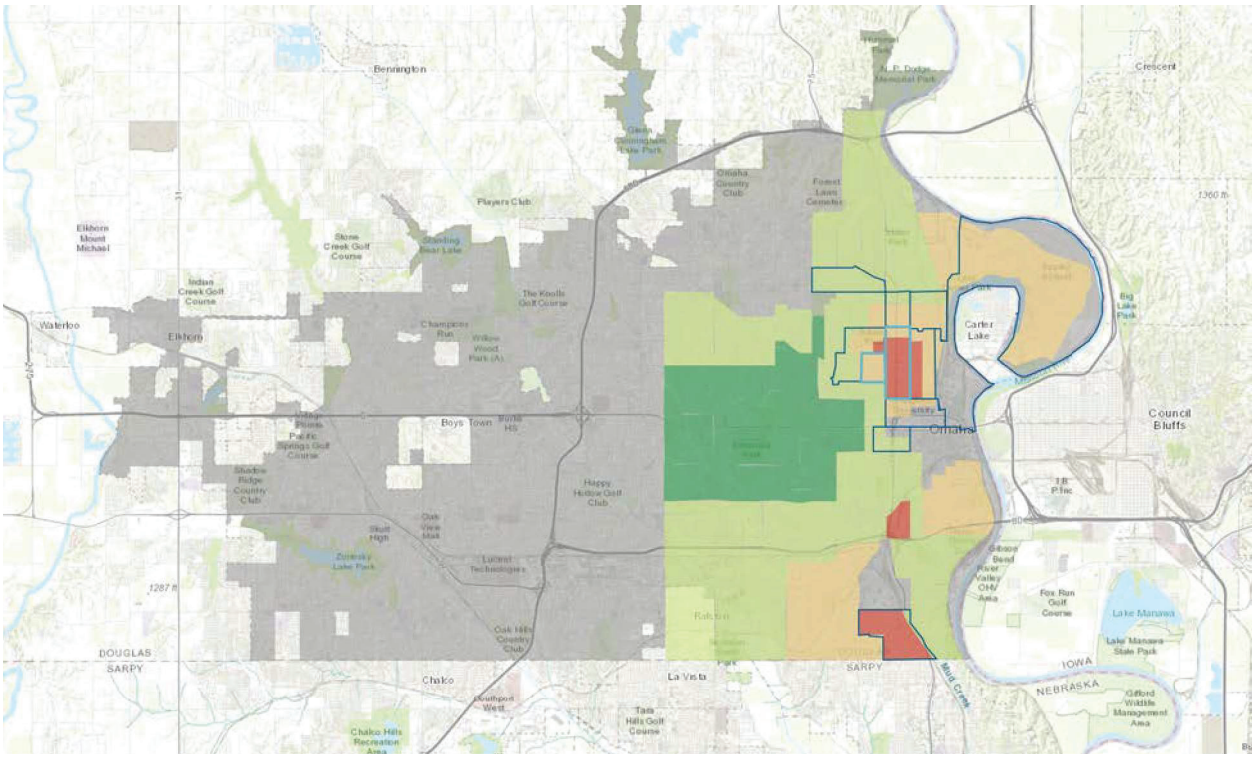
B (Still desirable): HOLC generally rated neighborhood with all or nearly all White, U.S.-born residents as "still desirable" and sound investments for mortgage lenders.

C (Definitely declining): Residents of HOLC-rated “declining” neighborhoods often were working-class, first- or second-generation immigrants from Europe. These areas often lacked utilities and were characterized by older building stock.

D (Hazardous**):** Residents of HOLC-rated “hazardous” neighborhoods often included many Jewish, Asian, Mexican, or Black families. These areas were more likely to be close to industrial areas and to have older housing.

Appendix Figure A.4

Historically Redlined Areas Superimposed on a Current Day Map of Omaha, NE



A: Best

B: Still desirable

C: Definitely declining

D: Hazardous

Study neighborhood (Highlander, Omaha, NE)

Tracts experiencing persistently high poverty

Omaha, NE

SOURCES: Shapefiles data from the Decennial Census and Nelson et al. (2023).

NOTES: A (Best): Home Owner Loan Corporation (HOLC) generally characterized upper- or upper-middle-class White neighborhoods as posing minimal risk for banks and other mortgage lenders, considering them "ethnically homogeneous" with room to be further developed.

B (Still desirable): HOLC generally rated neighborhoods with all or nearly all White, U.S.-born residents as "still desirable" and sound investments for mortgage lenders.

C (Definitely declining): Residents of HOLC-rated “declining” neighborhoods often were working-class, first- or second-generation immigrants from Europe. These areas often lacked utilities and were characterized by older building stock.

D (Hazardous): Residents of HOLC-rated “hazardous” neighborhoods often included many Jewish, Asian, Mexican, or Black families. These areas were more likely to be close to industrial areas and to have older housing.

APPENDIX

B

Chapter 3 Supplementary Materials

ANALYTIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR WORKING WITH CORELOGIC HISTORIC PROPERTY AND OWNER TRANSFER DATA

The measures of total residential and single-family parcels, foreclosure rates, owner-occupancy rates, and property values of single-family parcels discussed in Chapter 3 were constructed using "historical property" and "owner transfer" data from CoreLogic, a private company that provides consumer, financial, and property information and maintains one of the largest property and ownership databases in the United States. The historic property data were transferred in the form of several parcel-level files, with each file covering residential parcels in all states for different tax roll years. For each parcel, the data included information related to its geographic location, land use, property type, ownership, property value, as well as other details maintained by county tax assessors across the time period of interest. The owner transfer data were in the form of one file covering property transactions such as deed transfers and foreclosures in the United States over multiple years, with each record representing a transaction for a parcel.

To prepare these data for analysis, the research team broke the yearly data into subsets corresponding to the residential parcels in each of the five Purpose Built Neighborhoods (PBNs) and their larger cities using a combination of geographic information and property type. The team defined the geographic areas of interest using a list of census tracts and geographies from the 2010 Census that best approximated the boundaries of the respective neighborhoods. The team associated parcels with census tracts using a CoreLogic-provided census identification number as well as geographic coordinates that could be matched to census tracts, ensuring the census geographies were consistent over the period of interest. The team classified parcels as residential and as single-family using the parcel's land use code. In cases where the land use code was indeterminate, the team used an additional property indicator code to help classify the parcel.

The residential parcels of focus included single-family and multi-family properties, apartments, and condominiums. While the properties examined for this study did not include parcels explicitly classified as vacant or undeveloped, a small fraction of undeveloped lots may have remained in the data due to ambiguity in identification. Additionally, information on the buildings' conditions for these parcels was incomplete and therefore could not be used to assess building quality. A small percentage of records missing key information such as census tract, street address, and latitude and longitude coordinates were also excluded. Parcels had one record per year spanning the period of interest, with the exact years available varying by site. Some of the historic property files contained overlapping years. If a parcel had more than one record for a particular tax roll year, the research team kept the record from the more recent file to create a file that was unique at the parcel and tax roll certification year level. If a parcel did not have a record for a particular year, the team excluded it from that year of analysis (i.e., no information was "carried forward" or filled in).

After identifying the parcels of interest and cleaning the data, the research team used CoreLogic derived information to construct key measures. Owner-occupancy status was based on a CoreLogic "owner occupancy code" that indicates if the property owner resides at the site based on a combination of assessor and sale or mortgage data and proprietary inference code. Property values were based on a CoreLogic derived measure that uses county supplied market, appraised, and assessed value, in that order. The team excluded the top and bottom 3 percent of values prior to analysis, as well as any properties with a housing authority listed as the owner. The team also inflation adjusted property values to 2019 dollars. A small percentage of parcels were missing an owner-occupancy code or property value and so were excluded from the respective measure. After constructing these measures, the team calculated total counts, percentages, and percentiles for the relevant samples of parcels for each year, grouping parcels by site, geographic level (e.g., neighborhood or city), and property type (e.g., single family). These yearly estimates were then used for discrete-change regression analyses.

To construct foreclosure measures, the team obtained yearly counts of foreclosed single-family parcels in the geographic areas of interest from the "owner transfer" file. The team identified the relevant parcels by matching the single-family parcel sample from the historic property file, as the owner transfer file did not contain the same level of geographic detail. Foreclosure counts were based on CoreLogic proprietary indicators that show whether the parcel had a transaction with a completed foreclosure where the bank took back ownership of the property (REO) or the bank sold the REO to a third party.

ANALYTIC ISSUES AND METHODS FOR STUDYING CHANGE OVER TIME IN PURPOSE BUILT NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

The present appendix describes the analytic approaches used to study change over time in Purpose Built Neighborhood (PBN) characteristics. Estimates of the following parameters are reported for each PBN characteristic:

- *Initial values of PBN characteristics* (those for the initial time segment of change over time analyses).

- *Changes over time* in PBN characteristics during an analysis period that approximates the launch and early implementation of PBN initiatives.

- *Differences in changes over time* for PBN characteristics and their reference areas. Three reference areas were used for this purpose: (1) the city in which each PBN is located, (2) persistently high-poverty census tracts in that city outside of the PBN, and (3) the public school district within which PBN "pipeline schools" and PBN "nearby schools" are located.

For each parameter, estimates are reported for:

- Its magnitude and direction to assess substantive importance.

- Its statistical margin of error (MOE) to assess uncertainty.

This appendix describes the following:

- The time-series data structures used for PBN change analyses.
- Statistical issues addressed when operationalizing these analyses.
- Narrative issues addressed when reporting and interpreting findings from these analyses.

Time-Series Data Structures

The local organizations leading the interventions in the five PBNs, called "Community Quarterbacks" (CQBs), were established between 2010 and 2012 and joined the national Purpose Built Communities network in 2012 or 2013. In addition, data for change-over-time analyses were typically available between roughly 2008 and 2019. Consequently, the present analysis describes the change that occurred between mean PBN characteristics for an *initial* multi-year time segment of an analysis period, just before the CQBs began planning their Purpose Built Communities interventions, and a *final* multi-year time segment of that analysis period covering the last several years of available data. Two types of time-series data were used for these analyses: annual data and multi-year moving averages.

Annual Time-Series Data

For PBN characteristics with annual time-series data for a full analysis period — typically ranging from about 2008 or 2009 to about 2018 or 2019 — the research team could use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to estimate change over time. The team considered two alternative OLS approaches for this purpose: (1) parametric regression that fits a time trend to the annual data and estimates change over time from that trend, and (2) non-parametric regression that estimates change over time as the difference between the mean value of a PBN characteristic for an initial multi-year time segment and a final multi-year time segment. For reasons discussed below, the team chose the non-parametric approach, referred to in this report as "discrete-change regression."

Parametric Regression

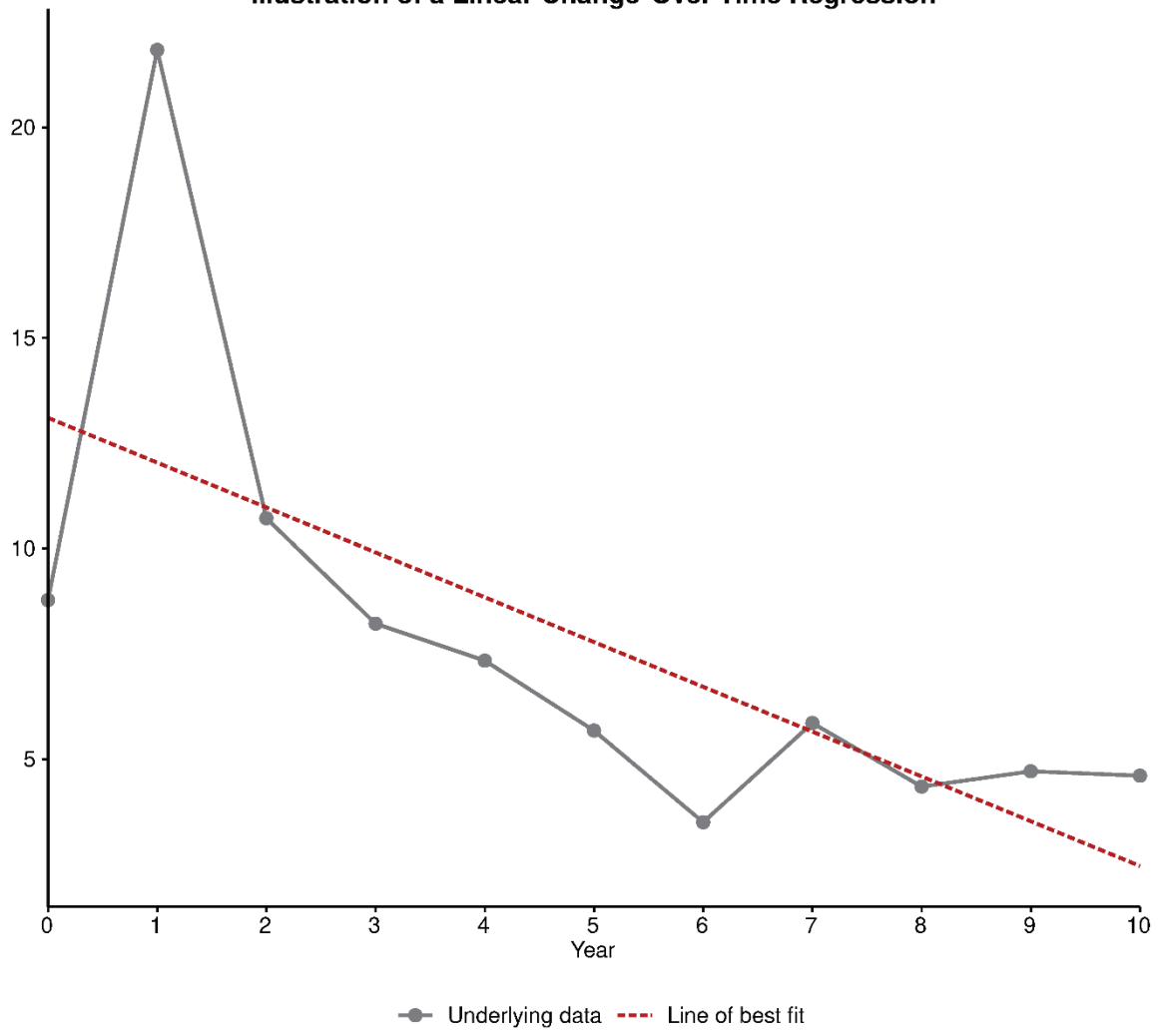
With annual time-series data, it is possible in theory to estimate a parametric regression that specifies a PBN characteristic as a linear or nonlinear function of time measured in years. However, in practice, given the small number of years available for the present analysis (typically 9 to 12) and the complexities and ambiguities of nonlinear regression, the team only considered a linear trend model.[1]

1. In theory, a polynomial function of time can reflect changes in the magnitude and direction of the slope of a nonlinear time trend. However, in practice, with very few data points, there are too few degrees of freedom to estimate the parameters of such a model with adequate precision. Furthermore, the

The first step in this approach is to graphically portray the trend of interest by plotting the value of a PBN characteristic for each year in an analysis period and then superimposing the best-fitting linear regression line on those plotted points. Figure B.1 illustrates such a plot.

Appendix Figure B.1

Illustration of a Linear Change-Over-Time Regression



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Infutor Total Consumer History data.

estimated model will tend to "overfit" the data being used and thus reflect random noise more so than a true underlying trend.

Points in the figure represent the value of a PBN characteristic for each year. The line in the figure represents the linear regression model that best fits those points. The value of the PBN characteristic on the line for Year Zero represents the intercept of the regression, which is one measure of *initial* conditions. The slope of the regression line represents the estimated *average annual change* in the PBN characteristic from the first to last year in the analysis. Multiplying this slope by the number of years between the first and last year produces an estimate of the *net cumulative change* in the PBN characteristic.

The regression line in the figure can be represented by the following equation (Equation 1):

$$\hat{Y}_t = \alpha + \beta t + e_t \qquad \text{(Equation 1)}$$

where:

$\hat{Y}_t =$ observed value of a PBN characteristic for year t,

$t =$ zero for the first year in the time-series plus an increment of one for each subsequent year,

$e_t =$ the deviation of $\hat{Y}_t$ from the regression in year t, which, for simplicity given the small number of data points, is assumed to vary independently and identically across years, with a normal distribution that has a mean of zero and a variance of σ^2,

$\alpha =$ the regression intercept, and

$\beta =$ the regression slope.

Because the first year of the time series is defined as Year Zero, and subsequent years are defined in consecutive numeric order (Years 1, 2, 3, etc.), the regression intercept (α) represents the initial value of $\hat{Y}_t$, and the regression slope (β) represents the average annual change in $\hat{Y}_t$.[2] As noted above, multiplying the estimated slope by the number of years spanned produces an estimate of the net cumulative change from the initial to final year.[3]

Unfortunately, imposing a linear time trend on a change estimate for a PBN characteristic represents a very strong assumption that cannot be tested adequately with few annual data points. And for a specific trend that visually departs from linearity, searching for alternative functional forms with little or no theoretical guidance and few data points for validation would be very difficult to do and highly susceptible to idiosyncratic error. Furthermore, the severity of these problems increases exponentially with the large number of time-series data examined by the present analysis, and for the many different PBN characteristics.

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2. Using the intercept of a regression to estimate the initial value of $\hat{Y}_t$ combines information for the initial year with information for all subsequent years. Thus, it increases the statistical precision of the estimated initial value. However, such findings are only as good as the assumption of a linear time trend.
3. This approach can be extended to analyses of changes in PBN versus reference area differences (which are equivalent to differences in PBN versus reference area changes) by estimating $\hat{\Delta}_t = \hat{Y}_t^{PBN} - \hat{Y}_t^{REF}$ for each year, and modeling $\hat{\Delta}_t$ as a linear function of time.

Non-Parametric Discrete-Change Regression

An appealing non-parametric alternative to parametric regression is something the research team calls discrete-change regression. This approach analyzes time-series data in a way that directly mirrors the following core evaluation questions about PBN change:

- What was the *initial mean value* of a PBN characteristic, or the PBN versus reference area difference in the characteristic, at the beginning of each Purpose Built Communities intervention?

- What was the *net cumulative change* in that PBN characteristic, or the PBN versus reference area difference in the characteristic, during early PBN implementation?

For a long-term intervention such as Purpose Built Communities, it is important that the first question focuses on underlying *average conditions* for several years during the onset of the intervention, not on idiosyncratic transient conditions for a single early year. Likewise, the second question should focus on the change over time in multi-year average conditions, not in specific year-to-year changes. Thus, idiosyncratic year-to-year fluctuation in actual (not just measured) PBN characteristics or in actual (not just measured) PBN versus reference area differences, is a source of random estimation error, in addition to any measurement error or sampling error that might exist. Consequently, it is an important source of *uncertainty* about answers to the present research questions that should be accounted for whenever possible.

One way to address this issue for a PBN measure with annual time-series data is to define an initial multi-year time segment and a final multi-year time segment, and estimate the change in the mean value of the measure that occurred between these two time segments. For example, with 11 consecutive years of data, one could define the first 3 years as the initial time segment, and the last 3 years as the final time segment.

One could then address the above two evaluation questions by (1) using the mean value of a PBN characteristic for the first time segment to represent the initial average value of that characteristic, (2) using the mean value of the characteristic for the final time segment to represent its final average value, and (3) using the difference between these two averages to estimate the net cumulative change in the characteristic.

Difference of means estimation. The simplest way to do this is to estimate the difference between the two means based only on time-series data for the initial and final time segments, which, for the present illustrative example, involves three years of data per time segment, or six years in total. One could then estimate a standard error for this difference of means based on the average year-to-year variance of values for the PBN characteristic *within* the two time segments and construct confidence intervals (CIs) accordingly.

This approach makes it possible to estimate the change that occurred in an average PBN characteristic during a seven-year period. The mean characteristic for the first three years of analysis provides the best possible estimate of the true average characteristic at the midpoint of

that time segment (time 1.5). Similarly, the mean characteristic for the last three years of analysis provides the best possible estimate of the true average characteristic at the midpoint of this time segment (time 8.5). The time elapsed between these two time points is thus seven years (time 8.5 minus time 1.5).

One major drawback of this simple approach is that it ignores valuable information from annual data for the years between the two time segments examined, and thus only uses 6 of the 11 available data points to *assess uncertainty* about neighborhood change. Specifically, because the approach estimates two parameters (the two means involved) from six time-series data points (for the two time segments involved), there are only four degrees of freedom for estimating the standard error of the change estimate and its corresponding MOE or CI.[4] With this small sample, uncertainty about the standard error is unnecessarily high, and the resulting MOE is unnecessarily large.

For example, the estimated 90 percent MOE for an estimated standard error ($\widehat{se}$) based on four degrees of freedom is $\pm 2.13\widehat{se}$. However, as described below, a three-parameter discrete-change regression bases its estimate of the standard error for a neighborhood change estimate on eight degrees of freedom in the present example. Hence, the width of its 90 percent CI is $\pm 1.86\widehat{se}$.[5]

Three time-segment discrete-change regression. To address the preceding limitation of difference in means estimation, the present analysis uses two complementary three time-segment discrete-change regressions. These models explicitly or implicitly represent the initial and final time segments defined earlier, plus a middle time segment which includes all years between the other two time segments. To provide useful background information, one can use Equation 2 below to estimate the mean value of a PBN characteristic for each of the three time segments, plus their standard errors and MOEs.

$$\hat{Y}_t = \gamma_1 S_{1t} + \gamma_2 S_{2t} + \gamma_3 S_{3t} + e_t \qquad \text{(Equation 2)}$$

where

$\hat{Y}_t =$ the observed value of a PBN characteristic for year t,

$S_{1t}, S_{2t}, \text{and } S_{3t} =$ values for year t of zero/one indicators for the initial, middle, and final time segments, respectively,

$e_t =$ the deviation of $\hat{Y}_t$ from the regression in year t, which, for simplicity and given the small number of data points available, is assumed to vary

4. The sampling distribution of a statistical test statistic for an estimator with a normally distributed error is a t distribution with n degrees of freedom, where n equals the number of data points used (six years in the present example) minus the number of model parameters being estimated (two means in the present example).
5. The width of the CI for an estimate is a multiple of the standard error of the estimate, and the multiple depends on the number of degrees of freedom upon which the estimate is based.

independently and identically across years, with a normal distribution that has a mean of zero and a variance of σ^2, and

$\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \text{and } \gamma_3 =$ the mean value of the PBN characteristic for the initial, middle, and final time segments, respectively.

Figure B.2 illustrates this model for an 11-year time series, with the first 3 years defining the initial time segment, the next 6 years defining the middle segment, and the final 2 years defining the final time segment. Each data point in the figure represents the observed value of the PBN characteristic for a given year, $\hat{Y}_t$. The three horizontal lines in the figure represent the regression-estimated mean value ($\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \text{and } \gamma_3$) of the PBN characteristic for each time segment. In addition, the vertical distance between each data point and the horizontal line for its time segment represents e_t, which is the deviation of $\hat{Y}_t$ from the mean value ($\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \text{or } \gamma_3$) for its time segment. Lastly, the vertical distance between the mean value for the initial time segment and the mean value for the final time segment equals the change over time in this mean value.

The variation in e_t across all 11 years in the time series is the basis for estimating standard errors and MOEs for estimates of $\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \text{and } \gamma_3$. Hence, estimates of Equation 2 are based on eight degrees of freedom (for 11 data points minus three parameter estimates).

The next step in a discrete-change regression analysis is to estimate Equation 3 below based on data for all time points. This produces an estimate of β_1, which is the mean of the PBN characteristic during the initial time segment, plus an estimate of β_2, which is the change in the mean between the initial and middle time segments, plus an estimate of β_3, which is the change in the mean between the initial and final time segments. Doing so also provides estimates of the standard errors and MOEs for these parameter estimates.

$$\hat{Y}_t = \beta_1 + \beta_2 S_{2t} + \beta_3 S_{3t} + e_t \qquad \text{(Equation 3)}$$

where:

$\hat{Y}_t =$ the observed value of a PBN characteristic for year t,

$S_{2t} \text{ and } S_{3t} =$ values for year t of zero/one indicators for the middle and final time segments, respectively,

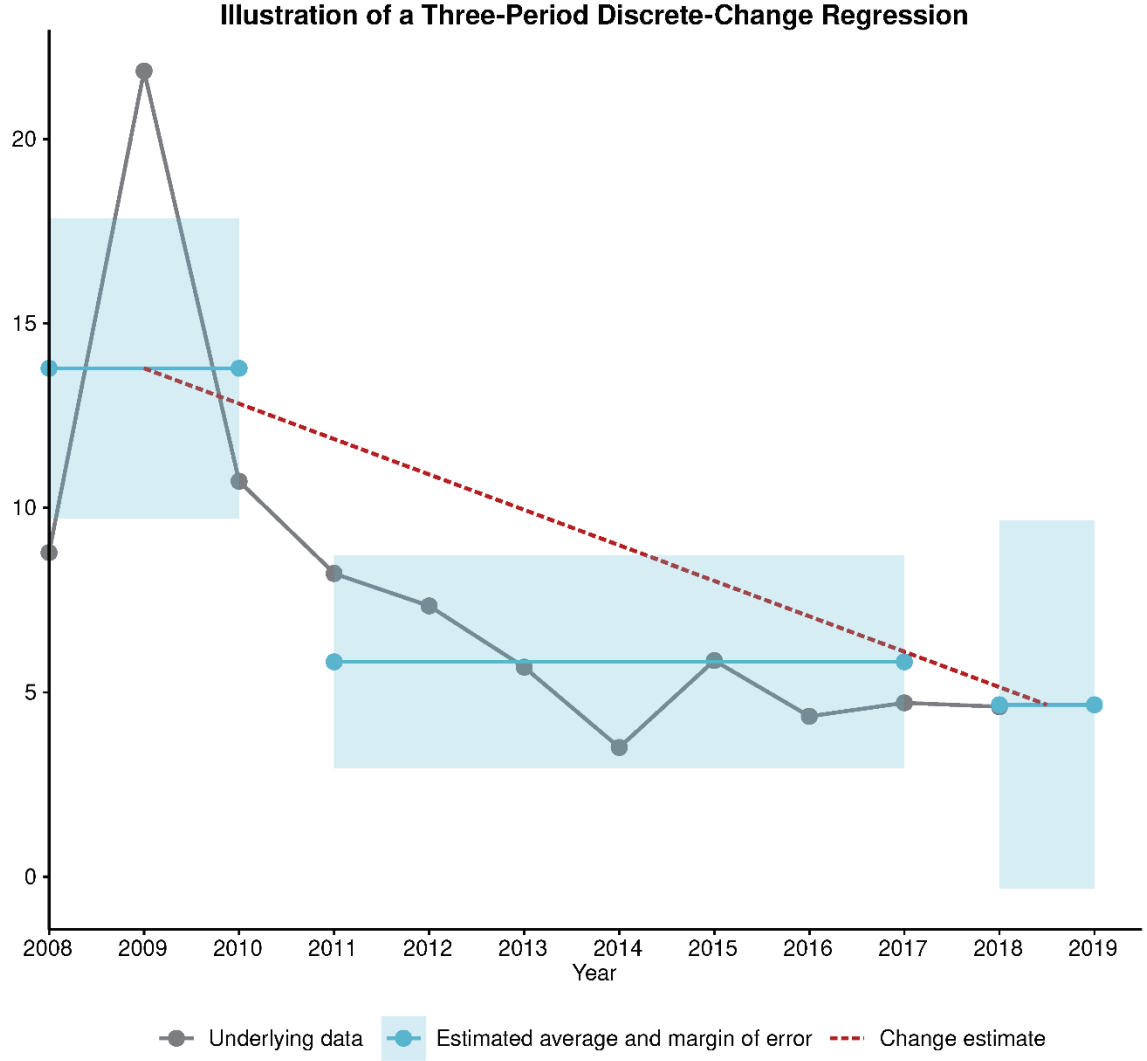
$e_t =$ the deviation of $\hat{Y}_t$ from the regression in year t, which, for simplicity and given the small number of available years, is assumed to vary independently and identically across years, with a normal distribution that has a mean of zero and a variance of σ^2,

$\beta_1 =$ the regression intercept, which represents the mean value of the PBN measure during the initial time segment, and

$\beta_2 \text{ and } \beta_3 =$ changes in the mean values of the PBN measure between the initial and middle time segments, and between the initial and final time segments, respectively.

Appendix Figure B.2

Illustration of a Three-Period Discrete-Change Regression



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Infutor Total Consumer History data.

Defining initial and final time segments. When defining initial and final time segments for a given total number of annual data points, one faces a tradeoff between the following:

- Increasing the precision of change estimates by increasing the number of years in the time segments.
- Increasing the chance that meaningful change occurred between the two time segments by reducing the number of years in each, and thereby increasing the time elapsed between them.

Table B.1 illustrates this tradeoff for a hypothetical PBN characteristic with 11 years of data. The first two columns in the table indicate the number of years in the initial and final time segments, respectively. For example, the first row defines the initial time segment as Year 1, and the final time segment as Year 11. The second row defines the initial time segment as Years 1 and 2, and the final time segment as Year 11. The third row defines the initial time segment as Years 1 and 2, and the final time segment as Years 10 and 11, and so on.

Appendix Table B.1

Statistical Precision Versus Follow-Up Duration for a Three-Period Discrete Regression Analysis with 11 Consecutive Years of Data

Number of Years In Initial Time Segment	Number of Years In Final Time Segment	Standardized 90 Percent MOE[a]	Follow-Up Duration (in Years)
1	1	2.63	10.0
2	1	2.28	9.5
2	2	1.86	9.0
3	2	1.70	8.5
3	3	1.52	8.0
4	3	1.42	7.5
4	4	1.31	7.0
5	4	1.25	6.5
5	5	1.18	6.0

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.

[a]A "standardized" standard error or MOE of an estimated discrete-change in mean outcomes from an initial to a final segment of a follow-up period is expressed as a multiple of the residual standard deviation of the corresponding discrete-change regression. Given the limited number of time points—and thus regression residuals—that are available for the present analysis, the discrete-change regressions assume a constant residual variance (homoskedasticity) without serial correlation.

Results are for eight degrees of freedom with a three time-segment discrete-change regression.

The third column in the table lists the "standardized" 90 percent MOE, which equals one half of a 90 percent CI. This measure of statistical precision is standardized for convenience by setting the standard error of an estimated PBN characteristic for a single year equal to one.[6]

The last column in the table lists the number of years that elapsed between the midpoints of the initial and final time segments. This is the best estimate of the time period represented by the PBN change estimate.

Now, consider the tradeoff between increasing the statistical precision of one's analysis (which, as discussed elsewhere, is highly limited) and increasing the time for neighborhood improvement (which is generally quite slow) to occur. This tradeoff ranges from a 10-year change period with a 90 percent MOE of $\pm$ 2.63 standardized units (in the first row) to a 6-year

6. The estimated MOE for a specific PBN measure thus equals its standardized value times the estimated standard deviation of e_t (the square root of the estimated error variance) for a discrete-change regression.

change period with a 90 percent MOE of ± 1.18 standardized units (in the last row). Hence, there is a striking tradeoff at the extremes of the available options. However, while adding a single year to one time segment reduces the change period by a constant amount (half a year), the corresponding reduction in the standardized 90 percent MOE reflects markedly diminishing returns.

To make these findings concrete, consider the definition of initial and final time segments for estimating change in the percentage of PBN residents ages 25 years or older who leave the neighborhood by the following year.[7] This analysis was conducted using 11 years of annual time-series data from 2008 (several years before the Purpose Built Communities interventions in the present study were launched) to 2018 (the most recent year for which usable data were available). The initial and final time segments for the analysis were defined as the first three years and last two years of the time series, respectively. Doing so produced a change period of 8.5 years with a 90 percent MOE of 1.70 standardized units.

Using the first three years as the initial time segment helped to increase the statistical precision of change estimates (which is crucial) without masking changes in PBN resident mobility that occurred after the Purpose Built Communities interventions in the present analysis were launched. Hence, this decision was clear. Using the last two years as the final time segment also seems important for maintaining the precision of change estimates. However, adding another year to either time segment would reduce the duration of the change period by one half year, and only reduce the 90 percent MOE by about 11 percent. Hence, for this time series, three initial years and two final years are a good compromise.

Estimating the Difference Between PBN and Reference Area Changes

Now, consider how discrete-change regression analysis was used to estimate the difference in the change over time for a PBN characteristic and that for a reference area. The first step in this process was to estimate the difference in a PBN characteristic and that for a reference area ($\widehat{DIFF}_t$) for each year (t) in a given time series using the following equation (Equation 4):

$$\widehat{DIFF}_t = \hat{Y}_t^{PBN} - \hat{Y}_t^{REF} \qquad \text{(Equation 4)}$$

The next step was to substitute $\widehat{DIFF}_t$ for $\hat{Y}_t$ in Equations 2 and 3. Estimating this version of Equation 2 produces estimates of the mean PBN versus reference area difference for each of the three time segments in the present analysis, plus their standard errors and MOEs. Estimating this version of Equation 3 produces an estimate of the mean PBN versus reference area difference for the initial time segment and an estimate of the change in this mean difference from the initial to final time segments, plus their standard errors and MOEs.[8] One important point to note when interpreting an estimated change over time in the mean value of

7. This analysis is based on MDRC calculations from Infutor Total Consumer History data, which provides the 10 most recent street addresses for each individual covered, along with the date that they were "last seen" at the address, for persons currently residing in each U.S. state. See Infutor (2024) and Appendix D.
8. Estimating this version of Equation 3 also produces estimates (which are not reported) of the change in the mean PBN versus reference area difference from the initial to middle time segments, plus their standard errors and MOEs.

$DIFF_t$ for two time segments is that it is algebraically equivalent to the corresponding difference in the change in the mean value of $DIFF_t$ for a PBN and a reference area. To observe this, consider the following equations (Equations 5 and 6):

$$Change\ in\ Difference \equiv (\bar{Y}_F^{PBN} - \bar{Y}_F^{REF}) - (\bar{Y}_I^{PBN} - \bar{Y}_I^{REF}) \qquad \text{(Equation 5)}$$

and

$$Difference\ in\ Change \equiv (\bar{Y}_F^{PBN} - \bar{Y}_I^{PBN}) - (\bar{Y}_F^{REF} - \bar{Y}_I^{REF}) \qquad \text{(Equation 6)}$$

where

$\bar{Y}_I^{PBN}$ and $\bar{Y}_F^{PBN}$ = the mean value of a PBN characteristic during the initial and final time segments, respectively, and

$\bar{Y}_I^{REF}$ and $\bar{Y}_F^{REF}$ = the mean value of the characteristic for the reference area during the initial and final time segments, respectively.

It can easily be shown that the expression for *change in difference* is algebraically equivalent to the expression for *difference in change*. Hence, the two equations represent two different ways to express the same thing.[9]

A focus on PBN versus reference area differences is appropriate for analyses of gaps or discrepancies between the characteristics of a PBN and those of its reference area. This focus is natural, for example, when comparing a PBN to its city or comparing PBN pipeline schools or nearby schools to their school district.

In contrast, it is not necessarily relevant to estimate gaps or discrepancies between a PBN and other persistently high-poverty census tracts in the same city. However, there are good reasons for wanting to know whether a PBN improved over time by more or less than these other disadvantaged communities in the local area.

Multi-Year Moving Average Data from the American Community Survey

One key source of data on PBN characteristics for change analyses is the American Community Survey (ACS). However, because of the limited ACS samples for small geographies, such as census tracts and block groups (the basis for ACS data on PBN characteristics), the ACS does not publicly report annual estimates for them. Instead, it reports the most recent five-year average for each year.[10] Consequently, it is not possible to construct a meaningful annual time series for ACS measures of PBN characteristics.

Nonetheless, one can use ACS five-year average data to estimate PBN change in a way that mirrors how it is done with annual time-series data. To do so, the present analysis uses the earliest available ACS five-year averages calculated with population estimate weights that

9. This result is a well-known property of difference in differences analysis.
10. For example, the ACS reports a five-year average for each census tract characteristic for the period 2006 to 2010.

reflect the 2010 Census (that for 2006 to 2010) to represent the initial mean value of a PBN characteristic ($\bar{Y}_I^{PBN}$); the analysis also uses the most recent available ACS five-year average averages calculated with population estimate weights that reflect the 2010 Census (that for 2015 to 2019) to represent the final mean value of that characteristic ($\bar{Y}_F^{PBN}$).[11] With these mean values, it is then possible to estimate the change over time in this characteristic ($\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN}$) using the following *difference of means* equation (Equation 7):

$$\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN} = \bar{Y}_F^{PBN} - \bar{Y}_I^{PBN} \qquad \text{(Equation 7)}$$

Based on the 90 percent MOEs reported by the ACS for $\bar{Y}_F^{PBN}$ and $\bar{Y}_I^{PBN}$, one can approximate the corresponding MOE for $\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN}$ using the following equation (Equation 8):[12]

$$MOE(\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN}) = \sqrt{(MOE(\bar{Y}_F^{PBN}))^2 + (MOE(\bar{Y}_I^{PBN}))^2} \qquad \text{(Equation 8)}$$

The corresponding 90 percent CI is then $\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN} \pm MOE(\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN})$.

Similarly, one can estimate an initial PBN versus reference area difference in a neighborhood characteristic and a corresponding final difference, and estimate the change in this difference. MOEs (and thus CIs) for these changes in differences (and their algebraically equivalent counterparts, differences-in-changes) can be estimated as follows (Equation 9) from reported MOEs for $\bar{Y}_F^{PBN}$, $\bar{Y}_I^{PBN}$, $\bar{Y}_F^{REF}$, $\bar{Y}_I^{REF}$ because an estimated change in a difference or difference in a change is a linear combination of $\bar{Y}_F^{PBN}$, $\bar{Y}_I^{PBN}$, $\bar{Y}_F^{REF}$, $\bar{Y}_I^{REF}$.[13]

$$MOE[(\bar{Y}_F^{PBN} - \bar{Y}_F^{REF}) - (\bar{Y}_I^{PBN} - \bar{Y}_I^{REF})] = \sqrt{(MOE_F^{PBN})^2 + (MOE_F^{REF})^2 + (MOE_I^{PBN})^2 + (MOE_I^{REF})^2} \qquad \text{(Equation 9)}$$

Interpreting and Reporting PBN Change Estimates

Having described the estimation of change over time in PBN characteristics and differences in change over time for PBNs versus their reference areas, this appendix now describes how those estimates were reported and how they should be interpreted. Fortunately, change estimates from discrete-change regression analyses of annual time-series data and change estimates from difference-of-means analyses of five-year moving average data from the ACS are reported and interpreted in the same manner.

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11. The weighting methodology ACS uses to calculate estimates are revised each decade to reflect the results of the corresponding decennial census. However, revisions are not made for estimates released in prior years. See U.S. Census Bureau (2020b).
12. Equation 8 does not account for any serial correlation that might exist between $\bar{Y}_F^{PBN}$ and $\bar{Y}_I^{PBN}$, which is not reported by the ACS. Consequently, it might overstate or understate $MOE(\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN})$. In addition, because ACS MOEs do not account for idiosyncratic annual fluctuation in PBN characteristics, they tend to understate $MOE(\Delta\bar{Y}^{PBN})$.
13. Equation 9 (like Equation 8) does not account for serial correlation over time or auto-correlation between PBNs and their reference areas, because the ACS does not report these parameters. Consequently, Equation 9 is only an approximation.

Interpreting Change Estimates

The present approach to reporting and assessing estimates of PBN change is based on CIs and their corresponding MOEs, instead of statistical significance tests and p-values.[14] Furthermore, the approach is based on two complementary CIs (a 90 percent CI and a 75 percent CI) for each PBN change estimate, instead of a single CI per estimate.

This two-CI approach was developed to address the fact that most of the neighborhood change estimates in the present report are highly imprecise. This imprecision reflects the small geographies (ranging from two urban census block groups to three urban census tracts), and thus small samples, for each PBN studied. Consequently, using a standard null hypothesis test at the 0.10 level of statistical significance to determine when one has *conventional statistical evidence* of the direction of a change would produce a very large number of inconclusive findings.

A second important reason for using the present two-CI approach is that, over the past decade, there have been major debates among statisticians, econometricians, and other quantitative methodologists about whether conventional statistical significance testing is appropriate for determining whether a given parameter estimate is worthy of being used to guide important decisions.[15]

Among other things, there has been a push for using CIs instead of significance tests for this purpose. This is especially relevant when one's analytic goal is to estimate a parameter value, not to test a null hypothesis about whether the true parameter value is zero.[16] In addition, there is a growing movement to supplement or supplant conventional statistical significance testing with Bayesian statistical inference, which combines findings from a current parameter estimate with prior estimates of the same parameter to produce a more "fully informed" parameter estimate.[17]

In addition, the explicit goal of the quantitative component of the present study is to estimate, and thereby describe, change that occurred during a roughly decade-long period for a large number of neighborhood characteristics in five PBNs. Hence, the study is an *exploratory descriptive analysis* of the direction and magnitude of change over time, which makes it a clear candidate for the use of CIs and MOEs.

Furthermore, the present study is *explicitly not* a causal analysis of PBN impacts, which was its original goal. This is because an early evaluation design assessment clearly indicated that

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14. Imbens (2021) clarifies the distinction between parameter *estimation* and parameter *null hypothesis testing*. In addition, he argues for reporting point estimates and CI estimates when the analytic focus is on parameter estimation (as in the present study) and reporting p-values and statistical significance tests when the focus is on testing null hypotheses about zero parameter values.
15. For example, see Wasserstein and Lazar (2016); Greenland et al. (2016); and Amrhein and Greenland (2022).
16. For example, see Imbens (2021).
17. For example, see Deke, Finucane, and Thal (2022); and Gelman and Loken (2014).

a sufficiently rigorous impact analysis was not possible.[18] This conclusion, which the study's funder accepted, was based on the fact that the best feasible design for a PBN impact study — a synthetic comparison group analysis — would not have adequate statistical precision to identify meaningful impacts. In addition, the relatively slow roll-out of initiatives in neighborhoods that implemented the Purpose Built Communities model made it virtually impossible to distinguish PBN changes caused by those initiatives from those caused by other local, state, or national factors.

Tabular Reporting of Change Estimates

Table B.2 illustrates the tabular approach used in this report to present estimates of change over time by site in a specific PBN characteristic and comparisons of this PBN change with that of its local ecosystem. All tables presenting such analyses have the same basic structure, although the specific estimation method used differs by outcome measure, depending on the data and calculation.

Table B.2 presents mean student scores on state standardized tests in math and reading or English language arts, combined across the subjects and grades that were tested, for PBN pipeline schools (the schools targeted by the Purpose Built Communities intervention), and for their school district.[19] The first two columns in the table report the point estimate and a conventional 90 percent MOE for the mean student score during the initial time segment of the analysis. For example, the point estimate for the PBN in Birmingham indicates that, on average, students in its pipeline schools scored roughly 2.8 grade levels *below* the national average when CQBs began planning their initiatives. The 90 percent MOE (± 0.4 grade levels) for this point estimate indicates that its 90 percent CI ranges from -3.2 to -2.4 grade levels below the national average.

The next two columns in the table report the point estimate (-0.5 grade levels) and 90 percent MOE (± 0.6 grade levels) for the change in the mean student test score between the initial time segment and the final time segment, which was roughly a decade later. This finding implies that the 90 percent CI for the change estimate ranges from -1.1 to 0.1 grade levels. Because this CI includes both reductions and increases in student test scores, it does not enable one to determine the direction of change. More generally, anytime a 90 percent MOE is larger than its point estimate, the result does not enable one to determine the direction of change. Consequently, the finding for the PBN in Birmingham does not provide *conventional statistical evidence* of the direction of change.[20] Unfortunately, this is the case for many of the PBN change estimates in the present analysis.

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18. Bloom, Kopsic, and Préel-Dumas (2020).
19. Data on these scores were obtained from the Stanford Educational Data Archive Version 4.1, which collects annual state test scores by school and district and converts them to a standardized national scale, which the study team transformed into units of grade-level equivalents.
20. The research team acknowledges that, in many fields, conventional statistical evidence is determined by a higher standard — a p-value that is less than or equal to 0.05 for a two-tail null hypothesis test, which is reflected by a 95 percent CI. Thus, although a 90 percent CI is *a* conventional threshold for statistical evidence, it is not the *only* conventional threshold used in practice.

Appendix Table B.2

Student State Test Performance in Pipeline Schools and Their School Districts: Difference from the National Average in Grade-Level Equivalents

	Initial Mean Score		Change in Mean Score			
Site and School Group	Estimate	90% MOE	Estimate	90% MOE	Direction of Change	Pipeline School Change Differs from District Change
Woodlawn, Birmingham						
Pipeline schools	-2.8	± 0.4	-0.5	± 0.6	▽	◇
School district	-1.9	± 0.4	-0.8	± 0.5	▼	
Renaissance West, Charlotte						
Pipeline schools	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
School district	0.3	± 0.1	0.1	± 0.1	△	
Near East Side, Columbus						
Pipeline schools	-2.9	± 0.2	-0.4	± 0.3	▼	?
School district	-1.7	± 0.1	-0.3	± 0.1	▼	
Highlander, Omaha						
Pipeline schools	-2.8	± 0.4	0.3	± 0.6	?	?
School district	-1.2	± 0.2	0.1	± 0.3	?	
Northside, Spartanburg						
Pipeline schools	-2.7	± 0.4	0.0	± 0.5	?	◇
School district	-0.7	± 0.1	-0.3	± 0.2	▼	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) Version 4.1 data, with measures on the SEDA Cohort Standardized Scale (CSS).

NOTES: MOE = margin of error.

SEDA mean test scores, which are available for grades three through eight, are pooled across all grades (centered at the middle grade of each school) and subjects (math and reading or English language arts).

This analysis relies on nationally normed test scores that are reported on the SEDA CSS, where units of interpretation are in standard deviation units. For readability, MDRC estimates based on these CSS measures are multiplied by three prior to being reported in this table so that each unit can be interpreted as representing one grade level. Per SEDA's technical documentation, one CSS standard deviation unit is approximately three grade levels.

The initial time segment for all site but the Omaha site is spring 2009 to spring 2010; for the Omaha site, it is spring 2011 to 2012. The final time segment for all sites is spring 2017 to spring 2018.

Renaissance West STEAM Academy is the only pipeline school in the Charlotte site. Since it is a new school that opened during the 2017–2018 academic year, there are no SEDA data for pipeline schools in the Charlotte site that fall within the study's timeframe.

For the Birmingham, Charlotte, Omaha, and Spartanburg sites, "nearby schools" include pipeline schools and other local schools whose 2015–2016 (or 2009–2010, for the Birmingham site) attendance zones overlap the current census-based Purpose Built Neighborhood footprint.

For the Columbus site, "nearby schools" include pipeline schools and other local schools whose 2015–2016 attendance zones either overlap or abut the footprint.

A legend describing the meaning of each symbol can be found in Box 3.1.

So, what should one conclude from this analysis? Should one conclude that every time there is not conventional statistical evidence about the direction of a change, there is no statistical evidence about it? Or instead, should one conclude that, just because a change estimate does not provide conventional statistical evidence about the direction of a PBN change, it does not mean the estimate provides no statistical evidence about it?

In line with the latter premise, the present study also applies a lower standard of evidence for each change estimate to determine whether it at least provides *suggestive statistical evidence* about the direction of change. This lower standard is based on a 75 percent CI and its 75 percent MOE, which is roughly *two-thirds* as large as a 90 percent CI and its 90 percent MOE. Although, for simplicity, tables in this report do not explicitly state the 75 percent MOEs, but rather indicate the evidentiary implications of 75 percent MOEs for the direction of change.

Consider the second-to-last column in Table B.2. This column reports a *downward-pointing* triangle to identify change estimates that provide some level of statistical evidence of a *decline* in a PBN measure over time. Likewise, it reports an *upward pointing* triangle to identify change estimates that provide some level of statistical evidence of an increase in a measure over time. In addition, a *hollow* triangle indicates that this direction is only supported by suggestive statistical evidence (based only on a 75 percent MOE), whereas a *solid* triangle indicates that this direction is supported by conventional statistical evidence (based on both a 90 percent MOE and a 75 percent MOE). In this way, the implications of 75 percent MOEs are represented, without reporting their values.

If a change estimate does not meet a 75 percent CI threshold, the present study concludes that it provides *inconclusive* evidence about the direction of change. This conclusion is indicated by a *question mark* in the table.

The final column in Table B.2 indicates whether there is conventional or suggestive statistical evidence of a *difference* between the change over time in student test scores for a PBN's pipeline schools, and that for its school district. Conventional statistical evidence of this difference is indicated by a solid diamond, suggestive statistical evidence is indicated by a hollow diamond, and inconclusive statistical evidence is indicated by a question mark.

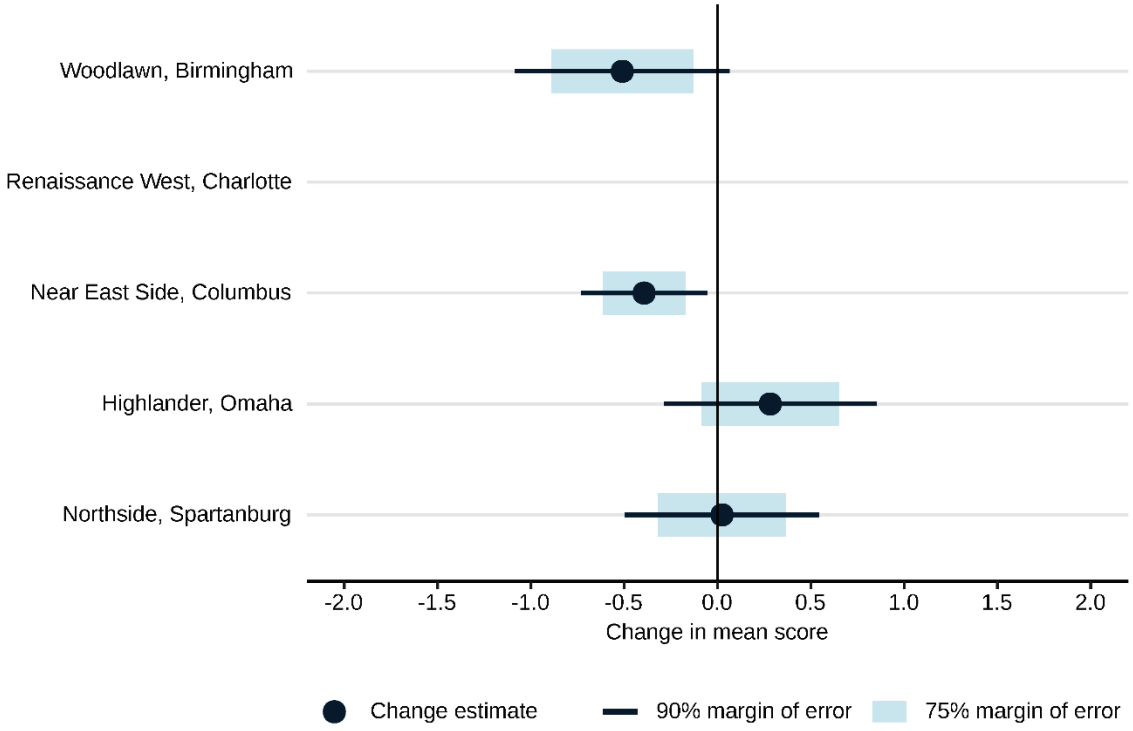
Reporting Change Estimates Visually

Figure B.3 illustrates the findings in Table B.2 visually by plotting the change estimate for the pipeline school or schools in each PBN (designated by a large dot), the CI representing its 90 percent MOE (the solid line through each dot), and the CI representing its 75 percent MOE (the shaded portion of the solid line).

As can be seen, for the PBN in Columbus, both the 90 percent and 75 percent CIs lie entirely to the left of zero (which is equivalent to the downward-pointing solid triangle in Table B.2). This illustrates that there is conventional statistical evidence of a decline over time in student academic performance at pipeline schools. For the PBN in Birmingham, only the 75 percent CI lies entirely to the left of zero (which is equivalent to the downward-pointing hollow triangle

Appendix Figure B.3

Change Over Time in Student State Test Performance in Pipeline Schools



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) Version 4.1 data, with measures on the SEDA Cohort Standardized Scale.

in Table B.2). This illustrates that there is suggestive statistical evidence of a decline over time in student academic performance at pipeline schools.

For the PBNs in Omaha and Spartanburg, both the 90 percent and 75 percent CIs lie on both sides of zero. This illustrates that there is inconclusive evidence (as defined by the present analysis) of the direction of change in student academic performance at pipeline schools. Consequently, the present analysis does not identify improvement in student academic performance at pipeline schools for any PBN between school years 2008–2009 and 2017–2018.

APPENDIX

C

Chapter 4 Supplementary Materials

MEASURING STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

As noted in Chapter 4, the best existing source of data for the present analysis of change over time in student academic performance is the Stanford Educational Data Archive (SEDA). SEDA has obtained, cleaned, organized and standardized data on annual state test scores in math and reading or English language arts (ELA) for public schools throughout the United States, including public charter schools and magnet schools. SEDA data that were available for the present analysis begin in school year 2008–2009 and end in school year 2017–2018.

For each school year, SEDA obtains data by school and grade on the distribution across state-specified proficiency levels of student scores on state-mandated tests in math and reading or ELA. As required by law through the federal Common Core of Data program, these test-score data for selected grades between third and eighth grades are reported annually to the U.S. Department of Education, which maintains them in its EDFACTS database (SEDA's source of state test-score data). Because tests, test versions, test metrics, and test proficiency levels vary across states and change over time, it is not possible to compare their scores directly across states and time.

To overcome this obstacle, SEDA standardized state test scores based on results from a nationwide testing program in math and reading or ELA called The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This nationwide student assessment is administered every two years to fourth graders and eighth graders in a statistical sample of schools from all U.S. states.

NAEP tests are designed in a way that makes it possible to compare their scores across states in a given year on a common metric. In addition, it is possible to compare NAEP scores across years (because they are normed over time to a common standard) and across grades (because NAEP tests are vertically integrated).

SEDA uses student-level NAEP scores from each state to standardize the state's distribution of scores across its pre-defined proficiency levels in a way that makes it possible to express a state's test-score threshold for each proficiency level as a NAEP score. Doing so makes it possible to estimate the state's mean and standard deviation of state test scores in the NAEP metric. (See Fahle et al., 2021.) This information plus data on the distribution of original state test scores across state proficiency levels for each school in the EDFACTS database are used to compute the mean test score for each school, school district, county, and state in a common metric.

The present analysis uses the SEDA Cohort Standardized Scale (CSS) for scores that are pooled across math and reading or ELA, and pooled across all grades tested in a school between third and eighth grades. This cross-grade pooling is made possible by the fact that NAEP tests are vertically integrated. The resulting SEDA "mid-point grade" score is estimated as the difference between the school's average score and the corresponding national student average. This difference is then reported as a multiple of the national student standard deviation of scores. For example, if a school received a SEDA CSS mid-point grade score of

-0.25 for a given year, its student average that year was 0.25 national standard deviations below the national average.

To facilitate interpretation of this measure for the present analysis, the research team transformed it to grade-level equivalents based on the fact that — according to SEDA documentation (Fahle, et al., 2021) and further analysis of published research by one of the present authors and his colleagues (Bloom, et al., 2008) — a difference of one national student standard deviation is approximately equivalent to a difference of three grade levels. Thus, for example, if the SEDA CSS mid-point grade score for a given school in a given year equals -1.0 national standard deviations, the average student in that school that year performed approximately three grade levels below the national average. Likewise, an average SEDA CSS mid-point score of 0.5 national standard deviations implies that the average student in a school that year performed approximately 1.5 grade levels above the national average.

Appendix Table C.1

List of Pipeline Schools and Nearby Schools

Site and Type of School	School Name	Grades	Year First Appeared in Data
Woodlawn, Birmingham			
Pipeline school	Avondale Elementary School	PK to 5th	2009
Pipeline school	Hayes K8 School	PK to 8th	2013
Pipeline school	Oliver K5 School	PK to 5th	2009
Pipeline school	WE Putnam Middle School	6th to 8th	2009
Other nearby school	Gibson Elementary School	KG to 5th	2009
Other nearby school	Whatley Elementary School	KG to 9th	2009
Renaissance West, Charlotte			
Other nearby school	Berryhill School	PK to 8th	2009
Other nearby school	Reid Park Academy	PK to 8th	2009
Other nearby school	Westerly Hills Academy	KG to 8th	2009
Near East Side, Columbus			
Pipeline school	Beatty Park Elementary School	KG to 5th	2009
Pipeline school	Champion Middle School	6th to 8th	2009
Pipeline school	East Columbus Elementary School	PK to 5th	2009
Pipeline school	Eastgate Elementary School	PK to 5th	2009
Pipeline school	Ohio Avenue Elementary School	PK to 5th	2009
Pipeline school	Trevitt Elementary School	PK to 5th	2009
Other nearby school	Columbus Africentric Early College ES	PK to 8th	2009
Other nearby school	Columbus City Preparatory School for Girls	6th to 8th	2011
Other nearby school	Duxberry Park Alternative Elementary School	PK to 5th	2009
Other nearby school	Fairwood Alternative Elementary School	PK to 6th	2009
Other nearby school	Windsor STEM Academy	PK to 6th	2009

(continued)

Appendix Table C.1 (continued)

Site and Type of School	School Name	Grades	Year First Appeared in Data
Highlander, Omaha			
Pipeline school	Kennedy Elementary School	PK to 5th	2011
Other nearby school	Conestoga Magnet Elementary School	PK to 6th	2011
Other nearby school	Druid Hill Elementary School	PK to 5th	2011
Other nearby school	Franklin Elementary School	PK to 6th	2011
Other nearby school	Kellom Elementary School	PK to 6th	2011
Other nearby school	King Elementary School	PK to 5th	2011
Other nearby school	King Science and Technology Magnet Middle School	5th to 8th	2011
Other nearby school	Lewis and Clark Middle School	6th to 8th	2011
Other nearby school	Lothrop Magnet Center	PK to 4th	2011
Other nearby school	Monroe Middle School	6th to 8th	2011
Other nearby school	Walnut Hill Elementary School	PK to 6th	2011
Northside, Spartanburg			
Pipeline school	The Cleveland Academy of Leadership	PK to 5th	2009
Other nearby school	Carver Middle School	6th to 8th	2009
Other nearby school	W. Herbert Chapman Elementary School	KG to 5th	2009

SOURCE: Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA) Version 4.1

NOTES: KG = kindergarten; PK = pre-kindergarten.

Pipeline schools are local public schools that the Community Quarterback organization in each Purpose Built Neighborhood (PBN) targeted for improvement.

Renaissance West STEAM Academy is the only pipeline school in the Charlotte site. Since it is a new school that opened during the 2017–2018 school year, there are no SEDA test score data for pipeline schools in the Charlotte site that fall within the study's timeframe.

For the Birmingham, Charlotte, Omaha, and Spartanburg sites, schools flagged as "other nearby school" are local schools whose 2015–2016 (or 2009–2010, for Birmingham) attendance zones overlap the current census-based PBN footprint.

For the Columbus site, schools flagged as "other nearby school" are local schools whose 2015–2016 attendance zones either overlap or abut the 2015–2016 census-based PBN footprint.

One pipeline school (i3 Academy) in the Birmingham site was not included in quantitative analyses, as it opened in 2020—after the "final period" defined for this research. It has also been omitted from this table.

Appendix Table C.2

Per Pupil Expenditures at the National and State Levels for Selected Years

Geography	2009–10	2011–12	2013–14	2015–16	2017–18
United States	14,261	13,398	13,334	14,167	14,624
Alabama	11,819	10,653	10,820	11,074	11,027
Nebraska	15,224	14,661	14,264	15,513	14,916
North Carolina	10,481	9,615	9,353	9,909	10,280
Ohio	15,195	14,576	13,697	14,180	14,659
South Carolina	13,234	12,103	12,145	12,670	13,234

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data from National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

APPENDIX

D

Chapter 6 Supplementary Materials

ANALYTIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR WORKING WITH INFUTOR TOTAL CONSUMER HISTORY DATA

The measures of residential mobility described in Chapter 7 — "moved out of the neighborhood within one year" and "outflow of adult legacy residents from neighborhoods" — were constructed using "total consumer history" data files from Infutor, a consumer reference database that compiles address histories for adults in the United States based on signals obtained from a variety of information sources.[1] The data were transferred in the form of one data file per state or territory at the individual person level. For each person, the Infutor data included the 10 most recent mailing addresses, the date the person was last observed at each address, and the date on which the individual was "last seen" in the information sources used to construct the data. For people who had moved between states, their information appeared in the state file with their current or last seen residency at the time of data acquisition. The data were securely transferred to the research team in July 2021.

To transform these data into an analysis-ready format, the research team reshaped the data from each of the states in which the Purpose Built Neighborhoods were located into an annual time series to show where a person lived in each year from 2008 to 2018. Gaps in a person's address sequence were filled by "carrying forward" each address to the next year until an address with a newer "first seen at this address" effective date appeared in the data.[2] A person's final address was only carried forward through the date on which they were marked as "last seen" in the Infutor data.[3] All addresses were then geocoded and flagged as falling within or outside of a study neighborhood's census boundaries. Any addresses that could not be geocoded were classified as not being in a neighborhood. Over the course of these preparations, the team omitted certain types of records, including the following: (1) records missing date of birth, last seen date, or zip code, as this information was required at key points for preparing, validating, or subsetting the data; (2) records with a P.O. box address, as these were judged unlikely to represent residential locations; and (3) records with very young or very old individuals.[4]

To examine annual rates of residents leaving a neighborhood, the data were first restricted to those ages 25 years or older in a given year. Then, to calculate the probability that individuals living in the neighborhood in a given year would move out of the neighborhood by the next year, the research team used the Infutor data to assemble lists of all residents of a

1. See Verisk Marketing Solutions (2022).
2. The research team additionally used a variety of approaches to impute any missing address dates when possible.
3. Limiting the length of time each individual was tracked also limited the upper bound on ages for the analytic sample, providing counts of the number of people with current addresses in a given year much more aligned with trends reported by American Community Survey data.
4. The research team understood that Infutor's data can differ from nationally representative data for certain subsets of populations due to "... children and young adults who do not show up in the Infutor records because they have not accumulated a large consumer paper trail." See Phillips (2020).

given neighborhood in each year of the study period. Then, the team compared the list for each year against the list for the following year to see whether a resident who lived in the neighborhood in that year also appeared to be living in the neighborhood the following year. The team then subjected the resulting annual data to a discrete-change regression analysis. In the context of this evaluation, the Infutor data are useful for giving a general sense of whether residents are staying in place or moving out in relatively large or small proportions. However, given how the data were prepared, there is a chance that there was no change in the proportion of residents moving out of the neighborhood between the initial and final periods.

To examine how many neighborhood residents remained 5 and 10 years later, the data were first restricted to those ages 25 to 75 years in 2008. Then, the research team assembled lists of all residents of a given neighborhood in a given reference year and similar lists 5 or 10 years later. After that, the team compared lists from the reference year list with those from later years to identify which residents living in the neighborhood in the reference year were still present in the later years. In the context of this evaluation, the Infutor data are useful for giving a general sense of whether residents are staying in place or moving around in relatively large or small proportions. Given how the data were prepared, these numbers represent a lower bound on the proportion of legacy residents who remained 5 and 10 years later.

The Infutor data revealed trends that deviated from nationally representative data: The data indicated a gradual reduction in the number of people observable in the Infutor records over time and an unexpectedly large drop in the number of people after 2016 (across multiple states and levels of geography), whereas the U.S. census showed that populations for some of these areas remained stable or increased over this time period. Theorizing that the availability of information from the dynamic and varied sources from which Infutor collects their data may have affected the dataset, the research team ran sensitivity checks and took two approaches to ensure that the changes in 2016 (which Infutor could not isolate for the purposes of the study) did not reflect substantive data quality concerns. The first approach followed the process outlined above and used the data "as is" (referred to in this appendix as "Version 1 data"). The second approach carried forward the final address of any individuals with a last seen date of 2016 or later beyond their last seen date, with no limitation (referred to here as "Version 2 data"). The team then conducted benchmarking exercises, comparing measures constructed using each version of the Infutor data against nationally validated data sources. The team concluded that, although more prone to missing data on certain subsets of populations due to data source coverage than data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau, Infutor data still offer fairly accurate resident stability or mobility trends over time in the Purpose Built Neighborhoods.

Based on these explorations, analyses of the "moved out of the neighborhood within one year" measure rely on Version 2 data for all sites except for the Near East Side in Columbus, OH, and analyses of the "outflow of adult legacy residents from neighborhoods" measure rely on Version 1 data for all sites except for Renaissance West in Charlotte, NC. (For the two exceptions, benchmark comparisons found that, for each neighborhood, similar measures constructed using the other version of data were more similar to nationally representative

data trends in that neighborhood). Further, given the challenge of validating the data quality from all 52 state files, the research team relied on data from the five study states. The team conducted sensitivity checks and benchmarking exercises to ensure that using data from the state files did not leave out a substantial proportion of individuals who had previously lived in the neighborhoods and subsequently moved out. These analyses revealed that 96 percent of current and past residents of a given study neighborhood could generally be found in that neighborhood's state file, so the observed trends over time were unlikely to have been affected.

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ABOUT MDRC

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