The Battle of Gentrification vs. Centrification
The Role of the Nonprofit Sector & the Hilltop of Tacoma
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The Hilltop

Images from City of Tacoma Hilltop Subarea Plan
Gentrification - the Good, the Bad, & the Ugly

Historical narrative of edgy revitalization & organic do-goodery

Image from http://harmon.property/property/lofts/
Gentrification - the Good, the Bad, & the Ugly

- Economic development reality of competitive cityscapes
  - Transformative capacity for disinvested neighborhoods
  - Increased tax base and businesses, stores, restaurants, etc.

- Diverse & satisfying urban cityscapes
  - Happy & healthy - amenities & activities
  - Hilltop Tacoma - waiting for years
  - A clear ‘before and after’ for Hilltop
  - Whose lens?
The Good

Before

After (design)

Image from http://maps.google.com

Image from THA Hilltop Dev. Report
The Good

Before

After (design)

Images from http://maps.google.com
The Bad

The details of loss...
And the Ugly...

West Mall
No Amenities
Bad Zoning

#newprojects

Images from http://maps.google.com
Reality Check

Opportunity vs. Opportunistic

Planned

Actual

Image from http://maps.google.com
Gentrification - A Battle of Displacement

- Modern gentrification has become integrated as a planned part of the modern municipal economic success model
- Negative effects of gentrification center in one simple reality — displacement
- Many forms of displacement
  - Physical
  - Economic
  - Social
  - Political
  - Emotional
Women & Children First!

• As markets tighten disproportionate impact occurs

• Women & children (single moms - 3 bedrooms anyone?)

• Low income & working poor families (ALICE)

• Renters & young adults
Disproportionate Impact & Race

- Hilltop is historical center of African American community in Tacoma
- Decades of redlining, disinvestment, slumlord rental markets
- Underserved and under resourced schools, parks & amenities
- Housing assets negatively impacted by great recession
- Institutional & structural policy prime the pump of gentrification

- Hilltop African American population 2010 - 2015?
Disproportionate Displacement (35% in 5 years)

Relocation of African American Population Center Prior to Hilltop Community Gentrification

Image - William Towey
Gentrification vs. Centrification
A battle of displacement vs. participation

• “Centrification” — Rev. Montgomery of the Tacoma Ministerial Alliance
• A sort of “circling of the wagons” of existing community to protect and participate in gentrification

• My research examines, first in a general way and then through a case study of the Hilltop area of Tacoma, the role and practices of CBOs, nonprofits, and advocacy groups to build community engagement, raise-up and prioritize the historical neighborhood, and champion the value proposition for residents in the face of gentrification.
Centrification - Look & Feel

Existing residents, anchor institutions, and community stakeholders taking action that will:

• Prioritize, value, and protect the historical and cultural values and experience that undergird the existing soul of the community
• Create a shared narrative of belonging for all people in the community
• Champion and engage existing community into new opportunity
• Connect, renew and invigorate existing social capital
Centrification - Tools of the Trade

- Community organizing and engagement
- Community Development Corporations (CDCs)
- Land trusts & nonprofit/affordable housing
- Political advocacy for incentives & requirements
- Common vision and goals - shared vision
- Strong partnerships/good practices

All of this is not enough....
Centrification = Participation

- Trusted leadership centered in shared narrative
  - A narrative that roots and authenticates all residents as participants
- Coordinated centralized master planning & leadership
  - Interdisciplinary design, vision, oversight, and coordination
- Longitudinal fortitude and perseverance
  - Centrification is a difficult & long term opportunity
- Money - political activity and support
  - Taking meaningful coordinated action to enable economic participation
Thank You

For more information or questions email toweyw@uw.edu

References
Tacoma Housing Authority, Hilltop Draft Renderings, available upon request.
Tacoma Housing Authority, Housing Hilltop Discovery Report, available upon request.
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