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

Image from http://maps.google.com

After (design)

Image from THA Hilltop Dev. Report
The Good

Before

After (design)

Images from http://maps.google.com

Image from THA Hilltop Dev. Report
The Bad

The details of loss...

Images from http://maps.google.com
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
#DensityDrama - #NoAmenities - #WestMallFail

Hilltop About 100 Units

Over 600

Same Scale

Images 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)

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 towew@uw.edu

References


Tacoma Housing Authority, Hilltop Draft Renderings, available upon request.

Tacoma Housing Authority, Housing Hilltop Discovery Report, available upon request.

Towey, W. ACS data 2010, 2015 via Social Explorer

Towey, W. Interview research data, 2017