

CHICAGO/SSA



The Nature of Social Interaction in Mixed-Income Developments¹

¹ This brief is based on a longer paper currently being prepared for publication, *Relational Expectations and Emerging Realities: The Nature of Social Interaction in Mixed-Income Developments* (Chaskin and Joseph, in review). For more information about the Mixed-Income Development Plan, see <http://www.chicagopolitico.org/sites/default/files/2016/08/2016-08-01-Plan-for-Transformation-Updated-2016-08-01.pdf>.

DESCRIPTION OF MIXED-INCOME DEVELOPMENT STUDY SITES

- Oakwood Shores, on the south side of the city, is being built in place of Ida B. Wells/Madden Park, and will ultimately be one of the largest mixed-income developments in Chicago with 3,000 projected total units. One-third of these units will be occupied by relocated public housing residents, with the remainder split between affordable (23%) and market-rate (44%) residents. It is being developed by a national non-profit organization, the Community Builders, in partnership with Chicago-based private developer Granite Development Corporation.
- Westhaven Park is the second phase of the redevelopment of Henry Horner Homes on the city's west side, the first phase of which was completed prior to the launch of the Plan for Transformation. Units produced in the initial pre-Transformation phase were only for public housing residents. The entire development will consist of 1,316 units, 63% of which will be set aside for relocated public housing residents (including some off-site housing), 10% for affordable residents, and 27% for market-rate residents. Westhaven Park is being developed by Brinshore Michaels, a team of private developers.
- Park Boulevard is being built in place of Stateway Gardens on the city's south side. Projected to have 1,315 units, occupancy will be split equally between relocated public housing, affordable, and market-rate residents. Park Boulevard is being developed by Stateway Associates, LLC, a team of private developers. Due to delayed construction and occupancy at Park Boulevard, no resident interviews were conducted at that site for this research brief.

In general, at both sites, residents report low to modest levels of interaction, and the interaction they describe is overwhelmingly casual. Most interactions appear to be among residents in relatively close spatial and social

Instrumental Exchanges

The vast majority of casual interactions reported by our respondents were not characterized by instrumental exchanges, such as practical information or specific favors. Nearly a quarter of our small sample of residents across the two sites reported not knowing any of their neighbors well enough to ask a favor or invite into their home, and another third claimed only one or two such acquaintances in the development. However, several respondents did mention instrumental interactions. Residents with whom we spoke at Oakwood Shores reported somewhat higher levels of these kinds of exchanges, as did owners at both sites.

For the most part, instrumental interactions were described as exchanges of favors or information between one resident and another, largely between residents within income and tenure groups. Often, the favors exchanged were described as small but important acts of basic good neighboring, like placing lost keys on top of a mailbox for their owners at Is More (Number)

I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are. I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are. I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are.

Market-Rate Owner, Oakwood Shores

Negative Interactions

Residents also talked about instances in which they found interactions with neighbors to be negative experiences. Most residents' reactions on negative interactions were described in fairly general terms as taking place within a broader context of mistrust, or avoidance, or differences with regard to expectations. This was especially true regarding expectations for behavior and adherence to norms, for example, of "common courtesy," such as keeping music and late-night noise to a minimum, keeping children under supervision and within bounds, and refraining from public drinking. Some described the tenor of such interactions in broad terms: a general lack of friendliness, a degree of caution toward one another, a sense of judgment being rendered. As one put it:

It's just the way that people are. I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are. I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are.

Relocated Public Housing Resident, Westhaven Park

Or, in the words of an owner:

I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are. I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are.

Market-Rate Owner, Oakwood Shores

Others are more specific about the dynamics that lead to avoidance, or to specific negative interactions. Children are frequently invoked in describing these dynamics.

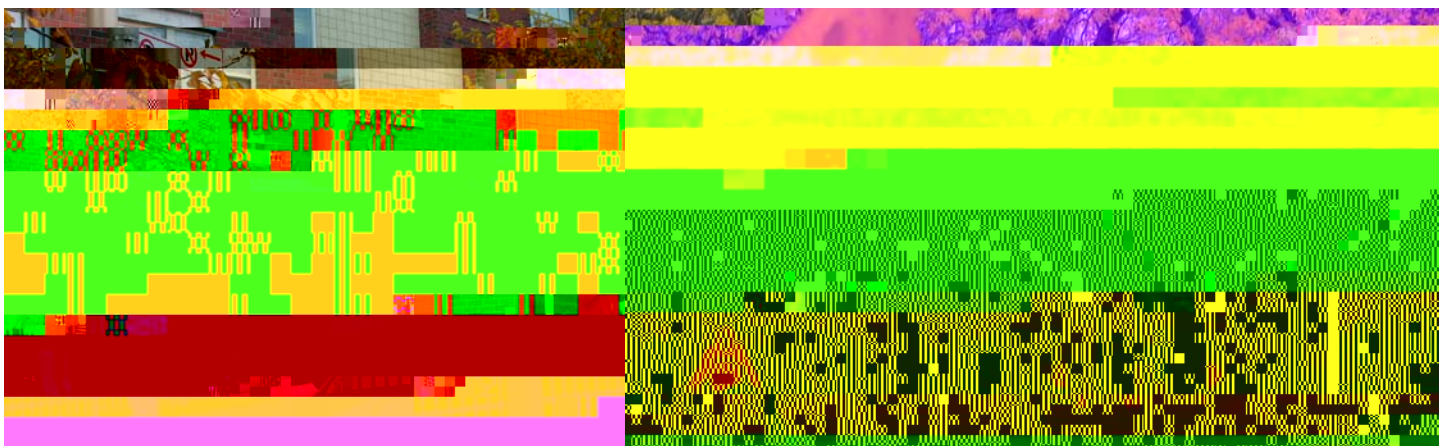
I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are. I don't know if it's just the way that people are, but I think it's just the way that people are.

Market-Rate Renter, Westhaven Park

Although some residents did note uncomfortable interactions with younger children (refusing to move to let a returning homeowner climb the stairs; returning a cautionary look with "this hate stare"; the use of profane language, far more frequent and problematic were perceptions of and interactions with older youth.

In some cases, respondents discussed negative interactions with reference to particular examples of conflict, such as issues with noise and child management. These were more often reported at Westhaven Park, particularly by owners and market-rate renters in our sample. These negative interactions led to a tenor of discomfort, mistrust, or fear. This dynamic has led to a tendency for some residents to withdraw and to rely more on formal channels to maintain social control, like calling the police, rather than informal neighborly interactions and processes.

- the physical infrastructure of the community (layout of buildings, the extent to which entrances to buildings are private rather than common, and, especially, the relative lack of “shared space” that could serve as a communal meeting place)



Perhaps most important were issues of perceived “difference” that set residents apart from one another. These perceptions can lead individuals to continue to interact mostly within their own groups rather than across groups. For example, in the absence of dedicated space for social gathering, some residents (presumed to be relocated public housing residents) make use of public space that is not dedicated to civic use in ways that others (owners and higher-income people) find objectionable. Further, this type of behavior becomes a way that higher-income residents distinguish and set themselves apart from other resident groups. An owner described the way in which the behavior and attitude of others is judged:

*... I think it's a judgment, a judgment of what's acceptable, what's not acceptable, what's... B... ?
 I... O... S... A... A...*

Affordable Owner, Westhaven Park

Assumptions about neighbors based on their behavior go the other way, as well, and many relocated public housing residents, in particular, note a kind of standoffishness among presumed owners.

*... I think it's a judgment, a judgment of what's acceptable, what's not acceptable, what's... B... ?
 I... O... S... A... A...*

Relocated Public Housing Resident, Oakwood Shores

ese perceptions of difference, as they are reinforced over time through interactions and conversations within groups, seem to be establishing themselves in ways that may become difficult to undo. This sense of difference is further supported by structural arrangements of the developments themselves, including:

- governance structures that include subsets of residents (e.g., owners on condominium boards) to the exclusion of others,
- programs and events that cater (intentionally or not) to specific portions of the population, and
- ways in which there remain some distinctions, within buildings and on blocks, where residents live according to housing category, despite an overall effort to mix and not distinguish unit types.

Key Questions for Policy and Practice UMI95

