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NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT: A CHANGING COMMUNITY IN THE URBAN
SOUTH

A Capstone Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the College of Arts & Sciences
University of San Francisco

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN URBAN & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

By

Jackson W. Nutt-Beers

May 2021

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis
has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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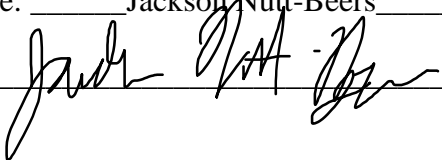
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Abstract

Since the mid-twentieth century, public and private actors across the country have been identifying sources of potential capital accumulation in the United States. Shortly after the passing of the Civil Rights Act by President Lyndon Johnson in the mid 1960s, many White families across the country fled the urban core for the suburbs leaving neighborhoods in the city center abandoned and without capital. During this period, Black families and other racial minority groups were forced to live in the blighted neighborhoods of the urban core due to a variety of racialized discriminatory housing practices that lead to the disinvestment of specific neighborhoods in the city. With capital quickly leaving the urban core for the suburbs, many of the remaining residents lived in dilapidated housing with little to no access to resources necessary for survival. Later in the twentieth century in what was known by some as the Back to the City Movement, capital began to return to the city in what is more commonly referred to as gentrification. Cities such as New York and San Francisco were some of the earliest cities to experience the phenomena where public actors, in partnership with private developers, would reinvest into blighted neighborhoods in which many middle- to low-income Black families lived.

Within the last decade, North Nashville has seen massive amounts of capital reinvested into the community. The capital being reinvested in the community is done so in an attempt to lure wealthier, whiter families into community to shore up the tax base for the City and provide the urban environment that is attractive to younger generations. This has been witnessed in brand new homes built on land once occupied by Black families, construction of new businesses owned by White families, displacement of Black families from the community to areas that are more affordable, decreased representation in decision making bodies, and this sense of disorientation developed by long-time residents who no longer recognize their own communities. The

experience of North Nashvillians during this process requires me to ask the question: How do reinvestment practices developed by public and private actors in Nashville for capital accumulation impact the sense of community of long-time Black residents within North Nashville? In this Capstone Project, I argue that through the restructuring of physical space reinvestment practices developed by public and private actors in North Nashville erase the conditions in which community is forged along and across identity lines. I support this thesis through the examination of scholarly literature, a history of the North Nashville community, interviews with various members of the community and community organizations, and three specific policy recommendations in response.

Introduction

Following the outmigration of White families from city centers during the mid-twentieth century, municipal governments across the United States withdrew necessary resources from middle-to-low income, racial minority neighborhoods in the urban core. The disinvestment of these neighborhoods left many marginalized communities under-served, under-resourced, and all but deserted. Municipal leaders' disinvestment strategies left these communities without access to vital city services and resources needed to lead successful lives in their communities. As a result, communities in disinvested neighborhoods lack access to the following resources and services: public transportation that allows them to travel quickly and efficiently outside of their communities to other areas, adequate access to grocery and food supply stores to meet their dietary needs, medical services vital to the physical, mental, and emotional health of the community, and other city services needed by the community to survive. The historical withdrawal of these resources left marginalized communities vulnerable to the process of gentrification through the process of capital reinvestment which the Encyclopedia of Housing, defines as, "The process by which central urban neighborhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the in-migration of a relatively well-off, middle- and upper-middle-class population," (Van Vliet 1998, p.198).

With massive amounts of capital moving between spaces, there are inevitable problems that arise. Cities across the country — such as Louisville, Kentucky, and Cleveland Ohio, all the way to the west coast in cities such as Los Angeles, California, and Portland, Oregon — are seeing massive reinvestment practices developed by the State and real estate investors and subsequently implemented by private developers. Because of these different socioeconomic, demographical composition of these cities undergoing a similar process, the process of

gentrification is a systemic one leading to the issues faced by neighborhoods experiencing gentrification as systemic issues. The systemic issues faced by gentrifying neighborhoods result in increased violence on indigenous residents, mass evictions, and the demolition of culture developed over several decades (Moskowitz 4-5). For example, Professor Lance Freeman of Columbia University suggests in his book *There Goes the Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up*, that behavior deemed permissible in the New York City neighborhood of Harlem before its gentrification in the 1970s — such as loitering on the street corners — was criminalized following the in-migration of the gentry (Freeman 105). The gentry moving into Harlem during this period were white, wealthy professionals who worked in Manhattan. The criminalization of this behavior in predominately black communities happens as a result of White in-movers' inability to distinguish black neighborhoods and what Freeman refers to as “crime, poverty, and general undesirability” (Freeman 82). By criminalizing this behavior, the in-movers who are more powerful politically and better organized shape the neighborhoods in a way that benefits their way of life, leading to the decimation of what culture existed before and relegation of indigenous Black people to second-class status in the urban core. Subsequently, the gentry uses this power to advocate for better funding for schools and public services that benefit the gentrified community (Freeman 111). In cities like New York, wealthier, whiter neighborhoods saw their blocks “downzoned” — a planning technique used to reduce density — while low-income neighborhoods mostly comprised of communities of color were “upzoned” — to increase density (Stein 102; Moskowitz 190).

The real-world problem when it comes to the reinvestment strategies and subsequent gentrification for capital accumulation is that racial minority communities in the urban core are disproportionately impacted by the construction of new residential buildings, increased

commercial activity, and shift in cultural norms of the community. The gentrifying history of Harlem, a predominately Black borough in New York City, appropriately demonstrates the disproportionate impact capital reinvestment strategies have on Black communities in the urban core. Following the departure of urban industrial manufacturing and white families from city centers across the country, blight neighborhoods — composed mainly of low-income Black families — provided an incredible source of capital accumulation for the State and private investors (Stein 50). The term “blight”, according to Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* refers to a specific area in the urban core that has been become slowly deserted over time by middle-class professionals who were in turn replaced by people who had little economic or social mobility (Jacobs 44). The Black families that lived in blighted neighborhoods were forced to live in dilapidated housing conditions due to racist discriminatory housing practices such as redlining — a tool used to discriminate against Black people, Jews, and Italians in New York City following the passage of the New Deal in the mid-twentieth century. This process relegated marginalized communities to specific areas of the city where city governments would subsequently withdraw necessary resources (Stein 54).

Furthermore, in California, San Francisco’s Fillmore District saw massive reinvestment in the 1950s through the Urban Renewal era where homes were bulldozed to create additional commercial space and construct new residential buildings for wealthier, whiter residents. In San Francisco, Black communities in the Fillmore District experienced the aforementioned negative implications of reinvestment strategies through gentrification for the accumulation of capital. San Francisco, resembling Harlem, implemented massive reinvestment strategies to rid the city of blight which decimated Black communities in the Fillmore District. The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA), established in 1948, was permitted in San Francisco,

California, with the responsibility to eradicate the inner-city of unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions that contributed to the blight of communities living in the dense urban areas of San Francisco. Through the discriminatory practice of redlining in neighborhoods composing of mostly Black communities were also considered to be blighted due to the deterioration of the housing stock. As a result, San Francisco's Planning Department and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency identified the Fillmore District as one of the main neighborhoods they considered to be blighted. This identification resulted in the bulldozing of homes and residential buildings primarily occupied by Black and communities of Asian descent to create a space for more affluent homes for wealthier, whiter residents. The new in-movers would have the financial support to maintain the housing stock and prevent it from reverting to a blighted neighborhood occupied by middle- to low-income communities of color. This massive redevelopment project in San Francisco's Fillmore District resulted in the displacement of over 2,000 Black families into other neighborhoods such as Haight-Ashbury, Hayes Valley, and onto Divisadero Street (Elberling 2017). Though neighborhoods in urban centers throughout the country are experiencing gentrification, the process is unique to each city and requires an individual analysis to understand the context of the process and how it is impacting middle- to low-income, racial minority communities. However, given similar historical discriminatory practices such as redlining, blockbusting, and residential segregation, cities across the country — particularly in the urban South —are primed to see similar outcomes to capital reinvestment through gentrification in San Francisco and Harlem.

To bring larger tax bases back to urban centers and maximize capital accumulation for private actors, city leaders across the country have implemented varying reinvestment strategies that allow for tax breaks aimed at large corporations that are contingent on the following

requirements: capital investment in communities, infrastructure investment to house middle- to high-income earners, rezoning land from residential to commercial, increasing in the number of bike lanes, establishing greenways, and investments in public transportation, all of which contribute to an increase in the price and value of property. These reinvestment strategies often result in the gentrification of middle- to low-income, racial minority neighborhoods in major urban areas. Through the process of gentrification, neighborhoods such as Harlem in New York City, New York, and the Fillmore District in San Francisco, California, were some of the first historically Black neighborhoods to experience capital reinvestment strategies as a way to revitalize blighted neighborhoods. Neighborhoods like Harlem began to transform into bedroom communities for white-collar workers who were typically employed in skyscrapers in Manhattan and worked in industries such as fashion, consulting, advertising, and business (Freeman, 49). With the decline in the desire for a nuclear family in the suburbs, many younger, whiter, and single white-collar workers were drawn to the proximity of their home to their place of employment. Neighborhoods like Harlem saw the reentry of commercial activity that began to recede after the mass exodus of the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, the receding commercial activity of this time can also be attributed to the civil unrest during the Civil Rights Movement and the utilization of discriminatory housing practices by the Homeowners' Loan Corporation through the Federal Housing Administration (Freeman 65). The fleeing of commercial activity in Black communities found them slowly turn into food deserts where Black families were resorted to traveling long distances to go grocery shopping or have access to healthier grocery shopping.

This project in particular will be looking at capital reinvestment and subsequent gentrification in Nashville, Tennessee. As leaders in Nashville, Tennessee — the United States' new "it" city — have looked to the many ways they can increase their tax base and bring in

unprecedented revenue into the local government, Nashville appears to be on a similar path of cities that experienced capital reinvestment by public and private actors into local neighborhoods suffering from disinvestment of the decades past (Severson, 2013). One of the most prominent examples of Nashville's attempt to revitalize disinvested neighborhoods is through the luring of large corporations to the city. This tactic was recently used to bring Amazon's Operations Center of Excellence that is scheduled to open in 2021. Amazon has reported that this investment into Nashville will bring approximately 5,000 high-paying jobs to Nashville (McGee, 2019). Furthermore, Oracle, a software company based in Austin, Texas, announced in April of 2021 that the company is looking to build an office hub just across the Cumberland River in downtown Nashville. Oracle is said to bring approximately 8,500 jobs with six-figure salaries that will boost the tax base for the city of Nashville exponentially (Jorge Apr 14, 2021). This investment by Oracle coupled with Amazon's move to Nashville spells disaster for marginalized, underserved, and under-resourced communities. Kay Bowers, the co-chair of Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH), said about the plans for Oracle to move to Nashville, "We need to ensure that Oracle's impact brings the best that I can bring for our people and neighborhoods and doesn't destroy and uproot people that made this city what it is today," (Wallace May 3, 2021). However, many of the jobs created in Nashville are followed by an influx of high-income, well-educated new residents to Nashville that require housing, green spaces, elimination of food deserts, and other resources in neighborhoods that did not previously exist. Consequently, long-term renters and homeowners in middle- to low-income, racial minority neighborhoods run the risk of being evicted and displaced so landlords can sell their properties for double or triple what it was purchased for decades prior (White, 2019). Nashville's history of racialized discriminatory housing practices allows for the city to pinpoint specifically

in which neighborhoods they want to invest, and where there is the highest and best use of land. The highest and best use of land concept, according to Samuel Stein, “turns land use planning into real estate appraisal, positing that the best use for any piece of land is that which derives the greatest value at the lowest cost and allows buildings to actualize their full potential rent. Stein goes on to suggest that planning according to this concept allows city leaders and private actors to look like planning/zoning through the lens of economic potential rather than what is best for the community (Stein 78). The influx of new businesses and the potential to increase capital for the city of Nashville pose an increased risk to underserved racial minority communities in North Nashville. When examining current capital reinvestment strategies and gentrification in Nashville through the lens of what happened in San Francisco’s Fillmore District and Harlem, North Nashville is in a position to undergo significant restructuring of physical space and the decades-old culture formed by native residents. The narrative they are selling in Nashville when luring businesses and members into disadvantaged communities highlights the revitalization of these comments for a “New Nashville”, one that is focused on who is coming, not who is already there.

Provided the problems of capital reinvestment and subsequent gentrification faced by the low-income, racial minority communities in Harlem, New York City, and the Fillmore District in San Francisco, I am interested in looking at the neighborhood of North Nashville as a case study to examine whether current Nashville city leaders have learned the hard lessons from reinvestment in San Francisco and New York City. By analyzing first-hand responses from members of the community, census data regarding shifts in demographics and housing affordability, and changes in educational attainment levels, my project will understand how capital reinvestment has Black’s sense of community in North Nashville. The significance of this

project is that Nashville is showing trends of capital reinvestment similar to those in San Francisco and New York City. Trends that result in physical changes to the community that all but destroy long-standing communities and culture. The influx of corporations can have a detrimental impact on the cultural and community identity of North Nashvillians all in the name of reinvestment. At its current, the zip code encompassing the entirety of North Nashville has a population of approximately 18,000 residents with 67% of the neighborhood identifying as Black or African American. Of the 67% of residents in North Nashville identifying as Black or African American 84% are native to Tennessee (U.S. Census Bureau). The implications of capital reinvestment into North Nashville not only impacts a significant number of natives to the state, but also a marginalized community with a strong, deep history in Nashville. My interest in how long-time Black residents of North Nashville identify with capital reinvestment strategies in their communities leads me to ask the question: How do reinvestment practices developed by public and private actors in Nashville for the purpose of capital accumulation impact the sense of community of long-time Black residents within North Nashville? Over the course of this capstone project, I argue that reinvestment restructures the physical space of a neighborhood in ways that erase the conditions in which community is forged across identity lines. As capital begins to move back into disinvested communities, residents of North Nashville are developing a sense of disorientation as a result of the new commercial development and housing primarily occupied by wealthier, whiter in-movers. As such, this thesis demonstrates that reinvestment practices threaten the ability of long time Black residents in North Nashville to have a voice in the place where they built and lived their history, to foster a stronger sense of community with their neighbors, and to appropriately seek justice through the current system. To rectify this

injustice, I argue, it is necessary to enact a set of policies that will re-focus reinvestment strategies through the lens of the marginalized.

To demonstrate and justify how I answer my research question in this Capstone Project, my thesis proceeds in the following sections. In the first I engage scholarly literature exploring discriminatory housing practices, neoliberal reinvestment and gentrification, and the perceptions developed by communities of neoliberal reinvestment and gentrification to demonstrate what methods were used to create the areas subjected to reinvestment and gentrification, the means through which city leaders and private actors utilize reinvestment strategies to reinvest and gentrify blighted communities, and how the community perceives and responds to the gentrifying of their communities. This section demonstrates how the project's research question is significant because of its exploration into the gaps of scholarly literature that considers gentrification in the South and its impact on the Black populations living in the region. In a region riddled with systemic racism, my question inquires about a unique community experiencing a common practice in the urban core. In the second section, this project identifies the specific research methods utilized to inform my question. The first research method I will utilize is the semi-structured interview where I engaged with members of the community and non-profit community organization to understand the implications of capital reinvestment in North Nashville. I utilize an archival study to examine the shifts in demographics and affordability of housing in North Nashville. In the third section, I state how my position as a native to the Nashville, Tennessee, region, and my privilege as a white person conducting research that explores the experience of a racial minority groups influence my Capstone Project. In the fourth section, I explored the community history of North Nashville and how experiences of the past developed the community's understanding of how reinvestment impacts their sense of

community. The fifth section of the Capstone Project analyzes the data gathered from members of the community, community organizations, and data accessed through the US Census. The final section provides my conclusions and policy recommendations in to address the growing crisis in North Nashville.

Literature Review

As city leaders and private actors in major urban areas across the United States and around the world reinvest and gentrify blighted communities, scholars have explored the implications of capital reinvestment and gentrification as it relates to middle- to low-income Black communities since the middle of the twentieth century. Understanding the different ways public and private actors practice capital reinvestment through gentrification in disinvested neighborhoods require an examination of the scholarly literature. The following literature review is separated into three subsections — discriminatory housing practices, reinvestment and gentrification, and community perceptions — that explore the varying scholarly work beginning in the mid-twentieth century to provide a comprehensive understanding of how experts and scholars view each of these subtopics. First, I explore the discriminatory housing practices such as racial residential segregation, blockbusting, and redlining, that were utilized throughout the twentieth century that led to increased disinvestment of marginalized communities. Second, I examine the scholarly work on reinvestment strategies and gentrification throughout the second half of the twentieth century as it relates to middle- to low-income Black communities in major urban areas. Lastly, I explore the perceptions of gentrification and reinvestment from middle to low-income Black people who live in disinvested neighborhoods and how it influences their sense of community and belonging in their neighborhoods. Though reinvestment and

gentrification experiences are not a monolith, this review will work to identify common themes throughout the literature. Each of these subtopics explored collectively constructs the lens through which my Capstone Project views the revitalization of blighted neighborhoods through the perspective of the impacted communities and identify how these communities identify, perceive, and respond to reinvestment strategies that can bring access to services and opportunities that are desperately needed while simultaneously running the risk of residential displacement.

Discriminatory Housing Practices

To understand the literature and scholarly conversations about how middle- to low-income, Black communities are impacted by the reinvestment practices of the local government and private actors, this section of the literature review will explore the scholarly conversations surrounding discriminatory housing practices by local governments and private actors imposed on Black communities. This section will exemplify how these practices systemically forced Black communities to live in specific areas of the urban core which are removed from access to necessary public services.

Over the last century, scholars have argued critically over the exacerbation of discriminatory housing practices and whether these discriminatory housing practices have contributed to the current state of residential segregation. As far back as the early 1900s when metropolitan governments would zone large areas of land in middle-class areas comprised mostly of white families while zoning for denser housing in predominately middle- to low-income, Black neighborhoods (Rothstein 2017, 48). According to Farley and Frey (1994) and Rothstein (2017), residential segregation based on race was largely exacerbated in major cities

through discriminatory practices including discriminatory lending policies, White aggression towards Black people looking to live in White areas, exclusionary zoning in the suburbs, blockbusting, redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and federally sponsored public housing. These discriminatory housing practices largely barred Black families from owning their own homes outside of racially segregated areas unless racial attitudes were more friendly than aggressive towards Black people (Farley and Frey, 1994). So much so that the Federal Housing Agency was more inclined to approve mortgages in communities where Black and White communities were naturally separated by highways, boulevards, and other barriers (Rothstein 2017, 65).

Although scholars such as Glaeser and Vigdor (2012) suggest that we are being a more integrated society in terms of residential spaces, other scholars disagree with this understanding of residential integration of neighborhoods. Farley and Frey (1994) suggest that White families are still incredibly uncomfortable with higher numbers of Black families moving into their predominately white neighborhoods preventing the creation of multiethnic neighborhoods in urban areas. During Jim Crow segregation Houston (2012) argues that although racial etiquette — a well-understood behavior and relationship between Black people and southern Whites — played an important role in maintaining order and civility in the American South, Black communities were still confined to specific neighborhoods that further cemented their place as second class citizens (25). Though urban centers are herald as diverse settings with people from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, and histories, it is clear that multi-racial neighborhoods are slow to exist in cities.

Scholars also argue that with increasing income levels for middle- to low-income Black families following the end of de jure segregation, there is optimism for a more integrated urban

core in residentially segregated cities due to the gentrification of blight neighborhoods (Glaeser and Vigdor 2012). However, Themis Chronopoulos (2020) challenge this by suggesting the incremental integration of segregated residential areas is marginal and not necessarily a reflection of the United States' success in ending residential segregation. Massey (2005) supports this argument by suggesting that although racialized discriminatory housing practices are being stripped away, new ones will inevitably be implemented to maintain racial stratification. Massey argues that to eliminate racialized housing discrimination in the United States, a dedicated, unrelenting effort over an extended period is necessary (Massey 2005). Although racial residential segregation is on the decline in urban areas across the country overall, there is still a considerable amount of time until residential integration can influence other areas of racialized inequality (Logan, 2013). Scholars do not disagree that their discriminatory housing practices have negatively impacted middle- to low-income Black communities but are not in agreement on how far society has progressed in dismantling those practices and policies.

Reinvestment and Gentrification

By implementing discriminatory housing practices from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, blighted neighborhoods have become an area of opportunity for city leaders and private actors across the country to invest capital and subsequently gentrify. This section of the literature review explores the scholarly conversations surrounding reinvestment and gentrification and how both reinvestment and gentrification often bring a wide array of services and opportunities to blighted areas but also run the risk of displacing middle- to low-income Black communities in the urban core. This subsection explores the different ways scholars understand gentrification and the varying impacts it has on the community.

Reinvestment strategies through gentrification for capital accumulation is a process through which cities across the country are currently experiencing regardless of their different socioeconomic backgrounds. According to Samuel Stein in *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*, the process of gentrification the final stage of a three-stage movement of capital between spaces (Stein 57). Initially, capital is invested into urban areas throughout the country with industrial manufacturing having a large presence in the city center with white families living in the city center. Then, following the Great Migration of Black people from the United States South to urban areas in the North and the West and the conclusion of World War II, industrial manufacturing leaves the city along with White families in a mass exodus of the city during White Flight. This second stage of massive disinvestment and property abandonment of the urban core results in capital leaving the city and moving to the suburban areas outside of the city. The final and current stage of this movement of capital between space is what many blighted neighborhoods in the urban core are currently experiencing. In the state of reinvestment through gentrification, capital is now leaving the suburbs and returning to the urban core in what some researchers call a “back to the city movement” (Stein 57; Neil 1979). In searching for places to maximize the accumulation of capital through reinvestment strategies and gentrification, public and private actors look for areas that provide the highest and best use of land. The highest and best use of land concept, according to Samuel Stein, “turns land use planning into real estate appraisal, positing that the best use for any piece of land is that which derives the greatest value at the lowest cost and allows buildings to actualize their full potential rent. Planning, according to this concept, allows city leaders and private actors to look like planning/zoning through the lens of economic potential rather than what is best for the

community (Stein 78). Each of these stages plays a pivotal role in understanding the fundamentals of current reinvestment strategies through gentrification.

The three stages indicated by Stein typically result in larger tax bases in urban centers for city leaders to fund their projects and maximized capital accumulation for private actors. Municipalities across the country have implemented varying reinvestment strategies that allow for tax breaks aimed at large corporations that are contingent on the following requirements: capital investment in communities, infrastructure investment to house middle- to high-income earners, rezoning land from residential to commercial, increasing in the number of bike lanes, establishing greenways, and investments in public transportation, all of which contribute to an increase in the price and value of property. These reinvestment strategies often result in the gentrification of middle- to low-income, racial minority neighborhoods in major urban areas.

In addition to Stein's stages of gentrification, MIT urban studies professor Philip Clay suggests a four-stage process of gentrification. The following steps created in 1979 and relayed by Moskowitz are strongly applicable to what is happening today: stage 1) individuals without government or institutional support move into a blighted neighborhood led initially by gays and lesbians looking to escape the homogenization of the suburbs. 2) real estate is bought up by those attracted to the changing neighborhood leading to more media coverage and often identified as an "up and coming" neighborhood. During this phase is when displacement begins 3) middle-class speculators take a more active role in the gentrifying process bringing additional capital into disinvested neighborhoods. In this phase, banks tend to lend more money than previously, and there is a larger police presence. Stage four indicates the final stage where the neighborhood is completely gentrified and only becomes wealthier. However, Moskowitz argues that a fifth and final stage is required to complete the process of gentrification. In the fifth phase, the

gentrified neighborhoods are no longer places where people can live normal lives but have transformed into a commodity and an increased source of capital for the global elite. Moskowitz also argues that the stages indicated by Clay can happen “simultaneously, or out of order” pushing in toward the same direction increasing “the worth of neighborhoods and cities until they become uninhabitable for average people” (Moskowitz 2017, 32-5).

As blighted communities in urban centers across the country are disinvested through discriminatory housing practices, private actors and city leaders — in Nashville and across the country — have identified these communities as areas of opportunity including but not limited to: investing capital, increasing the tax base, and ridding the city of blight. Scholars argue that the proponents of this neighborhood transformation often herald capital reinvestment as a way to increase property values, reduce the number of violent crimes, increase the tax base, consumption of fewer public services, rid these communities of blight and concentrated poverty, and establish a diverse array of eateries, coffee shops, and other types of eateries (Lee, Spain, and Umberson 1985; Shinault and Seltzer 2019). Moskowitz (2017) contributes to the scholarly conversation of reinvestment by arguing that the deregulation and privatization of public services, such as education, transportation, and housing, is a coping mechanism for late-stage capitalism (23). In support, Smith (1979) agrees with this argument by suggesting that in a society with a capital-centered economic structure, profit is the primary indicator of success, so by privatizing public services city leaders can increase competition and profits for private organizations.

By tearing down public and blighted housing, scholars are divided on who are the gentrifiers and who is moving into these newly gentrified neighborhoods. Contrary to the mainstream understanding of gentrification, Smith (1979) argues that the people who are

identified as moving into newly gentrified communities from out of town are more than likely from other areas of the city rather than outside city limits. While others argue that reinvestment and gentrification allow public officials and private actors to develop new, 'luxury' housing to attract wealthier, whiter, and younger homebuyers to the newly transformed neighborhood (Zuk and Chapple 2015). As a result, developers and city leaders are marketing these reinvested neighborhoods as a center of diversity and inclusion. Of the forced diversity that develops in integrated neighborhoods in urban centers across the country, Putnam (2007) suggests that these neighborhoods run the risk of losing social capital and social solidarity between the long-time residents and the immigrants into the neighborhood.

To make room for the in-movers, whether they be from the suburbs or other parts of the city, gentrifying neighborhoods run the risk of displacing long-time residents. In *Urban Displacement: A Reconnaissance*, authors Grier and Grier (1978, 8) define residential displacement as a process which "occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or immediate surroundings and which: 1) are beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent; 2) occur despite the household's having met all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; and 3) make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous or unaffordable. Moreover, Newman and Owen (1982) suggest that practices of disinvestment from landlords and acquisition of property for capital reinvestment increase the likelihood of displacing long-term residents. When analyzing the implications of capital reinvestment and gentrification in middle- to low-income, racial minority communities where they are disproportionately impacted by the color-blind racial ideology, an ideology that allows developers and local governments to move away from social policies and towards private enterprises, that is embedded in neoliberal redevelopment policies that sanitize

urban economic, racial, and social inequalities (Alavaré, 2017; Mele 2012). Mele, in particular, argues that the colorblind racial ideology, based on the idea of a post-racial society and supported by neoliberal redevelopment policies, shifts the responsibility for structural shortcomings from the state to the people, so they bear no obligation to provide public services that middle- to low-income, racial minority communities rely on (Mele, 2012). As city governments, in collaboration with private actors, continue to implement these policies without account for how they impact racial minority, middle- to low-income communities, neighborhoods like North Nashville increase the risk of rapid gentrification and residential displacement. The scholarly conversation surrounding reinvestment and gentrification provides a complex understanding in which several experts and researchers see gentrification as a way to bring vital resources and services back to neighborhoods that desperately need it while other experts see the practice as a disaster leading to the extreme residential displacement of middle- to low-income communities of color.

Understanding Gentrification from the Community

Through discriminatory housing practices, reinvestment, and gentrification communities have formed identities and perceptions in response. The next section explores the differing community perceptions of and identifications with reinvestment and gentrification. Scholars suggest that some members of the community support the added amenities, services, and opportunities, while other scholars argue that the new services are often instilled for the incoming whiter, wealthier population.

As a result of discriminatory housing practices, capital reinvestment, and White Flight in the South, the boundaries between racialized neighborhoods are often identified between major

roadways and interstates. In North Nashville, Hightower and Fraser (2019) say that the most distinct man-made neighborhood boundaries are the main thoroughfares of Rosa Parks Boulevard and Charlotte Avenue. Boundaries such as these form a sense of community within those boundaries that foster neighborhood identity, culture, and experiences. In “The Social Construction of a Gentrifying Neighborhood: Reifying and Redefining Identity and Boundaries in Inequality,” author Jackelyn Hwang (2016) exemplifies the importance of neighborhoods by saying, “...depending on the social context, residents may define their neighborhoods in different ways—to associate space with safety and comfort, to establish social identity or group membership to attract or exclude others, or at levels consistent with administrative districts such as school catchments, police precincts, and political wards” (100). As neighborhoods begin to gentrify and revitalize, the ways through which new and old community members identify with the neighborhood continue to grow.

Moreover, the ways through which community members in disinvested neighborhoods identify with their neighborhoods is significant. According to Brown, Brown, and Perkins (2004), confidence in residents’ neighborhoods, though rarely assessed in inner cities, and place attachment are necessary for the successful revitalization of neighborhoods. Even before the reinvestment practices of private actors and local governments, residents of disinvested communities maintain a certain level of attachment to their homes, the neighboring buildings, and construct social relationships with their communities (Saegert 1989). Brown, Brown, and Perkins (2004) argue that the positive attitudes developed by in-movers into disinvested neighborhoods have the potential to strengthen place attachment and confidence in revitalizing neighborhoods. Scholars are suggesting that there is a deep connection between the community and the place in which they live.

When it comes to exploring how community members make sense of gentrification and reinvestment, the responses are often mixed. When researching gentrification and reinvestment in New York City, Professor Lance Freeman of Columbia University says in his book, “A positive reaction to gentrification was a clear theme that emerged during my conversations with residents of Clinton Hill and Harlem. Some of the positive reactions were based on narrow economic self-interest” (Freeman 2006, 60). Moreover, Freeman suggests the three following schools of thought in how members of the community make sense of gentrification:

The first thought is that the new developments of the neighborhood are for the potential new whiter, wealthier residents who are moving into the neighborhood. In interviews with residents of Harlem, New York, Freeman found that residents perceived the influx of services and amenities came to fruition at the demands of the wealthier, whiter in-movers. The reason being that the white in-movers were more organized politically, secure financially, and more demanding of higher quality services and commodities. Freeman found that many residents of Harlem found that with an increased presence of the Police Department many public areas were found to be safer to perform recreational activities than before white people began to move into Harlem (Freeman 2006, 99). However, according to Atkinson (2003), the relationship between gentrification and race is an under-researched aspect of the urban processes and the effects of gentrification on Black communities receive less of a focus than the causes (Atkinson 2003). Rather, most of the literature involving this theory on gentrification proposed by Freeman — as it relates to race and residential displacement — is still being debated amongst scholars.

The second is that the improvements are coinciding with the influences of the market. Freeman found that the changes in the neighborhood were responding to the interests, living habits, and mere presence of white people. Residents of Harlem understood the changes in the

neighborhood as a coincidence rather than intentional reinvestment strategies. For example, several members of the community attribute the increased police presence as a way of the police being more likely to protect their kind (white people), rather than genuinely wanting to protect the neighborhood. Furthermore, other residents found that the increased presence of restaurants was in response to the whiter, wealthier population being more likely to go out to eat instead of staying home (Freeman 2006, 102-3). Freeman also found that many of the residents who shared this view were more likely to resent the whiter, wealthier in-movers, less likely to welcome the new residents and be more cynical of the reinvestment process (Freeman 2006, 107). From the perception of middle-class households in urban areas, Atkinson (2003) agrees with Freeman in that gentrification and reinvestment will make the city more like 'them', in that they will be able to develop stronger political groups, community identity, and a sense of security (Atkinson 2003).

The last is that the upgrades are a result of residents, whether they are part of the gentry or long-term residents of the community, fighting for a better, more improved neighborhood (Freeman 2006, 123). Community members with a history of activism with local advocacy groups tend to view the improvements of neighborhood amenities as a success of their activism and organization. Moreover, the residents involved in cooperative boards, or other community-based organizations, felt that the development of neighborhoods like Harlem and Clinton Hill was a result of the residents, regardless of whether they were indigenous to the community or part of the gentry (Freeman 2006, 101). Similarly, Steinmetz-Wood et al. (2017) found results in a study conducted of collective efficacy in gentrifying neighborhoods of Montreal, Canada. This study found that as Freeman suggests, gentrification boosts the perceived collective efficacy

of the neighborhood as opposed to a neighborhood that has not been gentrified where the perceived collective efficacy was lower (Steinmetz-Wood et al. 2017).

When applying these schools of thought to the North Nashville experience of colorblind reinvestment, Hightower and Fraser (2019) suggest that the people's perceptions of gentrification are shaped by how the city leaders and real estate developers disregard how neighborhood redevelopment has disproportionately impacted Black communities in Nashville's urban core (Hightower and Fraser 2019). Though there are positive perceptions of reinvestment and subsequent gentrification from native residents of gentrifying neighborhoods, it is difficult to gauge the perceptions of residents who have been displaced or forced to move to more affordable areas.

The scholarly conversations around discriminatory housing practices, capital reinvestment and gentrification, and changes in community perceptions are filled with complexities and nuance that have varying impacts on low- to middle-income Black communities. These complexities and nuances are often a result of time and place. As time passes and communities shift, each of the topics discussed above is going to have different impacts and varying implications depending on where the community is located and the period in history in which it is undergoing capital reinvestment. For example, the middle- to the low-income Black community in North Nashville experiencing the beginning of capital reinvestment and gentrification in the 2010s can have a different perspective and understanding of gentrification after witnessing the long-term implications of capital reinvestment and gentrification of major urban areas like San Francisco and New York City during the mid-twentieth century. Discriminatory housing practices, such as blockbusting, racialized residential segregation, and redlining, undeniably had negative implications on the success of middle- to

low- income, but scholars are conflicted on whether or not the effects of these practices are as severe and hindering as they were during the twentieth century. Lance Freeman points out the differing positions of people experiencing the same type of reinvestment in one specific area. Scholars also disagree when it comes to reinvestment and gentrification when it comes to who is moving into these neighborhoods and whether or not the implications of capital returning disinvested neighborhoods is necessarily harmful towards middle- to low-income Black communities in urban centers. This disagreement also translates into scholarly conversations that explore the relationship between capital reinvestment and gentrification. Some scholars argue that middle- to low-income Black communities welcome reinvestment as it provides them access to resources they were not able to access previously — such as health services, grocery stores, public transportation, etc. Other scholars disagree and suggest that the changes to these communities and the capital being reinvested are not for the people already living there, but rather to attract new wealthier, whiter families to increase the tax base of those communities.

The gap in the literature review that my project looks to fill is how the understanding of capital reinvestment through gentrification shapes the possibilities for the people who live in the gentrifying community. My project aims to understand how members of the community are impacted by the way public and private actors are gentrifying their community, not whether it is good or bad. With the history of racial segregation and contributions to Southern culture through education, music, hospitality, and religion the experience of Black communities in urban areas in the South — in this case, North Nashville — provide a unique and nuanced case study that cannot be analyzed through the experiences and perceptions of Black communities in other urban areas in the United States. This project specifically looks away from megaregions such as New York or the San Francisco Bay Area, two areas that have undergone massive reinvestment over

the past several decades, and looks toward midmajor cities like Nashville that are seeing increased cost of living and capital reinvestment as a result of developers and investors looking for a source of increased capital.

Methodology

This capstone project utilizes a mixed-methods approach to explore the gap in the scholarly literature of discriminatory housing practices, reinvestment, and gentrification, and how communities make sense of gentrification. These chosen research methods — described in the subsequent paragraphs — are the best way to gather specific data to analyze changes in socioeconomic demographics and understanding native residents' personal experience with capital reinvestment and gentrification given the limitations impacting this project.

Out of the myriad of research methods from which to choose, semi-structured interviews and archival study are the most appropriate methods to utilize for this Capstone Project. My research question necessitated exploring the use of reinvestment strategies and subsequent gentrification by public and private actors for capital accumulation in low-income, Black communities in North Nashville and how it impacts the residents' sense of community. To understand the historical and current discriminatory housing practices, I utilized resources such as newspapers, maps, external studies, and other documents that informed my research question. Furthermore, this capstone project applied a semi-structured interview method to obtain the personal experience and understanding of gentrification from the residents and members of community-based organizations in the North Nashville neighborhood.

Semi-structured interviews are a type of research method that transitions from opened-ended to theoretical questions through the use of interview segments. One of the most important benefits gained from the use of this method is the ability to gather information based on their lived experiences (Galletta and Cross 2013, 24). In addition to the semi-structured interviews method, I also utilized an archival study to gather statistical and historical data. This method of research required the examination and analysis of newspaper clippings and articles, photographs, external studies, maps, and other documented material to provide a historical record of a specific area (Galletta and Cross 2013, 25). Both of these methods are important in researching my Capstone Project.

The collection of this data played a vital role in understanding how members of the community make sense of gentrification. Without the perspective and lived experiences of the community and historical to present-day archival records, my thesis does not adequately satisfy my research question. However, the collection of this data proved to be a challenge given the shelter-in-place restrictions placed upon most urban areas across the United States of America as a result of the growing global COVID-19 pandemic during the duration of this project. Given these restrictions, I relied heavily on telecommunications to interview community members, community leaders, and members of nonprofit organizations working within these communities. By speaking with members of community organizations — at first through local organizations such as the Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH) — I utilized their connections, through snowball sampling, and knowledge of the community to interview a diverse group of people. This Capstone Project also relied on local news publications to gain additional perspectives of the community for my archival study.

When utilizing both the semi-structural interview and archival study methods, there were benefits and obstacles to each. The semi-structural interview benefited my Capstone project by providing firsthand, the real-life experience of the people living in the area that I am studying. It allows this project to uplift and amplifies the voices and stories of members of the Black community in North Nashville that have long been muzzled and silenced by the powers that be. This project included a wide range of interviewees from residents, academics, non-profit workers in fields such as affordable housing and homelessness. This method crafted a bottom-up perspective that is rare in the scholarly conversation regarding capital investment strategies and gentrification of low-income, Black communities in the urban core. The data gathered from the archival study method allowed my project to provide a specific framework to view and analyze the socioeconomic changes of North Nashville. This framework provided my research — and the scholarly conversation — a history of the community in the context of capital reinvestment and gentrification that has been left out.

However, in applying the mixed-methods approach to conduct research, there were several obstacles faced. The primary restriction in conducting this project was the inability to travel to Nashville from San Francisco due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Guidance from the University of San Francisco did not permit travel for the duration of the pandemic. Without traveling to Nashville to interview members of the community, I relegated to telephone and telecommunication interviews. This largely restricted access to data and people in the community that would have otherwise been easier to access. As highlighted briefly in the paragraphs above, this project relied heavily on telecommunication to gather data and conduct interviews. As such, this project excluded many people who did not have access to the internet, computer, telephone, etc. or did not have the time/availability to meet virtually. Furthermore,

during the research part of this project, Nashville was hit with a violent, destructive Winter weather system that limited residents to resources necessary for survival. Due to resources stretched then by community organizations in Nashville, several organizations were unable to meet due to the increased demands of the community following the unusually destructive Winter storm. The limitations of this project impact how much and specifically what data is gathered and limit access to members of the community.

Community History & Positionality Statement

The neighborhood of North Nashville in Nashville, Tennessee—one of the city’s oldest Black communities—is one of the last predominately Black neighborhoods left in the city’s urban core. This section offers a brief history of the established Black community in North Nashville and provides context to the scope of my capstone project and provide a lens to understand the different ways through which North Nashville has experienced capital reinvestment and how the community identifies with it. It underscores the ways through which North Nashville has already experienced reinvestment and the lasting impacts previous reinvestment strategies had on the community to the present. Furthermore, it explores the natural boundaries used to identify North Nashville, the racialized discriminatory housing practices utilized against Black people in the community, the construction of Interstate educational disinvestment, the reinvestment efforts following the violent tornado in March of 2020, and the use of tax credits through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs from the federal government. The community of North Nashville has experienced capital reinvestment before and are not unfamiliar with the impacts and effects of reinvestment in their community. Even through

the historical capital reinvestment of North Nashville, members of the community have held strong to the identity of their neighborhood as well as the decades long development of culture in the community through food, education, and music.

As other neighborhoods in the urban core — such as East Nashville, Edgehill, Germantown, and Antioch — see capital reinvestment into their neighborhoods, North Nashville is one of the few neighborhoods in which city leaders have not revitalized through capital reinvestment. North Nashville is directly next to downtown Nashville, a place now filled with piercingly bright lights, honkytonks, and at least one sporting event happening at the nearby Bridgestone Arena or Nissan Stadium on the other side of the Cumberland River. At approximately eight square miles and roughly 13% of the total land area of Nashville, North Nashville's boundaries are defined by railroads and major interstates to the west and south while the Cumberland River defines its north and east boundaries (“A General Plan For Nashville & Davidson County: Volume III: Community Plans”). North Nashville is home to several prominent historically black colleges and universities such as Fisk University, Tennessee State, Watkins College of Art and Design, and the South's first medical school for Black people, Meharry Medical College. North Nashville's strong commitment to education — so much so that Nashville is often referred to as the “Athens of the South” due to its large number of institutions of higher education — also played a significant part in Nashville being dubbed “Music City” with the world-renowned Jubilee Singers attracting prominent recording artists such as Jimi Hendrix and Etta James to perform at local nightclubs in the neighborhood (“A General Plan For Nashville & Davidson County: Volume III: Community Plans”). This is not only a testament to the influence North Nashville has had on the city's identity at large but how Black people in

North Nashville formed their own identity while the powers that be left the community to their own devices to succeed.

From the natural boundaries defined by geography to the artificial boundaries —railways, interstates, and other major roadways such as Charlotte Pike — crafted by policymakers and urban planners to strategically force Black communities into one specific part of the city. As one of the most prominent Black communities in the city, North Nashville still maintains a relatively high percentage of residents who identify as Black or Black — approximately 65% — while other neighborhoods such as East Nashville and the Edgehill neighborhood in South Nashville have seen a steady decline in Black people’ share of the population in those neighborhoods (“Policy Map”). However, according to recent data United States Census from 2007 to 2016, North Nashville has seen a decline in Black people in each of the Census tracts located within the boundaries of North Nashville. According to one of the census tracts encompassing Germantown, Salemtown, and Hope Gardens — all smaller neighborhoods within North Nashville — Black people’ share of the population declined from 60% to 38% while white people’s share of the population grew exponentially from 36% of the population in 2007 to almost 59% 2016 (Reicher 2018).

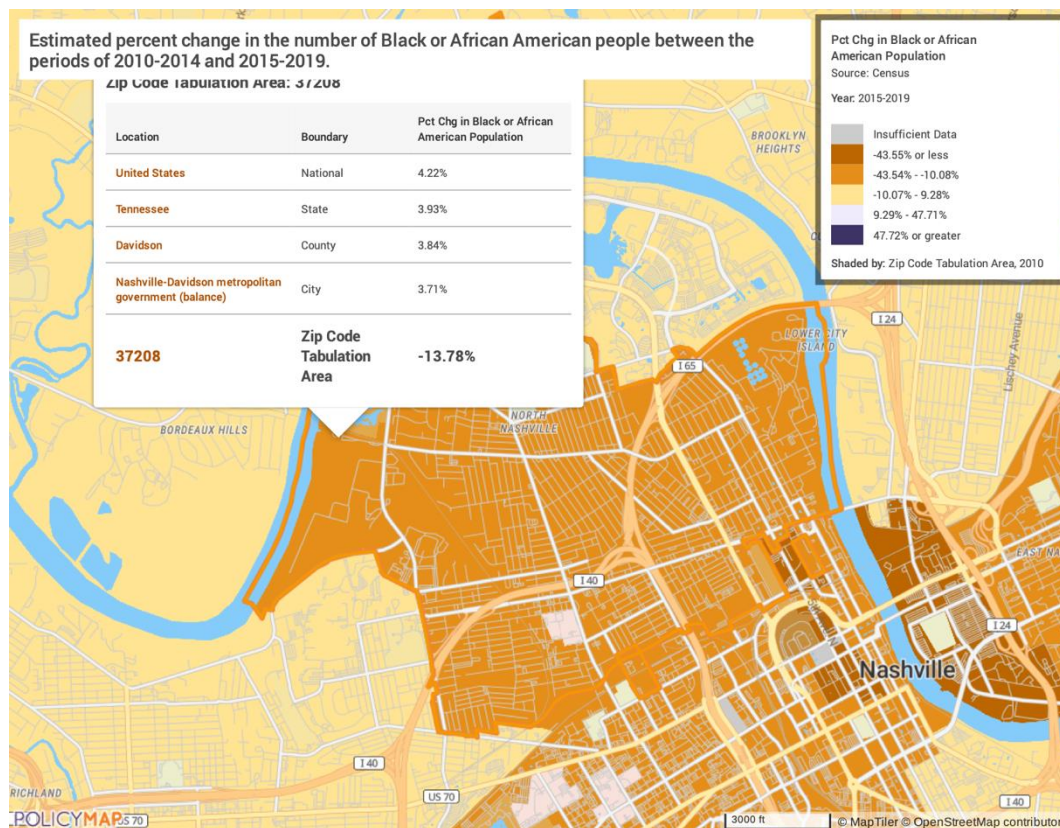
North Nashville's place in the history of the city at large began following the emancipation of enslaved Black people in the American South during the Civil War. With the communities developing around the commercial corridor on Jefferson Street, the established institutions of higher education, and a strong commitment to Christianity through the plethora of Black churches littered throughout the community, North Nashville was an area of the city viewed by Black people as a place for opportunity, community, and safety.

The strong sense of community was in part born out of racialized discriminatory housing practices often utilized by housing authorities and mortgage lenders in urban centers across the country. North Nashville was also one of the very few places Black people were allowed to take out a mortgage to buy their own homes in the city because of the use of redlining by the Federal Housing Authority. These loans were typically high in interest while the homes were low in value-creating financial hardship for many Black families in North Nashville. Redlining, as defined by Richard Rothstein in *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, as bankers “refusing to give mortgages to Black people or extracting unusually severe terms from them with subprime loans. (Rothstein 2017, vii). As a result, North Nashville was deemed a “hazardous” and considered a dangerous area for non-Black residents to live. The more affluent neighborhoods, such as Belle Meade and Green Hills, were labeled as the best neighborhoods and were primarily comprised of white households that much more attractive mortgages with better interest rates. With home and property ownership heralded as a way for Americans to grow wealth in this country, Black people in North Nashville were not afforded the same American ‘dream’ that white families in the same city were all but guaranteed (Aycock 2020). For example, an analysis conducted by Redfin, a real estate brokerage company based in Seattle, Washington, found that a homeowner in an area considered ‘best’ under the Federal Housing Authority standards had more approximately 131% more equity than a homeowner owning property in an area deemed ‘hazardous’ by the same standards. According to Redfin the growing homeownership gap between black families and white families in Nashville can be directly attributed to the discriminatory housing practices utilized by the Federal Housing Authority in the mid-twentieth century. In an interview with Redfin, Chief economist Daryl Fairweather said, “The expanding homeownership gap between Black and

white families can in part be traced back to diminished home equity due to redlining, as it's one major reason why Black families today have less money than white families to purchase homes either as first-time or move-up homebuyers," (Anderson, 2020).

Since the founding of North Nashville has a predominately Black community in North Nashville, residents of the area have witnessed a myriad of ways the State has invested into the community — often at the detriment to the neighborhood. The most prominent example of policymakers directly impacting the Black communities in North Nashville was through the construction of Tennessee's interstate system. Nashville is a central location for the intersection of highly trafficked highways known as Interstate 65, Interstate 24, and Interstate 40. The last of which has had a lasting negative impact on the communities surrounding Jefferson Street in North Nashville. In its original plan in 1957, Interstate 40 was to be constructed eastward along specific railways and already constructed corridors through Nashville. However, upon further inspection, the intended path of Interstate 40 would come to close to the wealthy, exclusive city of Belle Meade, Vanderbilt University, and Centennial Park — a large green space located adjacent to the prestigious Vanderbilt University (Wynn 2019). In light of this, State officials offered an alternative plan to city leaders that would construct Interstate 40 near the commercial corridor of Jefferson Street and directly through North Nashville. With little to no consultation with the public in how this new path would impact the community, large parts of North Nashville were bulldozed as nearly one hundred square blocks, that also included nearly twenty commercial blocks on Jefferson Street, were leveled for the construction of Interstate 40 and the adjoining campuses of Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College was severed (Wynn 2019). As a result, the tight-knit, prominent Black community in North Nashville was fractured as a result of strategic transportation investment strategies implemented without

considering the concerns of the community members. (Wynn 2019). The following map indicates the shift in racial demographics where the Black population in North Nashville fell by almost 14% between 2010-2014 and 2015-2019:



In addition to shifting demographics, another prominent, contemporary example of the Nashville selective disinvestment strategy can be found in its education system. The City of Nashville’s commitment to education is exemplified in historic institutions such as Vanderbilt University, Belmont University, Fisk University, and other prominent institutions of higher education. Vanderbilt University, in particular, is often rated amongst the United States’ top research institutions with emphases on law, medicine, and education (“Vanderbilt University”). Nashville’s commitment to higher education, in addition to the construction of a full-scale replica of the iconic Parthenon during the Centennial Exposition and the Greek-style State

Capitol Building, resulted in it colloquially known as the ‘Athens of the South’ in a reference to ancient Athenians emphasis on learning and education.

However, the reputation of Nashville as a center for educational opportunities and learning does not necessarily extend beyond the institutions of higher education that are littered throughout the entire city. Outside of the prominent universities of Fisk University, Tennessee State University, and Meharry Medical College, high schools in North Nashville are lagging in graduate rates, college readiness, and standardized test scores. According to the US News & World Report, Pearl Cohen Magnet High School — formerly one of Nashville’s two public schools for Black children of which makes up 94% of the total student population —has an approximate graduate rate of 75% and a college readiness rating of 6.5 out of 100 in 2020. The US News & World Report defines the college readiness index as “a weighted average based 25% on the AP [Advanced Placement] or IB [International Baccalaureate] participation rate and 75% on the quality-adjusted AP or IB participation rate. Both exams are used when applicable. The maximum value is 100” (“Pearl Cohn Magnet High School”). In comparison, Nashville’s Hume-Fogg Magnet School, a school with a population of 75% white and 24% Black, maintains a 100% graduate rate and a college readiness rating of 94.5 out of 100 (“Hume-Fogg Magnet High School”).

Though the United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs Board of Education* effectively ended segregation policies in public schools across the country, Nashville public school officials—and most other public school systems in the South—dragged their feet on integrating public schools in the urban center. So much so, that it was not until the 1980s, nearly thirty years after the *Brown vs Board* decision, that public school officials in Nashville developed a plan to integrate public schools (Gamoran and An, 2016). However, according to

Gamoran and An, in 1999 the plan was met with criticism and irritation over the complexity of bussing, the persistent gap in academic achievement between white students and Black students, and the ‘burden’ of bussing racial minority students across Nashville lead city officials to abandon their desegregation attempts and instead allowed students to attend schools in their local neighborhoods (Gamoran and An, 2016). Instead of continuing their plans of desegregation, city leaders opted to construct new, ‘enhanced option’ schools which brought specialized resources to underperforming, disinvested schools which are found in neighborhoods — including but not limited to North Nashville— with high concentrations of poverty. According to Gamoran and An, enhanced option schools “were granted reduced class size, an extended school year, and some mix of additional resources including preschool options, after-school tutoring, and social and health services” (Gamoran and An 2016, 45). The authors believe that the compensatory methods used by public school officials in the enhanced option schools are likely to shrink the gap in academic achievement between white students in better-resourced schools and Black students in under-resourced schools (Gamoran and An 2016).

With the approximate \$10 million per year, the Barnes Housing Trust Fund receives, new construction of affordable homes and the preservation of current affordable housing is vital for the established communities in North Nashville and other neighborhoods under the threat of gentrification. According to a 2015 housing report released by then-Mayor Megan Barry claiming that Nashville would need to build 31,000 affordable units by the year 2025. However, even with the investments from the Barnes Housing Trust Fund and the understanding from the Mayor’s office of the need to build more affordable housing for long-time residents, rent in every census tract that makes up North Nashville has increased significantly since 2010 (*Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program Developments*). With the \$10 million a year going into the Barnes

Housing Trust Fund it would take 63 years for Nashville to meet the demands of 2025. The rising cost of housing and lack of new affordable housing construction has left some residents of North Nashville do not think that building new affordable housing for long-time residents is not a top priority list for city leaders even though the demand for affordable housing continues to grow in North Nashville. When talking about what constitutes as affordable housing, one resident of North Nashville described the city's definition of what is considered to be affordable housing coupled with the rising cost of living as "irreconcilable".

The growing concern of lack of affordable housing in North Nashville is also exacerbated by the expiration of several affordable housing developments that were kept affordable using the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program. According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, "gives State and LIHTC-allocating agencies the equivalent of approximately \$8 billion in annual budget authority to issue credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households" (Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)). The expiration of affordable housing developments funded by the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program allows for these properties to lose their affordability status further worsening the affordable housing crisis in North Nashville. Furthermore, many of the programs that are not expired in North Nashville will expire within the next decade leaving very residents of North Nashville few options for guaranteed affordable housing in their community (*Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program Developments*).

In addition to the expiration of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program developments intensifying the housing crisis in Nashville, developers are also are utilizing a term, coined by Hightower and Fraser, known as "reverse blockbusting" (Hightower and Fraser 2019). In a

reference to the original blockbusting—a discriminatory housing practice utilized in the mid-1900s where developers would play on white families’ fear of Black families moving into their neighborhood to quickly sell their home for less than it is worth and then sell it for a much higher price to Black families—reverse blockbusting allows for developers to buy up large swaths of land in urban areas for a cheap price allowing for larger areas to be developed quickly. This allows for a complete neighborhood remake in the image of the developer and rejects the need for urban pioneers — a term crafted by Weninger where new in-movers into a community where the majority are members of the original community and are typically lower class (Weninger 2009). By purchasing and flipping these large areas of land in North Nashville and other areas of the city, for-profit, private developers are increasing the value of land and directly causing North Nashville to continue to become unaffordable for the residents who currently live in the area and identify strongly with the community established through the maintaining of affordable housing options for middle- to low-income families.

Given the extensive history of the community in North Nashville, my position as a White researcher from the University of San Francisco and my subjectivity and awareness should be noted. As a native Tennessean, I grew up in the rural farm town of Spring Hill, Tennessee approximately forty-five minutes south of the soon-to-be metropolis of Nashville. During my adolescence, I attended church regularly at Edgehill United Methodist Church in the South Nashville neighborhood of Edgehill. A haven for unhoused Nashvillians, the underserved and marginalized, the LGBTQ+ community, and many more populations not mentioned here, Edgehill United Methodist Church had a significant impact on my perceptions of how public policy impacts those left behind by the people at the top at a very young age.

Following my departure from Nashville after receiving my Associate of Arts degree from Columbia State Community College, I began taking classes in the Black Studies department at the University of California at Santa Barbara where I would eventually graduate with a bachelor's degree in the said field. When initially learning how capitalism and reinvestment impacted communities of color in urban centers across the country, I was able to witness this firsthand in Nashville in many divested neighborhoods. As I traveled back and forth between Santa Barbara and Middle Tennessee, I would often see new homes—colloquially referred to as “Tall & Skinnies”—on property previously occupied by low-income rental units or homes owned predominately black people of color. My experience existing in these communities as they continue to gentrify coupled with my academic experience at the University of California, Santa Barbara provides me with a unique lens that I believe to be both beneficial and necessary to appropriately conduct this Capstone project. My experience will allow me to maintain an equitable lens through which to view and analyze the data while also prioritizing policy recommendations that benefit the community of North Nashville and other communities experiencing capital reinvestment.

As I conduct this project and engage with members of the community and community organizations some obstacles can impede my research. My position as a White researcher could hinder my ability to secure interviews with members of the community in North Nashville and those who are directly experiencing gentrification and capital reinvestment. In my Capstone Project, I want to position myself as someone who grown up in the surrounding area but did not have the same experience. Additionally, I want to thwart any kind of impending colonization of research, stories, or data by uplifting the voices and stories from these communities and presenting them from the perspective of the people.

Data Analysis

Provided the historical foundation of the complex, nuanced, and rich history of North Nashville—and my position as a researcher—the data analysis section will analyze semi-structured interviews, interviews conducted with news organizations, and specific maps North Nashville obtained through the research methods identified in the aforementioned sections. To directly answer my research question: How do reinvestment practices developed by public and private actors in Nashville impact Black’s sense of community within North Nashville? I will argue that through the restructuring of physical space reinvestment practices develop by public and private actors in North Nashville erase the conditions in which community is forged along and across identity lines. The restructuring of space inhibits Black members of the community the ability to see a reflection of themselves in their community which denies them a voice in the place where they built their histories. The following section is broken up into three separate sections where I analyze 1) the physical restructuring of space in North Nashville 2) the effects of the reinvestment strategies on the community and 3) the question of voice in the community. The following section analyzes recent reinvestment practices and gentrification of North Nashville over the last 10 to 15 years. The subsequent analysis builds on the physical restructuring of space, the altered understanding of reinvestment and gentrification, and the reduction of voiced experienced in decades preceding the data presented here.

Physical Restructuring of Space

The physical restructuring of space in North Nashville is one of the primary ways public and private actors in Nashville have implemented reinvestment strategies in the urban core. The physical restructuring of space alters the way residents recognize areas within the neighborhood the physical and cultural boundaries established throughout the history of the city. One of the primary examples of this was as a result of a violent, destructive tornado that ripped through the city in the early morning hours of March 3, 2020. As the tornado ripped through the rural and urban areas in Middle Tennessee, many neighborhoods and iconic structures — such as entertainment venue The Basement East in East Nashville — were either damaged or destroyed leading to the loss of 25 lives in total. The tornado upended cars, uprooted trees, shattered windows, destroyed powerlines, and littered the streets with extreme amounts of debris.

In a neighborhood where the Black population fell dramatically over five years prior, residents were feeling fearful and anxious following the tornado that ripped through their historic community. According to data gathered from PolicyMap, the population of residents identifying as Black or African American fell approximately 14% between the periods of 2010-2014 and 2015-2019 (“Change in the number of Black or African American people between the periods of 2010-2014 and 2015-2019”). One member of the community said, “a lot of the people, especially in North Nashville, were scared that gentrification was going to be in overdrive and the neighborhood would be decimated.” In another interview I conducted with someone who works with the community in North Nashville they shared a similar understanding of the aftermath after the destructive tornado by saying, “You know, quite often this last year, right after the tornado, like literally days after, there were a lot of developers calling people who their own homes were demolished and asking them, you know, low balling them asking to buy their homes.” In

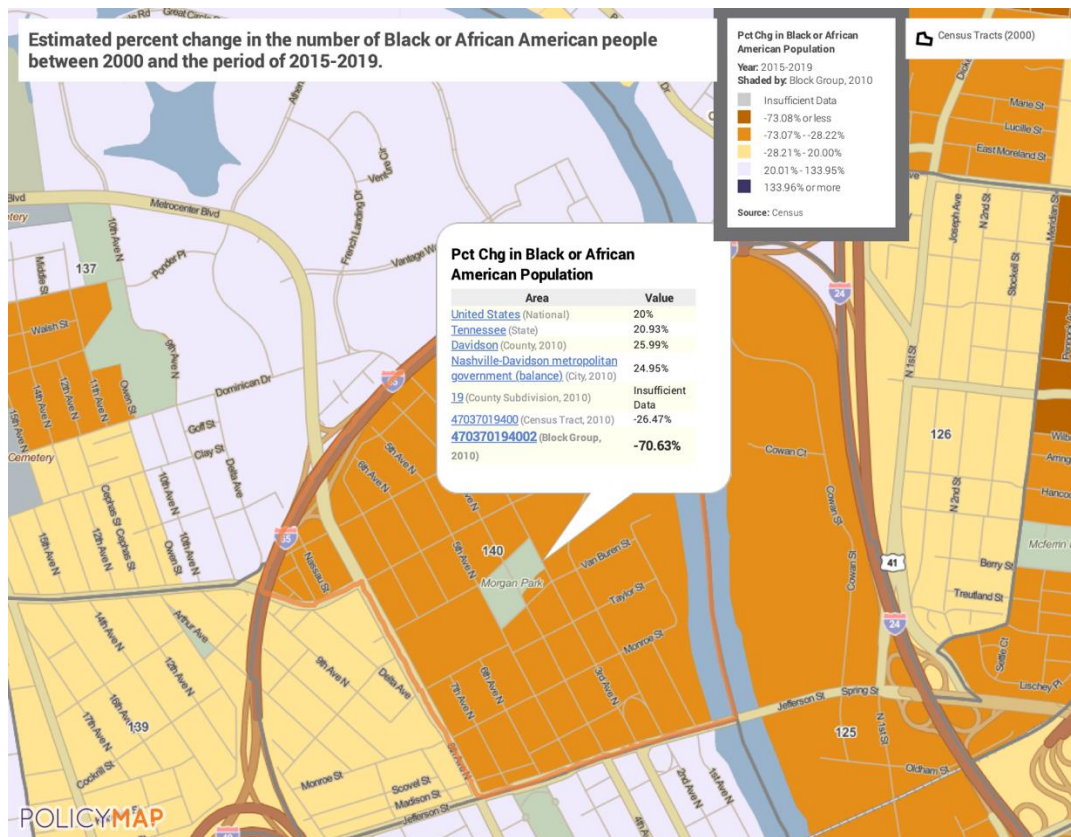
response to the developers moving into the neighborhood following the extreme weather, North Nashville resident and singer Adia Victoria said in an interview with *The Tennessean* — a local newspaper based in Nashville — that the developers were, “going to come in and they’re going to change our neighborhoods. That’s what they do. I believe, unfortunately, that this latest natural disaster is just going to expedite the whole process” (Tamburin 23 Dec. 2020). Each of these sentiments expressed in response to the devastation experienced in North Nashville indicates that there is an intense rebuke of how public and private actors are reinvesting in North Nashville. As search-and-rescue missions began across the city and the Greater Nashville region, the residents of North Nashville witnessed a scene that was all too familiar. Nearly two decades ago, the deeply rooted Black community in East Nashville — located on the other side of the Cumberland River — saw the roots of their community ripped from the ground as their homes and businesses lay in rubble while developers swooped in at the opportunity for a rapid development process in a divested neighborhood.

Following the violent, destructive tornado in 1998, East Nashville saw massive reinvestment fueled partly by insurance money that led to a ‘hipster renaissance’ of sorts. The insurance money led to the construction of new, trendy bars and restaurants and to the subsequent gentrification of East Nashville (Fausset and Cavendish 4 Mar. 2020). The reinvestment strategies implemented decades ago led to the change in character, demographics, and culture of East Nashville — an outcome that residents of North Nashville did not welcome. In an interview with *The Tennessean*, Nashville City Councilwoman Delishia Danielle Porterfield said, “We saw what happened before [in East Nashville], and we are aware of the situation so we’re trying to provide resources so that the community is not prayed on. This is what community is about” (Tamburin 7 Mar. 2020). The swift organizing efforts from

community organizations — such as Gideon’s Army and the Equity Alliance — kept predatory developers at a distance and made a significant effort to keep people in their homes.

Following the fears of gentrification of North Nashville after the tornado ripped through the city, residents witnessed a slow recovery that appeared to keep attempts to rapidly gentrify the neighborhood at bay in the aftermath of the storm. Nearly seven months later, WSMV — a local broadcast news affiliate — reported that Gideon’s Army sent groups to canvas the neighborhood for families who may still need supplies or additional recovery help. However, in an interview with WSMV, the volunteer coordinator reported signs of gentrification in the devastated community when she said “What I’ve noticed and a lot of others who do this work have noticed is the houses that have been completely rebuilt are the gentrified houses out north. That’s very clear...the homes that have been fully ‘recovered’ are homes of folks that are not historically from North Nashville” (Taylor 1 Sept. 2020). The lasting implications of the destructive, violent weather event that occurred in the early morning hours on March 3, 2020, will be difficult to convey given that not enough time has passed to properly measure its impact. With North Nashville reeling from the devastation of the violent tornado, the residents did not have to look far to see what the future of their community would look like if it were to be redeveloped.

The ways through which North Nashville has experienced reinvestment practices by public and private actors before the decimating tornado in 2020 is exemplified through the creation of Germantown — an area formerly associated with North Nashville and the Black communities that lived there — as its neighborhood. The following map depicts the percent change in the number of Black or Black people in Germantown between 2000 and 2015-2019.



The map above portrays a 70.63% decline in the Black population in the Germantown neighborhood. Between the years 2000 and 2015-2019 the block group depicted above has seen an increase of 515% in home value with home sale prices averaging \$391,000 during the year 2017 (“Estimated median sale price of residential homes sold in 2017”). Moreover, rents in Germantown have increased over 70% between 2010-2014 and 2015-2019 to an average of approximately \$1,700 per month (“Estimated percent change in the median gross rent between the periods of 2010-2014 and 2015-2019”). Within the last decade, Germantown has seen the establishment of eclectic restaurants — such as City House, Henrietta Red, and Rolf & Daughters — coupled with artisan coffee shops, wellness centers, and new, luxury apartment complexes located in proximity to the neighboring amenities. The market-rate apartments in Germantown use accessibility to the restaurants, wellness centers, coffee shops, greenways, nearby and its proximity to downtown too oftentimes used to lure young, white professionals to

live in their luxury apartments and condos (Stein 49-50). Witnessing the creation of a new neighborhood catered to younger, whiter professionals in the geographical space of a predominately Black community fueled a sentiment within these communities following the destruction of the tornado in March of 2020. This sentiment is exemplified when Aida Victoria said to *The Tennessean* in the wake of the tornado, “We have already got words from residents of getting approached by developers. We got to keep the character of these communities...we owe it to the people here to keep their homes and help them stay where they are” (Sleem 8 Mar. 2020). This sentiment of maintaining the character of the community and the desire to keep people in their homes signifies that the people in these communities want to be here and that a feeling in the community has developed that the developers looking to reinvest and revitalize their communities are doing so to accumulate capital and provide the city with new housing to increase their tax base. The space where communities were formed, singers sang, students learned, chicken became hot, was now being restructured into market-rate homes for a different socioeconomic group of people that would shore up Nashville’s tax base to fund a variety of other projects elsewhere in the city and to pay off debts owed by the city.

Following the recovery effort put forth by community members and organizations, some fears that the physical restructuring of space in the community were coming true. Following the aftermath of the violent tornado in the Spring of 2020, an interviewee who works in the community said, “... like they are this is a predatory behavior they're going in because they know that people are vulnerable, maybe, you know, they don't think that they'll be able to rebuild...”. These types of behaviors from predatory developers have continued for months in the wake of the tornado and have only worsened in the time since. One member of the community’s experience with attempting to sell her home signifies that the people buying and

developing homes in North Nashville are not residents, but people from all over the country taking advantage of the booming Nashville housing market. Ivery Frazier said of her 12th Avenue North home, “I put my house on the market, just to see what would happen. I got calls from all over the country,” (Telli June 26, 2020). However, the development of North Nashville continues at a rapid speed. Another interviewee said in response to the physical restructuring of her neighborhood, “And if you stayed away for maybe a month or two, six weeks, from any particular section of North Nashville when you went back, you could go down whole streets and not recognize 80% of the houses.” It is the aforementioned changes that are the easiest to identify, the easiest to understand, and the easiest for people from the outside to think “I could live here.” This sentiment indicates that the developers are investing in the neighborhood to create something attractive to whiter, wealthier young professionals looking to move to Nashville. As suggested by the interviewee, the changes in the physical structure of the homes in North Nashville reveal the developers have no interest in maintaining the character or preserving the history of the community.

The lasting implications of the destructive, violent weather event that occurred in the early morning hours on March 3, 2020, indicate just one of the many ways the city looks to reinvest and reconstruct the physical. One of Nashville’s primary sources of financial support to build affordable housing in Nashville is the Barnes Housing Trust Fund. According to the Office of the Mayor’s website, The Barnes Housing Trust Fund “makes competitive grants to nonprofit housing dousing developers to increase affordable housing options for Nashvillians” and provides funding for the “preservation and creation of affordable rental and homeowner units and other supportive efforts to encourage long-term affordability” (*The Barnes Housing Trust Fund FY 2020 Annual Report Delivering Housing Affordability Solutions for Nashville*). Since

its creation in 2013 by then-Mayor Karl Dean, the Metropolitan Housing Trust Fund Commission — the commission in charge of investing the funds from the Barnes Housing Trust Fund — has invested over \$44 million to develop and preserve affordable housing through the Barnes Housing Trust Fund (*The Barnes Housing Trust Fund FY 2020 Annual Report Delivering Housing Affordability Solutions for Nashville*). Even with a fund specifically dedicated to the creation and preservation of affordable housing in Nashville, the city's housing crisis worsens and middle- to low-income communities in North Nashville are put at risk. The consequences of the structural makeover of neighborhoods travel beyond just the structural erasure of a community that has a deep, strong connection to the land on which they have existed for decades. With the changing demographics, neighborhood organizations representing the community in decision-making bodies also resemble the effects of how capital reinvestment and gentrification have impacted physical space in North Nashville. As structures begin the change and new whiter, wealthier people move into North Nashville, representation in neighborhood organizations inevitably reflects this change. The effects of reinvestment and gentrification have resulted in a significant impact on how natives of North Nashville identify with the reinvestment strategies and the community itself.

Effects of Reinvestment on Community

When conducting interviews with various members of the community and individuals who work with them in North Nashville, as well as gathering interviews conducted outside of this project — through news publications such as *The Tennessean* and WKRN — on reinvestment on North Nashville, one of the most prominent themes identified was erasure. Following Jim Crow segregation and the discriminatory housing practices of the mid-twentieth

century in Nashville, Black people in North Nashville established a tight-knit, impactful, and influential community that is currently seeing massive reinvestment strategies rapidly erasing the physical space of North Nashville's Black community. The history rooted in this community influenced the distinct ways North Nashville molded the neighborhood's identity. That is, a feeling of a recognizable Black community — be it the transformation of physical space or the decline in Black representation in community organizations — was disappearing. In an interview with News Channel 5, Pastor Curtis Bryant of Greater Heights Missionary Baptist Church said, "The soul of this neighborhood for many, many years has been mostly black families," (Horan Mar 3, 2021). The very fabric of the community — sewn together by major contributions to the local community and the culture of Nashville itself — is being ripped apart at the seams. The threat of uprooting Black communities is not lost on the people who have lived in the community for decades. When thinking about the restructuring of North Nashville for the whiter, wealthier in-movers, Pastor Bryant said, "The properties can go. The units, but who are the people who comes into the neighborhood. Do they still have love for each other? What's a real community. Those are foundational questions," (Horan Mar. 3, 2021). The questions asked by Pastor Bryant symbolize a feeling from the native residents of North Nashville are wearing and skeptical of the reinvestment strategies implemented in their neighborhoods. The soul of the community, as Pastor Bryant put it, is at risk of being manipulated and altered to address the needs and desires of the gentry. In response to the increasing property values and ever-increasing property taxes as a result of the reinvestment practices, Alisha Haddock, Director of community-based services for Catholic Charities of Tennessee and Director of the McGruder Family Resource Center in North Nashville said in an interview with the *Tennessee Register*, "We wanted to find ways to slow it down. We were losing community members left and right. We want them to survive and thrive in

communities they know and love, neighborhoods they grew up in,” (Telli June 26, 2020).

Haddock suggests here that the community is changing in ways that are becoming unrecognizable to the remaining long-time residents. By slowing down the reinvestment, North Nashville would have the opportunity to safeguard the community — and the history embedded in it — from being dismantled by public and private actors looking to amass capital and increase the tax base for the city.

Moreover, members of the community want to stay in the community that they’ve built over the past several decades. The shared history between members of the community motivates people to stay in the neighborhood. North Nashville resident Kathleen Wilkes-Payne said in response to the flood of inquiries from developers, “Every year I save up all the little letters and I burn them because I have no intention of selling,” (Wallace July 22, 2020). The established community shared and valued by the Black families in North Nashville is deeply rooted in the history each person helped create. The history rooted in this community influenced the distinct ways North Nashville molded the neighborhood’s identity. The history entrenched in this community led to the founding of well-revered institutions of higher education such as Tennessee State University, Meharry Medical College, and Fisk University. The history led to cultural culinary contributions such as the world-renowned hot chicken made famous by local Black-owned business, Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack. A concept now repeated by other hot restaurants — even making an appearance on Kentucky Fried Chicken’s menu — and led to the creation of its festival — The Nashville Hot Chicken Festival. The history rooted in this community played a vital role in Nashville’s reputation as Music City, USA, through the contribution of the Fisk Jubilee Singers who toured the United States and Europe while performing for audiences including President Ulysses S. Grant at the White House, and Victoria,

Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. North Nashville's history as a Black community and the influence that carries was not unrecognizable in neighborhood organizations tasked with serving and representing the interests of the community.

As structures begin the change and new whiter, wealthier people move into North Nashville, representation in neighborhood organizations inevitably reflects this change. In an interview with a member of the North Nashville community, the interviewee recalled the changing composition of neighborhood associations by saying, "But I saw a night where were all the people that I've known for all these years, where are they, they were gone". This quote in particular is powerful in that Black members of the community are physically no longer present in a body designed to represent the community. The community to which many North Nashvillians hold close was slowly dissolving and one of the most apparent examples is the change in the racial composition of the neighborhood association. The erasure of long-time Black members of the community from representative decision-making neighborhood organizations indicates a pivotal moment in the community's history. Another interviewee shared the same sentimentality by saying, "that Neighborhood Association Board went from all black to all white". Without long-time Black members of the community actively participating in decision making bodies — because they were made to leave through eviction by their landlords, bought out by developers looking to flip large areas of land in the city's most profitable area, or forced to leave due to increased cost of living — the history of the community having a voice in these community organizations is at risk of being lost.

Not only are community members leaving with their identity as a person of color in a governing body, but also with the knowledge of North Nashville's history as a neighborhood of immense contribution to the culture of the city and as a place filled with community and deep

roots in the city's history. So much so, that one interviewee familiar with the change in space and demographics in the neighborhood said, "I wonder if we'd [Nashville] be the first place where we have three HBCUs in a completely white neighborhood". The in-movers replacing the long-time residents in these decision-making bodies are not other long-time members of the community, but people unfamiliar with the long-standing history of North Nashville and an entirely different connection to the land on which these historical roots run deep. The symbolism attached to this erasure of physical space and metaphorical space reflects the minute amount to which policymakers and developers value the land public and private actors deem incredibly valuable juxtaposed with the people who live on the land. The length that policymakers go to adhere to the concerns of the community are largely perceived as performative and not a serious consideration of how the members of the community members feel. In reply to an inquiry about gentrification in North Nashville, community leader Jeff Carr said in an interview with local Fox affiliate Fox 17 News, "It reinforces placing Black people in second class citizenship. Psychologically, it tells them [Black people in North Nashville] we're not important unless we have white people coming into the neighborhood," (Wallace July 22, 2020). Carr's comment suggests that the restructuring of space and the way public and private actors are reinvesting into North Nashville impacts the residents of North Nashville on a level that is deeper than what can be visibly witnessed. It impacts the psyche of the residents, the familiarity of the neighborhood, and the fabric of the community.

Significance of Voice

Developed over decades in North Nashville has been a sense of voice used to express the thoughts, concerns, desires, etc. of the community through representation in governing bodies

and Nashville society in general. The voice of North Nashville is formed at the intersection of a wide range of forays in the city that assist in the construction of the community's identity.

Through the performances of the Fisk Jubilee Singers for heads of state, the creation of Nashville Hot Chicken at Prince's, the existence of one of the oldest African American communities in Nashville, the founding of three Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and representation in neighborhood associations, the voice of North Nashville has cemented itself as a voice of art, food, community, education, and government. As a result of reinvestment practices through gentrification for capital accumulation, North Nashville's position as a voice in each of these areas is beginning to wane. Current reinvestment practices and interviews with North Nashvillians indicate that governing bodies are becoming whiter becoming unrecognizable to long-time residents of the community, eateries with similar food as Black-owned restaurants — such as White-owned Hattie B's Hot Chicken — are expanding at higher rates, and housing for the local community is becoming increasingly unaffordable where renters looking to purchase homes in the neighborhood are no longer able to do so.

Residents who are homeowners are seeing the voice of the community under relentless harassment from developers looking to reshape the neighborhood for their benefit. Jeff Carr said in an interview with Fox17 Nashville regarding the disruption caused by developers, "It was put under assault by gentrification and trends that started to creep into the area," (Wallace 22 July 2020). The assault indicated by Carr is not just an assault on the homes owned by Black families in North Nashville, but an assault on the Black community itself and its voice. It is an assault on the identity of the community, the ways through which members of the community exist in physical space, and the history developed over years of socialization and community building through art, education, food, and shared lived experiences. Following the aftermath of the violent

tornado in the Spring of 2020, an interviewee who works in the community said, "... like they are this is a predatory behavior they're going in because they know that people are vulnerable, maybe, you know, they don't think that they'll be able to rebuild...". This type of sentiment led to the fear that the community — once filled with familiar faces and places — was on a track to become a neighborhood where things were changing in a matter of months. As sizeable plots of land are being bulldozed for construction of new homes, commercial spaces, etc. the older Black families who fall victim to predatory lending practices by private developers and real estate agents looking to flip their property for financial gain no longer recognize the blocks on which they live. One interviewee about this disorientation, "And they're older black people, even old, much older than I who have been here for decades and decades. It has been very disorienting for them to not be able to recognize so much in terms of property". People's perception of home, of community, of a sense of belonging, is founded in familiarity. Often, with familiarity comes a sense of comfortability, so when one's familiarity with the area they call home begins to wane it becomes increasingly detrimental to the fabric, life, and cohesion of the established community. These changes lead to long-time residents — people who attended the local historically black colleges and universities, listened to the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and consumed the iconic hot chicken from Prince's Hot Chicken Shack — to experience disorientation when navigating a neighborhood that starting to no longer feel like home. In response to the loss of community and changes in representational governing bodies, one interviewee said, "We showed up for things together, we did a lot of things together. A lot of community activities. I don't even know who's over there I don't know the people who are over the neighborhood association". The interviewee indicates that there is a strong connection between showing up and connecting with your neighbors that indicate how a community is formed and maintained. As long-time residents

become disoriented and unfamiliar with their neighborhood, this sense of community begins to disappear.

With this sense of disorientation comes a developing sense of abandonment of the Black communities in North Nashville by city leaders and policymakers. Members of the community feel that in the economy structured around neoliberal, capitalist ventures, there is little to no desire to reinvest in the current community. City leaders and policymakers have no desire to pave crumbling roads, level uneven walkways, install new streetlights to illuminate dark areas, create green spaces for community members to engage recreationally, etc. Regarding these practices, one interviewee said, “There just seems to be no desire to make the necessary changes and to fix the sidewalks and add more green spaces and do all these nice new things, while the people while the indigenous people who have been here for decades are here.” This feeling of abandonment by community members is represented through the construction of new grocery stores and eateries in gentrified areas. The creation of Germantown as its neighborhood separate from North Nashville lead to the opening of many diverse restaurants and coffee shops — Such as Henrietta Red, City House, and The Goat Nashville — that were previously nonexistent in the neighborhood.

Through the exclusion of the voices of Black families in decision-making bodies, members of the community did not feel that city leaders sought to implement policies that benefit the long-time, typically middle- to low-income households, residents of North Nashville. In an interview with one resident of North Nashville, they said, “I don't think Nashville wants a lot of the indigenous population people who have been here and people who have helped make Nashville the city...But I don't think Nashville wants to accommodate a lot of working low wage working-class people into the city....” In a city that has adopted a plethora of policies intended to

grow the tax base of the city, middle- to low-income families living in North Nashville are casualties of these policies where there is little to money to be made. This sense of abandonment from city leaders by Black families in North Nashville is something that can potentially transcend racial lines. Discriminatory housing practices of decades past have set up Black families in North Nashville to be disproportionately impacted by the gentrification efforts of policy developers and private actors in North Nashville.

The abandonment felt by members of the community in North Nashville lead to the realization that city leaders lacked a sense of intentionality to preserve and protect the voice of the community itself. A lack of intentionality from city leaders to protect marginalized communities whose susceptibility to displacement is heightened due to the lack of affordable housing. The perception that city leaders and policymakers are not crafting policy that protects the community is increasingly damaging to people's sense of community and to the fabric of the community itself. One interviewee said regarding these policies, "this embracing of being pro-growth as a mentality means that people that can afford to live here are already considered collateral damage". This mentality inherently puts the wants and needs of an already underfunded, divested, and marginalized community in limbo where there is little to no buffer to protect them if a policy or development project does not benefit the long-time members of the community. Pro-growth policies in Nashville — in the context of urban reinvestment strategies — reward those who are financially capable of withstanding the increased cost of living brought on by the various projects crafted by developers and those who carry out the reinvestment strategies. The loss of community, disorientation of community, abandonment from policy leaders, lack of representation in governing bodies lead to the individualization of space. As people no longer see themselves or their community represented in organizations, they no longer

attend the meetings, no longer organize or participate in community activities. As indicated in the quote above, the residents of North Nashville “did” a lot of community activities and events, but as the demographics and representation changed the activities centered around the community disappeared.

To create a society in Nashville that is just and allows for everyone to work and live within the city, the voices of Black families in North Nashville cannot be without a presence in the policy-making environment. By leaving the voices of Black communities in North Nashville out of the equation when assessing the best way to develop divested land, developers are going to develop land in such a way that allows them to make as much money as they can without a sense of caring how their developments impact the long-time members of the community. This leaves North Nashville not on a path of neighborhood revitalization, but a perpetuation of an economic system inherently designed to keep the voices of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented out of positions of power and out of situations in which decisions are made about the land on which these communities sit.

The dissolution of community and the effects it has on the notion of community voice in North Nashville directly challenges Susan Fainstein’s urban theory of justice. In her theory of a just city, Susan Fainstein suggests in her book *The Just City* that to have a city which is justice, equity, diversity, and democracy are essential to every policy-making decision (Fainstein 2010, 5). In a capitalist economic structure, there is a certain socioeconomic hierarchy that requires one group at the top — often the wealthy elite — to exploit those at the bottom — typically middle- to low-income racial minority groups — for economic gain. The equitable distribution of resources across racial and socioeconomic lines allows for a bottom-up approach to solving the crises faced by marginalized communities in urban centers across the country. In North

Nashville, equitable distribution of resources would allow North Nashvillians access to vital resources to revitalize their neighborhood and maintain the strong sense of community that has developed over the past half-century. Diversity amongst governing bodies and in decision-making positions allows for appropriate representation of long-time residents who can provide history and perspective in places where it would not otherwise exist. Ensuring diversity would provide North Nashvillians proper representation amongst government officials and allows for the voices and history of North Nashville to be represented in government. The democratization of government allows for the people in the community to have a bigger say in who decides what policy is made and the direction of their neighborhood. By democratizing the process, North Nashville, and other communities left out of the decision-making process would have a pathway to a seat at the table.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Provided the data analysis of how capital reinvestment by public and private actors into North Nashville impacts the local community's perception and understanding of housing security and their sense of community, this section will conclude this capstone project and provide recommendations based on the data presented in the previous section. The data analyzed in the preceding section indicates that as a result of a history of discriminatory housing practices such as redlining, blockbusting, and disinvestment, the historically Black community in North Nashville has seen massive amounts of physical space restructuring, disorientation in their own communities as a result of those physical changes, and a subsequent loss of voice in decision making bodies. Because of the history of the South's implementation of policy that was often

based along and across racial lines, the experience of Black residents of North Nashville can be used as a model of for how to assess the implications of capital reinvestment in other urban areas who will undergo similar practices of capital reinvestment.

In this capstone project, I analyzed the different ways in which Black people residents in the community of North Nashville perceived and understood public and private actors' capital reinvestment strategies in their neighborhoods. Throughout urban areas in cities across the country and around the world, disinvested communities comprised mostly of middle- to low-income Black families are experiencing heightened levels of capital reinvestment by public and private actors that have significant implications on the long-time residents' sense of housing security and community. Based on the data gathered through the research methods identified and analyzed in the preceding sections of this capstone project I recommend three policies to address the various concerns of the members of the community in North Nashville. Effectively, what each of these policy recommendations will do is create a more just balance of power, provide the community with the power to control what happens in their community, streamline resources from the city government to stay in their community, and allow for additional housing options for indigenous community members. The policy changes recommended in this chapter must be crafted and implemented in a way that ensures equity, diversity, and democracy are at the focus of each policy. Too often the general public rallies behind the notion of equity, diversity, and democracy as a concept, but there is often little understanding of what is meant behind those words. To provide clarity on what equity, diversity, and democracy mean in the context of this project and the policy recommendations that follow, I draw on a variety of understandings of each value from varying scholars.

When understanding what it means to have equitable, diverse, and democratic solutions to complex, systemic issues faced by marginalized, oppressed populations there are several perspectives to take into account. According to Susan Fainstein, equity is chosen equality to create a more just city because equality, “acts as a magnet for all the objections based on rewards to the most deserving, on questions of obliteration of incentives, on the trade-off between growth and equality, and on the unfairness of penalizing everyone above the median in the name of the greater good,” (Fainstein 2010, 36). Equality, in this sense, does not acknowledge how a capitalist economy marginalizes communities based on race, gender, sexuality, income, and other identities — many of which are not mutually exclusive. By focusing on equity, communities who see the greatest reduction in political, social, and economic representation are provided with resources to even the playing field when it comes to resource distribution.

As indicated by Iris Marion Young on the promise of greater equity through deliberative democracy theory, “the deliberative democrat thinks that the best way to limit political domination and...to promote greater social justice through public policy is to foster the creation of sites and processes of deliberation among diverse and disagreeing elements of the polity,” (Young 2001, 672). This is to say that Young suggests creating situations in which the voices of the marginalized are uplifted and provided a platform to disagree with those in positions of power. The ascension of voices onto a platform where the voices of the marginalized are amplified is beneficial to the decision-making process regarding — in this specific project — how capital reinvestment does not necessarily provide these communities with the necessary power. What is required is a transfer of power from the state to the community where the people in the community have the power to decide where and how capital is reinvested in their community. By giving power to the people, the members of the community have the agency to

make decisions on what is best for their community and allow the community to preserve the character of the neighborhood and the history embedded in the land.

The first policy change I recommend is establishing a city-specific Department of Housing through the Office of the Mayor of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. At its current rate of construction, Nashville would not meet the affordable housing demands of 2025 until the 2060s, according to an interviewee who has decades of experience working in affordable housing in Nashville. The establishment of a city-run Department of Housing will allow local leaders and policymakers to act more efficiently when it comes to the needs of members of the community. Instead of relying on a larger, quasi-governmental body such as the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, Nashville's growing housing unaffordability crisis requires a separate department to regulate and implement fair housing policies. This signifies that there is a growing need for a more direct response to the crisis caused by the policies and actions of public and private actors in disinvested neighborhoods in Nashville. It is important to note that relying on the city government to fix the problems public and private actors created is not a permanent solution to a long-term problem. As long as the accumulation of capital through reinvestment practices and gentrification of low-income, racial minority communities continue to be the highest priority of economic policy in Nashville, the issues faced by the impacted communities will persist. The creation of a Department of Housing in Nashville will allow the city to address the issues faced by North Nashvillians, and other impacted communities, directly by providing resources that can relieve immediate pressure. In this department, the equitable representation will allow for a diverse department of Nashvillians working to alleviate the stresses caused by a worsening housing market in Nashville. The Department of Housing's specific role in addressing the housing crisis

in Nashville provides a more equitable, temporary solution provided the current nonexistence of a city department with the sole task of addressing housing. The growing crisis in Nashville needs to be met with a city department equipped and well-resourced to address the immediate housing needs of the indigenous residents in North Nashville where housing is growing increasingly unaffordable for Black communities.

Secondly, I recommend a significant increase in housing regulation policies in Nashville. Cities that have experienced gentrification and displacement as a result of capital investment across the country have implemented similar policies to address the very issues Nashville is facing. One of the primary policies used to create an affordable housing stock in urban areas is through the implementation of inclusionary zoning policy. These types of policies require a certain percentage of new housing construction to be affordable, that is, costing no more than 30% of the tenant's income. Requiring a certain percentage of new multi-family home/apartment construction to be affordable will allow Nashville to maintain a healthy and robust affordable housing stock in Nashville. Inclusionary zoning policies would also encourage mixed-use, allow for socio-economic diversity, and neighborhood revitalization of disinvested communities that require access to affordable housing. The creation of new affordable housing through the implementation of inclusionary zoning policies would increase a sense of housing security and address the concerns that the city of Nashville is not building enough affordable housing for the people who need it the most. With the creation of more affordable units throughout North Nashville, many residents who are unable to afford the new market-rate apartment complexes or the newly developed Tall and Skinny homes would have access to housing in their neighborhoods. This type of zoning would create a diverse population in a developing neighborhood and allows for a more equitable solution to the city's desire to increase

development and the community's desire to stay in the community in which they have lived for decades.

Along with inclusionary zoning, I recommend that the city implement a citywide rent control measure either through a current city department/agency, the recommended Department of Housing, or through a more democratic process such as a ballot initiative through which Nashvillians can decide. Citywide rent control will protect renters who are under threat of being priced out of their homes because of the capital reinvestment practices of public and private actors in North Nashville and other parts of Nashville. Rent controlled apartments whose rent would not be able to increase past 10% of the base rent every year would shield middle- to low-income renters who oftentimes see their rent increase by hundreds of dollars due to rapid gentrification of neighborhoods and would prevent them from becoming increasingly cost-burdened by the cost of living in the neighborhood in which they've established familial roots and community. Larger metropolitan areas such as San Francisco, California, and New York City, New York, have instituted rent control laws that keep thousands of housing units affordable. These cities could be utilized as a model by Nashville to understand what would and would not work to fit the needs of middle- to low-income renters in their homes. By keeping renters in their homes without the threat of being priced out of their rental properties due to there being a lack of rent regulation, the community of North Nashville has the potential to withstand gentrification and capital reinvestment and reap the benefits of the revitalization of their neighborhood. Increased housing affordability through the creation of a citywide rent control ordinance would buoy attempts to force people from their homes and quell fears of displacement due to rent hikes for people in North Nashville. The implementation of rent control in Nashville would foster a sense of equity by keeping middle- to low-income, racial minority

families in their homes. By controlling the increasing price of rent in Nashville, low-income, racial minority communities would be protected from displacement due to the increased cost of housing in their neighborhood. By keeping people in their homes through controlling rent prices, renters in Nashville can continue to foster a sense of community in their neighborhoods and enjoy the benefits of reinvestment. Otherwise, rents would continue to rise and force many low-income, Black renters to leave their homes due to increased unaffordability.

The last policy I will recommend is the establishment of a community oversight board for capital investment into the community. Similar to the community oversight board over policing in Nashville, capital reinvestment into North Nashville has left a devastating impact on the land and the community. Democratizing the process will allow for a more equitable process in reinvesting in the community. Similar to Jane Jacobs' desire for community-based building in urban areas, the democratization of the building process in North Nashville will allow long-time residents to voice the concerns, wants, and needs for the community instead of it being assumed by city leaders, private actors, and developers looking to flip large swaths of land for financial gain. Community oversight boards such as this would allow for members of the specific communities undergoing capital reinvestment to have an organized voice in policy decisions that would prevent developers from implementing amenities, such as a dog park as referenced by one interviewee, that does not directly benefit or wanted by members of the community. The presence of community members in an oversight capacity will that Black members of the community have a voice in how the capital is reinvested in their community ensuring a more democratic, diverse process than its current state where a majority of members in neighborhood associations are predominately White. The presence of Black members in an oversight role will

ensure that capital is reinvested equitably in the community by solidifying Black communities' place in an oversight body.

Each of these policy recommendations requires the focus of all public policy decisions considering housing, zoning, and capital reinvestment to be through the lens of equity, diversity, and democracy. By ensuring that voices and considerations of the Black community in North Nashville are at the forefront of the policy decisions that have significant implications on their community, both public and private actors and members of the community have the opportunity to revitalize a disinvested community without leading to the displacement of long-time renters and homeowners. Through the increased regulation of housing in Nashville, policymakers and developers can ensure that Nashville has a robust affordable housing stock available for middle- to low-income families in Nashville. The creation of a Department of Housing would provide the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County with an entire department tasked with addressing the growing housing crisis that is worsening in Nashville. The formation of a community board focused on community-first building that will provide oversight and a voice for the community regarding all reinvestment practices in North Nashville will provide a platform on which long-time members of the community in North Nashville can appropriately voice their concerns and share their vision for future of North Nashville. Each of these policy recommendations — through a lens of equity, diversity, and democracy — has the potential to relieve the growing fears of erasure, abandonment, and lack of intentionality from government officials, that members of the community in North Nashville are currently facing. North Nashville is home to a wide range of people, most of whom have a strong connection to the land and want to live in their homes. North Nashville is not a transient place, but a place full of

history, culture, and community that deserves to withstand efforts to displace or radically change their community. It is their home.

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