



CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
*Melvin Carter, Mayor*

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**MEMO:**

Review of public comment regarding  
Amending the West Side Community Plan  
to add the WSCO Equitable Development Scorecard as an Appendix

**To:** Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee  
**From:** Michael Wade, *City Planner*; Luis Pereira, *Planning Director*  
**Date:** December 18, 2019

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**Summary**

Over the last two years, the West Side Community Organization (“WSCO”) developed an Equitable Development Scorecard (“scorecard”) to use in evaluating development proposals in District 3. The resulting score can be used by WSCO in formation of its recommendation to the City when it reviews zoning applications for development proposals in District 3.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the matter on December 6, 2019. One representative from WSCO spoke in support of the amendment. Four emails were received by end of the public hearing record on December 9, two in support and two in opposition to the amendment.

**Summary and staff analysis of public comments**

- A. **In support:** WSCO executive director Monica Bravo answered Planning Commissioner questions regarding the formation of the scorecard. Ms. Bravo reported that five developers had been consulted during the formation of the scorecard to ensure a fair and reasonable scoring. Ms. Bravo said that WSCO had not considered applying this scorecard to individual single-family home properties and projects. Ms. Bravo reiterated the scorecard’s emphasis on the vitality of the “cultural landscape” rather than “neighborhood character”.

Additionally, letters of support were emailed to Michael Wade, City Planner, by Monica Marrocco with names and addresses of other supporters and by the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability. The letters reflect on the extensive community input process that went into the formation of the scorecard.

- B. **In opposition:** Craig David, resident of District 3, sent two emails to the Planning Commission. The first email included a letter of Mr. David's thoughts and a news article on the controversial results of gentrification. The second email, sent December 8, included a rewritten version of Mr. David's previous letter and included a list of supporters who had lent their names and addresses. The second letter will be discussed as a refined version of the first.

The letter confirmed support for "a majority of the scorecard", but made seven additional requests, discussed below:

- i. **Include the "principles of equitable development" from the original scorecard produced by Alliance for Metropolitan Stability.** These principles include "equitable community engagement", "equitable land use", "equitable transportation", "equitable economic development", and "equitable housing", which are also the categories of WSCO's scorecard, displaying direct inclusion. The Alliance' scorecard includes a one-to two-sentence definition of each. These definitions appear to be in harmony with WSCO's scorecard and may contribute to clarification, though this purpose was not elucidated in Mr. David's letter.
- ii. **Reconsider verbiage in the scorecard's "Anti-Displacement and Anti-Gentrification" section.** Mr. David's main point is that investment in the West Side is desired by many West Side residents, and he feels the scorecard goes too far in dissuading investment. He writes, "[W]e would like the SCORECARD to also embrace redevelopment and revitalization that benefits and improves the community."

This section of WSCO's scorecard outlines phases of gentrification: A) disinvestment; B) drop in property values; C) displacement resulting from a rise in property values due to re-investment; and D) a rise in property values to a price that excludes lower-income residents from moving into the area. It is followed by statements supporting investment without displacement. While the scorecard authors could consider adding mention of re-investment as an independent phase before the C) displacement phase in clearer recognition of the possibility of investment without displacement, the scorecard neither bans redevelopment nor ignores the possibility of investment without displacement.

- iii. **Tailor the scorecard to allow redevelopment that will raise home values on the West Side.** Mr. David states, "We feel that a total Anti-Gentrification stance may threaten home equity. The SCORECARD must ask questions that guide the sort of investment the community needs and desires, through ventures that protect and enhance our current equity." Mr. David brings up private home values ("capital assets") as an object which is in the community's interest to protect and raise, and the enhancement of which could be impeded by the scorecard. Mr. David brings up the historical lag in housing value growth on the West Side as context for this concern.

The scorecard states: "[The scorecard] is used to make sure that the principles and practices of fair and just development, environmental justice, and affordability are applied to our community and that plans for economic development and wealth creation benefit all West Siders." While investment in one's privately-owned house and property

is a major financial decision that is linked to neighborhood context, this scorecard's explicit task is agnostic to the return on investment on individual homes, concerning itself instead with housing affordability across the district. Regarding the argument put forth about a historical lack of investment or lag in housing values in the area, these are due to independent to market forces. In the scorecard's use so far, it has not proven a deterrent against development projects as much as a community statement and negotiating document. Mr. David and supporters' desire to see the scope of the scorecard expanded is between them and WSCO.

Regarding the City's position, the 2030 *City of Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* and the proposed *Saint Paul For All 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, both are replete with policies that promote housing affordability, expand diverse housing options, and encourage access to homeownership, and no policies mention increasing private home equity. Concerning social equity, the *Saint Paul For All 2040 Comprehensive Plan* states: "How we grow, develop and invest over the next 20 years must be done in a way that reduces racial disparities in jobs, housing cost burden, education and homeownership." The City is considering this scorecard based on it and WSCO's shared interest in addressing (social/racial) equity and reducing disparities.

- iv. **"Better address the repurpose of existing commercial stock and development of new commercial corridors, thus helping to create community equity and vibrancy."** In this section, Mr. David laments a lack of investment in existing commercial buildings and corridors and states the scorecard should address these issues. The connection between repurposing of existing commercial stock and social equity is not explained. While repurposed buildings may contribute to reinvestment in disinvested communities, Mr. David does not lay out in what way the scorecard might address this reality when applied to a specific project brought to WSCO for evaluation.
- v. **"Add questions that support investments, ... protect and enhance ... current equity and build a vibrant community."** Mr. David appears to regard this document as a proactive document that is intended to promote development in the West Side, rather than an analytical policy tool that is applied to a development proposal by WSCO once interest is shown. A distinction should be made between the intent of this evaluative scorecard and that of a proactive economic development strategy involving activities that "bring outside interest in financing quality projects".
- vi. **"Speak to building visionary, well-designed buildings with quality materials."** In this section, Mr. David asserts that architectural quality is an issue of equitable community development. His argument considers the quality of a *place* as a public matter, and that the scorecard "must add questions that grade the life span of the project, the quality of the materials, and especially the vision in use and community interface that the project will represent." The implication is that low-income communities receive poorer-quality *places*, and that this constitutes an injustice.

Currently, the scorecard considers aesthetics only under the heading "Economic Development/Land Use", *line (h)*: "Design contributes to distinct identities of local

cultural heritage through the presence, preservation, or addition of architectural assets with Universal Design.” This line focuses on a community culture or identity which, while still conceptually broad, offers support for WSCO and neighbors to more specifically discern whether proposed architectural/designs are rooted in cultural or design precedent. However, with a maximum point value of five out of a possible 205 total points, aesthetic design is given low importance by the scorecard.

One equity-related perspective on this argument is the academic discussion of “aesthetic justice”. The aesthetic justice argument is based on the premises that A) the public is affected psychologically and emotionally by both publicly- and privately-owned and developed structures, and B) those with less means are less able to remove themselves from aesthetically unpleasant areas; therefore, the public should have a say in the formation of their built environment. Aesthetic justice includes *how* aesthetic decisions are made (whether everyone in an affected local community have influence over projects affecting the built environment) and *what* the resulting aesthetic environment is. The scorecard addresses this topic obliquely in the above *line (h)* from the perspective of local culture and community identity.

Regarding the importance of aesthetic design in City policy: The subject of *place* looms large in urban planning spheres. Public art is a favored method of incorporating aesthetics into the public realm and publicly-financed development projects. The City’s public art ordinance dedicates 1% of many sources of City funding for capital projects to incorporate a public art component. The design of privately-funded architecture, however, outside of Historic Districts, is regulated under Sec. 63.110 of the Zoning Code’s Building Design Standards, as well as with additional design standards in certain zoning districts (such as T Traditional Neighborhood and IT Transitional Industrial districts) and in these, only very generally.

The Land Use chapter of Saint Paul’s current (2030) Comprehensive Plan does highlight aesthetics in “Strategy 3: Promote Aesthetics and Development Standards”. Summarizing this strategy, the Plan reads:

*As Saint Paul continues to revitalize itself and to grow, it must be an attractive place to live, work, and visit. This strategy provides a framework for design and aesthetics that will engage people and help integrate the built environment into the community. (p. LU6)*

This strategy rests largely on implementing pedestrian-scale design standards which include simplified elements such as land use diversity, shorter block length, buildings anchoring the corners of their block, front yard landscaping, building façade continuity and articulation, height, materials and detailing, parking placement, lighting, and street trees, and others. These standards are applied to Traditional Neighborhood zoning districts. The current Comprehensive Plan does not address aesthetics from a social equity perspective.

While there is merit and breadth to this discussion of aesthetics and place (including room to expand on expression of cultural identity in underserved communities), evaluation and addition of this criteria into the scorecard is ultimately up to WSCO as its author. Incorporation of the scorecard into the West Side Community Plan without additional consideration of aesthetics is not at odds with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

- vii. **Add an additional scoring category regarding perception of the development.** This category, called "tacit", consists of some highly subjective statements that affect the perceptual environment created by the evaluated development proposal, as well as some more direct but individual questions such as "do you want this built across the street from your home?"


While very directly assessing neighborhood sentiment, the lines in this category act as a survey of opinion rather than a scorecard concerning issues of social equity. Staff considers this category ineffective as a tool to measure the equity impact of a development and therefore inappropriate to include in this scorecard and the West Side Community Plan.


### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends adoption of the scorecard (as released for public comment on November 1, 2019) as Appendix A to the West Side Community Plan together with the proposed linking language.


### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1) "Principles of Equitable Development" from the Equitable Development Scorecard produced by the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability

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2525 Franklin Ave E, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55406 

ADVANCING REGIONAL EQUITY



The Alliance

December 9, 2019

Dear Members of the St. Paul Planning Commission,

The Alliance is a coalition of community-based organizations and advocacy groups building shared power to advance justice and equity in economic growth and land development in the Twin Cities region. **We write today in strong support of the adoption of the West Side Community Organization's "Equitable Development Scorecard" into the West Side Community Plan and use of the scorecard in evaluating development proposals in District 3.**

For neighborhoods to prosper, developers, communities and government agencies must collaboratively plan and implement land use strategies that will benefit all people — especially people of color, indigneous, immigrant and low-wealth communities that have been historically and intentionally barred or disenfranchised from land and property ownership. Traditional applications of land use policies have precluded residents most impacted from helping to define and set the vision for — and play a meaningful role in — how and what gets developed in their neighborhoods. **The WSCO Equitable Development Scorecard is an actionable way to begin to close that gap — and position St. Paul as a leader in equitable development.**

Working from the Alliance's *Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard* as a starting point, the West Side Community Organization led a more than two-year process of deep and sustained community engagement to create a set of shared values and principles for development in their neighborhoods. In addition to community members and policymakers, WSCO has worked with and received positive feedback from developers who see the Equitable Development Scorecard as a transparent and actionable evaluation tool to work collaboratively and effectively with community. The scorecard also provides a thoughtful process to ensure that development is approached from a comprehensive standpoint, both meeting prospective community needs and building on existing assets. Not surprisingly, the collaborative, community-led and cross-sector process and outcome **have become an inspiration and model, not only for other entities in the Twin Cities, but nationwide.**

Recognizing the impact of this tool on the West Side of St. Paul — and adding to the resounding support from the members of the St. Paul Planning Commission — **we strongly recommend that the city move forward in adopting the WSCO scorecard as part of the development process.**

Sincerely,

Joo Hee Pomplun,  
Executive Director



Saint Paul Planning Commission, c/o Michael Wade  
25 West Fourth Street, suite 1400, Saint Paul, MN, 55102

December 5, 2019

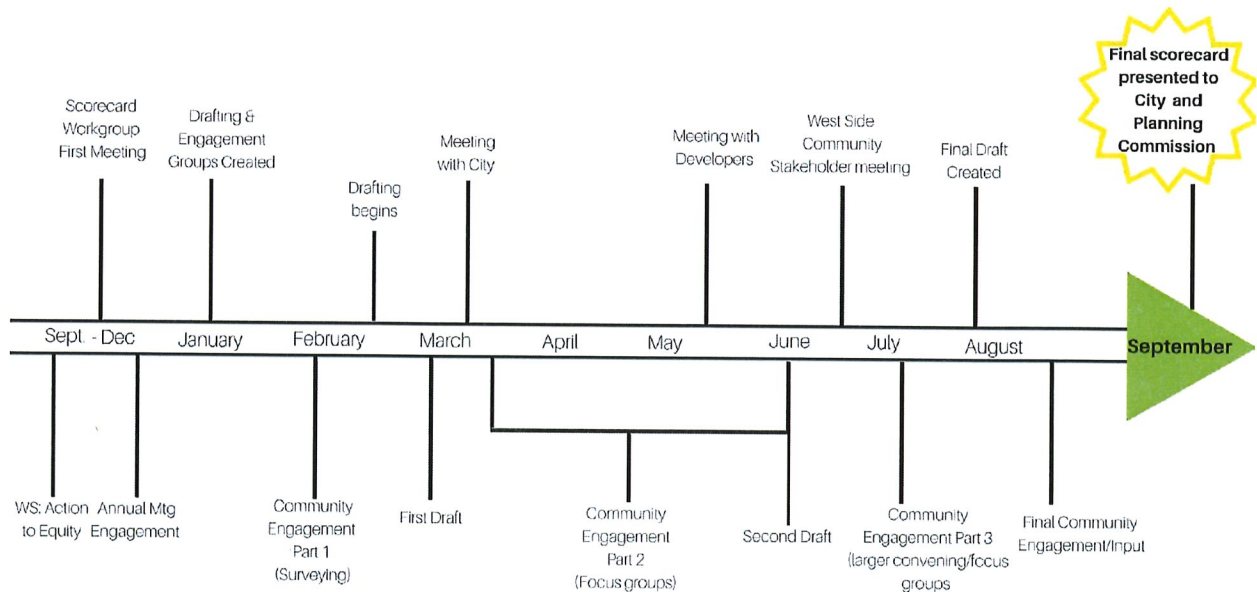
Re: West Side Equitable Development Scorecard Adoption

Dear St. Paul Planning Commission,

This is a letter in support of adopting the current draft of the West Side Equitable Development Scorecard.

The Scorecard has seen an incredible outpouring of community support since West Side residents first set to work on it over two years ago. In September 2017, the West Side Community Organization (WSCO) held a series of community meetings where over 100 West Side residents were not only informed on what a Scorecard for our community would look like, but also invited to become actual creators of what the Scorecard would BE.

The Scorecard has truly been created **by, for, and with** the neighborhood. As you have heard from many community members over the past two years, and as recent as our enthusiastic group who joined you for the Planning Commission meeting last Friday, WSCO has talked the talk and walked the walk when it comes to co-creating the Scorecard within community, consistently leaving the door wide open to not only community input, but the entire planning, development, and implementation process. To highlight some, but certainly not all of these opportunities for engagement, please review the following steps taken by WSCO: (Content also available on the WSCO's website: [https://www.wSCO.org/equitable\\_development\\_scorecard](https://www.wSCO.org/equitable_development_scorecard))



## West Side Equitable Development Scorecard Timeline

As a community, we recognize that we have never before been given such an opportunity to have such a powerful say in what development takes place in our neighborhood. The Scorecard's creation process has been unique in that it has specifically elevated people on the West Side who have been historically under-served or under-represented. The Scorecard has gone through multiple drafts in an effort to gain as much community input as possible to inform every bit of it.

We desire investment, development, and revitalization in the community. WSCO has worked tirelessly to meet these goals, even beyond the Scorecard. Any mention of the contrary is simply not true. We are committed to building our anti-displacement and anti-gentrification efforts as a way to ensure that development and revitalization can happen without displacing our neighbors. We believe that development without displacement is possible. In addition, we will continue to build partnerships to create a more socially connected community, inviting ALL to begin and/or stay connected with the entirety of the Scorecard implementation process. We are only ready to move forward with the implementation process because community has invested years in the planning process.

On behalf of the hundreds of us in the community, some of which are shown in the heading of this letter, we look forward to your approval of the West Side Equitable Scorecard.

Sincerely,



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Saint Paul Planning Commission, c/o Michael Wade  
25 West Fourth Street, suite 1400, Saint Paul, MN, 55102

December 5, 2019

Re: WSCO Equitable Development Scorecard Adoption

Dear Saint Paul Planning Commission,

WSCO has done wonderful work creating the *West Side Equitable Development Scorecard*. We support a majority of the scorecard. This letter is our request for changes and additions to the draft *SCORECARD*, before adoption into the West Side Community Plan. We do not feel the current draft reflects the true and total voice of ALL those living on the West Side.

1. Within the original template document, there are *PRINCIPLES OF EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT*. Some of the important original principles are not included, nor scoreable in WSCO's *SCORECARD*. We recommend including the original *Principles* within the *SCORECARD*.
2. Within the title, and concept of page 4 of the West Side Equitable Development Scorecard draft, *ANTI DISPLACEMENT, ANTI – GENTRIFICATION* principles and definitions were added. WSCO makes the very large assumption – that **ALL** community members are in favor of absolutely **NO** gentrification. In actuality many members of the community have desired redevelopment, revitalization, and renaissance in the community. Many of us have dreamed about realizing investment in the community, with vibrant new businesses and vital, beautiful housing.

Although we do support most of the principles of *Anti – Displacement and Anti – Gentrification*, we would like the *SCORECARD* to also embrace redevelopment and revitalization that benefits and improves the community. We do not support a total ban on redevelopment and revitalization, whether initiated from within or outside of the community.

3. **Equity and Value in the Current Housing Stock:** We are the community that has been left behind. West Side home values have risen a fraction in comparison to other areas of the metro. The *SCORECARD* talks about equity, but we must see better support for long time residents and home owners. The *SCORECARD* must work to protect and improve the capital assets of the present community and not jeopardize them by stifling revitalization, and redevelopment financed by outside developers. We feel that a total Anti-Gentrification stance may threaten home equity. The *SCORECARD* must ask questions that guide the sort of investment the community needs and desires, through ventures that protect and enhance our current equity.
4. **Commercial Development:** (case example) In years gone by (1970's and before), the Brown Derby building was a supper club that served the neighborhood. Many folks living within the community joined together at the Derby. It was a community hub. After the Derby's closing and with each subsequent owner, the building has become more of a liability to the neighborhood, and less of an asset. Outside development money, in conjunction with local initiatives and guidance are needed to give the neighborhood new life. There are many of these existing buildings that leaders and developers have taken no interest in. New life in these buildings would become the building blocks of the community. The scorecard must better address the repurpose of existing commercial stock and development of new commercial corridors, thus helping to create community equity and vibrancy. Vibrant and visionary repurposing of existing commercial stock is a prime issue of equitability.
5. **Outside Investment:** Past leaders, developers and investors haven't had much interest in the West Side. How will the *SCORECARD* bring outside interest in financing quality projects that meet the criteria of our community plans? We must add questions that support investments, those that will protect and enhance our current equity and build a vibrant community.
6. **Development that Contributes to the Quality of the Public Realm of the West Side:** **Low income communities deserve quality design and construction of attractive buildings.** The scorecard needs to speak to building **visionary, well - designed buildings with quality materials.** Development in recent years has focused on low quality design and cheap materials, which have contributed to the degradation of the community. Projects must be well designed. Architects, artists, history, culture and current citizenry should inform design. Development projects must be designed to interface with the neighborhood where they are built. They

must be created as an answer to place. They must NOT be PLOP DOWN – FORMULA buildings. NO cookie cutter buildings should be built with impenetrable walls affronting or ignoring the community. The SCORECARD must add questions that grade the life span of the project, the quality of materials, and especially the vision in use and community interface that the project will represent. It is all about equity.

7. Please add an additional scorecard titled **tac-it** (*/ˈtasət/ adjective*)  
 Definition: “understood or implied without being stated”  
 Here are a few simple tacit questions that should be scored.
- Does this project feel good (or right) to you? 5 Points
  - What is the positivity rating of this project 5 Points
  - Would you live here or in this place?, 5 Points
  - Would this place be a beautiful place to live? 5 Points
  - Does this project meld with the neighborhood? 5 Points
  - Does this have great value for ALL in community? 5 Points
  - Do you want this built across the street from your home? 5 Points
  - Does this project utilize site topography and history? 5 Points

We hope you will seriously consider addressing these ideas and concerns to the SCORECARD, before adoption to the West Side Community Plan.  
 (All West Side Resident or West Side Business Signatories)

Craig David – *Art Davidii Public Arts*  
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Peter Kramer – Architect  
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This letter was a 2 day initiative. With time, and the current true sentiment of West Side residents, we would have a vast many more supporters.



*Journey of the River and the Sun - Story of the West Side Immigrant* © Art Davidii 1997

Saint Paul Planning Commission  
c/o Michael Wade  
25 West Fourth Street, suite 1400  
Saint Paul, MN, 55102

December 5, 2019

Re: WSCO Equitable Development Scorecard Adoption

Dear Saint Paul Planning Commission,

WSCO has done a wonderful job on their work creating the Equitable Development Scorecard. I support a majority of the scorecard.

It appears the template for the WSCO *Equitable Development SCORECARD* is the *Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard* (developed by a consortium of 17 local alliances, development corporations, associations, housing and justice organizations). In the newer WSCO *EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT SCORECARD* some components were added and some deleted in comparison to the original *SCORECARD*.

Within the original document, the *Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard*, there are *PRINCIPLES OF EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT* (pg. 4). These important principles were not included in WSCO's *SCORECARD*. Why were these *Principles* not included? I believe that some of the listed original *Principles* are not addressed in WSCO's *SCORECARD*. Can the original *Principles* be included in the new document and addressed within the *SCORECARD* itself?

Request for changes and additions to the SCORECARD as it is drafted.

- WSCO makes the very large assumption that **ALL** community members are in favor of absolutely **NO** gentrification. In actuality many members of the community have desired redevelopment, revitalization, renaissance in the community for years and years. Many have conversed how fantastic it would be to realize investment to bring the community up, create vibrant new businesses and vital, beautiful housing. Most with whom I have conversed support the principles of *Anti – Displacement and Anti – Gentrification*, although not in totality, but rather in a compromised fashion. Can the scorecard reflect a compromise position? This should be open for further discussion.

- Commercial Development: (case example) In years gone by (1960's and before), the Brown Derby building was a supper club that served the neighborhood. Many folks living within the community joined together at the Derby. It was a community hub. After the Derby's closing and with each subsequent owner, the building has become more of a liability to the neighborhood, and less of an asset. Outside development money, in conjunction with local initiatives and guidance are needed to give the neighborhood new life. There are many of these existing buildings that leaders and developers have taken no interest in. New life in these buildings would be the building blocks of the community. Can we address this in the scorecard, helping to create equity in our community.

- We are the community that has been left behind. I've lived on the West Side most of my 67 years. I've owned my current home for 33 years. It's value has barely crept up over these years. My home is where a majority of my lifetime earned equity is. The SCORECARD talks about equity for current residents, but there has been little equity for long time residents and home owners. The SCORECARD should work to protect the capital assets (the homes) of the present community. Past city leaders and investors haven't had much interest in the West Side. Why? Will the SCORECARD bring outside interest in financing quality projects that meet the criteria of our community plans? Can we add questions that guide the sort of investment we need and desire, investment that protects and enhances our current equity?

- Quality Development Projects. If a project is primarily to help low income folks, that is a fine goal. Yet, the scorecard has nothing that speaks of building visionary, quality designed buildings and projects that address the community as a whole, including people of little income. People of all variety need quality ideas, design and construction, not just 'cookie cutter buildings' that are built as cheaply as possible. Please add to the scorecard questions that grade the life span of the project and the materials, and the vision in use and life-time that the project represents.

Additional entries that could be added to the SCORECARD to more accurately reflect *Local Community Assets, Equity and Desires*:

- building materials including cladding, should be of high quality, and reflect the excellence of traditional or modern materials. The poor and disenfranchised need quality materials for their buildings as does the interface with the community. Landscape design and materials must be of quality too. Native plants are not the only answer, are often messy, unmaintained, and misunderstood.
  - projects must be well designed, not plop buildings. Architects, artists, history, culture and current citizenry should inform design.
  - projects must not be designed to be built as cheaply as possible, which totally affects vision of use, interface with community and the equitability of the project within the existing community.
  - development projects should be designed to interface with the neighborhood where they are built. They must be created as an answer to PLACE. They must function in PLACE. They must interface with PLACE. They must NOT be PLOP DOWN buildings.
  - NO cookie cutter buildings should be built with impenetrable walls affronting or ignoring the community. All projects should have the vision of embracing community in design and intention of use, to fully integrate within the existing vernacular of community.
- 
- Community Engagement and Equitable Housing Scorecards: Both these scorecards essentially ask the same question three or four times thus loading the importance of the issues heavily on the scorecard. Is this OK?
  - Here are a few other simple questions that should be scored under TACIT
    - Does this project feel good (or right) to you? 5 POINTS
    - What is the positivity rating of this project 5 POINTS
    - Would you live here or in this place?, 5 POINTS
    - Would this project inspire a low income person? 5 POINTS
    - Would this project inspire an average income person? 5 POINTS
    - Would this project inspire an artist? 5 POINTS
    - Would this project inspire a poet? 5 POINTS
    - Would this project inspire a dancer? 5 POINTS
    - Would this project inspire a doctor? 5 POINTS
    - Would this project inspire the construction worker? 5 POINTS

Thanks very much for considering the addition of these ideas to the SCORECARD.

Craig David – *Art Davidii Public Arts*  
*West Side Artist in Residence*  
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651-276-1750



Urban myths

## In praise of gentrification

*Accusations levelled at gentrification in America lack force, meanwhile its benefits go unsung*



Print edition | United States

June 21st 2018 | NEW YORK, OAKLAND AND WASHINGTON, DC

GENTRIFIER has surpassed many worthier slurs to become the dirtiest word in American cities. In the popular telling, hordes of well-to-do whites are descending upon poor, minority neighbourhoods that were made to endure decades of discrimination. With their avocado on toast, beard oil and cappuccinos, these people snuff out local culture. As rents rise, lifelong residents are evicted and forced to leave. In this view, the quintessential scene might be one witnessed in Oakland, California, where a miserable-looking homeless encampment rests a mere ten-minute walk from a Whole Foods landscaped with palm trees and bougainvillea, offering chia and flax seed upon entry. An ancient, sinister force lurks behind the overpriced produce. “Gentrification’ is but a more pleasing name for white supremacy,” wrote Ta-Nehisi Coates. It is “the interest on enslavement, the interest on Jim Crow, the interest on redlining, compounding across the years.”

This story is better described as an urban myth. The supposed ills of gentrification—which might be more neutrally defined as poorer urban neighbourhoods becoming wealthier—lack rigorous support. The most careful empirical analyses conducted by urban economists have failed to detect a rise in displacement within gentrifying neighbourhoods. Often, they find that poor residents are more likely to stay put if they live in these areas. At the same time, the benefits of gentrification are scarcely considered. Longtime residents reap the rewards of reduced crime and better amenities. Those lucky enough to own their homes come out richer. The left usually bemoans the lack of investment in historically non-white neighbourhoods, white flight from city centres and economic segregation. Yet gentrification straightforwardly reverses each of those regrettable trends.

### **One in, none out**

The anti-gentrification brigades often cite anecdotes from residents forced to move. Yet the data suggest a different story. An influential study by Lance Freeman and Frank Braconi found that poor residents living in New York’s gentrifying neighbourhoods during the 1990s were actually less likely to move than poor residents of non-gentrifying areas. A follow-up study by Mr Freeman, using a nationwide sample, found scant association between gentrification and displacement. A more recent examination found that financially vulnerable residents in Philadelphia—those with low credit scores and no mortgages—are no more likely to move if they live in a gentrifying neighbourhood.

These studies undermine the widely held belief that for every horrid kale-munching millennial moving in, one longtime resident must be chucked out. The surprising result is explained by three underlying trends.

The first is that poor Americans are obliged to move very frequently, regardless of the circumstances of their district, as the Princeton sociologist Matthew Desmond so harrowingly demonstrated in his research on eviction. The second is that poor neighbourhoods have lacked investment for decades, and so have considerable slack in their commercial and residential property markets. A lot of wealthier city dwellers can thus move in without pushing out incumbent residents or businesses. “Given the typical pattern of low-income renter mobility in New York City, a neighbourhood could go from a 30% poverty population to 12% in as few as ten years without any displacement whatsoever,” noted Messrs Freeman and Braconi in their study. Indeed, the number of poor people living in New York’s gentrifying neighbourhoods barely budged from 1990 to 2014, according to a study by New York University’s Furman Centre. Third, city governments often promote affordable-housing

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pregnancy, incarceration and early death. Gentrification steers cash into deprived neighbourhoods and brings people into depopulated areas through market forces, all without the necessity of governmental intervention. The Trump administration is unlikely to offer large infusions of cash to dilapidated cities. In these circumstances, arguing against gentrification can amount to insistence that poor neighbourhoods remain poor and that racially segregated neighbourhoods stay cut off.

What, then, accounts for the antipathy towards gentrification? The first reason is financial. Though the process has been going on for a few decades, the increased attention comes in the middle of a broader concern about the cost of housing in American cities. The share of households that are “rent burdened”—those spending more than 30% of pre-tax income on rent—has increased from 32% in 2001 to 38% in 2015. Things are worse among the poor; 52% of those below the federal poverty line spend over half their income on housing. Rents have risen dramatically, though this can be the fault of thoughtless regulations which hinder supply more than the malevolence of gentrifiers. The net creation of jobs has outpaced additional housing in New York City by a rate of two to one. In San Francisco, perhaps the most restricted American metropolitan area, this ratio is eight to one.

A second reason gentrification is disliked is culture. The argument is that the arrival of yuppie professionals sipping kombucha will alter the character of a place in an unseemly way. “Don’t Brooklyn my Detroit” T-shirts are now a common sight in Motor City. In truth, Detroit would do well with a bit more Brooklyn. Across big American cities, for every gentrifying neighbourhood ten remain poor. Opposing gentrification has become a way for people to display their anti-racist bona fides. This leads to the exaggerated equation of gentrification with white supremacy. Such objections parallel those made by white NIMBYs who fret that a new bus stop or apartment complex will bring people who might also alter the culture of their neighbourhood—for the worse.

### Porcini progressives

The term gentrification has become tarred. But called by any other name—revitalisation, reinvestment, renaissance—it would smell sweet. Take Shaw, a historical centre of black culture in Washington which limped into the 1970s as a shadow of itself after a series of race riots. Decades of decline followed, in which a crack epidemic caused the murder rate to spike. Today, crime is down. The O Street Market, where one person was killed and eight were injured in a shoot-out in 1994, is now a tranquil grocery store. Luxury flats with angular chairs and oversized espresso machines in the lobby have sprouted

opposite liquor stores. An avant-garde speakeasy beckons from the basement beneath a humble doughnut store. At the Columbia Room, a wood-panelled bar with leather chairs, mixologists conjure \$16 concoctions of scotch, blackberry shrub and porcini mushrooms. This is how progress tastes.



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