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# Sense of Place in Urban Transformation, Gentrification and Preventing Displacement: a Case Study of the Marketview Heights

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**R·I·T**

**Sense of Place in Urban Transformation, Gentrification and Preventing Displacement: a  
Case Study of the Marketview Heights**

**By**

**Aya Alfonso**

A Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Science, Technology, and Public Policy

**Department of Public Policy**

**College of Liberal Arts**

**Rochester Institute of Technology**

**Rochester, NY**

**June 23, 2016**

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*Masters of Science, Science, Technology and Public Policy*  
*Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements for the*

*College of Liberal Arts/Public Policy Program at*  
**ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**  
*Rochester, New York*

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Aca Guakia Yaya Turey Bibima Itiba Cahubaba Atabey  
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Aca Gua Bibima Babama Cemini Guákara Cacibajagua  
Aca Gua Latí Aniki Gua Katu

Gracias al Gran Espíritu y la Divina Madre  
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Gracias a mis hermanos y hermanas de sangre y de agua  
Gracias a todas las maestras y maestros del camino  
Gracias al maestro Corazón  
Gracias al Amor  
Gracias a la Vida

Jajancatu

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a case study of the Marketview Heights neighborhood in the city of Rochester, NY, the main target of the City's Urban Renewal District Plan (2014). Citizens of Marketview provided input for this plan that used participatory strategies in its creation. The citizens of this neighborhood are primarily people of color who experience relatively high rates of poverty. The Marketview Heights Collective Action Project (CAP) is a community-based organization that has organized and empowered the community with initiatives and programs, like the creation of community gardens and participation in planning of policies that affect their community. CAP is a reflection of the strong sense of place citizens of this community value and maintain. The Urban Renewal District Plan (URD) aims to revitalize the neighborhood by investing in infrastructure and affordable housing, using mixed income housing to attract new residents. Mixed income housing has been shown to induce gentrification, which in turn causes different forms of displacement of original residents. Displacement causes loss of sense of place, detrimental to all spheres within the community. Using a qualitative approach, this study looks at how much the URD reflects the needs and desires of the community as determined by their sense of place. This research explores the use of sense of place as a policy frame or tool that may result in positive neighborhood change that is based on the inclusion and integration of the community's vision and sense of place in policy.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
List of Figures and Tables.....	3
Definitions.....	3
Literature Review.....	6
Gentrification.....	6
Displacement.....	8
Policy.....	11
Sense of Place.....	13
Case Study and Methods.....	19
Marketview Heights.....	19
Qualitative Data Collection.....	25
Data Analysis.....	31
Interviews and Active Participant Observation.....	31
Sense of Place in Marketview Heights.....	32
Findings.....	33
Safety.....	33
Physical Conditions.....	40
Community Assets and Strengths.....	46
Visions for Change.....	49
Experience in Participatory Planning.....	53
Sense of Place and Participatory Planning in the Urban Renewal District Plan.....	55
Content Analysis: The URD and Previous Plans.....	55
Marketview Heights Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS).....	59
North Union Street Corridor: A Community Vision Plan (NUSC).....	60
Marketview Heights Focused Investment Strategy: Situational Analysis (FIS).....	62
Urban Renewal District Plan (URD).....	63
East Main Arts and Market Initiative.....	64
Findings.....	66
Analysis and Recommendations.....	71
Recommendations and Policy Implications.....	73
Conclusions and Future Research.....	76
Works Cited.....	78
Appendix.....	86

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Map of Marketview Heights in Rochester, NY.....	20
Figure 2. Code applications.....	67
Figure 3. Code co-occurrence.....	69

## DEFINITIONS

Acronym	Definition
CAP	Marketview Heights Collective Action Project
FIS	Focused Investment Strategy
NOTA	Neighborhood of the Arts
NRS	Marketview Heights Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy
NUSC	North Union Street Corridor
URD	Marketview Heights Urban Renewal District Plan
EMAMI	East Main Arts and Market Initiative

# INTRODUCTION

Gentrification, or the influx of upper- or middle-income households in low-income urban neighborhoods, has become an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in diverse urban spaces across the globe. Since gentrification does not occur in a vacuum, it is important to understand the role of government and how public policies affect and impact the communities targeted for urban transformation. This thesis aims to provide a contribution to the search for creation of policies that are participatory in different ways that include sense of place of citizens affected by them. In the interest of highlighting the importance of citizens' sense of place, this thesis explores how participatory tools may be used in planning and policy in ways that can alleviate or halt the detrimental effects of displacement to communities that gentrification causes. The community studied is the southern portion of Marketview Heights neighborhood in Rochester, NY, focus of an Urban Renewal District Plan adopted by Rochester City Council in 2014.

Different realities coexist in this neighborhood that make up the strengths of the community and the challenges they face, as the Marketview Heights Collective Action Project (CAP) founded in 2005 detailed in its Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS 2006). These challenges range from low education levels to absentee landlords, as well as drug activity and shootings. Despite the challenges, CAP is proud to acknowledge and utilize with pride the most important asset they recognize: the citizens of their community (NRS 2006). As the implementation of the 2014 Urban Renewal District (URD) plan materializes in the not so distant future, it is useful to investigate the sense of place and feelings residents have towards their neighborhood and its imminent transformation, as well as their experiences in the participatory planning process that will bring change to their neighborhood. The purpose of this thesis is to answer the question of how the needs, desires and sense of place of the residents of this

particular community is reflected in the policy planning process that resulted in a promising plan that will allegedly bring positive change for the community. Furthermore, this thesis aims to use the lessons learned from the results and analysis to provide and propose planning and policy frameworks that are centered on sense of place, with the intent that both community and government benefit from working and learning together and from each other.

The case of the Marketview Heights is important to study for a number of reasons. The vibrantly diverse community that constitutes it today is a reflection of its rich and particular history. The residents' journey in organizational and community engagement efforts has translated into tangible and intangible benefits to them as an expression of their sense of place and desire to preserve and expand it. This thesis aims to open a path for reviewing interventions and policies that better improve community involvement where citizens' sense of place is valued, and citizens are protected from the potential adverse consequences of any form of displacement. A case study format and mixed qualitative methods are used to get a deeper understanding of the community's sense of place, and how it can be used in the context of planning. Semi-structured interviews in combination with active participant observation were the methods used to experience directly the exercise and notion of sense of place the citizens have for their neighborhood. The results from these experiences and exchanges were used to compare with the content analysis of the pertinent urban plans, focusing on what they say about sense of place and the extent to which they reflect and aim to preserve it, as well as to the extent they were participatory and community-based. The mixed qualitative methods used contribute results that survey or quantitative methods could not. While the characteristics, circumstances, experiences, assets and outcomes of the Marketview Heights community are unique to the case, there may be implications and important lessons for communities to learn from.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Gentrification

Although many scholars define gentrification differently, the definition used for this literature review is “the movement of middle-income people into low-income neighborhoods causing the displacement of all, or many, of the pre-existing low-income residents” (Lees, Butler and Bride 2012). Displacement via gentrification is a phenomenon that has become more visible and pervasive across major cities in the United States and the western world. Research and popular press literature predominantly focus on gentrification that occurs in large western cities such as New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. or London. This may be due to the fact that there has been a strong recent movement of people back into the city, as opposed to the past trend of moving out to the suburbs (Hyra 2014). In addition, these cities are part of large metropolitan areas where the residential market is strong and housing options are limited, especially for low-income residents. There is a growing body of literature that demonstrates that gentrification is not exclusive of the western world (Bridge, Butler and Lees 2012), and that gentrification is a phenomenon that has to be understood on a broader geographical, demographic and political scope regardless of the size of the metropolitan area where it occurs (Billingham 2015). This is because while gentrification is better known for its occurrence in larger cities, it is also occurring in mid-sized cities in more gradual and subtle ways, resulting in greater disadvantage to low-income residents who are displaced by the impact of newcomers or ‘gentrifiers’ in their neighborhoods.

Two of the main factors that induce displacement of longtime residents of color in low-income communities are economic pressures, such as booming real estate markets, and the

public policies that support them (Podagrosi & Vojnovic 2008). Grant (2003) provides a depiction of how gentrification is commonly occurring in cities:

America's renewed interest in city life has put a premium on urban neighborhoods, few of which have been built since World War II. If people are flocking to new jobs in a region where housing is scarce, pressure builds on areas once considered undesirable.

Gentrification tends to occur in districts with particular qualities that make them desirable and ripe for change. The convenience, diversity, and vitality of urban neighborhoods are major draws, as is the availability of cheap housing, especially if the buildings are distinctive and appealing. Old houses or industrial buildings often attract people looking for "fixer-uppers" as investment opportunities.

Gentrification works by accretion — gathering momentum like a snowball. Few people are willing to move into an unfamiliar neighborhood across class and racial lines. Once a few familiar faces are present, more people are willing to make the move. Word travels that an attractive neighborhood has been "discovered" and the pace of change accelerates rapidly.

Policies that have induced gentrification usually come as 'mixed income housing development' or 'urban renewal/revitalization' plans and encourage investment by private developers. Urban renewal and neighborhood development policies often drive real estate values up, making housing no longer affordable for the communities' longtime residents. In some cases, entire buildings are demolished to be replaced by upscale luxury housing, or major franchises begin moving in the neighborhoods causing independent local businesses to wane (Hyra 2008). Longtime residents are displaced in different ways as middle- or higher-income occupiers come in. Former residents lose access to the support networks of their community and the resources it provided them, often for generations. Citizens of the community become displaced and consequently lose their sense of place.

## **Displacement**

Displacement occurs as a result of the diverse gentrifying policies that cause different forms of displacement by a combination of various factors. These factors include market forces that are allowed into neighborhoods via public policies that are heavily influenced by market and developing interests (Bailey and Robertson 1997). Twigge-Molecey (2014) provided a framework of characterizing displacement as direct and indirect, and classifying indirect as more gradual, social, cultural and political, while defining being priced out of the neighborhood or forced to leave as direct displacement. She explains that indirect displacement is less visible and harder to measure, and other research demonstrates that it is just as detrimental to a community's sense of place as being forced to move (Shaw and Hagemans 2015).

The research on gentrification in urban settings suggest that government has done little to prevent any form of displacement. In virtually all cases examined from cities like New York, Chicago, and Milwaukee, some form of displacement occurred that was not accounted for in policy or the policymaking process, even in the cases where community residents organized and resisted gentrification. There is no evidence that people's sense of place - what connects them to where they live, what makes them care about where they live, and survive because of where they live - has not been considered by policymakers and private developers in a comprehensive way.

Direct displacement is understood in this context as the displacement that occurs physically and immediately. An example of this would be when a landlord gives a short notice for residents to move out because the building is either being sold or demolished so that a more expensive one can take its place. Indirect displacement is caused by cultural, social or political changes that result from changing demographics (Twigge-Molecey 2014). A gentrifying neighborhood may be losing local resident-owned businesses to national chain businesses that

original residents cannot afford or desire. Living in their neighborhood may then become too expensive, even if they are still able to afford rent. In these situations, residents may begin to feel their neighborhood does not feel like home anymore, and living there may no longer be as appealing or comfortable. This example shows how indirect displacement can gradually lead to physical displacement. Other forms of displacement include social and cultural displacement that happens when higher income residents, of different cultural backgrounds and customs, move in to a gentrifying neighborhood. Low-income longstanding and lifelong residents may have their sense of place in danger as the presence of higher income gentrifiers may shift, for example, the traditional uses of a park where families and children play that has been rebuilt as a dog park where children are no longer safe to play in (Twigge-Molecey 2014). The political and economic power of low-income residents may also be displaced as gentrifiers that live disconnected from preexisting neighborhood organizations that are socially engaged, politically appropriate efforts and get the upper hand in determining plans to redevelop or revitalize commercially places of the community (Davison 2008).

Different types of policies have opened the doors to gentrification in inner city neighborhoods. For the purposes of this study, I investigated the literature on the governmental programs or policies that either directly or indirectly allowed for gentrification to unfold in specific urban communities. I was specifically interested in evidence of community participation, to determine if community participation influenced local policy or programs, and the impact of the policy on the people affected. Literature on policies that engaged citizens in their planning related to gentrification and neighborhood change was scarce. The role of government and private development exercised through the implementation of policy is important to understand as government can be a promoter and, in rare cases, serve as a constraint or influence of the

gentrification process (Levine 2004). The creation, development and implementation of policy are experienced differently for different actors and stakeholders because they exercise different kinds of power and occupy different places in society.

Arnstein (1969) explains in her classic study of typologies of citizen participation that, while in theory and principle in a democratic government citizen participation is accepted, in execution the application and influence of participation varies. In her argument, a citizen will occupy a certain place in the ladder of participation, which ranges from manipulation to full citizen control of politics and policies, according to the social or racial group to which they belong. Their identity or membership in a certain economic or racial group also determines how their participation and power are exercised or embraced. When more powerful dominant classes with strong political and economic capital are exercising their right to participate politically in a democratic environment, their participation is not only sought, but also welcomed and accommodated by government. But when citizens are from low-income communities, their search and struggle for autonomy through their empowerment is seen as “separatist” and undesirable (Arnstein 1969). She affirms this further:

Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy – a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone. The applause is reduced to polite handclaps, however, when this principle is advocated by the have-not Blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos and whites. And when the have-nots define participation as redistribution of power, the American consensus on the fundamental principle explodes into many shades of outright racial, ethnic, ideological and political opposition. (Arnstein 1969: 216).

More recent research states that "experiences in the participation process show that the main source of user satisfaction is not the degree to which a person's needs have been met, but the feeling of having influenced the decisions" (Sanoff, 2000, p. 12). In other words, it is not just participation that matters but the feeling that the input and engagement given is satisfactory from

the citizen's perspective and experience, evidenced by how much their perspectives are reflected in final decisions.

Betancur proposes that policies that create and promote gentrification are also implemented with the intention of exercising social control over the affected community that tends to be inhabited by impoverished residents of color (Betancur 2002: 806). Whittle et al. (2015) further underline and provide evidence for this conclusion. In their study of a community of the San Francisco Bay Area's Mission District, they showed how gentrification made the conditions of an already poor neighborhood far worse as residents experienced greater food insecurity and detrimental health conditions as a result of the exacerbation of the preexisting conditions. Even though most of the residents of the area were gradually displaced, the residents that were able to stay did so by enduring the worsening conditions of their livelihood as the price to sustain their lives grew, all because they wanted to continue living in their community. Their sense of place, i.e. the importance of the location of their community and their role in it, was what kept them there even as conditions became harder. Governments might create policies that promote or constrain gentrification (Betancur 2002). Bailey and Robertson (1997) say that while there are policies that indeed end up favoring the market (a policy that promotes gentrification), governments have also executed and promoted policies that are based on the social needs of the community at stake, a possible indicator of taking into account sense of place which will be discussed more in depth further.

## **Policy**

To understand the role of government and policy, this section explores mixed-income housing policies in the context of gentrification, as this is generally the explicit goals of City of

Rochester plans that impact the Marketview Heights neighborhood. While there is not a universally agreed upon definition for mixed income neighborhoods, Brophy and Smith (1997: 5) defined mixed income living as the “deliberate effort to construct and/or own a multifamily development that has the mixing of income groups as a fundamental part of its financial and operational plans.” The Mixed-Income Research Design Group refers to these areas as “all intentional efforts to generate socioeconomic diversity in a targeted geographic area” (Briggs et al., 2009: 10). Galster, Booza, and Cutsinger (2008) referred to the broad range of communities that are characterized by a diversity of household incomes as “income-diverse areas.” An income-diverse area is a low-poverty area that was not part of a mixed income policy effort but where low-income residents were relocated to other neighborhoods of middle to high income.

Mixed income housing policy has been used as a tool to deconcentrate poverty in public housing or low-income neighborhoods since roughly the early 1960s (Gans 1961a, 1961b). Very politically attractive (because social or income mixing policy sounds better than gentrification policy), social mixing was proposed by scholars, politicians and journalists as the alternative to desegregate those who were in areas of high concentration of poverty (Lees, Butler and Bridge 2012). The most notable of these policy efforts is Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) Program of 1992 (Levy, McDade and Bertumen 2013). Research has questioned local and federal government claims of positive outcomes from the implementation of HOPE IV as the problem of poverty has persisted even as mixed income housing policy continues to be used for deconcentrating inner-city poverty (Castells 2010; Fraser, DeFlippis and Bazuin 2012; Zielenbach and Voith 2010). Joseph (2006) argues that living in mixed developments may be beneficial to low-income residents because of the access to higher quality goods and services, but social interaction with people of other incomes alone does not suffice for

increased benefits. Research has found that middle income residents are the ones who enjoy greater satisfaction from mixed income developments and that these developments do not generally benefit low income residents (Fraser and Nelson 2008). Vale (2006) claims that better housing design and management along with careful tenant selection can produce the same or better results without the need for mixing income. Wilson (1987) claimed social mobility can really only occur when a change in the structural economic conditions that inhibit access to employment, education, and so on takes place, not just with facilitating reintegration with the middle class.

According to Lees, Bridge and Butler (2012), “social mix is a one-sided (government) strategy, as it is seldom advocated in wealthier neighborhoods that may be just as socially homogeneous as the deprived neighborhoods where social mix is pitched as a heterogeneous remedy” (Lees, Bridge and Butler 2012: 7). Scholars who are critical of gentrification view ‘social mix’ as rhetoric that serves to cloud a gentrification strategy that brings middle classes into deprived neighborhoods as a way to ‘rescue’ them and alleviate decline by their consumption practices that boost the local tax base (Smith 2002; Lees 2003; Blomley 2004; Slater 2004, 2006; Davidson and Lees 2005). The literature shows, mixed income policy has failed to improve neighborhoods it targets and does not achieve what it is designed to do for low-income residents.

### **Sense of Place**

Although the literature on the motivations for and impact of gentrification focuses on the role of the real estate market as a main driver and displacement in terms of numbers, the reality of the social change that gentrification brings is political (Gecker 2013). Gecker completed an

ethnographic study that examines the different ways residents frame themselves in contrast with how the local government frames them by using interviews that complemented an examination of the political process of gentrification. Gecker defines gentrification as “a set of political decisions that shape the character and ultimate outcome of development” (Gecker 2013: iv). This definition adds an important component, the politics of gentrification, to the original definition used prior, because it extends the meaning of gentrification beyond just economics and the movement of people and highlights the political element that makes it possible.

“Descriptions of gentrification as a market process allocating land to its best and most profitable use, or a process of replacing a lower for a higher income group, do not address the highly destructive processes of class, race, ethnicity, and alienation involved in gentrification ... community formations are as strong as their political and economic power. ... the most traumatic aspect is perhaps the destruction of the elaborate and complex community fabric that is crucial for low-income, immigrant, and minority communities—without any compensation” (Betancur 2002: 807).

The literature on mixed income communities serves as a valuable economic frame to view a community or development effort, but is limited in exploring other essential elements of a community, particularly Sense of Place, which Betancur hints at in the end of the above quote. The value of communities, their culture, and the sense of place they create tend to be disregarded by government once the gentrifying neighborhood yields higher real estate values and is assimilated more with the incoming gentrifying culture (Newman and Wyly 2006). Yet, this aspect of gentrification is critical since the destruction of community can be understood as a political tool of structural violence against communities and their sense of place, exercised by a combination of diverse policies but more directly by urban housing and market driven policies (Betancur 2002; Gecker 2013; Whittle et. al 2015). Gentrification then is political and does not occur randomly, under the guise of urban housing policies driven by the market usually

combined with involvement of government in neighborhood development (Levine 2004; Newman and Wyly 2006; Billingham 2015).

Definitions of sense of place are numerous and diverse and vary from very different fields and perspectives such as environmental psychology, anthropology, architecture, geography and many others. In this thesis, I define sense of place as the deep connection experienced by an individual or group of people to their environment or locality and the communal networks and support systems that the environment provides. Sociologist David Hummon (1992) explains that “sense of place is inevitably dual in nature, involving both an interpretive perspective *on* the environment and an emotional reaction *to* the environment ... Sense of place involves a personal *orientation* toward place, in which ones’ understanding of place and one’s feelings about place become fused in the context of environmental meaning” (253).

Place is also difficult to define. “The places we live in are a whole set of cultural preconceptions that shape the way we respond to the place, and in some measure, reshape the place to fit those preconceptions.... This lack of a common definition or understanding of sense of place, results both from the fact that it has become a buzzword used to suit various purposes, and from the interdisciplinary nature of the concept” (Cross 2001: 1). A more comprehensive definition of sense of place is offered by Dr. Thomas Woods, president of Making Sense of Place, Inc. as follows (2003):

People develop a "sense of place" through experience and knowledge of a particular area. A sense of place emerges through knowledge of the history, geography and geology of an area, its flora and fauna, the legends of a place, and a growing sense of the land and its history after living there for a time.

The feel of the sun on your face or the rain on your back, the rough and smooth textures of the land, the color of the sky at morning and sunset, the fragrance of the plants blooming in season, the songs and antics of birds and the cautious ramblings of mammals are environmental influences that help to define a place. Memories of personal and cultural experiences over time make a place special, favorite objects that shape to your

hand or body with use, songs or dances that emerge from the people of a place, special skills you develop to enjoy your area--these too help to define a place and anchor you in it.

Through time, shared experiences and stories (history) help to connect place and people and to transmit feelings of place from generation to generation. Shared physical perceptions and experiences help people from different cultural groups fashion a local culture that expresses their unity in a place. Finally, place becomes unique and special for individuals and their group, and the group solidifies its identity through celebrations and rituals.

Developing a sense of place helps people identify with their region and with each other. A strong sense of place can lead to more sensitive stewardship of our cultural history and natural environment.

This definition shows how ideas of place and sense of place are very complex, and the importance sense of place has in developing sensitive stewardship. These ideas of sense of place are constructed and developed from individual or shared experiences that ultimately generate a strong bond and emotional connection to a place that may be passed on through generations. Ties to a location are influenced by the connections that the location makes available. These ties create a strong sense of belonging no matter how inconvenient the conditions of the livelihood may be in the area because these ties make it possible to thrive (Whittle et al 2015). Active citizens, who are organized and engaged in their community, often reflect a strong sense of place. This has shown to improve mental health and overall wellbeing in the context of urban regeneration (Baba et al 2016).

Caring about where you live and wanting to remain there despite neighborhood changes is considered in this thesis an expression of sense of place. Communities' sense of place and its consideration in policymaking is a theme absent in the literature. Few texts like Muñiz (1995), Shaw and Hagemans (2015), and Betancur (2002) discuss the importance of sense of place explicitly in connection to resistance to the negative consequences of gentrification. There are even fewer accounts of successful community resistance to halt, delay gentrification, or relevant

contributions about community being involved differently in the planning process in a way that rights can be exercised by the citizens affected if resistance to displacement is needed.

The small volume of literature that mentions sense of place or hints at it indirectly demonstrates the power that sense of place has, not only to resist gentrification but to enhance and empower communities where residents are more engaged and involved politically, socially and emotionally in their communities. “Place attachments, place identity, sense of community, and social capital are all critical parts of person-environment transactions that foster the development of community in all of its physical, social, political and economic aspects” (Manzo & Perkins 2006: 347). That being said, it would be in government’s best interest to preserve sense of place if it were to have citizens care about and be more engaged in the places they live in.

Another dimension that is not prevalent in the literature of policy analysis on gentrification is how other preexisting policies, such as health or education policies, affect the outcome of an urban policy in terms of the impact it can have on the residents in danger of or undergoing displacement. This responds to the question of the structural and systemic aspect of gentrification where it can be situated as an element of a larger system or network of policies that creates certain outcomes and impacts on the people affected. While some studies have shown different strategies of residents organizing lobbying or protests, few have presented evidence of these activities reversing or halting impending gentrification and displacement, or address other structural factors behind the impacts (Whittle et al. 2015).

Much of the analysis of gentrification is primarily focused on the way gentrification occurs in major western cities of the global north where community resistance is not broadly examined and sense of place is almost always overlooked by both researchers and policymakers. It is also

evident that while there are other systemic factors and policies that add to the detrimental results of gentrification and displacement of low income residents of color, the policies reflected in the research are primarily focused on urban renewal, development and housing policies. Few studies reflect a systemic approach to show how gentrification alone is not responsible for the negative impacts of community; inequality and other policies in areas such as health or education, add to the stress of displacement and loss of sense of place. While some research points out the positive impacts of gentrification, most acknowledge that the real consequences for existing lower income residents are negative even though at first they may seem beneficial. Even when secured housing is there to prevent displacement, loss of sense of place and indirect displacement stresses the community (Shaw and Hagemans 2015). This stress is created by the exacerbation of preexisting conditions of the low-income residents along with the increased struggle to deal with the challenges due to the loss of the community support network that displacement creates.

The literature mostly emphasizes the economic and market pressures that influence gentrification, and shows the importance role of government in the inception and implementation of policies that result in gentrification. In the discussion of displacement, indirect displacement, including political displacement, is overlooked. as Twigge-Molecey (2014) highlighted. Evidence of rampant displacement of residents in major metropolitan areas shows that gentrification is encouraged without acknowledging sense of place or importance of place of community. Much of the literature on gentrification focuses on policy outcomes that yield higher incomes, higher property values and greater private real estate market advantages.

The focus of the literature on gentrification and mixed income development clearly leaves out the importance of sense of place and empowerment of the citizens of a community. These aspects must be understood in order to best understand policy dynamics and implications for the

recognition of and inclusion of sense of place. This case study aims to uncover different perspectives that can contribute to the literature and policy implications for sustaining citizen engagement in the context of neighborhood change that is facilitated by a strong sense of place. “Having real discussions about real issues and feelings is the secret to building a cohesive community that thinks globally and acts locally” (Sarkissian et al. 2009).

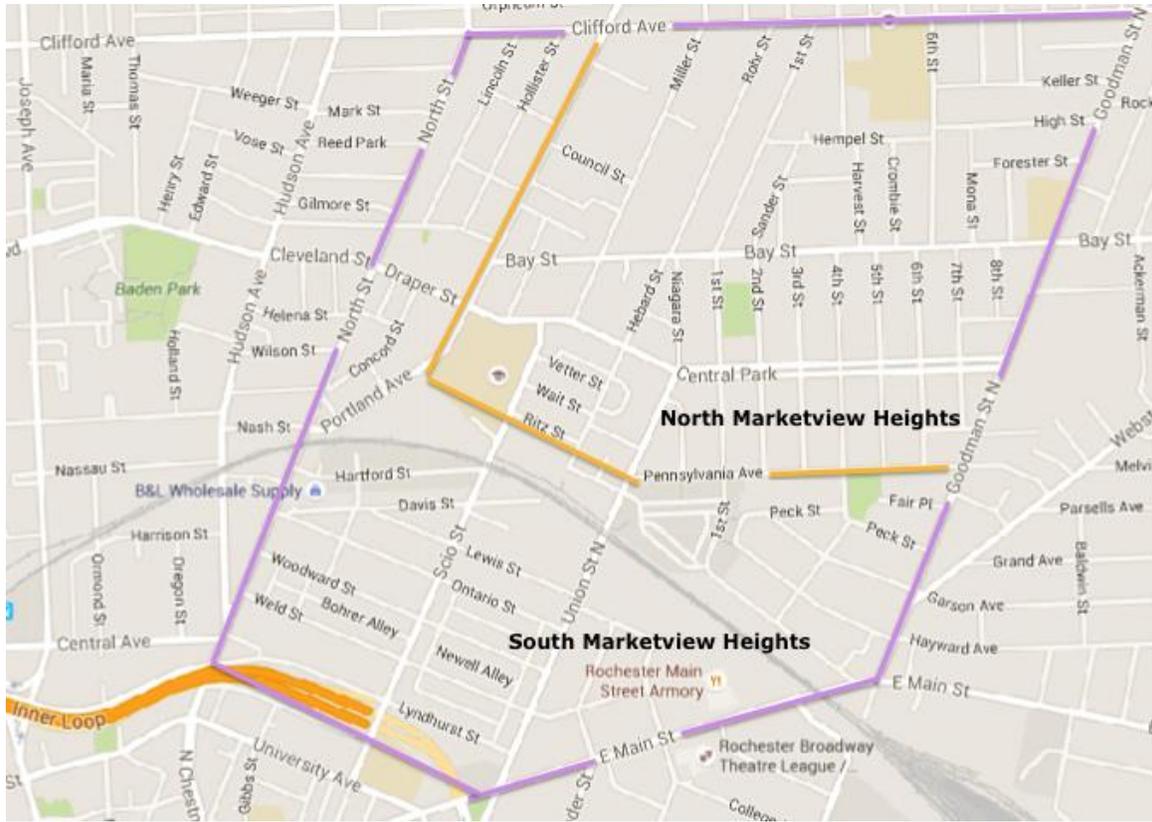
Loss of sense of place is often overlooked in the discussion surrounding displacement due to gentrification policies and practices. Sense of place is an important consideration in neighborhood transformation because it explains how people interact with their surroundings and environment. Understanding how people interact with their place or community is relevant when their community is the target of an urban policy or other kinds of policies involving healthcare or education that may also affect them (Whittle et al. 2015). For the complex problem that gentrification and displacement create for citizens of a community a complex solution is needed; residents’ sense of place may provide important considerations and inform more effective policy considerations.

## **CASE STUDY AND METHODS**

### **Marketview Heights**

The community that is the focus of this case study is located in the South Marketview Heights of the City of Rochester. Figure 1 shows the geographic location and border of the neighborhood in the purple outline, and the division of North and South Marketview Heights with the orange outline. Clifford Avenue is the northern border, the Inner Loop and East Main Street provide the southern delimitation, and North Street and North Goodman Street provide the west and east delimitations respectively. The main attraction and great community asset, the

legendary Rochester Public Market, is located between North Union Street and First Street, and has been a significant landmark for more than a century.



**Figure 1. Map of Marketview Heights in Rochester, NY. Source: Google Maps**

Since its establishment in the early 1830s, the city of Rochester has undergone significant population transitions. The Marketview Heights neighborhood occupies a particular position in the city of Rochester’s past and present. It is also a focus of future transitions contemplated in the City of Rochester’s Urban Renewal District plan (URD 2014) and East Main Arts and Market Initiative (EMAMI 2015). As former city historian Blake McKelvey expresses in his Rochester’s Near Northeast historical account, the city of Rochester, and particularly the near northeast, came to be from Irish and German settlers that began to occupy and purchase land in the late 1800s. After World War II and the outmigration of Germans and Irish, the massive influx of Black and

Boricua<sup>1</sup> people changed the makeup of the neighborhoods, quadrupling the the non-white population of the time and becoming fifty percent of the Seventh Ward (McKelvey 1967: 13). This migration was due to the opportunities that the clothing, film and camera industries brought at the beginning of the twentieth century. Black and Boricua people settled in the poorest areas of the area historically known as the Near Northeast, and today known as the Crescent of Poverty or Fatal Crescent, composed of the Upper Falls, parts of Group 14621, and the Marketview Heights neighborhoods. The population of people of color was also very young in the middle of the twentieth century, where the median age of the area where Black people comprised one third of the population in these neighborhoods by the 1950s was twenty-two years old (McKelvey 1967: 18). The needs of people of color in the Near Northeast for adequate schools and playgrounds and better housing grew with increasing population. Friction began in the sixties when Black people's unemployment rates grew while the city's unemployment rate lowered, and Black community meetings to address community discontent were continually interrupted by police (McKelvey 1967: 19). Just a few blocks west of North Street, on Joseph Avenue, the western boundary of today's Marketview Heights neighborhood, a great uprising ensued where distressed and discontented people looted and destroyed businesses (McKelvey 1967: 21). The zoning of the wards and other complex issues, such as a large concentration of multi-family low-income public housing, created segregated circumstances where communities of color were living in dire conditions. Tensions rose as residents could no longer tolerate the social, economic and physical immobility that did not allow them to thrive in a city that seemed to offer a better quality of life for white residents. (McKelvey 1967: 19).

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<sup>1</sup> Boricua in this thesis is used to refer to the people of Boriké, also known as Puerto Rico.

This historical event, also known as July '64, has left a great impact on the makeup of the population. Beyond 'haunting' the city with its traumatic memory and lessons from the past (Hare 2014), it helps explain the dynamics and location of the great diversity that is found in Rochester and the Marketview Heights neighborhood today. The Rochester known today is on Seneca ancestral lands that have been occupied by white settlers and gave way to the creation of the city with the diverse groups that came. The diversity present today is also historically grounded in the migration of European immigrants from the 1890s to the present, and currently there is a growing Southeast Asian community within the Marketview Heights neighborhood.

Before the uprising, Rochester attracted thousands of Black people from the south; it was appreciated as the northern promise of a better life (Elson and Christopher 2006). "Black people came to Rochester to build better lives and found only better public assistance benefits" (Hare 2014: 2). Rochester's Black population tripled to more than 25,000 during the 1950s, but they did not possess the proper skills to be employed in the manufacturing sector, and the industries did little to nothing to train or recruit them for employment (Hare 2014). While white Rochesterians had a lower than two percent unemployment rate, Black people had ten percent (Hare 2014). City leaders ignored this situation, and the increasing overcrowding of housing downtown and unemployment combined with repeated police clashes against Black people, contributed to the growing tension and discontent. Even though white, upwardly mobile Rochesterians had already begun their exodus from the city to the suburbs before the uprising, the uprising forever changed Rochester and created the fear that further drove out white Rochesterians from the inner city (Hare 2014).

Today the demographics of the Marketview Heights are not so different from the past. Young people of color, primarily Black and Boricua, make up the bulk of the population, and

poverty still persists as a major challenge for the community (NRS 2006). The neighborhood is mixed income with almost half of the residents earning less than \$15,000 a year, 75 percent of the population making less than \$35,000, and only 13 percent making more than \$50,000 a year (NRS 2006). The population below the age of twenty is 38.4 percent and the median age is 26.5 (US Census 2010). More than fifty-nine percent of households are family households, 43 percent of these are headed by single mothers, and 30.1 percent are households with children under 18 years (US Census 2010). More than 20 percent of the population is white, 58.1 percent is Black, and 34 percent are Latino (30.7 percent alone are Boricua) (US Census 2010). The neighborhood has experienced a significant population decrease along with the decrease in residential owner occupancy. Residential units are primarily renter-occupied. In 2006 owner-occupied housing units were only 35 percent of all occupied residential units. (NRS 2006, US Census 2010).

The richly diverse community of Marketview Heights also has a legacy of community engagement and activism. Marketview Heights was home to activists and iconic members of resistance and positive action such as the Boricua Amalia Gavillán and Daisy Smith (Hansen 1978; Marino 1993). Amalia Gavillán was especially iconic because of her involvement in the community and strong sense of place, as demonstrated in her unwillingness to leave her deteriorating apartment because

“all the people she knows live nearby. It is near the Anthony Jordan Health Clinic in Genessee Hospital, which she visits, and near the Rochester Public Market, where she shops, ... and if her neighbors don't see her pattering in her garden or walking down the street for a day or two, they come over to see if she's all right ... While she might qualify for a rent-subsidized apartment in one of the city's high-rise apartment buildings, that would mean leaving behind her friends, the dog, her way of life. She has filled the tiny yard with flowers and would have to leave her garden behind, too.” (Hansen 1978: 1B).

Daisy Smith's strong sense of place was also evident as she considered her home in Marketview Heights “extended well beyond the walls of her house” (Marino 1993: 4C). During

her time in the early nineties, the area was referred to as the “Lower Marketview Heights”, a name she would resist by saying there was “nothing *lower* about it” (Marino 1993: 4C). The issues of crime and drug activity were not as rampant when she moved in the neighborhood in the sixties, she claims that drugs were hardly heard of and people didn’t know of drug houses (Marino 1993). After twenty-one years in the neighborhood things changed dramatically and she and the community became concerned and gathered signatures to have the drug houses in the area closed (Marino 1993). She was also on the board of directors of the Marketview Heights Association and the Lewis Street Center, as well as president of her local block club. She said that “there’s always some kind of meeting to go to, we do what we can to keep our neighborhood clean and safe” (Marino 1993: 4C). Marketview’s organized citizens of Gavillán and Smith’s times successfully stopped the use of the Corpus Christi Church on Lyndhurst Street to house transients coming out of prison. They gathered signatures and resisted this move because they were certain that this would add to the problems that are still challenging the neighborhood (Calandra 1986).

Following this tradition of sense of place, caring for where they live and wanting a clean and safe space for the community, the Marketview Heights neighborhood has gained momentum in the recent decade with its engaged citizens and organizations. A group of residents initiated the Marketview Heights Collective Action Project in 2005 to organize and expand citizen engagement in the revitalization of the community. Citizens’ efforts include recommendations for improving Union Street, an important gateway to the Rochester Public Market, creating more community gardens and instituting an annual block party, a tradition that has been recovered after sixty years (Riley 2015). The city has highlighted the potential of the neighborhood and detailed the revitalization and development potential of the neighborhood in the Marketview

Heights Urban Renewal District Plan adopted in 2014. Similarly, the East Main Arts and Market Initiative adopted in 2015, further focuses on the re-development potential of the streets and amenities adjacent to the Marketview Heights neighborhood and the Public Market.

The Marketview Heights Urban Renewal District Plan (URD) of 2014 aims include clearing of blight, taking over vacant and underused properties to develop them for economic activity, increasing the municipal tax base of the area, decreasing crime via environmental design, and investing in the public spaces such as lighting, gardening and public art (URD 2014). The plan calls for additional affordable housing units in Marketview and regeneration of the area, including mixed income housing that will allow for market rate housing units. These units are planned to replace houses on Lewis Street that will be demolished due to their poor condition and rampant criminal activity. This thesis will specifically study the area designated for renewal that the URD has delineated from the period of January through June 2016. Deeper analysis of the URD and contemporary related plans that target the same area will be discussed further.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

For the purpose of answering the central questions for this thesis there were different methods utilized. The question driving this thesis is: How effective is participatory planning in including citizens' sense of place so that needs and desires are reflected in the resulting plan? This case study explores sense of place as expressed by the residents themselves and analyzes what the plans represent about resident views, needs and desires; the study further investigates resident experience in participatory planning. To conduct this case study a qualitative approach with triangulation of mixed methods was used, following the guidelines of grounded theory. Thanks to its iterative, systemic process of generating explanations as the data is analyzed,

grounded theory is used to explain sense of place in the context of displacement and gentrification based on the systematically collected and analyzed data from the qualitative methods. This approach provides the ability to get a deeper understanding of participants' views and sense of place, which are hard to measure quantitatively, and also allows for the research to be conducted from a more intimate insider's perspective. With triangulation, multiple resources of evidence were gathered and later collated to produce the best possible answers or findings (Gillham 2000). The methods used are active participant observation, semi-structured interviews and a content analysis of the City plans and studies published by and for the Marketview Heights neighborhood and Collective Action Project. These methods and approach were chosen in order to best inform the question and produce rich evidence to support the conclusions that follow the analysis. In other words, the combination of the qualitative methods of active participant observation, semi-structured interviews and content analysis of planning documents constitute the analytical framework used for the study. The themes developed to analyze the interviews and plans are grounded in the data collected and by the evidence from the results of the triangulation.

The persons interviewed include city planners and community residents of the area designated in the Urban Renewal District plan. The proposed interviewing methodology was approved by the Institutional Review Board of RIT. Prior to building trust and relationships with residents, sources such as academic publications, historical data from city newspaper clippings, planning documents, and results from previous collaborative work done through the University/Community Partnerships of RIT with Marketview Heights were researched. The information from these sources laid a foundation for what the interviews were to uncover and explore. The resulting literature review assisted in understanding the different manifestations of the nature of gentrification and displacement, and the shortcomings of mixed income housing

policy, as well as the importance of sense of place and its little to no mention or inclusion in neighborhood transformation policy. The semi-structured format allowed for interviewees to express with more ease their sense of place without asking them directly about sense of place. The interviews conducted, combined with the evidence from the active participant observation, provided the foundation for the content analysis of the plans from the perspective of sense of place and participatory planning. The approved interview guides used are included in the appendix.

Interviews with city planners were set up through electronic mail, and interviews with community members were set up over the phone. Most interviews spontaneously occurred while spending time in the neighborhood, using a snowball sample and a community friend, Hao, who served as a guide. In order to arrange interviews community members, I first spent several hours of active participant observation that involved volunteering in the community garden on First Street and street clean up on Fifth Street, as well as attending CAP events and regular meetings. These observations and interactions allowed me to gain trust and take the active observation to more intimate spaces where community residents permitted, from painting a bedroom ceiling of one of the interviewees to attending dinner gatherings. The interviews with city planners took place in a conference room and an office cubicle that the planners chose. The interviews in the community took place in front porches, kitchen tables and patios, as determined by each interviewee's preference. Only the participants and the researcher were present, with the occasional neighbor that passed and greeted or relative that was around. Participants gave consent to the interviews and to the audio recording of the interviews as approved by the Institutional Review Board at Rochester Institute of Technology. They were also asked if they would prefer to remain anonymous or a name of their choice be used instead of their official

name. Participant observation occurred from February through June 2016. A total of fourteen interviews were conducted between April and June 2016, twelve community citizens and two city planners. A chart with details of the interviewees is included in the appendix.

The purpose of the interviews was to bring the community residents' perspectives and experiences to the center and use them to guide the course of study, and to better inform understanding of their feelings and involvement in the process of the creation of the plans and studies that have led to the URD plan, as determined by their expressions of sense of place. The interviews were analyzed for the common themes of sense of place that arose such as visions for change, challenges such as safety, and needs, assets and strengths of the community. Notes and audio recordings from the interviews were examined to find the quotes associated with the aforementioned themes. Attention was especially placed on the themes of sense of place, those that express appreciation or concern for their community, ranging from the importance of social capital or networks and relationships, to its safety and its physical conditions. These quotes were then organized and categorized by the themes under the umbrella of sense of place: safety, physical conditions, community assets and visions for change. This was done for understanding what constitutes their particular sense of place and their concerns for gentrification, as well as desires for positive neighborhood transformation that preserves and enhances sense of place. This evidence provided the foundation for the content analysis to draw similarities and comparisons from what the citizens expressed and what the plans ultimately documented. This evidence was also used to explore the participatory aspect of the creation of the plans, comparing the experiences of the citizens who participated in the processes and results the plans show.

Aside from deliberately seeking to speak with the city planners involved in the URD, the interviewees from the community were spontaneously chosen as relationships were built and

willingness to participate was expressed. Leaders from CAP were sought after because they were involved in the participatory planning process of the URD, but only those with whom a relationship and trust was built were interviewed. This is because as a researcher I consider this experience as an exchange, I did not ask anything from them until I first provided or did something for them and their community. At the same time, this limited the diversity of perspectives that could have been gathered had there been more time to immerse myself in the neighborhood and expand more beyond CAP members and those that participate in their activities and interventions in the neighborhood.

The interviewees from the neighborhood consist of a mix of longtime residents that have been living in the neighborhood for a number of decades, recent residents with less than five years in the neighborhood, CAP members and non-CAP members, a non-resident community member who has served it for over two decades, and a few residents that do not reside in the URD delineated area but live a few blocks away on Fifth Street, who are still in the same census tract area close to the border of South Marketview Heights neighborhood, bordering the Public Market. Some of those interviewed came from Boriké (known as Puerto Rico), moved in from a different part of Rochester or the state of New York, while others have a long family history of living in the neighborhood for generations. The purpose of having a varied background of interviewees was to get as many diverse perspectives and experiences of sense of place as possible from the snowball sample and time constrain. This enabled the opportunity to document the feelings and views of those who have seen the neighborhood change and transform for decades along with those of the ones who have just recently moved in and integrated that have also developed a strong sense of place for the community, despite their short time living there.

Active participant observation allowed me to immerse myself in the community as much as residents and the available time to conduct the study allowed. As mentioned earlier, this involved participating in the monthly Collective Action Project (CAP) meetings and events, volunteering in their gardens, clean-up efforts, and being in the neighborhood as much as possible. The intent behind this was to contribute any kind of support along with building a real relationship with residents as they contributed to the study and we learned together and from each other.

Documentation of active participant observation was through field notes and memos. These were used to enrich the interviews and climate of the context of the community at the time of the research. I believe the citizens of Marketview Heights are their best experts, so the experiences and interests of the community are paramount to understand their needs and concerns, in addition to providing a basis for investigating what the content in the planning documents reflect of the needs of the community, and ultimately their sense of place.

The experiences from the interviews and active participant observation created a lens to perform the content analysis of the URD and related plans. The findings from the interactions and information provided by citizens were used to compare and contrast with what the plans say and show about their sense of place, and the extent to which the plans take into account the main concerns of citizens. The goal of using these methods is to bring the community, its strengths and its needs to the center by highlighting their perspectives and experiences with government involvement in the context of planning for neighborhood change. The analysis and conclusions from the interviews, active participant observation and content analysis follows in the next sections.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Interviews and Active Participant Observation**

As mentioned earlier, interviews combined with active participant observation sought to explore the citizens' perspectives about their community: their sense of place, priorities, assets, strengths, potential, and challenges. Active participant observation was utilized because it allowed me to get a deeper understanding and participate in the realities of life in the community. Although there are limitations to this research tool, "its deficiency in producing quantitative data are more than made up for by its ability to minimize the distance between the researcher and his subject of study" (Gans 1976: 59). The main objective was to capture rich and diverse perspectives and experiences from intimate and real connections with the citizens that participated in the limited period of time. Observations done in community visits helped experience the expressions of the community's sense of place in their public and intimate spaces, as well as participating in involvement with their neighborhood. These observations were documented in field notes that added to the content from the interviews. The interviews asked residents about their wants and desires, what they see the city is planning and doing, their policy expectations and concerns, and what their experiences have been with government when it comes to policymaking or implementation. The interview guides can be found in the appendix. Data from the participant observation and the interviews was coded to identify emerging patterns and themes which were applied to further analysis.

Because of the time the research began, active participant observation only took place in CAP meetings and events, homes and streets. It was not possible to attend the prior city-sponsored planning meetings to experience how government engaged the community, and get

their input firsthand from the participatory intervention and workshops that resulted in the Urban Renewal District Plan as these took place over a year before the study began.

## **SENSE OF PLACE IN MARKETVIEW HEIGHTS**

Sense of place is expressed in diverse ways by citizens of Marketview Heights. These expressions of sense of place were gathered from the input of citizens from their interviews and the experiences from active participant observation. The data found from these methods and interactions were categorized in four main themes based on recurring issues expressed by citizens to gather a deeper understanding of their sense of place. These themes are safety, physical conditions, community assets and strengths, and visions for change. The theme of safety refers to the citizens' concern for their safety due to the drug activity and the violence related to it that takes place in their community. Physical conditions are the expressions for concern of the physical aspect of the streets and homes of the community. Community assets and strengths reveal how citizens view the strength and power of their community as expressed in their organizations and actions, taking in their own hands the improvement of their community. Finally, the theme of visions for change shows how despite having a great appreciation and love for many aspects of the community, citizens' sense of place also includes a desire for positive change by tending to the challenges that the community faces, even when that means that great changes may unfold. These were the recurring views and concerns that citizens expressed and many times translated into direct action with their community. The data from the themes provide a view into the main elements that construct their sense of place and ways that they express and preserve it.

## **Findings**

### **Safety**

I attended my first CAP meeting on the evening of Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. The people there were a mixed crowd diverse in age, race, and country of origin. The majority of participants were people of color, there were elders from the neighborhood and RIT students from the University/Community Partnership program. There were also three policemen present, a captain and two officers. Kevin Kelley, a city planner from City Hall was also present. Participants brought food to share, everybody was welcoming and there was a feeling of familiarity among all.

The meeting included community updates and later leaving the space open for announcements and comments. Martín Pedraza, a renowned community leader, was leading this meeting. During the meeting, I learned of the homes of the neighborhood that were physically improved by the government as part of the Focused Investment Strategy (FIS) program. The FIS program provided targeted funding in four city neighborhoods for improvements to owner occupied and tenant occupied residential properties. Residents in the meeting discussed how the situations in their areas are better after the FIS intervention, but expressed that it also caused the rise of property values and rental rates, displacing other residents in the area. The FIS program in Marketview Heights renovated and repaired homes to increase beautification and value. This program will be discussed in more detail in the content analysis section.

After discussing FIS, they moved on to discuss the preparation and labor for their community gardens. Some expressed discontent with the fact that people would commit to working in the gardens but would not show up, so they decided they would take measures so that those who come to work are not overloaded. I learned of the *Tea and Herb* garden on Union

Street and a vegetable and fruit garden on First Street, next to the Susan B. Anthony apartments where CAP meetings are held. The police representatives discussed recent criminal activity, they celebrated improvements and were content with the collaboration with the citizens of the community. Ms. Bertha, an elder Black woman, protested about the lack of responsiveness to her calls as she lives on Weld Street and always notifies police when she sees drug sales take place on the corner of the intersection with Union Street. Through the exchange between Ms. Bertha and the police representatives, it became clear that there was indeed a positive collaboration and relationship between police and community where they were working together to alleviate the violence and drug activity present. Police representatives were present at every CAP meeting I went to, and every session there was an exchange of information between citizens and police about incidents and activities they witness and report about on their streets.

When the floor was opened for comments and announcements, I stood up and introduced myself and stated my reason for attending. They were receptive and supportive. Hao, a new resident from Singapore showed interest in the research, and officer Enrique Gómez approached me at the end and gave me his card along with an offer to take me on a tour of the neighborhood in his police car. I decided I would not ask anything from anyone in the community without first giving to them. Following this initial meeting, I attended CAP events, went to their monthly meetings, and volunteered at their garden on different occasions to build real relationships with folks that later agreed to an interview.

The monthly CAP meetings I attended were on the Tuesdays of March 29<sup>th</sup>, April 26<sup>th</sup>, and May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 at the Susan B. Anthony apartments meeting room. The police were present at every meeting, listening and collaborating with the community as citizens expressed their concerns with the criminal and drug activity in every session. The concern for safety among

citizens of the Marketview Heights community was evident as it was a topic mentioned in every meeting, and was also expressed by all participants who were interviewed.

After more encounters with the community, volunteering in the garden and attending CAP events, I visited the neighborhood for interviews. On the morning of May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016 around 11am, Hao, my volunteer community guide, invited me for a walk in the neighborhood and took me to several places to conduct interviews. First, we went to the St. Martin's Place Soup Kitchen on 55 Ontario Street where hundreds of homeless people are fed every week free of charge. There I interviewed Joanne, who is known as Sister Joanne, even though she is not formally a sister institutionally within the nearby church. She is known for serving the community, church, and the soup kitchen for over twenty-five years. Joanne expressed concerns for safety from what she has witnessed in her time within the community, highlighting the importance of having a suitable place to live in to reduce violence:

I would just like to see a peaceful neighborhood where people can be proud of where they live and feel comfortable where they live. If people can live in a place that's decent and clean, and that a landlord will take care of their concerns. Because there's a lot of anger issues. People may think that's a little thing, having a place to live, but it's not, it's a big thing. I think that may take away some of the violence in the streets. People might not need to steal or, I don't know. I just think if people are more content with their lives they don't have to be afraid.

Later we went to Ms. Bertha Jones' home. She is a CAP member and known elder in the neighborhood. She gave us each homemade julip to eat while I interviewed her in her living room. She too expressed concerns for safety and shared an encounter she had with a drug dealer down her street:

The other day he did a drug deal right there and I told him, I said, 'I'll tell you one time. I don't care what you do, but you don't do it up here, take it back on the other end'. And he gave me some lip. I told him, you can get away with it this time, I said, but the next round is on me. And the boys coming down that way said man, you don't know what you're doing. And he said something else.

Ms. Bertha Jones, at eighty-three years young, is a great example of how citizens of this community do what they can to increase their safety. She reports to police about the activities she witnesses on her street (Weld Street). She looks out for others using her wisdom as an elder, and has even confronted the drug dealers that sell on the corner of Weld and Union Street. Hao recalls when she bluntly exercised her power on the day they brought back an old tradition of the neighborhood by organizing neighborhood block parties in the summer of 2015:

Do you know what's Ms. Bertha's job that I've ever seen her do? Seriously, it was last year's meeting, I mean last year's block party we had here. The dealers were always trying to take that corner, right? We had Ms. Bertha sitting there from nine o'clock in the morning, and no one messes with Ms. Bertha! You move!

As an elder in the neighborhood Ms. Bertha looks out for others, and is also appreciated and looked after by her neighbors:

If anything, the only way they [her neighbors] bother me, they miss seeing me for a couple of hours, somebody will come see what's the matter. If not, they play phone tag to see if I'm okay. My neighbor in the back will call around three o'clock to see if I'm okay. Then at about seven thirty, Mannie will call to see if I'm okay.

Ms. Bertha shared with me how her neighbors across the street call her if after 8am they do not see or hear from her. They are new neighbors that look out for Ms. Jones who rents her second floor to a young man. Neighbors are keenly aware of who moves in, and who just comes to stand on the corner to sell. Ms. Bertha and the network of people I encountered throughout the course of the study demonstrated they clearly care about each other and do whatever in their power to ensure and increase each other's safety.

On Sunday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016, I spoke with Judy, block club captain, community leader and CAP member, who expressed hope that the implementation of the URD may bring some relief to

the rampant crime and drug activity experienced practically daily in the streets of the neighborhood. She feels the lack of homeownership on the most problematic street, Lewis Street, facilitates the selling of drugs even after the police has intervened:

It (the URD) will eliminate that pocket of crime, drugs. I lay in bed here at night and I hear gunshots and it's coming back that way, so I know it's back that way. Every week. A couple of times a week. It's chronic. If the police close them down, another one opens up. You only have three homeowners on that whole block.

The first time I was invited for dinner, after months of getting to know each other and attending CAP gatherings and meetings since February 2016, I experienced for myself the danger from the violence of the drug sales on Weld Street. I had come earlier in the week to volunteer in the garden to prepare for high school students that later came as part of a volunteer program. Judy and Hao invited me for dinner at the end of the day the students came to volunteer. I went to Judy's home for dinner on the evening of Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

The experience of dinner at Judy's reminded me of gatherings from my home in Santo Domingo in the Caribbean. Everyone there were neighbors, but the way they treated each other resembled more of a family. I felt welcome, especially after realizing that a meal was particularly prepared for me since they asked me about my eating preferences as I am vegetarian. Martín Pedraza and his wife, Raquel were there. They are from Boriké and have been living in Rochester for more than two decades. Hao was also there, as well as Judy, her daughter, and Judy's grandchildren. We ate on the front porch, I spoke with the Boricuas about the diasporic experience and how much we missed life on the islands. I connected with Hao since he is also a musician, we played music together and shared original music. Hao is a resident who moved in two years ago from Singapore with just his wife, and has grown to be an important member of the community as he has offered his knowledge in business and his support with the youth of the

neighborhood. Hao volunteers his time at the CAP-sponsored Neighborhood Resource Center on Weld Street, helping folks with their resumes and job search. Hao became my community volunteer guide for some of the interviews conducted. On the day I was invited to dinner at Judy's we were done eating when suddenly we heard gunshots from down the street. We all ran for shelter and cover inside the house.

Judy's daughter was the first to go back outside, and everyone else followed. Hearing gunshots at such proximity was not a foreign experience to me. What was new to me was the accuracy Judy's daughter had in knowing where they had come from and who was involved. The incident had occurred less than two blocks away, she went out on the sidewalk to confirm which drug house was the source of the shots. We were already sitting back on the porch in conversation less than ten minutes later when the police arrived at the place of the incident. The experience showed me they were used to this kind of event that seems to be part of their daily lives, and at the same time they have grown very tired of having to live with it. Everyone present had something to say about their concern for their safety and that of all the children who live in the community.

In the face of events like the one during dinner at Judy's, the citizens of Marketview express their sense of place by looking out for each other and taking measures to protect each other. They know each other well and also know who is involved in violence and drug sales within their streets, corners, and alleys. They empower themselves by getting to know their neighbors and coming together to help each other out.

The drug problem has been present for decades in Marketview Heights. Citizens of the community mainly attribute its chronic and persistent occurrence to absentee landlords that do

little to maintain the homes that freely operate as drug houses on Lewis Street, and some interviewees mentioned the importance of a more holistic solution such as improving education.

This is not the first time the citizens of Marketview have mobilized to have their voices heard and needs met in the face of the violence and drug situation, as they have in their participation with the URD that will be discussed further. Two important achievements that exemplify resident engagement is the creation of the Neighborhood Resource Center on the corner of Weld and Union Street where Hao volunteers his time to help others write resumes and do job searches. Jocelyn, another CAP member and participant in this study, helps other residents get a high school diploma and apply for scholarships. The apartment that houses the Resource Center was not being rented by anyone because of the drug activity nearby, so CAP members decided to create the Resource Center. PathStone, a housing, community development and human service organization, is the owner of the property and covers all utilities and costs of the Resource Center.

The second example is when the church adjacent to the Soup Kitchen on Ontario Street was proposed to be house a re-entry program for prisoners released from the county jail into the already problematic neighborhood. Judy recalled the community mobilized over one hundred people to City Hall and successfully prevented the program from happening. At the time of this study, the church was in foreclosure for delinquent property taxes.

The lesson learned from the citizens interviewed is that safety is not just an essential for their livelihood in the community. They taught me that a safe place to live in is a place one can be proud to live in, it is a place where residents can calmly be content with and grow as a community from the sense of place that flourishes within safe spaces.

## **Physical conditions**

Many participants related the lack of safe and stable housing conditions to the issues of safety. These physical conditions allow for the illicit activity to unfold in abandoned and vacant houses; tenant-occupied properties are usually owned by absentee landlords that do not look after their properties and who do not address the drug activity and violence that their tenants engage in.

The concern for the physical aspect of the neighborhood is another expression of sense of place that the community has also literally taken into their own hands. By creating gardens that produce chemical-free food, herbs and flowers, organizing and carrying out their own community street clean up, and participating in programs like the FIS program and Blocks in Bloom, a Cornell University initiative that guides neighbors in the process of creating front yard flower gardens, citizens of Marketview Heights have taken action to embellish their neighborhood however they can.

A few participants of the study were recipients of the FIS program for the improvement of their homes. They expressed that even though it brought improvements to their own homes, many renters were harmed because landlords raised their rents right after the program's restriction of maintaining rental prices for a year, displacing their now former tenants. Ms. Bertha Jones expressed to me she was not happy with the work done in her home on the afternoon of Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016. I passed by and sat with her on her porch, and she told me that the contractors did not do their job right, the paint job they did on her porch was peeling shortly after they painted. Based on what participants said, the FIS program has had mixed results for homeowners and tenants, making improvements for some and short-lived repairs or displacement for others.

Outside of participating in programs to repair their homes, citizens of Marketview are very engaged in their community gardens. I volunteered at their gardens and yards on various occasions, some as part of programs that involved students and outsiders to help plant and maintain the garden, and other times just joining Martín Pedraza who frequently visits the gardens to keep them shape. On the morning of Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016, I went from 9am to noon to volunteer at the garden on First Street. Martín invited me to come, he was there along with Jocelyn, another CAP member from Boriké, and her two sons. We weeded the beds where strawberries and other vegetables were grown, and put new soil in others from the compost they have been gathering throughout the year in preparation for the upcoming garden event, Planting Day, that occurred on Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. While we were working, Martín and Jocelyn were telling stories of their youth in Boriké, and telling Jocelyn's sons about the importance of knowing where their food is coming from, and how privileged they are to have a garden that they maintain and benefit for themselves. The inclusion of Jocelyn's sons in the activity was the passing of knowledge, culture, and practice from elders to youth. They were both very glad to be helping their mother and asked questions about the stories Martín and Jocelyn shared, as well as questions about how to keep a garden in good conditions. When we were finished, they left for lunch and I went to stop by Ms. Bertha's home to see if she needed help with anything.

During the time in the neighborhood I met Jim. Jim is a block club captain, community leader and CAP member who has been living in Marketview for over sixty years. I met Jim during CAP meetings and events. His parents came from Italy and Germany in the early twentieth century. He now occupies the house he was born in, where his family first lived when they arrived in Marketview. I met with Jim on the afternoon of Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016 for a spontaneous interview on his front porch. He said that the disregard of some landlords and

tenants for their physical spaces and the lack of care to the lawns is a sign of disconnection with the community:

They do not know how their property is taken care of. We have this one at the corner here, he lives here, he is a firefighter, but he doesn't take care of the lot the way the man who had it before that passed away. You could eat off that lawn when the gentleman that had it before. You got some absentee landlords down the street, they just don't take care of their property. They just want the money and that's it. And I think that they [the government] need to get to absentee landlords more than what they do. Because if you're going to buy in the community, you are part of the community. That's the way I feel. And you should know what goes on in that community and what your properties are. I guess they have some management, housing management that they're getting to take care of some of this stuff, but not all the owners know exactly what's going on with their properties or who's in it.

I told Jim that despite what he had mentioned about properties that have not been properly taken care of, I noticed the numerous flowers on his front yard and the yards of his neighbors. He expressed how positive it has been for neighbors to participate in Blocks in Bloom and motivate others to do the same:

I did last year, it was fun. People across the street, all four houses down the street we did Blocks in Bloom with Martín. Seeing people take pride was great. And really, to walk down the street and see flowers again where there was dirt was nice.

“Having flowers again where there was dirt”, not just for a home, but encouraging others to do the same with theirs. Having more flowers on Woodward Street, and turning vacant lots into playgrounds for children instead of blighted and untended properties, is sense of place in action that is then reinforced by the feelings of joy and the gratification of looking at their street filled with essence and colors, with green open spaces where kids play.

I had spent the morning of that Sunday at a street clean-up on Fifth Street before I interviewed Jim. Fifth Street is not within the area the URD has targeted, and most neighbors there are not CAP members. I was invited to come by the only CAP member who lives on Fifth

Street, Tunya, who organized the street clean up. Tunya has lived in the community for more than twenty-seven years and has been a community organizer for eight years, she lives with her sisters and mother. She has been working with VISTA/AmeriCorps in partnership with RIT and CAP for the past two years while pursuing a Doctorate of Ministry at the same time. She works with CAP's Beautification Committee which focuses on creating more access to fresh, healthy food through community gardens and training youth in gardening and nutrition.

CAP's community actions and interventions inspired Tunya to organize the first street clean-up on Fifth Street that took place on that Sunday morning of May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016. I considered it a great privilege to have been there on that day thanks to Tunya's invitation. Neighbors were engaged and collaborating with each other, removing dry leaves and trash from sidewalks, sharing water and preparing an abundant meal shared with all at the end of the activity. There were youth and elders working together, people of different races and places of origin, a reflection of the colorful makeup of the general population of Marketview engaged in improving their community.

Like Jim, Tunya did Blocks in Bloom for her home. She said it was an experience that opened her to gardening and it really shifted her perspective towards her community:

This is what helped me also to look at the richness of the community, it was the Blocks in Bloom. The first time I've ever done it. I'm going to do it again next year, and I want to get more people involved. It was a lot of work, but seeing the end result to me, and I don't think I'm at the end result, I'm going to the store now, and I've never been a gardener. And now I'm going to the store in the gardening area and people who know me they're like, Tunya, you don't garden. Now I do! So, it's my first year, and I'm looking forward to doing it again next year, but in between time, learning more about how we change. I have this ideal now in my mind about transforming spaces. And to me, that's what Blocks in Bloom does, it transforms spaces, for the beauty of the community. Martín does that, you know? That's his work. I think it creates some more sense of place because it makes people appreciate where they live at, and want to be where it is that they live in. Makes you want to come sit on the porch and admire, wow, the beauty of it.

In addition to speaking with Tunya, I spoke with other neighbors that I had helped during the clean-up. Florine, who lives across the street from Tunya, agreed to an interview while she was grilling chicken in her backyard to share with all the neighbors once the clean-up was finished. Of French and Cuban descent, Florine is Haitian-American and moved into Rochester from Jamaica more than ten years ago, and moved to Fifth Street over two years ago. She put together and takes care of the community garden next to her home on her own, and has a backyard filled with flowers and vegetables. She told me about the importance of involving youth in the garden for the future of the community:

Like this morning, I told the children, any time they want they can come to my backyard, see what I plant, but let me know. You come to the backyard, and then you ask me, what is that? And then I could give you one plant to plant for you, you got stick, you put your name in it. This is how you grow and bring positive change to the neighborhood. They need someone to show them the road, to teach them how to do it, put something on the ground and see it grow. No example, no change, no future.

Something as simple as doing a street clean-up or planting flowers on the street or a front yard, has shown to greatly impact citizens of Marketview in a positive way. Beautification as a manifestation of sense of place, and the expansion and nourishment of this sense of place through the transformation of spaces that make its inhabitants proud to live there, and maintain and expand its beauty through passing the culture of these practices to their neighbors and youth.

After spending the morning on Fifth Street and interviewing Jim afterwards, I went to Weld Street to stop by Judy's home one more time. I found her outside with Martín and a young boy, planting lilies on the sidewalk. I assisted them in planting and asked them if that day's work was related to Blocks in Bloom. They replied that this was just them going ahead and planting for themselves as they deemed necessary, even though Blocks in Bloom will happen again the following year. Then they spoke about how they were proud of the young boy with them who

recently moved in from Boriké, and has been diligently involved with them in the gardens and helping elders with chores.

The importance of taking pride in where they live by taking care of and maintaining their spaces in good condition is the underlying force of this community's beautification actions. The experience of that day taught me that pride comes from taking action and seeing as well as enjoying the results of that action. They believe in creating spaces according to their vision and sense of place. Sense of place may look like flowers, clean yards and green open spaces, but sense of place may manifest this way because of the seeds of community collaboration and shared pride that are responsible for the blooming of the neighborhood and engaged citizens. In learning about gardening and eating healthy foods that they themselves have planted and seen grow throughout time, they are empowering themselves and providing food security for their future, in an area considered to be a food desert according to participants. In a time where having access to fresh and healthy food across the country is limited, the community of Marketview has exercised their sense of place in a powerful way by learning how to nourish themselves and embellish their community through the work in the gardens and blooming sidewalks. There are gardens they can eat from, the streets look better, and they feel better.

A new beginning was set for the community on Fifth Street that day, a beginning for a stronger community that is engaged in its improvement because of the collaboration and participation of its citizens, inspired by the work from CAP on Weld, Woodward and other nearby streets of Marketview. Along with this new beginning, a continuation of a legacy was also planted as Martín and Judy planted the flowers with the upcoming youth leader that volunteers and commits to learn from CAP leaders and continue the work. Their actions reflect that sense of place is continuous, they acknowledge the importance of expanding and passing on

the positive and powerful actions that help increase pride and engagement in their community and homes.

### **Community assets and strengths**

From the community resident's pride in their neighborhood and the result from their collective actions comes the realization of many that despite what the media says, Marketview Heights is home to a very rich community. Participants of the study are aware that they, the people that make up the community that come together to improve it, are their greatest asset. The main assets mentioned by all participants are the safety and support they provide each other day to day, the walkability the neighborhood has to important locations they can comfortably get to when needed, being the home to one of the most diverse communities of Rochester and home to the famous Rochester Public Market, their gardens and beautified homes and streets. Many of those interviewed agreed that there are more resources and assets in the community than what they had known. They have expanded their notion of their assets as they come together in action to improve the community and learn about each other's skills and talents and appreciate them as assets. Tunya mentioned the importance of the mindset of the community when it comes to acknowledging assets. She experiences a shift in her own perception of the community through the collective actions she has organized and participated in, going from being ashamed of living in Marketview, to recognizing it as rich:

You don't look at stuff like that when you are only paying attention to what you've been sold. And I purchased what was sold to me about this particular community. We have been living here over twenty-seven years. I moved out to Henrietta for three years, and then I ended up back here. So, one of the questions I asked myself was, you know, why am I back here? I didn't want to be back here. I didn't, the truth of the matter is that I didn't want to be back here. I would drive other places before I would even get back to my street so I could see something different, and I thought that seeing something different, what I saw that was different was better than what I was seeing. But the problem was I wasn't looking for the

right thing. With the work with RIT and with [RIT student] Audrey doing a photography project, it opened my eyes to a rich community that I did not see before, that I came from. I was not proud to be a part of this community at all. We are sold an idea of what better looks like, right? So, I purchased what I thought better was like, so I never could see really what better was. My kids come back to this community, and they don't want to live anywhere else. They love the culture, they love the people, they always say, 'Mamma, you can't get this anywhere'. People who are scared of it they want to come in here because they know. It's like Africa, they know the rich resources are there, right? And I think that people know that this is a rich community, they just want us to buy into the lie that it's not.

Another important asset that participants described as one of the main reasons they would not move out of the neighborhood is its proximity to locations such as the Rochester Public Market, schools, banks, and other places that are comfortably walkable for many. Jocelyn clearly illustrated this for me when I interviewed her in her backyard on the afternoon of Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016 while her two sons played basketball:

Being close to everything is one of the biggest things that has helped me because I go to school, my kids go to school up and down these streets. Anything happens I'm up or down the street. And this is the first reason why I don't ever move outside. When I walk in the street with everybody else here, I can relate. I can relate to everything that everybody else is going through. The people that walk down the street with you here are about the most genuine, sincere people that you will find anywhere you go. They say what they mean, they mean what they say. Most of the people that are here, they're genuine people that are proud people, they feel like they have something to bring to the table. They don't want any charity, they're proud of the things that they can do. They're strong rooted people.

During my time in the neighborhood I experienced what Jocelyn describes about the people who walk the streets of Marketview. My presence was acknowledged by neighbors when I walked or biked any of the streets, some greeted, some nodded. I was always received with great hospitality and offered a meal whenever I was invited into a home. I also experienced how the community's assets are shared and expanded to help make each other's lives a bit easier or happier. Hao visits Ms. Bertha a few times a week to check on her, to just say hello, or help her with yard work. Jocelyn goes to her neighbor Sonia, an elder from Boriké who has been living in

the neighborhood for forty-three years, and makes her coffee. A group of CAP members goes to dinner at Judy's. Scenes like these are part of the day to day lives of the citizens of Marketview. They taught me that relationships are built from honest support to each other that later serves to bring people together for a common good. Hao illustrated this support in the following quote:

We watch each other's kids. When we need something, people don't even think twice about giving. When we want company, when we want company to talk to we get it. That's the most important thing because most of us don't have our families immediately with us here.

Hao arrived in the neighborhood over two years ago from Singapore with just his wife, who came to study music in the Eastman School of Music. They moved into Marketview for its proximity to the school. Hao told me that at first, he was not sure about the neighborhood, but soon after Marketview became his home where he has found an extended family who he works and celebrates with.

The people themselves, their relationships and what they create from their healthy links has created a bountiful garden of assets for the citizens of Marketview to provide improvements and positive change that expands beyond the streets where CAP has been visibly active. When Martín did Blocks in Bloom and got more people involved, he only had gardening supplies to work on six homes, but managed to stretch them for planting flowers on over thirty properties. They have a shared desire to see each other thrive, and come together to help others be part of the work and also enjoy the benefits. These relationships and shared beliefs have created a strong organizational culture characterized by the citizens' ability to come together in action to have their needs and desires met or voices heard in City Hall, taking matters in their own hands to manifest solutions. And sometimes, these actions include a celebration like reinstating an old tradition of a summer block party that CAP brought back in the summer of 2015. For an entire day, children and family could eat and play on Weld Street without worrying about gunshots or

drug sales. Marketview citizens have empowered themselves in their interdependence and interconnectedness as neighbors who act with clear, collective intention.

### **Visions for change**

The neighborhood wants change, change that involves the continuation of the work they have been doing together, as well as the reduction and elimination of drug activity. This is expressed in the feelings of all interviewees and in the visible actions they have taken based on their sense of place.

The citizens of Marketview manifest their vision by bringing the future into their present as much as they can. The community gardens, improvement of homes and blooming streets are visions of positive change that have materialized. Citizens interviewed look forward to what the URD may result in clearing the problematic homes on Lewis Street, yet are also concerned about gentrification. Ms. Bertha mentioned during her interview that she wants change, but not too much change that the neighborhood moves away from the essence of the community it has today:

I wouldn't want too much done for the very simple reason why: I do not want another Corn Hill. I don't want another Corn Hill. I want it to stay so we can know our neighbors, look out for each other. But if it gets to be another Corn Hill nobody's going to know who's who, where's where, how's how. But with the way we got it now we can at least walk out on the porch and holler 'hey how are you feeling?' And they'll acknowledge you. But if it's another Corn Hill. I would rather for it to stay something similar to what it is. So, the neighbors know the neighbors, the kids can know the neighbors. Where there's children coming up, they need to know that they got somewhere they can go if something goes wrong.

Corn Hill is a neighborhood of the city of Rochester that underwent urban renewal in the late 1970s, resulting in gentrification. Ms. Bertha is aware of the negative impact gentrification has had for the citizens of Corn Hill and for their community after development took place, and does

not want Marketview to follow the example. Judy added a concern for property values that have already risen and displaced people out of the community:

For the people that grew up in this community, living in this community; I just don't want property values to go up so high that they can't afford to live here anymore. That's usually what happens with gentrification, what I've seen with FIS trying to get everybody to sell and stuff.

The changes the URD may bring are welcome in some respects, but the concern for gentrification is real among citizens of Marketview. The URD has not been implemented yet, however, the FIS program already resulted in the displacement of some citizens, as observed by many who were interviewed. They would like renters to be better accommodated and considered with regards to the sudden rise in rates, as Ms. Bertha expressed:

That's where they made the mistake with FIS. FIS would have put that clause in there, the landlords wouldn't be able to jack their rent up to where it is now. There's a couple of landlords that around here that went up on their rent as soon as the work got started. They are paying nine for the downstairs, two bedrooms. And upstairs paying nine fifty. And across here, downstairs is paying eight fifty, upstairs paying eight fifty, majority are renters. Right here behind me, he just decided to up on his, he went from six fifty to eight fifty. As soon as FIS was done. I would like to see them put a clause in that whole deal that the landlords can't push people out or raise their rent if they're getting that free money.

FIS has had positive outcomes for homeowners, but displaced many others who were renting in the neighborhood. As homes have been improved and some home values increased, citizens of Marketview have been constantly getting offers to buy their homes, specifically those who were recipients of the FIS program or who live near a home that did. Sonia who lives on Scio Street has received phone calls and a letter from Syracuse:

Recibí una llamada. Me decía, este, estoy interesada en su casa y tengo dinero pa comprarla. Recientemente, unos días antes de que empezaran a ayudarnos a nosotros, la ayuda del gobierno. Yo creo que algo se estaba tejiendo por ahí. La llamada no sé de dónde venía, pero la carta venía de Syracuse.

I got a phone call. They said, I am interested in buying your home and I have money to buy it. Recently, days before the government came to help us. I think something is going on. I don't know where the call came from, but the letter came from Syracuse.

Judy, Jim, Martin and Ms. Bertha are among participants who received offers on a weekly basis, in the mail, through phone calls, and even from people passing by, before, during, and after the FIS program was done. They expressed concern about gentrification in terms of the displacement that is already taking place and harming the most vulnerable population of renters in Marketview. They are ready for more positive change to unfold, but do not want this change to harm other citizens of the community. Their visions and hopes of the future become clear in their work in gardens and involving youth to inspire them and plant seeds for a better future. How they care and support each other by engaging and creating positive spaces and activities for the community to play and grow in healthy ways is at the core of their sense of place. Their sense of place has inspired other citizens beyond the blocks where CAP is active, and creates hopes for the future as they empower themselves more. There was not a single participant interviewed that said they would want to sell their home or move elsewhere if they had the opportunity to do so. Marketview is where their home and hearts are, where their flowers and vegetables grow, and where their families and community come together.

### **Sense of Place in Marketview Heights summary**

Sense of place, as the experience in Marketview taught me, means loving and caring for the place you live in, as well as wanting it to change for the better and for all to enjoy the benefits of positive change. Sense of place is rooted in interdependence and genuine relationships that manifest a collective intention into positive action. These actions pave the road for the culture of organizing and coming together to be continued by the following generations.

Marketview residents reinforced the importance of feeling safe in the place we call home. Feeling safe helps citizens to go outside and clean or fill their streets with flowers, even amidst an atmosphere shared with drug deals and gunshots. As their spaces look better, they are filled with pride to live where they live, and begin to expand their perspective about the richness and abundant resources their community has to offer. Based on these assets then, they construct a shared intention to construct an ideal future for the community, planting in the present as an investment for success.

The lessons learned from the sense of place of the citizens of this community show that relationships are important and are built from working together through time, facing together whatever challenges are in the community and celebrating together the fruits of their work, and expanding the inspiration and benefits to other members of the community. Marketview is an example of how a citizens' sense of place can have a great impact for the good of their larger community. This impact is nurtured by the relationships that bind the community together, based on the history of living for a long period in Marketview or an inexplicable attraction that brings a sense of belonging and appreciation for the community.

The sense of place of the residents of Marketview extends to more than just loving and caring for where they live. They want to improve their community and spaces, even if that means undergoing changes like the ones the URD will bring. They are aware of the impacts the changes may bring and wish that they will be able to continue to live as the community they are, preserving their sense of place. Sense of place among these residents is beneficial for all, from streets to relationships, the entire community begins to thrive and improve a little more with each seed of sense of place. The sense of place of these citizens is the light that guides and empowers them to come together and act with intention. As Florine from Fifth Street said:

This community works hard to get what we want. Working together, knowing each other, getting along, one watches out for the other, communication is the key of the success. The way we get better is we all coming together. Believe in who you are. Believe in what roots you come from.

### **Experience in Participatory Planning**

Some citizens of Marketview were present in the participatory aspect of the creation of some of the plans and programs that occurred in their neighborhood. Because of the time the study took place, I was not able to gather a large sample of participants who were present in the workshops and meetings that were part of the planning. I used a snowball sample to speak to as many of those who were involved as possible. Had there been more time, interviews could have expanded to more citizens of Marketview who were involved in the processes.

The citizens of Marketview who were involved in the participatory process of a few of the plans were not all that happy with the results of the plans or how the process unfolded. They felt the process was not smooth and that they were not well informed, as Ms. Bertha expressed:

When it first started, we didn't have enough information to know exactly what was going on. They eventually got it together. But they started off raggedy, I would say. It wasn't imposing, it was bringing you something that they didn't have together to let you know exactly what was going on. In the beginning, they should have held a forum to find out what people wanted before they started this mess. And then after they found out what people wanted work around that.

Hao recalls they were "planned to death", referring to the long hours of workshops and meetings. Other participants of the study were also not satisfied with the amount of time the sessions took as they were very tiring.

From an outsider's perspective, Marketview is only perceived as a host to concentrated poverty and drug activity. The reputation is far from the reality because even though those things happen, they do not permeate the overall feel of the neighborhood and its environment based my

own experiences of being in the community. Interviewees expressed some frustration in this regard as they are tired of being treated and viewed as incapable, poor people that are in desperate need of being rescued. Their reputation represented a difficulty when Judy participated in the meetings for the East Main Arts & Market Initiative. She does not attend their meeting regularly because:

They're folks that have money and see the neighborhood differently. If you read any of their reports they talk about looking from East Main Street back to the market the houses are tacky and need work. And I'm thinking, we just put in all this money. What do you do? Stand on East Main and see a raggedy roof here and there? I try not to go to those meetings. They have an attitude that we're going to do something for these poor people. We are not a poor community. We are one of the richest communities around here. We know our neighbors. Our houses may not be quarter of a million dollars, and we don't drive Mercedes-Benz, but we make do, and we work it, people are stable here. They've been here many, many years.

Participating in planning has left the citizens of Marketview satisfied that government is reaching out to them and recognizes them for their power to organize and make things happen, but not so satisfied with the scope of the solutions the plans propose as well as how the participatory process was carried out. As some participants said, they are their own best experts in terms of knowing their strengths and needs, and they want solutions that go in tandem with their vision of the future for their community. With regards to the concern for displacement and property values increasing they all share, Judy provided the following suggestion:

The plan needs to be tweaked. I would do a progressive tax increase for those grandfathered in that were still around there. Next to this expensive project coming in, don't raise their taxes all of the sudden, do it progressively. Because the assessment on your house is going to go up when you have a new one built next door.

Hao added that the solutions to their challenges as proposed in the plans need to do more than just cure symptoms:

It (the URD) only cures symptomatic problems, the true cause is education and attitude. They are not properly curing anything. The solution is education.

Martín also felt that just working with Lewis Street alone would not be enough to tackle the drug problem:

You have to take care, when you're fixing that, you take care of Weld Street. I told them that. As you're fixing fix Weld Street, so when you're done there's nothing there. It's clean. Do what you have to do. You don't build next to a junkyard then expect them to straighten out later. You take care of it, you take care of Weld Street while they're doing that.

The resulting solutions the URD proposes do not reflect the needs and concerns of the citizens who were involved in the participatory process, according to those interviewed. The solutions are not comprehensive and only propose development as the remedy for Lewis Street. The initiative to develop comes from government and no alternatives to development were offered or explored according to participants. They do not want to become another Corn Hill where their sense of place has been compromised due to real estate values raising and citizens being displaced. Residents seek comprehensive solutions that better reflect the initiatives they have undertaken for the improvement of the community.

## **SENSE OF PLACE AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING IN THE URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT PLAN**

### **Content Analysis: The URD and Previous Plans**

This content analysis explores the evidence and depth of community input in the final plan of the URD. In addition to the Urban Renewal District Plan (2014), the documents reviewed include newspaper articles, East Main Arts & Market Initiative (2015), Marketview Heights Focused Investment Strategy Area: Situational Analysis (2009), North Union Street Corridor

(2008), and the Marketview Heights Collective Action Project's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (2006) studies. A content analysis is used in this research for viewing the aspects in the text of relationships between ideas or concepts, and involves an interpretation of hidden meanings that are not explicitly expressed in the text (Downe-Wamboldt 1992, Kondracki et al. 2002). Kondracki et al. (2002: 226) claim that "when properly applied, content analysis methods are both reliable and valid." Content analysis applies key steps in the methodological procedure and ensures credibility of the research (Sapleton 2013: 232). This information is used to find how the aspects of sense of place, the needs and desires of the residents of Marketview are reflected, relying on the unique expressions of sense of place that the interviews provided. The City's role in the plan preparation and content was informed by the interviews with Kevin Kelly and Julie Beckley, two Senior Community Housing Planners who were both involved with the URD. They were both present in the community participation process of the plan. These interviews helped to better establish the City's position with regards to the neighborhood and helped provide clarity to the content analysis of the plans.

The plans are reviewed in chronological order, examining their main goals, the entity who initiated, their participatory strategies, prevention of displacement, and how well, if at all, they address sense of place as revealed in the resident interviews. Coding was used for the analysis of the plans to "fracture" the data found and categorize them to allow for organizing them in broader themes and issues (Strauss 1987: 29). The organizational categories utilized in the analysis work as sections for sorting the data and later serve for subsequent theoretical categories that "place the coded data into a more general or abstract framework" (Maxwell 2005: 97). The strategy used to develop the categories is based on the research question of finding indicators of Sense of Place in contrast to terms or concepts that would fall into the market or economic

aspects of the neighborhood or planning. The rationale behind distinguishing between the language associated with community and sense of place versus the language that focuses on market or economics, is to account for what the language in the plans in general seems to be emphasizing more: the tangible measurable aspects of economics and monetized values or the intangible resources of the community residents' sense of place.

According to the interviews with Kevin and Julie, the key points of concern and interests of the citizens of the community were taken into account in the planning of the URD and contemporary plans. They both expressed that the fact that citizens of Marketview are already organized and taking action was an important component in the decision to work with them and create the plans:

We have a commitment to that neighborhood just because we've invested so much there that, that there's always going to be an open channel there. We always want to stay engaged with CAP and other similar neighborhood groups. So that as things change over time, we're checking in with them, making sure that it's done right.

Kevin is not concerned about rising rental rates and perceives that the gentrification that has unfolded in other greater cities would not happen so fast in Rochester:

I think they, you know, they've said that they want to make sure the neighborhood doesn't change too much, but they also don't want it to stay stagnant where there's concentrated poverty and crime. So, I think that while that risk is real, it's probably not as real as it is in bigger cities. I don't think that there's much risk of that happening too rapidly in Rochester. If we're talking about the risk of people being priced out or they can't afford to live there anymore, I don't, I personally don't think that's happened yet, except for maybe a little pocket around the University of Rochester. But if that were to happen, there has been talks here about can the city do something to the tax assessment of properties for folks that have been there for a while, to limit the sort of increase in taxes. I'm not saying that's going to happen I'm just saying that it's been talked about as a tool.

As citizens of Marketview have declared in the interviews, rental rates and property values have risen just with the work of the FIS. Many residents observed that tenants had have already

been displaced since the one-year limit on raising rent that was a condition of participating in the program had expired. From the residents' perspective, gentrification and displacement have begun. Suggestions for mitigating the corresponding displacement are too late for those who have been displaced, and it is not clear when or how the tool of limiting taxes increase will be used as displacement continues. During the interview with Julie, she emphasized the importance of the improvements done to the physical aspect of the neighborhood and hopes that the URD will be a vehicle to attract new residents:

It addresses a problem of decay and offers another living option, and then that cascades into, strengthens the tax base, which makes it a more positive, attractive community for people to consider moving into.

From the interviews, it is clear that these City planners are aware of the power of CAP and support their work in the community. There is not a solid immediate plan for relocation of renters that live on Lewis Street. This relocation would be strictly limited to the legal requirements associated with urban renewal plan implementation. In addition, there is no comprehensive strategy with respect to those involved in drug activity according to Kevin. According to the URD plan, certain properties are slated for demolition and later to sold by the urban renewal authority (in this case the City of Rochester) to developers for the construction of mixed income housing. This recommendation is supported by the housing market research performed in conjunction with the plan development. Kevin's and Julie's hopes for the URD are the same as citizens of Marketview when it comes to clearing crime and improving the situation on Lewis Street, but diverge in that the City is more interested in attracting new residents rather than having a clear plan when it comes to gentrification and displacement, or promoting more of the activities that CAP has done to improve the community and their sense of place.

## **Marketview Heights Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS)**

This plan was published on 2006, and was initiated by Housing Opportunities, Inc., Marketview Heights Association, Enterprise Community Partners, City of Rochester, and Marketview Heights CAP. This plan intended to “create a more coordinated and comprehensive mechanism for neighborhood organizing, planning and action to achieve our primary goal: increased investment in our neighborhood.” The plan was developed as an organizing tool based on a vision for the revitalization of the neighborhood through actions that bring the community together and serve as an investment strategy. The full plan is appended to the URD plan and is referenced as a resource for consideration during URD plan development.

The process of the creation of the NRS was very participatory where citizens, business owners and other community stakeholders began to work together from March 2005 until its publication in 2006. First, stakeholders such as community leaders and business owners were interviewed by the core planning team to gather the current issues, concerns and efforts of the community. The “Tell Us” workshop was held on March 9, 2005 where the community at large was invited to define for themselves how they feel about the planning process and to ensure inclusion of neighborhood residents’ perspectives in the effort. A month later, on April 9, 2005, the Marketview Heights 2025 Visioning workshop was held where the issues from the previous workshop were reviewed, and participants were asked to set aside the main issues and concerns of the neighborhood to envision “what would Marketview Heights be like if we achieved everything we wanted to achieve?” (NRS 2006: 5). On May 23, 2005, the Draft Vision and Action Teams workshop took place. During the drafting of the vision, the community had the opportunity to critique the statement and put together action teams of seven to fifteen core members who commit to meeting a minimum of ten times per year to organize and expand the

activities of the NRS to other members of the community. The action teams then met June through September 2005 until the document was then finally published in 2006.

This plan strongly emphasizes the sense of place of the citizens of Marketview, as they are the main experts behind the content and mission of the plan's strategy. There are actions described to prevent displacement that include training for better jobs, increasing homeownership, and exploration of community economic development. According to the 2000 census, seventy percent of Marketview residents were renters, in some parts of the neighborhood more than eighty five percent were renters, and most landlords did not live in the community.

This plan illustrates an empowered community with a clear mission and intention to improve their neighborhood based on their sense of place and the power they get from coming together in action, as well as taking into account realities of the citizens of the community who are more vulnerable to displacement. The plan suggests the implementation of four future phases to achieve its goals for revitalizing all of Marketview Heights, as well as creating their own measures for evaluating their successes. One of these future phases resulted in the following plan to be analyzed, the North Union Street Corridor: A Community Vision Plan.

### **North Union Street Corridor: A Community Vision Plan (NUSC)**

Published in 2008, this plan grew directly from NRS. This plan was produced by the Rochester Regional Community Design Center (RRDC), in collaboration with Rural Opportunities, Inc., City of Rochester, Housing Opportunities, Inc., and Marketview Heights Association and a Steering Committee, comprised of citizens of the neighborhood. The RRDC produced this document based on the community's vision plan for the North Union Street

corridor from East Main Street to Central Park. The main goal of the plan was to present a design vision for enhancing the North Union Street Corridor, as reflected by community residents.

The participatory strategy consisted in organizing a mini-charrette where nearly forty citizens of Marketview participated to voice their ideas for a better design of the corridor that is healthier, safer with regard to traffic patterns, and consistent with the community's future and vision. The event took place in October 2007. Elaborate maps were created that provided suggestions for the design and development of four main nodes in the corridor between East Main Street and Central Park. The suggestions included the development of short-term and immediately achievable actions and projects, the improvement of the experience of the pedestrian, the creation of a unifying identity for the corridor, and a plan to capitalize on the open vacant lots available. The community determined that they preferred these lots become community gardens or permanent green open spaces.

Sense of place is centered in this plan as it is a product of the ideas of citizens of the community and is also a result of the actions the NRS planned. The four nodes identified and planned for were all determined by the input that came from the charrette, as well as the purpose and changes they will undergo as the community advances in the development based on their sense of place. This plan only focuses on urban design of this corridor and gateway to the Rochester Public Market and does not mention displacement or ways displacement can be prevented in case the improvement and increased investment in the community brings gentrification.

## **Marketview Heights Focused Investment Strategy: Situational Analysis (FIS)**

Following the work of the NRS and NUSC, this situational analysis was also published in 2008 and was initiated by the City of Rochester, in recognition the advances the community experienced since the previous plans and their actions. Marketview Heights was one of the four selected areas for revitalization. The main goal of the FIS initiative is to invest in physical improvements to the spaces and homes of the neighborhood so that local housing markets improve through property values increasing, along with increasing resources available for services and investments. The goal is also to “maximize the number of low and moderate income residents who benefit from the housing policy initiatives beyond the direct recipients” (FIS 2008:1).

The strategy for this plan included the creation of FIS teams composed of community representatives that came together to create strategies for the improvement of the physical conditions of the neighborhood. These meetings were done in the form of neighborhood walks that resulted in inventories of the conditions observed to better inform the strategies. This plan was heavily informed by the previous planning documents NRS and NUSC, and is positioned within the framework of those plans and the purpose they serve. FIS mainly focuses on improving the housing market of the area to bring more investment to the neighborhood as a revitalization strategy.

The plan uses the community’s sense of place as a starting point for the improvement of physical conditions, and includes as a strategy to honor and acknowledge the work CAP and the NRS action teams have accomplished to date. But the recognition of the sense of place of the citizens does not extend to protecting renters from rising rental rates and property values who have already suffered displacement before, during, and after the improvements have been made.

As we learned from the interviews, the program was successful in extending to more people yet some citizens were not satisfied with the short-lived improvements done to their home.

### **Urban Renewal District Plan (URD)**

Published in 2014, the URD stems from a recommendation of the FIS for the creation of an Urban Renewal District to better tackle the issues of drug trade and other illicit activities on Lewis Street. In 2013, the City of Rochester sought to create the URD guided by a consultant team from Interface Studio LLC, an urban planning and design firm. The consultant team based their work from the extensive previous planning documents of the community and later worked with citizens who were integrated in a Steering Committee along with CAP to “develop a market-driven, strategic action plan for the URD that takes into account ongoing development initiatives and ultimately guides the implementation of the community’s vision for the Marketview Heights URD” (URD 2014: 4).

The main goal of the URD is to revitalize the neighborhood by way of removing blight, transforming Lewis Street with a large-scale residential redevelopment project, building a larger customer base for the Public Market and filling commercial vacancies on East Main Street, complement the beautification improvements already done in the neighborhood, and supporting the continued grassroots initiatives and efforts for positive change in the community. By synthesizing all previous plans along with CAP’s organized collective actions and improvements already put in place, the URD claims to establish a new vision statement that “not only guides urban renewal actions, but ensures that such actions support community priorities” (URD 2014: 8). Safer streets and a beautified community, stable, long-term residents who rent and own

properties, and mixed income residential development of townhomes that are walking distance to fresh produce, are the main objectives of this plan.

The participatory process of the URD included two community groups of stakeholders, a Steering Committee that met three times during the process in April, July and finally in October 2013 for the presentation of the draft. This committee's role was to help make the important decisions regarding redevelopment and work as a 'sounding board' for the consultant team. The second group is CAP, comprised of community leaders who were also in the three meetings that took place, who according to the plan, "learned about the project, weighed in on their priorities for the URD, and offered comments on the proposed Land Use and Site Plan for the URD" (URD Appendix: 41).

Sense of place is within the URD as it is a product of previous plans that have centered sense of place, and incorporates participatory strategies that involve the community directly in the planning process. The URD is the only plan that addresses displacement, though it does not mention gentrification. Displacement is only mentioned twice in the document as "Explore Anti-Displacement Policies" to be explored a year after initial implementation. The claim is to "explore anti-displacement policies that could be instituted prior to implementation of developing the Ametek industrial site to prevent long-term residents from being priced out of the neighborhood" (URD 2014: 16). No plans or suggestions beyond that statement are found.

### **East Main Arts and Market Initiative (EMAMI)**

A year later after the URD was published, the East Main Arts and Market Initiative (EMAMI) was completed. The purpose of this plan is to "identify multi-modal circulation, access, and parking improvements along with recommendations for land use development,

streetscape enhancements, and community branding, as well as strategies to promote housing opportunities in the areas immediately east of Rochester’s Center City, which adjoin both the Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA) and the Public Market/Marketview Heights” (EMAMI 2015: 7). This plan spans several neighborhoods close to Downtown Rochester where many important destinations of the city are concentrated, and seeks to connect these neighborhoods better through transportation. This plan does not build upon the previous plans and only refers to the URD.

The planning process for the development of the EMAMI included focus groups, two public meetings in the form of open house events, and interviews of citizens of different neighborhood. These meetings included the use of charrettes, post cards from the future, and other activities where citizens had an opportunity to share and explore their ideas of how they envision the improvement of the area of the study, which overlaps with the areas of the FIS and URD. A Project Advisory Committee was created and included representatives from neighborhood groups such as CAP and Neighborhood of the Arts Neighborhood Association, as well as business associations and public transit organizations.

The principal elements of the plan include the creation of ‘new hubs of commercial and mixed use’, referring to mixed income housing development and community centers, community branding for the study area that encompasses the neighborhoods that surround East Main Street (including Marketview Heights and NOTA), as well as transportation development to make it easier for cars and bikes to park and get to East Main Street and the Public Market. These elements are at the core of the plan as strategies to attract new, higher income residents into the area. Merging the neighborhoods that surround East Main Street under one community brand may be problematic as the Neighborhood of the Arts lives a different reality from that of

Marketview, and erases the sense of place unique to each community. Based on the experience of Judy, who attended some of the meetings of the participatory component of this plan, there are different feelings and opinions about the images and ideas residents have towards Marketview as they are seen as the ‘poor’ neighborhood that will be saved by the initiative of this plan.

The sense of place of citizens, despite the participation of residents in the planning process, is turned into a commercial brand for economic and residential development that focuses on the future of the area, not its present. Attracting new residents and creating new capital from them, not so much on the existing residents and their grassroots efforts and achievements, is what is centered in the plan. This plan focuses on improving market potential for housing and business of the area.

## **Findings**

All plans reviewed included resident participation in different ways as they were initiated by different stakeholders and had different goals. Charrettes, workshops and forming advisory teams that regularly met to act on behalf of the community throughout a period of time were some of the participation strategies some plans used. As illustrated in Figure 1, two main categories were used for coding, Sense of Place and Market. These were the categories chosen to distinguish the language expressed in words, phrases or concepts in the plans that focused on the economically measurable or more tangible monetary aspects of the community and intent of the plan, versus those that emphasized more the people, their connections and their community. The subcategories within Sense of Place were community and security to see how much of the language of each plan was about culture and coming together, or language about increasing safety through various strategies. These were both under sense of place since they are elements

of the sense of place of a community that is not only coming together to make things happen, but to also look out after one another. The subcategories within the market category were real estate, to identify language about residential or housing development; business, to identify the language related to bringing in more retail and business opportunities; tax, to identify the language about increasing the tax base or tax related increases; and investment, to identify the language that focuses on increasing investment in the neighborhood. Codes within names were ignored, so names like Focused Investment Strategy (FIS) were not counted in the categories since they are a title rather than an expression of an idea.

There was not a plan that did not include references within the two main categories, tax was used in only two plans, the URD and the NRS (see Figure 1). This subcategory appeared in expressions like “increase the municipal tax base within the project area”, and “Mixed-Income Tax Credits for the large-scale multifamily rental development on Lewis St.”. Both examples are extracted from the URD and almost the same expressions are found in the NRS.

Media	Codes								
	Market	business	investment	real estate	tax	Sense of place	community	security	Totals
2015 East Main Arts & Market		52	43	14			31	1	141
2014 MVH Urban Renewal District		46	13	18	2		137	31	247
2009 FIS Situational Analysis		20	13	15			35	3	86
2008 North Union St Corridor		7	6	1			38	7	59
2006 Martktview Heights Collective		32	14	17	3		221	34	321
Totals		157	89	65	5		462	76	

**Figure 2. Code applications**

Coding was also used to provide a general idea of the kind of language that mainly encompasses each document. Figure 2 shows what kind of codes were applied for each document. The plan with the most abundant language of sense of place is the Marketview Heights Revitalization Strategy Plan. This is understandable since it is the document that set the stage for all the subsequent documents that came after it, and heavily emphasizes and focuses the work of CAP, the needs and desires of the community, the vision they share of their future and the actions they plan to take to make it happen. On the other hand, market, specifically from the subcategory of business, was the highest in the East Main Arts & Market Initiative plan. This plan focuses heavily on the revitalization of Main Street as a commercial attraction in close proximity to the Public Market utilizes expressions such as:

*“Respond to market potential by meeting demand for new development.”*

*“Complement private investments/development with public realm improvements that beautify the neighborhood.”*

*“Have potential to yield economic return by spurring further investment and attracting new residents or businesses and creating jobs.”*

Additionally, the East Main Arts & Market Initiative is the only plan that has the presence of the words “gentrification” and “sense of place”, as shown in the following statements taken from the document:

*“Incentives for new residents without spawning gentrification;*

*Diversity -> Good. Gentrification -> Not Good;*

*The potential for gentrification/displacement;*

*Worried that with momentum underway, the area will get too expensive for R-City if they don't get started soon. Discussed an article that Kevin Kelley shared about "gentrification" in rust belt cities – perhaps not as much of a concern, but important to work with long-term neighbors to earn their trust, faith, support."*

When it comes to codes that co-occurred, meaning multiple codes found within the same phrase or idea, market subcategories were the ones that coexisted the most (see Figure 3). Some of the sense of place subcategories co-occurred with market codes, but do not surpass the amount of frequency of the market with market co-occurring codes. Even though sense of place codes co-occurred with market codes, there is a higher frequency in the market with market co-occurring codes.

Codes	Codes							Totals	
	Market	business	investment	real estate	tax	Sense of place	community		security
Market									
business			9	5			6	1	21
investment		9		9			5		23
real estate		5	9		1		2		17
tax				1			1		2
Sense of place									
community		6	5	2	1			1	15
security		1					1		2
Totals		21	23	17	2		15	2	

**Figure 3. Code co-occurrence**

From EMAMI, “It is walkable, bikeable, and has a sense of place!” is the only example of the use of the term sense of place found in all of the plans and comes from a comment from a participant expressing what they consider the neighborhood would be like in the future. While terms of sense of place and community appear in the plan there is no explanation offered for any of them. Given the understanding of gentrification and displacement the literature reviewed provides, and the widespread occurrence of these in redeveloping cities, it is interesting to see that prevention of displacement and the preservation sense of place are not really present as a concern within the plans reviewed; although, this is clearly a part of the concern of citizens of Marketview.

The NRS is the only plan that emphasizes and provides strategies and alternatives for the social aspects and relationships within the community, whereas all other plans acknowledged the ideas in the NRS, but focus on the physical aspects or ‘face-lifts’, such as the FIS. It is understandable that the NRS would be the one focusing mainly on this aspect as that was one of the main intentions of the plan, aside from its stated goal of increasing investment in the neighborhood. But it is important to see how an organized community with a voice can produce the plans and actions as shown in the NRS that is absent in the other plans, even though they involved resident participation and were informed by the collaboration of the community members that participated. The NRS is also the only plan that identifies people and their connections as an asset.

Even with participatory activities in the plan development process, important concerns of citizens were not planned for or addressed. Low income is perceived as a problem in the plans, yet it is in the areas where low income residents are concentrated that the community is very engaged and thriving in other aspects, not measured simply by demographic data, that are just as

important to the residents to improve the community. The attraction of new residents is also present as an objective in the plans, but there are no clear strategies proposed to ensure that current citizens who reside in the neighborhood are protected from already occurring displacement. The only plan that includes a more comprehensive approach to improve the community and its citizens is the NRS. It includes job training and education as its strategies, not just attracting new residents with residential development as solutions. Sense of place clearly disappears from the subsequent plans as they are more focused on tax revenues and higher income housing development rather than on supporting the work of the Marketview residents has completed with its gardens and clean-ups. Other alternatives to development could have been included where citizens could be a part of the decisions for the use of vacant lots and houses that reflect the accomplishments of the CAP on behalf of current residents, such as a larger Neighborhood Resource Center, or community gardens, neighborhood play spaces, and gathering spaces. These alternative uses are notably absent from these plans as the only redevelopment contemplated is mixed income rental housing development.

## **ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The aim of this research is to explore sense of place as it is expressed among residents in a specific neighborhood and how it is reflected in community engagement and participatory planning undertaken by local government. In the interviews, residents were asked questions about concerns for gentrification that they claim is already happening; they were also asked if they would stay in the neighborhood if they could move to a “better” place. Questions also covered their desires for positive future change in their neighborhood, and their experiences in participatory planning. A complex problem needs a complex solution, and the numerous plans

and efforts of the community in different respects provides evidence that residents are using a combination of efforts to effectuate the transformation they have envisioned together. The overall feel of the community as expressed by interviewees is one of hope for the future while maintaining concerns for the preservation of their community and sense of place as displacement has begun. They are ready to become the empowered and beautiful community they have begun to embody, and want to be able to continue to operate this way without vulnerable citizens being displaced from their homes in Marketview.

The time spent in the community and the interviews revealed that there is tremendous power in coming together and taking action to improve conditions for the community. Beautification has enhanced residents' sense of place and created a sense of caring for the environment, keeping spaces clean, and tending gardens that feed and nourish the community. Sense of place is defined as the driver behind improving the neighborhood and taking action to create and bring plans and programs like Blocks in Bloom, the URD and FIS to the community, without the need of having to increase business or economic activities yet growing more community assets as relationships among citizens expand. In almost all cases of their efforts, funding was provided by PathStone or other organizations that assist them in beautification or the creation of a resource center. Without an organized voice and intentional action, they would have not been able to achieve things the same way.

The content analysis demonstrated that while sense of place may be strong to set the stage for continuing community development, the focus diverges more into the interests of government and markets by placing greater importance on branding and encouraging new higher income residential development. Community participation activities were used in all the plans involved in this study; however, but even with providing channels for the community to voice their ideas,

the plans do not address those attributes that reflect the strong sense of place felt by current residents. The residents are aware there is a need to improve housing in the neighborhood, but their main asset as they declared, is themselves and what they achieve from their relationships and collective work. These plans fail to acknowledge the citizens of Marketview are transforming Rochester's Fatal Crescent into a Fertile Crescent, one seed at a time.

### **Recommendations and Policy Implications**

The information gathered for this research project and its analysis as well as policy recommendations and policy evaluation will be available for the community to use as they deem appropriate, as well as being useful for local policymakers. These recommendations may be used for taking the necessary measures to avoid displacement of residents and preserve their sense of place as their neighborhood becomes more desirable and attractive to new residents.

The results of this research show that it can be of great interest to policymakers to work with communities who come together and know how to organize themselves. It may be powerful for planners and policymakers to envision neighborhood change or urban renewal that is rooted in and seeks to preserve Sense of Place by including the active participation of community residents in the process. The City of Rochester has acknowledged the CAP because of their power and their achievements evidenced in their gardens and the ongoing improvements to the neighborhood in general. From the plans, we can learn that there is perhaps a lot more about sense of place that could be used in conjunction with community development efforts. A branded community or money is not what brought CAP to existence, a concerned group of citizens did. Based on these findings, policy recommendations have been created with the goal of expanding

the inclusion of sense of place in policymaking and reinforcing those attributes that contribute to the strong sense of place shared by residents of Marketview Heights.

#### Recommendations for communities:

As reflected in this research and specifically the lessons learned from the Marketview Heights Collective Action Project, it is important for residents to lead by example, come together and define a clear vision for the future of their community. Beautification efforts and community street clean ups, and increased communication among citizens provides opportunities to learn from each other about what the neighborhood has to offer, its main assets, needs, and challenges. Youth should play a significant role in order to continue of the efforts for positive change and the preservation of sense of place to span for generations. Citizens should know and articulate what the strengths and the assets of the community are so they can be used to address needs and overcome challenges. It is important for citizens to voice their ideas and concerns with government, and identify opportunities for collaboration on efforts to improve the community. Residents must be knowledgeable of laws and other policy instruments that protect renters and ensure that the policies implemented in the neighborhood include clear ways that mitigate the negative impacts of gentrification and displacement.

#### Recommendations for policymakers:

Local government should encourage communities to come together and plan to make the vision of their future a reality. Significant effort should be undertaken to recognize and define those characteristics of neighborhoods that contribute to residents' sense of place beyond asking what the physical or economic assets are to them. Identifying the skills, talents, and local

knowledge within communities is critical to understanding the basis upon which community transformation can occur. Communities should be encouraged and supported to define themselves for themselves and express the needs their neighborhoods. Policy makers should pay attention to subtle indications of potential negative impacts of gentrification, particularly when local policies and programs have directly caused both direct and indirect displacement. As indicated in the literature on gentrification, displacement is something that should be considered and planned for to protect residents from displacement and losing their sense of place. It could be helpful to utilize forms of participatory evaluations on policies and programs so that citizens can determine and measure according to their experiences, their unique perspectives and concerns that impact on their community.

Communities are the creators, keepers and preservers of sense of place. Sense of place is their treasure and source of power and inspiration to create the things they need for the improvement of their neighborhood. Because of the power sense of place has to transform and empower a community, it is important to create meaningful and effective policy that acknowledges and incorporates sense of place and is implemented in ways that promote and preserve it. To reduce the negative impacts of gentrification and displacement that citizens experience, rent control, inclusionary zoning, providing avenues to increase homeownership, and creating displacement-free zones (Rose 2001) are some elements that can be implemented in policy (Guercio 2005).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

These recommendations for communities, policymakers and evaluations of policy or programs can contribute to policies that bring positive change to neighborhoods in ways that the community can be incorporated to inform and help create policy. From the expressions of interviewees, it is evident that sense of place provides a strong connection and motivation for citizens to come together and create the change they want and need. The community members interviewed expressed the importance of sense of community and its preservation through the passing down of homes to relatives or keeping the spirit of stewardship and connection alive while striving to improve the community. The main reason for the involvement of the community in this effort is to characterize their sense of place as expressions of caring enough for where they live to take action into their own hands to increase safety as well as the physical and social conditions of their community. and to draw the attention of local policy makers to preserve those conditions that contribute to sense of place.

This is a special time in the history of the Marketview Heights and the community that is bringing it up. As they move towards the implementation of the URD it is important that their voiced concerns about displacement and gentrification are heard before any more displacement occurs. It is also important that they be allowed to define success for themselves and measure it with participatory evaluation. These findings may be applicable to communities who are beginning to use their sense of place to organize or are already organized and are exploring pathways to intervene in their neighborhood to bring positive transformation.

A major limitation of this study was that it began long after the development of the plans and community participation activities had taken place. It was not possible to experience firsthand the sessions of the participatory processes. Most of the participants were CAP members

or residents within the FIS and URD areas. Additional interviews with a greater number of residents impacted by the plans developed by the City would enrich the scope of sense of place of the community of the Marketview neighborhood. Further research could explore more deeply how sense of place enhances the appreciation and care for the environment, extending to the ecology and care for place. From this further research, implications for preserving the environment can be found in relation to community sense of place. Further research may also dive deeper into evaluating the policy making process by applying participatory evaluation using community-based participatory research so that a body of work may be created from the ideas and research by and of a community.

The essential finding of this study is that acknowledging and embracing sense of place has produced powerful stewardship by citizens of the neighborhood as they have inspired other communities nearby to follow their steps and join efforts. Sense of place is an element to be included in the creation of meaningful and effective policy that is planned and implemented with the community not just as a target, but with citizen planners and citizen experts. Renewal and revitalization are good for communities, but citizens who reside in them should have the same opportunity as newcomers to enjoy the benefits of these efforts and preserve their sense of place.

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## APPENDIX

The interview guide used for the semi-structured interviews goes as follows:

Resident interviews:

- How long have you lived here? What brought you to Marketview Heights?
- What was your role or participation in the Urban Renewal District Plan (2014) and/or the East Main Arts and Market Initiative (2015)?
- Are you happy with the results and propositions of the plans? Why or why not?
- Are you happy with the way the plans were created? Why or why not?
- Do you feel these plans accurately address the needs of the community? Why?
- If the answer is no, how would you have preferred they had been done differently?
- Is there anything you would change in any of the plans? Why or why not?
- Would you have preferred the community be involved differently with respect to the creation and implementation of the plans? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that what the plans cover are enough to guarantee or ensure that the community will not be displaced? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that the plans go beyond just ensuring affordable housing as a way to preserve sense of place? Why or why not?
- How do you feel the plans ultimately benefit the community? Why or why not?
- What does a mixed income neighborhood look like for you?
- How do you envision a better neighborhood? What are the most important elements that you consider the neighborhood needs to thrive and prevent displacement of residents?
- What is an ideal community? What is ideal in this community?
- If you could, would you move away to somewhere “better”? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what are the assets of the community?

City planner interviews:

- What is the main reason behind the urban revitalization of the area in question? What needs led to the creation of the plans?
- How did the planners involve the community? Why?
- How were the community’s priorities weighed with the city’s priorities? Why?
- How did residents respond to the government reaching out?
- How were residents engaged in the creation and drafting of the plan?
- Did the planners consider the sociocultural elements of the community to preserve their sense of place, aside from providing affordable housing?
- Are there other guarantors besides affordable housing that ensure residents will not be displaced?

## Marketview Heights Case Study Interview Participants

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location of interview</b>
Antoinette	Longtime resident for 27 years	29/05/16	Home front porch, Fifth St.
Ms. Bertha (CAP)	Longtime resident for 46 years	17/05/16	Home living room, Weld St.
Colleen	Longtime resident for 12 years	29/05/16	Front porch, Fifth St.
Florine	Recent resident for 2 years	29/05/16	Backyard barbecue, Fifth St.
Hao (CAP)	Recent resident for 3 years	27/05/16	Backyard, Woodward St.
Jim (CAP)	Longtime resident for 60 years	29/05/16	Home front porch, Woodward St.
Jocelyn (CAP)	Recent resident for 3 years	27/05/16	Backyard, Woodward St.
Judy (CAP)	Longtime resident for 32 years	28/05/16	Home front porch, Weld St.
Julie Beckley	Senior Community Housing Planner	29/04/16	Cubicle, City Hall
Joanne	Community member and server for 25 years	17/05/16	Soup Kitchen, Ontario St.
Kevin Kelley	Senior Community Housing Planner	08/04/16	Conference room, City Hall
Martín (CAP)	Longtime resident for 55 years	27/05/16	Home front porch, Woodward St.
Tunya (CAP)	Longtime resident for 27 years	29/05/16	Home front porch, Fifth St.
Ms. Sonia	Longtime resident for 56 years	27/05/16	Home dining table, Scio St.