

Measuring the Impact of Revitalization: Considerations in Assessing Equitable Revitalization

Presentation at
2014 Reinventing Older Communities Conference
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May 13, 2014



What Do We Mean by “Equitable Revitalization”?

“Equitable revitalization” is revitalization that, to the extent feasible, follows a process that engages and benefits community members at all income levels, ages, and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

- It is revitalization that seeks to ensure that the benefits of the improved prosperity are shared with the pre-existing residents and businesses, or at the very least, they are not worse off.
- It is also a process designed to lead to economic integration as a long-term reality, rather than as a transitional state.

[See Center for Community Progress at www.communityprogress.net]

Revitalization Scenarios

- Revitalization in older cities usually is focused on a single neighborhood or a set of neighborhoods.
- Some typical revitalization scenarios:
 1. Revitalization of a residential area
 2. Revitalization of a mixed use (residential and non-residential) area
 3. Revitalization of a predominantly industrial, commercial or institutional area
 4. Revitalization along a transportation corridor

Common Metrics for Revitalization

There is an array of measures that are commonly used to assess revitalization of urban areas:

- Improved physical infrastructure & decrease in blight
- Increase in investment
- Increase in population
- Improved housing quality
- Increase in property values
- Increase in homeownership rates
- Reduction in crime rates
- Increase in area jobs
- Increase in area employment rates
- Increase in median household income
- Increase in tax revenues generated

But none of these metrics specifically measures whether the pre-existing LMI residents or local businesses are benefitting from the revitalization.

Questions That One Must Ask to Frame Appropriate Metrics

- Are there residents or businesses in the target area that are being displaced, either temporarily or permanently?
- For area LMI residents and pre-existing businesses staying throughout the revitalization process, what actions are being taken to minimize the negative impact during the revitalization, as well as the long-term benefits?
- Are there LMI residents and businesses in the contiguous neighborhoods -- or citywide and regionally -- that also might be impacted by the revitalization process?

Additional Metrics to Assess Whether Revitalization is Equitable

For pre-existing LMI residents:

- Number/% moving to better (yet affordable) housing
- Number/% who are homeowners
- Number/% who improve educational levels and/or marketable vocational skills
- Number/% who are employed/gain employment
- Number/% who experience increase in wages and/or employment-related benefits
- Reduction in health disparities compared to city-wide or metropolitan area population

Additional Metrics (continued)

For pre-existing businesses:

- Number/% that remain in location and maintain or increase sales volume and profit margins
- Number/% that successfully relocate and maintain or increase sales volume/profit margins compared to old location
- Number/% that are sold for fair market price
- Number/% that fail or otherwise close

For targeted geographic area:

- Improvements in public transportation
- Increase in other services and amenities in the area that meet the needs of LMI residents, as well as more affluent residents
- Improvements in quality of local schools

The Challenges of Pursuing Equitable Revitalization

- Requires one to address more issues and undertake more activities than “standard” revitalization.
- Also is more demanding relative to ongoing data tracking and assessment.
 - Assessing the impact on pre-existing residents and businesses requires longitudinal tracking -- which is very costly to do
- One needs to approach the effort with a clear appreciation of the additional resources and efforts that will be necessary.