

RESEARCH REPORT

San Diego's City Heights Initiative

A Long-Term Impact Evaluation of a Comprehensive Community Initiative

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Errata

This report was updated on January 25, 2022, to correct an error we made when creating table 2. The “population older than 65” values are 16 percent (not 23 percent), 11 percent (not 22 percent), and 6 percent (not 31 percent).

This report was corrected June 21, 2022, to include a source that was missing from the reference list.

San Diego's City Heights Initiative

In seeking to transform disinvested areas, comprehensive community initiatives have constructed apartment buildings, financed small businesses, organized residents, offered tax breaks, paved streets, rehabilitated arts centers, financed charter schools, provided workforce training, and more, all to promote physical and social revitalization.

The use of “comprehensive community” (or “place-based” or “community revitalization”) initiatives has grown in recent years (Ferris and Hopkins 2015; Kubisch et al. 2010). The intellectual origins of place-based development efforts date back at least to the 19th-century settlement house movement, but the federal government’s involvement in place-based programs started with the public housing program in the 1930s. This was followed by urban renewal, which was authorized by the Housing Act of 1949 (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013; Mossberger 2010; Von Hoffman 2012). Successive administrations have put their own stamps on a federal approach to local revitalization, from President Johnson’s Model Cities, to President Nixon’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and to President Clinton’s Empowerment Zones. The Obama administration embraced a place-based paradigm to policymaking, rolling out Choice Neighborhoods; Promise Neighborhoods; Strong Cities, Strong Communities; Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation; and Promise Zones. And President Trump signed Opportunity Zones into law as a part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (Theodos, Hangen, Gonzalez, and Meixell 2020).

It would be a mistake to conceptualize comprehensive community initiatives as principally federal in nature, however. While often using federal funding, local public officials and philanthropic and anchor institutions are the backbone organizations that execute comprehensive place-based approaches (Kubisch et al. 2010). Large national foundations may backstop local capacity, and most such philanthropies have developed signature revitalization initiatives during the past three decades. But even when initiated from afar, comprehensive community initiatives take on a local flavor.

Like the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis that Odysseus had to thread his way between, place-based revitalization work has faced two opposing pitfalls. On one hand, initiatives might do too little to alter the status quo, leaving neighborhoods as impoverished as when they began, with the added insult of broken promises and a sense of intractability. This disbelief in change may take hold among residents or among outside observers, such as high-ranking officials in city government, philanthropy, or anchor institutions. Too little change might be observed because the initiative deploys too few resources relative to the need or because it deploys resources in the wrong way.

If the one danger is that community revitalization initiatives have too little effect, the opposing danger is that they have too much of an effect. It is possible that a revitalization initiative improves a neighborhood so much that it stimulates market interest in a way that takes over and crowds out households with low and moderate incomes that had been living in the area for years. They may or may not have been relocated directly because of the initiative, but when it takes hold, the danger is that a revitalized neighborhood becomes a gentrified one and that the households originally intended to benefit from the initiative no longer can.

What, then, of actual initiatives and their effects? What can be said about how they have performed? Although the prevalence of these efforts has grown, our knowledge of their effects has not grown commensurately. Like the communities they seek to change, comprehensive community initiatives are complex and have proven difficult to evaluate.

This study uses a new analytic technique, the synthetic control method, to understand one of the nation's largest, longest-standing, and most prominent comprehensive community initiatives: San Diego's City Heights Initiative. The study's research questions are whether the initiative caused observable changes to its target area in terms of population levels, racial and ethnic composition, incomes, poverty rates, college degree holding, housing tenure, and property values.

I find that the City Heights community, relative to a comparison, experienced significant population increases. The neighborhood's economic standing, whether measured by incomes, poverty rates, home values, or rents, was little changed relative to the counterfactual.

Background

There has been considerable research assessing the impacts of the broader suite of community development efforts, including housing programs, traditional community development programs, and economic development programs. This community development evaluation literature uses several methods, such as regression discontinuity analysis (Baum-Snow and Marion 2009; Bostic and Lee 2018; Deng and Freeman 2011; Freedman 2015). Several community development evaluations use adjusted interrupted time series, which sometimes use hedonic regressions (Galster, Tatian, and Accordino 2006; Galster et al. 2004; Reynolds and Rohlin 2015; Schwartz et al. 2006; Zielenbach and Voith 2010). The literature also includes more conventional difference-in-differences approaches, which are also sometimes used in hedonic regressions (Ellen et al. 2007; Richardson et al. 2017). The synthetic control method has not been used to evaluate a community development initiative.

BOX 1

Comprehensive Community Initiatives

I define a comprehensive community initiative as an approach funded in part by external sources but relying on local knowledge and resources, that seeks to upgrade, over a sustained period, one or more specific features of the physical or social environment of a distressed area in a way that is measurable and for which the benefits are anticipated to accrue, at least in part, to residents living in the area before the intervention.

Definitions can be deceptively simple, however, while reality is more nuanced. It is helpful to expand on what this definition does and does not include. First, there must be a targeted neighborhood or neighborhoods. Second, there must be local involvement in planning and implementation. Third, activities, expenditures, and services must be made available above the status quo. There can be spillover effects, but the activities must have an element of spatial concentration and targeting. Fourth, there must be a sustained commitment over time, typically at least 3 years, but often 10 or more. Fifth, though not required, comprehensive community initiative strategies are typically multifaceted and multisectoral. Finally, these strategies make claims on changing the target area in one or more ways: poverty alleviation, crime reduction, beautification, business growth, and public health gains are a few common examples. Such changes are, or at least could be, measured at the community level and are not simply upgrading an individual property or producing gains for the client base of an existing service provider.

Depending on who is doing the classification, there have been between one dozen and three dozen such initiatives across the US.^a The most prominent examples include Atlanta's East Lake Initiative, Baltimore's East Baltimore Development Initiative and the Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, Boston's Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and Higher Ground Boston, Chicago's New Communities Program, the Cleveland Community Building Initiative, Los Angeles's Best Start LA, New York City's Harlem Children's Zone and Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program in the Bronx, San Diego's City Heights Initiative, and San Francisco's HOPE SF initiative. In addition, there are a few cross-site efforts, such as the Ford Foundation's Neighborhood and Family Initiative and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections initiative. The Choice and Promise Neighborhoods program sites present interesting cases, where it is likely that some will be able to make claims on changing broader community dynamics.^b

^a James M. Ferris and Elwood Hopkins, "Place-Based Initiatives: Lessons from Five Decades of Experimentation and Experience," *The Foundation Review* 7 no. 4 (2015): 97–109; Anne C. Kubisch, Patricia Auspos, Prudence Brown, and Tom Dewar, *Voices from the Field III: Lessons and Challenges from Two Decades of Community Change Efforts* (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2010); Maria Martinez-Cosio and Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell, *Catalysts for Change: Twenty-First Century Philanthropy and Community Development* (New York: Rothledge, 2013); and Margery Austin Turner, Peter Edelman, Erika Poethig, and Laudan Aron, *Tackling Persistent Poverty in Distressed Urban Neighborhoods: History, Principles, and Strategies for Philanthropic Investment* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2014).

^b Rolf Pendall, Leah Hendey, David Greenberg, Kathryn L.S. Petit, Diane Levy, Amy Khare, Megan Gallagher, et al., *Choice Neighborhoods: Baseline Conditions and Early Progress* (Washington, DC: US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015).

I distinguish comprehensive community initiatives from the broader set of community development programs. The literature evaluating community development programs is voluminous, but the literature pertaining to comprehensive community initiatives is limited, especially in terms of quantitative impact analysis.

Relatively more is written about implementation and lessons learned. These include studies on the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections initiative (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2013), the Enterprise Foundation's Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (Brown, Butler, and Hamilton 2001), the Ford Foundation's Neighborhood and Family Initiative (Chaskin, Chipenda-Dansokho, and Toler 2000), the Hewlett Foundation's Neighborhood Improvement Initiative (Brown and Fiester 2007), the MacArthur Foundation's New Communities Program (Greenberg et al. 2014); the New York Community Trust's Neighborhood Strategies Project (Auspos 2000), and the Surdna Foundation's Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project (Miller and Burns 2006).

The impact literature is not well populated. It includes Rosenblatt and DeLuca's (2017) study documenting the failure to bolster Sandtown-Winchester. Other studies look at approaches that some have termed comprehensive community initiatives, but these efforts are different from the initiative studied here in that they seek to address larger spatial areas, such as entire cities or school districts (Collins, Johnson, and Becker 2007; Weitzman et al. 2009).

A review of the literature indicates that collectively, the successes of these efforts have been mixed. For some observers, engaging community residents is a sufficient measure of success. But most community building efforts are undertaken to improve the economic and social vitality of distressed communities. By these measures, many efforts have fallen short, though there are some successes (Kubisch et al. 2010).

San Diego's City Heights Initiative and Neighborhood Context

The City Heights Initiative is a large, multiyear, and multiservice effort (table 1). It has been led by a well-resourced, stable organization and has involved and supported multiple partner groups. The City Heights Initiative has made considerable investments in both human services (most notably for children and youth) and in physical redevelopment. The initiative relocated residents and demolished housing to make way for new development. The initiative developed or supported a significant amount of real estate for housing, education, retail, and community facilities such as

recreational options. The initiative is closely intertwined with local schools, including supporting construction or rehabilitation of the school buildings and programming.

The initiative has directly invested or leveraged likely well over \$212 million into the City Heights community since 1995, with contributions from philanthropy, government, and private market debt and equity financing. The initiative drew from the financial support of a single wealthy individual who established a foundation to accomplish the revitalization work.

TABLE 1
Summary Design Features of the City Heights Initiative

Design feature	City Heights Initiative
City and state	San Diego, CA
Lead organization	Price Philanthropies Foundation
Net assets per IRS Form 990	\$593 million
Start year	1994
End year	Ongoing
Amount directly invested or facilitated	>\$212 million
Emphasis of approach	Real estate for residential, commercial, and community facilities; public schools; resident services
Scale of physical redevelopment relative to neighborhood size	Low
Investment in human services	High

The next subsection introduces the City Heights neighborhood. It is followed by a discussion of the redevelopment efforts. Next is a description of the initiative’s key components, and the final subsection looks at recent adaptations of the effort.

The City Heights Neighborhood

City Heights started as a series of subdivisions that incorporated to become the city of East San Diego in 1912, with a population of roughly 4,000. But its life as a municipality was short lived, and East San Diego’s residents voted in 1923 to merge with San Diego. An independent city was too expensive to maintain.¹

City Heights sits a few miles east of San Diego’s central business district, the San Diego International Airport, and the San Diego Zoo. City Heights is bounded to the west by US Interstate 805 and CA Interstate 15 (I-15), to the south by CA State Route 94, to the north by El Cajon Boulevard, and to the east by 54th Street, Chollas Parkway, and 47th Street. Although it is sometimes referred to as a neighborhood, City Heights contains 16 neighborhoods and more than 100,000 residents. (The City Heights Initiative’s investments have been more spatially concentrated.)

The area was neither affluent nor highly impoverished. Despite its proximity, it was not well integrated into San Diego via transit, partly because it was bounded by canyons. Its real estate was mostly modest homes on small lots, but they developed without firm planning requirements (Kayzar 2013).

City Heights experienced white flight, but unlike many other communities undergoing this dramatic change, City Heights and San Diego quickly gained population. Local business owners, in response to declining revenues, supported rezoning the area for multifamily housing, and by 1970, much of City Heights's single-family housing was demolished and replaced with multifamily housing. This resulted in a shift from owner-occupant to renter households (Bliesner and Bussell 2013). Attracted to available housing and lower costs, immigrants from many nations moved into City Heights, and the community grew rapidly.

The rental buildings were generally of poor quality and not visually appealing, however, leading to low property values. And the area's commercial corridors continued to decline as higher-income families left, other residents shopped in suburban malls, and a new freeway separated the community from downtown (Kayzar 2013).

The area began experiencing crime and violence. Caltrans, California's Department of Transportation, has been blamed for some of the problems. Having purchased and boarded up several hundred homes in advance of the I-15 freeway extension, the freeway was not completed until decades after the plans were proposed. The area in the path of the freeway extension became a center for illegal activities, including squatting, drug dealing, and dumping (Bliesner and Bussell 2013; Kayzar 2013), eventually leading to a state of emergency declaration. City Heights became known as a high-crime area, perceptions shared by residents and those outside the community. The community was never bereft of resources, however. Examples of local civic infrastructure include the City Heights Community Development Corporation, established in 1981, and the Mid-City Community Advocacy Network. City Heights also has several cultural organizations that play a significant organizing role and that the initiative has supported via grant projects or operating support.

Census Bureau data from 1970 through 1990 attest to a changing community in City Heights. Table 2 reports on the demographic, economic, and housing characteristics of residents of the census tracts the initiative targets. As described above, the community was already mostly composed of renters by 1970, becoming more so by 1990, with just 7 percent of households owning their homes. Population levels rose quickly, and home prices appreciated. The community experienced sizable decreases in the number of white households and increases in the number of Latino and Black households. The share of residents who were foreign born rose by a multiple of

five. Average incomes were roughly the same in 1990 as in 1970, though poverty rates nearly doubled from 18 percent to 34 percent.

TABLE 2

City Heights Neighborhood Demographic, Economic, and Housing Conditions, 1970–90

	1970	1980	1990
Population, age, and family type			
Population density	12,230	14,253	21,956
Population younger than 5	9%	11%	14%
Population older than 65	16%	11%	6%
Race or ethnicity			
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	3%	6%	17%
Black	1%	12%	19%
Latino	19%	21%	37%
White	77%	60%	27%
Foreign born	7%	13%	38%
Education and economics			
Bachelor's degree or higher	6%	8%	8%
Household income (average)	\$41,093	\$34,710	\$42,466
Unemployment rate	7%	10%	13%
Poverty rate	18%	22%	34%
Housing			
Owner occupancy	14%	10%	7%
Vacancy rate	7%	7%	7%
Value of owner-occupied home (average)	\$90,543	\$150,549	\$159,351
Gross monthly rent	\$595	\$608	\$752

Sources: 1970, 1980, and 1990 Decennial Censuses.

Note: Dollar values are adjusted for inflation and reported as 2017 values.

Redeveloping City Heights

Sol Price, the originator of the City Heights Initiative, was first a successful businessman. He was the force behind FedMart, the nation's first discount retailer, which inspired Walmart, Costco, and other stores. FedMart opened in 1954 in San Diego, introducing consumers to new concepts like extended hours, bulk-item purchases, limited varieties of a given item, store-brand products, no-frills facilities, and combined food and nonfood items (Price 2012). He later went on to open Price Club.

Having been raised part of his life in San Diego and having graduated from San Diego High School, Price created the Price Family Charitable Fund (now the Price Philanthropies Foundation) in 1983 to give back locally, nationally, and abroad. Price was active philanthropically in San Diego, but he became convinced that to make a difference, he would need to concentrate a great deal of resources on a single community.² His awareness of City Heights was raised after the closing of a Vons grocery store, and he began to consider how best to repurpose that real estate. After meeting with residents, city officials, and stakeholders, Price envisioned a novel approach. He partnered

with William Jones, a former city council member, to split the for-profit development firm, owned by Jones, from the nonprofit activities headed by Price. The for-profit, Citylink Investment Corporation, developed the retail center.³ The for-profit firm, the nonprofit organization, and the city converged in a public-private partnership. For example, Price offered to loan the city the funds it needed to build a new police substation if he and partners could develop a master plan for the immediate area (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013).

The plan was creative and enterprising: “San Diego city staff contend that Price successfully compelled three very independent institutions to collaborate: the city, the school district, and the community college district, by using his financial assets and business acumen” (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013, 110). It resulted in the Urban Village, a project that contributed toward a stronger police presence, educational facilities, commercial options, and recreational venues. This first project expanded to become the multipronged revitalization effort called the City Heights Initiative.

From that point, Price moved to other education supports and to commercial and housing development. His foundation has continued this work in City Heights since his death in 2009 under the leadership of his son, Robert. The work from the early years, according to staff, has been “such an organic process...responding to needs as they arose.”⁴ Staff report there has been abundant experimentation along the way, with strategies and specific programs beginning and ending. And program staff report that community needs are shifting. Initially, the needs were more around basic safety. With improving security, “the narrative evolved to how we help get our kids to college.”⁵

Other actors are getting involved. Most notably, The California Endowment, a health foundation, has begun work in City Heights as part of a \$1 billion effort to provide health gains for residents through place-based investment.

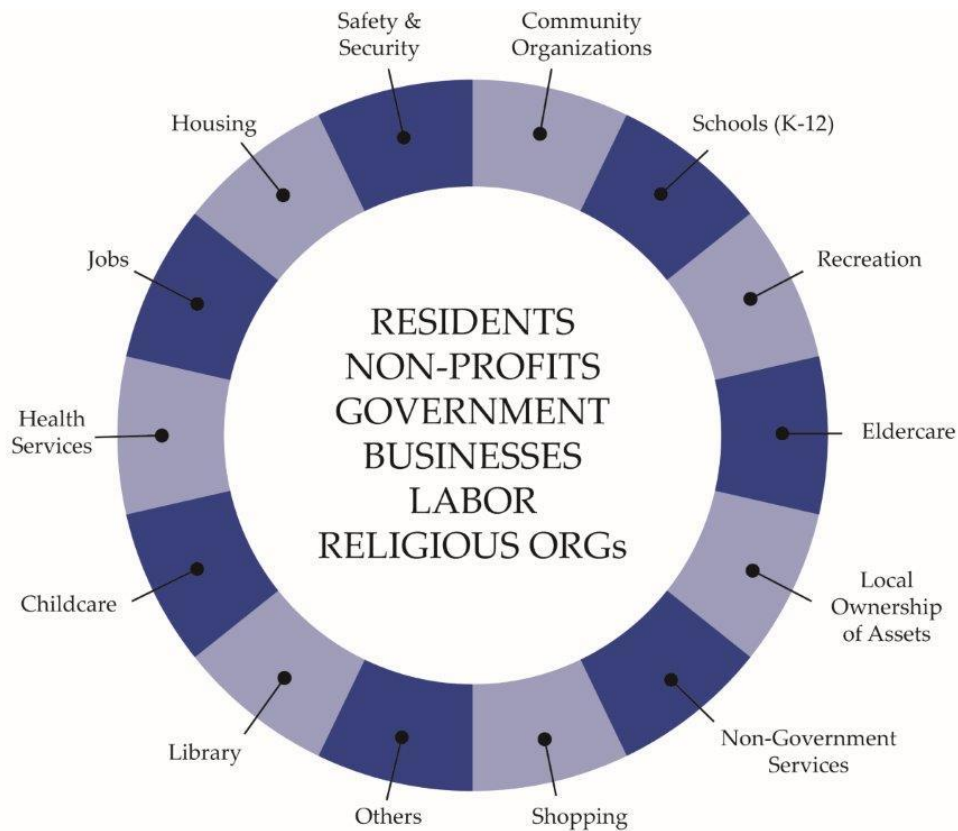
Key Components of the City Heights Initiative

The City Heights Initiative is a comprehensive community initiative, with specific elements having evolved over two decades. The model is one of physical redevelopment, supporting public schools, nonprofits, and community-based organizations and incubating new community organizations. The Price Philanthropies Foundation, the nonprofit behind the City Heights Initiative, does not frequently run programming directly but partners with other public and private entities.

The City Heights Initiative’s current priorities are broad and include such elements as housing and commercial development, education, safety and crime prevention, food security, and health. The initiative has directly created or funded projects in each of these areas. In structuring the

initiative’s approach, its instigator, Sol Price, articulated a desire for a holistic, multipronged effort. He depicted the factors present in a healthy community as “The Wheel” (figure 1).

FIGURE 1
City Heights Initiative Focus Areas



Source: Price Charities. “City Heights Initiative” (San Diego, Price Charities, n.d.). Used with permission.

The Price Philanthropies Foundation has \$593 million in assets, according to the most recent IRS 990 forms available (2017).⁶ As of 2012, the initiative had invested more than \$212 million into City Heights, roughly half in real estate and half in programming (Price 2012; Price Charities, n.d.).

Despite providing large sums directly, the Price Philanthropies Foundation has brought other public and philanthropic funders to partner in the initiative’s work. The Price Philanthropies Foundation has sought to leverage and attract funding and support from several quarters. This has come through local, state, and federal public-sector funds for health services, education, infrastructure, and housing. This has also come in the form of partnering with other philanthropies, such as the Weingart Foundation, and in the form of personnel. For example, the initiative hired a former San Diego city manager to lead its redevelopment work. As detailed below, Sol Price was

one of the first people locally to identify and initiate opportunities for public-private partnership around community development.

The Price Philanthropies Foundation has sought to implement the initiative in a collaborative manner, working with existing neighborhood institutions while bringing in new partners. This “collaborative, pragmatic process” has created a “thick web of organizations” (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013, 89). This approach means that, as one observer put it, the foundation’s “role has evolved from mainly being a funder into serving as an advocate, catalyst, deal maker, and convener, as well as a funder” (Edelman 2013, 128). As a part of this work, the initiative has also provided small grants to form neighborhood associations and the Mid-City Community Advocacy Network, which is at the center of much of the organizing and agenda-setting work that happens locally.

The following subsections detail the initiative’s five focus areas and work undertaken: retail and community facilities; education, youth services, and scholarships; public safety and beautification; housing; and employment and human services.

RETAIL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The City Heights Initiative has made several real estate-based investments in retail and community facilities. In many ways, the initiative began with a large redevelopment effort called the Urban Village. It was from the success of this first project, begun in 1994 and completed in 1996, that Sol Price made a deepening commitment to the community (Price 2012).

The Urban Village sits just east of Fairmont Avenue, which bisects City Heights, and just south of University Avenue, a major thoroughfare. With agreement from the city, Price developed a master plan for the parcel and oversaw the building of a public library, a recreation center, an outdoor theater, a park with a swimming pool and tennis courts, a health clinic, a shopping center with a grocery store as the anchor tenant, a pharmacy, a bank branch, restaurants, a coffee shop, and other retail. Development happened in stages. Roughly 400 housing units and some retail buildings were demolished (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013). Next, the park and recreational facilities were built. The City Heights Weingart Public Library opened in 1998 and became the busiest public library in San Diego (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013). The initiative has acted as a local land bank, purchasing land and redeveloping it. With the closing of a Safeway, City Heights was without a full-service grocer. The initiative encouraged Albertsons to move in, where it operated until closing in 2014. An El Super now occupies the space.

After the Urban Village was completed, the Price Philanthropies Foundation began work across the street assembling land for a housing and commercial development. That development, on the western side of Fairmont Avenue, includes a six-story office building and adjacent parking garage.

The building is primarily leased to nonprofit organizations, including a Head Start preschool, a pediatric clinic and urgent care center, and the offices of the Price Philanthropies Foundation. Leasing space to nonprofits was intended to bring both jobs and services to the community (Price 2012). As part of a 2011 mixed-use development called City Heights Square, the foundation introduced additional ground-level retail along University Avenue, including a credit union, a pharmacy, and a restaurant. The initiative also helped fund the New Roots Community Garden. Finally, the initiative supported the relocation of the Copley-Price Family YMCA; the new facility opened in 2015.

EDUCATION, YOUTH SERVICES, AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Education and youth development have been a major focus of the City Heights Initiative. That work began with investments in facilities. Rosa Parks Elementary School was built as part of the Urban Village development, with Price also hiring its principal a year ahead of the school's opening to begin hiring, planning, and outreach. In addition to Rosa Parks Elementary School, the Price Philanthropies Foundation also supported the development of a large adult continuing education building (community college satellite) along Fairmont Avenue.

The City Heights Initiative has done more than support facilities. Via the Price Community Scholars program, the foundation gives 15 San Diego State University freshman who are from City Heights a \$7,500 annual scholarship to mentor 45 seventh-graders at Wilson and Monroe Clark Middle Schools. Mentors and mentees meet weekly.

Sol Price initiated a partnership with San Diego State University and San Diego Unified School District. With underwriting from the Price Philanthropies Foundation, San Diego State University has provided academic support for three local schools (Rosa Parks Elementary School, Monroe Clark Middle School, and Herbert Hoover High School) (Price 2012). This work, later termed the City Heights Education Collaborative, focused on K-16 education outcomes. At Price's suggestion, the initiative also supports a School in the Park program, where elementary and middle school students spend a good portion of their learning time in Balboa Park and its museums.⁷ Although the Price Philanthropies Foundation's work has principally focused on three schools, other City Heights schools have received grant support—most notably, Wilson Middle School participates in School in the Park, and other schools receive \$25,000 annually in operating support.

In its work with high schoolers, the Price Philanthropies Foundation supported the development of the "College Avenue Compact" with San Diego State University.⁸ Students from Monroe Clark Middle School, Wilson Middle School, and Hoover High School in grades 7 through 12 who have a GPA of 3.0 or higher have access to one-on-one college and career advising, help

applying for college and financial aid, workshops for families on college awareness and planning, academic tutoring and study skills workshops, college-related field trips, and SAT/ACT test preparation. Hoover students meeting minimum GPA, course completion, and other requirements are guaranteed admission to the university.⁹ The program has 10 staff members, including student and family coordinators at each school. The program reports that college enrollment has risen from 185 students in the class of 2012 to 256 students in the class of 2018.¹⁰

The City Heights Initiative funds deeper programmatic work with Hoover students as well, partnering with the school and the San Diego Rotary Club 33 on Cardinals Interact. The program, which started in 2002 but evolved into its current form in 2013, provides academic tutoring; mentoring by adults; camps and summer enrichment programs; Rotary lunches; visits to local colleges and universities; visits to civic institutions, including the policy department, zoo, superior court, and city hall; community service and clean-up activities; mentorship to younger children; job-shadowing opportunities; financial literacy; Rotary programming and camps; and other supports.¹¹ The program has 6 staff members admits 50 students a year at the end of 9th grade, serving 150 10th-through-12th-graders at a time. Students completing the program earn scholarships up to \$1,500. The program reports that all the students completing it also graduate from high school and that 78 percent of program graduates took the SAT, compared with 56 percent of other Hoover students.¹² While getting students to college may be a positive outcome, staff from the City Heights Initiative report, however, that once successful in accessing college and a job, many program graduates do not return to City Heights.¹³

In addition to the College Avenue Compact and Cardinals Interact, the Price Philanthropies Foundation supports scholarships for Hoover High graduating seniors. The Stephen Effron Scholarship provides one student up to \$4,000 a year for up to five years at a four-year university or \$2,000 a year for up to three years at a community college. The Jesus Morales Memorial Scholarship provides \$2,000 and \$1,000 scholarships to Latino students for either four-year universities or community colleges.

The initiative has taken a broad view of student success and engaged in nonacademic ways as well, and it expects this work to expand.¹⁴ The initiative has supported social services, including counseling for students. This includes underwriting six bilingual social workers based at four local schools, staff members who support children and their families. The foundation has supported parent engagement and parent resource rooms, after-school programs, and a music program with a full-time music teacher for Rosa Parks Elementary School; coaching, instruments, and supplies at Wilson and Monroe Clark Middle Schools; and coaching and supports at Hoover High School. The City Heights Initiative has also supported school-based health care, including funding for school

nurses to work a full-time rather than part-time schedule, and three school-based clinics. To bolster the skills of teachers and help retain them, the initiative paid for master's in education degrees from San Diego State University, with classes held in City Heights.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND BEAUTIFICATION

Public safety and beautification were also some of the initiative's first priorities, stemming from resident articulations of high levels of crime and disorder. After the Mid-City police substation closed, Sol Price worked with the city and police department to build a new facility, lending \$3 million toward construction. The police substation was designed as a part of the Urban Village and is located on the west side of Fairmont Avenue, across from the park and recreational facilities.

In addition to police presence, the initiative has supported the provision of security cameras and community policing. Its Safety Initiative helped finance the Consensus Organizing Center at San Diego State University to reduce crime via community organizing and empowerment. (Organizing is challenging in a community like City Heights, where residents speak several languages [Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013]).

The Price Philanthropies Foundation has also funded beautification efforts in City Heights. This includes funding Urban Corps of San Diego for litter and graffiti removal and paying for landscaping services in public areas.

HOUSING

Housing development has taken on increased emphasis. The initiative initially supported a home purchase assistance program. The program targeted low- and moderate-income residents displaced by redevelopment or otherwise living in the neighborhood. They could receive \$85,000 in grants from the initiative and its partners toward the purchase of a home (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013).

The Price Philanthropies Foundation has emphasized a mixed-income approach to housing and has developed both affordable and market-rate residential units, often in the same building. The initiative has directly built 478 rental units. Of these, a portion are affordable, and the remainder are rented at somewhat below market rates but not at deep subsidies like the affordable units.¹⁵

In 2003, the City Heights Initiative built the Village Townhomes, 116 two-, three-, and four-bedroom apartments. Thirty-four are set aside for households earning below 50 percent of the area median income, and the remainder are priced at somewhat below market rates. In 2004, 120 apartments were also constructed as a part of the Metro Career Center. In 2007, the initiative supported Serving Seniors in developing a 150-unit supportive housing complex at City Heights

Square for very low-income seniors. In 2011, also as part of the City Heights Square mixed-use development, the initiative supported the development of 92 units that are renting at somewhat below market rates.

EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN SERVICES

A final area of focus for the City Heights Initiative has been employment and human services. The initiative has directly funded parent centers, social work centers, a community garden, and health centers. In each of these settings, the initiative has supported new positions to provide employment opportunities to local residents. The cleanup activities also provided employment to young adults. The initiative has made investments in job training as well. In addition to the services mentioned above, the initiative has supported a food stamps coordinator and education and job training via the University Community Center. The Price Philanthropies Foundation supported the creation of school-based health centers at four local schools (Rosa Parks Elementary School, Central Elementary School, Monroe Clark Middle School, and Hoover High School). The foundation also helped finance facilities for the expansions of four health clinics (La Maestra Community Health Center, Mid-City Pediatric Clinic, City Heights Family Health Center, and Rady Children's Hospital Urgent Care for Primary Care and Behavioral Health in City Heights).

Response and Adaptation

Local media report that gentrification is coming to City Heights,¹⁶ which has been controversial locally.¹⁷ This is not yet evident in terms of a change in the community's racial and ethnic composition, but there are reports of increasing rents and home prices.¹⁸ Gentrification pressures are perhaps inevitable in City Heights, given San Diego's growth and the community's proximity to other affluent neighborhoods and the central business district. These trends may be accelerated because the census tract containing the Urban Village and four adjacent tracts were selected as Opportunity Zones.

For an initiative seeking to upgrade a community for the benefit of residents, this poses a challenge. All the more given that staff are sure that their investments and work have made City Heights more attractive to market investors.¹⁹ There is "the very tangible fear that successful revitalization of these underserved neighborhoods will lead to gentrification.... For foundation and nonprofit leaders, there is significant discomfort surrounding a foundation facilitating gentrification through its community development projects" (Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013, 120).

What then are the initiative's next steps? The foundation has ample assets to continue to contribute to the initiative. Staff envision a sustained commitment to City Heights, though the foundation's broader giving is evolving, and it supports San Diego-wide efforts, in addition to giving

that happens beyond San Diego. In City Heights, the Price Philanthropies Foundation sees a continued evolution from a real estate developer and operator of programs to a funder. It expects to leverage public-private partnerships to stretch its resources further. In the two major parcels the foundation owns, it will work with developers to build more affordable housing, senior housing, a high-tech library, and additional community gathering spaces. The first that is being developed is the East Block Project, which is adjacent to the Copley-Price Family YMCA. The Price Philanthropies Foundation will partner with a developer to build 117 affordable units for seniors (affordably priced for people with incomes at 30 to 60 percent of the area median income) and 78 affordable units for families (affordably priced for people with incomes at 50 to 60 percent of the area median income). The site will also feature a plaza and resource center.

Methodological Approach

Methodology

To investigate causal effects of a single-area revitalization initiative, I use the “synthetic control” method (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010), a new approach that has yet to be used to assess comprehensive community initiatives. Under a synthetic control approach, evaluators assess the target community not against singular observed comparison areas but an artificial comparison created by combining and appropriately weighting the most representative nontreated areas.

The approach works by comparing a treated area with comparison communities. It treats the target area as one treated unit and creates a weighted composite of “pooled” comparison communities to become a “synthetic control” against which differences in outcomes can be assessed. Put differently, the analysis weights comparison communities to create a single control that best resembles the treatment community in the preintervention period and then measures the difference in the differences of outcomes before and after the intervention between the treatment community and the composite of comparison communities. The approach generates weights to minimize the difference between the target area’s pretreatment measures and that of a synthetic control. Weights are time invariant; there is one set of pre- and posttreatment weights. The synthetic control is the counterfactual for what would have been observed in the target area but for the intervention.

There is a sample of $J + 1$ units, and the treated unit is the first one, with its outcome being y_1 and outcomes for the other units being y_j . To assess impacts, I define the pretreatment period as $t = 1, \dots, T_1$ and after treatment as $t = T_1 + 1, \dots, T_2$; y_{jt}^1 indicates units that may or may not be treated in a world where treatment does not exist; and y_{jt}^2 indicates treated and untreated units in a

world where treatment does exist. I seek to estimate $a_{1t} = (y_{1t}^2 - y_{1t}^1)$ for $t = T_1 + 1, \dots, T_2$. (Before $t = T_1 + 1$ they are the same.) We observe y_{1t}^2 ; we do not observe y_{1t}^1 .

The synthetic control is created from the J pool of control tracts based on weights that are defined such that $w_j \geq 0$ and $\sum w_j = 1$. Let $W = (w_2, \dots, w_{j+1})'$, with each value of W representing a potential synthetic control. The treatment effect is estimated by taking the difference between the actual outcome and the synthetic control in the posttreatment period:

$$\hat{a}_{1t} = y_{1t}^2 - \sum_{j=2}^{J+1} w_j^* y_{jt}^1$$

Following Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller (2010), I select w^* as the value of W that minimizes the expression $\|X_1 - X_0 W\|_v = \sqrt{(X_1 - X_0 W)' V (X_1 - X_0 W)}$, where $X_1 = (y_{1,1}, \dots, y_{1,t})'$ is a $(T_1 \times 1)$ vector of the pretreatment outcome and where X_0 is a $(T_1 \times J)$ matrix containing the pretreatment outcome for untreated communities. I select v so that the synthetic control minimizes, pretreatment, the root mean square prediction error (the gap in the variables of interest between the target community and its synthetic control).

In implementing a synthetic control approach, it is necessary to select pretreatment measures that can be used to create a control that minimizes preintervention discrepancies in levels and trends. The approach is almost always used when data are available for multiple pretreatment periods for both the target area and the donor pool communities—that is, communities that are eligible to be included in the synthetic control.

The most important covariate is the pretreatment dependent variable (McClelland and Gault 2017). The advantage of incorporating this measure is that it is likely to include the effects of other important factors that predict it for the period in question—and thereby overcome the problem of omitting important predictive measures. But Kaul and coauthors (2018) demonstrate that including previous lags (i.e., pretreatment observations) for the outcome variable removes the predictive power of all other covariates, given how the method works. Yet, McClelland and Gault (2017) do not find that the alternative that Kaul and coauthors (2018) propose results in a better pretreatment fit.

The synthetic control method relies on several assumptions, most in common with those required for other difference-in-differences techniques. First, the synthetic control approach assumes that donor areas are not directly treated. Second, the approach assumes there is no interference across areas—that is, an intervention does not affect the communities outside the target area. Third, the initiative has no effect before it is created. Fourth, there are consistent pre- and posttreatment observations for treated and untreated communities. Finally, the treated community can be approximated by a combination of donor communities. This requires that the

treated area not be an outlier in the pretreatment periods. The approach must closely match the target area and donor community's characteristics before treatment.

The synthetic control method does not generate measures of statistical significance as is standard in the difference-in-differences models. Standard methods of inference are not appropriate, given that each intervention has only a single target area. Standard methods of inference do not make probabilistic assumptions but instead rely on the law of large numbers to create confidence that the characteristics of a sample resemble that of the larger population. This approach examines just one treated area, however.

It is possible, though, to conduct an inferential exercise by testing placebo scenarios or falsification tests. As developed in Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller (2010), it is possible to conduct “in place” falsification tests. The logic is intuitive. Suppose that under the method, the target area appeared to diverge moderately from its synthetic control posttreatment. Is such a result meaningful? One way to know would be to understand how exceptional this divergence is. Supposing there were 99 communities in a donor pool for the target area, the synthetic control method could be replicated for each of them, pretending that each was in fact the treated community and estimating the effect for each one—that is, generating 99 new synthetic controls. The results for the truly treated City Heights community could then be compared with results of the placebo communities (as though they were presumed to have been treated). If the effect estimated for the treated community is 50th in magnitude relative to all 100 communities, it is unlikely that the intervention's effects exceeded random noise. If, however, the City Heights community is ranked in the top 5 or 10 of all 100 communities, it is likely the intervention had an effect.

To determine whether the estimate for the treated community is large or small, one can calculate the share of placebos that have a posttreatment root mean square prediction error at least as large as the average for the treated unit.²⁰ If the estimate for the City Heights community falls outside most of the comparison estimates in its posttreatment root mean square prediction error (e.g., if it is within the 10th percentile), the evidence base is strengthened because the intervention had an effect on the outcome of interest, rather than any difference occurring simply by chance.

Implementation

An important step with the synthetic control method is selecting the best unit of analysis. Given the intervention's size, census tracts allow the closest approximation of the treated area. The City Heights Initiative has a larger footprint in terms of the Price Philanthropies Foundation's eligibility map where it has focused its work. The initiative's physical redevelopment and education supports

have been most heavily focused in two tracts—that is, the location of the Urban Village. The two City Heights tracts are also similar pretreatment. For analysis, I simply average all pre- and posttreatment values for the two tracts, treating them as one treated area, and then conduct the analysis. As a robustness check, I investigate other specifications of the treated area.

It is necessary in the synthetic control approach to define an appropriate donor pool of comparison units eligible to be included in the synthetic control. As there are many tracts in the US, for analytic ease, I limit the potential donor pool to tracts that closely resemble the target community. (Beyond a certain point, additional tracts add little or nothing to the estimate.)

My preferred donor pool is a national donor pool. The national donor pool for City Heights has 244 donor tracts. To create the national donor pool, I first exclude all tracts that are not in a metropolitan statistical area (MSA). I then keep only MSAs with levels and trends similar to those of each target area's MSA (separately for each target area). I keep MSAs that are within 3 standard deviations of the target area's MSA in terms of population, white population share, share of residents with a bachelor's degree, average household income, poverty rate, owner occupancy share, and average owner-occupant home value for all the periods in the study (1970 to 2015–19). I apply this selection requirement both before and after treatment to ensure that MSAs are on the same trajectory, with the logic that MSA-wide averages were not affected by the interventions.

After limiting the sample to MSAs with similar levels and trends as the target area's MSA, I then keep only tracts in those MSAs that are 1 standard deviation from the target area for all pretreatment periods (using the same variables I used to select MSAs).

I add additional constraints. To address the synthetic control method's assumption that comparison areas are untreated, I remove all tracts in all the donor pools that had an active revitalization initiative during the pre- and posttreatment observation periods. I use a list of community revitalization initiatives as defined in the literature. I also exclude tracts undergoing major public housing demolition and rehabilitation, as defined by receiving these funds via the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI Program. Given that spatial interference is mostly plausible with tracts surrounding a target area, I also exclude from the donor pools tracts adjacent to the City Height Initiative.

As a robustness check, I replicate the analysis with two other donor pools. The first pool is similar to the national model but rather than tracts that are 1 standard deviation from the target area, it uses tracts that are three-quarters of a standard deviation. The second pool is defined from all tracts within San Diego (except for neighboring tracts and those with similar interventions). The results (not shown, for brevity) are highly consistent across the donor pools.

The synthetic control approach generates weights to minimize the difference between the target area's pretreatment measures (preintervention outcome indicators together with any other covariates if included) and that of a synthetic control. The most important covariate is the pretreatment dependent variable. I include it here, separately, for all pretreatment years. Synthetic control analyses sometimes average or omit some pretreatment years of the pretreatment variable to avoid overfitting. But this study has only three pretreatment observations (1970, 1980, and 1990).

The synthetic control method maximizes pretreatment fit for the pretreatment outcome variable. When I include the pretreatment outcome variable for all pretreatment periods, the analysis, in maximizing fit, will rely only on that outcome variable to do so. As such, I do not include pretreatment covariates other than the pretreatment variable.

Data and Outcomes

Like with other revitalization evaluations, indicators for this study should be measured over a long period, with as many observation points as possible, and at a small unit of geography (Galster, Tatan, and Accordino 2006). I use data from the decennial censuses in 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 and data from the American Community Survey from 2006 through 2019. Relying on multiple preintervention data points from the decennial census allows for observing both the level and trajectory of change in the target and comparison areas before the initiative began. Further, observing change through 2019 allows enough time for impacts to develop, based on when the interventions began.

Data from the decennial census and the American Community Survey both allow for investigation of small geographic areas. I rely on tract-level data in evaluating the City Heights Initiative. Tracts are Census Bureau-defined geographies of 4,000 to 8,000 people. Because the Census Bureau has shifted the boundaries of some tracts, I use the Neighborhood Change Database, a set of historical tract-level census data from 1970 through 2010 converted into 2010 census tract boundary definitions developed by the Urban Institute and GeoLytics. I therefore have a balanced panel of census tracts, with all tracts present in all years.

An important question at this juncture is why these are the logical outcomes for the comprehensive community initiative. The City Heights Initiative attempted to achieve several benefits for residents in City Heights. Several are reflected as intermediate or long-term processes that can be captured in the data points described above. For example, the initiative relocated residents and then built new housing, meaning that population changes are clearly related to

programmatic activity. Improvements in educational attainment, poverty status, and income are all outcomes directly anticipated from the youth, education, and workforce supports and services the programming introduced. The outcomes also may change because of the in-migration of residents with different characteristics than incumbent residents. Similarly, homeownership rates, property values, and rents can be directly and indirectly affected by the City Heights Initiative as it developed and rented housing, some of it market-rate housing. Race and ethnicity are logical to check to understand how the surrounding neighborhood is changing and to provide insight into the processes of change—that is, changes for incumbent residents versus changes caused by differences in which households reside in a neighborhood.

There are several relevant outcomes beyond the ones mentioned above, including outcomes related to academic advancement and socio-emotional well-being for children and youth, college matriculation, public safety, access to fresh foods and other retail stores, physical and mental health for adults, and access to recreational facilities and parks. I affirm the value of these outcomes, as they reflect key elements of the initiative’s purpose and approach. I do not, however, include them in this study, as it is difficult to collect or access data for target area and comparison communities, and some data are not available. That said, future work could explore some of these outcomes, especially for initiatives that have begun more recently and for which pretreatment data are available.

Results

The City Heights Initiative invested or facilitated the provision of hundreds of millions of dollars into a narrowly targeted community. Although this sum may seem large, the investment took place over more than 25 years. Further, even with the intervention-backed financing, communities undergoing comprehensive revitalization still often access smaller per capita levels of private market capital than many middle- and upper-income neighborhoods as a matter of course (Theodos, Hangen, Meixell, and Foster 2020). But compared with other undercapitalized neighborhoods, investments from comprehensive community initiatives can be outsized.

Pretreatment Fit

Impact assessment is only as good as the comparisons it draws, and these are best understood by examining how comparable treated and comparison units are in the pretreatment period. The validity of the synthetic control approach, along with difference-in-differences models in general, hinges on the quality of pretreatment fit. The objective is to identify (or in this case create via

amalgamation) a comparison unit where pretreatment trends are aligned with the target area in key outcome variables and other contextual indicators.

In this study, the pretreatment goodness of fit is strong. One way to understand goodness of fit is to observe how comparable the treated and comparison areas are in pretreatment measures other than the dependent variables. Each estimation of the synthetic control procedure defines a separate synthetic control. The synthetic control is defined separately for each dependent variable and therefore includes somewhat different tracts from the donor pool or some of the same tracts but in different proportions. It is possible to investigate how pretreatment measures other than the dependent variable (i.e., those that were not used to define the synthetic control for that dependent variable) compare for the target area and the synthetic control to understand goodness of fit.

Table 3 shows pretreatment characteristics for the San Diego site. The results demonstrate that, with some exceptions, the target area and its synthetic controls are similar, pretreatment, for not only the dependent variable but the nondependent variables as well. Of course, these pretreatment fit analyses compare only observable metrics, and it is possible there are unobserved factors that compromise the validity of the comparisons advanced here. I also include pretreatment averages for the entire donor pool for comparison.

TABLE 3

San Diego City Heights Pretreatment Characteristic Table

Pretreatment characteristic	Target area	Synthetic Control (Average 1970-90)											
		Population density	AAPI share	Black share	Latino share	White share	BA	Income	Poverty	Home-ownership	Home value	Gross rent	Donor pool
Population density	16,146	15,840	7,919	5,251	6,415	5,579	6,597	6,473	6,024	8,632	6,997	7,312	6,934
AAPI share (%)	0.09	0.06	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.13	0.06	0.04	0.04
Black share (%)	0.11	0.03	0.14	0.10	0.14	0.22	0.18	0.16	0.20	0.13	0.12	0.23	0.18
Latino share (%)	0.25	0.51	0.19	0.23	0.25	0.19	0.21	0.22	0.16	0.19	0.23	0.19	0.20
White share (%)	0.55	0.35	0.58	0.62	0.56	0.55	0.56	0.56	0.60	0.55	0.59	0.54	0.57
BA (%)	0.07	0.04	0.14	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.08	0.08
Income (\$)	\$39,423	\$45,087	\$44,839	\$46,462	\$41,645	\$45,501	\$43,498	\$39,634	\$42,939	\$38,445	\$48,088	\$47,728	\$44,699
Poverty (%)	0.25	0.22	0.24	0.20	0.24	0.25	0.23	0.26	0.25	0.24	0.22	0.22	0.23
Homeownership (%)	0.10	0.21	0.20	0.23	0.17	0.23	0.20	0.20	0.18	0.11	0.23	0.23	0.21
Home value (\$)	\$133,481	\$120,019	\$108,408	\$107,992	\$99,951	\$99,267	\$107,093	\$95,658	\$104,726	\$109,394	\$133,681	\$108,024	\$101,844
Gross rent (\$)	\$651	\$748	\$684	\$701	\$700	\$732	\$663	\$642	\$663	\$611	\$741	\$768	\$676

Sources: 1970, 1980, and 1990 Decennial Censuses.

Notes: AAPI = Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander; BA = share with a bachelor's degree. This donor pool has 244 placebos. Dollar values are adjusted for inflation and are reported as 2017 values.

Outcomes

The City Heights Initiative's approach of relocation, demolition, and new construction of community facilities, retail, office space, and mixed-income housing, coupled with considerable funding for local schools, youth programming, and social services, signify a large and sustained investment for a relatively small number of families. This study tests the hypothesis that these investments caused observable changes to the neighborhood, specifically that the intervention led to a smaller population because of displacement, changes in racial and ethnic composition, lower poverty rates and higher incomes, higher educational attainment, higher homeownership rates, and higher property values. The initiative could well have had effects for youth and families who subsequently left the neighborhood. This research finds, however, that apart from population gains, there is limited evidence of effects on the community according to the metrics studied here.

Starting with population trends, the target area did show evidence of considerable and sustained growth above that of the counterfactual. The area grew immediately after the initiative began (from 1990 to 2000), even though the City Heights Initiative demolished and relocated residents in support of the Urban Village. Growth in the target area eclipsed that of the synthetic control, and by 2015–19, the area had over 6,000 more people per square mile than the estimate for the synthetic control. As indicated by the root mean square prediction error statistic, just 6 percent of tracts in the donor pool experienced changes greater than the target area relative to their synthetic controls. The analysis indicates that the City Heights Initiative led to significant and sizable increased population levels above that which would have been experienced absent the intervention.

In addition to the root mean square prediction error calculation, a helpful way to understand whether the intervention had an impact on a given outcome is to visualize the difference between the target area and its synthetic control and to do the same for each placebo, again pretending that it was the treated unit. These differences are shown in figure 2. The vertical dark gray line signifies the last pretreatment observation, in 1990. The blue line is the difference between the City Heights target area and its synthetic control. A difference close to zero *before* the treatment indicates good pretreatment fit. As can be seen in the figure in the postintervention period, the City Heights target area (the blue line) is among the communities with the highest population increases relative to its synthetic control estimate.

Did those population trends differ by race or ethnicity? Much of the City Heights target area's population growth was caused by a rising Latino population. Whereas 37 percent of target-area residents reported they were Latino in 1990, that share rose to 71 percent by 2015–19. This

increase is 26 percentage points higher than the estimates for the synthetic control and appears to be close to but not statistically significant according to the root mean square prediction error calculation. This finding is also demonstrated visually in figure 2.

The share of neighborhood residents that identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander has remained fairly steady over time; this figure was 17 percent in 1990 and 13 percent in 2015–19. There is not a statistically significant change. The share of target-area residents reporting they were Black rose from 1 percent in 1970 to 19 percent in 1990, before declining again to 7 percent in 2015–19. This is 8 percentage points below the estimates for the synthetic control, but again we cannot distinguish these changes from the average change based on the root mean square prediction error calculation.

A high share of residents of the City Heights target area reported they were white in 1970,²¹ but white households began leaving the neighborhood in substantial numbers after that point. By 1980, 60 percent of residents reported they were white, and by 1990, shortly before the intervention began, just 27 percent of residents reported they were white. The share of residents reporting they were white continued to decline to just 7 percent by 2015–19. This is 18 percentage points below the estimates for the synthetic control, but we also cannot distinguish these changes from the average change based on the root mean square prediction error calculation.

In comparison with national trends, college education rates have remained low in the target area. Eight percent of residents had a bachelor's degree in 1990, and 11 percent did in 2015–19. (Over this time, the share of US adults with a bachelor's degree increased by 12 percentage points, from 20 to 32 percent.) Examining root mean square prediction error calculations from synthetic control analysis of the target area and the placebos does not indicate the target area led to higher- or lower-than-average college education rates.

As with college, average annual incomes in the target area were virtually unchanged from 1990 to 2015–19 (\$42,000 and \$43,000 respectively, adjusting for inflation). The estimated average income of the synthetic control increased from \$43,000 to \$62,000 over this time, but we cannot distinguish these changes from the average change based on the root mean square prediction error calculation.

Similar to income, we see virtually no change in poverty rates from 1990 to 2015–19 (34 and 30 percent). The synthetic control's poverty rate decreased from 34 percent to 27 percent over this time. The trends in poverty rates also are also not statistically significant.

Homeownership rates have remained low in the target area, falling from 7 percent in 1990 to 4 percent in 2015–19. The estimated homeownership rate for the synthetic control increased from 7

percent to 13 percent, but again, these trends are not statistically significant according to the root mean square prediction error calculation.

Average inflation-adjusted home values was unchanged from 1990 to 2015–19. We see no difference in this outcome relative to the same calculation for the placebos (table 4 and figure 2). Finally, the findings of average monthly rents show no effect caused by the initiative. From 1990 to 2015–19, inflation-adjusted rents rose by \$165 for the target area versus a similar amount (\$217) for the synthetic control estimate. This change is not statistically significant according to the root mean square prediction error calculation, and as visualized in figure 2, the difference between the target area and its synthetic control estimate is in the middle of the similar calculation for all placebo tracts.

TABLE 4

City Heights Initiative Outcomes

Panel A

Year	Population Density				AAPI Population Share				Black Population Share			
	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE
1970	12,230	12,140			0.03	0.03			0.01	0.00		
1980	14,253	14,155			0.06	0.06			0.12	0.12		
1990	21,956	21,833			0.17	0.17			0.19	0.18		
2000	26,635	23,475	3,160	0.07	0.19	0.16	0.02	0.32	0.09	0.19	-0.10	0.18
2010	24,486	21,918	2,568	0.21	0.19	0.18	0.02	0.52	0.06	0.15	-0.09	0.31
2011	24,018	20,762	3,256	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.01	0.93	0.05	0.16	-0.11	0.26
2012	24,667	20,373	4,294	0.11	0.17	0.16	0.02	0.70	0.06	0.15	-0.09	0.32
2013	26,538	20,768	5,770	0.08	0.17	0.15	0.02	0.55	0.05	0.16	-0.11	0.26
2014	27,693	21,719	5,973	0.06	0.16	0.15	0.01	0.84	0.08	0.16	-0.08	0.38
2015	27,805	20,880	6,925	0.04	0.14	0.16	-0.01	0.67	0.07	0.16	-0.09	0.34
2016	27,323	20,061	7,262	0.04	0.15	0.15	-0.01	0.85	0.08	0.16	-0.08	0.37
2017	29,224	20,316	8,908	0.03	0.15	0.15	0.00	0.88	0.09	0.16	-0.08	0.42
2018	27,965	19,952	8,013	0.04	0.13	0.16	-0.03	0.38	0.10	0.16	-0.06	0.49
2019	27,915	21,556	6,359	0.06	0.13	0.16	-0.03	0.45	0.07	0.16	-0.08	0.36

Panel B

Year	Latino Population Share				White Population Share				BA			
	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE
1970	0.19	0.19			0.77	0.77			0.06	0.06		
1980	0.21	0.21			0.60	0.59			0.08	0.08		
1990	0.37	0.37			0.27	0.27			0.08	0.08		
2000	0.61	0.47	0.14	0.17	0.07	0.22	-0.15	0.10	0.04	0.09	-0.05	0.34
2010	0.61	0.46	0.15	0.34	0.11	0.26	-0.16	0.34	0.10	0.16	-0.06	0.57
2011	0.67	0.48	0.19	0.25	0.10	0.23	-0.14	0.42	0.09	0.17	-0.08	0.46
2012	0.66	0.48	0.18	0.27	0.09	0.24	-0.15	0.38	0.09	0.17	-0.08	0.55
2013	0.70	0.47	0.23	0.18	0.07	0.23	-0.16	0.32	0.09	0.16	-0.07	0.53
2014	0.69	0.45	0.23	0.17	0.06	0.23	-0.16	0.36	0.11	0.17	-0.07	0.58
2015	0.71	0.44	0.27	0.13	0.06	0.24	-0.18	0.33	0.10	0.17	-0.07	0.53

Year	Latino Population Share				White Population Share				BA			
	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE
2016	0.70	0.44	0.26	0.15	0.06	0.24	-0.18	0.34	0.10	0.18	-0.08	0.51
2017	0.71	0.44	0.27	0.14	0.05	0.25	-0.20	0.25	0.10	0.18	-0.09	0.46
2018	0.70	0.44	0.27	0.13	0.06	0.25	-0.19	0.31	0.10	0.19	-0.09	0.47
2019	0.71	0.45	0.26	0.12	0.07	0.25	-0.18	0.34	0.11	0.19	-0.08	0.55

Panel C

Year	Income				Poverty Status				Homeownership			
	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE
1970	\$41,093	\$41,292			0.18	0.18			0.14	0.15		
1980	\$34,710	\$34,897			0.22	0.22			0.10	0.10		
1990	\$42,466	\$42,715			0.34	0.34			0.07	0.07		
2000	\$36,377	\$49,750	-\$13,373	0.12	0.43	0.31	0.12	0.13	0.06	0.12	-0.07	0.16
2010	\$43,190	\$53,545	-\$10,355	0.45	0.27	0.27	0.00	0.97	0.05	0.18	-0.13	0.17
2011	\$41,336	\$54,831	-\$13,494	0.36	0.29	0.27	0.02	0.89	0.03	0.17	-0.14	0.12
2012	\$38,753	\$54,334	-\$15,581	0.25	0.31	0.29	0.01	0.90	0.04	0.16	-0.13	0.13
2013	\$37,640	\$53,974	-\$16,335	0.26	0.30	0.31	-0.01	0.87	0.04	0.16	-0.11	0.17
2014	\$36,638	\$52,633	-\$15,996	0.26	0.36	0.30	0.06	0.62	0.04	0.15	-0.11	0.15
2015	\$35,886	\$52,237	-\$16,351	0.27	0.36	0.31	0.06	0.63	0.04	0.14	-0.10	0.16
2016	\$35,479	\$54,041	-\$18,562	0.23	0.37	0.30	0.07	0.51	0.04	0.14	-0.10	0.15
2017	\$39,182	\$56,288	-\$17,107	0.36	0.36	0.29	0.08	0.52	0.04	0.15	-0.11	0.15
2018	\$41,770	\$59,475	-\$17,705	0.34	0.35	0.28	0.07	0.59	0.04	0.14	-0.10	0.19
2019	\$43,055	\$61,984	-\$18,929	0.33	0.30	0.27	0.03	0.79	0.04	0.14	-0.10	0.20

Panel D

Year	Home Value				Gross Rent			
	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE
1970	\$90,543	\$90,636			\$608	\$614		
1980	\$150,549	\$150,452			\$752	\$760		
1990	\$159,351	\$159,956			\$919	\$929		
2000	\$142,458	\$146,695	-\$4,236	0.90	\$754	\$870	-\$116	0.22

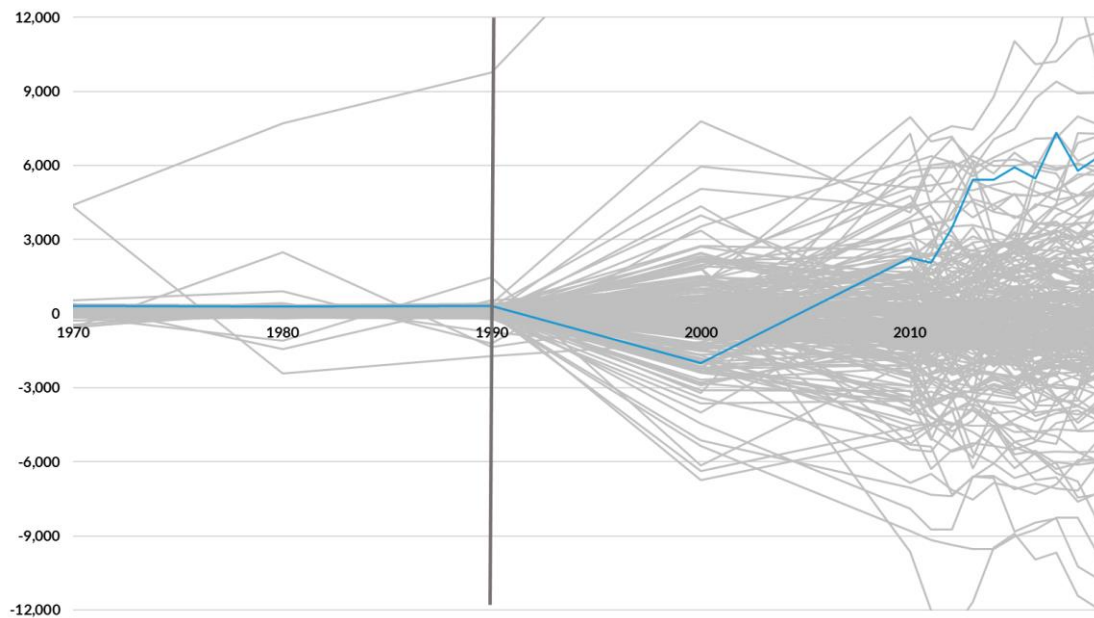
Year	Home Value				Gross Rent			
	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE	Target area	Synthetic control	Diff.	RMSPE
2010	\$380,462	\$343,324	\$37,138	0.70	\$1,060	\$1,039	\$21	0.85
2011	\$391,015	\$316,905	\$74,110	0.44	\$1,088	\$1,077	\$11	0.95
2012	\$289,956	\$279,547	\$10,409	0.91	\$1,045	\$1,075	-\$30	0.79
2013	\$284,346	\$255,959	\$28,387	0.77	\$1,033	\$1,046	-\$14	0.95
2014	\$347,435	\$244,453	\$102,982	0.30	\$1,040	\$1,046	-\$6	0.97
2015	\$188,881	\$255,499	-\$66,618	0.52	\$995	\$1,036	-\$40	0.79
2016	\$166,987	\$261,049	-\$94,062	0.34	\$989	\$1,051	-\$62	0.69
2017	\$320,354	\$281,286	\$39,068	0.74	\$1,065	\$1,106	-\$41	0.78
2018	\$320,912	\$302,405	\$18,507	0.86	\$1,087	\$1,138	-\$51	0.77
2019	\$159,833	\$320,196	-\$160,363	0.22	\$1,084	\$1,146	-\$62	0.71

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Notes: AAPI = Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander; BA = share with a bachelor's degree; RMSPE = root mean square prediction error. This donor pool has 244 placebos. The American Community Survey five-year estimates are labeled according to the last year in the series. RMSPE is the share of placebo synthetic control estimates with a root mean square prediction error greater than the target area in that year. Dollar values are adjusted for inflation and are reported as 2017 values.

FIGURE 2A

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for Population Density



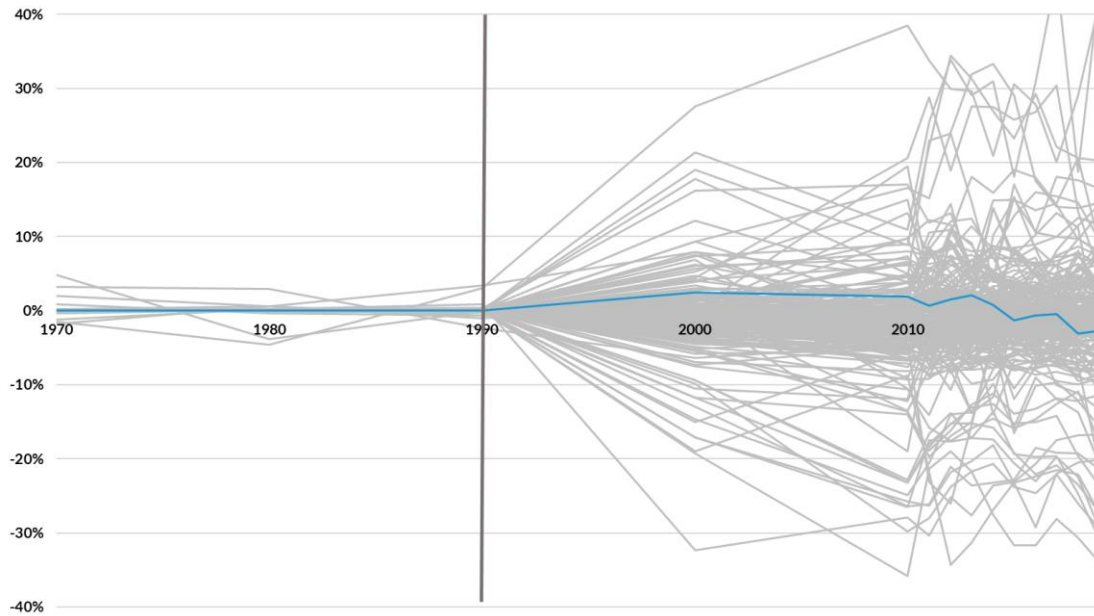
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2B

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for the AAPI Population Share



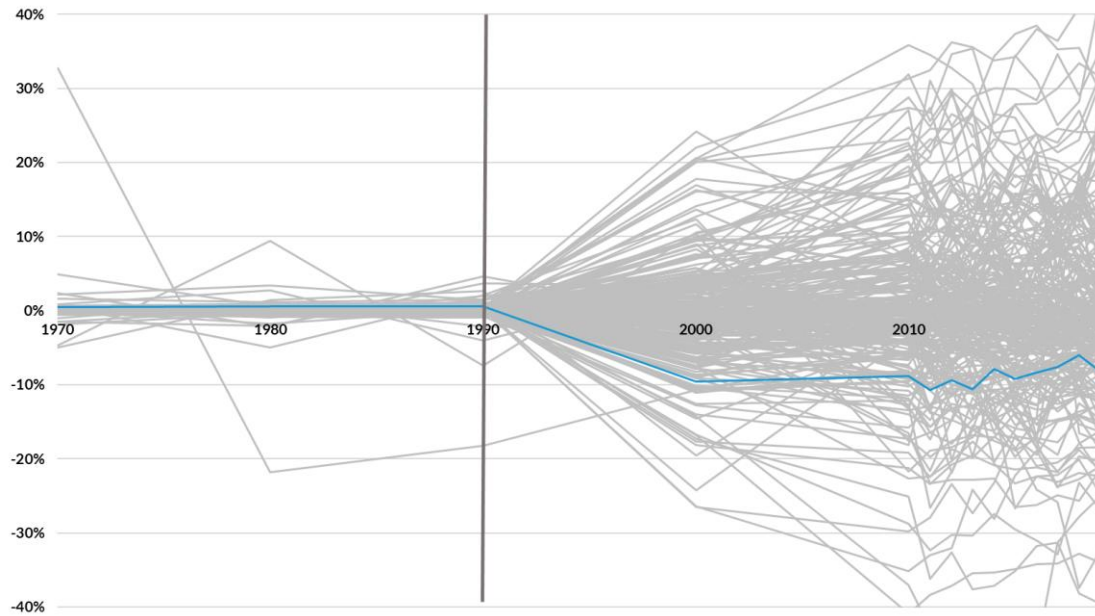
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: AAPI = Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander. Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2C

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for the Black Population Share



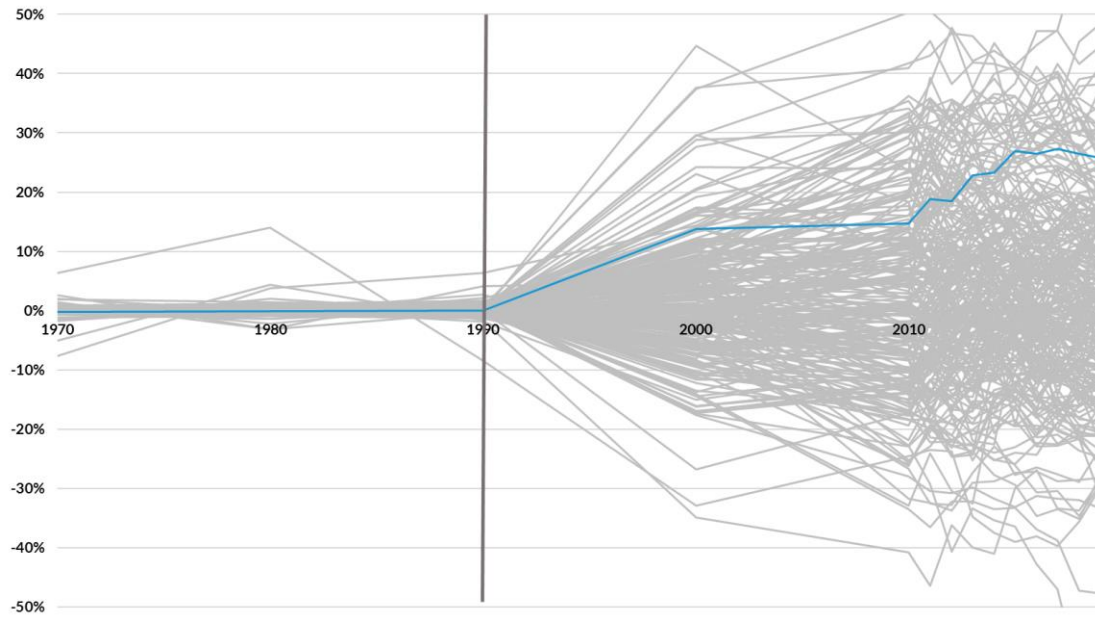
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2D

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for the Latino Population Share



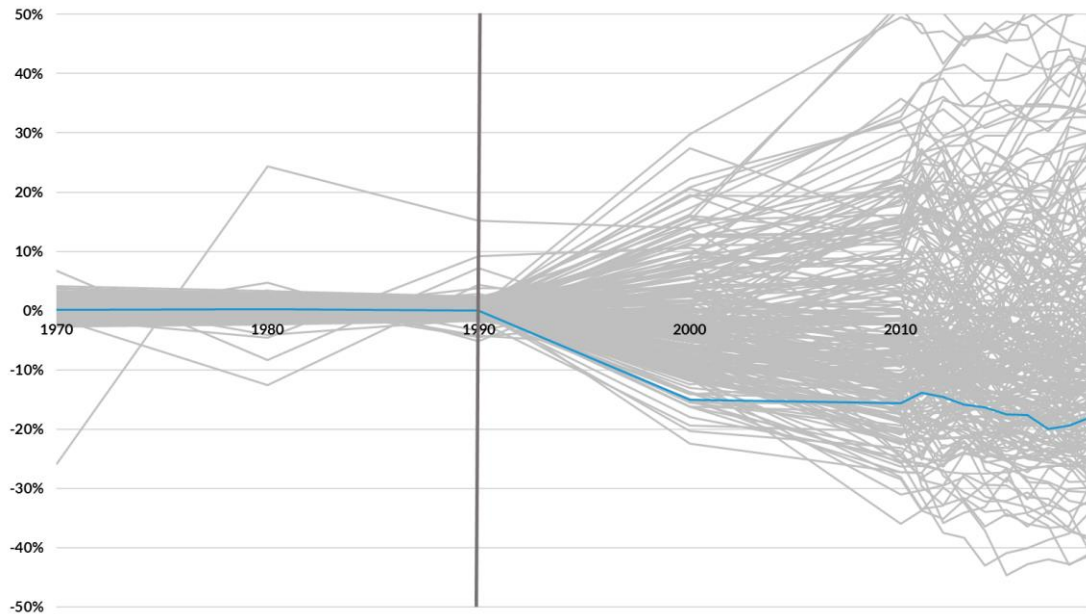
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2E

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for the White Population Share



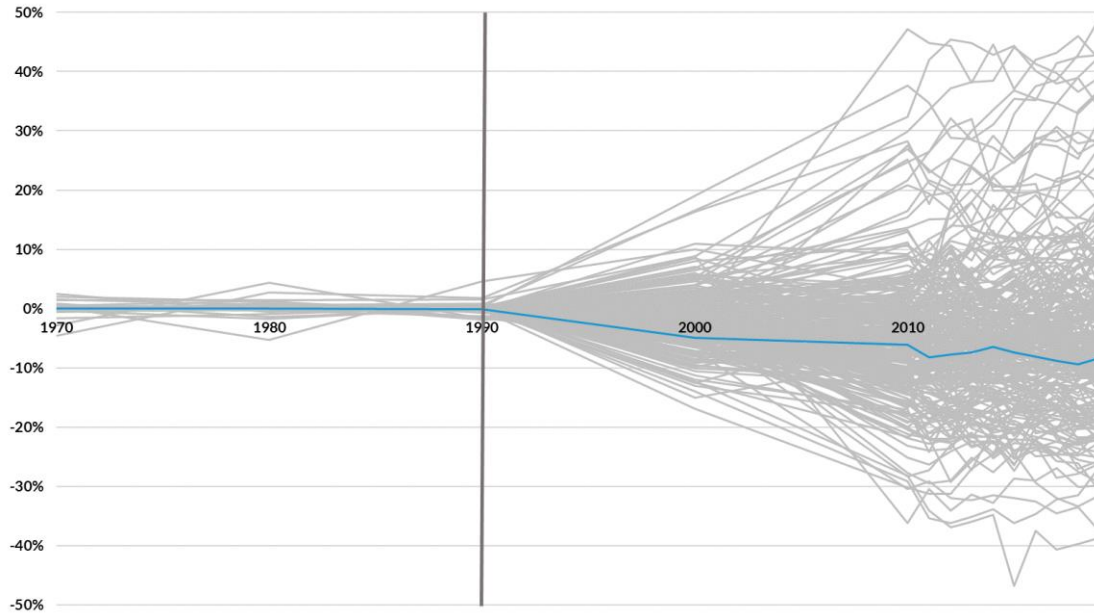
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2F

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for the Share of Residents with a Bachelor's Degree



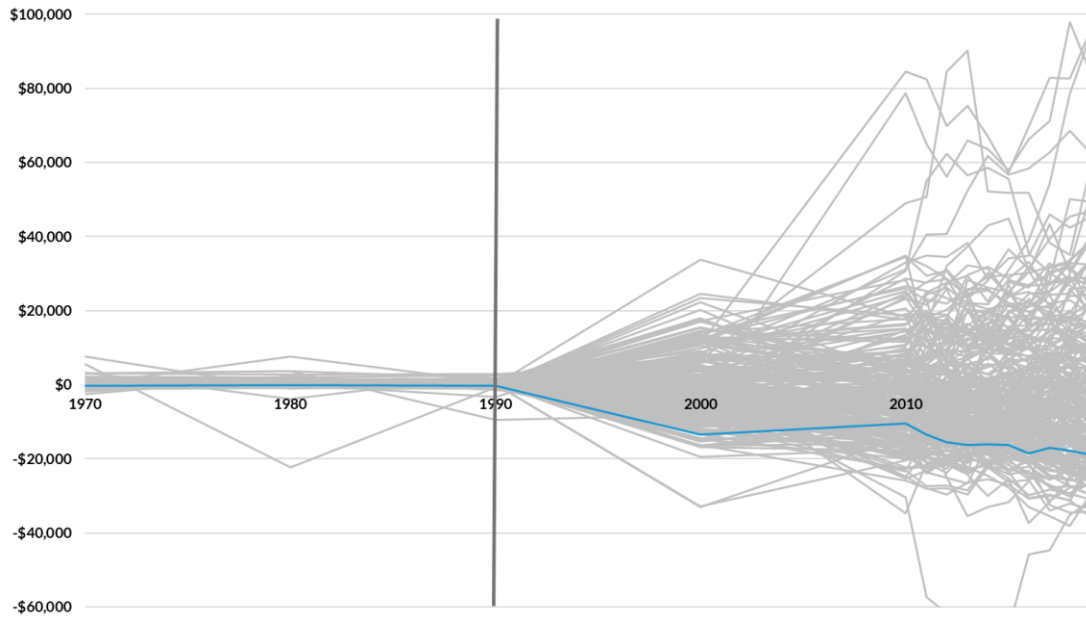
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2G

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for Income



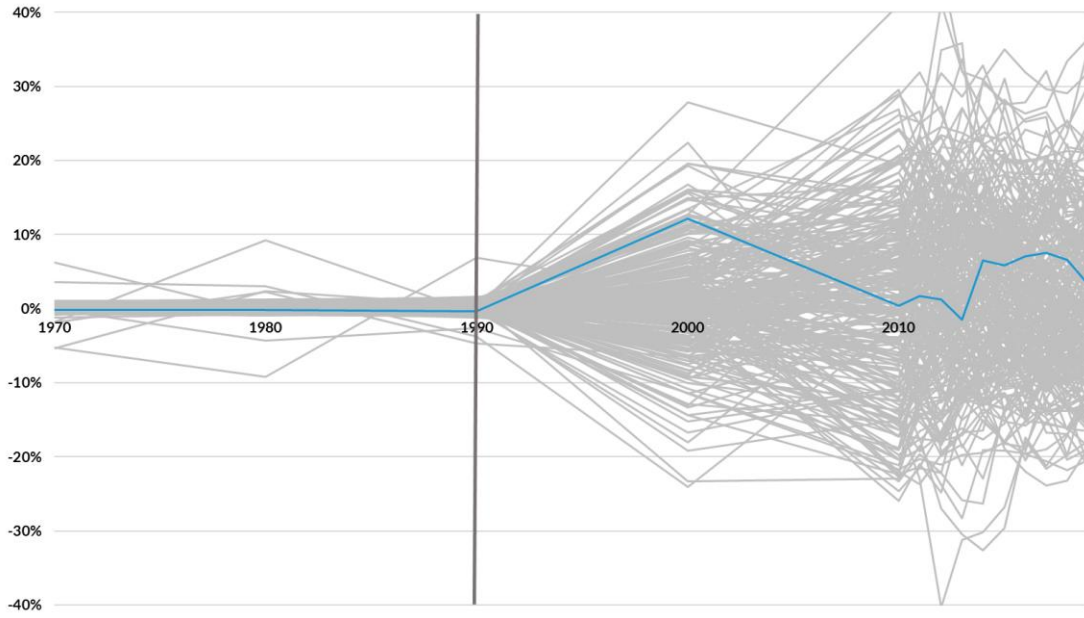
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2H

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for the Share of Residents Living in Poverty



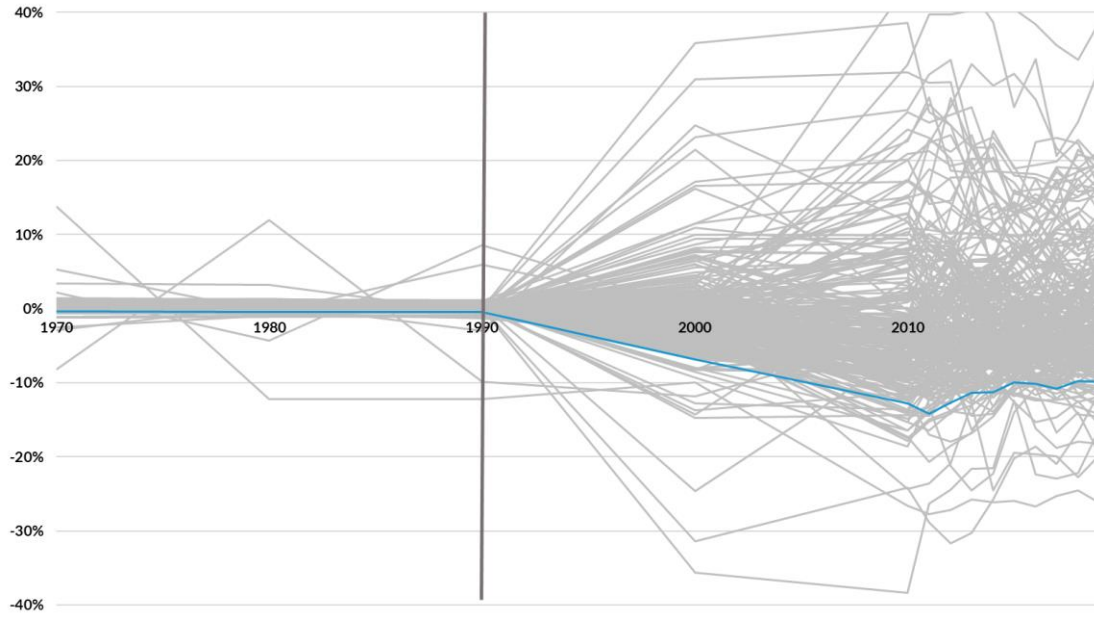
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2I

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for the Homeownership Rate



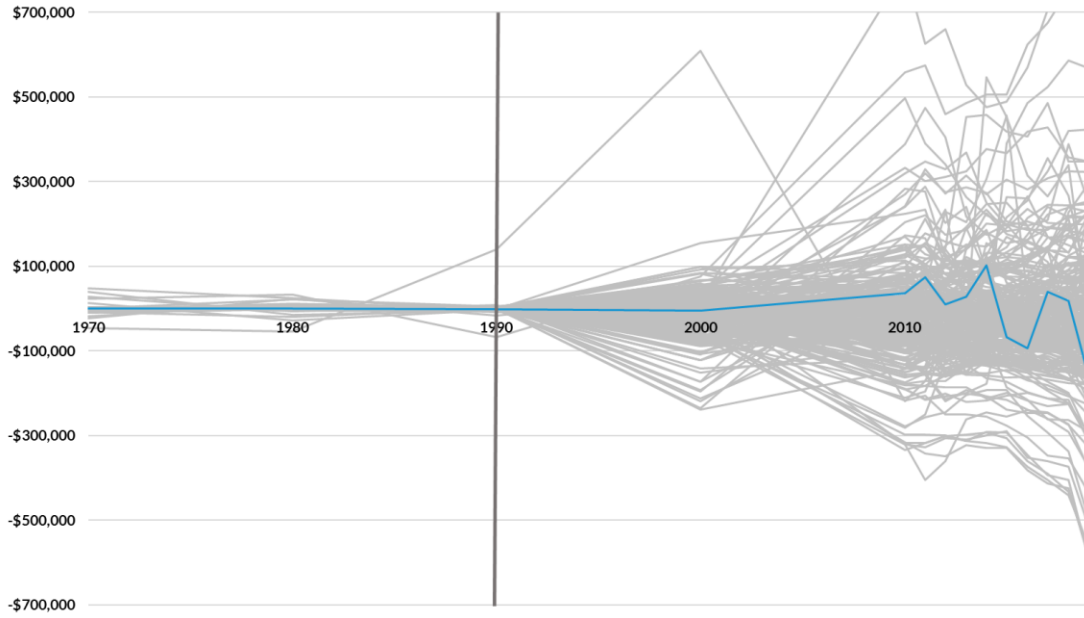
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2J

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for Home Values



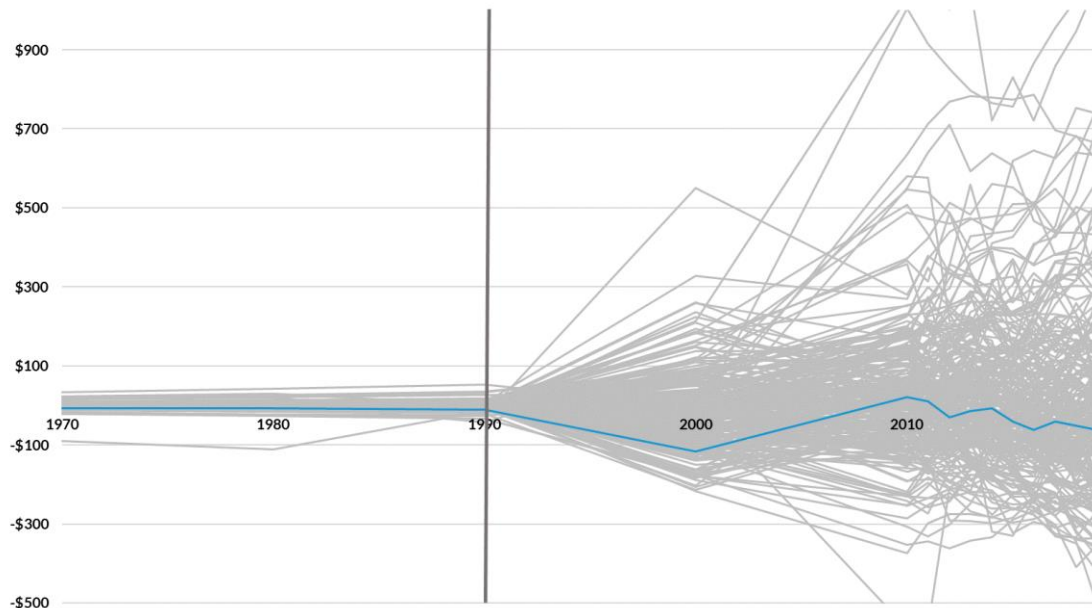
URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

FIGURE 2K

City Heights Initiative Outcomes for Gross Rents



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses and 2006–10 through 2015–19 American Community Surveys.

Note: Figure indicates differences between the target area and its synthetic control (blue line) and each placebo and their synthetic controls (gray lines).

Discussion

Social reformers have been motivated for many years to upgrade neighborhoods of economic exclusion. Recognizing the complexity of the challenges involved, a wave of initiatives is seeking to revitalize neighborhoods in ways that are more comprehensive and sustained than in previous eras. These initiatives typically address neighborhoods in both their built environment and human fabric—social, familial, educational, and occupational characteristics. They involve partners from multiple sectors.

Neighborhood renewal is an oft-discussed objective among policymakers and philanthropists. Witness the creation of Opportunity Zones, Choice Neighborhoods, and Promise Neighborhoods at the federal level in the past decade. Neighborhood renewal has appeal despite a surprisingly limited number of case studies of successful revitalization across the US. The number of sustained, intensive, localized revitalization efforts is perhaps just three dozen (Ferris and Hopkins 2015; Kubisch et al. 2010; Martinez-Cosio and Bussell 2013; Turner et al. 2014).

Challenges to Revitalization

That sustained, intensive neighborhood revitalization is often discussed but infrequently tried reflects the weighty challenges involved. Selecting one area to receive outsized public-sector investment is hard in a democracy and especially in one with racial prejudice. This is made more complex as initiatives often need to continue through successive local and gubernatorial administrations, each of which may articulate new areas of priority.

Philanthropy has fewer constraints and can provide the patient backstop needed for a successful initiative. But few philanthropies have pockets deep enough to support a revitalization effort over time, and few are willing to invest deeply in one area, preferring to spread resources more broadly. Anchor institutions such as universities and hospitals represent likely candidates, and we can point to meaningful examples of local engagement, but they, too, have bottom lines and institutional priorities, which are not always in line with those of local residents (Perry and Wiewel 2005).

Neighborhood revitalization is also difficult because change is hard (Bouton 2014). So, too, for residents that initiatives seek to help by getting them to college, helping them obtain a high-paying job, or building emergency savings. Whether in workforce training, financial education, homelessness services, or addiction treatment, program evaluations indicate that even the most well-designed and implemented efforts struggle to help individuals and households facing multiple barriers. Change is often moderate and incremental. Structural elements such as racism prevent or slow progress. Revitalization initiatives are working in communities facing these same structural obstacles and with the same human service programmatic elements that have mixed results—mentoring, coaching, case management, apprenticeships, tutoring, savings incentives, and the like.

If person-centered investments are challenging to translate into neighborhood-level gains, so are physical investments. Changes to a neighborhood's built environment can appear more straightforward than social changes. And such changes can be well justified. Inadequate housing, abandoned commercial strips, and antiquated schools communicate to residents that they are of little value. But improved buildings, streets, and parks may not improve lives or livelihoods, as the theory of change is not always immediate or clear.

Even with “bricks and sticks” investments by comprehensive community initiatives, it is hard to attract market-driven investment. It is more likely that an initiative fails to attract enough market investment than attracts too much. When public- and philanthropic-sector resources run dry, market forces may still not be ready to invest. (See, for example, the failed revitalization work in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood in Baltimore [Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2017].) For a

neighborhood to function well, it should be integrated into the broader regional labor, transit, and housing markets.

Revitalization efforts may, however, prove too successful in attracting market-rate investment. Appreciating home prices and rents may displace the residents the initiative sought to aid. But even if residents can remain in the neighborhood as it upgrades, losses of political and social capital balance against potential gains to public safety or education quality. The evidence on the effects of gentrification is still growing, but some authors are skeptical of the benefits of the proximity of high-income residents for low-income ones (Chaskin and Joseph 2015; Hyra 2015).

Revitalization is further challenged by the reality that people are highly mobile. One study of a cross-site neighborhood change effort *without* significant relocation still found that 57 percent of residents had left within three years (Coulton, Theodos, and Turner 2012). Residents may not remain to benefit from neighborhood improvements. Conversely, residents who see their economic standing improve because of the initiative may move away from a distressed neighborhood, meaning that even if services have their desired effect, it may not be possible to observe changes in neighborhood poverty or employment levels.

Summarizing Findings

Despite these challenges, simply keeping an initiative operating might be considered a notable achievement. But the community developers who started the initiative had other goals in mind, and it is against these objectives that an initiative must be weighed.

Are the results observed in this study encouraging or disappointing? There are elements of both. The City Heights Initiative caused significant population increases. The neighborhood's economic standing, whether measured by incomes, poverty rates, home values, or rents, was little changed relative to the counterfactual.

It is evident that, on one hand, the intervention has little by way of neighborhood change to show for more than 25 years of place-based investments. On the other hand, the initiative may indeed be a compelling success story of making people-centric investments, especially in children and youth, and building community facilities and amenities that improve quality of life while not pricing out the residents it hopes to benefit. It is possible that the City Heights community functioned as a “launchpad” neighborhood (Coulton, Theodos, and Turner 2012) with successive waves of new residents joining the neighborhood, benefiting from it, and moving away, leaving the economics of the place unchanged as they are replaced by newcomers.

Elements of Success

In learning from the City Heights Initiative and others like it, what factors are useful to consider for future revitalization initiatives? I explore 10 thematic and emergent findings.

Resident mobility and benefits from the redevelopment. Not everyone gains equally from government and nonprofit services and support, especially ones as complex as those offered by comprehensive community interventions, but one key measuring stick for community revitalization is how it has benefited the residents living there before the initiative began. This neighborhood-level study is not directly set up to answer the question, but it does document that significant relocation occurred and populations have shifted significantly over the life of the City Heights Initiative. Not all families may want to or be able to return to the redeveloped neighborhood, but having a strong theory of change for how all residents can benefit is an important first step in designing a successful initiative.

Committed local partners. Comprehensive community initiatives require strong local partners who are committed over the long term. As was true for the case study here, ideally multiple partners will be invested in the effort, including philanthropic and local political power structures. Initiatives can benefit from a local anchor institution that cannot leave the area. These institutions are less likely to lose interest in revitalization.

Sufficient scale. The City Heights Initiative invested multiple hundreds of millions of dollars and is not complete. Successful neighborhood revitalization is expensive. Replacing a single multistory building can cost tens of millions of dollars or more, and many communities have entire blocks that require attention. Not all resources need to be philanthropic, as market-rate tenants and buyers can help. Human services are expensive as well, if they are done in a manner that is sufficiently robust and of high quality. Achieving financial contributions from multiple parties is a must for a sustained initiative. Even an initiative backed by a wealthy individual and foundation relied on public-sector and other philanthropic funding. A school system paid costs to run a new school. Significant additional funding beyond that normally accessed by the neighborhood was required.

Resident decisionmaking and buy-in. Full buy-in does not appear to have been present at the beginning of the City Heights Initiative, but neither was it the case that the initiative faced sustained opposition from residents. The most controversial element of the initiative related to relocation and the perception that it has caused gentrification—the latter point not confirmed by this research. One challenge is that there is frequently heterogeneity of views in neighborhoods, so residents may not speak with one voice (nor should they be expected to). But it is possible for future initiatives to engage residents more deeply in design thinking before the intervention is formed and

over time with genuine leadership and initiative-shaping opportunities. As results become evident, trust can grow, but building platforms for sharing power will do far more than promises will do, as many initiatives seek to work in areas that have legacies of broken promises.

A long time horizon. The City Heights Initiative is notable in the length of time it has been working toward the same set of neighborhood outcomes. Future initiatives will need to recognize that it takes considerable time to change a community. Ten years will likely not be enough. It will be better to think about a 20- or 30-year time horizon.

Human services. The City Heights Initiative used human service supports. It will be necessary to conduct more person-level longitudinal studies to assess whether and how such supports benefited residents. But we do see that given mobility patterns, human services may not necessarily translate into neighborhood-level impacts. Conversely, if an initiative wishes to improve the livelihoods and well-being of incumbent residents, it is logical to conclude, as this initiative did, that a successful strategy will require bringing in high-quality service providers to the neighborhood, especially to help with employment, finances, housing, and mental and physical health. Also, initiatives will need to develop strong referral networks to send residents to high-quality providers outside the target area (but that are still accessible to it). This study could not tease apart the effects of some services versus others, but there is ample design and implementation failure in providing human services, so successful initiatives will need to incorporate tested strategies with high-performing organizations.

Built environment. The City Heights Initiative made notable changes to the physical makeup of the neighborhood it sought to improve, building or supporting the development of stores, office space, housing, and recreational facilities. Improvements to the built environment will be needed alongside the services, given prior disinvestment.

Proximity to market strength. The City Heights Initiative had some proximity to areas of greater market strength. Proximity to areas of market strength can help attract follow-on market investment. The sums required to revitalize an area can exceed the total of public and philanthropic funding available, creating a need for market capital. Of course, market strength can lead to gentrification pressures. Inflation-adjusted housing prices have risen appreciably in City Heights (just not in a way that is beyond that of the counterfactual). As such, it may well be that a city and metropolitan area's broader market strength matters as well. In weak or declining areas, local revitalization initiatives may struggle to achieve their aims, or such efforts may require additional public and philanthropic capital relative to scarce market capital.

Retaining control of land. A lot can change in the 20 to 30 years that a comprehensive community initiative is active. This was the case in San Diego. Even though the initiative did not

increase home values and rents, housing affordability is a growing issue. Maintaining control of land can be an effective tool to preserve affordability if a neighborhood becomes attractive to investors. Community land trusts or long-term deed restrictions can preserve affordability over successive generations of homeowners and renters and can be used for commercial properties, too (Theodos et al. 2019).

Adaptations. The City Heights Initiative adapted along the way. Few could have foreseen the shape of the past 25 years in City Heights. Thankfully, the initiative has built strong local partnerships and adjusted its strategy along the way. Strategies will need to continue to adapt to changes (or a lack thereof) on the ground.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

Community revitalization initiatives can vary widely in their local context and need, institutional strength, actors involved, resources committed, and strategies adopted. This research has advanced what is known about the effects of an initiative on local economic, demographic, and housing conditions, but many initiatives have not been studied in this manner, and this research leaves unanswered several additional questions. Areas for further research are as follows:

1. The field could benefit from additional quantitative case studies of other revitalization initiatives and their effects on local areas. It would be helpful to explore other geographies with different demographic and economic conditions, with different regional structures, and in different macroeconomic cycles. Local effects would then ideally be empirically related to the interventions' approaches, dosages, and starting points.
2. It would also be possible to conduct an analysis similar to this one on tracts adjacent to those targeted by comprehensive community initiatives. Such research would show how effects decay across space.
3. Future work can explore relevant outcomes not able to be included in this study. This might include factors relevant to crime, education, college enrollment, access to medical care, parks and recreational facilities, grocery stores, or other retail options. These data can be challenging to collect, but for some, coverage has improved in recent years, so initiatives that began after the one studied here may be more promising for assessment along these lines. Additionally, if accessing data for multiple cities in comparable ways is difficult (as with, for example, crime statistics), it would still be possible to use a single city or county to create the donor pool and assess the impact of an initiative in that way.
4. This study does not establish whether and how original residents benefited from the revitalization initiatives. Neighborhood-level changes could result from in- and out-

migration, not just changes for residents themselves. And some research shows that mobility is a more important factor in neighborhood-level change than changes in the lives of residents who remain (Coulton, Theodos, and Turner 2012). Additional research is needed to understand whether and how original residents benefit and along which dimensions. Resident tracking studies will likely be required to answer these questions, and such efforts are expensive. Administrative data can sometimes be used for these purposes, as in Reid's forthcoming study of the HOPE SF public housing revitalization effort in San Francisco, though this approach is more possible in settings where residents are part of a system or program that is already tracking resident outcomes.

5. A further area of research concerns the mix of services involved. Additional studies could help establish which service components are most beneficial to residents and how this may vary by subgroup. Such studies can help practitioners and policymakers peer into the “black box” of comprehensive community initiatives. It will be helpful to understand whether any services unlock additive benefits when received in combination than when provided separately. For example, there is growing interest in “two generation” services that pair supports for parents and children, though there is little research that tests the efficacy for these approaches (Lombardi et al. 2014).
6. Practitioners and policymakers could benefit from better understanding the level of resources required to achieve community revitalization and how the resources required may depend on market conditions. Also of use would be a better understanding of tipping points needed for attracting market-rate rather than philanthropic investment.
7. Finally, additional qualitative case study research is called for. Qualitative studies are best positioned to explore what makes for successful implementation and where implementation failure arises. It would be useful to explore how coalitions of support can be sustained and how residents can be engaged in decisionmaking. Also important is research on quantifying levels and thresholds of public investment that will be required to leverage enough private investment.

Conclusions for Policy

Given what is and what is not known about community revitalization initiatives, what should policymakers concerned about neighborhood environments do? A handful of implications emerge from the study's findings. First the City Heights Initiative was not principally driven by the public sector. But it could not have proceeded without robust local, state, and federal funding. With the notable exception of COVID-19 stimulus efforts, we are still in an era of federal austerity, where CDBG funding, for example, has been cut by 80 percent since its peak (Theodos, Stacy, and Ho

2017), and federal resources compose a smaller share of local government spending. An implication then is that to reach more neighborhoods, additional and sustained public resources will be needed.

An additional implication is that philanthropy and anchor institutions can provide the stable backstop needed to change communities over many years, as public officials come and go. But public programs can do more to include mechanisms of resident input and control. These processes are relatively weak in many federal programs. Other conditions, such as mandatory build-back requirements for public housing revitalization funds, can help better ensure incumbent residents benefit from neighborhood investments.

A third implication is that the public sector can do more to lay the groundwork for comprehensive community initiatives. This includes reimagining programs that support neighborhood planning processes. It includes combining financial expertise, human service expertise, community engagement expertise, and management and learning expertise. It also means working to align resources, to include transportation and infrastructure, with local initiatives.

A final implication is that change is hard, takes time, and requires patience. Funding commitments longer than those provided by annual appropriations channels or grant cycles can help create the longevity to accomplish neighborhood change.

Given what we now understand about the importance of neighborhoods for children, and given the examples we can point to where robust revitalization efforts have been created and sustained, these initiatives require deep commitment and must contain the ingredients necessary for success, with a greater emphasis on outcomes for incumbent residents. And many of America's neighborhoods will need smart, entrepreneurial problem solvers who can harness local resources, mobilize philanthropic and public-sector capital, and implement a long-term, patient, adaptive, and robust strategy of community revitalization.

Notes

- ¹ Ken Kramer, "Episode 56," *Ken Kramer's About San Diego*, KPBS, January 24, 2013, <https://video.kpbs.org/video/ken-kramers-about-san-diego-episode-56-thursday-january-24-2013/>.
- ² *The Price of Renewal*, directed by Paul Espinosa (San Diego, Espinosa Productions, 2005), <https://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/51889/The-Price-of-Renewal>.
- ³ *The Price of Renewal*, directed by Paul Espinosa.
- ⁴ Interview with Jennette Shay, January 2019.
- ⁵ Interview with Jennette Shay, January 2019.
- ⁶ The foundation was formerly structured as two organizations: Price Charities, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, and the Price Philanthropies Foundation, a private family foundation.
- ⁷ See the website for School in the Park at <http://schoolinthepark.net/>.
- ⁸ "College Avenue Compact," San Diego State University, accessed February 4, 2021, https://admissions.sdsu.edu/about_sdsu/college_avenue_compact.
- ⁹ "College Avenue Compact," San Diego State University.
- ¹⁰ "College Avenue Compact," San Diego State University.
- ¹¹ See the website for Cardinals Interact at <http://cardinalsinteract.org/> and "Interact-Hoover," San Diego Rotary, accessed February 4, 2021, <https://www.sandiegorotary.club/committees/interact-hoover/>.
- ¹² "Charting Success: Cardinals Interact Program by the Numbers," Price Philanthropies, Cardinals Interact, accessed February 4, 2021, <http://cardinalsinteract.org/about-us/charting-success/>.
- ¹³ Interview with Jennette Shay, July 2019.
- ¹⁴ Interview with Jennette Shay, July 2019.
- ¹⁵ Interview with Jennette Shay, July 2019.
- ¹⁶ Tarryn Mento, "City Heights Nearly Tops List of Hottest Zip Codes for County Home Sales," KPBS, November 9, 2017, <https://www.kpbs.org/news/2017/nov/09/city-heights-nearly-tops-list-hottest-zip-codes-co/>.
- ¹⁷ *The Price of Renewal*, directed by Paul Espinosa.
- ¹⁸ Interview with Jennette Shay, January 2019.
- ¹⁹ Interview with Jennette Shay, January 2019.
- ²⁰ I calculate this using Galiani and Quistorff's `synth_runner` Stata package (Galiani and Quistorff 2017).
- ²¹ The 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses capture white non-Hispanic as race and ethnicity; the 1970 Decennial Census captures only white (i.e., both Hispanic and non-Hispanic).

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