

# Family Mobility and Neighborhood Change

New Evidence and  
Implications for  
Community Initiatives

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## THE *MAKING CONNECTIONS* RESEARCH PROGRAM

*Making Connections* (MC) is a decade-long initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, operating on the belief that the best way to improve outcomes for vulnerable children living in tough neighborhoods is to strengthen their families' connections to economic opportunity, positive social networks, and effective services and supports. Launched in 1999, the initiative was implemented in selected low-income neighborhoods in 10 metropolitan areas across the country: Denver, Des Moines, Hartford, Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, Providence, San Antonio, and Seattle.

This paper (see abstract below) is one of a series produced under a program of research on the 10 sites, also sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The program has included major surveys along with analyses of a wide range of relevant census and administrative data files. The program has developed an unusually rich database that permits researchers to examine aspects of neighborhood change that have never been studied (with quantification) in as much depth before. Data about resident families include standard demographic, employment, and income variables, but also a host of other measures seldom available at this level (for example, on asset holdings and debts, public assistance patterns, social linkages, and attitudes about neighborhood conditions and services).

The 10 MC sites are both important (all but one are among the 50 largest U.S. metropolitan areas) and diverse. Their diversity means they offer good examples of the wide range of challenges being faced by local leaders as they try to make headway in improving poor communities today. The stereotypical declining neighborhoods of our older industrial cities (e.g., Louisville, Milwaukee, Indianapolis) remain among the most critical, but they can no longer be said to fully represent America's "urban problem." There are other poor neighborhoods in the East and Midwest that have many similar challenges but where, in addition, expanding immigrant populations (e.g., Des Moines, Hartford, Providence) are shifting the traditional dynamic. And yet other troubled neighborhoods in other regions operate differently, ranging from fairly stable Hispanic communities with severe persistent poverty (e.g., San Antonio) to rapidly growing, racially diverse neighborhoods where extraordinary housing affordability pressures are overlaid on the more traditional barriers to family stability (e.g., Denver, Oakland, Seattle).

### ABSTRACT

Americans change residences frequently. Residential mobility can reflect positive changes in a family's circumstances or be a symptom of instability and insecurity. Mobility may also change neighborhoods as a whole. To shed light on these challenges, this report uses a unique survey conducted for the *Making Connections* initiative. The first component measures how mobility contributed to changes in neighborhoods' composition and characteristics. The second component identifies groups of households that reflect different reasons for moving or staying in place. The final component introduces five stylized models of neighborhood performance: each has implications for low-income families' well-being and for community-change efforts.

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## Foreword

The community-change field has long recognized that residential mobility poses a challenge to our efforts to improve outcomes for low-income families through neighborhood revitalization. Funders, policymakers, and practitioners committed to community-change strategies face the reality that many original residents inevitably move out over the course of a long-term neighborhood development effort. This reality raises a number of significant questions: What are the factors that motivate families to leave or stay in a neighborhood? How does family mobility contribute to neighborhood change? How does residence in a particular neighborhood affect family outcomes—in some cases nurturing success in place, in some cases launching families to opportunity elsewhere, and in some cases locking families in isolation and poverty? Only by understanding the basic dynamics of family mobility and neighborhood change can we craft interventions and policies that promote positive results and prevent spiraling decline for both residents and communities.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation developed the *Making Connections* initiative in 10 cities to improve outcomes for vulnerable children living in tough target neighborhoods by strengthening their families' connections to economic opportunity, positive social networks, and effective services and supports. From the inception of the initiative, the foundation and its local *Making Connections* partners appreciated that we must understand the patterns, rates, drivers, and effects of family mobility to ensure that *Making Connections* served both original residents and newcomers.

An important component of Casey's *Making Connections* initiative is a strong emphasis on collecting and using data on families and neighborhoods for planning, management, and self-assessment. To obtain relevant data unavailable from other sources, the foundation commissioned a household survey in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) and analyzed by a team of researchers led by the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. A key feature of the *Making Connections* survey is that it provides more than a series of snapshots of neighborhood conditions. It also tracks a panel of original residents, even those who moved out of their homes, neighborhoods, and counties over the course of successive three-year follow-up periods.

Using this unique data source, the authors have produced a rich and insightful analysis of a fundamental issue in the community-change field—an issue rarely addressed at least partially because we usually lack the hard data needed to inform a programmatic or policy response. Using the *Making Connections* survey, the authors expand the community-change knowledge base, enabling all of us—policymakers, practitioners, and funders—to do a better job of ensuring that neighborhood-based initiatives promote stronger, better outcomes for the families that move as well as the families that stay, ultimately benefiting the population they were designed to assist: low-income, disadvantaged children and families. For this contribution to the field, the authors have our thanks.

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## Executive Summary

Americans change residences frequently. And mobility rates are higher among low-income households, renters, and younger families. Residential mobility can reflect positive changes in a family's circumstances, such as buying a home for the first time, moving to be close to a new job, or trading up to a larger or better-quality house or apartment. But mobility can also be a symptom of instability and insecurity, with many low-income households making short-distance moves because of problems with landlords, creditors, or housing conditions. Similarly, staying in place sometimes reflects a family's security, satisfaction, and stability with its home and neighborhood surroundings, while in other cases it may reflect that a family lacks the resources to move to better housing or to a preferred neighborhood.

Residential mobility not only affects individual families, but may also change neighborhoods as a whole. Neighborhoods are dynamic, fluid environments; they can change quickly. Despite the importance of neighborhood change and mobility, limited research has disaggregated how neighborhoods change for those who remain in the neighborhood and as a result of the mix of those who leave and join a neighborhood.

To shed new light on these challenges, this report uses a unique survey conducted as part of the 10-neighborhood *Making Connections* initiative. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative is a decade-long effort focused on target neighborhoods in 10 cities: Denver, Des Moines, Hartford, Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, Providence, San Antonio, and White Center (outside Seattle). The target neighborhoods offer a unique and valuable window on the dynamics of low-income, mostly minority neighborhoods nationwide.

This report consists of three components. The first component focuses on how residential mobility contributed to changes over time in the composition and characteristics of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, essentially dividing the overall neighborhood change into changes contributed by households that stayed in the neighborhood versus changes caused by differences between those who joined and those who left. The second component explores the characteristics and changing circumstances of movers, newcomers, and stayers, identifying distinctly different groups of households that reflect different reasons for moving or staying in place. The final component introduces five stylized models of neighborhood performance, each of which has implications for the well-being of low-income families and for community-change efforts.

### Key Findings

- All 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods had high rates of residential mobility. Roughly half the families with children who lived in the neighborhoods at the time of the first survey wave had moved to a new address three years later. However, many of the movers remained nearby.
- Many of these nearby movers may need ongoing help. Residential churning appears to pose a significant challenge in every type of neighborhood. This finding suggests that “housing instability” should be addressed more often in efforts to improve low-income neighborhoods. Vulnerable families

need help along many dimensions, but recent evidence on programs serving chronically homeless people shows that addressing housing instability first can make dealing with other challenges easier.

- A move does not always signal problems. For a substantial share of families, residential mobility represents a positive choice. Across the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, 3 of every 10 movers were “up-and-out” movers, often becoming homeowners in better neighborhoods where they were more satisfied and optimistic.
- High rates of residential mobility mean that measuring gross changes in neighborhood outcomes can be misleading. A decline in a neighborhood’s poverty rate or an increase in its employment rate does not necessarily mean that the well-being of individual residents has improved. In fact, we find that neighborhood change is often the result of mobility—differences between the characteristics of movers and newcomers. In contrast, changes in the economic status of stayers over a three-year period are generally small. Efforts to strengthen neighborhoods should acknowledge both the slow pace of change among stayers and the important role played by the continuous flow of households into and out of neighborhoods.
- Reductions in neighborhood poverty occurred in three neighborhoods, with the biggest improvement occurring in the poorest neighborhoods. Poverty rates declined in one of two ways: through a sizable departure of poor residents or through an influx of better-off households. Increasing neighborhood poverty occurred in only one fashion: stayer households experienced greater poverty and the community absorbed even more poor migrants while losing households that were relatively better off.
- The fact that outcomes improved only slowly (if at all) among families that stayed in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods does not mean that they stayed unwillingly—unable to escape to better neighborhoods. In fact, across the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods, close to half of all stayers were attached to their neighborhoods and positive about their future. A much smaller share of stayers were unambiguously dissatisfied with their neighborhoods, remaining in place primarily because they lacked viable alternatives.
- Evidence and analysis from the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods demonstrate convincingly that the dynamics of residential mobility and neighborhood change pose critical challenges for community-change initiatives. Policymakers and practitioners should avoid the mistake of seeing neighborhoods as static areas where a population of residents waits for services, supports, or opportunities. Instead, community-based interventions must focus on the characteristics and needs of households moving through a neighborhood as well as those of longer-term residents.





# Introduction

Where people live matters. Neighborhood environments have consequences for the families' well-being and their children's long-term life chances. The quality of local public services (particularly schools), the prevalence of crime and violence, the influences of peers and social networks, and the proximity to jobs can all act either to isolate families from social and economic opportunities or to enhance their prospects for the future. A substantial body of social science research finds that growing up in a distressed, high-poverty neighborhood is associated with an increased risk of bad outcomes, including school failure, poor health, delinquency and crime, teen parenting, and joblessness (Ellen and Turner 1997).

## Community-Change Initiatives

The recognition that place matters has led to several generations of community-change initiatives that attempt to address conditions thought to negatively affect families and children in poor neighborhoods. Often led by philanthropy and engaging both public and private partners, these initiatives embody a range of strategies intended to benefit residents directly through improved services and indirectly through strengthening social connectedness or access to resources (Kubisch et al. 2002).

Community building is often an explicit goal of these initiatives. Investments are made in building residents' and organizations' human and social capital, so the community gains the capacity to achieve common goods—changes that will benefit the residents (Chaskin 2001; Chaskin, Joseph, and Chipenda-Dansokho 1997). Neighborhood residents' participation is central to community building: “It works by building community in individual neighborhoods: neighbors learning to rely on each other, working together on concrete tasks that take advantage of new self-awareness of their collective and individual assets and in the process creating human, family, and social capital that provides a new base for a more promising future” (Kingsley, McNeely, and Gibson 1997, 7; McNeely 1999, 742).

The *Making Connections* initiative, conceived and sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, exemplifies these efforts to improve outcomes for families and children by strengthening the communities in which they live. Launched in 1999, *Making Connections* seeks to strengthen families' connections to economic opportunity, positive social networks, and effective services and supports in disinvested communities. The foundation has worked in partnership with residents, community-based organizations, local government, businesses, and social service providers in target neighborhoods in 10 cities across the country. Specific activities and investments vary from neighborhood to neighborhood but are intended both to connect parents to good jobs and asset-building opportunities and to ensure that their young children benefit from better health care, quality early childhood services, and more intensive supports in the early grades.<sup>1</sup>

Both the service-reform and community-building aspects of community-change initiatives assume some degree of residential stability in their target areas. For residents to benefit from improved services and conditions in their neighborhoods, they presumably must have access to them for some minimum period of time. And for capacity building to result in a community that can mobilize to achieve the common good, some stability in emerging leaders and networks is needed. Thus, excessive residential

mobility can be a challenge to the theories of change underlying community-based improvement initiatives (Kubisch et al. 2002).

## Residential Mobility and Neighborhood Change

Last year, about 12 percent of the U.S. population moved to a new address (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2008). And mobility rates are higher among low-income households, renters, and younger families. As a result, distressed neighborhoods frequently experience rates of mobility that exceed the national average. Residential mobility can reflect positive changes in a family's circumstances, such as buying a home for the first time, moving to be close to a new job, or trading up to a larger or better-quality house or apartment. But mobility can also be a symptom of instability and insecurity, with many low-income households making short-distance moves because of problems with landlords, creditors, or housing conditions. Similarly, staying in place sometimes reflects a family's security, satisfaction, and stability with its home and neighborhood surroundings, while in other cases it may reflect that a family lacks the resources to move to better housing or to a preferred neighborhood (Gramlich, Laren, and Sealander 1992; South, Crowder, and Chavez 2005).

Residential mobility not only affects individual families, but may also change the neighborhood as a whole. In particular, very high residential turnover can contribute to the erosion of social control and social capital. Studies have shown a negative effect of residential turnover on a neighborhood's collective efficacy, and this loss has been linked to problems such as crime and delinquency (Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001; Sampson and Raudenbush 1997). Moreover, high residential turnover may itself promote further mobility, as suggested by the link found between residents' desire to move and the perceptions that neighborhood residents move frequently or are not "close knit" (Clark and Ledwith 2006; Lee, Oroposa and Kanan 1994).

If the characteristics and well-being of in-movers differ from those of out-movers, mobility can change a neighborhood's demographic or socioeconomic mix, which in turn can reposition the neighborhood with institutions, resources, and the marketplace (Bruch and Mare 2006). For example, differential mobility into and out of a neighborhood might result in an increasing share of minority residents or new immigrants, rising homeownership rates or incomes, or a growing share of childless residents. The evolving profile of a neighborhood's population can further affect investments by both individuals and institutions through social and political processes that are reinforcing and evolve over time (Temkin and Rohe 1996).<sup>2</sup>

But selective mobility can also maintain a neighborhood's status quo socioeconomic composition, despite changes in individual residents' well-being. For example, if the more successful residents leave a distressed neighborhood and are replaced by others who are less well off, the neighborhood will remain distressed, even though individual households from the neighborhood improved their economic status (Andersson and Bråmån 2004).

The realities of residential mobility and neighborhood change make evaluating community-change initiatives difficult. Interventions may improve services for neighborhood residents or create employment and other opportunities, but needy families might not remain in the same neighborhood long enough to benefit. Alternatively, families may take advantage of the neighborhood's enhanced services and opportunities, and then move *because* they have benefited. And larger structural forces in the surrounding housing market or economy may cause more affluent families to move into a neighborhood, improving its profile without producing any gains in the well-being of low-income residents.

## How Neighborhoods Function for Residents—Stylized Models

Dynamic patterns of residential mobility and neighborhood change may yield big differences in how low-income neighborhoods function for their residents. Here we introduce five stylized models of neighborhood performance, each of which has implications for low-income families' well-being and

for community-change efforts. These models reflect two dimensions of residential mobility: the extent to which flows of families into and out of a low-income neighborhood contribute to changes in its composition and well-being, and the particular mix of characteristics of movers and stayers found in each neighborhood.

In the first model, neighborhoods operate as *incubators*, offering the services, social networks, and supports that low-income families need to thrive as well as the amenities that make them want to remain even when their circumstances improve. Incubator neighborhoods would experience low mobility, attachment and satisfaction among households that remain in place, and gradual improvements in family well-being among those remaining in place as a consequence of economic advancement. Often, community-change initiatives seek to transform distressed neighborhoods into incubators, so that outcomes improve both for long-term residents and for the neighborhood as a whole (Fulbright-Anderson and Auspos 2006).

Alternatively, a low-income neighborhood might benefit low-income families by functioning as a *launch pad* rather than as an incubator. Like an incubator neighborhood, a launch pad offers needed services and supports, enabling residents to advance economically. But as residents achieve greater economic security, they move on to more desirable neighborhoods and are replaced by a new cohort of needy households. Launch pad neighborhoods would experience high mobility, and, even though many residents were making significant individual progress, the neighborhood as a whole would not show any improvement on indicators such as employment, income, or wealth. Past research has shown that neighborhoods which serve as entry points for successive waves of immigrants may function in this way (Borjas 1998).

A previously distressed neighborhood may become a *neighborhood of choice*, with newcomers who are better off economically than either households that remain in place or those who move out. While taken to the extreme this may lead to the eventual displacement of vulnerable residents (sometimes referred to as gentrification), a neighborhood of choice that remains mixed income can be beneficial to the low-income residents who stay. Community-wide outcomes in a neighborhood of choice would improve, and some low-income households might be pushed out by the more advantaged newcomers. If sufficient affordable housing remains, though, this may lead to greater opportunity for the low-income families who remain in a stable mixed-income community. During the 1990s and early 2000s, neighborhoods in many revitalizing cities experienced gentrification and displacement after suffering from decades of distress (Kennedy and Leonard 2001). At the same time, though, some promising efforts to establish mixed-income neighborhoods have gotten underway (Joseph 2006).

Some low-income neighborhoods function as *comfort zones*. Some research has suggested that immigrant enclaves provide needed cultural and social supports for families struggling to get by under difficult economic circumstances (Borjas 1998). Comfort zones would likely exhibit low mobility and minimal gains in residents' well-being. But attachment and satisfaction among both long-term residents and neighborhood newcomers would be high, and residents may benefit from the relative residential stability that surrounds them.

Finally, low-income neighborhoods may isolate their residents from social and economic opportunities, contributing to their economic insecurity and distress. While *isolating neighborhoods* are similar to comfort zones in that residents' economic status is not improving, attachment and satisfaction are low among those who stay or move into these communities. Research literature on poor and distressed neighborhoods frequently documents this model (see, for example, Ellen and Turner 1997), but previous studies did not have the data needed to distinguish among the other models listed here.

## **Purpose and Organization of This Report**

These stylized models illustrate the potential complexity of residential mobility and neighborhood change and the challenges this complexity poses for community-based improvement strategies. To shed new light on these challenges, this report uses a unique survey conducted as part of the 10-neighborhood

*Making Connections* initiative. Information on changes for both neighborhoods and families over a three-year period makes it possible to test the plausibility and usefulness of the five neighborhood models and explore possible implications for the work of community-change initiatives.

More specifically, we have used two waves of household survey data to analyze systematic patterns of residential mobility and its contribution to neighborhood change in each of the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods. This analysis consists of two analytic components, both of which are needed to apply the five models of neighborhood functioning that we have outlined. The first component of the analysis focuses on how residential mobility contributed to changes over time in the composition and characteristics of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, essentially dividing neighborhood change into changes contributed by households that stayed in the neighborhood versus changes caused by differences between those who joined and left the neighborhood. The second analysis zooms in to explore the characteristics and changing circumstances of movers, newcomers, and stayers in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, identifying distinctly different *clusters* of households that reflect different reasons for moving or staying in place.

The remainder of this report details findings from the analysis of these data and discusses implications for policy and practice. The second section introduces the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, including the extent of residential mobility and basic information about family characteristics and where families with children moved. Sections 3 and 4 present findings from the two analysis components: first calculating the components of neighborhood change in poverty, and then exploring the characteristics of movers, newcomers, and stayers. The fifth section applies these findings to test the applicability of the five models of neighborhood functioning and their implications for the planning and evaluation of community initiatives. The final section summarizes key findings and discusses lessons of this work for policy and practice.



## The Making Connections Survey and Neighborhoods

### THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION'S

*Making Connections* initiative is a decade-long effort focused on target neighborhoods in 10 cities: Denver, Des Moines, Hartford, Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, Providence, San Antonio, and White Center (just outside Seattle). These neighborhoods were selected (and their boundaries defined) in partnership with local policymakers and practitioners, and as a consequence, they vary widely in size and composition.<sup>3</sup> The *Making Connections* neighborhoods do not always correspond to what might be considered natural neighborhood boundaries, and three target areas are composed of multiple, noncontiguous neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup> This raises the question, what is a neighborhood? This seemingly simple question does not have an easy answer. A neighborhood is generally defined as a contiguous small geography commonly recognized by residents and outsiders as similar or coherent with respect to people or buildings and as providing a space for social interaction. In this way, neighborhoods contain physical and relational components (Schwirian 1983). Other research on the *Making Connections* neighborhoods suggests that many residents define the boundaries differently, and official boundaries may have little real meaning for families (Coulton, Chan, and Mikelbank 2008).

Neither the *Making Connections* cities nor the target neighborhoods within them were intended to be nationally representative for research. Nonetheless, the 10 cities selected to participate in the initiative reflect considerable diversity in both demographic and economic characteristics. And because the initiative's cross-site household survey provides such rich information, the target neighborhoods

offer a unique and valuable window on the dynamics of low-income, mostly minority neighborhoods nationwide.

Throughout this report, we draw upon and present information about all 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods. But at several points, we discuss selected neighborhoods in greater detail when they provide particularly good examples of the patterns of residential mobility and neighborhood change we observe across all 10. This section begins by providing a brief summary of the *Making Connections* survey methodology followed by a description of all 10 neighborhoods' characteristics, including their socioeconomic composition and the extent of household mobility.

### **Making Connections Survey**

The *Making Connections* cross-site survey provides information about representative samples of households in the initiative's 10 target neighborhoods. Data come from two waves of surveys, with the first wave conducted between 2002 and 2003 (depending on the neighborhood) and the second wave conducted between 2005 and 2007. At wave 1, interviews were conducted at a random sample of residential addresses in each neighborhood. Then at wave 2 researchers returned to the same addresses, interviewing the current occupants, regardless of whether they were the same residents as at wave 1. If the household living at a sampled address had moved by the time of the second survey *and* if the original household had children, it was contacted and interviewed at its new address.<sup>5</sup> At both waves, survey questions covered a wide range of topics, including employment, income,

hardship, community engagement, satisfaction with neighborhood services, and perceptions of neighborhood quality, safety, and social cohesion. This approach makes it possible to measure changes in the composition and well-being of the neighborhoods as well as changes in the location and well-being of families with children who lived in these neighborhoods at baseline.

## Socioeconomic Characteristics

Although all 10 neighborhoods are disadvantaged, they vary considerably in their demographic and economic composition, as table 1 shows. At the time of the first survey wave, the average poverty rate in these neighborhoods was 39 percent, but the 10 neighborhoods were not equally poor. Four neighborhoods had poverty rates above 40 percent at the beginning of the study, with the Louisville neighborhood at the extreme with 57 percent. White Center had the lowest poverty rate at 19 percent.

The survey neighborhoods also vary widely in racial and ethnic composition. In the Des Moines, Indianapolis, and White Center neighborhoods, a majority of households were non-Hispanic white.<sup>6</sup> The Louisville and Milwaukee neighborhoods were both predominantly black, while the San Antonio neighborhood was predominantly Hispanic. Hartford,

Providence, and Denver had substantial populations of both blacks and Hispanics. The White Center and Oakland neighborhoods reflect the greatest racial and ethnic diversity, including whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups.

Poverty and race are correlated with other indicators of well-being: quality work, health benefits, educational opportunities, and economic success. As table 1 shows, the survey neighborhoods generally have low homeownership rates (averaging 34 percent), low college completion (12 percent), a low share of households with working adults (63 percent), and low incomes (only 28 percent of households earn above \$30,000).

Based on these indicators, some illustrative contrasts among the neighborhoods can be identified. The *Making Connections* neighborhood in Louisville epitomizes a severely distressed urban neighborhood, with 57 percent of households below the poverty level and just 14 percent earning over \$30,000. This neighborhood is mostly composed of renters, including a large share of subsidized housing; only 22 percent of households own their homes. Only 8 percent of the survey respondents have a college degree, and less than half are in working households (47 percent). Hartford and Milwaukee are only slightly less disadvantaged than Louisville along most of these same dimensions. San Antonio's *Mak-*

**TABLE 1**  
Demographic and Economic Characteristics of Residents by Neighborhood (percent)

Neighborhood	Poverty	White <sup>a</sup>	Black <sup>a</sup>	Hispanic	Asian <sup>a</sup> and other <sup>a</sup>	Homeowner	College grad or higher	Employed adult in household	Earning above \$30,000
Denver	38.2	40.1	14.3	36.4	9.3	35.4	27.3	64.3	36.0
Des Moines	32.6	51.7	27.6	9.7	11.0	50.9	12.3	69.1	27.9
Hartford	46.3	5.4	53.4	36.0	5.3	12.5	8.5	56.4	19.2
Indianapolis	33.6	60.2	27.2	8.5	4.0	41.0	6.9	66.6	23.8
Louisville	57.2	16.0	78.8	2.2	3.1	22.2	8.1	47.3	13.5
Milwaukee	49.3	10.7	76.1	4.7	8.5	29.9	9.8	57.4	22.0
Oakland	35.0	10.5	25.1	28.2	36.2	17.6	14.8	67.6	30.7
Providence	39.0	14.1	24.8	47.2	13.9	25.9	14.6	63.6	29.0
San Antonio	42.4	5.9	1.8	84.9	7.4	54.0	3.8	64.6	18.9
White Center	19.2	54.4	8.6	14.9	22.1	51.3	18.2	74.5	57.0
Average	39.3	26.9	33.8	27.3	12.1	34.1	12.4	63.1	27.8

Source: *Making Connections* neighborhood-change data, wave 1.

Note: Racial, education, and employment characteristics are for survey respondents. Poverty, homeownership, and earnings characteristics are for survey households.

a. Non-Hispanic

ing *Connections* neighborhood is also deeply poor (42 percent of households below the poverty level) with just 19 percent of households earning over \$30,000. But it is a more stable neighborhood, with a large share of homeowners (54 percent) and moderate employment (65 percent), though little formal education (46 percent of residents have no high school degree).

In Denver, Oakland, and Providence, poverty rates are still high (35 percent or above) but the neighborhoods appear considerably less distressed. About two-thirds of the households in these neighborhoods have an employed adult. Denver's neighborhood also includes a considerable number of relatively well-off households. Specifically, 36 percent earn over \$30,000 and 27 percent have college degrees. Poverty rates in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods of Des Moines and Indianapolis are somewhat lower, though still above 30 percent. Both have high homeownership rates and high rates of employment, but few college graduates and few households earning over \$30,000.

Finally, the White Center neighborhood differs from all the other neighborhoods in that it is much less poor. Only 19 percent of households have incomes below the poverty level, and more than half (57 percent) earned more than \$30,000 per year. Relatively large shares of residents are homeowners (51 percent), college graduates (18 percent), and employed (75 percent).

## Extent of Residential Mobility

Americans change residences frequently. Nationwide estimates indicate that 12 percent of the population moved within the past year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2008). However, mobility rates vary substantially by age, education, employment, income, housing tenure (renter or homeowner), and household composition. In general, low-income neighborhoods experience more mobility than affluent neighborhoods, but these differences are not as pronounced as the differences between low- and high-income individuals (Kingsley and Pettit 2007).

Given these national patterns, high residential mobility among residents of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods should not be surprising. In the three years between survey waves, more than half (57 percent) of the households living in the survey neighborhoods moved out of their original housing units (table 2).<sup>7</sup> Three-year mobility rates ranged from a low of 43 percent (in San Antonio) to a high of 65 percent (in Milwaukee). And in all but two neighborhoods, more than half the households moved.

One might expect childless households to move more than families with children, but in fact, mobility rates were substantially higher among families with children (61 percent) than among childless households (49 percent). This is probably because elderly people (both singles and couples) constitute a substantial share of the childless households in most

**TABLE 2**  
Mobility and Change in Household Population by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Residential move (%)	Median distance of move (miles) <sup>a</sup>	Change in number of households in neighborhood (%)
Denver	56.4	3.8	0.6
Des Moines	50.9	2.5	-0.6
Hartford	63.4	1.3	-3.1
Indianapolis	59.3	3.2	-7.6
Louisville	63.6	2.1	-17.3
Milwaukee	65.4	2.7	-2.1
Oakland	59.8	2.2	-3.6
Providence	56.4	1.8	-1.8
San Antonio	42.7	3.2	-1.8
White Center	47.3	3.3	3.6
Total	56.5	2.6	-3.4

Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

a. Move distance for households with children only; data not available for childless households that moved.

of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, and mobility rates are consistently low among the elderly.<sup>8</sup> In every neighborhood, more than half of the families with children living in the *Making Connections* neighborhood at the time of the first survey wave moved within three years. The rates of mobility among families with children ranged from a low of 53 percent (in White Center's *Making Connections* neighborhood) to a high of 79 percent (in the Milwaukee neighborhood).

Although many families with children moved, most remained close to their original address.<sup>9</sup> The median distance families with children moved was only 2.6 miles. In fact, a third of the families that moved out of the original housing unit remained within the boundaries of their *Making Connections* neighborhoods. And almost two-thirds (65 percent) of those that moved outside the *Making Connections* neighborhood remained within the same city. Nearby movers may remain connected to their original neighbors and to neighborhood institutions, and may continue to participate in community-based programs, social events, and civic activities. Nearby movers

may consider themselves to have stayed in the same neighborhood—in other words, they may have moved to a new house or apartment within the same neighborhood.

The change in number of households varied among the *Making Connections* neighborhoods in the three years between the two survey waves (see table 2).<sup>10</sup> The number of households remained essentially unchanged in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods of Denver and Des Moines. The White Center neighborhood was the only neighborhood that saw a meaningful increase in the number of households. The *Making Connections* neighborhoods lost households in Providence (down 1.8 percent), San Antonio (1.8 percent), Milwaukee (2.1 percent), Hartford (3.1 percent), Oakland (3.6 percent), and Indianapolis (7.6 percent). Louisville's *Making Connections* neighborhood experienced the most dramatic loss, with an estimated 17 percent fewer households at the time of the second survey wave than at the first. This decline was due in part to the demolition of a large public housing development and relocation of its residents.





## Components of Neighborhood Change

**NEIGHBORHOODS ARE DYNAMIC, FLUID** environments; they can change quickly. This change can take many forms: new buildings or public infrastructure, a changing economic base, shifting racial composition, enhanced or deteriorated school quality, and so on. Neighborhood change can be characterized broadly as either change in bricks and mortar or change for or in people, though the two are clearly intertwined. We focus here on changes for (and of) households, not the physical environment. While several factors are important in describing households, the most studied indicator of neighborhood improvement or decline is the share of residents who fall below the federal poverty level, due to the salient and concise nature of this measure (Galster et al. 2003; Gramlich et al. 1992; Jargowsky and Bane 1991; Kingsley and Pettit 2007). In this section, we focus on how the poverty rate changed in the Making Connections neighborhoods and examine how much this was driven by the three components. Stayers—the households that remained at the same home—can contribute to changes in neighborhood poverty by switching between being poor and nonpoor between the two survey waves. Mobility can contribute to changes in neighborhood poverty when those exiting and entering the neighborhood are differentially poor. Finally, a shift in the share of the residents who are stayers or movers changes each groups' contribution to neighborhood poverty.<sup>11</sup>

### Background on Neighborhood Change

Previous lines of thought, characterized by the Chicago School of Sociology, held that neighbor-

hoods had life cycles, developing in a fixed trajectory from inception through decline as the initial housing stock deteriorated and poorer residents, often minorities, moved into the area (Schwirian 1983). But the revitalization of urban neighborhoods in the 1990s and the growth in diversity and poverty in suburban neighborhoods in the 2000s have demonstrated that neighborhoods change in complex ways that are difficult to anticipate or predict.

Researchers who study neighborhood change have documented that communities decline, improve, or remain steady depending on their composition. For instance, between 1990 and 2000 in the 100 largest metropolitan areas, the poverty rate in 25 percent of census tracts improved or worsened by more than 5 percentage points. This means that 75 percent of census tracts remained stable from 1990 to 2000 (Kingsley and Pettit 2007). However, this volatility is not equally distributed: poor census tracts changed faster than census tracts that are not poor. In the same time, 55 percent of highly poor census tracts changed by more than 5 percent, while just 12 percent of low-poverty census tracts did (Kingsley and Pettit 2007). It is this very volatility that is, in part, the motivation for the community development efforts at work in these areas.

For community-change efforts and other place-based interventions, neighborhoods are the unit of intervention. Therefore, reliably identifying areas of need and targeting their residents is of paramount importance. However, as we have already seen, people move, and place-based criteria are slow to catch up. Despite the importance of neighborhood change and mobility, few data sources are well positioned to

describe, over time, the attributes both of individual people and place at a geography small enough to be of value. Most data sources on neighborhoods are cross-sectional; there are few longitudinal studies of households within neighborhoods. This vacuum has produced a lack of clarity about how neighborhoods change.

Changes in neighborhood poverty can occur for three broad reasons: changes for those who remain in the neighborhood (i.e., stayers), changes in the mix of those who leave and join a neighborhood, and a shift in each group's contribution to the neighborhood's population. Given the sizable flows into and out of neighborhoods each year, the potential for mobility to lead to neighborhood change is much greater than the potential for change driven by those who stay. However, neighborhoods only change as a result of mobility to the extent that residents who leave (movers) and join (newcomers) are different from each other. Absent these differences, neighborhoods may remain stable on a social indicator such as poverty even under conditions of high turnover.

Previous research has relied on stock data to assess neighborhood change, often from the decennial census. But the literature has not sufficiently distinguished between these two drivers of community change (Galster et al. 2003; Gramlich et al. 1992; Jargowsky and Bane 1991; Kingsley and Pettit 2007). This analysis divides neighborhood change into its three parts and explores each in turn. Only 9 of the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods could be included in this analysis; in Hartford, the neighborhood boundaries were changed between the two survey waves, so that the sample is too small to reliably measure changes for those who moved or stayed within the redefined boundaries. Appendix B describes our methodology and its limitations.

## Findings

Across the nine *Making Connections* neighborhoods, improvements occurred primarily through mobility, not because of changes among stayers or population shifts. Reductions in neighborhood poverty occurred in one of two ways: through a sizable departure of poor residents or through an influx of better-off households. For neighborhoods where stayers saw reductions in the prevalence of poverty, these improvements were not sufficient to produce neigh-

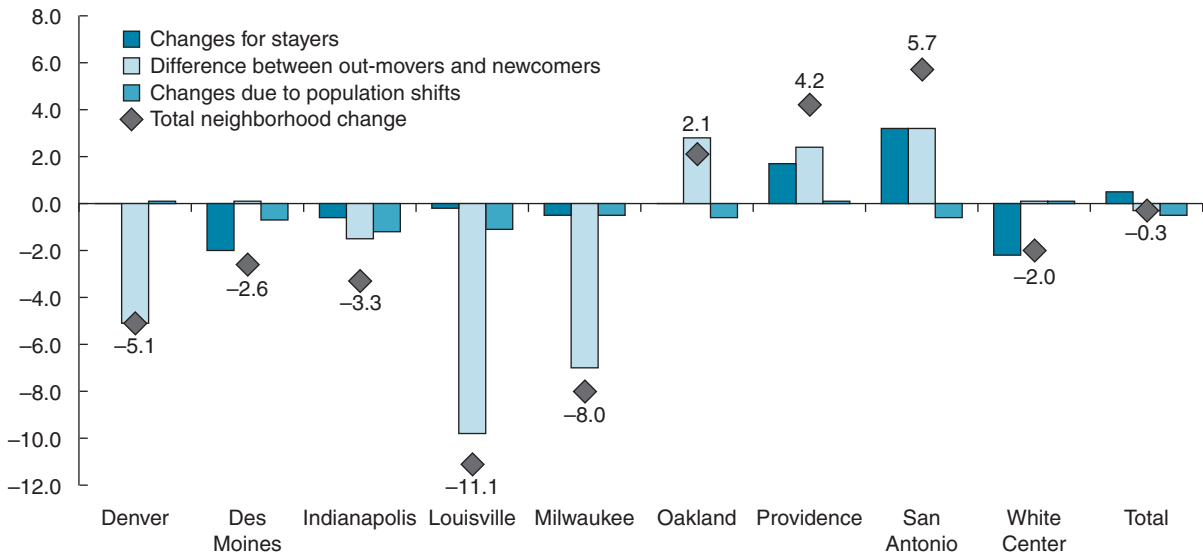
borhood gains. The biggest increases in neighborhood poverty rates occurred where poverty increased both among stayers and as a result of mobility.

As discussed in section two, the *Making Connections* neighborhoods ranged from moderately to severely distressed, with an average poverty rate in 2002 or 2003 of 35 percent. Of the nine neighborhoods analyzed, four saw statistically significant changes in the poverty rate. Of these, three neighborhoods experienced reductions in poverty, with the biggest reductions occurring in some of the poorest communities: Louisville (−10.8 percentage points), Milwaukee (−7.5 percentage points), and Denver (−5.2 percentage points). San Antonio experienced a modest increase in poverty of 6.3 percentage points.

It is possible to calculate change in a neighborhood's poverty due to stayers, mobility, and population shifts. Appendix B describes in detail our methodology for doing so. Figure 1 illustrates how these components contributed to the poverty-rate trends among these neighborhoods. For each city, the first column is the change in neighborhood poverty attributable to changes in stayers' poverty status. The second is the change due to differences between movers' and newcomers' poverty rates. The third column is the contribution of shifts in the neighborhood's population (and the shares of residents who are stayers or who move between the two survey waves). These three components sum to the total neighborhood change in poverty, which is shown as a diamond.

Summarizing our findings, the decline in Denver's neighborhood poverty rate was driven by the arrival of better-off residents. In Louisville and Milwaukee, on the other hand, declining poverty rates were driven by the departure of poor residents. In Des Moines and White Center, although the poverty rate remained essentially unchanged, poverty fell slightly among households that stayed in the neighborhood. Poverty in Indianapolis did not change for any group. Somewhat higher poverty rates among newcomers than among movers were not enough to notably shift Oakland's poverty rate. Providence saw modest increases in poverty from both stayers and mobility. Finally, in San Antonio, neighborhood poverty rates rose due to increasing poverty among stayers and to higher poverty among newcomers than among movers.

**FIGURE 1**  
The Components of Change in Neighborhood Poverty (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* neighborhood-change data, waves 1 and 2.

None of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods saw gains among stayers alone sufficient to produce a statistically significant net reduction in poverty rates. This is both because of the high rates of mobility these neighborhoods experienced and because an individual is more likely to continue to remain poor or nonpoor at two points (i.e., a stayer) than are two separate individuals at two points in time (i.e., a mover and newcomer). None of the neighborhoods that experienced rising poverty rates did so because of changes among stayers or mobility alone—both trends worsened together. Changes due to a shifting share of the neighborhood’s population who were stayers or who moved between the two survey waves were generally small, having little effect on neighborhood poverty. We explore these findings below—grouping sites that experienced improving, unchanging, or worsening poverty conditions.

### Poverty Reduction Driven by Arrival of Better-Off Residents

One *Making Connections* neighborhood, Denver, improved because newcomers were relatively better off than movers. As shown in figure 1, the poverty rate declined 5.1 points. This reduction in poverty was entirely attributable to mobility, with newcom-

ers over 9 percentage points less poor than movers, a sizable shift. Between 2003 and 2006, over half of the Denver neighborhood’s residents left (56 percent) and were replaced by newcomers, with no net change in population (table 2). Residents who remained in the neighborhood from 2003 to 2006 were, on average, no more or less poor.

Denver’s neighborhood change raises important questions for community-change initiatives in defining success. Households remaining in the neighborhood did not demonstrate improvements, though the community’s poverty rate fell by attracting better-off residents. Looking simply at Denver’s improving conditions misses this distinction.

### Poverty Reduction Driven by Departure of Poor Residents

Declining neighborhood poverty can be produced simply through the departure of poor residents, a scenario that some may consider a Pyrrhic victory and others a necessary deconcentration of poverty. Both the Louisville and Milwaukee neighborhoods reflect this pattern. Looking at Louisville to illustrate this phenomenon, we see that the poverty rate fell dramatically, dropping over 11 percentage points in three years (see figure 1). Yet, this improvement was

entirely attributable to the departure of some poor households. Over 63 percent of Louisville households left the neighborhood and many of these residents were not replaced by newcomers—the neighborhood’s population declined 17.3 percentage points (table 2). Further driving the changes, newcomers had a substantially lower poverty rate than movers (13.3 percentage points). However, with a poverty rate approaching 50 percent, they were still severely disadvantaged.

A sizeable share of Louisville residents relocated between the two survey waves as a result of the HOPE VI program. These changes drive the neighborhood findings for this neighborhood. But the Milwaukee neighborhood also saw the departure of poor residents, not as a result of a federal program. Households who remained in the Louisville and the Milwaukee communities experienced no improvements in their poverty rates.

### **No Change in Poverty, Though One Group of Residents May Have Experienced Gains or Losses**

Unlike the previously described neighborhoods, five *Making Connections* neighborhoods did not demonstrate changes in poverty rates, though one group of residents may have experienced a greater or lesser likelihood of being poor. For these neighborhoods, changes among or between individual groups were not sufficient to generate a net change. Because the shifts in poverty rates were not significant for communities, relying on these figures alone may mask divergent outcomes for the different groups.

In two neighborhoods, Des Moines and White Center, stayers were somewhat less poor at wave 2, an important outcome in assessing community change. Yet this change did not improve the neighborhood. Oakland also showed no net change in neighborhood poverty. But in this case, it was stayers who were unchanged while newcomers were 5.0 percentage points less poor than movers, and the shifting share of the total population contributed by each group slightly. These components resulted in a 2.1 percentage point increase in Oakland’s poverty. Poverty rates in Indianapolis were not substantially

different for stayers, as a result of mobility or shifts in the neighborhood’s population. In Providence, poverty increased modestly for stayers and as a result of mobility. This resulted in a 4.1 percent increase in neighborhood poverty (this change is not statistically significant).

### **Worsening Poverty Driven by Both Losses among Stayers and Mobility**

As opposed to improving, neighborhood poverty worsened in only one manner. The poverty rate increased in San Antonio, driven by a worsening situation among stayers and by mobility. Poverty among stayers rose by 5.5 percentage points from 2003 to 2006—a change that resulted in neighborhood poverty increasing by 3.2 percentage points. At the same time that stayer households experienced greater poverty, the community absorbed even more poor migrants while losing households that were better off. Those who joined the neighborhood had a poverty rate 7.5 points higher than those who left.

In sum, across all the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, this analysis shows few communities with poverty-rate reductions among stayers, a core indicator of neighborhood health and vitality. But in neighborhoods where poverty did decline among stayers, that gain would be overlooked by focusing simply on overall neighborhood change. The magnitude of change among stayers is smaller than change as a result of mobility, which is expected, given the lower prevalence of within-person changes. The fates of stayers and movers were linked in surprisingly few neighborhoods—only in worsening neighborhoods did they change in the same direction. Given the rate of mobility and the prevalence of change across different households, mobility was a larger influence in changing neighborhoods. Mobility contributed to neighborhood improvement in several cases, even if gains were not experienced by stayers. And in no neighborhoods did mobility alone drive neighborhood poverty-rate increases, though where poverty increased, poor newcomers added to an already deteriorating situation for stayers. In all cases, neighborhood poverty changed little due to shifts in stayers’ and movers’ share of the neighborhood’s population.



## Types of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers

**THE MAKING CONNECTIONS NEIGHBORHOODS**, like neighborhoods in general, experience considerable residential mobility, but at the same time many residents stay in place. Households move or stay for many reasons that may have implications for a community-change initiative's success. Generally speaking, it is important to know the characteristics of households that move or stay and how much their mobility decisions reflect positive or negative transitions. In this section we review what is known about factors affecting mobility and analyze the movers and stayers in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods.

### Background on Residential Mobility

Many push and pull factors affect a household's decision to relocate and influence the move's timing and location. Changing household circumstances, such as employment or family composition, may make the current housing unit or location less tenable or satisfactory. Additionally, deterioration in the current housing unit or the surrounding area may further the desire to move. Households may also be attracted to other housing units or neighborhoods for various reasons that contribute to the decision to relocate. At the same time, though, households may experience forces that make them resistant to a move, including attachment to their current house or neighborhood and relationships that would be disrupted by a move; they may also face physical, economic, or social barriers to achieving a desirable living situation elsewhere. Such complexities have generated several complimentary conceptual frameworks to explain both the intention to move and the actual moving.

A commonly used theoretical framework for understanding residential mobility is a disequilibrium model. In this model, a decision to move occurs when the current living arrangements become sub-optimal. Absent such disequilibrium, the household will stay put, as there are adjustment costs and other losses to moving. What is optimal relates to the housing unit's characteristics, its location, and neighborhood surroundings relative to the household's needs and preferences (subject to price and income constraints). Housing that may have been optimal can become suboptimal due to changes in household composition or circumstances, housing or neighborhood quality, and household income or the price of housing. Theory has also drawn a distinction between the household's experience of housing dissatisfaction, the intent to move, and the household's actual relocation (Speare 1974). The decision whether to move can be seen as weighing satisfaction with current housing relative to the anticipated satisfaction with alternatives. From this point of view, a combination of push and pull factors determines if, when, and where the household moves, subject to various constraints or barriers to mobility.

A complimentary framework, the life-course perspective, views residential mobility as one of many related aspects of human development. From this point of view, moving or staying is related to other life events such as marriage or divorce; birth of children; children leaving home or attending college; change of employer, income, or assets; and retirement. Several studies have found that these life events are potential triggers of mobility (Clark 2005; Clark and Withers 1999). These events can result in

dissatisfaction with the current house, such as when a growing family needs more space, or may change the household's aspirations, such as when a better job leads to increased status expectations. Moreover, homeownership or residential stability may become more or less salient at particular stages of life, such as marriage, birth of a child, or retirement. These life events tend to be correlated with demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and so forth, and these are also associated with the probability of residential mobility.

The role of homeownership in residential mobility deserves particular attention, as it is related to life course development, housing disequilibrium, and the costs and benefits associated with moving. Homeowners move less frequently than renters (Yamaguchi 2003) and homeownership has been shown to have positive effects on individuals and their neighborhoods (Green 2001). For example, child outcomes such as educational attainment and teen child bearing are more positive among households that own their home, and homeownership is a protective factor for children even in distressed neighborhoods (Harkness and Newman 2003). Additionally, owner-occupied housing is better maintained (Galster 1983) and homeownership is associated with neighborhood participation and collective efficacy (Sampson and Raudenbush 1997). However, in recent years negative equity and high rates of foreclosure have reduced the benefits of homeownership for vulnerable households and neighborhoods. With respect to mobility, negative equity tends to retard movement (Ferreira, Gyourko, and Tracy 2008), while foreclosure forces households to move under duress.

Employment is an additional factor that has been studied in relation to residential mobility. A job change may precipitate a move, especially if the new employer is in a different metropolitan area or the new job results in a sizeable increase or decrease in income. When viewed in combination with other life events, changing jobs is a significant trigger for moving, but its influence is much stronger among renters than homeowners (Clark and Withers 1999). However, employment location is not necessarily a strong determinant of residential location because workers make trade-offs between the costs of commuting and housing, often choosing to travel further to obtain the housing they desire or can afford (Zax

1991). Thus, job changes may not precipitate a move if the household is otherwise satisfied or would incur significant costs.

Neighborhood context as a factor in residential mobility has received less attention in the literature than life-cycle and economic factors. Neighborhood quality and satisfaction, though, may be a consideration in households' mobility decisions. However, the evidence on whether it is an important influence relative to other factors is mixed. A national longitudinal study (Newman and Duncan 1979) found that neighborhood dissatisfaction had little influence on residential mobility once demographics and housing dissatisfaction were taken into account. A study in Nashville found that objective indicators of neighborhood characteristics and subjective evaluations of neighborhood change were related to households' thoughts about mobility but had little influence on moving (Lee et al. 1994). Similarly, a study in England found that disordered surroundings and satisfaction with aspects of the larger neighborhood influenced the intent to move but had less effect on actual moves (Kearns and Parkes 2003). Nevertheless, the influence of neighborhood quality may be more important in low-income neighborhoods than elsewhere. A study in 20 poor neighborhoods in U.S. central cities found the households' assessment of neighborhood quality when they moved in to be a strong predictor of residential mobility later on. A perceived decline in neighborhood quality added to the household's chances of moving out. A perceived improvement in neighborhood quality decreased movement for renters but not for homeowners (Boehm and Ihlanfeldt 1986).

Neighborhood attachment and social ties may deter residential mobility or affect the distance that a household moves. In a study that identified movers by asking residents how long they had lived in their neighborhood, good neighborhood quality and social ties were found to keep households in the neighborhood longer (Dawkins 2006). Social ties were found to have a stronger limiting effect on residential mobility among low-income compared with high-income families. Attachment to the neighborhood may also affect where households move and how they adjust to their new surroundings. A study of Seattle movers found that households moving a shorter distance (i.e., staying in the same census tract) showed higher post-move neighborhood attachment. Also, households

that moved for family reasons showed lower attachment to their new neighborhood than did households that moved to improve their housing or neighborhood surroundings (Bolan 1997).

Although most of the literature has focused on explaining the likelihood that households will move, there is also concern that some households face barriers to effective residential mobility. In particular, racial segregation and racial inequities may undermine the chances that people of color can move to satisfactory housing and neighborhoods. A study of structural barriers to residential mobility found that once life-cycle factors and neighborhood and housing satisfaction were held constant, black households in the United States had a lower probability of moving than did white households. While neighborhood dissatisfaction predicted residential movement among whites, it was the opposite among blacks, with black homeowners who judged their neighborhoods to be only fair as compared to excellent less likely to move than whites who expressed similar dissatisfaction (South and Deane 1993). This pattern suggests that many blacks may remain in unsatisfactory housing or neighborhoods due to social and economic barriers to movement. Moreover, studies demonstrate blacks are less likely than any other ethnic group to move to better neighborhoods, even when they have achieved the education and income that have allowed other groups to move up and out (Logan et al. 1996).

Although residential mobility can be a path to greater opportunity and satisfaction, there is concern that many low-income families move not to better their circumstances but due to unstable housing arrangements, and that such moves may have negative consequences. Indeed, studies show that frequent moving during childhood undermines educational attainment (Wood et al. 1993). Relocating may disrupt social ties and undermine a family's social capital (Briggs 1997), and have a particularly disruptive effect on children whose parents provide only modest emotional support and involvement (Hagan, MacMillan, and Wheaton 1996). Neighborhood quality may be another factor affecting the move's success. For example, teenagers who recently moved into distressed neighborhoods had higher drop-out rates than those who had lived there a longer time (Crowder and South 2003), but teenagers who moved from poverty areas to middle-class neighborhoods established positive ties in their new locations (Pettit 2004).

The preceding suggests that there can be no simple evaluation of residential mobility or stability in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods. Both moving and staying in place may reflect positive choices for the household or may signal that the household is in distress or faces barriers to better opportunities. While residential stability has certain benefits for the neighborhood and family, the ability to act on life-cycle events by changing housing may be necessary to development and opportunity. Households that are unable to move due to financial or social barriers, even when they are dissatisfied with their housing or neighborhood, are further disadvantaged by this lack of freedom. On the other hand, positive factors, such as social ties and neighborhood attachment, may discourage households from moving too far, even if they change housing. Such connections reflect the benefits of social support but can also prevent households from improving their opportunities. And after unanticipated hardships, disasters, or displacement, households may be forced to move even though they had previously been satisfied with their housing and neighborhood and had established connections to their neighbors. Given this complex set of influences, we conclude that within the *Making Connections* neighborhoods no combination of factors will distinguish movers from stayers or provide a sufficiently nuanced explanation of residential mobility. Instead, we anticipate that there may be discernable types of movers and stayers who experience combinations of push and pull factors.

## **An Analysis of Mobility**

Based on the recognition that residential movement occurs for a variety of reasons, we examined whether we could identify various types of movers, newcomers, and stayers in the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods. We anticipated that some households may be making positive moves to better housing or neighborhoods, some may be moving because changes in family size or composition require a different housing unit, and some may be moving involuntarily, due to a crisis or economic insecurity. Also, some households that stayed may be satisfied with their house and neighborhood, while others may be dissatisfied but unable to move due to barriers. Similarly, some newcomers may be drawn to a place to improve their circumstances, while others may face limited housing options or be relocating under duress.

Since the literature suggests many factors that influence moving, the identification of types requires a method that can uncover differences among households along many dimensions simultaneously. We use *cluster analysis* to explore whether there are identifiable groups of movers, newcomers, and stayers based on factors influencing their mobility and how much they are bettering or worsening their residential situations. A mover is defined as a household that moved out of its housing unit between wave 1 and wave 2, a stayer is a household that was in the same housing unit at both waves,<sup>12</sup> and a newcomer is a household that was in its housing unit at wave 2 but not at wave 1. The details of the cluster analysis methodology and a statistical comparison of the clusters are presented in appendix C.

Previewing our findings showed three discernable types of movers, newcomers, and stayers in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods. One of the types in all instances reflected households in distress. Their residential situations were dictated more by economic exigencies or family stress than by choice. Another type could be characterized as positive in their residential choices, whether they were staying in satisfactory places or moving to better situations. Finally, in all instances we identified a type for which life stage and household composition were predominant factors in their residential location. These patterns are consistent with the expectation that households move or stay put for various reasons, and that simple mobility rates belie differences that have implications for community initiatives. The cluster characteristics supporting these conclusions are detailed below.

## Movers with Children

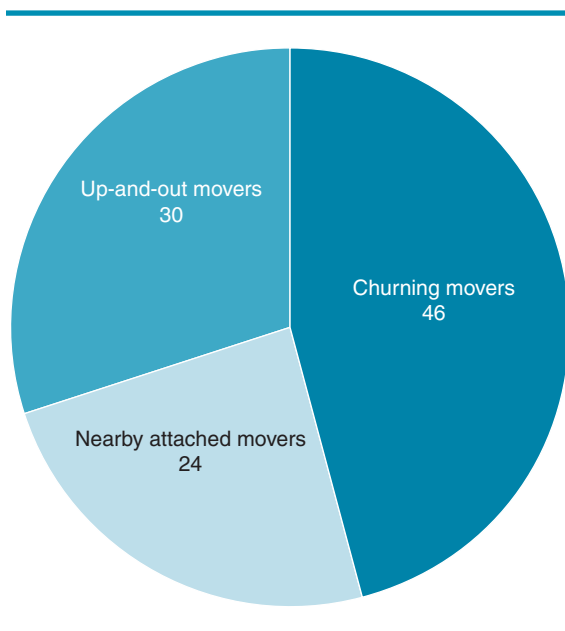
The cluster analysis suggested that families with children that moved out of their residence between wave 1 and wave 2 can be divided into three types.

1. *Young-family movers churning in place*: The families in this cluster tend to be young and are adding children to their households. They have very low incomes (median \$14,000) and are mostly renters who had not lived in their old house very long (median two years), and were the least involved of any cluster in their neighborhood. These families moved short distances (median 1.7 miles) and did not gain much in terms of neighborhood amenities and satisfaction. They started out in poor neighborhoods that they viewed as somewhat unsafe and not very positive for their children, and they gained little by moving. This pattern suggests that these households may be frequent movers whose moves are a response to financial stress or problems in their rental housing arrangements.
2. *Nearby attached movers*: The families in this cluster are middle aged and have declined in household size. They have very low incomes (median \$15,000). However, unlike churning households, more of them were homeowners at wave 1, had lived in their homes for a very long time (median 7.5 years), and were highly involved in their original neighborhoods. These families moved the shortest distances (median 1.1 miles), with some (19 percent) shifting from homeowner to rental tenure. Their relocation did not appreciably affect their neighborhood distress or satisfaction, but they reported somewhat less neighborhood participation following their move. Thus, nearby attached movers had been stable involved residents whose moves may have been dictated more by life-cycle factors than by a desire to leave their house or neighborhood. In fact, they have not moved far nor have they changed very much in their feelings about the place.
3. *Up-and-out movers*: These are young families but more likely to be gaining an adult in the household than churning movers. They have moderate incomes (median \$28,000), had not lived in their old house very long (median three years), and were the most dissatisfied with the old neighborhood. These families moved much farther (median 5.8 miles), with more becoming homeowners than other clusters. They are more satisfied and optimistic about their new neighborhoods, which are substantially less poor and less predominantly minority, and which have higher (and rising) house values. In summary, up-and-out movers seem to have moved a long distance to improve their housing and neighborhood satisfaction. They had the financial wherewithal to make such moves possible.



Figure 2 displays the cluster classification, showing the percentage of movers that were classified into each type. Close to half (46 percent) of the families that moved can be classified as young-family movers churning in place. In other words, a substantial share of the mobility among families might be characterized as “residential instability,” with the possibility that these families are experiencing a degree of stress and need help if they are to benefit from neighborhood resources or opportunities. Nearby attached movers, who had been long-term, involved residents, account for about a quarter (24 percent) of movers and essentially remained in or near their old neighborhood location. Up-and-out movers, who improved their situation by moving to better housing situations and more prosperous neighborhoods, account for 3 of 10 families (30 percent) that moved between wave 1 and wave 2. Almost 7 of 10 movers (i.e., churning movers and nearby attached movers) stayed close to their original locations, possibly changing their house or apartment without necessarily distancing themselves from their original neighborhood. In other words, depending on how neighborhood is defined, some of these may be residential movers but not neighborhood out-migrants.

**FIGURE 2**  
Movers by Type (percent)



Source: Making Connections cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

## Newcomers

The cluster analysis distinguished three groups of newcomers.

1. *Dissatisfied renter newcomers:* In this cluster are families with children that are almost all renters (96 percent). They are young (mean age of adults is 30.8). They have low incomes (median \$12,000) and have difficulty affording their housing. About a fifth (22 percent) receive housing subsidies and only about two-thirds have an employed member in the household. These families are very dissatisfied with the neighborhood and have not become very involved in it since their move. This pattern is consistent with being pushed to move by circumstances rather than attracted to their new residence by a positive feeling about the neighborhood or the achievement of a stable housing situation. Their profile suggests that they may move again quickly due to further disruption or dissatisfaction.
2. *Low-income retired newcomers:* This cluster is predominately older households with very low employment rates (9 percent) and very low incomes (median \$7,500). A large proportion of newcomers in this cluster have housing subsidies (35 percent) and most of the households in this cluster are renters (81 percent). Many report that they have trouble paying for their housing costs (33 percent). Despite their financial difficulties, they are positive about the neighborhood and are moderately involved. This cluster seems to represent households that already felt positively toward the neighborhood and changed residences due to reaching retirement and requiring lower housing costs or more housing assistance. This newcomer group is likely to remain settled unless their personal situations change or they can find more affordable or subsidized housing elsewhere.
3. *Positive newcomers:* This cluster is made up of working households (97 percent are employed) in their middle child-rearing years. They have high incomes (median \$30,000), are the most likely of the newcomer households to be homeowners (37 percent), and are the least

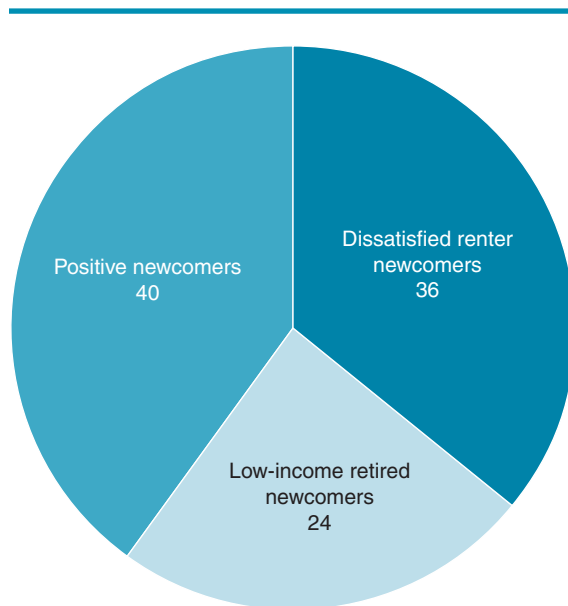
likely to have difficulty with housing affordability. They are very optimistic about the neighborhood and participate in it. This cluster is likely to become engaged with their new community and to remain stable as long as their housing remains optimal. Those with rising incomes may move on, though, as they are ready for homeownership or as their housing needs and preferences shift.

As figure 3 shows, across the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods, more than a third (36 percent) of newcomers are dissatisfied renter families, which appear to be moving into their new residences by default rather than by choice. Approximately 40 percent are positive newcomers who seem to have been drawn to their new home and location. Approximately 24 percent of newcomers are low-income retirees who have probably changed residences due to life-cycle factors but are positive toward the location they have chosen.

## Stayers

Of the households that stayed in place, the cluster analysis suggests three distinct groups.

**FIGURE 3**  
Newcomers by Type (percent)

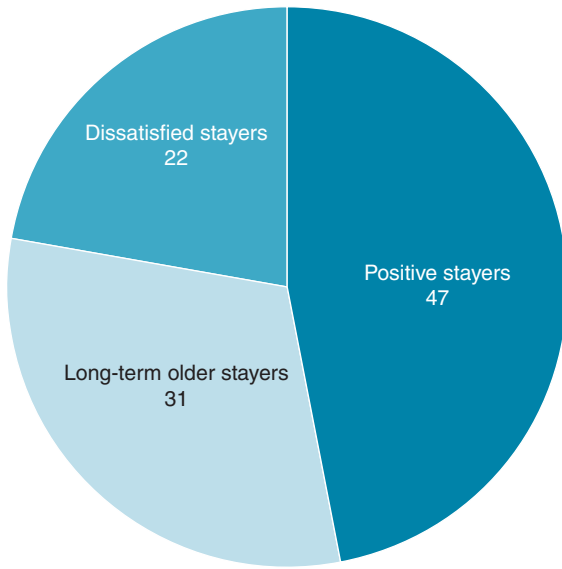


Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

1. *Dissatisfied stayers*: This is the youngest of the stayer clusters (the mean age of adult members is 38.9), although stayers as a group are older than movers. Most of these families have an adult who is working (79 percent) but their incomes are only low to moderate (median \$20,000). The majority of these households are renters (61 percent) and likely to be having difficulty paying housing costs. They have lived in the neighborhood the shortest time (median six years) and, out of all stayers, are the least positive about it. If they continue to remain in their current residence, it is likely because of barriers to movement rather than a stable and satisfactory situation.
2. *Long-term, older stayers*: The households in this cluster are a bit older (mean age of adults 63.7), seldom include working adults (only 20 percent employed), and have very low incomes (median \$10,000). Yet more than half of these households own their homes and few are having difficulty with housing costs. They have lived in the neighborhood for many years (median 24 years) and are satisfied with it. Although it seems likely that they will remain in place, their fixed incomes and advancing age may make them somewhat vulnerable.
3. *Positive stayers*: These households tend to be middle-aged (mean age of adults 41.3) families that are working (95 percent are employed) and have the highest incomes (median \$30,000) of the three stayer groups. Most are homeowners (68 percent) and the median number of years living in the neighborhood is 10. These households participate most in their neighborhood and are the most optimistic about it. This cluster is likely to continue to be involved and remain in their residence as long as they remain satisfied with their housing and surrounding neighborhood.

Close to half of all stayers are positive stayers (47 percent). These appear to be households that are staying in place because they want to. Another third (31 percent) are long-term older stayers, who also seem positive about remaining in place. But

**FIGURE 4**  
Stayers by Type (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

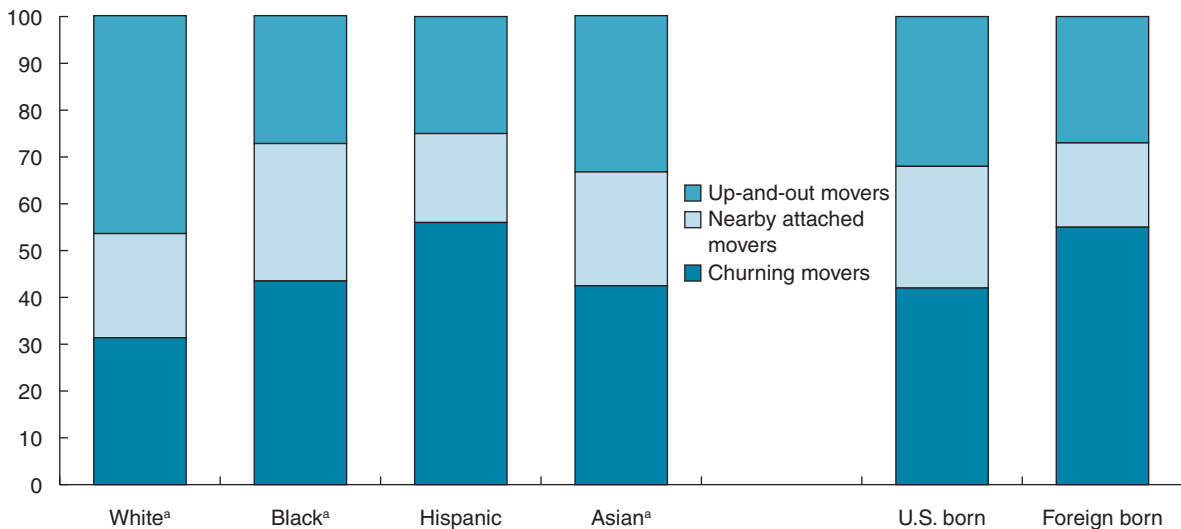
about 1 of every 5 stayers (22 percent) are dissatisfied stayers, who seem to be remaining in place not because they are attached to the neighborhood or their home but because their options are constrained (see figure 4).

### Cluster Differences by Race, Ethnicity, and Immigrant Status

The above clusters show that various push and pull factors affect residential mobility in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods. In this section, we explore whether there are differences in the types of movers, newcomers, and stayers across race or ethnic groups and according to whether the householder is native born or foreign born; some of the literature cited above found ethnic and racial disparities in mobility patterns (Logan et al. 1996; South and Deane 1993).

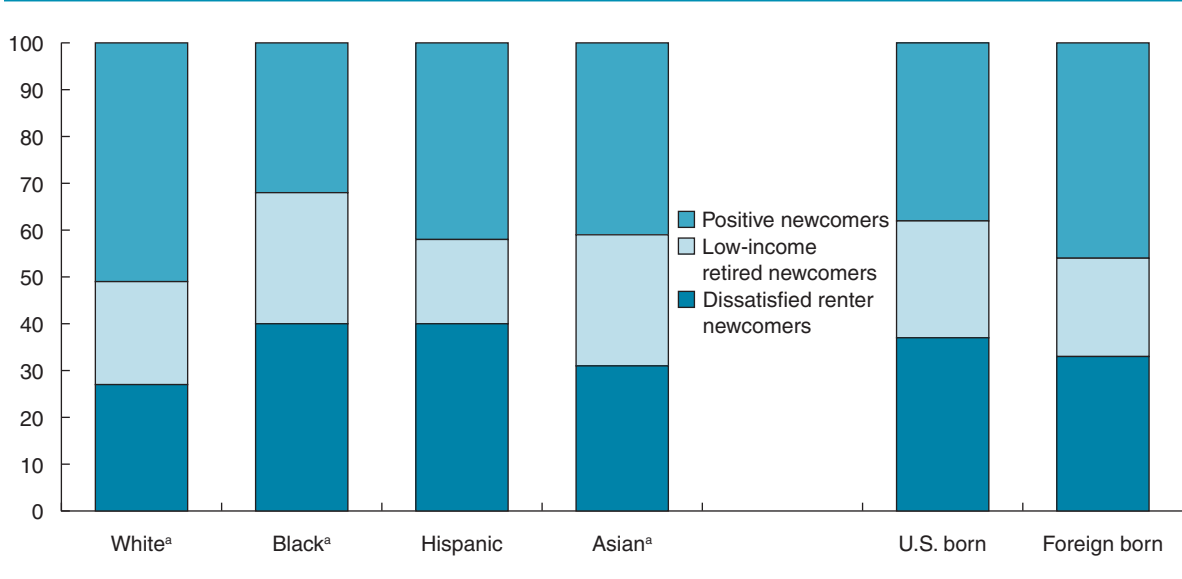
As shown in figure 5, white movers are more likely to fall into the up-and-out movers cluster than are members of any other race or ethnic group. Among Hispanic mover households, a higher proportion compared with other ethnic groups falls into the cluster of churning movers. Black and Asian movers are more likely than other ethnic groups to be classified as nearby attached movers. Movers in households where the head is foreign born are more likely to be in the churning movers cluster compared with native-born households, which have more movers in the up-and-out movers group. Such patterns are consistent with the literature that has found that nonimmigrant whites are more successful than other groups in bettering their neighborhood circumstances through residential mobility.

**FIGURE 5**  
Types of Movers by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.  
a. Non-Hispanic.

**FIGURE 6**  
Types of Newcomers by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.  
a. Non-Hispanic.

With newcomers (see figure 6), the cluster patterns are to some degree the mirror image of the movers'. Whites have the highest percentage of positive newcomers and black newcomers have the smallest percentage. Low-income retiree newcomers constitute a larger proportion of the Asian and black newcomer groups than is seen among white or Hispanic newcomers. There was a similar preponderance of older black and Asian households in the stayer clusters shown above, probably reflecting different age distributions for these populations in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods. U.S.-born newcomers have a higher likelihood of being classified as long-term older stayers than do foreign-born households.

Figure 7 presents the clusters of stayers by race/ethnicity and nativity of the household head. Asian stayer households are somewhat more likely to be classified as positive stayers than other groups, while Hispanic households are the least likely to fall into the positive-stayers cluster. Dissatisfied stayers account for a slightly higher portion of Asian and white stayers than for the other two ethnic groups. Long-term older stayers are more prevalent among black and Hispanic stayers. Fewer foreign-born households are classified as long-term older stayers compared with U.S.-born stayers, but foreign-born

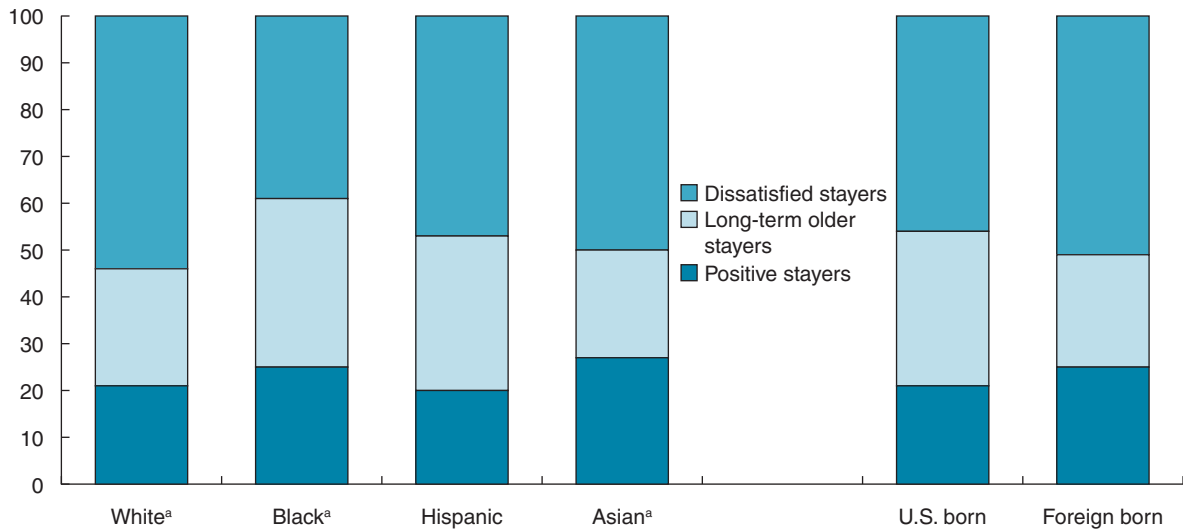
stayers are slightly more likely to be in both the positive and dissatisfied stayer clusters.

### A Neighborhood-by-Neighborhood Comparison of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers

The reasons households move in, move out, or stay are likely to differ from place to place and may suggest how particular neighborhoods are functioning and changing. The *Making Connections* neighborhoods show interesting differences in this regard based on the mix of the clusters in their populations. Each of these comparisons is illustrated below.

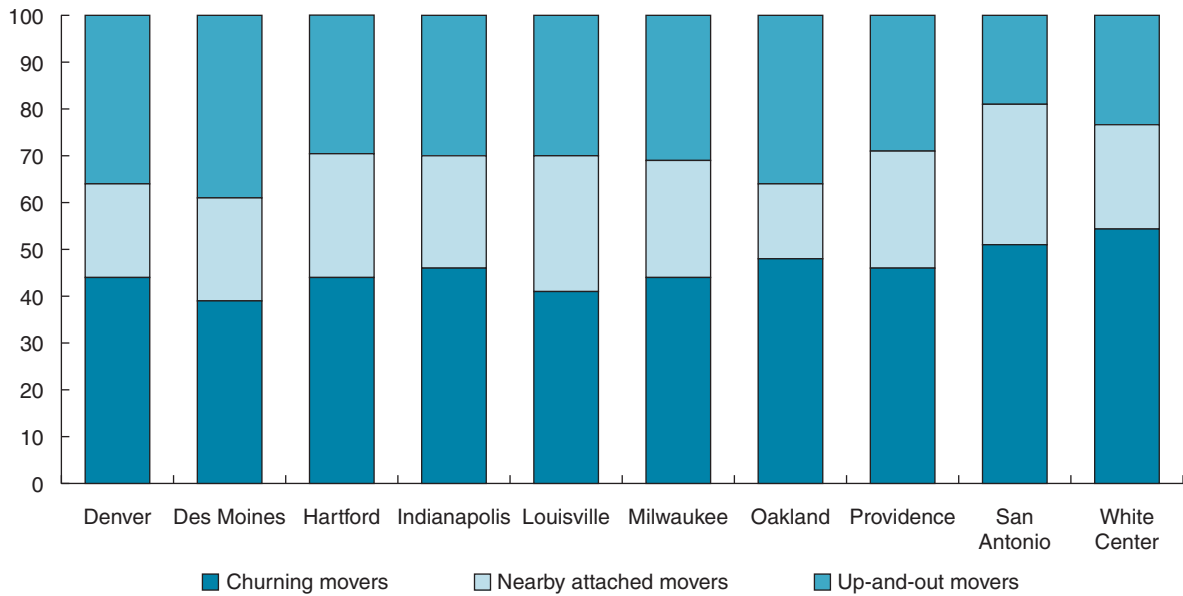
The mix of movers by type differed among the *Making Connections* neighborhoods. As shown in figure 8, Des Moines, Denver, and Oakland had the highest percentage of up-and-out movers. San Antonio and White Center (just outside Seattle) had a greater proportion of movers who were classified as churning than did other neighborhoods. Louisville and San Antonio showed the highest rates of nearby attached movers. Despite these differences, though, it should be noted that the churning movers were the largest cluster in all neighborhoods with the exception of Des Moines.

**FIGURE 7**  
Types of Stayers by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.  
a. Non-Hispanic.

**FIGURE 8**  
Mix of Movers by Neighborhood (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

The *Making Connections* neighborhoods differ in the mix of newcomers to their neighborhood (figure 9). Hartford and Milwaukee newcomers are disproportionately dissatisfied renters. The newcomers in Denver, Des Moines, and White Center are more likely to be positive newcomers than in the other neighborhoods. Louisville stands out relative to the other neighborhoods by having larger numbers of low-income retirees in its newcomer population.

There were differences among the *Making Connections* neighborhoods in the mix of stayers (figure 10). For example, Hartford has the highest proportion of dissatisfied stayers and the lowest proportion of positive stayers. White Center, Des Moines, and San Antonio have higher proportions of positive stayers than do the other neighborhoods. Louisville has a high proportion of low-income retirees among their stayer population but a very low percentage of positive stayers.

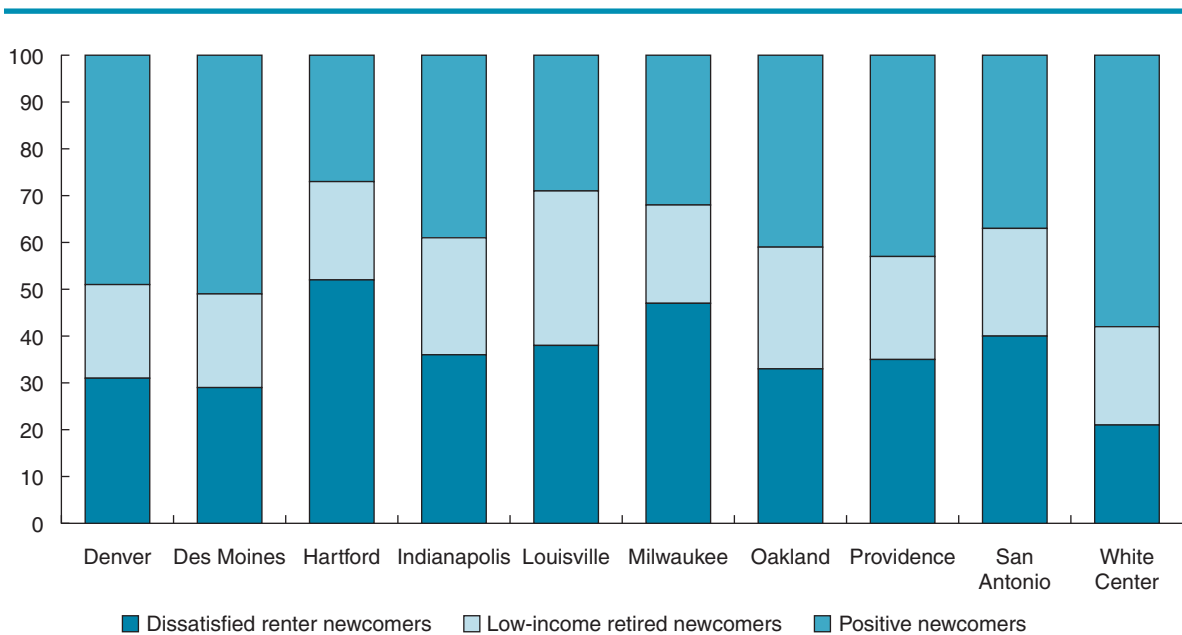
### Summary of Neighborhood Comparisons

The mix of movers, newcomers, and stayers can be combined to illustrate some cross-neighborhood

differences in how residential mobility affects neighborhoods. For example, Denver has a large component of long-term older stayers while the percentage of dissatisfied stayers is low. Denver is also low on nearby attached movers and low-income retiree newcomers while being in the middle range on other clusters. This pattern suggests the core of a stable older population in the Denver neighborhood, with little influx of older newcomers. In general, the positive newcomers exceed the dissatisfied ones. However, churning movers exceed the nearby attached movers by about two to one, reflecting considerable churning among in the younger low-income population in the Denver neighborhood.

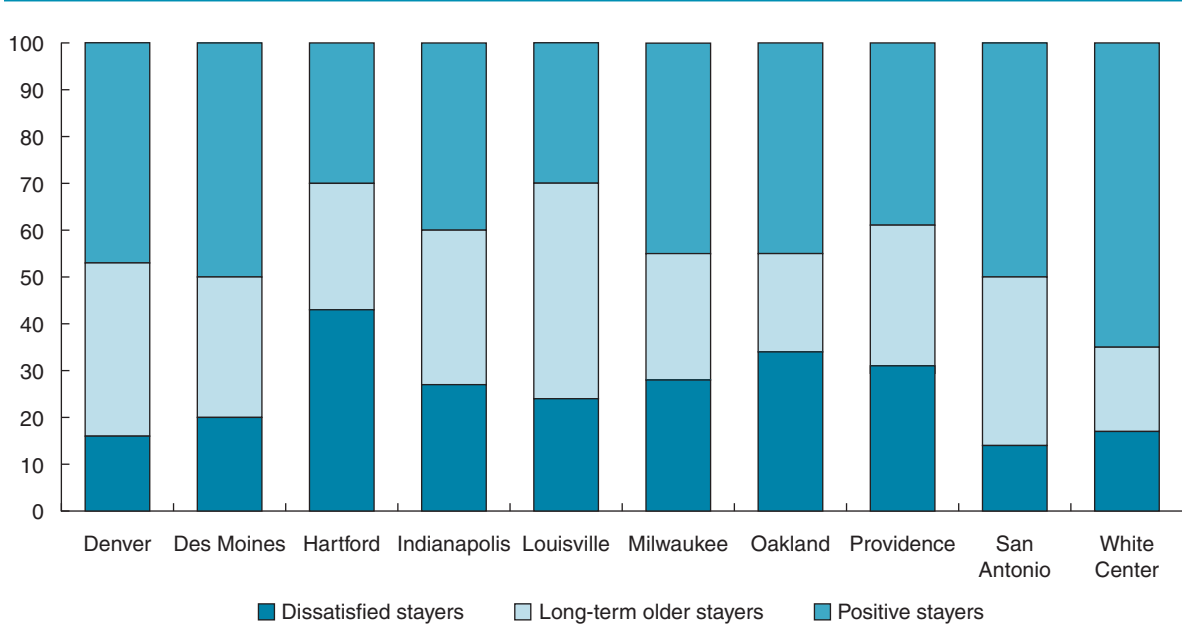
In Des Moines, three clusters stand out: up-and-out movers, positive stayers, and positive newcomers. Des Moines is also low on churning movers and low-income retiree newcomers. This pattern suggests that the Des Moines neighborhood is a positive attraction for many households but is also a place movers leave behind to improve their situations. Oakland and Providence have similar profiles to Des Moines, though somewhat less positive. In Oakland and Providence slightly more movers are churning, and more stayers are dissatisfied than in Des Moines.

**FIGURE 9**  
Mix of Newcomers by Neighborhood (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

**FIGURE 10**  
 Mix of Stayers by Neighborhood (percent)



Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

The Hartford *Making Connections* neighborhood is characterized by large proportions of dissatisfied newcomers, dissatisfied stayers, and churning movers. The small proportion in the up-and-out clusters suggests that few are moving on to better housing or neighborhoods. Few of the newcomer households fall into the low-income retirees, suggesting that younger distressed families are the bulk of those relocating to the neighborhood. Milwaukee’s mix of movers and newcomers is similar to Hartford’s. However, there are more positive and fewer negative stayers in Milwaukee than in Hartford.

Louisville stands out in the high proportion of stayers and newcomers in the low-income older clusters. Also, Louisville’s movers tend more than the other neighborhoods to remain nearby attached movers. Few are up-and-out movers and few of the households that stay or move in are doing so for positive reasons. This pattern suggests that many households in the Louisville *Making Connections* neighborhood are there mainly because housing is affordable and that many are long-term residents with a connection to the neighborhood. The mix of movers, newcomers, and stayers in Indianapolis is similar to Louisville, with the exception that

Indianapolis has a higher proportion of positive newcomers.

San Antonio is unique among the neighborhoods in that its movers mostly remain nearby and are seldom bettering their situation by moving out. Nevertheless, San Antonio also has a large group of positive stayers who are remaining in place and are satisfied with the neighborhood. The newcomer mix in San Antonio is unremarkable compared with the other neighborhoods, with an almost equal mix of newcomers in the positive and dissatisfied clusters. This pattern suggests that the San Antonio *Making Connections* neighborhood is one with a core of long-term residents, but many of them frequently change housing units within the general neighborhood.

The White Center neighborhood is low on up-and-out movers and high on positive stayers and positive newcomers. It appears, therefore, that residents who are being drawn to the neighborhood are seeking its positive qualities and not moving away for better situations. However, the neighborhood is also high on churning movers, suggesting that there is also an element of frequent moving among residents with unstable living situations.



## Models of How Neighborhoods Work for Families

**BY SIMULTANEOUSLY DECOMPOSING** neighborhood change and examining the mix of movers and stayers, our findings offer new insights on how different low-income neighborhoods may be functioning for the families who live in them (and move through them). We begin by returning to the five stylized models outlined in the introduction of this report. Two of these stylized types—*incubator* and *launch pad*—function in positive ways for their low-income residents, while two types—*neighborhood of choice* and *comfort zone*—are mixed, and the last one—the *isolating neighborhood*—essentially fails low-income families. For each model, table 3 summarizes what we expect to find for rates of family mobility, the composition of neighborhood change, and the predominant types of movers, newcomers, and stayers.

If a neighborhood is an incubator, mobility rates should be low. Neighborhood outcomes should be improving, primarily due to improvements for stayers. Stayers should be attached and positive about the neighborhood and newcomers should be positive about it as well. If, on the other hand, a neighborhood is a launch pad, one would expect to observe higher rates of mobility. Neighborhood outcomes would remain unchanged over time, even though outcomes among stayers were improving, because successful families would be moving out while needier families moved in. In a launch pad neighborhood, many movers would be transitioning up and out, but those who stayed would be attached and positive, and newcomers (though poor) would be positive about what the neighborhood had to offer.

In neighborhoods of choice, mobility rates should be high and neighborhood outcomes should be

improving. But these gains should reflect the well-being of neighborhood newcomers, with lesser improvements in stayers' well-being. And while newcomers should be very positive about the neighborhood, many movers are likely dissatisfied and disconnected.

Comfort zones would experience low mobility and little or no improvement in outcomes for long-term residents or for the neighborhood as a whole. In this way, comfort zones are like isolating neighborhoods. However, in a comfort zone, many stayers would be strongly attached and many newcomers would be satisfied with their neighborhood circumstances.

Finally, isolating neighborhoods would have moderate rates of mobility, and neighborhood outcomes would either remain unchanged or decline over time, reflecting static or worsening conditions among stayers. Short-distance churning moves may be common, though long-distance opportunity moves would be infrequent. Movers, newcomers, and stayers would all be dissatisfied about their neighborhood circumstances.

Patterns of mobility and neighborhood change in most of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods roughly align with these stylized models. The White Center neighborhood and possibly Indianapolis appear to be functioning as incubators;<sup>13</sup> Des Moines and Oakland look like launch pads. Louisville, Milwaukee, Hartford, and part of Indianapolis all have attributes that correspond with isolating neighborhoods. San Antonio and Providence appear to be functioning as comfort zones for low-income households struggling under tough economic circumstances. And Denver appears to be at least in part a neighborhood of choice.



**TABLE 3**

Expected Patterns of Mobility and Neighborhood Change in Five Models

Models	Mobility	Components of Neighborhood Change			Characteristics of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers		
		Overall	Among stayers	Due to mobility	Family movers	Newcomers	Stayers
Incubator	Low	Improving	Improving	None	Many nearby attached	Many positive	Many attached positive
Launch pad	High	None	Improving	Worsening	Many up and out	Many positive	Many attached positive
Neighborhood of choice	High	Improving	None	Improving	Many churning	Many positive	Many attached positive
Comfort zone	Low	None or worsening	None or worsening	None	Many nearby attached	Many positive	Many attached positive
Isolating neighborhood	Moderate	None or worsening	None or worsening	None	Many churning	Many dissatisfied renters	Many dissatisfied

Despite this alignment with a typology of neighborhood functions, the full picture in each *Making Connections* neighborhood is more complex and messy. All exhibit characteristics that differ from their stylized models. And none unambiguously functions in the same way for all of its residents. For example, even in an incubator neighborhood, some residents feel isolated or dissatisfied and some movers appear to be churning. And even in an isolating neighborhood, some families are able to move up and out. In the following sections, we focus in turn on five *Making Connections* neighborhoods that most closely match the

stylized neighborhood models, highlight the complexities and contradictions within these neighborhoods, and suggest possible implications for community-change strategies.

### An Incubator for Many, But Instability Persists among Poor Renters

As table 4 illustrates, the White Center *Making Connections* neighborhood looks like an incubator in almost every respect. Stayers are experiencing modest

**TABLE 4**

The White Center Neighborhood and the Incubator Model

Incubator Model	Mobility	Components of Neighborhood Change			Characteristics of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers		
		Overall	Among stayers	Due to mobility	Family movers	Newcomers	Stayers
White Center	Low	No change, growing population	Improving modestly	No change	High churning; low up and out	High positive; low dissatisfied renters	High attached positive; low long-term older

declines in poverty and most are positive and attached to the neighborhood. The population is growing, but mobility does not appear to be contributing to the decline in poverty; the poverty rate among newcomers is essentially the same as among movers. Few movers appear to be up-and-out movers, and most newcomers are positive newcomers.

White Center differs from the stylized model of an incubator in one respect, however. A substantial share of movers (just over half) are churning movers. This category of mover has only lived in the neighborhood for a short time, is not strongly attached to it, moves only a short distance, and is not any more satisfied or optimistic about the new location. Thus, while White Center may be functioning as an incubator for many of its residents, it also exhibits residential churning for some families. Further analysis suggests that these churning movers are mostly young working families, often single parents, who rent homes and apartments. They are considerably more likely than White Center's stayers to be minorities or immigrants.<sup>14</sup>

Because so many of the households moving into White Center are positive newcomers, one might wonder whether the neighborhood is experiencing gentrification. However, poverty rates among newcomers are essentially the same as among movers. Further analysis shows that even the positive newcomers have lower average incomes than most stayers. Newcomers are also more likely to be minorities or immigrants than the neighborhood's stayers. However, the positive newcomers are much less likely to have children than stayers, which may sug-

gest an influx of singles and childless couples to the White Center neighborhood.

What strategies make sense under these circumstances? White Center already offers substantial assets that attract and retain residents who are positive about the neighborhood and attached to it. And the wellbeing of those who stay in the neighborhood is rising. Community initiatives should build on these assets and expand their reach so that more families can benefit. In particular, the large share of churning movers need targeted help to achieve greater stability. One strategy might be to target low-income families who rent homes and apartments in the neighborhood, reaching out to draw them into available services and activities, and expanding rental assistance, including short-term emergency assistance to help families remain in place longer. In addition, resident engagement and community-building efforts might explicitly work to engage the neighborhood's newcomers, including childless singles and couples. Many of these households appear very positive about the neighborhood and prepared to get involved and contribute to it. But these newcomers are by no means affluent; they too need help connecting to neighborhood-based services and supports.

### A Launch Pad, Although Many Residents May Be Happy to Stay

Des Moines's *Making Connections* neighborhood exhibits dynamics that match the model of a launch pad neighborhood (table 5). In particular, a large share of movers are up-and-out movers and few are

**TABLE 5**  
The Des Moines Neighborhood and the Launch Pad Model

Launch pad	Mobility	Components of Neighborhood Change			Characteristics of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers		
		Overall	Among stayers	Due to mobility	Family movers	Newcomers	Stayers
Model	High	None	Improving	Worsening	Many up and out	Many positive	Many attached positive
Des Moines	Low	None, no change in total population	Improving modestly	No change	High up and out; low churning	High positive	High attached positive

churning movers. In addition, many newcomers are positive, although they do not appear to be substantially poorer than the households they are replacing. In addition, the flow of movers out of the Des Moines neighborhood is smaller than one might expect for a launch pad, the stayers' well-being appears to be improving, and many stayers are attached and positive.

In fact, Des Moines's up-and-out movers appear similar to positive stayers in many respects. A majority of both groups are renters; most are minorities, and most are native born. The up-and-out movers are somewhat more likely than the positive stayers to rent and somewhat more likely to be native born. So Des Moines may actually be functioning as a launch pad for some residents and an incubator for others.

However, not all Des Moines residents are experiencing positive change. In particular, low-income immigrants appear to be less well-served by the neighborhood. Churning movers have much lower incomes and are more likely to be immigrants than either the up-and-out movers or the stayers. And dissatisfied newcomers are more likely to be immigrants than the positive newcomers.

These findings suggest the need to build on existing neighborhood assets, but to explicitly extend them to reach immigrants living in and coming to the neighborhood. Currently, these households appear substantially less engaged, less positive about what the neighborhood has to offer, and less stable. Because they are immigrants and are more likely to move frequently, they may be left out of commu-

nity-building and resident-support networks. In addition, community-based work in such a neighborhood might help them retain connections with the up-and-out movers, effectively extending the network of engagement and support beyond the neighborhood boundaries.

### A Neighborhood of Choice, But Few Gains for Low-Income Residents

Denver's *Making Connections* neighborhood appears to be a neighborhood of choice. As shown in table 6, the neighborhood's poverty rate is declining but not due to any gains among stayers. Among stayers, the poverty rate remains unchanged, but newcomers to the neighborhood are much less likely to be poor than movers. Movers include both up-and-out movers and churning movers. However, Denver is home to a core of attached elderly stayers as well as many positive stayers.

Denver's positive newcomers have substantially higher incomes than any group of stayers or movers. They also have small households on average, with few children. However, the racial/ethnic composition of these positive newcomers does not differ dramatically from that of stayers, although the positive newcomers are more likely to be white, less likely to be Hispanic, and less likely to be immigrants than are movers. So the neighborhood as a whole probably is not undergoing dramatic racial/ethnic change, but the differences between newcomers and movers will gradually make the neighborhood more affluent and whiter, with fewer children present.

**TABLE 6**

The Denver Neighborhood and the Neighborhood of Choice Model

Neighborhood of choice	Mobility	Components of Neighborhood Change			Characteristics of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers		
		Overall	Among stayers	Due to mobility	Family movers	Newcomers	Stayers
Model	High	Improving	None	Improving	Many churning	Many positive	Many attached positive
Denver	Intermediate	Improving with no change in population	No change	Newcomers better off than movers	High up and out	High positive; but also dissatisfied renters	High long-term older

Finally, although roughly half of the newcomers to the Denver neighborhood are positive newcomers, a smaller but still substantial share are dissatisfied renters. These newcomers are much poorer, less likely to be working, more likely to be black or Hispanic, and more likely to be immigrants. Moreover, Denver has a large group of long-term older stayers. These households have children, high rates of joblessness, and very low incomes. They are more likely to be black or Hispanic than either the more affluent, positive stayers or the positive newcomers. Thus, at the same time that Denver is a neighborhood of choice, it also continues to serve a large population of needy households and can be characterized as moving toward a more diverse income mix.

Such neighborhood dynamics challenge community-based strategies to engage the positive newcomers, so that they may become active participants and contribute to improvements that benefit residents who are still struggling economically. Many positive newcomers express strong attachment to the neighborhood and optimism about its future. Actively reaching out to them and involving them in ongoing community-building activities and social networks may enable a neighborhood like Denver's to capitalize on their resources and influence to the benefit of the neighborhood as a whole. Yet potential gains from these positive newcomers must be balanced against the risks of future displacement and efforts may be needed to preserve affordable housing and stabilize the income mix.

## A Comfort Zone Despite Worsening Economic Outcomes

The *Making Connections* neighborhood in San Antonio corresponds closely to the model of a comfort zone. As table 7 illustrates, economic outcomes are deteriorating in the neighborhood as a whole, both because stayers are getting poorer and because newcomers are worse off than movers. Although the rate of mobility is low, the neighborhood's total population is declining. A substantial share of movers are churning movers, but the share of nearby attached movers is also high, and most stayers are either positive and attached or long-term older stayers. In other words, many residents appear to be attached to and positive about the San Antonio neighborhood, even though their economic outcomes are deteriorating.

Most of the San Antonio neighborhood's residents are Hispanic, and the Hispanic residents appear most likely to be attached to and positive about it. More specifically, almost all the neighborhood's stayers are Hispanic, as are the nearby attached movers. In contrast, nearby disconnected movers are almost all black.

These findings suggest that the San Antonio *Making Connections* neighborhood may function as a comfort zone for its Hispanic residents, though larger structural factors in the economy prevent much economic advancement. Hispanic residents appear to have established strong social networks and community activities that they enjoy and value. But these neighborhood assets may not be capable of

**TABLE 7**  
The San Antonio Neighborhood and the Comfort Zone Model

Comfort zone	Mobility	Components of Neighborhood Change			Characteristics of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers		
		Overall	Among stayers	Due to mobility	Family movers	Newcomers	Stayers
Model	Low	None or worsening	None or worsening	None	Many Nearby attached	Many positive	Many attached positive
San Antonio	Low	Worsening and losing population	Worsening	Newcomers worse off than movers	High churning and high nearby attached; low up and out	All 3 types of newcomers	High positive; low dissatisfied

compensating for low wages and insecurity in the entry-level labor market. These dynamics suggest that community-based initiatives may not always be able to tackle the larger barriers undermining residents' well-being, and have to work in concert with larger policy-change strategies designed to address structural challenges of employment and income.

### Isolating Despite a Big Drop in the Neighborhood Poverty Rate

The *Making Connections* neighborhood in Louisville suffers from a higher rate of poverty than any other neighborhood. And even though the poverty rate dropped 11 points over a three-year period, the Louisville neighborhood continues to suffer from severe distress and its dynamics correspond in many troubling respects to the hypothesized characteristics of an isolated neighborhood (table 8). The neighborhood is losing population (in part because a large public housing development was demolished and will ultimately be redeveloped), and the decline in poverty is entirely attributable to the loss of population, with movers disproportionately poor. The poverty rate among stayers remained unchanged. Moreover, few movers are up-and-out movers, few newcomers are positive newcomers, and few stayers are positive stayers.

Despite this generally discouraging picture, a large share of the neighborhood's movers remain nearby and appear attached to the community. These nearby attached movers appear slightly better off than the churning movers; they are a little older,

more likely to be employed, and have fewer children. But although the share of nearby attached movers is high compared with the other *Making Connections* neighborhoods, this group is actually outnumbered in Louisville by the much needier churning movers. The Louisville neighborhood is also home to a large group of older attached stayers. These are families who have long lived in the community and are strongly attached to it. In Louisville, these older stayers typically have children but do not work and are extremely low income.

Given its current dynamics, the Louisville neighborhood might be experiencing a continuing downward spiral of poverty, disinvestment, and distress. But it might also be a good candidate for equitable redevelopment strategies. Presumably, demolition of the public housing project is a first step toward development of new, higher-quality housing that serves a wider mix of incomes (including public housing residents). Because the neighborhood has lost population, it should have room to grow by attracting new residents, without risk of displacement. The challenge will be to provide quality housing and neighborhood amenities that attract moderate- and middle-income households while also providing the services and supports that current residents need to increase their employment and earnings prospects. In particular, the neighborhood's long-term older stayers and its churning movers are extremely needy. A mixed-income redevelopment strategy probably would not help these families unless it is accompanied by tangible supports for both adults and children.

**TABLE 8**  
The Louisville Neighborhood and the Isolating Neighborhood Model

Isolating neighborhood	Mobility	Components of Neighborhood Change			Characteristics of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers		
		Overall	Among stayers	Due to mobility	Family movers	Newcomers	Stayers
Model	Moderate	None or worsening	None or worsening	None	Many churning	Many dissatisfied renters	Many dissatisfied
Louisville	High	Improving but losing population	No change	Out-movers much worse off than stayers or newcomers	High nearby attached	High low-income retirees; low positive	High long-term older; low positive



## Summary and Implications for Community Initiatives

### THE CROSS-NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY

conducted as part of the Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative provides a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of residential mobility from the perspectives of both neighborhoods and families. This analysis reinforces findings from past research about high rates of residential mobility, but also offers new insights on patterns of mobility and their implications for neighborhood change in low-income communities located in 10 very different cities. This concluding section summarizes key findings and then discusses what they suggest about the different ways low-income neighborhoods work for families and how community initiatives might tailor their strategies in response.

### Summary of Findings

Across all 10 neighborhoods, we found high rates of residential mobility. Roughly half the families with children who lived in the neighborhoods at the time of the first survey wave had moved to a new address three years later. Although this finding is by no means new, its significance is frequently overlooked by community-based initiatives and local practitioners. Efforts to improve the well-being of families and children by strengthening conditions in poor neighborhoods cannot simply assume that families will remain in one place long enough to benefit fully. However, many of the *Making Connections* movers remained nearby. In fact, some families probably changed addresses without changing neighborhoods (as they perceive or define them). These nearby movers may retain social connections in their origi-

nal neighborhoods and may still participate in activities and services there. This finding highlights an opportunity for community-based initiatives to continue serving families that move but remain nearby.

Moreover, our findings suggest that many of these nearby movers may need ongoing help. Almost half the *Making Connections* families that moved were classified as churning movers; they appear to be moving frequently, renting in different locations without establishing strong neighborhood attachments. These families tend to be young with very low incomes. This finding highlights the potential importance of housing assistance to community-based work. By reaching out to engage churning movers and helping them remain in place longer or by helping them move to opportunity neighborhoods, local initiatives could improve outcomes for these vulnerable families and their children.

But a move does not always signal problems. For a substantial minority of families, residential mobility represents a positive choice. Across the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, 3 of every 10 movers were up-and-out movers, often becoming homeowners in better neighborhoods where they were more satisfied and optimistic. In some cases, these up-and-out movers may simply be escaping from a bad environment; in other cases their moves may reflect the success of community-based services and supports that have helped them obtain the resources they needed to advance.

High rates of residential mobility mean that measuring gross changes in neighborhood outcomes can be misleading. A decline in a neighborhood's poverty rate or an increase in its employment rate does not

necessarily mean that the well-being of individual residents has improved. In fact, we find that neighborhood change is often the result of mobility—differences between the characteristics of movers and newcomers. In contrast, changes among stayers over a three-year period are generally small. Efforts to strengthen neighborhoods should acknowledge both the slow pace of change among stayers and the role played by the continuous flow of households into and out of neighborhoods.

That outcomes improved only slowly (if at all) among families that stayed in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods does not mean that they stayed unwillingly—unable to escape to better neighborhoods. In fact, across the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods, close to half of all stayers were attached to their neighborhoods and positive about their future. A much smaller share of stayers were unambiguously dissatisfied with their neighborhoods, remaining in place primarily because they lacked viable alternatives.

### **Making Neighborhoods Work Better for Families—Lessons for Policy and Practice**

Although it is instructive to classify low-income neighborhoods based on stylized models—incubator, launch pad, neighborhood of choice, comfort zone, and isolating neighborhood—the evidence from *Making Connections* teaches us that reality is far more complex. Although each *Making Connections* neighborhood roughly corresponds to one of these models, none of them performs in the same way for all their residents. All 10 have both up-and-out movers and churning movers, all 10 have both attached and dissatisfied stayers, and all 10 have both positive and dissatisfied newcomers. In other words, each neighborhood may be working in different ways for different residents. And the goal of community-based initiatives should be to strengthen neighborhoods' performance for all their residents: supporting up-and-out moves while reducing churning, supporting the attached stayers while improving the choices available to dissatisfied stayers, and engaging with both positive and dissatisfied newcomers to draw them into neighborhood networks and supports.

In particular, residential churning appears to pose a significant challenge in every type of neighborhood. This finding suggests that addressing “housing

instability” should receive more attention in efforts to improve low-income neighborhoods. Vulnerable families need help along many dimensions (from job training to mental health services), but recent evidence on programs serving chronically homeless people shows that addressing the housing instability first can make it easier to deal with other challenges. Expanding the availability of high-quality affordable housing, preserving the current stock of moderately priced rentals (most of which receive no subsidy), and helping families apply for and use available housing assistance can all contribute to greater housing stability and reduce churning. In addition, programs that provide short-term emergency assistance to prevent eviction, foreclosure, or a forced move could help vulnerable families remain in place even if long-term housing assistance is scarce.

The evidence from the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods also argues strongly for flexible and fluid definitions of neighborhood boundaries. Instead of focusing exclusively on households living within a defined geography, neighborhood-based services and supports should provide continuity for nearby movers, so that families can remain part of the community and receive uninterrupted services even if they have to change their address. Similarly, community-building efforts should sustain connections with families who move, including those moving up and out, broadening the social networks for those who choose to stay as well as for those relocating nearby.

Evidence and analysis from the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods demonstrate convincingly that the dynamics of residential mobility and neighborhood change pose critical challenges for community-change initiatives. Policymakers and practitioners should avoid the mistake of seeing neighborhoods as static areas within which a population of residents waits for services, supports, or opportunities. Instead, community-based interventions must focus on the characteristics and needs of households moving through a neighborhood as well as those of longer-term residents. And it may be unrealistic for every neighborhood initiative to create an incubator for all residents. Neighborhoods can also serve their residents well by offering a launch pad to better environments and opportunities. Understanding how a neighborhood is functioning today may help in defining realistic goals for improving its performance over time.

## APPENDIX

# A

## **Making Connections Neighborhood Information**

*Making Connections* is a decade-long community-change initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. It was designed to improve outcomes for children and families living in impoverished neighborhoods through strengthening their families' connections to economic opportunity, positive social networks, and effective services and supports. The initiative is being

implemented in selected low-income neighborhoods in 10 metropolitan areas across the country: Denver, Des Moines, Hartford, Indianapolis, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, Providence, San Antonio, and White Center. Table A.1 describes the size of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, presenting their population as of 2000 and their area in square miles.

**TABLE A.1**  
*Making Connections* Neighborhood Information

Neighborhood	Population	Area (sq. miles)
Denver	19,557	4.55
Des Moines	31,702	7.10
Hartford	39,698	5.28
Indianapolis	39,374	9.04
Louisville	18,746	2.65
Milwaukee	29,493	2.42
Oakland	25,271	1.95
Providence	38,718	3.38
San Antonio	133,646	24.37
White Center	28,373	6.16
Median	30,598	4.92

Source: Population data from the 2000 Decennial Census.



## APPENDIX

# B

## Components of Neighborhood- Change Methodology

Using data from waves 1 and 2 of the *Making Connections* survey, we develop a new method to determine the components of neighborhood change. This analysis is not focused on changes for people per se, but on changes in a place as influenced by changes for (and of) people. We divide neighborhood change in poverty into its three components. Stayers—the households that remained at the same home—contribute to changes in neighborhood poverty by switching from being poor to nonpoor, or the reverse, between the two survey waves. Mobility contributes to changes in neighborhood poverty when those exiting and entering the neighborhood are differentially poor. Finally, a shift in the relative share of the residents who are stayers or movers changes each groups' contribution to overall neighborhood poverty.

To do so, we restricted the *Making Connections* sample to cases where an interview was completed in a housing unit at both waves, or where a housing unit was not occupied or did not exist at one of the waves and an interview was completed at the other wave. By these criteria, we excluded 311 cases, leaving a sample of 5,980 at wave 1 across all 10 neighborhoods. In running sensitivity tests on the restricted sample and comparing it with the full sample, we found minimal statistical differences between them. In the end, we only included 9 of the 10 *Making Connections* neighborhoods in this analysis; in Hartford, the neighborhood boundaries were changed between the two survey waves, so that the sample is too small to reliably measure changes for those who moved or stayed within the redefined boundaries.

The restricted sample enabled us to classify wave 1 and wave 2 respondents into two categories: those who stayed and moved. Movers can be further sub-

divided into those who left the neighborhood (movers) and those who joined it (newcomers). At wave 1, our sample includes stayers and movers, and at wave 2, the panel includes stayers and newcomers, where the newcomers live in units either vacated by wave 1 movers or vacant or not existent at wave 1. For the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, we separate the change in neighborhood poverty into its three components. Changes in poverty for stayers, as a result of mobility and due to changes in their relative size, are additive; they may move in the same direction or they may offset each other.

In calculating the change in poverty among stayers, we determine the share who improved (fell below the federal poverty level at wave 1 but were above it at wave 2), the share who worsened (were above the federal poverty level at wave 1 but were below it at wave two), and the share whose poverty status did not change.

As described in section two, the considerable size of out- and in-flows has great potential to change neighborhoods. In measuring the change in poverty due to mobility, we calculate differences in the characteristics of movers (at wave 1) and newcomers (at wave 2) for each housing unit present at both waves. Where a housing unit was present at either survey wave but vacant or nonexistent at the other, we also include the household's poverty status in our calculations.

By definition, each neighborhood has the same number of stayers at both waves. But in each of the 10 cases, the number of newcomers and movers were not the same, meaning the neighborhood's population was different at wave 2 than at wave 1. This difference in population had to be accounted for when

we calculated the components of change. For example, in a neighborhood with fewer newcomers than movers, population declines. As a result at wave 2, stayers represent a larger proportion of the neighborhood than they did at wave 1. Therefore, stayers contribute to overall neighborhood change by changing their personal circumstances and also by increasing their share of the neighborhood's population.

Using this information, we defined the following terms accordingly:

- $P_1$  = Neighborhood poverty rate at wave 1
- $P_2$  = Neighborhood poverty rate at wave 2
- $s_1$  = Poverty rate of stayers at wave 1
- $s_2$  = Poverty rate of stayers at wave 2
- $m_1$  = Poverty rate of movers (wave 1)
- $m_2$  = Poverty rate of newcomers (wave 2)
- $t_{s1}$  = Number of stayers in the neighborhood at wave 1
- $t_{s2}$  = Number of stayers in the neighborhood at wave 2
- $t_{m1}$  = Number of movers in the neighborhood at wave 1
- $t_{m2}$  = Number of newcomers in the neighborhood at wave 2

We defined each group's share of population as

- (1)  $w_{s1} = t_{s1} / (t_{s1} + t_{m1})$  = Share of wave 1 population that are stayers
- $w_{s2} = t_{s2} / (t_{s2} + t_{m2})$  = Share of wave 2 population that are stayers
- $w_{m1} = t_{m1} / (t_{s1} + t_{m1})$  = Share of wave 1 population that are movers
- $w_{m2} = t_{m2} / (t_{s2} + t_{m2})$  = Share of wave 2 population that are newcomers

Neighborhood poverty is

- (2)  $P_1 = w_{s1}s_1 + w_{m1}m_1$
- $P_2 = w_{s2}s_2 + w_{m2}m_2$

The change in neighborhood poverty is

- (3)  $P_2 - P_1 = w_{s2}s_2 + w_{m2}m_2 - w_{s1}s_1 - w_{m1}m_1$

The change in poverty for stayers is

- (4)  $\Delta s_{12} = s_2 - s_1$

The difference in poverty between movers and newcomers is

- (5)  $\Delta m_{12} = m_2 - m_1$

The change in each group's share of the population is

- (6)  $\Delta w_{s1s2} = w_{s2} - w_{s1}$
- $\Delta w_{m1m2} = w_{m2} - w_{m1}$

Substituting equations 4, 5, and 6 into equation 3 yields

- (7)  $P_2 - P_1 = (w_{s1} + \Delta w_{s1s2})s_2 + (w_{m1} + \Delta w_{m1m2})m_2 - w_{s1}(s_2 - \Delta s_{12}) - w_{m1}(m_2 - \Delta m_{12})$

Rearranging and canceling terms produces the equation

- (8)  $P_2 - P_1 = w_{s1}\Delta s_{12} + w_{m1}\Delta m_{12} + \Delta w_{s1s2}s_2 + \Delta w_{m1m2}m_2$

These final terms measure the three components of neighborhood change. The first term ( $w_{s1}\Delta s_{12}$ ) is the contribution of change in poverty among stayers (holding their population share constant at the wave 1 level). The second term ( $w_{m1}\Delta m_{12}$ ) is the change in neighborhood poverty attributable to the difference between movers and newcomers (holding their population share constant at the wave 1 level). Combined, the final two terms are the change in neighborhood poverty resulting from changes in population ratios ( $\Delta w_{s1s2}s_2 + \Delta w_{m1m2}m_2$ ).

A limitation arises in classifying respondents into the mover and newcomer categories. Due to sample constraints, movers without children were not surveyed at wave 2, and therefore we do not know whether they moved out of the neighborhood or to a different unit within the same neighborhood. Therefore, some respondents may be misclassified as movers when in fact they remained within the neighborhood. Like with movers, newcomers include households that moved into a unit that was previously vacant, nonexistent, or occupied by another household between wave 1 and wave 2. We did not survey these households at wave 1 and do not know whether they moved from outside the neighborhood or from a different unit within the neighborhood. Therefore, this analysis may misclassify some households as newcomers to the neighborhood when in fact they moved from within the neighborhood's boundaries. As a sensitivity test of this analysis, we reclassified those families with children who moved out of their residence but remained within the *Making Connections* neighborhood as stayers. This accommodation did not alter the findings.



## Cluster Analysis of Movers, Newcomers, and Stayers Methodology

### Variable Definitions

Based on the literature cited in the text, we identified variables in the *Making Connections* survey that represented factors that could affect the chances that a household would move or stay in their housing unit between the two waves of the survey. Table C.1 lists these variables and their definitions. Newcomers were only interviewed in wave 2, so the cluster analysis for newcomers involves a more limited set of variables.

The first group of variables is proxies for life-cycle events that may trigger a move or that capture stages in the life cycle that are associated with the chances of moving. For example, although households with children are generally more stable, gaining or losing children may trigger the need for more or less space. Similarly, the addition or departure of a spouse or partner may influence the desire or ability to relocate.

The second set of variables relates to employment and income. Change in employment status may trigger a move, due to either location of the job or its effect on income. Financial hardships may bring on a housing crisis while financial improvements may make possible a move to a better situation.

Homeownership and housing subsidies are a third set of variables used in the analysis. Homeowners and households with subsidies are expected to move less often, but changing tenure is a possible reason for a move.

Fourth, several variables were chosen as measures for perceived neighborhood quality. Dissatisfaction with neighborhood quality could serve as a push fac-

tor for movers while a positive view of the neighborhood might be a pull factor for newcomers and stayers.

Fifth, we included several measures of attachment to the neighborhood, anticipating that it might be strongest among stayers and that movers who only went short distances or who were forced to move for other reasons might also show high attachment.

Sixth, several measures of neighborhood conditions from American Community Survey and Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data were included to distinguish movers who improved their neighborhood circumstances from those who did not. Finally, the distance of the move was included as a variable to distinguish movers who remained nearby from those who moved further away. Based on theoretical considerations and availability of data, each cluster model differed in some respects in the waves of data available and the variable specification.

The final measure captures the distance households moved between wave 1 and wave 2. The variable is specified as the log distance of the move, in miles.

### Cluster Analysis

The statistical procedure adopted to analyze this set of variables is *cluster analysis*. Cluster analysis is an exploratory data-analysis procedure that classifies cases into a smaller number of mutually exclusive groups based on their similarity on a set of measures. Several algorithms are available for clustering, but all rely on mathematical measures of distances among the cases on the variables.<sup>15</sup> Cases with

**TABLE C.1**  
Variable Definitions

Variable	Definition	Movers with children	Newcomers	Stayers
<b>Demographic</b>				
Age	Respondent's age at time of survey—continuous	W1	W2	W1
Age of youngest child	Age of youngest child	W2	W2	W2
Joined spouse	Respondent's spouse or partner was not present in household at wave 1 but is present at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Left or lost spouse	Respondent's spouse or partner was present in household at wave 1 but is not present at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Spouse or partner present	Respondent's spouse or partner is present in household at time of survey—Yes/No			
Change in number of children	Children left or entered the household; this is the difference in the number of children in the household between wave 2 and wave 1—continuous	W1 to W2 change		
Number of children	The number of children present in the household—continuous		W2	W1
<b>Employment, income, and distress</b>				
Got job	Respondent and or spouse not employed at wave 1 and respondent and/or spouse employed at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Lost job	Respondent and or spouse employed at wave 1 and respondent and/or spouse not employed at wave 1 at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Employed	Childless movers and newcomers: respondent and/or spouse employed at time of survey. Stayers: respondent and/or spouse employed at wave 1 and at wave 2—Yes/No		W2	W1 and W2
Not employed	Childless movers and newcomers: respondent and/or spouse not employed at time of survey. Stayers: respondent and or spouse not employed at wave 1 and wave 2—Yes/No		W2	W1 and W2
Income	Total household income—continuous	W2	W2	W2
Difficulty housing costs	Household had difficulty paying their housing costs, and/or utilities for the household were disrupted by nonpayment of bills—Yes (if either or both are true)/No to both	W1	W2	W2
<b>Homeownership and housing subsidy</b>				
Became a homeowner	Respondent rented housing unit at wave 1 and was a homeowner or was in the process of homebuying at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		

**TABLE C.1**  
Variable Definitions (*Continued*)

Variable	Definition	Movers with children	Newcomers	Stayers
Became a renter	Respondent was a homeowner at or was in the process of homebuying at wave 1 and was a renter at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Homeowner	Respondent was a homeowner or was in the process of homebuying—Yes/No		W2	W1
Kept subsidized housing	Household received subsidy for housing cost in wave 1 and wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Lost subsidized housing	Household received housing subsidy in wave 1 but did not at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Gained subsidized housing	Household did not receive subsidy at wave 1 but received subsidy at wave 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Never had subsidized housing	Household did not receive subsidy at either wave 1 or 2—Yes/No	W1 to W2 change		
Subsidized housing	Household had subsidized housing at the time of the survey—Yes/No		W2	W1
<b>Neighborhood services and future</b>				
Perceived safe neighborhood	Difference in combined scale based on how safe respondent feels in neighborhood between wave 2 and wave 1: neighborhood is safe for children, safe in home at night, safe in neighborhood during the day, would help someone asking for directions, children go trick or treating, most criminal activity in committed by people who live outside of the neighborhood—ordinal	W1 to W2 change	W2	W1
School satisfaction	Difference in satisfaction with child's school for respondents with children between wave 2 and wave 1 (focus child responses used in wave 2)—ordinal	W1 to W2 change	W2	W1
<b>Neighborhood attachment</b>				
Neighborhood involvement	Combined scale variable at time of survey based on neighborhood-attachment variables: respondent attends neighborhood events, respondent volunteers in neighborhood, respondent gets together with neighbors to resolve community problems—ordinal	W1	W2	W1

(continued)

**TABLE C.1**  
Variable Definitions (*Continued*)

Variable	Definition	Movers with children	Newcomers	Stayers
Know child's friends	Does respondent know none, some, or most of their child's friends, for respondents with children at time of survey (focus child responses used in wave 2)—ordinal	W1	W2	W1
Years in neighborhood	Combined years and months lived in the neighborhood at wave 1—continuous	W1		W1
<b>Neighborhood conditions (external measures)</b>				
Poverty rate of census tract	Change between the 1999 poverty rate of wave 2 tract and the 1999 poverty rate of the wave 1 tract—continuous	1999 to 1999		change
Percent minority of census tract	Change between the 1999 percent minority of wave 2 tract and the 1999 percent minority of the wave 1 tract. Percent minority is determined by subtracting by the percent of white population in 1999 from the total population—continuous	1999 to 1999		change
Median home loan amount of tract	Change in the median home loan amount between the 2005 wave 2 tract to the 2002 wave 1 tract. Median home loan amount is defined as the median mortgage amount for home purchase loans—continuous	2002 to 2005		change
<b>Move distance</b>				
Distance of move	Log of distance of move	W1 to W2		

shorter distances on the set of variables are grouped together. This does not mean that every household in a given cluster is exactly the same in every respect, but they are more similar to households in the same cluster than to households in other clusters. Note that the goal of the cluster analysis is not to explain rates of mobility but to identify and describe different types of movers, newcomers, and stayers. The cluster analysis was conducted separately for moves, newcomers, and stayers. We determined the number of clusters by examining several statistical criteria<sup>16</sup> and by evaluating how the clusters differed on each variable used in the analysis. Each cluster was then described relative to all the others by determining which variable captured distinctive characteristics of the cluster.

### Movers with Children

For movers with children, three clusters were identified. Table C.2 shows how the three clusters differ on selected variables.

With respect to life-cycle factors, families in the churning cluster are young, are growing (in terms of children), and are losing some adults in the household. Movers in the nearby attached cluster are older and have declining family sizes. Up-and-out movers are also young but have slightly older children and are gaining more adults in the household than the other two clusters. Thus, churning movers and up-and-out movers may be feeling pressure from increased housing needs, but up-and-out movers

**TABLE C.2**

## Selected Characteristics of Households in the Movers with Children Cluster

	Churning movers	Nearby attached movers	Up-and-out movers	Weighted average
<b>Life-cycle factors</b>				
Respondent age (mean)	28.0	40.9	32.4	32.5
Age of youngest child (mean)	3.57	10.38	5.79	5.88
Change number of children (mean)	0.53	-0.27	0.21	0.24
Added adult to household (%)	9	5	18	11
Lost adult from household (%)	16	16	6	13
<b>Employment and income</b>				
Employed, W1 (%)	70	69	78	72
Household income, W2 (median \$)	14,000	15,000	28,000	16,000
Gained a job (%)	14	12	13	13
Lost a job (%)	14	17	5	12
Difficulty housing costs, W1 (%)	42	43	35	40
<b>Homeownership and housing subsidy (%)</b>				
Homeowner, W1	8	29	23	18
New homebuyer	10	9	26	15
Shifting to rental	2	19	7	8
Gained subsidy	12	16	7	12
Lost subsidy	13	12	16	14
<b>Neighborhood quality</b>				
Safety rating, W1 (mean)	4.33	4.74	3.72	4.24
Change in safety (mean)	0.16	-0.27	1.93	0.59
Neighborhood good for kids, W1 (%)	62	66	34	55
New neighborhood better for kids (%)	14	17	63	30
<b>Neighborhood attachment</b>				
Neighborhood involvement, W1 (mean)	0.57	1.3	0.72	0.79
Years in neighborhood, W1 (median)	2	7.5	3	3
<b>Neighborhood conditions (census tract)</b>				
Change in poverty rate (mean)	-4.78	-6.46	-22.33	-10.53
Change in percent minority (mean)	-6.8	-6.49	-38.42	-16.36
Increase in housing prices (median \$)	23,500	26,000	45,000	31,000
<b>Distance of move</b>				
Distance in miles (median)	1.66	1.14	5.77	2.17
Cases in cluster (%)	46	24	30	100

Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

may have more resources in terms of adult family members' support. Nearby attached movers appear more likely to downsize.

The clusters also differ on employment and income. In particular, up-and-out movers stand out as having more employment and income than the other two. Moreover, employment for nearby attached and up-and-out movers appears to be changing in opposite directions, with nearby attached

movers losing jobs while up-and-out movers are gaining jobs. Churning movers remain very low income and have more unemployed households.

The variables having to do with housing tenure suggest that nearby attached movers and up-and-out movers are also changing in opposite directions. Nearby attached movers show movement from homeowner to renter, while more up-and-out movers are becoming homeowners. Churning movers are

almost exclusively renters, and this does not change. Churning movers are holding steady in their housing subsidies, whereas up-and-out movers declined in the use of subsidies.

The indicators of neighborhood quality also differentiate the clusters. Up-and-out movers are the most dissatisfied with their old neighborhood, and they find their new neighborhood to be considerably safer and a better place to raise children. Nearby attached movers find their new neighborhood to be slightly less safe than their old one, while churning movers experience little change in perceived safety. However, a small minority of churning movers and nearby attached movers perceive that their new neighborhood is a better place for their children.

Neighborhood-attachment measures were stronger for nearby attached movers than for the other two clusters of movers. Nearby attached movers reported the most involvement in their old neighborhood and had lived there more than twice as long as either of the other clusters. Churning movers had the least involvement in their old neighborhoods along with the shortest stays.

Neighborhood conditions, as measured by economic and demographic data, also improved much more for up-and-out movers than for the other two clusters. Compared with their old neighborhoods, poverty rates for up-and-out movers fell almost four times as much, and the percentage of the minority population in the new neighborhood fell almost six times as much for the up-and-out movers cluster as the other two clusters. Although all neighborhoods saw rising housing prices between the two waves of the survey, home values in the up-and-out movers' neighborhoods nearly doubled (in constant dollars).

Finally, the clusters differed in the distance of their moves. Up-and-out movers relocated at considerably greater distances from their original addresses. Nearby attached movers went the shortest distances to find a new home. Churning movers moved somewhat farther but still remained in the same neighborhood and in distressed conditions.

### Newcomer Households

Next, we focus on households moving into homes and apartments in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods. For these households, the *Making Connections* survey provides only wave 2 information; we do not

know where these households lived before or how their circumstances have changed.<sup>17</sup> However, we can explore factors that may have pushed or pulled them into their current location, including age and number of children, employment and income, housing tenure and subsidy status, affordability problems, and perceptions of the neighborhood and attachment to it.

Just as we found for movers, newcomers are diverse with respect to these factors, suggesting that they have moved in response to different circumstances. We hypothesized that some may be moving because they see the neighborhood as an opportunity or a step up, while others may be moving involuntarily, due to economic insecurity or the absence of better options.

Cluster analysis yields three categories of newcomers distinguished on the factors shown in table A.4. First, focusing on life-cycle factors, the clusters differ in the household members' ages. Dissatisfied renter families are the youngest and have young children. Low-income retirees are mainly childless<sup>18</sup> and older. Households in the positive newcomer cluster are slightly older than low-income retirees but many still have young children at home.

The newcomer clusters differ markedly in their employment rates. Almost all households in the positive newcomers cluster (97 percent) have an employed adult, whereas almost no low-income retirees (9 percent) have employed adults. Incomes vary too, with positive newcomers having the highest income and low-income retirees the lowest. However, dissatisfied renter families stand out with difficulty paying for housing (an indicator of financial distress), with more than half having trouble paying housing costs. This is related to dissatisfied renter families' extremely low rate of homeownership and only modest housing subsidies. The highest rates of homeownership (37 percent) are among newcomers in the positive-newcomers cluster and the highest levels of subsidy (35 percent) are in the low-income retirees cluster (35 percent).

Newcomers in the dissatisfied renter families cluster rate their neighborhoods as extremely low quality relative to the other two clusters, which do not differ significantly. For example, while only 26 percent of dissatisfied renter families see their neighborhood as a good place to raise children, 81 percent of



**TABLE C.3**

## Selected Characteristics of Households in the Newcomers Cluster

	Dissatisfied renter newcomers	Low-income retired newcomers	Positive newcomers	Weighted average
Life-cycle factors				
Respondent age (mean)	30.8	53.1	36.6	38.4
Age of youngest child (mean)	3.65	10.51	7.01	5.52
Number of children (mean)	1.91	0.3	0.78	1.08
Adults in household (mean)	1.64	1.8	1.52	1.63
Employment and income				
Employed, (%)	67	9	97	66
Household income (median \$)	12,000	7,500	30,000	15,000
Difficulty housing costs (%)	51	33	21	35
Homeownership and housing subsidy (%)				
Homeowner	4	19	37	21
Housing subsidy	22	35	2	17
Neighborhood quality				
Safety rating (mean)	3.62	4.85	5.04	4.48
Neighborhood good for kids (%)	26	72	81	59
Neighborhood attachment				
Neighborhood involvement (mean)	0.47	0.72	0.87	0.69
Years in neighborhood (median)	1	2	2	2
Neighborhood conditions (census tract)				
Poverty rate (mean)	36.44	34.27	29.95	33.3
Percent minority (mean)	78.02	74.31	69.77	73.8
Cases in cluster (%)	36	24	40	100

Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

positive newcomer families rate their neighborhoods as good for children. A similar pattern is shown in the neighborhood involvement scores, where positive newcomers have the highest level and dissatisfied renter families the lowest. With respect to neighborhood conditions, positive newcomers live in census tracts with poverty rates a few points lower than the other clusters and lower concentrations of minorities.

### Stayer Households

Finally, we turn to the households that stayed at their original addresses. For these households, the survey provides two waves of information about both families with children and childless households, including a wide range of factors that might have made them want to stay as well as factors that might have limited their options for leaving. Specifically, we considered

respondent age and number of children; employment status, income, and difficulty paying housing costs; housing tenure and subsidy status; and perceptions of the neighborhood and attachment to it.

Like movers and newcomers, stayers prove to be diverse across these factors, suggesting that reasons for staying may differ significantly. We hypothesized that some are staying because they are attached to the neighborhood and want to live there, while others are staying because they lack the resources to move to a neighborhood they would prefer. Therefore, we again applied cluster analysis to identify and describe categories of stayers. This analysis reveals three distinct groups of households staying in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods.

Table C.4 displays the difference between the clusters on the selected variables. Long-term older stayers are older than the other two clusters and have a

**TABLE C.4**

## Selected Characteristics of Households in the Stayers Cluster

	Dissatisfied stayers	Long-term older stayers	Positive stayers	Weighted average
Life-cycle factors (mean)				
Respondent age	38.9	63.8	41.3	47.7
Age of youngest child	6.73	9.21	8.08	7.83
Change number of children	0.14	-0.16	-0.04	0
Adults in household, W1	1.57	1.71	1.42	1.54
Employment and income				
Employed, W1 (%)	79	20	95	69
Household income, W2 (median \$)	20,000	10,000	30,000	20,000
Difficulty housing costs, W1 (%)	39	14	19	22
Homeownership and housing subsidy (%)				
Homeowner, W1	39	56	68	58
Housing subsidy, W1 and W2	17	18	3	11
Neighborhood quality				
Safety rating, W1 (mean)	3.36	4.83	5.12	4.64
Neighborhood good for kids, W1 (%)	15	80	93	72
Neighborhood attachment				
Neighborhood involvement, W1 (mean)	0.76	0.81	0.89	0.83
Years in neighborhood (median)	6	24	10	11
Neighborhood conditions (census tract)				
Poverty rate, W1 (mean)	32.49	32.14	28.88	30.68
Percent minority, W1 (mean)	77.26	82.1	77.91	79.07
Increase in housing prices (median)	15,500	10,500	10,500	11,000
Cases in cluster (%)	22	31	47	100

Source: *Making Connections* cross-site data, waves 1 and 2.

decreasing number of children in the home. Indeed, a much smaller percentage have any children in the home by wave 2 than do the other two clusters.

The three clusters differ significantly from one another in income and employment status. Long-term older stayers have very low income and employment rates but not as much trouble paying for housing costs as dissatisfied stayers, perhaps because more of them have paid down their mortgages. Positive stayers are better off economically than the others, while dissatisfied stayers are the most economically distressed.

Housing tenure is another factor that differentiates the clusters. Positive stayers have a high proportion of homeowners and a low proportion of households with subsidies. Dissatisfied stayers have the lowest

homeownership rates among stayers and the highest subsidy rate. The long-term older stayers cluster lies somewhere in between.

With respect to neighborhood quality, dissatisfied stayers are significantly different from the other two clusters. The poor ratings they give on neighborhood safety and the neighborhood as a good place to raise children stand out. Although the stayer clusters do not differ significantly in neighborhood involvement, they do differ in how long they stay in the neighborhood, with long-term older stayers having significantly longer duration than the other two groups. There are no significant differences among the stayer clusters in neighborhood conditions, with the exception of the mean housing price increases, which were largest for dissatisfied stayers.



## Notes

1. For more information on this initiative, see <http://www.aecf.org/Home/MajorInitiatives/MakingConnections.aspx>.
2. The process of selective mobility is complicated, though, because it is not simply a collection of individual decisions but is also influenced by macro forces including public policy, housing markets, economic shifts, and racial segregation. Particular attention in the research literature has been given to the problem of concentrated poverty, which grew markedly in the 1970s and 1980s, partly due to selective departure of the nonpoor but also due to the declining wages of many blacks, whose movement was already constrained by racial segregation (Jargowsky and Bane 1991; Massey, Gross, and Shibuya 1994).
3. These areas are larger than traditionally defined neighborhoods. The median size is 4.9 square miles, with a median population of 30,598. See appendix A for neighborhood-by-neighborhood information.
4. Although these areas may differ from what are traditionally perceived to be neighborhoods, we use the term *neighborhood* to describe them for readability and consistency with the wider literature.
5. Because the *Making Connections* initiative focuses on the well-being of families with children, childless households that moved between survey waves were not reinterviewed at their new addresses.
6. Households have been classified as non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnicity. For the remainder of this report, the term “white” refers to non-Hispanic whites and the term “black” refers to non-Hispanic blacks.
7. In the second wave of the *Making Connections* survey, interviewers returned to the same sample of residential addresses that they interviewed at wave 1. If the focus child from the wave 1 interview was no longer living at that address (and was not yet over 18 years of age), the wave 1 household was classified as a *mover* and interviewed at its new address. The household currently living at the original sample address was classified as a *newcomer*, even though it is possible that some members of the wave 1 household still remained.
8. Oakland is the only *Making Connections* city in which the share of movers was higher among childless households (60.6 percent) than among families with children (59.0 percent).
9. Note that the *Making Connections* survey does not provide information on the destinations for childless households that moved. Households where the focus child from wave 1 was no longer under 18 also were not interviewed in their new locations.
10. The number of households living in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods was estimated for each survey wave based on the number of residential addresses (obtained from Postal Service records) and the share of sampled addresses that were occupied.
11. For example, in a neighborhood with fewer newcomers than movers, population declines. As a result, at wave 2, stayers represent a larger proportion of the neighborhood than they did at wave 1. Therefore, stayers contribute to neighborhood change by changing their personal circumstances and by increasing their share of the neighborhood’s population.

12. Because the *MC* survey did not reinterview childless households that moved between survey waves, our analysis of movers is limited to families with children.
13. The Indianapolis *Making Connections* site is difficult to classify because it is actually two different neighborhoods that appear to be changing in opposite directions on many indicators. Due to sample size limitations, we are not able to analyze these two neighborhoods separately, but the combined results do not reflect either neighborhood's circumstances well.
14. We compared basic demographic and socioeconomic characteristics for the various clusters of movers, stayers, and newcomers in each site. Although the sample sizes are small and results must be interpreted with caution, here we highlight major differences that appear to be robust.
15. The method used in this analysis is a nonhierarchical cluster technique known as k-means and relies on Euclidean distances. It was chosen for this study because it is suitable for variables that are continuous or categorical. After standardizing the input variables using the Jaccard coefficient, we conducted this analysis using the FASTCLUS procedure in SAS.
16. The number of clusters was determined by looking for the maximum value of the pseudo-F statistic and the minimum of the  $R^2$  (Finch 2005).
17. As discussed earlier, we do not have wave 1 addresses for these newcomers; some may have lived nearby and considered themselves in the same neighborhood.
18. Note that the age of the youngest child in table C.3 reflects the mean age for households that have a child. However, the percentage of households with a child in the positive newcomer cluster is low (20.3 percent).



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