

THE ARTS, GENTRIFICATION, AND COLUMBUS, OHIO

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Allison R. Sweeney

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DEDICATIONS

Dedicated to Lynn and Jack Sweeney
My biggest fans, my favorite people, my amazing parents

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There are several individuals and organizations that must be acknowledged in contributing to the success of this thesis. Without these certain individuals and organizations, I would be absolutely be up stream without a paddle and left researching a topic that held no interest for me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	v
ABSTRACT	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
THE SHORT NORTH.....	11
THE SHORT NORTH ARTISTIC REVITALIZATION	19
FRANKLINTON.....	24
FRANKLINTON AND ARTISTIC REVITALIZATION	30
CONCLUSION	36

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1 – Map of the Short North Neighborhood

FIGURE 2 – Map of the Franklinton Neighborhood

ABSTRACT

Artistic revitalization is something that has the power to change the fate of any neighborhood, whether that be through economic development or gentrification. Comparing the results of interviews and quantitative research in this proposal leads to an investigative look at two different neighborhoods in Columbus, Ohio where such developments have taken place and are continuing to evolve. The Short North is an area known for its gentrified population and drastic artistic change that has turned the neighborhood into the arts district of Columbus. Franklinton is known as the poorest neighborhood in the city, yet one that is on the verge of this same artistic growth that the Short North has undergone.

Due to the act of displacement, one negative known consequence associated with the gentrification phenomenon, the research here was conducted to establish the role of the arts in this process. The data collected for this thesis has shown that though the arts and artists in each of these two neighborhoods were the pioneers of drastic economic movements, they are not directly to blame for the displacement of families in these two neighborhoods. The intervention of businesses and other economic factors are the driving force that takes the reins in the gentrification process. The arts in each respective neighborhood exist build the local economy through inclusion and community building.

INTRODUCTION

Columbus is an area of Ohio that has grown into a thriving market for the arts. Between the continued developments in the Short North, to the new arts district looking to make a home in East Franklinton, there has been a large focus on the arts in these two Columbus neighborhoods. Though the arts have had a lasting influence on the culture here, a rather serious discussion has emerged about their role in the displacement of low-income families due to gentrification. Listening to both sides of the argument has led me to discover for myself what exactly that role has been.

I have always been immersed in the arts and culture of the city. Being a Film Studies major only enhanced this overall artistic experience and enabled my professors and peers to show me all the great hidden art spots throughout the city. One of those spots, perhaps not so hidden, is the Short North. This strip of galleries, bars, restaurants, and boutiques that line the area between The Ohio State University (OSU) and downtown Columbus in some ways has become more culturally relevant than the downtown area itself. Watching this strip grow and develop over the years has only left me more interested in the process and the arts that are involved with it. Though these developments are overall positive for the city by bringing in tourism that invests funds directly into the city, it also proves an unwelcome sight to small business owners and families who can no longer afford their prime location in the district. Large business owners and corporations seem to be the individuals with everything to gain, while small local businesses are left to fear their rising rent costs.

After beginning my graduate studies I immersed myself with facts and field trips to Franklinton to do research for a project for a Creative Placemaking class. Located a short mile from downtown Columbus, it proved to be an area much different than that of the Short North. The poverty of the neighborhood stands out in every detail. From the vacant warehouses to the high crime volume, it holds a population with about 50% of residents below the poverty level (*Franklinton Neighborhood* 2012). Though the Short North came about naturally with no development plans to better the neighborhood, Franklinton is a planned cultural development district. With these impending developments, local residents will finally have easy access to fresh produce, an inclusive say in the future of their neighborhood, and the attention of Mayor Coleman to instill change. But with these changes, the looming fear of a gentrified neighborhood and corporate attention is not far behind. For the moment the residents of Franklinton have everything to gain, yet this may not be the case in twenty years.

After further research on the evidence and data surrounding gentrification, I have found few facts that relate to the culture of Columbus, Ohio and these two neighborhoods. It is understandable that each city's culture is different and they would therefore deal with redevelopment efforts in varied ways. Therefore putting these two Columbus neighborhoods under the microscope, and comparing their development efforts with like cities could only be beneficial to the overall conversation of gentrification and how to turn it into a positive process. This thesis is needed to provide solid evidence to add to the discussion of how the arts have contributed to gentrification here in Columbus.

Gentrification is a topic of discussion that many individuals from both the Short North, and Franklinton have on their minds. My research has shown that the Short North

is already a gentrified area, while Franklinton is showing early signs of this same path due to their extensive planned developments aimed at tourists. Diving into this research, engaging in progressive talks, and listening to the difference in opinion of the role of the arts in this process of displacement is where my interests really started to pique. Though I have only scratched the surface of ongoing research in this field, the future of these two neighborhoods will be a topic of conversation for years to come.

For the purpose of this study, I used an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design (Creswell 2013). This thesis takes an analytical and comparative look at two strong art districts in Columbus, the Short North and Franklinton. Before researching any qualitative data that lead to conclusions about the effects of gentrification, quantitative data needed to be researched and used as a template for future data collection and analysis. I therefore began with measuring Census data in the Short North and Franklinton, evaluating literature on the subject of gentrification and the role of the arts, and researched local publications dating back from the 1980s to present time that could offer any insight on these suggestions of displacement in each of these areas. Measuring solid quantitative data, such as average household income, and poverty levels in each neighborhood, helped me to specifically describe and measure changes in these two neighborhoods, and helped identify the presence of gentrification.

I then studied qualitative research with essential interviews to help me maintain and gain certain knowledge that can help fill in the gaps that the quantitative research left out. These extensive interviews with the experienced individuals I spoke with gave me the vast majority of information needed to complete this research. Jim Sweeney is the

Executive Director of the Franklinton Development Association who gave inside information on developments in Franklinton and his views on the artistic stimulation on the area. Chris Sherman is an artist and owner of a warehouse building that is home to many artist studio spaces. His long time residence in Franklinton and artistic roots in the area offered even more information to build on Sweeney's perspective of the ongoing work in Franklinton. The Executive Director of the Short North Alliance, Betsy Pandora, allowed a deep understanding of how the Short North has grown over the past 20 years and what the organization is doing to foster that growth across the neighborhood and city. Local long-time realtor, Joe Armeni, also added to this conversation by helping along the quantitative data of gentrification in the Short North and aiding in the understanding of how local businesses have helped in the process of artistic development. Local artist, advocate, and volunteer with the Columbus Children's Choir, Suzanne Accetta, offered her perspective as a mother, resident, and artist of Columbus for over 30 years. Walker Evans is the editor of a Columbus online publication called Columbus Underground. His long-time interest in the Franklinton Developments and Short North history furthered my understanding of where each community came from. Office manager, artist, and shop owner, Esther Hall, brought her experience in each of these fields and applied them to her understanding and dealings with both the Short North and Franklinton. Rex Brown is the Executive Director of Glass Axis, a nonprofit glass blowing gallery and art center that is relocating to Franklinton in the Fall 2014. He was happy to share his experience working with Mayor Coleman, and day-to-day dealings with the developments and move to Franklinton. Each of these interviews strongly encouraged my research in the field and can be considered primary resources for study.

Some limitations of this study include multiple factors with quantitative and qualitative data collection. The quantitative data has already been established to measure displacement and economic changes since urban revitalization efforts were initially put into place. Finding specific individuals to contribute to this conversation on census data would prove to be a lengthy and time-consuming challenge due to time, availability, and their willingness to participate. Therefore, most of the data produced about gentrification came from a quantitative source such as the Census website. First hand experiences came from the individuals that were interviewed. A main limitation of the qualitative data collection was finding individuals to speak to about gentrification. No one I interviewed was willing to admit to gentrification in their own area of interest, yet were quick to point the finger at other areas for displacement. Therefore, to not assume one or the other party was being facetious, I relied primarily on quantitative data, to make assumptions about gentrification. Another limitation came in the form of Census data itself. According to my research it is very difficult to pinpoint the specific neighborhoods of Franklinton and the Short North due to their numerous amount of zip codes. Therefore other sources aside from the Census website, such as City-data, had to be considered in the overall investigation of these neighborhoods and gentrification. Another limitation with the Census website came in the form of past research. It would have been quite beneficial to compare present to past data such as residential income and poverty levels, but that information was not available.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gentrification is a word that has multiple meanings and interpretations. Though these meanings are all important, for the purpose of this thesis I will be focusing on one aspect: displacement. Gentrification involves the displacement of low-income families into a lower-income area due to a large influx of residents and businesses (Smith 1979). This in turn raises demand for housing, therefore causing a rise in property value. Though the arts do many things to benefit and build an urban economy, in most cases their presence brings more artists and organizations to the area. Some claim this growth of artists to be through their own preference to be spatially present throughout cities (Markusen 2006). Their presence is also credited to artist employers and local markets that stimulate their work and their lifestyle. Through this assimilation with other artists and businesses, they can help maintain and boost an economy and therefore have been often credited with the rise in the cost of living and the displacement of low-income families to a lower-income area. Though gentrification brings with it positive notes through community revitalization, it also has negative aspects such as this displacement. It is a phenomenon that still remains a topic of conversation with city planners and theorists alike. These negative traits associated with gentrification lead many to pinpoint a cause and solution for this phenomenon. One of the fields involved in this process that many have theorized as to its role is the arts, artists, and creative minds. This literature review will focus on aspects that portray the arts as a main factor in gentrification, whether they are pinpointed as the cause, or the initiator of displacement.

There are two main ideas I will be focusing on in this review. These two main theories are that art/artists lead the gentrification wave, and the other boasts the theory that they are the innocent victims and have nothing to do with gentrification. The literature on this subject identifies certain areas both nationally and internationally that have experienced the negative effects of gentrification with the associated artist involvement. Though this information is extremely valuable and relevant to each different community, there has been no research on gentrification in the Columbus, Ohio region. Columbus is a city with much history instilled in the arts and development, and boasts an economy on the verge of extreme revitalization efforts that can therefore provide worthy information to add to the overall conversation on gentrification. Comparing and analyzing all of these specific cases, examining and understanding these two specific theories associated with arts-based gentrification, and comparing them with other cases throughout the nation, has built a solid framework for my research throughout Columbus. Local publications such as the Columbus Dispatch and Columbus Underground also provide ample proof of the city's relevancy in the overall conversation of gentrification on a national level.

Many believe that artists initiate this process of gentrification by taking over a poor area and investing in it, therefore pricing themselves out due to general interest and popularity (Zukin 2011). Many of these thoughts can be traced back to what many believe to be the most popular story of a gentrified neighborhood, SoHo and the intentional initiatives that took place there in the 1960s. According to *Are Artists to Blame for Gentrification* by Ben Davis, SoHo is one of the most popular, well-known cases of widespread gentrification initiated by artist George Maciunas (Davis 2013).

Artists were drawn to the area due to architectural buildings from WWII that left large open loft spaces for artists to use as studios. *Loft Living* by Sharon Zukin profiles this SoHo lifestyle and has created an exemplar of the general idea of life purely centered around the arts and the draw it brings to the city from outside neighborhoods (Zukin 1989). Due to this mainstream idea of gentrification based on this exceedingly popular story of an artist's initiative, it has been proven that they are the catalysts to this event.

In 2011, the National Endowment for the Arts *Artists and Art Workers in the United States* released an article stating that the median salary for artists in general entertainment jobs such as musicians, dancers, and choreographers, is just over \$28,000 (Nicodemus 2013). It is because of this example of a minimal salary that artistic individuals have to work with, which drives them to seek out cheap warehouse spaces in poor or "risky" areas where they can practice their craft. Artists begin this process because they are more willing to move into these areas, pay very low rent costs, and live in these often unsuitable conditions. But with this move they bring with them creativity and a freshness that is generally missing from an area and one that is needed to ensure its economic stimulation. From here businesses take hold, along with tourism, housing developers, realtors, etc. in this general pattern bringing with them rises in housing costs and rental properties (Smith 1979). In her book *Naked City*, consumer society and culture expert Sharon Zukin outlines the theory that these developments alienate and expunge those individuals who gave the community their identity in the first place: artists. When these cheap studio opportunities present themselves and artists inhabit the area, they help to provide a sense of culture and have the power to bring communities together. Though

they appear to be the starters of an endless flow of development, they inherently end up being victims themselves in the process.

Another strong voice to the aide of the arts in their lack of responsibility for gentrification is Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, an expert in creative placemaking and artist spaces. She speaks avidly for an artist's lack of responsibility for gentrification. In her article *Artists and Gentrification: Sticky Myths, Slippery Realities*, she addresses the accusation that artists are the "shock troops of gentrification" by explaining the opposite. She theorizes that artists are among those citizens who are more often than not affected by gentrification in a negative way, but who are also seeking out answers to the problems associated with gentrification (Nicodemus 2013). Nicodemus insists that the claim of artists as gentrifiers is something instilled in the brains of Americans ever since word of the SoHo effect, outlined by Zukin, started to spread. Nicodemus tells the story of artists being used more as pawns in an idea put into place by politicians and developers who see the benefit of artistic projects to boost an economically distressed area. These business-minded individuals use the arts because of their influence over a community, and how they have the power to establish presence in any given area. Though she does credit them with being the pioneers in these revitalization efforts, she does not put the full weight of displacement on their shoulders. It is, in fact, a collaborative effort with city officials who should be in the conversation of gentrification as well.

To coincide with the thoughts of Nicodemus, urban studies theorist Richard Florida has said that it is becoming cliché to blame artists for gentrification (Florida 2013). In recent years, artists have been put into the discussion of community building through creative placemaking efforts citing them among the "creative class". Florida

classifies these as young working professionals in an artistic, scientific, or creative field that flock to cities and help stimulate a post-industrial city with their special skill sets (Florida 2002). He credits them in being able to create new, exciting forums that interest a large set of individuals. This is how they pull other creative individuals into a city that may not be large or even popular at the time. Though Florida does see the arts as being a necessity to economic growth, he does specify the necessity of the creative class as well.

It is also very common for theorists to frankly blame the arts for gentrification. There is a large part of the conversation pertaining to the fact that artists are sometimes classified as “first stage gentrifiers”. This phrase comes from *Neighborhood Renewal: Middle Class Resettlement and Incumbent Upgrading in American Neighborhoods*. In this piece of literature, Phillip Clay offers up stages of gentrifiers in the process of displacement in inner city neighborhoods. He pinpoints artists as the first in this process by calling them the pioneers, and in turn being the most to blame in the displacement of neighborhoods.

The research that follows is part of an investigation to find the role that the arts play in the gentrification of these two Columbus neighborhoods. Though art initiatives were first on the scene in the Short North and Franklinton, and have since been a large catalyst of these revitalization efforts, they are not responsible for the continued developments or the displacement of residents. They continue to act as a community stimulant to better enrich and provide for the residents they serve.

THE SHORT NORTH

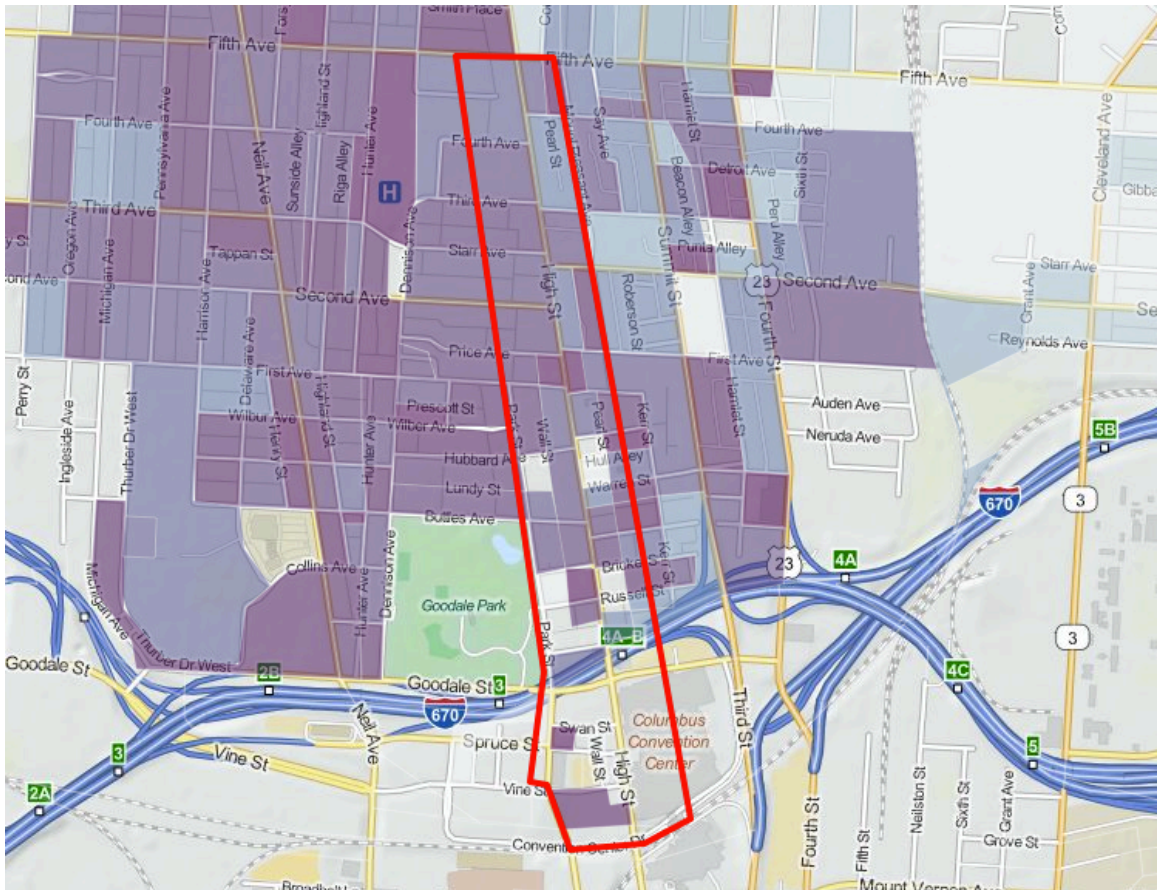


FIGURE 1- Map of the Short North Neighborhood (City Data)

One of the largest art districts in Columbus, Ohio is the Short North. An area of Columbus that connects downtown to The Ohio State University (OSU), it is known for the many galleries, restaurants and bars, and according to many interviewees, the

predominantly large empty nesters and LGBT¹ population. Due to the large urban growth consistently making way into these areas on High Street, there have been rises in the cost of properties, changes in residential demographic, and the consistent building of businesses. These are all characteristics of the displacement of low-income residents to lower income areas, or more commonly known as gentrification (Davis 2013). The research of the Short North outlined in the following chapter shows great evidence to support the idea that artists were the first on the scene here over 40 years ago. Through their many programs, organizations, and businesses they have provided a solid groundwork for the arts district and established a strong connection with the Short North community. They were the driving force that gave the neighborhood its identity and have continued to facilitate and grow this identity over the years. The following data shows that with this consistent growth, they have unfortunately had a hand in the displacement of families, though they are not completely at fault.

Though most residents of Columbus know the Short North as an equality-friendly, socially interactive downtown area, this was not the case 40 years ago. Local police nicknamed the area “The Short North” because it fell ‘just short’ of the downtown area businesses both economically and physically. It was also a very undesirable neighborhood due to the criminal activity, unsafe conditions, and overall physical state of the area. One of the defining characteristics for artists was the affordability the neighborhood provided since they were in need of room to bring their artwork to life while using the space as living quarters. One of these artists was Maria Galloway. After some time she opened PM Gallery in 1980 at 726 North High Street, which is now the

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Community

longest standing Short North gallery (Williams 2010). She proved to be the driving force that enabled the arts to have a long lasting impression on the area with the creation of a popular Short North tradition known as Gallery Hop. Gallery Hop is a street festival along the High Street strip that celebrates the art, culture, and amenities the Short North has to offer. It has occurred, and still occurs, the first Saturday of every month since its creation in 1984 (Williams 2010). Galloway claimed that since the area was labeled as a bit unsafe, Gallery Hop was the first step in getting local residents to be comfortable being in the area after dark. After this boundary was broken, they could then feel comfortable coming to the Short North during the daylight as well. This would prompt a steady flow of visitors who would see the charm of the area and want to make this place their home. This past year Gallery Hop just celebrated its 30th anniversary, making the Short North a Columbus destination spot.

The arts were further solidified and tied to the area with the establishment of the Wexner Center for the Arts in 1989. Located on The Ohio State University campus at 1871 North High Street, The Wexner, or the Wex as it is affectionately called, in many ways ensured Columbus as a city for the arts (Williams 2010). It is a multidisciplinary arts center named for Harry L. Wexner, father of Leslie H. Wexner, founder of the Limited Brands based out of Columbus. The Wexner family built the center to honor Harry Wexner and his large patronage and love of the arts. They also continue to provide ample funding and support. The Wexner features performing arts, media arts such as film/video, and exhibitions. The center quickly made itself prominent in the field, getting national acclaim for the many contemporary and innovative exhibitions it brought to Columbus. Exhibiting such artists as Dan Clowes, Stan Douglas, and Christian Marclay,

the Wexner is the go-to spot for contemporary works and first time U.S. or Ohio appearances (*Mission Statement* n.d.). Their on campus location and affiliation with The Ohio State University has enabled them to be a prime resource for the up and coming creative class and graduating classes of Columbus. The university offers many courses in the Wexner Center that focus on growing the minds of interested students and preparing them for a career in the art world of Columbus. The presence of the Wex further inspired the artists in the community to make their way into this hopeful area with a direct link to the Short North.

With these two main art establishments firmly secured in the heart of the city, it was only a matter of time before an endless array of bars, restaurants, galleries, etc., took hold of the area. The Short North has not stopped growing since the establishment of the arts in the community in 1980. Though artists are what drew residents to the area, they also facilitated other creative minds to grow there.

The creative class has therefore also made its presence known in the Short North. As Florida outlines in his book, *Rise of the Creative Class*, creative individuals such as artists, architects, and engineers have the ability to determine things such as the predominant businesses in an area, or even what cities will thrive (Florida 2002). As the creative class slowly made its way to the Short North, its members have ensured that the arts remain present. The culinary arts were among the categories associated with the creative class outlined by Florida, and they too made their move. Sanburn Wood was one of the first business pioneers in the area (Duffy 2012). Arriving on the scene in the late 1970s, Wood was a banker who saw the potential of the Short North. To begin a larger investment in his future in Columbus, he began turning houses and redeveloping them for

profit, which due to demand for residencies in the area, turned out to be a very profitable venture. This enabled him to invest in other local businesses and further solidify his interest in the Short North. Among his main acquisitions, he also invested in Rigsby's in the late 1970s. Rigsby's is known to be among the first restaurants in the neighborhood and still remains in the same location to this day. Kent Rigsby established his presence in 1986, with a little help from Wood, with the opening of his restaurant that offered a creative twist on American cuisine. Though the prices have risen and the clientele changed a bit, Rigsby's still remains the first restaurant in the Short North and has kept up with their culinary tradition throughout the years by remaining a visionary in the culinary arts.

Perhaps the main functioning arts organization in the Short North who holds ownership and responsibility for their main large events is the Short North Alliance. They function as a 501(c)(3) organization and facilitate the three largest events held in the Short North. These are Gallery Hop, Highball Halloween, and the Short North Gala. Highball Halloween is the main Halloween festival in Columbus that facilitates a celebration of fashion, costume, and culture in the district. Along with many other details of Halloween and culture, Highball showcases the fashion world of the district. They focus on being an event that engages with the Latin community by also including a large *El Dia de los Muertos*² aspect into the event. It has even received national acclaim from Fox News as being "The single most elaborate Halloween event in the country" (Rupersburg 2013). The Short North Gala is also an important staple in the Short North community. It is a grand celebration of the varied culinary skills and cultures in the

² Translated as *The Day of the Dead*, the holiday focuses on gatherings of family and friends to pray for and remember friends and family members who have died.

neighborhood. The event is held at the Hilton Ballroom and involves a night of local residents supporting the arts in the community along with celebrating their culinary skills. To add a larger artistic focus to the event, they also feature live bands and visual arts to tie into the culture of the neighborhood.

Though there is a consequence that comes with this unending development and creative presence in the Short North. There are many details within my research for this area of Columbus that indicate gentrification in the Short North over the years that began with the arts moving there in 1980. For example, one of the main indicators of displacement is a rise in property value due to the increasing demand for housing (Zukin 1989). Lower-income families can't afford this change in pricing or the rise in rent, and are pushed into a more affordable area. Chris Sherman, business owner and former Short North resident, recalls a time growing up when his father attended graduate school at The Ohio State University. His parents bought a house in the Short North due to the affordability of the neighborhood and close vicinity to OSU. Some time later, Sherman's mother bought an apartment on Park Street (another main street in the district) and rented it out. Today, Sherman's mother is finding that the cost of rent cannot sustain the rising property taxes and she is no longer able to keep her apartment. When details are factored in such as maintenance, and add rising property taxes into the mix, there is a deficit to be had where rental income is concerned.

Another direct indicator of gentrification includes the differences of average household income in any given area in comparison to a gentrified area (Smith 1979). A larger household income above the city average can pinpoint advanced development. This is a result of suburban families flocking from outside the city limits and into the city

due to the draw of these revitalization efforts (Zukin 1989). The Short North is no stranger to this statistic. As of 2011, the average household income in the Short North was almost \$53,000 in comparison to Columbus at \$40,000 (*Short North Neighborhood* 2011). Also because of this influx into the city where many wish to be surrounded by the arts in this Bohemian-style³ neighborhood, it tends to cause a larger population in this concentrated area (Zukin 1989). In 2011 the Short North had a population density of just over 8,000 people per square mile. This is much more than Columbus with about 3,500 people per square mile (*Short North Neighborhood* 2011). These statistics only scratch the surface of providing ample proof for the gentrification of the neighborhood.

Another large indicator that points to the signs of displacement in the Short North is greatly due to the drastic rise in the cost of properties, and a large amount of housing initiatives and building development that have taken place there over the past years. Chris Sherman recalls in the late 1960s and 70s a time when you could purchase a house on Neil Avenue (one of the main streets in the Short North) fix it up, and sell it for \$70,000. Joe Armeni has been a realtor in the area for 22 years, and has lived there for 35 years. He claims this same thing could be done today for about \$500,000. With this ongoing development and large amount of demand to live there, many more houses and properties have been built to accommodate the rising need. From the years 1940-1980, a total of 40 years, only 213 houses were built in the Short North (*Short North Neighborhood* 2011). This is a time 40 years before artists moved into the neighborhood. Yet after their arrival in the 1980s, things progressed at a quicker pace. From the years 1980-2005, a total of 25 years, 328 houses were built in the Short North. This extreme differential in the building

³ In modern usage, the term "Bohemian" is applied to people who live unconventional, usually artistic, lives.

of properties only adds to the assumption that this great demand for housing was due to the high demand to live in a growing area.

Joe Armeni's years of experience have led him to the conclusion that property taxes continue to rise due to constant demand to live in the neighborhood, which the city of Columbus happily obliges. He also credits much of the displacement to rents streaming upward not only for households, but for businesses as well. One of the oldest buildings in the Short North is the old Union Station Café. The property has been owned by Armeni's company, RE/MAX Realty, for the past 30 years. Armeni says that the price to rent this venue on a monthly basis back in the 1980s was averaging around \$2,000, but today the price of rent per month is nearly \$9,000. He credits this rise in rental price not to artists, but to the development of the buildings and businesses that inhabit the Short North. In his opinion, they have created more walking traffic for residents and visitors to notice the property, and therefore have become more valuable. Armeni also blames the large influx of outside residents to the neighborhood in the past 10 years, giving the area much more exposure and again, making it more valuable to the realty market.

The Short North has established a long history with the art world of Columbus making it one of the largest art districts in the city. Though the arts were the pioneers and catalysts that aimed the attention of the city in their direction, as the data shows, displacement was an unintentional consequence. Though the many art initiatives and creative minds of the neighborhood still continue to ensure the arts remain a valued part of the area, gentrification inevitably found its way into the community.

THE SHORT NORTH ARTISTIC REVITALIZATION

The many art initiatives and organizations that inhabit the Short North and Franklinton all serve a purpose where gentrification is concerned. As the pioneers of these revitalization efforts in their respective communities, each is tailored to take the role of catalyst and spark a movement fueled by the arts that would enable a sense of community and culture to form. Though this has been the general idea, and has been fulfilled to some extent, in the case of the Short North other forces have taken control and the effects of this have snowballed into gentrification. This chapter will elaborate on what the arts are doing to ensure their place in the Short North remains relevant and positive. It will also discuss their initial role in gentrification, and how other forces have taken the reins and therefore claimed a stronger role in this displacement.

The Short North is a neighborhood fueled by many distinct factors, the main one of these being the arts. They are rooted in the culture and history and are only working positively to ensure they remain an active and necessary factor in their future. Though the constant developments of parking garages, bars and restaurants, and apartment buildings have the potential to turn this downtown area into a reinvented SoHo, the arts are doing all they can to ensure this doesn't happen. The Executive Director of the Short North Alliance, Betsy Pandora, describes many art initiatives revolving around a complete cultural experience for the visitor, resident, and employer and business-owner. They stimulate local businesses and feed into the economy by collaborating on nearly every event they put on, and enable artists to thrive by spotlighting their talents in these events.

One of the ways they are doing this is through the constant of Gallery Hop. By holding this event that is solely a celebration of the artistic talent of residents of the Short North, a focus is drawn to the neighborhood in a positive way. This is an event that everyone in the community participates in. Businesses that line High Street all have a hand in what they display to the public on this day. Most of them take the opportunity to collaborate with local artists and galleries by showing their support and displaying their share of artwork (Mantey 2013). Many others also employ live bands and street performers for the event, giving all facets of the arts a chance to participate. Each gallery in the Short North also takes it upon themselves to change exhibitions right before the event so residents can see new artwork each time they visit. This in turn supports artists by ensuring a new individual gets to exhibit their work each Gallery Hop. Restaurants also have the chance to offer something special during this time with many of them offering different menus or tastings only for the event.

Highball Halloween in the Short North is another community event that takes pride in the local talent and uses it to better the neighborhood and raise awareness and opportunity for artists. Along with being a large celebration of Halloween and the culture and traditions behind it, Highball showcases the artistry of fashion in the centerpiece event Costume Couture Fashion Showdown. This is a costume event where fashion designers come up with four looks, and costume designers come up with a costume to coincide with the collection (Tigges 2013). Some of the show designers have gone on to become major influences in other larger markets such as New York and Los Angeles. Several of them have even been contestants on Project Runway⁴, both prior to and after

⁴ American reality television series on Lifetime, previously on the Bravo Network, which focuses on fashion design and is hosted by model Heidi Klum.

participating in Highball Halloween. In 2013 the scales for event exposure were tipped with over 25,000 people attending the event. Last year, funding for Highball Halloween 2013 was substantial enough to enable the collaborative effort of over 45 non-profits in Columbus.

Coinciding with these larger more popular events, the Short North Alliance also gets much support from their local partners who include such distinguished organizations as the Wexner Center for the Arts, and the Columbus Museum of Art. They also promote community involvement and artistic stimulation in the Short North through their internship and public programs. Since the Wexner Center is located directly on OSU campus, the Short North Alliance uses this opportunity to give young adults an artistic experience centered around events and artistic facilitation.

With the many artistic opportunities happening in the Short North, there are many who point the finger at other sources for gentrification, not the arts. Short North realtor and resident Joe Armeni specified that the artists were the pioneers in the neighborhood. They established their presence and have henceforth made sure it remains part of the culture. Armeni also specified that though they claim the name pioneer, they are also not the stimulants in this immense and constant revitalization of the area due to their lack of business knowledge. Since Armeni has been a resident and businessman of the area himself for the past 30 years, he has seen many artists pursue the route of entrepreneur by opening galleries or shops, but he claims most have failed. He credits much of the continued artistic growth of the neighborhood due to their collaboration with organizations such as the Short North Alliance. By doing this, they are able to focus on their own craft and leave the business aspect to the more experienced individuals. As

Armeni points the finger away from artists, in turn he credits business owners, politicians, and investors as the true catalysts of development and growth in the Short North.

Betsy Pandora of the Short North Alliance credits the initial revitalization efforts to the arts who she says “kickstarted” the movement with simply their presence. Though Pandora pinpoints the arts as the first on the scene in the Short North and the positive stimulants that enable growth, she also doesn’t credit them with the negative connotations associated with gentrification. What she does blame for displacement is the endless stream of bar and restaurant development in the Short North. Over the past 10 years, the Short North has expanded their food service businesses by over 30 establishments (*County Business Patterns* 2012). Yet, as an art district, in the past 10 years they have only grown by about 3 artistic businesses or organizations (*County Business Patterns* 2012). Long-standing pioneer gallery owner Maria Galloway also expresses her concern over that large amount of businesses developing that are lacking an artistic concentration. She says it’s not the amount of galleries that leave that bother her, it’s that more new galleries aren’t coming to the Short North (Mantey 2013). There are even galleries who are leaving the Short North due to their lack of opportunity of local artists to showcase their work (Mantey 2013) Keeping the district a place for the arts is a main goal for the Short North Alliance. This kind of growth in these industries outside of the realm of the art world is worrisome for artistic influences such Betsy Pandora and Maria Galloway.

The Short North’s continued revitalization and focus on production of non-artistic goods and consumption of food and beverage, provides a cause for concern in the art district. The arts were the first to initiate the revitalization of the community, but other forces such as business investors have taken the reigns in the development process and

are appearing to leave the arts on the outskirts. Though this may be the case, the artistic minds of the Short North are doing all they can do ensure their positive influence continues to stimulate the local economy and give opportunity to those individuals who would ensure the community's economic growth.

FRANKLINTON

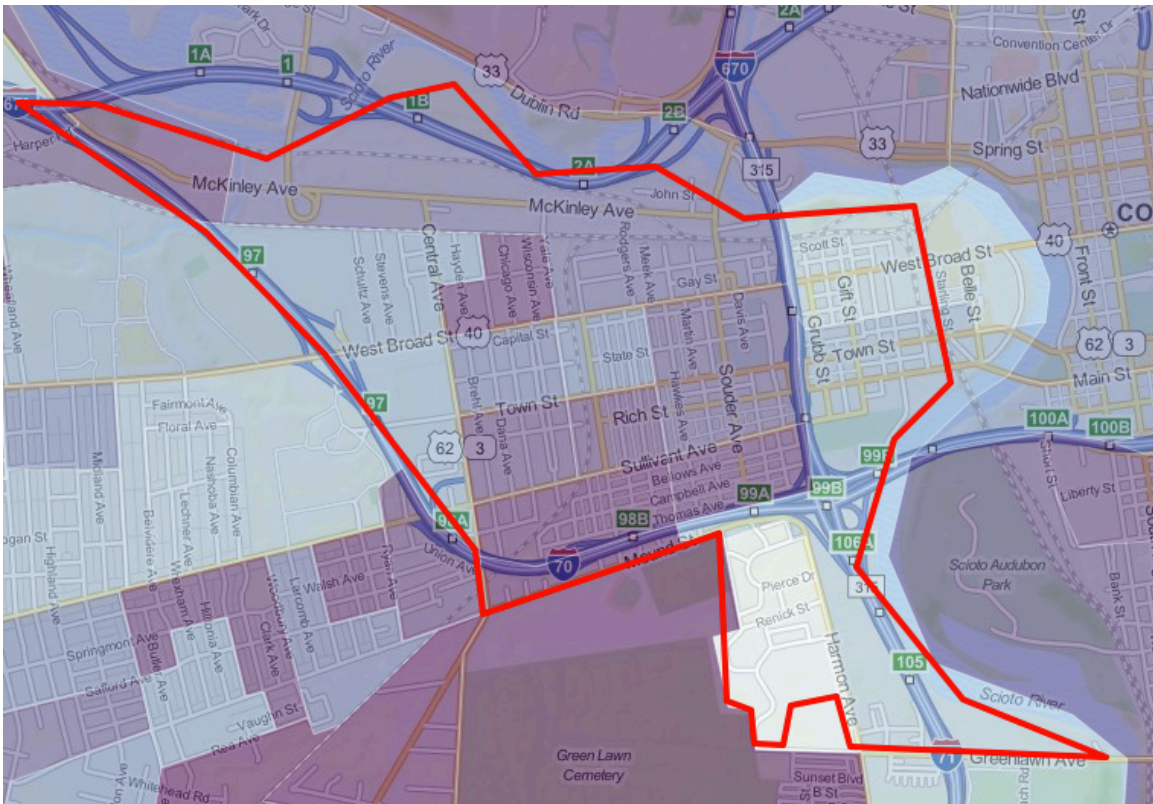


FIGURE 2 – Map of the Franklinton Neighborhood (City-Data)

Franklinton is known for being one of the first settlements in Ohio. Referenced as “The Bottoms” for its low-income residents and known criminal activity, it has most recently been cause for conversation for being called the new developing arts district of Columbus. With extreme revitalization efforts being put forth by the city’s Mayor Coleman, and multiple new projects on the horizon, there is much fear that Franklinton will be a replica of the Short North with rising property taxes, displacement, and unending development. The research presented in this chapter explains the long road and history of the Franklinton neighborhood from a floodplain to the focus of major revitalization efforts by the city. This chapter also outlines the art initiatives that have

taken place in the community and why they have taken such an avid interest in these recent developments.

Franklinton was established in 1797 and is an area of Columbus located directly west of what is now the downtown Arena District. It was founded by a surveyor named Lucas Sullivant, who named the area Franklinton for his admiration of Benjamin Franklin (*Lucas Sullivant* 2012). Being founded nearly 15 years before Columbus made Franklinton one of the first settlements in Ohio, its undesirable location provided many problems over the years. Located at the fork of the Scioto River and Olentangy River made it very prone to multiple destructive floods that have proven to be devastating for the community. It was for this reason that the State legislature decided to not choose Franklinton for the site of the Capitol, and moved the location to higher ground. Because of its unfortunate location, the worst natural disaster to ever hit Columbus happened in 1913 in the Franklinton neighborhood. Endless downpours for days in the spring finally made the levees of the Scioto break loose onto the neighborhood (Motz 2013). With a flood that claimed the lives of 93 people, and an area of Columbus that has never truly been able to recover from the tragedy, Franklinton officially established itself as one of the poorest areas in the city. This has made re-establishing and rebuilding this neighborhood more difficult than ever.

There's a long road that led to where Franklinton is today, on the brink of major revitalization, and it all starts with the Franklinton Development Association (FDA). After the devastating flood of 1913, things never really changed in Franklinton until about the 1960s. At this time, banks in the area were fined by the federal government for

redlining⁵, which affected the lives of many residents who were trying to obtain loans. With the civil rights movement in the late 1960s came the Community Reinvestment Act⁶ that led to a community empowerment push. With this Act in place making sure that banks would be a force for good that offered community support and the funding of revitalizing efforts in inner city areas, came a need for non-profits to take control and offer their services. Since Franklinton was officially named a floodplain by this time and building restrictions had been put into place to ensure no more property was destroyed in the case of another flood, this proved to be a difficult plan to enforce. The Franklinton Development Association was formed in 1993 after the announcement of the building of a floodwall that would prevent any more disasters similar to the flood of 1913. With the completion of the Franklinton floodwall in 2003, the area was finally safe but still left overlooked by the Columbus community (Hovey 2012).

Previously, The Bottoms have been classified as such because of their abandoned warehouses, high criminal activity such as prostitution and drug trafficking, and undesirable living conditions. But, in 1875 Columbus was one of the foremost buggy manufacturers in the nation. Columbus Buggy Company employed such influential names in the history of the automobile such as Harvey Firestone and Eddy Rickenbacker (*Columbus Buggy Company* n.d.). Located in Franklinton on Lucas Street, the Columbus Buggy Company had a need for many warehouses to build and store their product. These warehouses lined the neighborhood, many of which still stand today. Franklinton's prime location on both the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers made manufacturing and shipping easy

⁵ The unethical practice whereby financial institutions make it extremely difficult or impossible for residents of poor inner-city neighborhoods to borrow money, gain approval for a mortgage, take out insurance or gain access to other financial services because of a history of high default rates.

⁶ A United States federal law designed to encourage commercial banks and savings associations to help meet the needs of borrowers in all segments of their communities, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

for the company. The creation and new nationwide popularity of automobiles in the 1920s eventually saw the end of the Columbus Buggy Company and left Franklinton littered with vacant warehouses. This overall undesirable look that these warehouses brought, and still bring, to the community only added to their reputation for being a poor area of the city.

The neighborhood of Franklinton covers about 2.5 square miles with a population of 11,232, carrying a higher population density than that of Columbus (*Franklinton Neighborhood* 2011). This is similar to the Short North, yet the population densities are for two very different reasons. In the Short North this large cluster of residents is due to a high demand to live in the desirable area. Franklinton is desired by poorer residents due to its affordability. As of 2011, the median household income in Franklinton was \$21,455 in comparison to the Short North that is over double that at \$53,000 (*Franklinton Neighborhood* 2011). Both of these statistics provide great evidence for the poverty of the area in comparison to other areas throughout the city. According to interviews, it also leads many to theorize that this is the “go-to” area for displaced families who can no longer afford other Columbus neighborhood economies. Long time Franklinton resident and entrepreneur Chris Sherman strongly believes that many of the families who were displaced from the Short North made their way to Franklinton because of its close vicinity to downtown.

This past year in Franklinton, 46.7% of those in the labor force were considered below poverty level (*Labor Force Statistics* n.d.). This is in comparison to the Short North with only 23.6%. These numbers are another representation of the vast economic differences between Franklinton, Columbus, and the Short North. Another statistic is the

estimated housing value being \$66,611. This is about half the price of buying a house in Columbus with the average price of \$147,248 (*Franklinton Neighborhood* 2012). Much of the very low cost of living is due to the floods that have devastated the area in the past that have inflicted serious and lasting damages to the foundation. Also, most of the houses are original from their establishment over 100 years ago. Executive Director of the Franklinton Development Association, Jim Sweeney, credits the lack of housing development due to the fact that no one in the area can afford to buy a house at that price, and no Columbus resident who could afford that price would want to move to The Bottoms. Yet with these unfortunate conditions, there has proven to be much room for change and development.

Finally in 2012, Mayor Coleman started the initial plans in motion to revitalize Franklinton in an extensive 20-year plan that began implementation last year. This plan outlines a number of commercial tourist attractions that will include an extension of the Columbus Zoo, a redesigned Veterans Memorial and museum, and a 1,200-unit residential and retail development to the west side of the Scioto River (Wartenberg 2013). Along with these large mainstream plans, this news has also led local residents to take it upon themselves to do their part.

One of the main art initiatives and staples of the Franklinton community that started the arts movement was the purchase of 400 West Rich by Chris Sherman. 400 West Rich is an old warehouse building in East Franklinton that was bought by Sherman due to its affordability and bank loan possibility. He knew there was an opportunity and need here for studio space, and he therefore took advantage of it. They were able to begin rejuvenating the space in 2010 and opening it for artists in 2011. They now house 97

artist studio spaces that range from anything to painters, sculptors, fabricators, textile and clothing, dancers, aerial performers, hydroponics, etc. They act as a catch all to all genres of art and offer affordable spaces to practice.

Though Franklinton is an area of Columbus that represents the need for development and attention by city officials, the time is finally approaching for them to have their moment. The long history and poverty stricken past has led many to see the benefits of these impending developments, yet there is also fear that many years down the road, gentrification such as that in the Short North, could become a factor. The art initiatives that have been put into place by local residents will prove to play a central role in these developments.

FRANKLINTON AND ARTISTIC REVITALIZATION

Franklinton has been classified as the new arts district many times over due to the recent revitalization efforts made by Mayor Coleman (Mantey 2013). Considering the many negative events in the history of the neighborhood, these new investments to improve Franklinton have been the talk of the city. With the mayor and the city finally behind the community, the local art scene has taken it upon themselves to provide ample opportunity for the neighborhood to grow by collaboration, community involvement, and long-lasting investment in the area.

The arts started the driving force in this revitalization effort with the creation of the Franklinton Arts District (FAD) in 2007. FAD is a nonprofit organization that was started by Executive Director of the FDA Jim Sweeney, and local business owner and artist, Chris Sherman. They started the organization to bring together the creative minds of Franklinton and promote creative initiatives to enrich the lives of current residents, and to bring in new residents to the area in the hopes of building a strong creative class. One of the ways in which they stimulate and feed into their local economy is through their main event called Urban Scrawl. This is a two-day music and art festival, now approaching its 7th year, which features local artists painting on large-scale canvases. The event has grown drastically from its first year with only 200-300 attendees, with the 2013 festival seeing over 500 between both days. Among the main event of the artwork feature, FAD also employs the help of local live bands to perform throughout the festival

and encourage active participation. Local food trucks are also present to provide their services as well. These large pieces are sold throughout the city at an auction and the funds are used to support a neighborhood arts grant program that will enable students to get money for art materials, educational field trips etc. By doing this, they give students the opportunity to be invested in their own community and instill a notion of loyalty to their cause by creating this opportunity. Urban Scrawl is used as a way to allow art to directly fuel and fund the neighborhood and those individuals who would help foster its economic growth.

400 West Rich is another community asset that acts as the anchor for the arts in Franklinton. Owner, artist, and entrepreneur Chris Sherman believes that with an institution such as this one to foster the growth of the community and provide ample space for open discussion and community involvement, the arts can be a stimulant in more ways than one. 400 West Rich is promoting community betterment and local collaboration through their bi-weekly farmer's market. Franklinton is one of the areas of Columbus with the highest poverty rate and many residents are left without the convenience of personal transportation. This leaves them at the mercy of the public transportation system to get simple items such as fresh produce. Sherman explains the hassle some residents express of getting on a bus with a weeks worth of groceries in hand. He wanted to ensure that residents didn't feel the need to invest their money in sugary, unhealthy food items they could get from the local corner store that didn't provide any sort of produce. The idea behind the farmer's market is to give residents easy access to fresh goods, and to also provide them the opportunity to sell their goods to the public. The market also puts forth a collaborative effort with Franklinton Gardens. The

market not only benefits the community, but also brings together the help of many local organizations.

On the collaborative side of the market, there is Franklinton Gardens, a local non-profit organization dedicated to growing food, making beauty, and building community. In addition to the farmer's market at 400 West Rich, those at Franklinton Gardens are also providing ample opportunities for residents to get fresh produce. They have multiple community gardens where residents have the option of growing their own produce, or taking advantage of local food pantries. Their well-trained staff and volunteers provide assistance and guidance throughout the process, teaching all those who wish to learn about cultivating their own goods. The abandoned lots located throughout the neighborhood are another focus of Franklinton Gardens. By beautifying these spots, they not only make the area more appealing to the eye, but instill a sense of pride in their residents as well. Their many collaborative efforts throughout the city and the Franklinton neighborhood, help them build connections that will invest in the community.

The arts are also encouraging the growth of Franklinton by building an arts community. The first step was 400 West Rich, and the Franklinton Arts District. Beyond that, Jim Sweeney and the Franklinton Development Association have worked to include other art institutions in building up the neighborhood and making it a new arts community centered around involvement and collaboration. The first big established organization the FDA brought to the area is the Columbus Idea Foundry. They are a community workshop, arts space, and learning center that puts their focus on teaching and training (*Idea Foundry About* n.d.). They also provide the tools and materials for

those individuals who wish to use them. Sweeney was able to secure their move from 1158 Corrugated Way to their new home at 421 West State Street in Franklinton with the help of multiple financial sources. The city of Columbus contributed \$900,000 for them to buy the building in 2011, and ArtPlace America⁷ awarded them with a \$350,000 grant (Ferenchik 2013). This will enable them to renovate the 60,000 square foot warehouse in Franklinton to continue their mission of teaching people who want to learn, and providing tools for those people who want to build. Along with the Columbus Idea Foundry, glass art center and gallery Glass Axis will also be moving to Franklinton in October 2014. Sweeney thinks this art community they are aiming to build will enhance community involvement and investment in the neighborhood and prompt new collaboration that will ensure the arts support each other in the area while bringing in outsiders to aid the community.

There is a certain amount of government mainstream help that will also be present in the development of Franklinton. Looking into the more commercial side of these efforts, one of main highly anticipated new additions will be the redevelopment of Columbus Veterans Memorial. Along with being a monument to all men and women who have served in the armed forces, Veterans Memorial acts as a venue for ceremonies and events around the city. The transformation is in part due to a \$25 million donation from Leslie Wexner and his wife Abigail (Jarman 2013). Though no architect has been chosen, it is certain that there will be a large, modern artistic element to the building's architecture. It has also been specified that the upper levels will be used for military

⁷ ArtPlace America is a collaboration among 14 foundations, 8 federal agencies, and 6 financial institutions dedicated to strengthening the field of creative placemaking.

services and graduations, and the bottom levels will serve as a museum to the armed forces. Other interactive exhibits will be rendered to teach children the value of service. This new addition to the downtown Scioto Mile will help give Franklinton the push it needs to jumpstart their local economy through this cultural experience.

Along with this complete redevelopment of Veteran's Memorial, one of the largest and most visited attractions in the city, the Columbus Zoo, is building an extension in East Franklinton. This indoor interactive attraction is set to tentatively open in 2017 (Jarman 2013). Since the main facility for the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is located more than 20 miles outside of downtown Columbus, it limits the accessibility for this unique cultural experience to only residents with the means to travel. Therefore, the main purpose of this project is to ensure that the zoo experience has the chance to reach many more Columbus residents, especially those in Franklinton who will be within walking distance. This is another development aspect that will draw residents to the area and ensure the vitality of Franklinton.

Franklinton and the Short North share many similarities, and many are hoping that gentrification is not one of them. Jim Sweeney of the FDA expressed his own concern with this in saying that 20 years down the road displacement could be a possibility. Sweeney also thinks the community and city planners have learned lessons from the Short North and other neighborhoods like that around the country in that you don't want to gentrify your artists out. This revolves around a concern for not only keeping the artists in the neighborhood, but current residents as well. He insists that with proper planning, investigation, and research, the FDA can take this information and ensure that Franklinton does not become a replica of the Short North where gentrification

is concerned. Sweeney wants the main goal to be making Franklinton into a permanent arts community, not a temporary one. Getting individuals to not be afraid to come to the area was the biggest hurdle that has been jumped thus far, and Sweeney believes that has already been accomplished.

Though many residents and officials of the neighborhood share the same enthusiasm and excitement as the Mayor for the upcoming developments, there is still the fear that many residents will be displaced. For this reason, the arts are ensuring their own community identification by taking an active role in this development process. With the proper skill set, officials and community members believe they can make it a place where residents will remain and the arts will thrive.

CONCLUSION

Gentrification is something that has been a topic of large discussion in Columbus, Ohio these past 10 years. Due to the negative connotations associated with gentrification, the arts are implicated due to their close encounters to those artistic areas where family displacement occurs. The question of this association has a tendency to imply that the arts are the ones at fault in this process. Yet, the research in this thesis provides ample proof of the opposite.

The focus on the art world in the Short North is the most positive aspect of the neighborhood. Through events and programs that draw outside funds to the city to community projects that promote inclusion, the area has certainly become a desirable destination. Yet, an inadvertent consequence of this focus involves the endless building and development of corporate businesses and the large increase in home value. The art world is striving to work in a similar way in Franklinton by being the center of the community. By promoting an investment in the neighborhood with community projects and organizations, Franklinton is doing all it can to avoid the Short North reputation of gentrification. Though most believe these developments to be a positive change, many other residents fear for their homes and the presence of tourism.

The Short North is a gentrified neighborhood and the same fate may also be in store for Franklinton. The research conducted in these two specific Columbus areas have led to the inevitable conclusion that the arts were the pioneers and main catalysts of

revitalization efforts. Both of the neighborhoods represent an area of Columbus that the arts have taken special interest in, and have done nothing since but promote economic growth through revitalization, even with the impending interference of outside factors. Though the arts can surely take blame for stimulating the economic growth of these two economies, they cannot take responsibility for displacement. Hopefully these continued efforts by the arts in these two communities can ensure that development remains a positive part each neighborhood.

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