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PLANNING AND PROTEST IN MEMPHIS: THE LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATORY DISCOURSE

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

Andrea Craft

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Matthew Wilson

Lexington, Kentucky

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

PLANNING AND PROTEST IN MEMPHIS:
THE LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATORY DISCOURSE

Recent discussions of participatory urban planning have focused largely on municipal-led initiatives for collaborative resident engagement as an increasingly visible trend of neoliberal urban governance. Critical observers have noted the alliance between local government and business interests, and their capacities to manage, co-opt, and depoliticize diverse community-based efforts, and to marginalize dissent, through public-private partnerships, often facilitated by private consultants. Actual practices of participation demonstrate a variety of alternative meanings. This case study of a community-based planning initiative for public housing redevelopment in Memphis, TN challenges and complicates these narratives. The Memphis Housing Authority invited a local community organization to lead a participatory planning initiative for redeveloping the city's last remaining public housing development. This initiative was then cancelled by the MHA after it produced data indicating that residents' visions did not align with the city's designs for the neighborhood, and instead would be used to protest impending housing demolitions. The ongoing struggle calls into question the authenticity of commitments to resident empowerment by local governments, and makes visible a serious disagreement about what exactly is meant by participation itself. I address the limitations of a normative discourse of participation, and offer possibilities for reframing the politics of participatory practice.

KEYWORDS: participatory planning, Memphis, public housing, participation, redevelopment

Andrea Craft

May 9, 2014

PLANNING AND PROTEST IN MEMPHIS:
THE LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATORY DISCOURSE

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PREFACE

Contingency and path-dependency are frighteningly powerful concepts. When I think about how I got to where I am now, I trace a winding path, like a railroad track of switchpoints, each with the potential to direct me differently. The endpoint is determined by series of switches that came before it, and which direction was chosen at each one. The track that led me to writing this thesis began with a day when I cried in the bathroom at my workplace, where I held a research position with an urban planning consulting firm in Chicago. I was frustrated with my own complicity with a planning style determined by political patronage, with the limitations of development set by a small set of market-oriented best practices, and an offensive mimicry of community involvement that in reality reflected a disparaging lack of care.

That sense of despair somehow led me to the Planners Network, an organization of self-identified "progressive planners," largely organized by Marxist-influenced planning academics and practitioners who focus on planning for social equity. That year, this organization was holding their national conference in Memphis, my hometown. So I went. Switch number 1. As an unaffiliated attendee at the conference, I became acquainted with several progressive planners who have inspired my research ever since, and one of whom I conducted this thesis research with. Some time after that conference, I skipped town during a spat of unemployment, went to New York City, spent days immersed in the map room of the New York Public Library, where I saw a flier for a geography graduate program at a local university. I instantaneously decided I would go to grad school. Switch number 2. During all of this, my neighborhood in Chicago was becoming the first community in the U.S. to try participatory budgeting, which soon exploded into a nation-wide movement, with its own attendant local political backlashes backlash from those who protested its potential to exclude people in the guise of increasing democratic representation. (Switch number 3) After much agonizing, I decide on a graduate program in a geography department that equips me to undertake a research project with people from that initial conference. (Switch number 4) And so on. There are many more deciding moments in this process, an infinite number of switchpoints that partially determined this path. I could refer to the several individuals I met along the way who turned me in certain directions, or random books that my hand happened upon, seemingly by chance, and they all seem completely crucial. So many things had to happen, had to fall into place for me to write this thesis. If the 2011 PN conference had not been held in Memphis, I would not have encountered my research subjects, and I would not be here. If I had not annoyed my friends and then-partner by skipping town and going to

NYC for a winter, I may not have decided to go to grad school, and I would not be here. If I hadn't gone to work for the planning firm after undergrad and had gone into a different industry, I would not be here. All of these things were necessary to converge into where exactly I am right now in space, time, and emotional and cognitive focus. All of these things, in combination with and in relation to each other, led me to writing this thesis about public housing and participatory planning in Memphis. This is what is frightening about contingency. I am reminded how the flows of power, both of and not of myself, impact these changes, which are not random but partially orchestrated, partially enabled, and then only partially random, conceptualized by Massey as the "throwntogetherness" of intervention and chance. (Massey, 2005)

Defining this research topic was a very personal decision in many ways. Reflecting on that process affirms my methodological training in grounded theory, iterative processes of hypothesis testing, and the relevance of researcher positionalities in which we are co-implicated in producing the data we are meant to collect. (Allen, 2008; Knigge & Cope, 2006) I originally envisioned this project as a critique of participatory planning as embodying a technocratic approach to problem solving, and as a conceptual inquiry into how formulations of power rely on various forms of constructed knowledge. I had a history of activist burnout after immersion in certain types of Marxist-influenced literature which rationalizes the inability of community-based projects to live up to ideals of the discourse of participation based on their perpetual suffocation by global capitalism. For a while, everything I wrote was about the imperfect internal politics of the community organizations. This was disconcerting, because even though I was aware of, and sensitized to, the imperfections of their decision making process and economic development goals, I was ultimately studying the Vance Avenue Collaborative because I thought that their vision was good for the community, and that it has and will continue to generate real material improvements for people's lives. I wanted to hold them up, not bring them down with my enlightened criticism. But I couldn't figure a way out of the quagmire that has resulted from reflexive critiques of participation, as embodied by the condemnation of participation "tyrannical." (Cooke & Kothari, 2001b) At the same time, I could not in good faith simply make the argument that increasing inclusivity and using participatory mapping would generate empowerment, because my feminist training has enforced a perpetual question for me about internalized and reproducible forms of oppression, and the problem of speaking for others. (Alcoff, 1991) I cannot ignore the fact that even in community-based, participatory practice, there are forms of knowledge that are imposed on oppressed people, who are asked to assimilate into those forms of knowledge, and to pick up the tools that are promoted to them as their means

of empowerment. I desperately needed a new framework for thinking about this project, lest I fall into the trap of being another researcher who critiques from the outside, who calls out well-intentioned people for their internalized hegemonic thinking. I thought about what I have learned from a rich body of debate in the GIS & Society tradition, about the productive role of critique, and the problem of the divide between practitioners and theorists. I agreed with Schuurman & Pratt that feminist-informed critique calls for "having a stake" in the future of the object of critique, and that having a stake is closely related to the condition of being an insider, of knowing deeply the practice and theoretical ground, of "caring for the subject." (Nadine Schuurman & Pratt, 2000)

My approach has been to gain legitimacy for my voice on participatory urban planning by seeking to understand it in the theoretical context in which it is positioned, a contemporary paradigm of collaborative planning, in the context of communicative planning theory. While I have not acquired expertise in this field, it is the framework within which I seek to understand my research subjects, to construct critique on the terms of the goals that participatory planning projects set for themselves. This requires me to let go of my assumptions that when an organization undertakes a participatory mapping project, that they expect it to produce a new form of local knowledge, previously unearthed, that will form the basis for a new distribution of power. When I was able to do this, I realized that underneath all the process and procedure and techniques and formal meetings, that my research subjects mostly wanted to resist the way power has historically circulated in the city of Memphis, and that they wanted to raise the consciousness of residents who have been beaten down by a history of exclusion. They were just as interested in the process as the outcome.

I also have encountered Gibson-Graham's theorization of class, in which they argue that the kinds of theory we create is based on what kinds of questions we want to answer, and what we want to do with the answers. (Gibson-Graham, 2006a) I decided that I could make a conscious decision about how I wanted to theorize the organization I was paying attention to, if I were going to use my work to support them. And this was not difficult; it became easy for me to do when I realized how many achievements this group of people accomplished because of their unique approach to their work. I also realized that there is a self-awareness of many practitioners that some critics do not understand, that they may not actually believe that techniques and technologies will solve the problems they encounter, but that they often use them for purposes other than which they were designed.

An early experience that still informs my curiosity about participatory planning occurred in the Spring of 2012, when I attended a community meeting for a proposed bike trail expansion in south Memphis, a mixed-class, African-American part of the city. The meeting was organized by several planner-organizers who are involved in the Vance Avenue Collaborative. Held in a public space in the south Memphis neighborhood, with a catered dinner to offset the time that residents took off to attend the meeting, this consultation entailed a presentation on the proposed bike trail, and then a community mapping activity to review routing options. Residents gathered around an enlarged GIS-produced map of the proposed route for the bike trail. They were asked to suggest improvements, and to use their local knowledge to affirm how appropriate the proposed route would be. It was not exactly a bottom-up, needs-based planning process, in which residents determined whether they would like a bike trail, and if so, what route it should take, what form, and what it should connect. In fact, I recall one woman specifically pointing out a part of the trail that would traverse her neighborhood, and voicing her opposition to its potential to reduce neighborhood privacy, saying that her neighbors would not handle well the random non-resident bicyclists riding through regularly. Her critique did not alter the map, because this was essentially a pre-determined plan which was looking for community buy-in. In that moment, I noted that community-based processes may not be responsive to community needs, and that the practice of participatory mapping, using local knowledge, everyday experiences, and multiple different forms of data would not necessarily translate into greater representation or equity for residents.

However, I also noticed another phenomenon occurring at the meeting, which was that residents were very responsive to the atmosphere, and the general sense of care that was paid by the organizers. It was unlike any public hearing I had ever been to, in which city planners must hold public consultations as a state-mandated required step in creating a new plan or district. Here, people were genuinely listened to, and open, multi-directional conversation occurred. At the close of the meeting, when final comments were being made, the woman who had opposed the trail routing through her neighborhood, stood and spoke about her appreciation of being invited to the meeting, that it was held in her neighborhood, and that attendees were fed dinner, and that she felt respected and considered. While I was concerned at the time that the meeting was merely a gesture, and that the plan would not incorporate real changes suggested by residents, I also did realize that there was value in the space that was convened by that meeting, and that people were brought together to speak and listen to one another for things other than just that bike trail.

I describe this experience because it was an entry point for this research project, as a space of ruminating on the value of participation. It demonstrated the multiple purposes ascribed to participatory practice, the abstract relationship-building that can occur within them, and the distinctions between state and non-state organizers of participatory planning processes. Participatory planning in Memphis is a series of experiments, and iterative processes of trial and error, as such are my attempts to understand them in theory and practice, and make use of them in ways that build up hope for justice and social betterment, and resist tendencies toward hopelessness and powerlessness in a complicated world.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Planners Network Conference, Memphis, TN, 2011

In the summer of 2011, a busload of self-identified 'progressive planners' from across the country, who were in town to attend the national Planners Network conference, were brought to the Vance Avenue neighborhood in downtown Memphis in order to observe and learn from an exciting new participatory community-based planning initiative. This initiative, led by a community group called the Vance Avenue Collaborative ('the Collaborative') was working toward the creation of a comprehensive plan for neighborhood revitalization as part of the new Choice Neighborhoods policy, ('Choice') in partnership with, and as a hired consultant for, the Memphis Housing Authority (MHA). This community planning project, referred to as VanceCN, promised to greatly improve social and economic opportunities for residents of this historic low-income African American neighborhood while preserving affordable housing by updating and maintaining the city's last remaining public housing development, Foote Homes. Memphis had recently been awarded a Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support this planning project, which involved neighborhood residents and public housing tenants in developing a bottom-up, resident-led planning process that would generate a vision for the neighborhood that was based on the experiences and priorities of residents in this historically marginalized and excluded community. The Collaborative and other Memphians looked forward to the actualization of this plan, which involved rehabbing public housing with sustainable design features, building a trail and public green space to complement the planned daylighting of an underground creek, and instituting job training and support for local businesses, all the while implementing local hiring requirements for the new construction projects that would follow. Participants of the Planners Network conference were inspired by this project, and they were able to participate in a day of workshops, where a mutual exchange of ideas occurred between conference-goers and Collaborative organizers, with the purpose of learning from the Collaborative and bringing their experiences back to other communities who hope to bring the same level of resident involvement and participatory representation to their own communities. (Birch, 2011)

VanceCN, Memphis Housing Authority, 2012

Exactly one year later, the informational outreach website for the VanceCN was shut down without warning, community meetings were cancelled, and the neighborhood consultants were fired. (Reardon, 2013a) The MHA informed stakeholders that the "consultation period" had ended, and that the agency would be moving forward with a new St. Louis-based consulting firm, and without local resident participation, in order to formulate an application for a HUD grant which would fund the demolition and redevelopment of Foote Homes according to the City's larger vision for downtown redevelopment. By this point, VanceCN had drafted a "Vance Avenue Community Plan for Transformation," which called instead for the preservation of Foote Homes, based on outcomes from the prior two years of community planning. The resulting scenario, as of the summer of 2012, was an awkward juxtaposition of two competing plans for public housing redevelopment, and a city agency desperately trying to backpedal from their commitment to a participatory community planning initiative that seemed to have worked *too* well. The community had bought in, believing that the invitation to partner with the city meant that their visions for the neighborhood and their place within it would be taken seriously, and that they would have the chance to influence a cutting-edge approach to development that posed a creative alternative to the models of the past. The MHA realized that this initiative had in fact generated a vision for development that contradicted their broader plans for the area, and that they may have been unprepared for the accountability that is demanded by opening up historically opaque and centralized planning processes to public involvement and power-sharing. The lead academic planner of the Collaborative reported on the outcome of VanceCN, saying that "our recommendations are at significant odds with the city's plan." (Collaborative community meeting, September 5, 2013) Speaking for the MHA and the city's Division of Housing and Community Development, the director (of both departments) stated "[The Collaborative's] plan is not our plan. Our vision is a better vision and we're going to move forward without him [lead academic planner.]" (Waters, 2012)

What has transpired since has been a contentious political debate in Memphis about the role of residents in redevelopment processes, a flame war between the MHA and Collaborative organizers as they seek to discredit each other's plan for Foote Homes and the Vance Avenue neighborhood, and a protest movement by Foote Homes residents and Collaborative organizers as they try to preserve Foote Homes and halt the impending displacement that would result from relocation of hundreds of residents into mixed-income public housing or the private market. Now, in 2014, the MHA has formally submitted their demolition plan in an application for HUD

Choice funding. The Collaborative continues to protest this plan, while working on other projects that address social and economic needs in the community. This case study follows the last four years of planning for the Vance Avenue neighborhood, focusing on conflicts around the role of participation and the effectiveness of participatory planning in this place.

Timeline of Vance Avenue Collaborative	
2010, February	Vance Avenue Collaborative initiates participatory planning for VanceCN
2011, March	Memphis wins HUD Choice Planning Grant
2011, June - December	VanceCN is launched, Residents undertake participatory action research for community plan
2012, February	Residents vote to preserve Foote Homes
2012, August	MHA terminates Collaborative and U of M consultants
2012, September	Collaborative presents Vance Avenue Community Transformation Plan
2012, October	Collaborative launches Improve Don't Remove Campaign
2012 October - current	Improve Don't Remove campaign ongoing protest against exclusion by MHA, develops
2013, September	MHA submits application for Choice Implementation Grant to demolish Foote Homes

Figure 1.1 Timeline (see Appendix for detailed chronology)

Motivations for research

Participatory approaches to urban governance are becoming increasingly popular and mainstream. (Kaza, 2006; Rydin, 2007) In only a few years, the Participatory Budgeting Project has grown from one Chicago neighborhood's experimentation with a public budgeting mechanism developed in Brazil into a federally-supported nation-wide movement. (Participatory Budgeting Project 2013) Open data movements have pressured municipalities to improve transparency by making datasets freely available to the public, to be used for citizen watch efforts

through mapping, app development, and reporting. (The CivicLab, 2014; www.data.gov, 2014; www.openstreetmap.org, 2014; Tresser, 2014) In urban planning in the U.S., participation has come to define a new paradigm, which prioritizes community involvement and representation in a push to democratize the ongoing process of designing and governing cities. (Bratt & Reardon, 2013; Cooke & Kothari, 2001b; Healey, 2008; Mccann, 2001; Rydin, 2007)

As this ideology and methodology grows rapidly, the need for reflexive critique becomes apparent (Mohan, 2001), given the high stakes of urban decision making - quality of life, service provision, housing availability, and economic stability of millions of people in an era of increasing precarity due to economic recession and governmental austerity. (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; Kipfer & Keil, 2002) With the growing interest in participatory governance, there is a responsibility for meeting social needs of urban residents. Of particular interest is how participatory approaches toward planning, development, and urban governance, intersect with ongoing trends of gentrification and housing crises. (Hackworth, 2005; Hanlon, 2010; Newman & Wyly, 2006) The prevailing context of gentrification as the global urban strategy means that reinvestment in city centers has become the norm, along with the effects of class displacement that eventually ensue, and that the state now mobilizes to actively catalyze gentrification. (Smith, 2002) The historical process of housing provision for the poor, as well as white flight and the evolution of urban segregation, placed high density public housing developments of the 60s and 70s in urban centers, where they are now squarely located in the path of downtown reinvestment and gentrification efforts. Thus, public housing developments have become key targets of redevelopment efforts, as we transform concentrated public housing sites into mixed income, mixed use hubs for private investment in renovated urban centers. As such, Wyly & Newman have argued that public housing, along with rent control policy, has functioned as a primary buffer against displacement caused by pro-gentrification urban policies, as it can serve as an anchor in neighborhoods that are otherwise experiencing rent inflations. (2006) Thus, the deregulation of public housing, and targeting such developments for elimination, represents a serious threat to affordable housing, and the 'right to stay put.'

Informed by my own cautionary interest in the proliferation of participatory practice and an understanding of the precarious role of public housing in pro-gentrification urban policy, I became interested in how this particular instance of community organizing and participatory planning in Memphis has responded to the anticipated displacement to be effected by the redevelopment of Foote Homes as a central node to the continued revitalization of downtown Memphis. Both phenomena – the Vance Avenue Collaborative's participatory planning project,

and gentrification efforts for downtown Memphis, represent current prevailing trends in urban development. Nevertheless, they have the effect of contradicting each other with opposing visions for the use of the space currently occupied by Foote Homes, and the rights of current residents to that space.

I seek to understand why this opportunity for resident planning 'failed' in Memphis, meaning that it did not effectively accomplish a collaborative partnership between the City and community-based organizations, and did not succeed in generating a consensus over a neighborhood plan. What enabled a city agency to initiate a community planning project and then to abandon it and the hard work of involved residents? Why was the Collaborative unable to effectively persuade the city to make good on their interests in participatory practice? What are the restrictive conditions in which participatory planning operates which limit its potential for transformative change? In exploring these questions, I argue for more clarity and nuance in how participatory techniques are framed in critical literature and how we explain success of participatory practice.

Argument

In this thesis, I will attempt to show how the Vance Avenue Collaborative functions as a major instigator of social movement organizing in Memphis in its multiple roles as urban planning consultants, protesters, and organizers, and how they have productively drawn upon the participatory paradigm in order to do so. Participatory practice is diverse and comes in myriad forms, and its contours are heavily shaped by local political context, social histories, and contingency of human social organizing. In the midst of heavy critique of participatory practice, I will identify the ways in which participation does not produce immediate liberation, and can at times decline to engage with the workings of power and oppression. I will then proceed to illuminate the disjuncture between the multiple ways that participatory practice is invoked in different types of planning and activism in the U.S., and the critical literature on such practices. Finally, I argue that the critical literature on the participatory paradigm is actually not sufficient to understand the complex ways in which grassroots organizations operate as collaborative planning 'partners.'

I feel compelled to make this argument for two reasons, which have emerged out of my fieldwork researching this project, and out of my positionality as a Memphis resident for 18 years, and an anti-gentrification activist in other cities over the past 10 years. In particular, I have been active

in several cooperatives that work on creating autonomous and horizontal community responses to the harmful effects of neoliberalism, including the Participatory Budgeting Project in Chicago, but also less formal neighborhood-based living and work cooperatives, all of which use participatory approaches to generate radical inclusivity and direct democracy. In Memphis, I have observed the ways in which the Collaborative has had to navigate the political complexities that have been clearly identified and problematized by critical scholars. There are many pressures with which participatory organizers have to contend, most of which are predicated on the claim that participatory methods will generate social justice and increase social equity. The Collaborative has found that participatory techniques cannot on their own level historically entrenched power dynamics, and there is a very real risk of reproducing and strengthening these power dynamics if they are not adequately challenged in the process. (Aitken, 2010; Ramsey, 2008) Particularly in the era of collaborative planning, planners are expected to work toward achieving consensus in decision-making, which can stifle dissent as minorities of all kinds are filtered out in the pressure to settle upon a consensus, which consolidates hegemonic urban forms rather than introducing creative alternative possibilities. (H. a. Perkins, 2013; Purcell, 2009)

The most significant turning point in the period of engagement between the Collaborative and the city was when the planning partnership was aborted in August, 2012, after it became apparent that there was a definite non-consensus on the decision for the future of Foote Homes. When visions for preservation emerged from the community planning process, which controversially opposed the city's plan for demolition and redevelopment, it became obvious that this was a much politicized issue. The ways that participatory practice engages with politics is a point of contention for scholars, who caution against the depoliticizing effects of participation. The potential for depoliticization is a factor that the Collaborative had to struggle with, and it affirmed the cautionary theorization that critical scholars have synthesized so far in this research direction.

The second observation that I am using to support this argument is that despite these complications and pressures, the Collaborative actually leveraged their participation to expose the aforementioned political nature of public housing, to protest downtown gentrification strategies, and to carve out a space for dissent in a city marked by economic depression and political exclusion.

Although the Collaborative was interested in working with the city and willingly engaged in a partnership during this time, their work was not restricted to this domain. They did not permit their own operations to be dictated by this partner relationship. When the repressive tendencies

of state-led participatory processes became visible, the Collaborative began to integrate their planning practice with protest actions, and they did not permit their partnership to discourage that kind of action.

Overall, the Collaborative's work in the VanceCN partnership, and then in the subsequent Improve Don't Remove protest campaign, has not taken the form of state-led participatory planning initiatives taken up within the discourse of collaborative planning, as described by other scholars. I believe that this represents an opening for the impasse that has been reached by participation scholars, this impasse being the contradictions felt when participation functions in very power-masking ways. That said, it currently may be the most appropriate method for making development and planning decisions more democratic and inclusive. This opening calls for dissecting the types of participatory processes we are talking about, instead conflating them under the hegemonic conceptualization of highly directive participatory processes led by state or institutional leaders of planning or development.

Thesis Overview

In order to develop this argument, I have organized the structure of this thesis as follows. Since the process of planning for Foote Homes/ Vance Avenue community redevelopment is complicated, involving many actors, and has shifted over time, I will first, in Chapter 4, give a detailed explanation of this case study and how it has progressed over the past few years. Next, I discuss how public housing residents perceive and respond to gentrification in Memphis, the roles of the Vance Avenue neighborhood and federal housing policy in the future of the neighborhood, and the methods used by the Collaborative to use their planning expertise and their organizing skills to resist gentrification. Following this, in Chapter 5, I will relate the community planning process in Memphis to critical literature on participation, highlighting the difficulties faced in using participatory methods for equity planning. The malleability of discourses of participation led to a polarizing opposition between the Collaborative and the MHA, both of whom were mobilizing a discourse of participation, and using it to support very different visions for the city. I will discuss the implications for these opposing discourses, and how it restricted the potential for participatory practice to support social justice. Then in Chapter 6, I will look at the ways in which participatory practice enabled positive effects that were much broader than the stated aim to preserve Foote Homes. It is here that I will challenge the critical literature on participation,

and begin to re-theorize what we consider to be the role of participatory planning, how we identify disempowerment and manipulation, and how we measure its success.

Contributions of research

In the end, I hope to make several contributions with this research. Most immediately, I have chosen to research this project because I am interested in social justice activism in Memphis, and especially the ways that the Collaborative has increased the organizing capacity of local social movements there. I believe that no research is without political interests, and I directly acknowledge mine in my self-identification as an activist scholar. (Caitlin, Pain, & Sultana, 2007; Kobayashi, 1994) Through my activist research, I aim to bring visibility to the Collaborative, and to amplify their voice and their mission through my research focus and writings. Relatedly, I acknowledge the importance of expanding the geographic scope of case studies used in urban studies research. (Robinson, 2008) Memphis is underrepresented in urban research, and focusing on it as a research site promotes the importance of mid-sized, or second-tier, cities, in abandoning a 'one size fits all' approach to researching policy, social problems, and networks of urbanism. (Lees, 2000; Markusen et al, 1999)

I situate myself in the research field of literature on participation, and I intend to contribute to the development of this body of literature by pushing back on the ways in which critiques are formulated, and what they are directed at. I ask scholars to pay attention to the multiple workings of grassroots actors and community organizations, and to the self-awareness that many of them have regarding the contradictions of the participatory paradigm. I encourage caution in alleging that the state and private actors function to manage or suppress social movements through participatory practice.

And lastly, I hope to contribute to formulating alternate ways of seeing planners and activists, since the line between activism and planning is increasingly blurry, and cannot be divided neatly into different political categories. (Sager, 2012) By alternately theorizing participatory practice, I want to bring hope to community efforts around urban planning by shifting perspectives and changing the way we evaluate our successes and failures.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

"this (Choice Neighborhoods) is just the next iteration of that (HOPE VI). Just a different name."

-Executive Director, Memphis Housing Authority, 2013

This research project takes place at a critical juncture in the evolution of federal housing policy in the U.S. Heavily implicated in local public housing provision is the recent appearance in 2010 of a new federal initiative, the Choice Neighborhoods program. Unrolled by the Obama administration as a somewhat reformed replacement for HOPE VI, Choice continues HOPE VI's formula of removing the high-density housing projects of the Urban Renewal era and replacing them with mixed-income housing developments, but with an enhanced emphasis on neighborhood scale redevelopment, synergistic governance, and reforming certain negative effects of HOPE VI. In this sense, an understanding of the social importance of HOPE VI in restructuring cities is essential for analyzing the local enactment of Choice policy. It can be seen as an extension, and a deepening, of the neoliberal motives and the effects of HOPE VI. Although I began this research under the pretext that Choice represented a potential shift in how community redevelopment is done, a point of view shared by hopeful individuals from the Collaborative, the MHA director was quick to tell me that he considers Choice to be just a continuation of HOPE VI, saying "this is just the next iteration of that. Just a different name." (Executive Director, Memphis Housing Authority, Personal interview, September 6, 2013)

The particular formations of HOPE VI and Choice hinge on the hegemony of neoliberal urbanism, which increasingly activates the state in facilitating the movement and growth of private capital and marketization of social policy. (Brenner et al., 2010; Brenner & Theodore, 2002a; Peck & Tickell, 2002) As many scholars have pointed out, the elevation of neoliberalism as a defining ideology of the current global situation often leaves its usage increasingly vague and all-encompassing of a variety of multiple, simultaneous, and contradictory events, policies, and processes. (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Ferguson, 2010; Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2013) The utility of the concept for making sense of changes in federal-local housing policy in the U.S. leads to privileging of certain functions over others. In this context, I am referring to the restrictive circumstances that urban areas in the U.S. are existing within, as conditioned by measures of austerity effected by several decades of rollbacks in federal funding as well as recent global economic crisis, and the new forms of statecraft that have

emerged to cope with crisis by diversifying governance practices and facilitating the investments and mobilities of global finance capital. Neoliberalism has been theorized as both the withdrawal of the state to permit greater freedom for private market interventions to dictate public policy, as well as the mobilization of the state in order to create favorable conditions for capital accumulation. (Lipman, 2012; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Weber, 2002) In the case of public housing, this is exemplified by cutbacks in federal funding, which are compensated for by entrepreneurial practices of privatization, partnerships, and financialization of public services. (Hackworth, 2007; Weber, 2002) HOPE VI and Choice rely in particular on the valorization of public-private partnerships, diversified governance, and localization and privatization of social services formerly sourced from the state. (Levy, 2006)

U.S. housing policy has long focused primarily on private home ownership, and the history of subsidized rental housing has been characterized by a splintering of individual programs, and a lack of overarching policy. (Landis & McClure, 2010) HOPE VI was initiated in 1992, during the Clinton administration, to provide grants to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) for the revitalization of public housing developments, including costs associated with physical demolition and construction, or rehabilitation, management improvements, and supportive services. The program was designed to reform the flaws of the urban renewal era, which razed inner-city tenements and replaced them with high-density public housing. After decades of mismanagement, insufficient maintenance funds, white flight and related disinvestment, and the social effects of concentrating the poor in locations underserved by economic opportunities, HOPE VI provided opportunities for starting over once again, and a new approach was formed based on a theory of deconcentrating poverty by designing mixed-income housing developments of lower densities. During the early 90's, U.S. HUD secretary Henry Cisneros oversaw this program, and is largely credited for its success and scope. While the HOPE VI program received much criticism, which is largely reflected in this thesis, it also helped make a case for Cisneros continued federal investment in housing provision for the poor and homeless when HUD itself was threatened with disabling budget cuts. (Cisneros & Engdahl, 2010)

Public housing revitalization in the HOPE VI program usually occurred by demolishing high-density developments, and replacing them with mixed-income, low-density developments, based on New Urbanist design principles, which the program has become known for. Central to this process was the social goal of deconcentrating poverty; this was accomplished by distributing Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs, formerly known as Section 8 vouchers,) as a tenant-based form of housing subsidy, and the relocation of some residents into the new developments, which

remained in part a project-based housing subsidy. (Hackworth, 2005; Hanlon, 2010; Landis & McClure, 2010) HCVs moved public housing residents into the private market, where their vouchers are used to subsidize their rent to private landlords who choose to opt in to the program. Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) incentivize the construction of affordable housing by private and non-profit developers. The production of new affordable housing using LIHTCs, and the conversion of private rental units into voucher-accepting public housing units by landlords, are both entirely non-mandated. They rely on the assumption that developers and landlords will act as rational economic actors and choose to provide affordable housing based on preferential market conditions. (Goetz, 2011) As traditional project-based public housing developments are demolished through HOPE VI, and now Choice, public housing providers and tenants are transferred to the private housing market.

According to a recent HUD report monitoring the progress of Choice, "the best practices observed under HOPE VI have been written into the requirements of Choice." (The Urban Institute, 2013, p 1-11) These best practices, and subsequent areas of similarity, include: an emphasis on public-private partnerships and mixed financing (including LIHTCs), attention to tenant relocation, cooperation with tenant-based assistance programs (such as HCVs,) specific grant allocations, such as the 15% set-aside for flexible uses (non brick-and-mortar,) and of course, maintaining the vision for mixed-income, New Urbanist-inspired residential developments as the center point for neighborhood revitalization projects. The "attention to tenant relocation" mentioned in this list of best practices is enacted in Choice as a one-for-one replacement requirement, a reform of the most criticized aspect of HOPE VI, which was the net loss of affordable units, wherein fewer affordable units were rebuilt than demolished. The rest of this list involves the most salient parts of HOPE VI that actively facilitated neoliberal urban restructuring: shifting public housing provision into a private market, soliciting greater levels of private capital through mixed-financing, and catalyzing broader urban revitalization in city centers.

'Roll-out' neoliberalism entails a reorganization of the state, referred to as "neoliberal statecraft" by Brenner and Theodore, and this reorganization spatializes neoliberalism as most active in urban spaces, and at the local scale. (2002b) Localization to cities, the "interiorization" of neoliberal policy, restructures cities as experimental laboratories of neoliberal policy regimes and as sites of creative destruction, both of which are exemplified by the local implementation of federal HUD public housing directives. (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a) Localization is accomplished through the diminishing availability of federal funds for local housing and

development projects, and it effects a reliance on partnership models to accomplish social policy-making and public service provision. ‘Partnership’ is enrolled through the financing model of public-private partnerships, but also through an entrepreneurial culture of collaboration, typified by the new discourses of stakeholdership, volunteerism, and governance. (Brenner et al., 2010; Harvey, 1989; Mccann, 2001; H. a. Perkins, 2013; Robinson, 2008; Ward, 2010) Essential contributions from this literature which inform my research are the claims that the marketization of social policy is politically guided, that the state facilitates at all scales, and that the local functions as a proving grounds for federal guidance of capital mobility. A very pointed analysis of HOPE VI as neoliberal urban policy has been undertaken by James Hanlon, who argues that the key avenues of neoliberalization via HOPE VI are its partnership-based mixed finance model, the imposition of mixed-income communities, the rebuilding according to New Urbanist design principles, and of course, the pro-active role of the state in enforcing all these objectives. (Hanlon, 2010)

I align with scholars who understand the mission of producing mixed-income communities, along with the privatization of public housing provision, to be a key component of gentrification strategies in revitalizing urban spaces. (Hackworth, 2005) Theorizing gentrification as a strategy of urban governance follows the shift from “roll-back” to “roll-out” neoliberalism, where the state is realized as an agent of gentrification, no longer charged with regulating or mitigating market-driven gentrification, but instead assists gentrification through policy, local subsidies, and deregulation of housing markets and land use restrictions. (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Smith, 2002) If HOPE VI (and now Choice) are important facilitators of neoliberalization, their re-spatialization of the trajectory of public housing is a lever for the movement of capital and people in and out of resurging downtowns. Historically, public housing developments had been built on vacant or cleared land made available through urban renewal and white flight; these spaces were almost exclusively in downtown urban districts, which continued to experience population loss and disinvestment for decades. With the reinvestment of capital into mixed commercial and residential uses, and the simultaneous and connected cultural shifts that target the creative class and inner-urban living, HUD funds are used to demolish public housing occupying large land tracts located in now highly desirable downtown districts. The effects of displacement due to gentrification, and this reproduction of historical phases of moving the poor around, are central to literature evaluating HOPE VI. (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Hackworth, 2005; Hanlon, 2010; K. T. Jones & Popke, 2010; Lipman, 2012)

Research evaluating the effectiveness of HOPE VI has reviewed a scope of successes and failures. Achievements of HOPE VI can be summarized by its ability to reduce high concentrations of poverty and segregation by dispersing poor residents, diversifying housing assistance through combining with HCVs and LIHTCs, and constructing New Urbanist-inspired mixed-income developments that are sometimes able to generate renewed private investment in formerly disinvested urban areas. (Castells, 2010; Popkin et al, 2004) At the same time, the program has been criticized for its failure to guarantee housing for former residents in the new mixed-income developments, and for the high levels of resulting displacement. Several studies have found very low levels of returning residents; on average, less than half of former residents return to live in the new mixed-income developments. This low rate of return is attributed to the following factors: fewer public subsidized and affordable units were rebuilt in the new developments than were demolished (the infamous lack of one-for-one replacement requirement that Choice now seeks to implement,) rents for affordable units were higher than those they replaced, and many former tenants lost their HOPE VI eligibility due to stricter enforcement of screening criteria. (Brooks et al, 2005; Popkin et al., 2004; GAO, 2003, Clark, 2002)

The feature of Choice that I am investigating is its emphasis on community-oriented development, which is established through the use of the neighborhood scale as the spatial target of development, and through its advocacy of resident engagement in the planning process. This emphasis on community-based revitalization reflects the influence of collaborative planning strategiesfunction further both democratic ideals as well as neoliberal management of urban space. Collaborative planning is enacted through what I call the participatory paradigm, the phenomenon of enrolling public participation in formerly state-controlled planning and development projects.

The Participatory Paradigm

As a nod to the influence of feminist epistemologies and activist research, as well as discussions of critique, especially within critical GIS traditions in human geography, I believe strongly in the relation between theory and practice, and in situating the object of critique, knowledge, and its site of production, firmly within the theoretical context in which it was constructed. (Cope, 2002; Haraway, 1988; Leszczynski, 2009) Participatory practice has unique lineages in the different disciplines in which it is performed. Although applied planning often draws from geographic

theory, I have found it necessary to expand beyond geography's literature on participatory urbanism in order to fully understand the Vance Avenue Collaborative as embedded in networks of government, professional practice, and community organizing. Hence, I will trace a brief lineage of the emergence of participatory planning in communicative planning theory, and link it to the participatory paradigm more broadly.

In U.S.-based community development practice, urban planners began seeking options for increasing resident involvement after popular uprisings during the 60's illuminated the failures of Urban Renewal and the War on Poverty. Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," written in 1969, has come to define decades of urban development work that shares goals of equitable outcomes and increased community control over their environments. (Arnstein, 1969; Bratt & Reardon, 2013)

The Ladder emerged out of urban social movements in the 1960s, in which black residents were organizing into community and tenants groups, to protest a recent history of slum clearance, urban renewal, housing discrimination, and general manipulation by racist and patronage-run city governments. The Ladder describes a typology used to refute what these new organizations perceived as false gestures of inclusion that were intended to quell social uprisings but not to shift fundamental oppressive practices of urban governments. By accepting this typology, community organizations would commit to designing development practices that enabled them to ascend the ladder to greater forms of popular inclusion; the lower rungs were eschewed as methods traditionally used by those in power to exclude residents. The lowest rungs, "manipulation" and "therapy," are actually "levels of non-participation' that have been contrived by elites to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable residents to participate in planning, but to enable powerholders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants." (Arnstein, 1969, p 217)

This recognition of the problems with traditional planning as hierarchical, unidirectional, and exclusionary, typified the politically conscious planning forms that emerged in the 60s and 70s. Planning that directly addresses social inequality has traditionally been referred to as equity planning, or advocacy planning, and generally conceptualizes professional planners as working for clients or interest groups in order to advance social justice goals. Advocacy and equity planners were responding to a particular modernist ideology of planning that took itself to be value-neutral and objective. Instead, they acknowledge the always political nature of planning

and governing, and argue that to not take a political stance in favor of reducing inequality is instead a political stance in favor of the status quo. (Davidoff, 1965)

With the communicative turn in planning theory, planning practice became more process-oriented, drawing heavily from Habermas' philosophy of communicative reasoning and action. Without delving too deeply into this branch of critical theory, communicative planning emphasizes the existence of multiple experience and plural realities, which must be shared and debated in a collective, open realm, typically through collaborative mechanisms. (Healey, 1997; Purcell, 2009) Models of planning that aim to increase inclusivity and representation in planning processes through participation, consensus-building, and stakeholder mediation, draw from this tradition, although they may differ in conceptions of power and the potential for creating Habermas' "ideal speech situation." (Forester, 2009; Healey, 2008) Whereas advocacy planners have been critiqued for "talking-on-behalf-of" marginalized communities they seek to represent, communicative planning theory has also been critiqued for using citizen participation without problematizing power in deliberation or recognizing the potential for co-optation. (Sager, 2012)

In the persistent effort to improve collaborative planning methods in order to generate inclusivity, and to transform social relations in ways that empower marginalized communities, contemporary planners continue to refer back to Arnstein's ladder, rethinking the complicated social interactions that generate forms of empowerment. Bratt & Reardon argue that the Ladder does not sufficiently acknowledge local context in measuring the effectiveness of participatory strategies, and that systems of governance are much more complex than the model allows. (2013) Fung similarly complicates the original model; his "democracy cube" explodes the spectrum into a multi-directional axis that visualizes an intersectional analysis of power and authority, categories of participants or stakeholders, and mode of communication used. Both of these models attempt to rework a schema to direct planning practice with a commitment to community participation as the strategy for planning for social justice.

A similar focus on participation as the key to generating social progress emerged out of a period of debates about the role of GIS in social science research. While postmodernism was exerting a great influence on most disciplines, asserting the existence of subjectivity and multiplicity in identity and experience, and the social construction of scientific knowledge, GIS technologies were rapidly advancing and holding the interest of academic geographers, as well as applied practitioners in and outside of geography. (N. Schuurman, 2000) The upward popularity of, and investment in, GIS research and methods became a subject of critique by researchers who were

concerned about its ties to positivist empiricism, which would too closely resemble geography's imperialist past, while promoting a "technology-led mentality" toward problem solving. (Openshaw, 1991; Taylor, 1990) In addition to its potential for reinforcing positivist science, GIS was perceived to be limited to quantitative research by processing numerical data computationally. Human geographers at the time were desperately trying to disassociate from quantitative methods, due to a dualistic understanding of an essential opposition between quantitative and qualitative methods. (Sheppard, 2001) A further critique noted the limits to representation offered by GIS, the visualization capabilities of which were structured by a Cartesian cartographic perspective that asserted an ability to absolutely locate objects in fixed space from an objective perspective, and to represent them as they are in reality, from a neutral point of view that is a "view from nowhere" or a "God's eye view." (Elwood, 2006b; Haraway, 1988; C. Perkins & Dodge, 2009) So, GIS was problematized as being exclusively quantitative, reproducing positivist scientific methodologies and empiricist epistemologies, and as universalizing subjectivity.

In response to these debates and critiques, an array of scholars have experimented with and prescribed modifications of GIS practice, largely rooted in feminist geography, which include merging GIS into grounded theory frameworks, representing qualitative, temporal, and multi-media forms of data, and including GIS analysis into mixed methods research, all for the purpose of demonstrating possibilities for engaging with GIS technologies in ways that do not represent singular universal perspectives, or are limited to positivist scientific rationalities. (Knigge & Cope, 2006) Particularly relevant is the assertion that technologies and practices are not inherently tied together, and that GIS, and by extension other technologies, can be adeptly applied and theorized for purposes other than initially designed, and thus are not necessarily restricted to a single methodology, epistemology, social process, or outcome. (Kwan, 2004, 2007; Pavlovskaya, 2009; Wilson, 2009) GIS has since been enrolled in activism and community development, strategic quantitative and empirical research for social equity, and has been expanded to community based participatory processes. Public Participation GIS (PPGIS) has worked to expand this traditionally institution-oriented technology in order to incorporate many actors in various phases of GIS work, through data collection, research design, visualization and analysis, and to collectively convene and generate goals and outcomes through its many functionalities and possibilities of representation. (Obermeyer, 1998) Overall, these scholars have demonstrated that GIS is not as limited as was initially believed, and that the social responsiveness of the technology can be improved through two primary means: engaging with

social theory to challenge assumed epistemologies and promote more critical usage of GIS, and focusing research on revising algorithmic capabilities of GIS to better represent critical views on data. As one of many popular participatory techniques employed by collaborative planning, and as a prevalent model for devoting GIS technology toward social goals and away from its institutional oppressive past identity, PPGIS is an utmost representation of the participatory paradigm.

What I refer to as the "participatory paradigm," the imperative to induce participation across disciplines in theory and practice, is referred to by Cooke and Kothari as the "participatory development orthodoxy."(Cooke & Kothari, 2001b) Participatory development is an approach to development that also emerged during the 1980's, with the growing recognition of the insufficiencies of hierarchical, centralized, and externally-imposed development models. Most development projects had been coordinated by "outsiders," meaning western-based NGOs whose programs were directed by private and state donors. Chambers' work on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was most influential in building the participatory development approach. PRA, initially referring to participatory rural development, and then generalized to encompass other forms of participatory development, aimed to increase the involvement of people who were most influenced by development initiatives. Having acknowledged the ignorance of local cultural and political realities by otherwise well-intended development practitioners, as well as the potential for overt abuse and exploitation by foreign interests, PRA is a mechanism for bringing in local knowledge, about what kinds of solutions are possible in unique social contexts. Participatory development, like other fields of participatory practice, was influenced by a rejection of modernist and positivist models of research methodologies, and sought to empower local people to take more active roles, with outside practitioners reduced to the role of facilitator, instead of leader. PRA has become an iconic model for strategies that put primacy on consultations with the most marginalized, and this field has been influenced by Paulo Freire and post-colonial perspectives on popular education for social transformation. (Chambers, 1994; Hickey & Mohan, 2004)

By calling out participatory development as an "orthodoxy," Cooke and Kothari shift the object of critique from a technocratic focus to a discourse focus, while maintaining a goal of straddling the boundary between internal and external critique. Although PRA has been widely accepted as a more sustainable and empowering approach to development, particularly in the context of foreign-directed NGO development work, it has also been subject to critiques of the technical limitations of the methodology and the conceptual and epistemological shortcomings that

underpin the approach. These conceptual questions center on whether PRA can adequately empower marginalized people if it operates in a global framework that is governed by the same marginalizing power structure, and also whether it tends to displace pre-existing, locally effective decision-making processes. Along these lines, a body of literature has emerged that makes radical accusations of participation as “tyrannical,” for imposing rigorous and culturally insensitive methods as a way to extract local knowledge for goals of social equity and better distribution of resources in ‘underdeveloped’ places. (Cooke & Kothari, 2001a; Samuel Hickey & Mohan, 2004) This “tyranny” refers firstly to the way in which the discourse of participation has become a hegemonic consensus in itself, an orthodoxy that practitioners are expected to conform to, regardless of context. Secondly, the power dynamics unreflexively wielded by facilitators of participation may in fact override the decision-making processes of the local communities which they wish to support. Conversely, it tends to overly valorize the local, without recognizing that the local scale is also infused with the uneven power relations of hegemonic discourse, and may also reproduce inequality and oppression, and so does not necessarily promote workable solutions. (Kothari, 2001; Mosse, 2001)

These critiques of participatory development are drawn from a large body of literature by development geographers who are asking strong questions about participation as a paradigm, or orthodoxy. The problem of non-transformative participation, the uncritical valorization of local knowledge, and the hegemony of discourse, have all become visible in the other fields of participatory literature that I have discussed here. (Dunn, 2007) PPGIS is a form of participatory practice that specifically seeks to uncover marginalized local knowledge. While Elwood, for example, describes community organizations as having “a deep and detailed knowledge of the institutional, spatial, and knowledge politics of urban planning and problem solving, and the capacity to manipulate these in strategic ways,” (Elwood, 2006a) Kothari argues that local knowledge is not an essential form of knowledge, and is a socially constructed discourse, affected by the same social power structures that create hegemonic discourse and dominant forms of knowledge. (Kothari, 2001) Similarly, Elwood also demonstrates the insufficiency of dualist conceptions of local vs. official knowledge, and shows how they are interconnected in participatory practice. (Elwood, 2006c)

Urban and PPGIS geographers in particular have taken up participation as a concept (as distinct from a research methodology) as it relates to processes of neoliberalization in economic restructuring and governance in cities, and as a focal point for scholarship on the social and political implications of GIS technology. Much of this discussion deals with the potential of

participation for empowerment through greater representation, or its use as a method to manage and co-opt resistance, and the tension between these effects. A primary theme is the question of whether participation is either a resistance or a cooperation, or even a continuance of a relationship of oppression. The inclusion of the non-expert public in data collection, analysis, and visualization articulates a politics of knowledge that privileges communities that have historically been under-represented in policy and space discourses. At the same time, the pressure to construct datasets and visualizations in the technical manner required by both GIS standards and professional governance means that not all forms of knowledge will exert influence, and that citizens may be manipulated through the specific technocratic means they are compelled to use to make their voices heard. Thus, the liberatory potential of PPGIS is contested, as are other similarly devised techniques of participation in community-based collaborative planning. (Elwood, 2002, 2006a)

That Arnstein's ladder continues to occupy a central place in academic and professional planning education, and is used to evaluate the democratic potential of resident-focused planning processes, indicates the resonance of technique-oriented approaches that seek to incorporate more people into planning processes, with the objective of more equitable outcomes and experiences of empowerment. In its moment of inception, the Ladder provided an important challenge to traditionally exclusive methods of community development. However, it is worth noting that over 40 years later, there are few that can claim to have made it to the top of the ladder, to the rung known as "Citizen Control." The ladder lends itself to a distributive understanding of power, in which power can be increased or accumulated by climbing rungs. Furthermore, ascending rungs can only be accomplished by resolving certain kinds of problems for which there are incremental, technical solutions. Framing problems of resident participation as an ascendant ladder lends itself to what Li identified as the process of "rendering technical," (Li, 2007) and what Ferguson observed as a tendency to invent or highlight problems for the purpose of being able to propose technical solutions to them, thus constructing a need for the intervention of the entity that is set up as the problem solver. (Ferguson, 1994) Part of the appeal of participatory development is that it claims an array of techniques that are low-cost, low-technology, and transcend language as the primary mode of communication. Participatory techniques include visioning, mapping, photography, and various other interactive forms of data collection. These techniques are creative, honor alternative forms of data, and are able to incorporate many ways of seeing, and many forms of knowledges. But the hope for techniques to enable better inclusion or

representation overlaps with a larger dilemma of framing social problems as technical ones, and relying on a constantly improving set of techniques to reach an ideal solution.

Many of the broader trends of neoliberalism discussed above contribute to the prevalence of participatory processes of decision-making, as traditional government services are shifted onto non-governmental actors through public-private partnerships and increasing localization of governance. For scholars who are concerned with the effects of neoliberalism on de-regulating and de-funding public services and heightening market-based competition in all sectors, the emergence of highly localized neighborhood planning may place excessive burdens on individuals and organizations who must increasingly demonstrate a level of entrepreneurship and technocratic capacity in order to have a voice. In this sense, collaborative governance can be wielded as a method of disciplining citizens. (Ghose, 2005) In their discussion of the ways in which neoliberalism and post-Marxism take up community participation, empowerment, and localism, Mohan and Stokke argue that both consider the local to be the most relevant scale for development, but the revised neoliberal position uses a "top-down" strategy, and post-Marxism instead mobilizes the local from the "bottom-up." (Mohan & Stokke, 2000, p. 249) For those who organize participatory strategies in order to empower marginalized people through a transformative democratic process, it is a danger when the state or NGOs promote localism as an effort to decentralize the regulatory state, or to make their activities more efficient or more profitable.

With the advent of collaborative planning, urban planning began to use a discourse of consensus-based decision-making which opened up decision-making processes to a larger number of interests and alternatives, including the private sector. In the same vein of deciding that corporations have personhood, businesses and consultants have been invited into the governance process via public-private partnerships, and often have a seat at the table in 'community' decision-making processes. Collaborative visioning processes, while idealized in discourse as open, participatory, not just reserved for experts, are in practice typically operated by hired consultants, heavily weighted by business elites and traditional political and bureaucratic leaders, and thus cannot actually create any new space for alternative development ideas. (Aitken, 2010; Mccann, 2001; Purcell, 2009)

Participation has a variety of lineages, from radical social movements for progressive change to functioning as devices for neoliberal restructuring. An active critical research program has taken off, shining light on participation as a discourse. This research urges caution about the perceived

domination of this discourse, and unreflexive imperatives toward participation. It has ultimately led to an impasse, where scholars and practitioners continue to undertake participatory best practices that are largely unchanged, but with a deep-seated discomfort with their processes and effects. This is where I am left, and where I hope to pick up on in my research on participatory practice in planning and activism around decidedly neoliberal urban policies.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

My case study had been in progress for several years before the formal commencement of this research project. I had been following the progress of the VanceCN initiative since the Planners Network conference in 2011, and during my visits home to Memphis, I met with organizers to learn about the other projects they were working on. In this way, I cannot help but to draw upon my experiences as a participant observer that occurred long before developing a research design. As an ally and volunteer, the ambiguity of what constituted research has continued to the present.

After following the progress of Vance Avenue neighborhood planning via local news outlets and social media, occasional visits, and conversations with academics who worked on it, I officially undertook a more formal research process that involved on-site fieldwork during the summer of 2013. My research methods generally followed in the same way: watching, reading, listening, mapping, and sometimes talking. (Moss, 1995; Rose, 1997) Formally, this is a mixed-method, qualitative activist research project that employed participant observation, semi-structured interviews, archival research. (Kitchen & Tate, 2001; Phillip, 1998)

Due to the complex and opaque nature of city government and planning divisions, I spent much time doing archival research to understand the recent history that led to the events of VanceCN, who were the key actors who have been able to influence the process, and what questions were currently on the table at any given time. I often felt like an investigative journalist, cross-referencing multiple forms of data in order to generate elusive answers. As an example of this, I was seeking a copy of the MHA's most current comprehensive development plan for Vance, which is ostensibly a public document, and one which should be in a complete stage since they were preparing to submit it to HUD for the Choice grant application. However, the name for this plan had changed several times over the past few years – as of 2008, the de facto name for the redevelopment area was Triangle Noir, it later became Heritage Trail, and at times the two are used interchangeably. There are often multiple drafts of a single plan, or plans that replace previous drafts, and all of these are made available at multiple online locations that are inconsistent and often out of date. Furthermore, there are occasionally documents that should be public, but are being kept from public scrutiny by city officials.

In my archival research, I used planning documents that were produced by the Collaborative and the MHA, specifically each of their final plans for the Vance Avenue neighborhood, but also the previous iterations of those plans, which documented the historical transformation of this space.

Large amounts of primary research were generously provided by the Collaborative, including their surveys and research materials used in the VanceCN planning process. I consulted secondary sources as compiled by HUD, such as statistics on HOPE VI funding projects, reports on previous projects, and policy evaluations.

I referred to local media to gauge public opinion on the redevelopment project, and to understand divisions among political factions, and I even found myself having casual conversations with people at bars or parties to find out what they had heard about the project, and their opinions on the political controversy caused by it. All of this helped me envision the political landscape that formed the context for my later research methods, and helped me understand the positioning of various actors.

After this preliminary archival and media research period, I conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders of both sides of the VanceCN division. (Kvale, 1996) This included two lead organizers of the Vance Avenue Collaborative, two members of the Memphis City Council who have been involved in the project or whose representative districts contain the Vance Avenue neighborhood, and the executive director of the Memphis Housing Authority. These interviews varied in usefulness. I found that interviewing activists was quite easy for me; as an activist myself, we spoke similar languages and had reference points in common. (Caitlin et al., 2007; Kobayashi, 1994; Rose, 1997) In addition, because the Collaborative had been recently exiled by the city, and was fighting against their exclusion from major decisions that would affect them, they were generally eager to express their viewpoint in whatever way they could, and consequently were very willing to talk to me.

I had a different experience interviewing city officials. First of all, I found it nearly impossible to use certain terms that are more common among community organizers. Even though I had presumed that participatory planning was fast becoming a mainstream planning practice under the umbrella of collaborative planning trends, the language of participation did not resonate with these interviewees at all. I eventually changed my language to 'resident involvement' or 'community engagement,' but then I tended to receive responses related to electoral politics or lobbying. In addition to this mismatch in language, responses from political figures would echo pre-rehearsed talking points, or evasive and vague answers. I had expected this and so was not surprised, but it was distinctive nonetheless. What I had not expected from interviews was a type of condescension I received from the city officials that I interviewed. I felt particularly condescended by two men that I interviewed, who used a kind of informality that I feel was

attributed to our gendered differences, as well as being treated as if I was ignorant about the issues I asked about. At times, it felt like they were attempting to use the interview as a 'teachable moment' to explain to me how public policy works, or the political structure of the city. However, I noticed several instances of misinformation, which indicated to me that based on my own research, I had become more expert on public housing and federal housing policy than they had. For example, even the director of the MHA did not understand the new requirements for 1-for-1 replacement housing in the new Choice Neighborhoods, which is disconcerting, since he seemed to believe that Housing Choice Vouchers constituted replacement public housing (which they do not.)

Another challenge to interviewing city officials was the seemingly suspect nature of my project, given that the city had been facing an unusual amount of backlash over their decision to exclude community representation in Vance planning. They had been harshly criticized in the popular media, and were quite secretive and protective. Even when I called to ask about public information, such as why a MHA board meeting was cancelled (this was a meeting at which the Collaborative was being allowed to give a public presentation, and it was obvious that it had been cancelled to prevent them from speaking before the submission date for the HUD application), I was interrogated as to my motivations, asked who I was and why I was calling, and why I cared about the meeting being cancelled. The thought that I was a concerned citizen interested in the workings of my local government seemed to be a foreign concept.

The most effective research method that I used was participant observation. (Babbie, 1989; Caitlin et al., 2007; Kitchen & Tate, 2001) I attended Vance Avenue Collaborative community meetings and was able to participate in strategy discussions about strategizing how protest would proceed after they were unable to submit their application to HUD, planning the future co-operative grocery store, and problem solving for the recently opened Green Machine Mobile Market. I also attended Memphis City Council meetings, where the year's budget was being discussed and debated, and involved many members of the Collaborative and other progressive organizations, such as the Bus Riders Union, who are allies of the Vance campaign. One of my biggest obstacles was the flakiness of the city; they regularly cancel public meetings, even those which are rarely scheduled. In general, I tried to immerse myself in the political culture of Memphis, in order to understand how it feels to be a resident in Memphis who is concerned with the direct effects of policy on one's everyday life. Even when I wasn't attending a meeting that specifically focused on downtown redevelopment, I was thinking about the role of residents, non-experts and communities, in the way that the city functions, and the ways that people organize

themselves to try to effect change. I tried to attend every public meeting and cultural event that I could, and spoke with people about Vance everywhere that I went. I even was able to have some informal dialogue with some high profile real estate developers who have years of experience negotiating with the Executive Director of the MHA, which helped me understand the rationale for his public statements against the Collaborative and his vision for the future of Foote Homes.

My most direct involvement with the Collaborative was through my role as a volunteer. I tried to make myself available to help out with their projects as much as possible, in order to try to develop an insider perspective on the various projects they take on. In this capacity, I was asked to create some basic maps for the Green Machine Mobile Market, which were used to help public housing residents access this new service. For Choice specifically, I took part in core organizer meetings to strategize on how to best promote the Collaborative's Transformation Plan to HUD officials. I assisted in researching the feasibility of submitting the Transformation Plan to HUD, and through careful study of Choice policy identified the particular thresholds for consideration that the VAC was unable to meet, which resulted in a major change in strategy. Ultimately the organization decided not to submit an application, because it did not meet some of the criteria to be considered by HUD.

As my fieldwork period progressed, I became more involved with the Collaborative, and my participant observation took on more of an ethnographic feel as I slowly dissolved the critical distance I had tried to take on as a researcher. (Burawoy, 1998) At the beginning of my research, I had attempted to position myself as a neutral, objective researcher, who did not have a particular interest in the future of Foote Homes, but only wanted to inquire and document the progress of opposing plans for the area. Despite my understanding that all research is biased and political, that full objectivity is unachievable, and that participatory action research is in fact very valuable, I had a few reasons for envisioning myself as a detached neutral observer. Since the object of my research was participatory practice itself, I felt like I could not 'do' participation while 'studying' participation. More importantly, I was aware of the sensitivity of this political debate in Memphis, and knew that public officials felt very much on the defense about it. Furthermore, several Collaborative leaders felt as if they had been black-listed by the City for their resistance – city officials would not meet with them, they felt like they were not listened to, and even the University had pulled away most of their support because of the backlash from the city. I wanted to maintain a distance from the Collaborative as a way of building trust with all of my research subjects. I was also concerned that if I was visibly associated with the Collaborative, then city officials would not be willing to interview with me.

I eventually realized that this level of caution about my research was holding me back and preventing me from getting useful data. Even before I became directly involved with supporting the Collective's work, city officials were reluctant to speak with me, if only because of their busy schedules and disinterest in helping a lowly masters student. (This was not true across the board; in fact, one of my interviewees was incredibly generous with his time and was very supportive of my academic endeavors. He even asked to be identified by name in my thesis, but I have declined to do so for the sake of consistency.) Regardless of my affiliations, city officials were not going to open up to me in the way that I would like, much less divulge all of their secret opinions. On the other hand, Collaborative members were enthusiastically willing to engage with me and did not feel compelled toward secrecy or defensiveness, and they regularly invited me to participate in ways that offered more opportunity for learning and gathering data. I decided that I should accept the opportunities that presented themselves, and so at that point I began collaborating with them on their research. This experience gave me much more insight than I would have acquired while still trying to be an 'objective' researcher, and I was still able to get interviews with city officials and MHA representatives, including the Executive Director of the MHA, a feat which was widely regarded as unattainable.

Interviews with MHA representatives and city officials were difficult to secure, and there were a few factors that assisted me in being able to get them. I found my site selection, in the city of Memphis, to be particularly conducive to qualitative research, because I had a familiarity with the space that likely surpassed what would be possible through conventional preliminary research. At the same time though, my affiliation with an out-of-state university, and the fact that I was no longer a Memphis resident, gave me a level of distance that interviewees seemed to feel comfortable with. The UK letterhead on my informed consent forms easily removed suspicion of reconnaissance for the Collaborative, and it presented an easy icebreaker, since the first thing that *all* my interviewees wanted to talk about was the poaching of Coach Calipari away from U of M by the UK basketball team. My university affiliation was a benefit to me, but I also used personal connections to encourage certain interviewees to participate in my research project. When the MHA office was not responsive to my initial cold emails, I solicited a willing professional connection in real estate to set up the interviews on my behalf. Again, this was a particular advantage of my research site that I would not have experienced in most other places.

Although my fieldwork involves participating in community organizing practice that includes public housing residents, and one of my goals is to amplify the voices of residents, I do not claim to represent Foote Homes residents in this research. While the Collaborative, and my

interviewees, are comprised of individuals who live in or nearby the Vance Avenue Neighborhood, and who are actively involved in the events that comprise my case study, I did not directly interview any individual who is currently a tenant in a public housing development in Memphis. However, I have made observations based on their public involvement in community meetings, and the methods used to aggregate the perceptions and visions of Foote Homes residents accumulated through participatory research. In this way, the voices of those residents are present through a passive representation on my part.

My intentional decision to not interview Foote Homes residents was made out of a careful consideration of research ethics, and my research goals. The real focus of this research is on planning and organizing practice, the fluid movement of that between formal and informal spaces, and the ways that communities negotiate contemporary discourses of participation. I feel that the Collaborative itself has effectively taken on the task of unearthing resident voices, making public housing residents visible at the forefront of development decisions, and representing residents directly. It felt unnecessary, and inappropriate, for me to attempt to replicate the work that they have done, instead I am looking toward what they are doing with that work.

However, in the initial phases of designing this research project, I was interested in interviewing residents of Foote Homes, to learn about their experiences of participating in the VanceCN initiative. Through preliminary interviews with lead organizers and academics from the university side of this partnership, I learned that in addition to the community research, mapping, surveys, etc that residents had been involved with over the past few years, there were other concurrent research projects in place, related to HOPE VI evaluation, as well as other graduate student research. Researchers involved in these other projects were also doing qualitative research that involved interviewing and surveying residents. I was concerned with unnecessarily burdening residents with more interactions with social science researchers, and felt that it would be an inappropriate overstepping of my bounds as a researcher to also try to interview residents. In reflecting on my own role, and assessing where I feel I can make the most social impact with my research, I determined that my energies would be best spent in trying to draw out the nuanced perspectives of those who are considered to be influential in directing participatory urban planning from the institutional side. I chose to interview city officials for two reasons. Firstly, I believe in the worth of "studying up," to make as one of my objects those who control, as theorized by Spivak and quoted by Roy, "the dispensation of bounty," those who manage the allocation of resources that greatly impact dis/advantage and the condition of spatial injustice.

(Roy, 2010, p. 38; Spivak, 1993) By identifying my own position, I focused partially on what was most familiar to me; instead of studying the other and seeking to make the strange familiar, I attempt to make the familiar 'strange.'(Roy, 2010) Lastly, as described above, my positionality enabled me to obtain interviews with certain individuals in positions of power that were unavailable to members of the Collaborative, so it is my hope that I have been able to conduct research that draws productively on my privilege and outsider role, and that is a complement to the research completed and in progress by other researchers and the community.

CHAPTER 4: FROM PLANNING TO PROTEST, A CASE STUDY OF THE VANCE AVENUE COLLABORATIVE

"I think they didn't like what they were hearing."

(interview with city council member, August 12, 2013)

In this chapter, I will describe in detail the community planning project that I have taken as my case study for this thesis. The phenomenon that has inspired this research was the moment of separation between the Memphis Housing Authority and the Vance Avenue Collaborative, in August 2012, when they found that they were unable to continue working together as partners to develop a resident-led participatory planning process for revitalizing Foote Homes and the surrounding Vance Avenue neighborhood. The Collaborative engaged with the MHA in this process as a way to increase resident voice in development projects, and resist displacement from gentrification strategies that make use of public housing redevelopment. I specifically frame the VanceCN partnership, and the later Improve Don't Remove campaign, in the context of the history of slum clearance, urban renewal, and current downtown revitalization via mixed income development. This enables us to see the Collaborative as having joined VanceCN as their entry point to protest gentrification and to attempt to mitigate the negative effects of resident displacement. By providing a narrative of the conflict over Foote Homes, I set up a background and reference point for understanding my analysis further on. This narrative stands alone as an in-depth account of one community's experience trying to wield a discourse of community participation to advance the interests of a marginalized community. It demonstrates the local specificity of this case study, and the constraints that communities are working with in this time and place.

After describing the last four years of the contested relationship between the MHA and the Collaborative, I will discuss the history of public housing and HOPE VI in Memphis. Drawing on my interviews and planning documents, I will illustrate the ways that residents have made connections between the current plans for Foote Homes and the history of residential displacement in Memphis. Foote Homes, and the Vance Avenue neighborhood, are (in)conveniently located within important spaces for the overall strategy of downtown revitalization, and thus much of the future of Memphis hinges on this space, and the people who create it.

After setting up this case study, and sharing local perspectives of resistance, I unpack the events in the context of broader trends in participatory planning, and make arguments about the limitations and possibilities of this approach. In chapter 5 I will discuss the difficulties and contradictions exemplified by VanceCN and the Improve Don't Remove campaign, and the points at which they were held back by dominant repressive discourses of participation. Then in chapter 6, I will take up the aspects of this story that are left out of critical discussion of participation, looking specifically for the sites at which the Collaborative opened up political possibility and used participatory engagement as resistance.

A Case Study: Competing plans for the future of Foote Homes

In 2010, the Memphis Housing Authority invited members of the Vance Avenue Collaborative, as well as faculty from the graduate program of the University of Memphis City and Regional Planning (CRP) department, to partner with them in order to develop a comprehensive revitalization plan for the Vance Avenue neighborhood and Foote Homes, the last remaining traditional family public housing development.

Figure 4.1 Foote Homes, Memphis, TN[1]

[1] This image is a screenshot from Google Maps Street View. Photographic representations of Foote Homes are always political. Publicly available images range from gleeful children playing in an open fire hydrant, to boarded-up and crumbling buildings from the first set of demolitions in the mid-90's. Concerned about my own tendency to want to portray Foote Homes in an idyllic light, I decided upon this image captured quickly in a drive-by on a regular summer day.

The goal was to design a participatory, community-based planning process to propose to HUD through an application for a Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant. If won, this grant would provide $250,000 toward implementing this planning process, which would result in a comprehensive plan for revitalization of this historic, although disinvested and deteriorated, African American neighborhood in downtown Memphis. Moving forward, the MHA would then be able to apply for the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant, a funding award of up to $33 million to fund the implementation of selected comprehensive revitalization plans that reflected the values and goals of this new federal public housing initiative.

The Vance Avenue Collaborative is a coalition of neighborhood leaders, hailing from community organizations, social service providers, and faith leaders; it is heavily organized around the St. Patrick's Catholic Church, whose Bishop is a leader in social justice organizing in the area. The Collaborative was concerned about maintaining affordable housing in the neighborhood, which was changing in accordance with broader trends of reinvestment in the downtown area. Both the Collaborative and the MHA had previous experience working with the U of M faculty. The Collaborative sought them out as an ally in working toward inclusive efforts to affordable housing provision in the neighborhood, given the faculty's reputation in community-based equitable development. The City of Memphis has previously hired the U of M program as consultants in developing the South Memphis Revitalization Action Plan (SoMeRAP,) a wildly successful revitalization plan for a disinvested area of south Memphis, which was also adjacent to the downtown area transversed by Vance Avenue. SoMeRAP had followed a resident-led participatory action research approach model that made use of extensive community input, led by a collaborative steering committee, and focused on local economic and community development. The resulting plan includes a full-service supermarket, bank, pharmacy, police substation, and a now-thriving farmer's market. The success of SoMeRAP was cited by several of my informants as the reason the city was interested in working again with the U of M planning faculty, despite their unconventional, involved approach to planning and development.

The Collaborative and U of M faculty expressed reluctance about accepting this original invitation to partner with the MHA, since they saw the history of public housing redevelopment as having proceeded in a top-down manner, and they were suspicious about the city's intentions and commitment to their participatory design process. Still, they accepted the invitation and agreed to facilitate the planning and grant application process, as a way to involve residents as active participants who would be able to influence such an important project that would have a major impact on their lives. The project of developing a community plan for the Choice

Neighborhoods application was referred to as VanceCN; as used in this thesis, VanceCN will refer to the period of collaboration between the Collaborative, the U of M faculty, and the MHA.

The application was successful, and their design for a resident-led participatory planning process was selected as one of seventeen winning cities out of a total number of over 100 applicants. Over the next two years, the Collaborative, in partnership with U of M and the MHA, put this planning process into action, involving over 1,000 local residents and other stakeholders in a participatory planning process that involved multiple PAR methods, different forms of data, such as photographs and oral histories, and extensive outreach to Foote Homes residents and other community members. With the grant funding, the Collaborative hired an organizer to increase the project's efficiency, and the U of M was able to assign a graduate assistant to coordinate much of the research and outreach. Community planning meetings were held often to review and gain resident support for each step of the research and planning process. According to the Collaborative, they received especially positive responses from senior HUD officials, who came to Memphis to review the planning process, and praised the quality and level of community engagement of the project, indicating that it was precisely in line with the kind of holistic, community-engaged redevelopment planning that the CN initiative envisioned. (Collaborative organizer, personal interview, June 6, 2013)

Since the funding from Choice Neighborhoods was for the revitalization of a targeted public housing development, and the lineage of HOPE VI had enabled the city to use previous HUD funding to demolish and rebuild the five other public housing developments in the city, a central focus of the Collaborative's planning efforts was to engage the community, primarily Foote Homes residents, in deciding what approach revitalization should take toward Foote Homes. Prior demolitions had targeted the most needy public housing projects; one of the first ones to be demolished was the famed Hurt Village, a quintessential failed public housing project. But Foote Homes had recently been rehabbed in the mid-late 1990s, and was generally considered to be higher quality and worth saving, thus it's de-prioritization as the last development to be targeted for demolition. In describing the high quality of Foote Homes housing, an involved city council member said:

> The Foote Homes are entirely different from what had existed in Hurt Village and Dixie Homes, it's entirely different, it's like comparing apples and oranges. It's entirely different. And certainly, if I lived in Hurt Village, anything would be better, a cardboard box would have been better… I think the difference with the Foote Homes and the residents there, they are living [not just existing] and

> they are proud of where they are living, and they don't want to be displaced. (Personal interview, August 12, 2013)

The Collaborative focused their efforts on preserving and improving Foote Homes, instead of taking the well-worn path of wholesale demolition - the model of the previous five developments, including Hurt Village and Dixie Homes mentioned above, which were widely considered to be the worst of public housing.

After nearly two years of working in the community and collecting data, including direct surveys of residents about specific redevelopment possibilities ranging from complete preservation to complete demolition, the Collaborative reported that their research results found that the majority of residents and local stakeholders did not want Foote Homes to be demolished. According to their surveys, two out of three residents preferred to selectively tear down the most deteriorated units, while preserving and rehabbing the majority of Foote Homes, and they wanted to coordinate this housing improvement with other neighborhood improvements, including green space and a walking trail, investment in job training and resources for local businesses and entrepreneurs, and adult education services. (Reardon, 2013) A city council member explains what happened next:

> And then all of a sudden, they [the MHA] said (claps hands,) you're fired, we don't need you anymore. And why? And I think the answer… you know everybody speculates, but nobody has really enunciated or has really revealed the truth behind why they just fired them out of nowhere, and said 'we just don't need your services anymore.' 'Well we're not through.' 'Well yes you are. We're gonna pick it up from here.' (Personal interview, August 12, 2013)

With the announcement that its consultants, as informed by a two-year HUD-approved participatory planning process, did not intend to follow the model of HOPE VI style demolition for mixed use redevelopment, and that the plan they were preparing with the CN grant would propose the preservation and improvement of Foote Homes, along with maintaining the tenancy of the current residents, the MHA immediately fired the U of M faculty and Collaborative from their consultant positions, shut down the public informational website for the plan, and cancelled all VanceCN meetings.

> I think they didn't like what they were hearing. What they wanted to hear was, oh yeah, we want better this, and we want grocery stores, and we want businesses to come in here, and we want to tear down this so we can live like this, and that wasn't what was said. And I think at that point that the city realized that maybe we made an error in doing this, let's get rid of them and we'll do it ourselves. (City council member, personal interview, August 12, 2013)

At that point, the nature of the entire project changed. The Collaborative, after conducting such detailed research and compiling vast amounts of empirical data intended for a comprehensive plan, decided to continue with the planning process, and to try to persuade the MHA to come to a compromise over the future of Foote Homes, if they were not willing to endorse the plan completely. Headed by U of M planning faculty with the technical expertise and professional experience needed to complete such a plan, the Collaborative drafted the Vance Avenue Community Transformation Plan ('Transformation Plan,') and intended to submit it to HUD for consideration as part of the Implementation Grant application process. At the same time, the MHA began trying to push through their "Heritage Trail Plan," which called for the entire demolition of Foote Homes, the construction of mixed-income replacement housing, and proposed to fund it all with over $100 million generated from a large Tax Increment Financing district, which would cover the entire downtown and would capture 98% of the districts future property tax increases over the next 20 years. (*Heritage Trail Redevelopment Plan*, 2012) The downtown Memphis context map in Figure 4.2 shows the comparative boundaries of each plan. The greater geographic expanse of the Heritage Trail plan is evidence of the scope of comprehensive downtown redevelopment intended by the city's plan. In contrast, the Collaborative's Transformation Plan is more localized, also directed at the neighborhood scale, but focused on Foote Homes and the residents of that area.

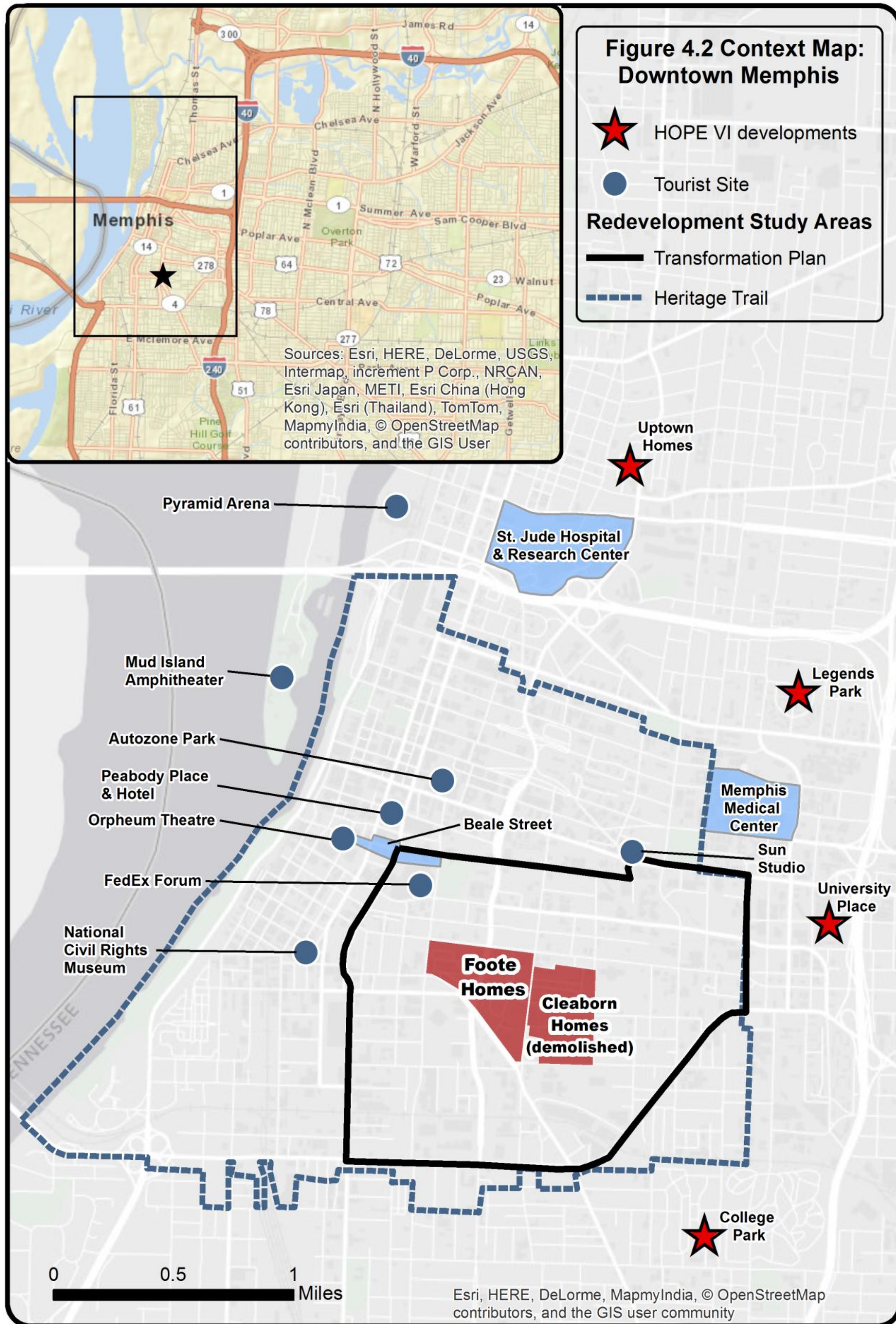

Figure 4.2 Downtown Memphis Context Map

And so, by September 2012, two competing redevelopment plans had been developed, one based in community research and calling for the preservation of Foote Homes, and the other calling for its demolition without having been even presented to the community at that point. Alongside this continued dual progression, the Collaborative switched their approach and began a community organizing campaign to "Improve Don't Remove" Foote Homes. They publicized their plan through press conferences, and set up meetings with various city officials to try to present their plan in public meetings of the city council, housing and community development, and other municipal department.

Finding themselves essentially shut out of the formal political process, and being targeted by a smear campaign by the executive director of the MHA, who now sought to discredit them in public, the Collaborative took up direct action tactics, and "Improve Don't Remove" transformed into a full-scale protest movement. They organized a march to City Hall to demonstrate and then present their plan at a Planning and Zoning board meeting. This board voted to endorse the plan, recommending it a public hearing in the City Council. A series of steps forward and setbacks proceeded; city officials identified technicalities to prevent the Collaborative from going forward and presenting their plan at the City Council. At a later date when they were to present again, they were removed from the agenda without warning. While organizing public demonstrations to support their movement, the Collaborative also met with local business leaders of the downtown area and was able to successfully mobilize them against the designation of the TIF district that was to fund the Heritage Trail Plan. This resulted in the "indefinite hold" of the TIF proposal, without which the Heritage Trail Plan would be unable to succeed, given the city's budget shortage for such an expensive plan. (Baker, 2013)

Although the Collaborative had community support for continuing with their original plans to submit a HUD application based on the Transformation Plan, and intended to do so, they were unable to meet the thresholds for eligibility, given that they were not represented by a PHA and did not have site control. Unfazed by this limitation, the Improve Don't Remove campaign continues, still putting pressure on the city to include residents in decisions for the future of Foote Homes, and seeking to preserve the housing development. They direct their protest efforts toward blocking the implementation of a plan that is not supported by the community. They have also taken concrete steps toward implementing other projects that have emerged from the planning process, such as a food market to address food insecurity in the neighborhood. At this point, the future of Foote Homes, and the community-based revitalization plan, is in question.

Histories of Displacement

Memories of Hurt Village

One cannot speak about the future of Foote Homes without speaking of the history of Hurt Village. In my interviews with members or allies of the Collaborative, the history of public housing demolition in Memphis inevitably was brought up, even though I did not specifically ask about it. This reference to the past was not only present in *all* of my interviews, but it was frequently the very first point invoked in the narrative of how the Collaborative came to be. According to one of my interviewees, the entire contemporary context of public housing in Memphis centers on the memory of Hurt Village, the first public housing development to be demolished under HOPE VI.

In the early 1990's, the Memphis Housing Authority was cited by HUD as one of the worst-run public housing agencies in the country. Housing conditions of Dixie Terrace, Lauderdale Courts, and especially Hurt Village, typified the poor quality of living associated with aging high-density public housing developments of the urban renewal era. The federal government was unable to continue providing funding for post-construction maintenance. Coinciding with joblessness, poverty, segregation, and high levels of crime and gang violence, public housing came to be similar to the slum conditions they were built to replace in many cities, the inner-city tenement housing that existed since industrialization and was razed for large-scale blocks of public housing. Researchers have since focused on the problems with over-arching claims about the dysfunction of public housing, noting both the historical nature of cyclical disinvestment in urban poor communities, in which public housing was just one moment in a long lineage of state failures for providing for the poor. Much effort has also been directed into documenting the positive aspects of public housing communities, the sense of autonomy and interdependence that developed among residents and extended family networks of the U.S.'s most iconic urban public housing. (Freidrichs, 2011; Goetz, 2013)

Nevertheless, by most accounts, Memphis' Hurt Village was a difficult place to live. Residents struggled with meeting their basic needs, remaining safe in the midst of extremely high crime and fatality rates, and high levels of drug use and gang activity. Largely regarded as the worst housing project in Memphis, and known for extremely high levels of violence, as documented in the 2012 play by Katori Hall, Hurt village was the epitome of the object of HOPE VI, the dilapidated and crime-infested targets of complete demolition. (Hall, 2013) Hurt Village is one of the housing

developments widely considered 'deserving' of demolition, as something beyond hope. Although Memphis was home to six major public housing developments, which varied in geography, density, and quality of life conditions, Hurt Villages remains iconic and ever-present in the memories of many Memphians. For this reason, I found that any in-depth conversation about public housing with a Memphis resident will involve references to Hurt Village; you cannot proceed without hearkening to the past.

But Hurt Village is not just a reference point for the failures of public housing; it is a signifier for displacement caused by the transition from public housing to mixed income housing under the HOPE VI regime. Although no one that I spoke with ever made the claim that Hurt Village should have been preserved, there was still the fear that Foote Homes would become 'another Hurt Village.'

> What happened with Hurt Village, you had all of these residents there who were displaced, they made have been put in Tipton County, or they may have been sent to Bartlett or to Raleigh or to Frayser, or to other parts of North Memphis, but they were just scattered everywhere, because they were given these vouchers. So these elderly people, along with the single moms, were looking at the convenience of where they were, where they have been, and how they can get back and forth to the clinic, how they can get back and forth to the hospital, how many things were at their fingertips through public transportation. And if they were disbanded or dispersed or given a voucher somewhere else, that would really hurt them. (City council member, personal interview, 2013)

Former residents of Hurt Village still speak of the troubles of relocation, and their inability to move back into replacement housing upon completion, due to income, legal infractions, or the reduced number of total housing units. When public housing developments were demolished, with the funding and directives of HUD, large numbers of relocated residents would be placed in remaining public housing developments. Over time, with the piecemeal demolition and transition to mixed-income of each development, former residents became either dispersed through the assignment of HCVs, or resettled into other public housing. After the previous five demolitions, the only public housing development remaining for displaced residents to be relocated into was Foote Homes. It is now home to a mixture of former residents from all of these other housing developments. When Foote Homes residents now make a reference to 'Hurt Village,' they mean the phenomenon of displacement that resulted from its demolition. Thus, Hurt Village is often the entry point for discussing residents' awareness about the critical issue of displacement, as well as the city's impression of its own successes in public housing redevelopment. Hurt Village has deep meaning for everyone, whether slum, displacement, or modernization.

HOPE VI in Memphis

Hurt Village was the second public housing project in Memphis to be demolished under HOPE VI, in 1995. After being labelled as one of the worst public housing systems in the country, Memphis quickly became one of the most successful cities at winning HOPE VI grants, especially for its size. This swift building of a strong partnership with HUD via HOPE VI is largely attributed to the election of Mayor Willie Herenton, Memphis' first black mayor, who was especially interested in making over the MHA and revitalizing public housing and affordable housing. Over the next 15 years, the MHA would win $144 million in HUD funding to demolish five public housing developments, the 8th largest funding amount in the country, and in a list of only ten PHAs to be awarded 5 or more HOPE VI Revitalization Grants. (See Appendix 1.) (HUD, 2011) The MHA now refers to itself as a "Historical Frontrunner in the public housing movement." (MHA, 2013) As successive HOPE VI awards were being used to tear down one by one each of Memphis' public housing projects, the City was taking the initiative to partially de-densify Foote Homes by selectively demolishing a portion of its scattered, low-density campus. After the de-densification of Foote Homes between 1994 and 1996, and with the complete demolition of Cleaborn Homes, which was an adjacent development and the recipient of the last and final HOPE VI grant, only 420 of the original 1,360 public housing units were left in the Vance Ave neighborhood. (Vance Avenue Collaborative, 2013) As of 2007, Memphis had successfully removed 55% of its total public housing units, making it second in a list of cities with the highest proportion of demolished public housing units. (Goetz, 2011)

In a study of relocated residents from the last three HOPE VI projects, Lamar Terrace, Dixie Homes, and Cleaborn Homes, researchers found that less than 4% of displaced residents were able to occupy units in the new HOPE VI mixed income developments. 9% were moved into Foote Homes, 11.3% moved into senior housing or supportive housing for disabilities. A large majority, 68.9, relocated to scattered sites in the private housing market through HCVs. (Freiman et al, 2013) The 4% of residents who moved back in to the new mixed income developments is drastically lower than the national average, which sits somewhere around 40%. (Popkin et al, 2004)

Research on HOPE VI in Memphis has largely reflected overall trends in HOPE VI across the country. With the demolition and redevelopment of traditional family public housing developments, the MHA, like other PHAs, now relies heavily on HCVs and HUD-assisted households are scattered across the city in standalone or low-density apartments owned by private

participating landlords. Critics of HOPE VI have been particularly concerned with the difficulties of placing relocated residents into new housing, and the inabilities of new mixed income developments to serve former public housing residents. There are major barriers to re-occupancy due to increased costs, restrictive criteria, or a net loss in total units due to fewer subsidized units being rebuilt than are demolished. Reliance on HCVs is problematic because the overall cost for tenants is higher than public housing units, due to tenants paying utilities on their own, which is often a prohibitive cost. Furthermore, since HCVs rely on the opting-in of landlords on the private market, there are typically not enough HCV-accepting units on the market to meet the needs of voucher-holders, as evidenced by the long waiting lists. The spatial dispersion of voucher-holders is also a major concern, since tenants are scattered away from the concentrated areas of social service providers nearby their former places of residence, and most do not have access to private transportation, and since voucher-accepting properties tend to be in less desirable areas of town, they have diminished access to public transportation.

While residents who are relocated using vouchers have difficulties with navigating the private market and unfavorable locations of acceptable housing, relocating is its own struggle. Federally-commissioned evaluations of the HOPE VI program have found that a small number of successfully relocated residents experience noticeable improvements in safety and housing quality, but that they are usually moved into neighborhoods which have comparable levels of poverty, racial segregation, and crime and drug trafficking as their former neighborhoods. Researchers have found that only a small proportion of original residents are able to move back into the new HOPE VI mixed income development when it is completed, and about half move to other public housing developments. (Popkin et al., 2004)

The use of other traditional public housing developments to absorb displaced residents of public housing redevelopment is of particular concern in the case of Foote Homes, since there will be no more remaining housing developments to take in displaced residents as Foote Homes has done for the prior five HOPE VI projects. Furthermore, much of the public housing tenant population experiences serious physical and mental health problems that make finding housing in the private market nearly impossible, leading to an entire class of people who are "hard-to-house" and at special risk for homelessness when all public housing options are closed off. (Popkin et al., 2004) Overall, involuntary relocation due to housing demolition, lack of social support during the transition phase, and lack of better neighborhoods, have a fairly negative impact on the residents who are most directly affected by public housing redevelopment.

In Memphis, when residents relocate from HOPE VI developments, they move to neighborhoods all over the city. New neighborhoods, though varied, tend to be equally as segregated by race and class as the original neighborhoods, but are scattered on the periphery of the city, far from the clusters of social service agencies in the downtown which have previously served local public housing residents. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show the spatial distribution of public housing residents relocated through HOPE VI, as mapped by researchers of the Urban Institute. (Freiman et al., 2013b) The new locations of these households can be compared with the former last three public housing projects, represented in the same location by their new HOPE VI developments, and the location of Foote Homes, in Figure 4.3. In Figure 4.4, high concentrations of relocated residents still reside in the city center, since 9% of recently displaced public housing residents moved into Foote Homes, as well as the portion that went into other supportive housing nearby. With the elimination of Foote Homes as the remaining traditional public housing development, the number of subsidized residents in the city center will be drastically lower, and the map will be expected to show an even greater distribution of relocated residents to peripheral areas of the city. Figure 4.5 focuses specifically on relocated households using HCVs, in order to show the further movement outward of voucher-holders as compared to residents in project-specific subsidized housing (traditional public housing developments such as Foote Homes.) As researchers from the Urban Institute found when they mapped the locations of households using HCVs and poverty levels in Memphis, voucher holders were dispersed widely across the city, but are concentrated in areas of high poverty levels, most in census tracts with at least 20% of families below the poverty line, and many remaining in areas where up to 75% of families are below the poverty line. (Figure 4.6)

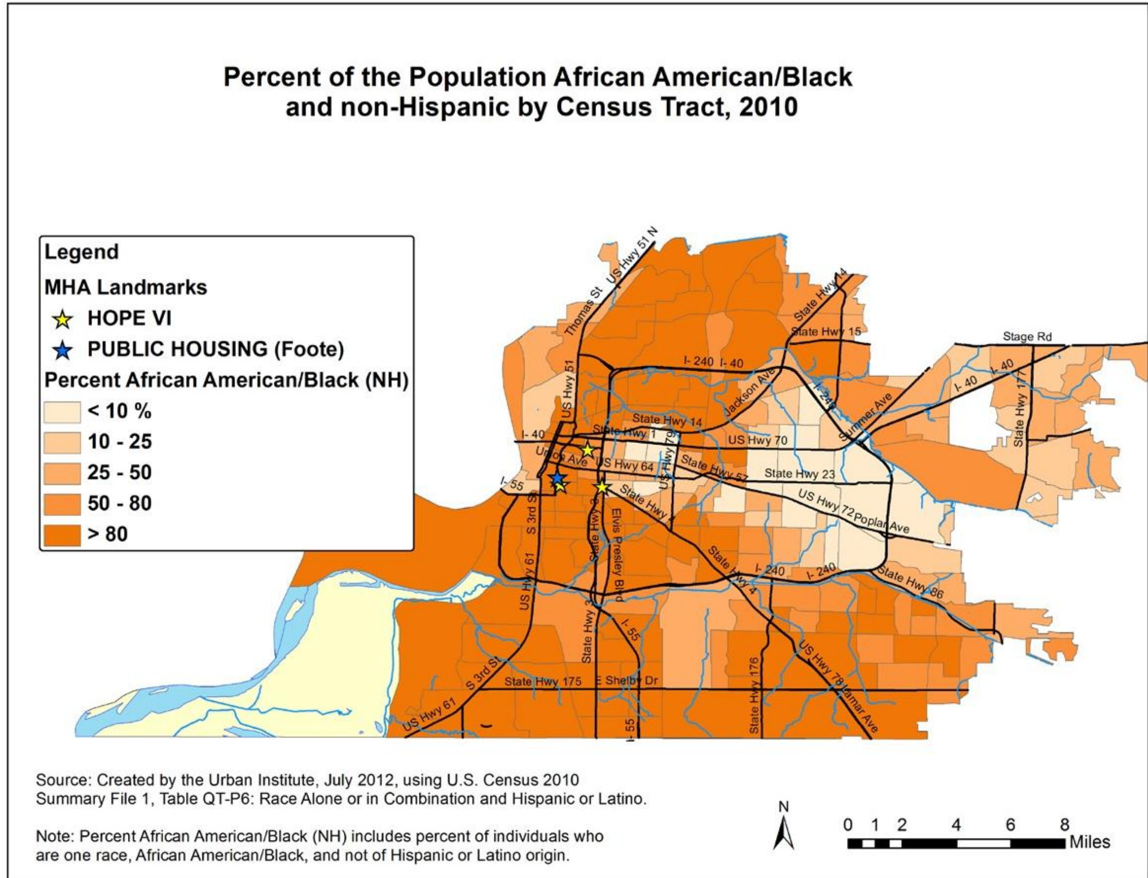

Figure 4.3 Map: Demographics and MHA Landmarks

(Freiman, Harris, Mireles, & Popkin, 2013a, Appendix B p. 2)

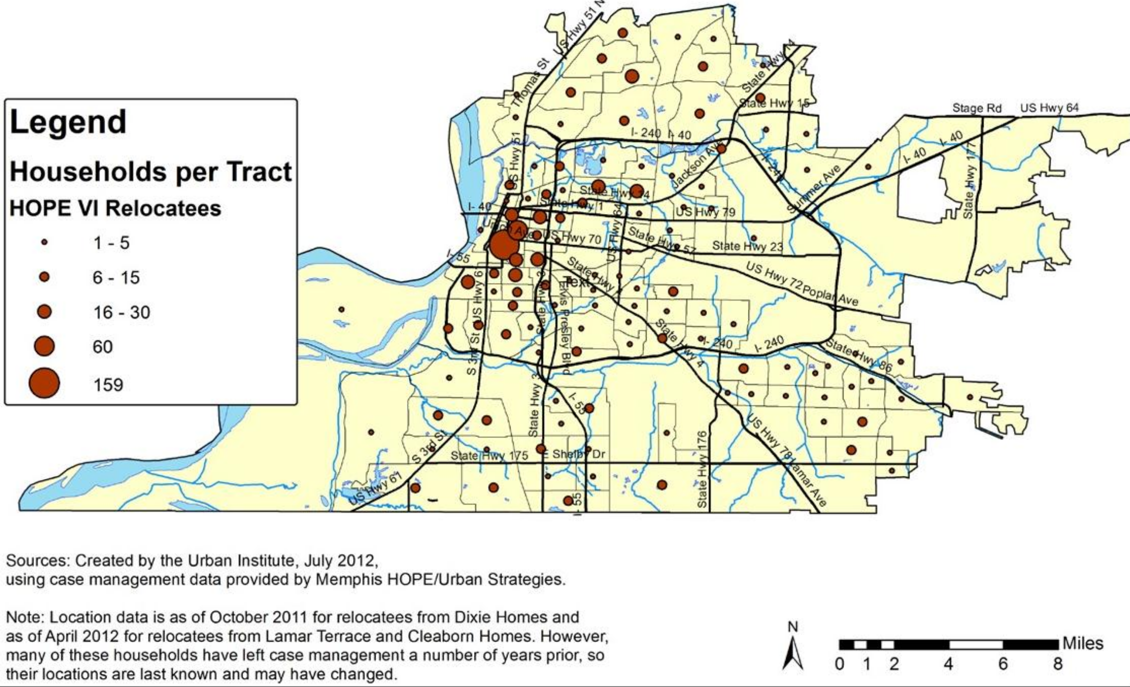

Figure 4.4 Map: HOPE VI Relocatee Households

(Freiman, Harris, Mireles, & Popkin, 2013a, Appendix B p. 5)

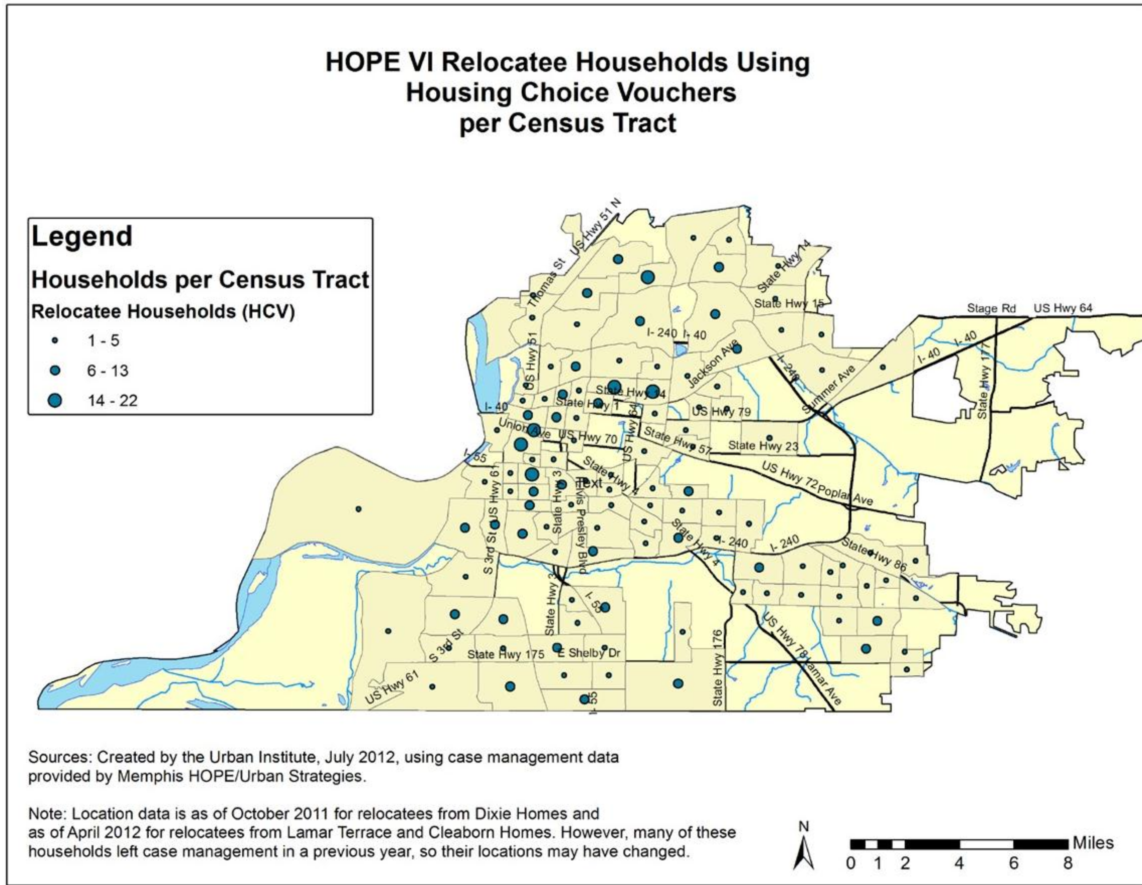

Figure 4.5 Map: HOPE VI Relocatee Households with HCVs

(Freiman, Harris, Mireles, & Popkin, 2013a, Appendix B p. 6)

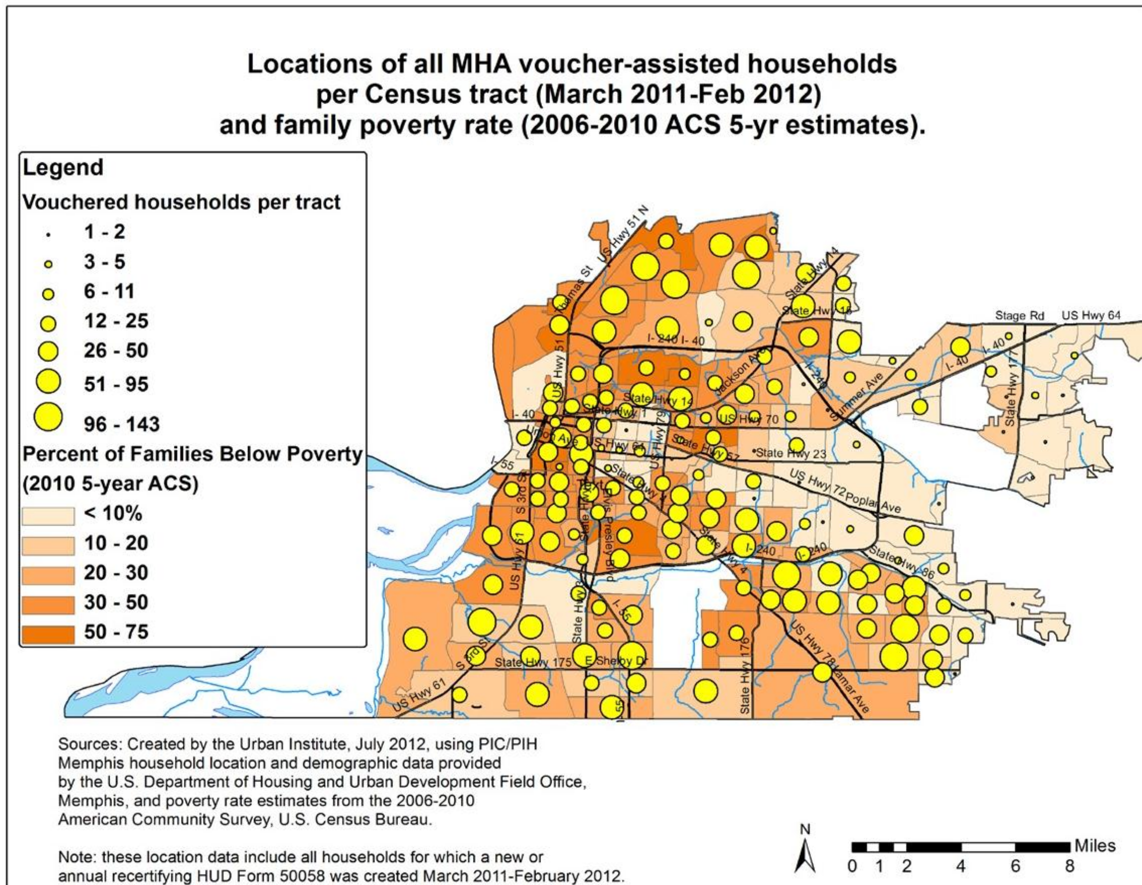

Figure 4.6 Map: All MHA HCV households

(Freiman, Harris, Mireles, & Popkin, 2013a, Appendix B p. 9)

Researchers are particularly concerned with the low level of self-sufficiency of former residents, as the social service providers who partner with HUD are unable to absorb the caseload of displaced residents, which increases with each housing demolition. Employment is required in order to move back into many of the redeveloped HOPE VI sites, and the lack of education and job skills held by many public housing residents is a barrier to re-occupancy, and the job training needed far exceeds the capabilities of the case managers. (Harris, 2009) Other issues related to access to social service are debilitating health problems, especially mental health issues, and lack of access to public or private transportation.

The lack of access to services and transportation is a central concern for opponents of housing demolition. Because of this scattered pattern of dispersal, particular changes in the public transit system, such as re-routing bus lines or increasing service, would have little effect on this

population as a whole. (Harris, 2009, p. 8) Figures 4.3 and 4.4 give an idea of the spatial distribution problems with relocated public housing residents moving from previously concentrated sites in the central downtown area to areas of the city that are far north, south, and east of the city center. Although the intention of HOPE VI is to reduce and de-densify poverty of targeted neighborhoods, newly voucher-holding households typically relocate to neighborhoods that are equally poor and racially segregated as their former neighborhood. Critics have charged that this does not impact the density of poverty or the segregation of the city, but it does technically reduce poverty in the targeted area by tearing down housing and relocating hundreds of very poor residents to other parts of the city. (Harris, 2009) The dispersion impacts of relocation are not simply a by-product of turning residents over to an unregulated private housing market, it is a strategic component of the goal of deconcentrating poverty, and is an intended effect. (Popkin et al, 2000)

The impacts of public housing loss on Memphis residents can be understood further when situated within an overall profile of the city as it is marked by high poverty, inequality, and race and class segregation. Memphis is a mid-sized city, with a population of 646,889, but spread over a wide geographic area due to successive annexations by the City, so it has a relatively low density for its geographic size. The population has been basically steady with little growth since the 1960s. Although Memphis has always had an economy centered on distribution, historically agrarian-focused, it was not hit hard by deindustrialization in the way that Rust Belt cities were. However, it is very economically depressed, with high levels of economic inequality and racial segregation. 62.4% of the population are African American; 29.6% are white, and the white dissimilarity index for the Memphis metro area, often referred to as the segregation index, is now 62.6. (www.CensusScope.org, 2014) A dissimilarity index above 60 is generally considered to be a high level of racial segregation. Class segregation may be even more extreme – Richard Florida has recently been applying the same methodology for measuring segregation to income inequality, and has ranked Memphis as the second-most income-segregated metro area in the U.S. (Florida, 2014) On the low end of this income inequality, 22.6% of families are living below the poverty threshold, and 42.1% of children are living in sub-poverty line households, as compared with 13.7% and 26.3% statewide.

Geography of the Vance Avenue Neighborhood

The Vance Avenue neighborhood itself is adjacent to several areas that have been significantly reinvested in over the past few decades, including tourist sites, commercial districts, and other economic generators, such as the cluster of medical facilities. The northwest region of the neighborhood overlaps with a sports and entertainment district that features the FedEx Forum and Autozone Park, as well as the Beale Street commercial corridor. On the northeast side is the Memphis Medical Center, which is an anchor for new mixed-use urban development, and houses medical services and research facilities. The South Main arts district hosts a variety of new restaurants, boutique retail and art galleries, and residential lofts. The Vance Avenue neighborhood is at the epicenter of new economic activity in downtown Memphis, but most of the neighborhood itself is not densely populated, and Foote Homes sits at the center of it. Out of the total population of about 4,000, more than half of the households in this neighborhood earn less than $10,000 per year, nearly 40% are unemployed, and 70% of the Vance population are living below the povertly threshold. (Collaborative, 2013; U.S. Decennial Census, 2010)

The downtown Memphis context map, shown in Figure 4.2, illustrates the overlap of the Vance Avenue area with other sites of reinvestment, and the proximity of Foote Homes to tourist sites and other economic generators. Other completed HOPE VI redevelopment sites are located in the surrounding downtown area, but Foote Homes is the furthest east, and most central to redevelopment districts, thus explaining its role as a linchpin for the progress of urban redevelopment. A vast socioeconomic distance exists between the residents of Foote Homes and the Vance Avenue neighborhood, and the residents and patrons of the downtown arts, sports, and commercial districts. Comparing the two redevelopment study areas proposed by the MHA's and the Collaborative's competing plans, the Transformation plan seems to focus more on local community development, whereas the Heritage Trail seeks to assimilate it into a wider arena of downtown.

Downtown Revitalization in Memphis

Foote Homes residents are intimately aware of the challenges of public housing redevelopment on residents, since many of them are themselves, or know neighbors and family members who are, former residents of other developments who moved there after being displaced from their

prior homes. They are also aware of the broader conditions of the changing downtown, and the role of eliminating mixed income housing as a part of a gentrification agenda is not lost on them. Memphis, like most cities in the U.S., experienced typical patterns of white flight and disinvestment in the 1960s and 70s, made unique by the significant impact of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and ensuing riots on accelerating the urban decline that was already taking place. (Rushing, 2009) Various attempts to revitalize the inner city have been tested with various degrees of success since the 1980s, using strategies of sports team recruitment and arena building, developing a strong medical industry, and investing in tourist sites related to civil rights movement history. Sports-centered development has been hit or miss, exemplified by the economic failure of the iconic Pyramid Arena, which is now the most distinctive mark of the Memphis skyline but which has stood empty for 10 years, the city still paying the $30 million debt today. (It will soon be converted into a Bass Pro Shop megastore.) More successful have been the development of the Memphis Medical Center, and tourist districts around cultural sites of music and civil rights history. The Vance Avenue neighborhood sits right at the intersection of all of these districts, which are currently the linchpin for creating growth in Memphis.[2] Foote Homes, as the last remaining public housing development, stands in the way of the City's goal to "eliminate the word 'public housing' from our vocabulary," in the words of the MHA Executive Director. (Dries, 2009)

The Collaborative constantly draws the connections between the current efforts to demolish Foote Homes and the historical process of urban renewal. Current actions by the Collaborative comment on the perceived role of poor residents in contemporary urban development schemes. But going back even further, and making sophisticated analyses of the racial and classed geography of the ebb and flow of urban Memphis, the Transformation Plan places the discussion of displacement and spatial privilege front and center, one again looking to the past in order to plan for the future. The Transformation Plan opens with a description of the "Rise and Fall of Memphis' most iconic historic neighborhood." In this opening, the historical lineage of the Vance neighborhood is accounted for, including its initial establishment in the 19th century as a white, upper-class residential neighborhood, and its transition to the center of black downtown life in the 20th century. The location of Foote Homes and the former Cleaborn Homes reflects the

[2] A partial list of important sites directing economic growth in Memphis that are located in or adjacent to the Vance Avenue neighborhood study area, as defined by the Vance Avenue Collaborative, and are thus within roughly a half mile of Foote Homes: FedEx Forum, Memphis Rock n Soul Museum, Memphis Medical District, Southwest Tennessee Community College – Union Campus, Beale Street commercial corridor, the National Civil Rights Museum/Lorraine Motel, the Gibson Guitar Factory.

concentration of urban renewal projects in this area between the 1930s and 1968. Slum clearance and urban renewal demolished more than half of the original structures of the neighborhood, and almost all of the buildings on the original Beale Street, leaving just 65 out of the original 625. On the site of this vast demolished area, public housing was built in the 40s, and it became the most dense concentration of public housing "for negroes" in Memphis. (Transformation Plan, p 6) This phenomenon represents a larger pattern of demolishing the spaces of black communities for urban renewal – for public housing, for the railroad (Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Project), and for an unrealized downtown mall.

This historical narrative is not merely inserted to provide a descriptive, flowery context to the Vance site, but is deliberately drawn upon in order to highlight the historical situatedness of contemporary gentrification plans, which have always shuffled around black communities, reluctantly providing housing options for the poor, and only in ways that do not interfere with white communities and economic growth. It reflects the experiences of being disregarded and marginalized as a black community in this southern city, and it makes the claim that contemporary trends toward mixed-income development is a continuation of slum clearance and urban renewal. The map in Figure 4.7 shows the original designation of Foote Homes and Cleaborn Homes as Urban Renewal sites in the 1960s. The current map in Figure 4.8 shows the same areas, now being encroached upon by modern-day urban renewal from the south and north. These maps and narratives of the Collaborative invoke a feeling of being pushed against from every side, and the risk of being squeezed out of the neighborhood. Looking at a map of the downtown Memphis area in general, it is clear that Foote Homes is holding out as the final frontier of urban revitalization of the new era.

Figure 4.7 – Boundaries of Urban Renewal areas in the 1960s

(Vance Avenue Collaborative, 2013, p. 34)

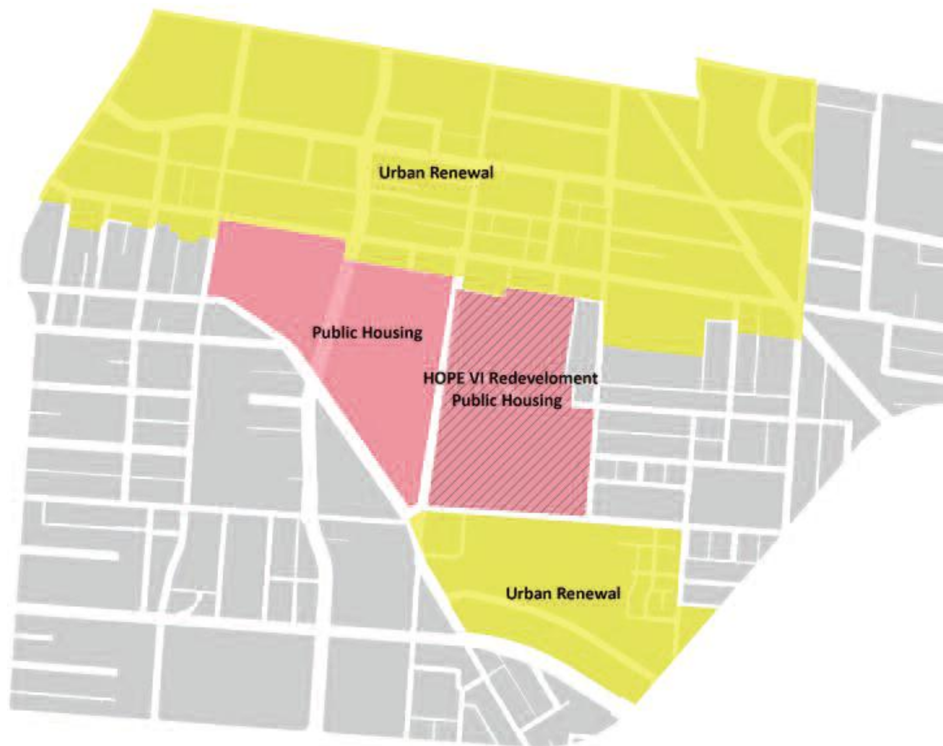

Figure 4.8 Areas that have been cleared and redeveloped in the history of the neighborhood
(Vance Avenue Collaborative, 2013, p. 7)

Current tourism-oriented development in Memphis entails claiming historically black cultural spaces in order to redesign them as palatable for tourists. For example, the National Civil Rights Museum was built as a memorial on the same site as the Lorraine Motel, which is now a spectacle for tour buses to quickly drive by and snap photos of, and a place for black-tie galas for conventions. The museum has been protested by Memphian Jackie Smith, former Lorraine Motel employee, who has held a constant vigil for 26 years outside the museum, where she urges potential visitors to boycott the museum instead of patronizing it. (Jones, 2000) Making the connections between rebranding civil rights history for tourism development as a strategy of revitalization, and attendant gentrification, she says:

> They [urban planners] predicted that by year 2000 there would be only 21 percent of African-Americans in the area even though at the time that they wrote the report there were 79 percent African-Americans in the area. And within that report they had the number of condominiums and townhouses they had planned on building, and they had how much they would cost, and so the report was broken down to income levels, and see by that they had made their prediction that there would be only 21 percent African Americans in this area, because they know we can't afford the apartments and townhouses an dcondominiums that they built... I mean you going to mistreat the poor people that live down here, you going to push them aside in order to gentrify the neighborhood? And that's exactly what they're doing. (Jackie Smith, as quoted in Jones, 2000)

A city council member is compelled to place Foote Homes, and the prior Cleaborn Homes, redevelopment in the context of long-term tourism and downtown development in Memphis:

> You know, city planning doesn't just start last year, *there's been a game plan all along*, to bring back, so to speak, the downtown area, to get rid of the 'eyesores' and the immediate area surrounding downtown Memphis. I mean, how does it look? You have Bass Pro over here, you are getting ready to redo the Chisca hotel to millions and millions of dollars, you're looking at Mudd Island to see what you're gonna do, you're building condos going back towards the south of the river, you have these multi-million dollar homes that overlook the bluff, and once you come in over the Old Bridge [colloquial name for the Memphis-Arkansas Bridge] into the downtown area and you see housing developments, that doesn't look good, and so the city planners say, 'we've got to do something,' just like we got rid of Dixie Homes and we have Legends Park, just like we got rid of Hurt Village and we have Uptown, we gotta get rid of them. And we've got to build something that's conducive for the overall look, the architectural look of the downtown area, and that doesn't do it. We got to get rid of that, we get rid of that eyesore [Foote Homes,] we can continue on with our plan. (Personal interview, August 12, 2013, emphasis mine)

Conclusion

Foote Homes residents, the Vance Avenue Collaborative, and their political supporters recognize the geographic and economic role of Foote Homes in opening up new space for the continued development of tourist districts to accelerate the economic growth of downtown Memphis. They also recognize that resisting the demolition of Foote Homes, and remaining in place, is one potential strategy of resisting the direct displacement and dispersion of public housing residents, and the broader ongoing effects of gentrification that continue to threaten affordable housing and cultural representation in historic spaces. The Collaborative, although aware of the complicated nature of partnering with a housing authority that had a different agenda, decided to join the VanceCN project as a way of improving their community's chances of being represented in decisions that affect their lives. After the breaking point, when they were expelled from the project, they began a protest movement to more directly attack the city's plans to erase this housing development. The planners, community organizers, and residents who comprise the Collaborative, have engaged in both normative planning and radical activist methods to address this complex social problem. I proceed to show how this project was effective in some ways and limited in others, and the way it problematizes the way we think about participatory practice.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPATION PROBLEMATICS

In general, case studies of participatory planning and development projects have been handled with a collective sense of unease by critical scholars. (Cooke & Kothari, 2001a; Samuel Hickey & Mohan, 2004) This unease stems from an awareness of insidious power relations at the root of uneven development, and inadequate acknowledgement of them when designing methods for the goal of empowerment. This way of understanding participatory practice has generated some debate on the merit of participatory planning initiatives, and ways in which they can or cannot be utilized for a vision of social justice. This chapter addresses these contradictions and blockages that have emerged within the participatory paradigm, as they have become visible in the efforts of the Vance Avenue Collaborative to facilitate a participatory planning project for the preservation of public housing in Memphis.

The Collaborative has had to navigate the political complexities that have been encountered by other practitioners and scholars, which at various points have posed serious obstacles to their mission, most evident in their eventual complete exclusion by the Memphis Housing Authority from the project they were originally invited to partner in. As a participant observer, I experienced much of the unease that is present in this literature. I felt it when I attended a much-anticipated city council meeting at which the Collaborative was planning to make a public presentation of their plan, only to find that their slot was removed at the last minute, after the meeting had already begun, and after they had organized transportation for Foote Homes residents, who showed up with signs and ready to speak. I also felt it when I sat in on the Collaborative's own community meetings and spent the majority of my time listening to white men speak through the microphone to the rest of us in the "audience," the majority of whom were women of color. In those moments, I felt the reality of the contradictions that come into play when any community attempts to represent the multiplicity of identities and interests in such a development decision. This contradictory nature is exceedingly present in projects which try to enact different outcomes through the strategy of increasing public participation through improving the inclusivity of decision making processes.

One reason why participation sits so uneasily with scholars interested in social justice is because it no longer can be clearly located on the right or the left of the political spectrum, and many of us would feel much more comfortable advocating methods for empowerment that are leftist in lineage and demonstrate a real threat to embedded relations of oppression in the global capitalist system. The fact is that we can locate participatory strategies in neoliberal projects that valorize

the entrepreneurial individual, or in which the state co-opts discourse of liberation movements for the purpose of popular suppression, and this is disconcerting to critical scholars and progressive practitioners. Thus, Mohan and Stokke frame participatory development within a multi-pronged movement toward localism, which they locate in both “revised neoliberalism” and “post-Marxism,” in the former because of its potential for restraining the interventionist powers of the state in support of market deregulation, and in the latter because of its potential to challenge universalist claims to knowledge of human conditions by more thoroughly acknowledging difference, place, and alternative forms of knowledge. (Mohan & Stokke, 2000) Such a locating of participatory discourse on the left and the right was demonstrated clearly in the conflict between the MHA and the Collaborative over Foote Homes.

Critique of participatory practice is centered on its propensity to fail to achieve certain objectives, typically material gains for a marginalized group, and abstract transformations such as empowerment and increased representation in decision-making processes. Here, I consider some prominent issues that are seen as leading to the failure of participatory projects, particularly as they relate to urban planning in the U.S. These issues are related to discursive competition over the meaning of participation, the potential for participatory practice to depoliticize social movements, and the role of the neoliberal urban condition in both constructing the parameters of participation as well as limiting its effectivity. The challenges associated with these problematic areas of participation were frustrating to Collaborative organizers, and resulted in their inability to integrate themselves into the planning process and to gain approval for their community plan, and the ultimate failure of their central objective to save Foote Homes.

Multiple discourses of participation

As I began my research on this case study, I was seeking an explanation of why the Collaborative was unable to successfully persuade the MHA to adopt their community-supported revitalization plan, given the MHA’s position as the originator of this project, and the popularity of participatory discourse. In order to start to understand what transpired and why, I began by questioning what exactly is meant by participation on each side of the conflict, and how each group uses distinct and differing discourses of participation.

At the root of the political struggle that has come to define the last few years of downtown life in Memphis, the struggle over the future of Foot Homes and its role in a revitalized urban core of

the Bluff City, is a difference in meaning of certain terms that have come to be common parlance. Discourses of participation are multiple, and in competition with one another. It has been possible for opposing interests, as represented by the MHA and the Collaborative, to both use a similar language of participatory urbanism, community planning, and resident engagement, in ways that mean entirely different things, and to legitimize and support very different visions of development via participatory planning processes.

The difficulty of working across differing discourses of participation represents a fundamental obstacle to empowerment, as these various discourses are associated with epistemological differences which align with different positionalities that are in tension with one another, such as foreign NGO/local community structures, university academics/activist groups, or in this case, municipal governing body/grassroots community organization. This case study is not unique in this regard, and opposing planning epistemologies, which produce distinct discourses of participation, underlie the controversial and painful conflict that has occurred at this specific place and time in downtown Memphis.

Drawing upon my personal interactions and interviews with leaders of the MHA and the Collaborative, and upon the planning documents they have each produced, I re-construct and analyze each party as embodying fairly distinct formations of participatory discourse. Simply put, the city positioned the original VanceCN initiative as an innovative procedure to further a downtown redevelopment agenda with heightened buy-in from the public; for the Collaborative, it was a venue for protesting this agenda and putting forth an alternate vision for the space. These distinct discourses are quite opposed to each other, but I observe how they are also intertwined, being enacted simultaneously, and how the Collaborative chose to draw productively from this oppositional distinction in order to further their organizing work in the neighborhood.

In analyzing the conditions for institutional support for participatory development projects, Mosse states that "In most projects, 'participation' is a political value to which institutions will sign up for different reasons. But it remains a way of talking about rather than doing things. It is not a provable approach or methodology." (Mosse, 2001, p. 32) It is important to note, as I will soon describe, that the Collaborative would disagree with the latter two statements, as they use a very action-oriented concept of participation, and have undertaken successful projects in the past that inform their persisting methodology. But Mosse is pointing to the centrality of participation as a discourse, which is relational, unfixed, and multiple. Understanding the discursive nature of

participation in this way, I explore exactly what are the political reasons for which the MHA and the Collaborative both "signed up" for a participatory planning project for urban redevelopment.

The Vance Avenue Collaborative

The Vance Avenue Collaborative is a grassroots, community-based organization of active tenants and homeowners, business owners, and activists. Among its leaders are individuals who have been trained in community organizing, as well as in specialized fields of urban planning, theology, law, and other areas. The Collaborative was initiated by a bishop of a local church who has a history of involvement in civil rights and social justice movements in Memphis, and a professor of the University of Memphis' Urban and Regional Planning department who also is a trained community organizer and is well-known for his advocacy planning projects. This positioning as a collective of faith-based leadership, community activists and trained planners sheds light on the ways in which this organization utilizes and produces a discourse of participation that promotes radical social restructuring in addition to distributive material outcomes.

Through their involvement in the VanceCN initiative, and their subsequent Improve Don't Remove campaign to preserve Foote Homes, the Collaborative constructs a discourse of participation that asserts the viability of increasing representation for marginalized communities within preexisting planning processes, and of actually proposing an alternative material reality through modelling new planning methods, and putting these visions into practice. Their vision is highly practice-based, draws upon a radical historical framework, and advocates for drastically changing the ways in which decisions are made for urban development.

In my research with the Collaborative, a statement that was continually made about the importance of this project was that a participatory planning process with Vance neighborhood residents is a critical way to make heard voices that had previously been unheard due to the systematic exclusion of communities by the MHA in the past. This insertion of resident voices, or bringing residents to the table, was articulated in interviews with Collaborative organizers, articles they have written about their experiences, as well as their extensive planning documents that formed the backbone of my archival research. They see themselves as a conduit through which to expand the number of voices which count, and which are listened to.

This possibility, of inserting resident voices into a historically exclusionary city development practice, was their motive for agreeing to participate in a project that was initially not of their own design. As described in the previous chapter, the MHA's VanceCN initiative represented a significant and unprecedented invitation, and the Collaborative was quite skeptical of the City's intentions. (K. Reardon, 2013b) This skepticism was directed toward the city's stated intention to collaborate with a grassroots organization that represented poor, African American public housing residents in a distressed neighborhood, as well as toward the invitation of self-identified 'progressive planners' who have a demonstrated history of advocating for social justice for poor and marginalized communities.

In fact, this skepticism almost deterred them from joining in the first place, but convinced that the initiative would advance with or without them, the Collaborative again asserted the potential to amplify resident voices. They decided to make use of the opportunity to integrate perspectives from those who have intimate experiences with the public housing system, who are directly affected by the policies of the MHA, and to push the city toward a more transparent and inclusive planning practice.

In their goal of 'inserting resident voices,' the Collaborative seeks to bring in local knowledge, and to elevate it to the status traditionally afforded to municipal policy. Their emphasis on outreach and promotion, and on directing research questions to Foote Homes residents themselves, indicates their view that participatory planning should function to bring in the most direct experiences of living in public housing.

In order to bring in voices that are not trained in policy, the Collaborative designed a multi-method participatory action research (PAR) approach that incorporates multiple forms of data that can communicate images, stories, and qualitative experiences. One of the major barriers for Foote Homes residents is low educational attainment, and illiteracy is a reality, much less familiarity with quantitative research methods. In response to this, the Collaborative designed several methods that can be directly enacted without the need to read, write, or count. These methods include various mapping projects, photo documentation of neighborhood assets and challenges, and participating in verbal interviews and focus groups. (Vance Avenue Collaborative, 2013) Using these research methods, and prioritizing them alongside more traditional planning research methods, encourages the sharing of local knowledge that cannot be accessed otherwise, and includes residents who are typically disenfranchised by poverty-related structural barriers.

The value of PAR methods for the Collaborative is in their ability to generate new forms of knowledge, which can be acted upon in autonomous ways. A mantra of a lead organizer, "we know because you told us," indicates the foundational position of local knowledge as the pre-condition for planning. (Collaborative community meeting, September 5, 2013) However, data collection for planning was only one part of the project, and a participatory vision implied proposing a viable alternative material reality. The Collaborative was formed as a direct response to the experiences of former public housing residents being unable to move into new replacement housing, being dispersed by housing vouchers, and lacking new jobs created for residents through new developments. As described in the Transformation Plan, the goal was to form "a new wave of resident-led problem solving, planning, and development," and through their "bottom-up process" they have initiated several community development projects that are in progress or have already been completed. (Transformation Plan, p.8) The extensive use of PAR methods formed the empirical basis for the Transformation Plan. They describe their vision of participatory practice as action, not advising, and the role of knowledge production is not to produce improved data sets to be used by professionals and experts, but instead to construct new material realities by the same people that created that knowledge.

This PAR process reflects the importance of process and outcome as embodied by participatory practice. It aims to preserve public housing and to generate a different type of community development, and to create comprehensive plans in a different way. The Transformation Plan itself is an action, in that its authors modelled their vision of how planning should be done differently. In reading this plan, one finds some components that are characteristic of comprehensive plans produced by conventionally trained planning professionals: snapshots of infrastructure quality, building and land use inventories, and market studies predicting the feasibility of future commercial uses, models and calculations that look to the future. It differs, though, in the way that it looks to the past, and in the ways that it integrates forms of knowledge normally not incorporated into comprehensive planning. By emphasizing the context of urban renewal, and contestations of blight discourse, we are forced to consider the argument that current development plans must be situated historically. It also argues that we must consider qualitative data, stories, and experiences, other kinds of data that are not quantifiable, and not produced by experts and professionals. Thus, the Plan itself is an action, a document uniquely produced through participatory practice that will inform and legitimize alternative and unconventional redevelopment plans in the future.

Since I have reflected on the claims to participation on both ends of the political spectrum, it is important to understand the political affiliations and histories of the particular discourse used by the Collaborative. A paper written by one of their scholar-organizers especially highlights the radical history of popular education that this form of participation is founded on, and the way in which participatory practice is conceived of as a process with transformative social goals. (Saija, 2012) Collaborative organizers locate themselves in a history of radical thinkers who are concerned with consciousness-raising and empowerment through the organizing process.

Saija explains PAR as primarily characterized by its willingness to deal with power. "As a consequence, planning aims at not only analyzing issues and setting up strategies, but also increasing the level of organization of powerless communities as a way for them to acquire more power." (2012, p. 8) Inspired by the principle of libertarian pedagogy (Freire, 1968; Horton, 1997) and in particular by experience of Highlander Folk School in West Tennessee (Glen, 1996), the Empowerment approach allows community participants to develop new skills that enable them to carry on planning and action in the present and, eventually autonomously, in the future." (Saija, 2012, p. 10) The goal of cooperating with VanceCN, then, was to develop skills and increase confidence among oppressed groups so that they can continue to develop means of resisting power structures far into the future. "One of the main purposes of the partnership is to enhance the powerlessness status of the organizations affecting their ability to shape decision-making for the "better," being the way "better" is defined dependent, of course, on the situation."(Saija, 2012, p. 10)

Overall, the Collaborative constructs a discourse of participation that uses PAR methods in order to directly involve the experiences and perspectives of public housing residents in designing a new vision for the space in which they live, to actively model a new form of progressive planning through creating new plans and putting them into practice, and to transform the consciousness of oppressed people for the purpose of socially sustainable organizing in the future. In their organizing work, they draw upon Paulo Freire, Martin Luther King Jr, the history of the garbage workers strike, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and other parts of the civil rights movement in Memphis, and they use direct action tactics to protest the conventional forms of planning that they are working against. Thus, if Mosse laments that "Participation no longer has the radical connotations it once had" (2001, p. 17,) then the Collaborative seems like a different kind.

Participation and Choice Neighborhoods

With the introduction of a revised federal policy for allocating funds to public housing provision in the form of Choice Neighborhoods, new participatory forms of collaborative planning have been codified into criteria which require resident engagement for a municipality to be a competitive applicant. In response to these criteria for the 'Neighborhood' component of the Choice application, the Memphis Housing Authority created the Vance Choice Neighborhoods initiative, which would ostensibly formulate a community-based planning process, headed by local consultants hired from Memphis, who had a history of working on local redevelopment projects in the past.

As described in the previous chapter, the new Choice program pursues a holistic approach to public housing redevelopment through revitalization at the neighborhood scale. As municipalities, typically through the local housing authorities, apply to HUD for funding from the Choice program, they must submit a comprehensive plan for the area that covers three themes of Choice policy: People, Neighborhood, and Housing. The 'Neighborhood' component asks applicants to identify various institutions and stakeholders to comprise their team, and they must demonstrate evidence of community engagement with current residents of the target housing development to be demolished and replaced with mixed-income residential development. (HUD, 2013)

Neoliberalism has long been associated with the local, as the scale at which neoliberalism is more fully expressed, both as a proving grounds for implementing new policy, and as the site of devolved tasks of governance. But the localization to the urban is not the extent of re-scaling at work; local urban governance is increasingly emphasizing the neighborhood as the scale for collaborative governance programs. Neighborhood-scale urban planning tends to be the site where participatory models are most undertaken, and represents neoliberalism's continued privileging of the local as the site of policy enactment and formulation. (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a; Mccann, 2001) It is through this new emphasis on community engagement in the Choice program that it came to be seen as an opportunity for implementing participatory strategies of community engagement. Many cities are now drastically altering the way they pursue public housing provision, by undertaking a careful consultant selection process, engaging with tenants groups, and working to tie in brick and mortar investments with other neighborhood improvements that respond to needs as articulated by residents. (Urban Institute, 2013)

Given the supposed widespread awareness of the centrality of resident engagement for Choice, and the holistic focus on whole communities, it is surprising that the Choice Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA,) which constitutes the guidelines by which communities will tailor their plans for HUD funds, actually includes only minimal specific requirements as to how applicants are expected to involve residents as part of the comprehensive planning process. For example, although community consultation is mentioned as an aspect of a competitive application, the NOFA only prescribes holding two community meetings over the course of the grant application process. The widespread opinion that Choice represents new opportunities for innovative collaborative planning practice through direct participation has been constructed perhaps not primarily by the policy language itself, but instead through the way it has been presented by advocates as a policy of reform, and the paradigmatic context of collaborative planning as the norm, with mainstreamed participatory planning as a popularized accomplice. Due to the limited instruction in the NOFA as to how resident engagement is expected to occur, the MHA was relatively free to demonstrate this expectation in whatever way they preferred. As I will explain further in the next section, the MHA eventually reacted against the opportunity for resident inclusion offered, though not mandated, by Choice, and took on a minimal level of participatory planning.

The Memphis Housing Authority

My analysis of the particular discourse of participation used by the Memphis Housing Authority is formulated from interviews with key city officials involved in the project, and with Collaborative organizers related to their experience interacting with the MHA through VanceCN, as well as from my observations in meetings of the Collaborative and the Memphis City Council.

By analyzing the particular meanings of a participatory discourse constructed by the MHA, I posit that they enroll the concept of participation as a strategic method toward gaining legitimacy in the climate of collaborative planning, that its primary value for this agency lies in its ability to fulfill a key component of an application that would continue the city's competitive status in the HUD pipeline, and that it would function locally as a means of consolidating public support and facilitating consensus for the future plans of the Foote Homes site and the Vance Avenue neighborhood. This discourse is facilitated by the contradictory nature of participation as demarcated by neoliberal trends toward local governance.

Two years prior, the MHA had won a Planning Grant from Choice, a grant that was set aside specifically to support community planning, but is not considered a prerequisite for winning an Implementation Grant. This Planning Grant was used to fund the resident-led participatory planning process that resulted in the creation of the *Vance Avenue Community Plan for Transformation* (the Transformation Plan,) by U of M faculty and the Vance Avenue Collaborative. Interviews with Collaborative organizers revealed that the application for this Planning Grant had been highly competitive and was enthusiastically received by HUD officials, who then asked the organizers to write up a white paper detailing their methodology, so that other applicants might learn from their success. (Collaborative member interview, June 5, 2013) This previous successful application to HUD, and the fact that the participatory planning methodology factored into their success, as well as the success of SoMeRap, which was planned and executed by the same group of planner-organizers, led the MHA to continue this trend in enabling such community-based planning efforts, led by a local community-based organization. Hence, they were able to capitalize on this acclaimed recent history to propel their progress in winning funds for this project, but it did not mean that they had to operationalize the visions that had been developed thus far, using those processes.

One indicator that the city did not consider VanceCN to be a vehicle for formulating new development prospects for Foote Homes is the widespread perception that the political power structure in Memphis is so highly centralized that only a couple of individuals, namely the Mayor and the Executive Director of the MHA, have the decision-making capacity needed to determine development outcomes. While this knowledge inspired the Collaborative to take on the project in the first place as a protest against that very condition, the fact that city officials share that perception while they continue to oversee the 'participatory' VanceCN project, demonstrates the limited expectations for action.

In an interview with a city council member who represents the district that Vance Avenue resides in, the council member repeatedly expressed a sense of powerlessness in making decisions about Foote Homes. According to him, the ultimate decision about what would transpire regarding Foote Homes is up to the mayor. Not only does he reflect on a unilateral decision-making style, but he also painted a picture of urgency related to the grant deadlines, by which the opportunity for compromise had already passed. He said that the mayor had already made his decision, so that the grant can be quickly applied for and won:

> I know that when you deal with applying for grant money, there are deadlines, so I believe that the mayor went ahead and made his decision so that that particular group could go ahead and plan accordingly in applying for the grant… If we did not do something we would lose that money, and if you don't apply to particular grants and accept them, you are highly susceptible to not being offered those opportunities again over time. (City council member, August 12, 2013)

If this is the case, that the mayor is the only one who holds decision-making power, and that he is unwilling to share that power, and city council members are aware of this, then it can be assumed that the intent of VanceCN was not to share power at all, was not to *empower* previously excluded residents, and was primarily for gaining public support for the mayor's pre-determined plan. Since neoliberal political rescaling has not withdrawn the state from governance, but re-crafted it as a facilitator of entrepreneurial, partnership-directed governance, the devolution of political responsibility has the effect of increasing the authority of the local state. (Purcell, 2002) The MHA envisioned a consultant-directed, mixed-finance approach to redevelopment, and the opening up of this process to a variety of participants did not reduce the influence of the local state in any way, and a select number of city officials still had the final word in what resulted from VanceCN.

If the city council did not feel like their deliberation had any bearing on the outcome of the VanceCN project, and thus power could not be shared by them, the key powerbroker of development in Memphis was the executive director of the MHA, who also holds other executive positions and is considered to be the direct advisor of the mayor, even described by the media as the person who directs the mayor. (Branston, 2012) When I interviewed this MHA director, who made the original call for a participatory VanceCN initiative, he described a moderate approach toward resident involvement in planning for the new housing development, predicated on gestural forms of involvement, not direct participation.

One of his primary concerns about direct participation is the complexity of the redevelopment process, which he believes calls for heavy-handed facilitation by experts. For example, although he argued that the job of the MHA in this situation is to work for the people in accordance with their vision, he also expressed the need to protect residents from too much information about the project, lest it cause them confusion or distress. When asked what was the appropriate way to involve residents into the planning process, he responded:

> Not to make it too complicated. Do you want something new or do you want to keep what you got? You don't want to get the residents involved in too much detail… but I do think you need to get their input, and say do you want to keep this development like it is, or do you want what, something totally new? And give them the facts about what can

> and cannot be done about that. (Executive Director, Memphis Housing Authority, Personal interview, September 6, 2013)

In this scenario, residents are not considered to be producers of knowledge in a shared research process about the conditions of their living space. Instead, the insight they offer is referred to as a ‘vision,’ which can then be counterposed against a set of ‘data’ which has been produced and aggregated by the city and private consultants. According to another city council member, “The city is very data-driven about what works and what does not.” (Personal interview, August 12, 2013) Data in this case is strictly quantitative, empirically reproducible, in the form of modelling, market studies, and best-practices in the lineage of HOPE VI. As non-researchers, residents do not produce data, but their vision will be compared with the data that the city already has, which is separate and external to residents’ viewpoints, and a base line with which to compare residents’ views with.

This represents a major distinction between the approach of the Collaborative and the MHA; while both sides claim to be ‘data-driven,’ they differ considerably in what they count as admitable data, and how that data is produced. The Collaborative considers residents to be active contributors of the data to be consulted, and they count a variety of forms of data acquired through mixed-method research methodologies. The city refers to outside ‘objective’ producers of privately held data sets in order to study and determine the best use for a space, as determined by market viability using assumptions of rational economic actors. When this data differs from residents ‘visions,’ then the models and quantitative data sets are to be trusted over the situated subjective experiences of non-expert residents.

Again, to compare ‘visions’ with ‘data’ sets up an implicit dualism with its always attendant hierarchy, where visions are subjected to the dominance of data. “…we need to get whatever vision they have, and based on the facts….based on the data, our job is to craft our vision based on our input from them.” (Executive Director, MHA, September 6, 2013)

The way that residents’ experiences are incorporated into planning for the future of their neighborhood is as an ‘input’ into a system of data calculation and manipulation, where this input is leveraged against an informed vision based on a set of facts from an informed set of experts. They are sought out inasmuch as they fit into this systemic process, and can uphold and bolster it. When they do not fit, they are externalized as not validating the data. Thus, the model of resident involvement referred to by the city’s willingness to undertake a ‘participatory’ community-based planning process rests on simplification of possibilities, offering a limited and pared-down set of options pre-delimited by the city’s development agenda. Residents are to then be polled about

their opinions on this set of options, which are ultimately proscribed based on the city's predetermined estimation of feasibility and compatibility with the plan that is already in motion.

Ghose discusses the contradictions of democracy that come into play in participatory governance programs, and says that even though participation opens up governance to previously marginalized groups to participate at the neighborhood level, the right to participation is not automatically conferred. Instead, it is determined by a kind of "flexible citizenship" that implies that the right to influence governance is not a fixed status but it is a performative act. (Ghose, 2005; Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003) A new kind of political subjectivity is sought, by which citizens must enact entrepreneurial partnership practices in order to practice as partners in governance. This means that citizens are only accorded participant status if they have the capacity to perform governance as it is expected in neoliberal localism. For the MHA, this means acting as advisors, as inputs, as providers of data. In this way, participatory governance is seen as a method of cultivating political subjects, a way of disciplining citizens and managing participation so that it is only enrolled in certain ways. (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003) While collaborative governance programs, such as participatory planning initiatives, and liberating in the ways they invite widespread participation at the neighborhood scale, they are repressive by restricting who is able to participate and how.

A model of participation in which residents are seen as 'inputs' meshes with an analysis of the spaces of participation as set forth by Cornwall. (2004) The language of 'participation' implies that there are those who invite participants, and those who answer the call by participating. Cornwall analyzes participation as a spatial practice, where the invitation to participate calls one into a space that is not their own, the space of participation. Spaces of participation are often spheres of the state or institutions; she distinguished spaces of participation from "sites of radical possibility," which are the spaces of those in the margins. (Cornwall, 2004, p. 78) In invited spaces, only certain voices and forms of knowledge are welcome. The MHA's invitation to participate, extended to the Collaborative, was an invitation to enter into their particular space, not an offer to venture to the Collaborative's own potential sites of possibilities. The emphasis on data-driven processes, and data that is neutral and objective, and residents as inputs into a previously consensed-upon process, also brings up the questions of rendering technical that is related to prospects of depoliticization that critics are wary of. (Ferguson, 1994)

The consensus-oriented approach that underlies many collaborative projects framed as 'participatory' tends to depoliticize social issues that are very politically contentious at their root,

which, in the process, disempowers people from making political claims about their experiences and calling for structural change. In this case study, both the MHA and the Collaborative were obligated to present themselves as without political bias in the form of a pre-existing plan; the accusation of having a prior agenda was wielded by each side at the other. Each side was compelled to present as objective and criticized the other for having a predetermined agenda, aiming for an underlying value of objectivity that in reality is impossible to obtain. Criticizing the veiled politics of the MHA, a Collaborative organizer said: "We then tried to get a meeting with the mayor, who stood right here and said 'there is no plan up my sleeve, we're gonna create this together, in a way that we can all feel good about it, *there is no pre-ordained plan*.'" (Community meeting, September 5, 2013)

Interestingly, both sides criticized the other for having a bias, or a predetermined agenda for the plans for Foote Homes. However, the Collaborative seems to take this in stride and demonstrates an awareness that any side to this situation is inherently, and undeniably political, while the city seems to think there is a possibility for objective, apolitical, conflict-free way forward. One of the primary accusations leveled at the Collaborative by the MHA director, in an effort to discredit their work, was that they were being 'divisive' and trying to manipulate residents. For example, the work that the Collaborative was doing with Foote Homes residents to help them understand real options for the future after demolition and relocation, was described by the director of MHA as inciting fear in residents, telling them they were going to be kicked out, and that the residents were already "packed up and ready to move out." He also said:

> The data is the data. Where we differ with the University of Memphis and the consultants we had is that they had an outcome they already had in mind before they started... I think as a consultant, I think you want to work with the person who hired you, and not have a hidden agenda before you start. And we felt that there was an agenda that they had before the meeting started, and that our job is to listen to the residents, not decide for the residents what they want. Our job is to get input from the residents without any preconceived notions. And we just felt that that wasn't the case here….. 'cause our job, we work for the residents. (Executive Director, MHA, Personal interview, September 6, 2013)

In their willingness to be political, the Collaborative broke from this depoliticizing tendency, in that they did not use the process to hide conflict, but instead to make it more visible. The MHA shunned politics at every turn, with the intent to depoliticize. This is why the moment of breakdown between the two was at the point when the politics of housing demolition became overtly apparent, and Foote Homes became a visible source of controversy in the media and in the neighborhood.

Further insight into the MHA's conceptualization of participation can be gleaned by observing what steps the city took after they decided that the Collaborative's vision did not fit into the City's plan for Foote Homes and fired them from their role as consultants on the project. As described in the previous chapter, once it became clear that the data generated by the Collaborative's PAR methodology did not support the demolition of Foote Homes, and that they intended to sustain a long-term direct involvement of residents in the planning process, the MHA swiftly cancelled their partnership with this organization and switched gears, moving forward on their own and hiring a new external consultant to oversee the process. Unlike the monthly meetings and ongoing participatory research that the Collaborative had been facilitating with Foote Homes tenants and Vance Avenue neighborhood residents, after this breaking point, the MHA drastically reduced the quantity and depth of opportunities for public consultation. Despite the new language of community engagement as a defining aspect of Choice, and because of the limited accountability set in proscribing what counts as engagement, the city barely fulfilled the specified requirements of Choice in that regard, which includes two community meetings at specific points on the planning process, transparency and visibility of the plan, etc. The brushing aside of resident engagement after the split from the Collaborative, and the city proceeding on its own, demonstrates that the MHA view of participation is to inform the public, build confidence in public housing residents, make them feel involved, but ultimately leave the decision-making to the experts.

Enrolling the language of resident engagement and participatory planning within a process that the city expected to simply generate community support to justify their predetermined development plan is indicative of a particular epistemology of participation that is distinct from other versions of that concept, such as those undertaken in an activist-oriented participatory process that draws upon radical social thinkers of the 60's, involving decentralization, horizontalism, and popular education. The city's distinct epistemology became particularly evident to me in my interviews with city officials, some of whom stated outright this philosophical difference. This particular discourse does not require residents to be heard at all in order to construct knowledge of the conditions of the space and possibilities for the future, all of which are to be found only in market research and locational analysis. Despite hiring consultants with demonstrated histories of equity planning through participatory processes, this step was the only act taken by the city that reflected a commitment to participatory processes of generating community involvement. In practice, the new housing development plan envisioned by the city was identical to the past HOPE VI projects; no creative alternative expectation emerged. These

projects embodied a technocratic and expertise-oriented version of planning, in which political leaders are assumed to have residents' best interests in mind, and to operate uncritically and protected from public scrutiny, due to their perceived expertise. This assumption of best interest means that city officials expect a level of trust in their ability to represent residents without direct participation. As the MHA director explained: "I've been doing this for 15 years. I know them, and the trust me….And I trust them." (Personal interview, September 6, 2013) An epistemology of representation, rather than participation, is enforced by an assumption of trust and best interests, and a generally unproblematized adherence to expert management of supposedly community-driven development projects.

A final observation from my interviews with city officials was the general difficulty, if not impossibility, of enrolling the language of 'participation' itself. City officials instead articulated a concept of participation that is tied to electoral traditions of political participation and representation. This contradicted my prior understanding that the participatory paradigm had made its imprint on all municipal governing bodies in the U.S., due to the popularity and rapid spread of the Participatory Budgeting Project, OpenData movements, and even the City of Memphis' own community outreach efforts for the new GreenLine urban bike path. (www.midsouthgreenprint.org) While city officials were able to discuss issues like public consultation, the distinctive positionality of residents' viewpoints, and community outreach efforts, the language of participation itself led to discussions of lobbying council members for representation in politics or for buy-in on community-led projects, or to volunteerism. I eventually had to excise the words 'participation' and 'participatory' from my interviews, despite the way the Collaborative had referred to their plan as 'highly participatory', even in upper-level city documents. This demonstrates that the participatory paradigm has not in fact reached Memphis, that it is not as normative as urbanists have led us to believe, and that the situation of this particular municipality should be differentiated from trends that are believed to have subsumed all urban planning discourse, which have been constructed and analyzed according to their establishment by larger cities who are more cutting-edge and experimental in their policy making, and who are over-represented in the majority of urban research.

Through my interviews with city officials holding positions in the City Council and the Memphis Housing Authority, it became clear that despite the success of the Collaborative-led participatory planning process in securing HUD funding for the initial planning grant, once the project was funded, the city was not committed to following any alternative plans that were generated by

resident engagement research practices, and that there would be no plan other than one which aligned with the Heritage Trail plan as previously envisioned.

Thus, the community planning process that comprised the Neighborhood component of the plan created for the HUD Choice Implementation Grant application was taken on as a key part of creating a competitive application to HUD that could win the $35 million grant that the city was pursuing to help fund an ambitious redevelopment project in downtown Memphis. In practice, it became clear that the city's understanding of the social lineage of the goal for greater resident engagement was minimal, and reforming their planning practice was a low priority compared to the vision of reaching a fully redeveloped downtown area to fulfill the goal of creating a tourism-driven flourishing downtown.

With the sidelining of social goals of improving representation for public housing residents, the city demonstrated their intention of using the Neighborhood plan component as a way of meeting a particular criteria for funding, and that they intended to operationalize it as a way of informing residents and building consensus around a plan that closely represented their historic approaches to public housing under HOPE VI. It was not a method of generating a different kind of planning practice or planning outcome, and not in the way that participatory planning is thought of in the collaborative planning tradition of bringing more voices to the table in order to develop a compromise plan that fits everyone's visions for a space.

While the Collaborative made participatory planning with the Vance neighborhood their full-time job, their experience working with city officials on the project was that the partnership was a strategic necessity, not a commitment to a democratic vision. When describing the difficulties of asking the city to listen, an organizer said:

> And as you know, we tried for 2 and a half months to get a meeting with the mayor, and then we only got a meeting when we prevailed upon the U.S. secretary of housing and urban development, whose office called the mayor and said 'your chances of getting any money is greatly lowered if you don't at least meet with various stakeholders in the neighborhood.' So we did have the meeting scheduled, and many of you were there….and the mayor came nearly two hours late to our meeting, and then when he met with us, he said he couldn't really sit down and talk with us because he was already so far behind in his schedule…. And the [Heritage Trail] plan was presented, there was no invitation to have a discussion and a vote upon it, they invited you to make a comment about elements of it, but there was no democratic discussion and vote. So that is the plan – the demolition, relocation, and the redevelopment of Foote Homes as a mixed income project that is going forward to HUD. (Community meeting, September 5, 2013)

Conclusion

I have provided a comparative analysis of the ways in which participatory practice is invoked within two distinct and opposing community planning discourses in order to show how the MHA and the Collaborative function within two different realities of participation. These distinct discourses of participation clash in several ways due to potentially incompatible epistemologies that underlie them, and they are not able to easily work together. Saija explicated the comparison I am trying to show here:

> [the Collaborative] use participatory planning techniques to advance participants' understanding of their status of powerlessness as a first step for social change. This is a very different use of participatory planning techniques, compared to the well-known consensus- building approach, inspired by Habermas's Discourse Ethics, in which the ultimate goal is the making of a decision that could be shared by groups with contrasting interests. (Saija, 13)

In her paper, Saija identifies the Collaborative as working in the lineage of Freirian popular education and consciousness-raising through transformative uses of participatory practice, while locating the MHA practices in the Habermasian tradition of consensus-building collaborative planning. Whether this disjuncture actually inhibits the ability of the Collaborative to advocate for their particular discourse is inconclusive, and will be addressed in the proceeding chapter. What is important is that this distinction between a radical discourse of participation and a consensus-building discourse of participation are frequently identified as co-existing in participatory development and planning projects, and that it is considered to be a site for suppression of progressive, creative change in conventional practice. Although these discourses are in competition, and this opposition has become visible through the conflicts that have emerged over the future of Foote Homes, the competition does not take place on equal footing. Since the city benefits from a formalized and funded position of power, the differences in discourses mean that there is also an implicit hierarchy, and the Collaborative is in danger of being subsumed by the imposition of the city's discourse of participation. Because multiple and competing discourses align with uneven power relations, critical scholars conclude that participating in such projects ultimately reinforces preexisting embedded power relations, rather than upturning them. Furthermore, this disagreement may preclude a possibility of compromise, much less consensus.

CHAPTER 6: BREAKING THE SCRIPT

"the people are watching. If we don't see it [success of VanceCN] immediately, we already define it as failure, outcomes need time to come to fruition. If it does not succeed, it is an example that will be used over and over again."

(Personal interview, August 12, 2013)

The previous chapter illustrated some of the ways in which participation can be limited by contemporary discourses of neoliberalism and communicative planning theories, as wielded under the umbrella of collaborative planning. Drawing on critiques in participatory literature in several different fields, I have shown how the Collaborative experienced many of the same problematic situations that other participatory efforts have faced, which limit their ability to create lasting change or impact power relations in their community.

If the last chapter was about the ways in which the Collaborative followed a 'script' of participatory planning, a script that has been written over time by the mainstreaming of participatory planning, by which it has become normative instead of resistant, this chapter will focus on the ways in which this case study broke the script. Centering on the severe limitations of participatory practice enables us to ascribe a label of failure to projects that do not achieve their stated material claims, in this case, the preservation of Foote Homes and the tenancy of its residents. This chapter is about revising the script, and opening up the boundaries of what we consider failure, in ways that allow for greater successes.

I will first establish the various ways in which the Collaborative broke with the script of participatory planning practice in the framework of collaborative planning, focusing on the productive effects of their process-oriented conception of community development, and their embrace of the political. In considering the particular issues that emerge when planning is used as protest, I identify the crucial, yet potentially overlooked, successes of this movement. With an awareness that participation has emerged in multiple political locations, and that its multiple forms can exist simultaneously, I argue that the Collaborative has leveraged their participation in order to expose the already political nature of public housing redevelopment, and as a result have carved out a new space for dissent in a city historically marked by economic depression and political exclusion. The strategic integration of state-led institutionalized participation with direct action and participatory action research has the potential to re-center participatory planning within a radical activist framework. When this occurs, it becomes clear that participatory practice

is not merely an externality of neoliberalizing transformations toward privatization and localization, but it is a productive site of political struggle.

I will use this understanding to push back against the literature on participatory practice, in an attempt to intervene in the increasingly limited framework that is used to critically analyze participation. I seek to disentangle the assumed linkages between cooperation with the state and co-optation by the state, between participatory practice and neoliberalism, and between power, conflict, and oppression. The existence of participatory practice must not be conflated with the normative status of the participatory paradigm. Ultimately, I argue for altering what is meant by success and failure, expanding the scope of what is considered participatory practice, and questioning what are considered to be planning and planners.

Breaking the script of participation in collaborative planning

In previous chapters, I have described at length what I consider to be a disjuncture between multiple, competing discourses of participation represented by the MHA and the Collaborative, and the implications for power-laden conflict that derive from the distinct epistemologies that underlie them. Typically this scenario can result in a stagnation, or blockage of movement toward conciliation or agreement, since it appears that each side is speaking on a very different level and are unable to recognize each other, which would be considered a barrier to consensus in the communicative model. These tensions and frustration have not been absent in the struggle over Foote Homes. However, what I observed was that the diverse abilities and objectives of the Collaborative effectively managed this difference and even used it to their advantage.

I argue that the Collaborative was able to effectively operate on multiple levels at the same time, exemplified by their capacity to both navigate the bureaucracy of city government, using their training as planners to 'speak' the language of the MHA, as well as to work on the ground with public housing tenants, using language and tactics that are very much outside of formal approaches accepted by the state. This simultaneous activity on multiple levels at which Vance Ave stakeholders were organized diversified the efforts and energies of the Collaborative, so that they were not all directed toward achieving a single preeminent outcome. In other words, they didn't put all of their eggs in one basket. By growing their grassroots while simultaneously cultivating institutional relationships, they did not allow themselves to be swallowed up in one

single area, or to be halted by the obstacles put in place by the City, and they were able to maintain their own autonomy as an organization.

The Collaborative is a grassroots community organization that believes in direct action and radical, often faith-based ideals of social and economic justice that are far from mainstream; they also lobby their political representatives, make presentations at local government meetings, write formal comprehensive plans using trained conventions in urban planning and government, and have experience and knowledge in navigating local state bureaucracies. By diversifying the spaces they worked in, and the types of relationships they built across the community, they managed to direct their energy and attention into a networked sphere with multiple loci. In this sense, their work is not contained only in the invited sphere of the space of participation, since this invited space is only one of the multiple spaces they operate in. (Cornwall, 2004) Some of the most important planning work of the Collaborative takes place within what Cornwall would consider the radical spaces of the margins, in this case the local spaces that reflect community autonomy – Foote Homes itself, and the church community center they hold their meetings in. The Collaborative has been able to cut across institutional and grassroots bounded spaces, working with representatives of local governance, private business interests, churches, and radical activist groups. While this kind of alliance building may not be regarded as unusual or spectacular for most coalition-oriented community organizers, it is not just a way of building solidarity among a network of allies. It has functioned to mitigate the frustrating effects of stagnant progress in achieving their legal and institutional goals, and it indicates that they were not incapacitated by the ultimate inauthenticity of the city's invitation to participate. After being exiled, they were able to continue moving forward on other projects they had been able to initiate during the period of partnership, bolstered by other spheres of community support they had built in the process.

When McCann describes collaborative visioning as "therapy," in which business elites tightly control the planning process and offer a public forum in which people can "express their views about the future in order to feel better about themselves…," it seems like community members would only choose to participate in a state-led participatory planning project if they were misled into it, after which point it would become clear that they had been drawn in by a false promise that their input was valuable and would be listened to. (Mccann, 2001, p. 215) However, the strategy of the Collaborative seems to be only able to emerge from a group of actors who are rather self-aware of the inconsistencies between the city's words and actions, as well as the power of collaborative planning discourse that has enabled the sketchy partnership in the first place.

The alignment of diverging discourses with uneven power relations means that the meaning of one side can be elevated, restricting of the efficacy of the other. However, I believe that the Collaborative made productive use of these competing epistemologies, by drawing on the one that they were opposed to as an enabler of their visibility. Although they did not speak the same language as the city, there was enough shared language, as well as the collaborative planning paradigm that has popularized participatory planning practice, that they were able to argue that there was indeed a place for themselves, and the methods they were committed to. This has also allowed them to use the city's own words and commitments against them.

A view of the Collaborative as self-aware, strategic partners, gives credence to their epistemological differences that does not necessarily imply unworkability. Could they have used this epistemological difference as an opportunity to latch themselves to more mainstream versions of participation in order to then agitate for more radical claims? Although the Collaborative and the MHA differ in their conceptions of the role and importance of participation, the popularity of participatory planning, regardless of form, allowed the Collaborative to be initially welcomed by the city, slipping in under the radar. This is not to say that the Collaborative was acting conspiratorially, or that they had the plan all along to build resources before an ultimate exile. Rather, I'm saying that cooperating with the state, choosing to participate in a collaborative project into which they were invited, does not indicate a lack of understanding of the constraints of discourse, as I believe has been charged by others.

A more apparent place to look for 'successes' outside the normative goal of achieving a primary outcome in the form of preserving the housing project, is to broaden the scope to acknowledge the myriad of other concrete projects that have emerged from this project. In their extensive research process, the Collaborative collected data from Foote Homes residents about community needs, not just related to housing, but also jobs, health, education, and other community-wide issues. This led to the formation of other projects designed to meet these needs, developed alongside the Improve Don't Remove campaign. The most visible area of this is the issue of food security, based on the knowledge that was created about the lack of healthy and affordable food options for people in the neighborhood and who have limited accessibility to transportation options.

Solutions to this issue ranged from short term to long term, and from mobile to fixed, they take the form of a food bus, and an ongoing plan for creating a cooperative full-service grocery store. In stark contrast to the opacity and long struggle for determining the fate of Foote Homes, the

Collaborative has already designed, funded, and implemented a project known as the Green Machine Mobile Food Market. They rehabbed a donated bus, built alliances with local businesses interested in food access, and fundraised on their own from private sources. The rehabbed bus is now stocked with produce and other grocery needs from local grocer Easy Way, and it makes weekly rounds to several locations in the neighborhood, including subsidized housing and social service sites that are accessed by low income population of the neighborhood. The success of this project, being completed in only one year and having fundraised several hundred thousand dollars, is impressive, especially considering that it occurred alongside the energy-intensive campaign for Foote Homes.

The longer term vision for addressing food security lies in the vision for a full-service cooperative grocery store. This project is particularly meaningful, considering that a cooperatively owned business is an anomaly in a neighborhood served mostly by predatory business models that funnel resources out of the neighborhood, i.e. payday loans, fast food businesses, etc. By considering Gibson-Graham's theory of the omnipresence of non-capitalist class processes, and the fluidity of class processes that occur not in fixed locations or identities but through interactions, we can see the potential ways that this business can encourage and grow non capitalist class processes in this neighborhood. (Gibson-Graham, 2006b) Biewener argues that for financial institutions to meet community needs in the ways they envision, they must not only offer lending and credit services to people who are typically marginalized and not served by larger financial institutions, but they must actively invest in and support noncapitalist class processes, such as cooperative business models which counteract histories of class oppression through funneling and externalizing community wealth. (2001) This cooperative grocery store will have the effect of building local wealth and creating non-exploitative class relations in new jobs that are offered. This is not only a project that will meet certain economic needs by creating jobs, something that could be done by or mainstream retail models or the siting of big-box or chain retailers, but it will create jobs that are less or non-exploitative, will circulate revenue and build wealth within this oppressed community, and have the potential to transform class processes on a larger scale. This will occur with or without the preservation of Foote Homes, and will also have the impact of affecting class relations for newer residents post redevelopment.

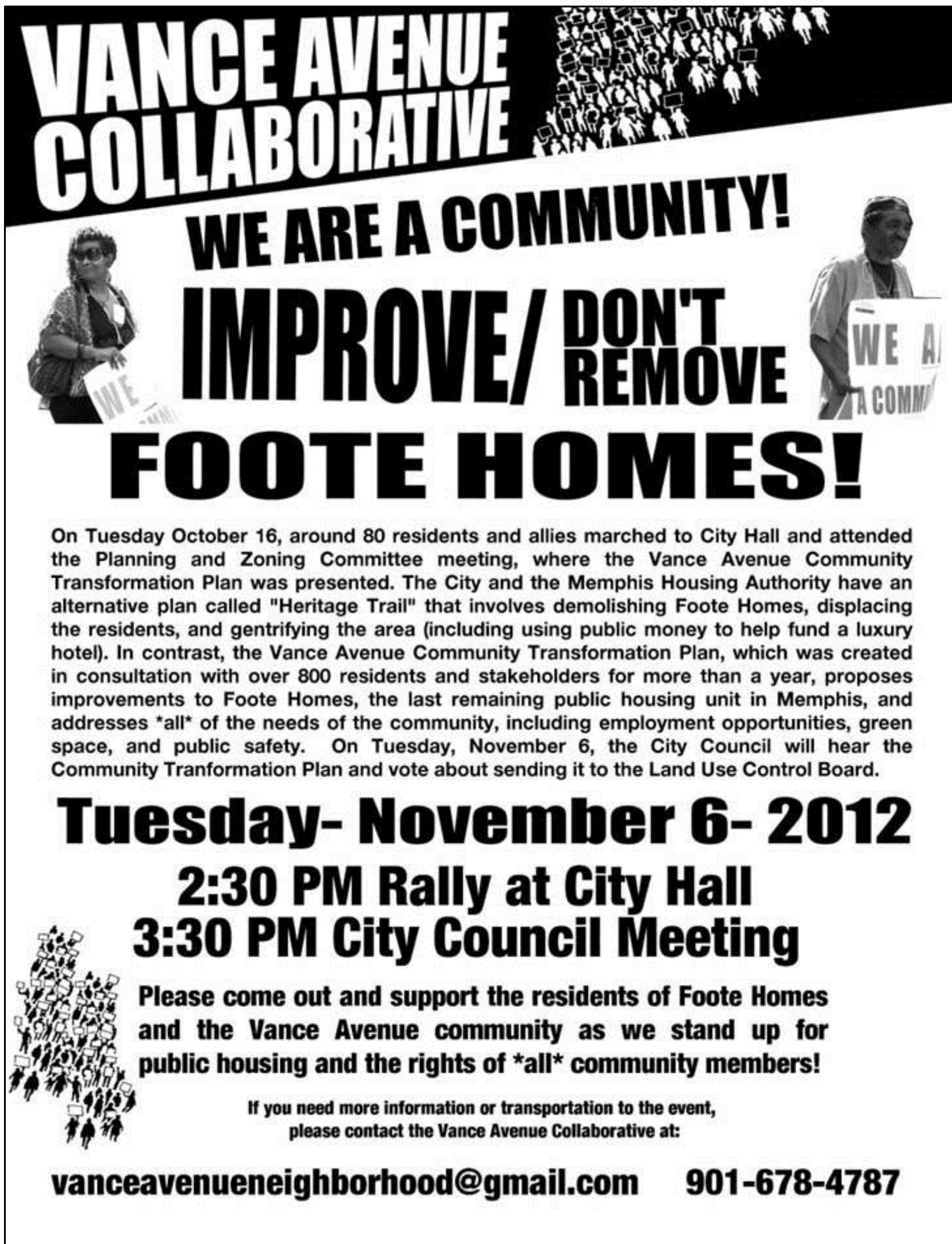

Figure 6.1 Flier for rally at City Hall

Figure 6.2 Green Machine Mobile Market

New spaces for dissent

In the popular imaginary, Memphis is indelibly remembered as an important place in the civil rights movement, mostly because it was the site of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Although the rest of the world associates Memphis with the civil rights movement, it is arguable that in reality, these historic events do not sit at the forefront of locals' memories, and Memphis is not host to the level of social movement organizing as one might think, given the city's important location in the history of civil rights struggle. Most representations of this history are in the form of memorials constructed to generate tourism, such as the National Civil Rights Museum, and the renovation of the Lorraine Motel as a site of galas and brief photo-ops by out-of-towners. Arguments have been made that this history has not translated into an activation of social movements, an injection of energy into solving modern social problems. (J. P. Jones, 2000) In fact, in a moment of frustration, one Collaborative organizer stated "I don't believe the civil rights movement ever came to Memphis." (Personal interview, June 10, 2013) The solidification of civil rights history as a remnant of the past, coupled with the restrictive nature of the political machine of contemporary government, has led to what I observe as a low level of political activism, characterized by feelings of powerlessness to challenge public affairs. In addition to collective feelings of political marginalization, active intimidation tactics by the MHA have been

reported by public housing residents who chose to get involved in the Collaborative. According to a city council member who is a supporter of the Collaborative, of the five previous public housing demolitions, not a single one has met such organized opposition as the current protest of Foote Homes demolition. (Personal interview, August 12, 2013) Reportedly, Foote Homes residents have been promised preferential positions on the waiting list for new units if they support the Heritage Trail plan, and other stakeholders have received political threats from the agency for their involvement. By organizing resident participation in the VanceCN initiative, and then protesting their exclusion through the Improve Don't Remove campaign, the Collaborative created unprecedented space for dissent in a city that does not currently have a highly active culture of resistance.

The organized resistance to Foote Homes demolition has not gone unnoticed in the public view, and the controversy has made the issue much more visible than it would have otherwise been. There is now a higher level of caution being taken by city officials, who feel like they are more in the public eye. A city council member who has not offered direct support to the Collaborative, but who does claim to have an interest in seeing greater resident involvement, acknowledged that there is now a lot hanging on this project, and that "the people are watching." He says "if we don't see it [success of VanceCN] immediately, we already define it as failure, outcomes need time to come to fruition. If it does not succeed, it is an example that will be used over and over again." (Personal interview, August 12, 2013) There is now a concern, which did not exist for the last five public housing redevelopments, that if this project does end up going through and fails, either by displacing more people than can be absorbed by the housing market through vouchers, or being marked by unfinished construction (like Cleaborn Homes,) or by not generating the tourist revenue that is expected (like Peabody Place,) then people in Memphis will remember the way that the community was shut out of the planning process, and that the result was a bad plan.

The Collaborative has succeeded in generating a degree of agitation that the City was unprepared for, and has been unable to confront or manage. In describing the way that the city officials have responded to this scenario, an supportive city council member said:

> They really want to dismiss them [the Collaborative activists,] if they had a big broom they would just sweep them away, sweep them into the Mississippi [River,] and they would go away and they wouldn't have any more headaches about it. (Personal interview, August 12, 2013)

Although they are disappointed and frustrated at their eventual exclusion from VanceCN, and over the unlikelihood of being able to save Foote Homes from destruction, a lead organizer of the Collaborative confidently states that they have instigated a "public discourse on equity" that has not existed before, and which is not ready to go away. (Collaborative organizer, community meeting, September 5, 2013) A "public discourse on equity," that has caused a "headache" to the MHA/city government, which "the people are watching," is no small accomplishment. Although it may not preserve brick-and-mortar public housing that was built over the last century, this movement promises to have a lasting impact on the political culture of the city, as well as the transformative mission of raising consciousness about oppression and re-politicizing poor people's spaces.

Resisting state power

In a neoliberal urbanist framework that emphasize pro-active statecraft as a driving component of multi-model, uneven, and locally contingent processes of neoliberalization, state power is not diminished in in favor of absolute market deregulation. Instead, it is actively reconstructed as a facilitator of capital flow, and it is persistently entrenched in enforcing power relations. The enduring role of the state can be seen in the VanceCN project, where the local state was the initiator and inviter of participating parties. Despite the supposed emphasis on community engagement, and the devolution of managing responsibilities to non-profit and non-state community entities, the state remained the ultimate decider, and was well-equipped to call off the original participatory initiative when the project strayed from supporting the state's development agenda. There is a cautious skepticism among scholars that accepting the invitation by the state to participate will inadvertently result in the solidification of this enduring state power. (Mccann, 2001)

As if pre-empting this concerned allegation, the Collaborative, although initially responsive to cooperating with the city, even willing to make concessions in favor of eventual compromise, has refused to accept exclusion by the state as a form of closure. Reporting back to a community meeting about their inability to meet the Choice thresholds and resulting de facto exclusion from the HUD Implementation Grant application process, a lead Collaborative organizer explained that it is not a stopping point for their vision: "Now does that mean we have no say in the process? I think the answer is no, not at all….." (Community meeting, September 5, 2013) He then

proceeded to review the myriad of other ways the organization has chosen to protest the Heritage Trail plan, and the MHA's HUD application. The Collaborative intends to file a complaint to HUD, backed by a petition that catalogues the number of residents who feel that they were excluded, to register their "opposition to not only the plan, but the process that was used, that no one would sit down and compromise." They also intend to file a legal complaint to allege a violation of the Fair Housing Act through systematic exclusion of the community from the process. They hope that these protest tactics will thwart the city's plan by stalling the process and blocking the city's eligibility for winning the grant. At the very least, an unsuccessful application round by the MHA would set it back one year in their plans, buying residents time before they are relocated, and hopefully forcing the MHA to come back to the table in order to craft a more competitive plan through working together with community groups. Again, the Collaborative chooses to use an arsenal of legal, officially sanctioned, state-legitimized tactics for purposes much more disruptive than they were designed for, as part of their determined strategy of 'Respectful, peaceful, and non-violent resistance.'

Almost as a response to those who allege that participation reinforces state sovereignty, the Collaborative actively resists the potential solidification of state power that could have resulted from VanceCN. In doing so, they undermine the authority of the MHA through protest and formal legal challenge. This undermining of the authority of the state may have only emerged as a result of the Collaborative's non-success in persuading the MHA to adopt their Plan for Transformation as the city's new comprehensive plan for the area, since it was the reactionary dissolution of VanceCN that anticipated the ongoing protest campaign that has brought so much visibility and politics to the situation.

Theoretical Openings

Politics

VanceCN failed to generate a compromise between a marginalized residents' organization and a city agency empowered to make drastic structural changes to the living conditions of those residents. As I re-evaluate the significance of disruption, political challenge, and agitation, I am aided by a burgeoning area of research in which urban scholars engage thoughtfully with ideas related to agonistic democracy and pluralism, as associated with the political theory of Mouffe.

(Hillier, 2003; Ploger, 2004; Ramsey, 2008) These theorists argue for the need to embrace 'strife,' disagreement and conflict related to identity, power, and politics, as a way of countering the consensus-oriented Habermasian ideals of communicative rationality, which have the potential to effect either a depoliticization, or resort to extremism.

I have argued that the Collaborative, having chosen to work within a state-mediated channel of participation oriented toward smoothing out social conflict, has functioned to elevate the political, and that they draw upon collaborative planning in order to seek not consensus but rather compromise. It is important to note the prevalence of the word 'compromise,' and never 'consensus,' in the language used by the Collaborative. They begin with the awareness that the interests of the MHA as representatives of private developer-driven restructuring of public housing are distinctly opposed to the needs and desires of public housing residents. They believe that all they can realistically hope for is compromise, a drawing of lines that do not hide this difference, and they acknowledge that each side is going to have to give something up in order to get there.

In order to give this further meaning, I have looked to Ramsey's work using Mouffe to develop a critical GIS perspective on collaborative mapping. (Ramsey, 2008) Based on his involvement in a state-led PPGIS project designed to resolve conflicts over surface water usage, he concluded that the project did serve to reflect and reproduce the power relations that form the roots of the water conflict, but that the project became much more complicated and conflict-ridden than the state agency expected, given its interest in managing and mitigating the conflicts at hand. In the end, it did not succeed in depoliticizing the issue, but rather it had incited further political agitation. In my case study, I have made similar observations of heightened politicization that resulted from collaboration, instead of the opposite, as warned by Ferguson and others. (Ferguson, 1994) Likewise, I have found problematic both the theoretical ideal of consensus and the practice of asking people to participate in a superficially inclusive deliberation on how to inhabit urban space.

Ramsey begins with the observation that: "to date, critical and participatory GIS research has focused almost exclusively on the ways in which the practice of collaboration often fails to live up to the normative discourse of collaboration used to justify or underwrite such practices." (Ramsey, 2008, p. 2347) A lineage of pointed critiques of participatory practice has been amassed, and the pitfalls that are highlighted therein center on the failures of this practice to meet the ideals of the normative discourse of participation. When participation is spoken of as a

technique of inclusion, representation, and equitable distribution, when it is regarded as the key to finding social harmony in a landscape of un-toppled interlocking systems of oppression, it is set up as an unachievable utopic fantasy, and so scholarship on this discourse put into practice consists of an inventorying of failures, which proceed with continually increasing cynicism. In critiquing the consensus model, Ramsey quotes Mouffe, who states that consensus is the "temporary result of a provisional hegemony." (Mouffe 1999, as quoted in Ramsey, p 2347) Thus, the invitation of already-marginalized communities into consensus-seeking participatory practice, where all are asked to use particular technical tools to persuade their perspective in a deliberative forum (including action research or collaborative planning tools) is asking them to step outside of their power-inflected subject positionalities. This participant subject positionality is what is conceptualized as a spatial metaphor by Cornwall, when she describes this invitation to participate as an invitation into a foreign space that contains traces of power relations that cannot be left at the boundary of the space. (Cornwall, 2004) An impossible task, since identity and power relations are not aspects of the self that one can simply check at the door, and so the invited can only act in a subordinate position in such a scenario. This is certainly the effect of participation that is honed in on by those who critique participation as tyrannical or neoliberal. Instead, I seek to replace participatory practice and practitioner, as the object of critique, with participatory discourse as a new object. This reframing would expose the repeated failings of participatory practice as rooted in an idealistic and unachievable discourse of participation, instead of the failings of individuals and communities to mobilize power against structures of exclusion.

Ramsey concludes by offering a potential vision for how the PPGIS project could instead embrace social difference and uneven power relations, and could be used as a tool to represent multiple experiences, and to reject the centrality of the state as adjudicator of which visions are legitimate and which are not. He proposes that such a participatory project would abandon the assumption that consensus is viable, and that there is a singular objective that could meet the desires of all. He formulates an example in which multiple GIS could be used to "compare alternate understandings" of a problem, that these GIS are able to incorporate multiple forms of knowledge, and that they each comprise part of a multiplicity of viewpoints on an issue. By doing this, the possibility of composing actions that all or most parties could support may be able to be identified, but the ever-present and necessary exclusions would not be hidden from view, and alternatives would be more apparent and not so easily dismissed as unfeasible, or invisible. He goes on: "Furthermore, those dissatisfied with the outcomes would potentially be better

equipped and more motivated that they would be otherwise to make their case in other political forums (legal, legislative, activist, etc.) The more groups turn to alternative political strategies out of frustration, the more collaborative planning programs will suffer from lack of legitimacy." (p. 2359)

I have reviewed this article in depth, because I believe that the Collaborative has performed precisely what Ramsey has called for. They have used an available set of methods and techniques not to concede to a temporary hegemony by subscribing to a singular vision of consensus, but instead to autonomously represent their own experiences, and to refuse subordination to the state as a participating subject. MHA's decision to abandon them from the original design of the participatory project did not result in their collapse, did not pull the rug out from beneath a singular unifying vision. The VanceCN project was used to make power relations explicit and unconcealed, and to articulate a well-researched and involved, very real alternative. The Improve Don't Remove campaign contested the typical exclusions of the past, posed a way forward, and communicated all of that to the wider public.

That the Collaborative has used collaborative planning techniques to represent multiple and conflicting realities, and to undermine the supposed objectivity of the city's strategy, is what I define as success of a chosen participatory practice, and an opening up of a discourse of participation that allows for successes. They called bluff on the city's stated commitment to participatory process, exposed the hypocrisy of the city for all to see, and perhaps exposed the potentially hollow nature of collaborative planning in general, not just in Memphis. They exposed participation as a discourse, redirecting our critical thought toward the (un)viability of the dominant discourse of participation.

Questions of co-optation

When practitioners express concern that participatory practice has lost its radical capacities, they note the receding of radical epistemologies that gave rise to participatory forms of activism in the 60s, and that contemporary discourses of participation refer more often to collaboration, partnership, and efficiency. (Mosse, 2001; Saija, 2012) Participatory practice has been re-created as a tool of neoliberal urban economic restructuring, and this prevalence creates an opportunity for radical participation to be assimilated into neoliberal participation. (Jessop, 2002; Peck, 2003) Hence the danger of engaging in something labelled participatory, lest it be taken up

as a support for the status quo, instead of challenging oppressive power relations and forming a basis for demands of redistribution and representation. The concern is that neoliberal partnerships, the inviters, will co-opt radical participatory activism. This fear of co-option is so great that practitioners question whether it is good judgment to use participatory methods, lest they be co-opted by the state, NGOs, or private partners. (Elwood, 2002; Mccann, 2001)

Gibson-Graham are concerned that the fear of co-optation, along with a political imaginary of totalizing systems of oppression, by which global-scale power structures must be transformed in order to effect change, results in political paralysis, where possible actions are closed off. They advocate instead for a "politics of possibility," which they observe in case studies of organizations who do at times collaborate with partners who do not align with their own political values or analyses, but who enable the organization to make change in the here and now, which ultimately strengthens them. The point is that organizations retain a "freedom to act" as self-reflective, ethical, and continually becoming subjects. (Gibson-Graham, 2006a, p. xxvi) In describing such organizations that compose their case studies of this politics of possibility, they describe the multiple, complex, and potentially problematic relationships these organizations have with governments, international agencies, and donors. But they maintain the following: "While recognizing the risk of co-optation that such relationships pose, they refuse to see co-optation as a necessary condition of consorting with power. Instead it is an ever-present danger that calls forth vigilant exercises of self-scrutiny and self-cultivation – ethical practices, one might say, of "not being co-opted." (Gibson-Graham, 2006a, p. xxvi)

The Collaborative has ventured into what many would consider risky endeavors of working with an adversarial public housing agency, attempting to enact social change through comprehensive planning, even though their meetings are repeatedly cancelled, political figures do not show up, and they are disregarded and abused by officials in the political system. This is the space in which co-optation occurs, and in some ways it has. Some of the data that the Collaborative generated through their multi-year participatory research process is now rightfully owned by the MHA, and they are able to selectively use it in their planning work moving forward. Collaborative organizers do not know exactly what is being done with that data, and how it is being used.

However, this concern may be overshadowed by the broader community transformations that have and are continuing to develop out of the Collaborative's work. Thanks to the original Planning Grant award ($250,000 to the MHA while they were originally still partnered with the

Collaborative,) the Collaborative was able to support an extensive community research and organizing campaign, they were able to organize tenants through their role as hired consultants. They hired Research Assistants from the U of M CRP program, who spearheaded much of the research and organizing. They engaged several U of M undergrad classes in doing much of the grunt work through service learning, which enabled them to achieve the extensive scope that they did. VanceCN was the starting point of a now 4-year movement that has transformed Memphis politics and the political role of the Vance Ave community, and made visible serious concerns about gentrification and the loss of public housing.

Critics charge that municipal-led collaborative planning is dangerous territory, in which grassroots organizations may be co-opted, managed, absorbed, and de-fanged through participatory planning processes. Contrary to this, I argue that it was the Collaborative who co-opted the City's participatory initiative, seizing VanceCN as an opportunity to unroll their own methods of participatory research and action, to model their vision of progressive planning, and to push the boundaries of politics in Memphis through protest and direct action. My analysis of planning used as protest holds that state-led participatory planning was an intentionally chosen tool of resistance, and that the Collaborative was the co-opter.

Failures/Successes

I have discussed the array of successes of the Collaborative in creating space for dissent, exposing the variable nature of participatory discourse, and co-opting the city's planning process in order to launch a protest movement against gentrification. In light of these achievements, the failure to actually persuade the City to adopt their plan, or to halt the plans for demolition, may be less of a setback. In order to circumvent the kinds of blockages that Gibson-Graham warn about, the sense of despair that comes with perceiving oneself as up against the world, against a totalizing system of global oppression that is unstoppable, and the frustration of being blocked by the ultimate role of the state in saying when a participatory process starts and stops, it is necessary to redefine what we mean by 'failure' and 'success,' and where we look for them.

In making this claim, I cannot help but think of Halberstam's Queer Art of Failure, which urges a re-thinking of failure, both in the way it is conceived, and the social importance allocated to it. (Halberstam, 2011) Beginning with the premise that queer aesthetic can be rooted in the failure of lesbian, gay, and gender-non-conforming people to live up to normative ideals of heterosexual man- and womanhood, Halberstam traces queer representation and aesthetic as deriving from and

marked by this failure. In urging a critique of fixed, positivist models of success and failure, he suggests that there is value in not succeeding in heteronormative capitalist society; this kind of success is a form of subjugation, and queer people have been doing successful failures for a long time. He then proceeds with a cultural critique filled with "examples of what happens when failure is productively linked to racial awareness, anticolonial struggle, gender variance, and different formulations of the temporality of success." (Halberstam, 2011, p. 92) Using queer identity and experience as an entry point, he argues for a re-valuing of failure, noting its productive capacities, and its eventual lack of appeal.

In a specific discussion of tactics of resistance and practices of power, Halberstam states "We can also recognize failure as a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique. As a practice, failure recognizes that alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent; indeed failure can exploit the unpredictability of ideology and its indeterminate qualities." (Halberstam, 2011, p. 88) Queer failure is a site of formulating alternatives to hegemony.

I have argued for re-examining what is considered to be failure in my case study of the Vance Avenue Collaborative and conflict-ridden plans for the future of Foote Homes, but I have also made a case that their inability to use the participatory paradigm to preserve public housing serves as a *productive failure* which has exposed participation as a discourse, and made visible the City's motives for taking on this approach to redevelopment, and of course, the ultimate falseness of their initial invitations.

Failures, productive or not, are not stopping points. Halberstam speaks of the alternatives posed by failure not as "mired in nihilistic critical dead ends." (2011, p.24) Ahmed describes failure as the point where re-orientation begins. (Ahmed, 2006) and Ahmed describes this blunted condition, cut-off end points as straightness. Straightness is the stickiness of lines, which are stuck in one alignment, enabled by the extending into space of familiar lines only. Queer objects, unable to trace familiar lines, can be stopped; this is the point of failure. But, queer response creates new lines, it does not stop at failure, instead it re-orients and redirects itself into that alternative, unfamiliar but possible political vision that only a queer type of failure can access. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 20)

Each point of failure for the Collaborative is taken as a moment of re-orientation. After an unexpected firing and exile from a participatory planning process they were invited into, based on their expertise and interests, they collectively reflected on their position and ability to move

forward, and reinvented themselves as a radical protest movement. Other smaller points of failure, of being stuck after traveling in the direction of a familiar line, have occurred along the way, and they continue to respond and redirect as needed. Queer theory can help us rethink failure.

Defining planning and the planner

The concept of planning, with its attendant role of 'planner,' implies a relationship of planner/non-planner, insider/outsider, expert/non-expert, etc. There is a politics around the planner, the development practitioner, the consultant. There are many practices that could pass as planning, but do not, because they are done through social movement activism, rebellion, unauthorized practices, or the mundane, unseen practices of the everyday, all of which shape space as much as, or more than, that which is done in the name of authorized planners. (Miraftab, 2009; Souza, 2006) Grassroots urban planning may refer not to progressive planning governments which have been opened up to popular participation, but to social activism itself, the process of creating solutions outside the state apparatus.

De Souza critiques both conservative and progressive branches of planners for assuming that the state is the only urban planning agent, citing the existence of spatial phenomena that were not planned for by the state. In particular, he notes that although the state always functions to preserve the status quo and is interlinked with spatialities of racism and class oppression, the state does not always plan specifically for things like segregation (although it has in the past), yet this spatial strategy emerges forcefully nonetheless. (2006)

This offers an alternative perspective on projects that plan and actualize, regardless of success in realizing their stated goals, alternative models to the state structure, such as Food not Bombs, info-shops or anarchist community spaces, squatter movements and anti-foreclosure housing occupation movements such as the Capetown Anti-Eviction Campaign detailed in Miraftab's article, or the spin-off Chicago anti-eviction campaign. We can see these groups as not just protest movements that defend rights, but also as examples of people autonomously planning alternatives to the state, and implementing spatial practices that construct space in a way that was not planned for by the state. Those people we can also call planners, and we could see them as additional 'planners' to refer to, if not for expertise, then for inspiration and for 'data' that would formerly be collected through participatory research and planning methods. "Social movements

take actions which can be interpreted as an alternative approach to land use, housing, traffic, environmental protection, and so on." (Souza, 2006, p. 329)

Similarly, Miraftab puts forth a more radical "insurgent planning" as a specific response to the depoliticizing effects of government-coordinated community participation. Looking at social movements of the global south, he discusses inclusion as a form of hegemony, and looks specifically at fluidly mobile resistance movements that assert radical definitions of space through both coordinated demonstrations and everyday nonconforming practices. He advocates a decentralization, informalization, and democratization of planning as a response to the "dominance by inclusion" that characterizes planning agents in a global context. (2009, p. 32)

By employing a specifically spatial perspective, we can see the way that different forms of planning for development and practicing development, through grassroots social movement activism and through state- and NGO-designed process of participation, are carried out in different spaces that are associated with varying degrees of representation and inclusion by different social groups. (Cornwall, 2004) Again, Cornwall speaks of invited spaces and popular spaces, where invited spaces are mechanisms for public involvement in governance through participatory technologies, i.e. spaces where people are 'invited' to participate by the facilitators of participatory methods. Popular spaces are constructed as those where organic, every day activities of people joining together to enact change or solve problems. Similarly, Miraftab, in his account of "insurgent planning" as a radical planning practice, refers to "invented" spaces, which occur through confrontational, anti-hegemonic resistance practices. He also compares these invented spaces with the invited spaces which are legitimated by state or NGO support. (Miraftab, 2009)

These distinct spatialities are each associated with a different social group which has a more constructive role in designing the space, or calling for the space, in the case of invited spaces. It is useful to think about who is invited into these spaces of action or collaboration, and who is doing the inviting, and whether you need to be invited at all in order to enter them. The problematic depoliticizing potential of "dominance through inclusion" by invited community participation, occurs when the invited spaces become the most influential spaces of action, and the powerful spaces of the margins, in which popular social organizing or insurgency occurs, are neglected. (Miraftab, 2009, p. 32)

This has implications for both those who design participatory methods for state-directed inclusion, as well as those active in social movements who must cope with the implications for

entering invited spaces in order to participate. Individuals and organizations seeking to improve techniques for participation with real concerns for full representation and inclusion should consider going to popular, existing political and cultural spaces in order to learn from them, rather than working to explicate local knowledge primarily through invited mechanisms of participatory research. Cornwall recommends that activist researchers look for participation "in the places in which they occur, framing their possibilities with reference to actual political, social, cultural, and historical particularities rather than idealized models of democratic practice." (Cornwall, 2004, p. 87) This is a more action-oriented goal than the initial calls for greater reflexivity and analyses of power as articulated by critics of participatory development. (Cooke & Kothari, 2001a)

For activists when considering their involvement in participatory processes, engagements with invited spaces coordinated by institutions, the state, or NGOs, should not come at the expense of the other spaces which serve as important methods of exerting pressure against hegemonic neoliberalism, through sustained critique, and the devising of alternative systems.

Conclusion

Critique of participatory practice most often evaluates the effectiveness of chosen strategies and techniques to actualize progressive goals, such as empowerment, or equitable redistribution. Planners and practitioners are evaluated based on their abilities to use the constraining avenues made available by the state to achieve those objectives, and when they do not meet them, their work is seen as a failure and a misdirection of their energies. I argue that this form of critique reveals the failure of participatory planning to elide politics, to ameliorate social conflicts with technical solutions. It is necessary to be responsive to the existence of multiple discourses of participation and the varying meanings of the practice in different contexts. The Collaborative, through their participation, planning, and protest, had the effect of delegitimizing the MHA in the eyes of the public, re-politicizing a planning practice in a way that constructed a radical alternative discourse of participation, and demonstrating that resistance can be enacted alongside, and through, participation.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Purcell synthesizes the array of critiques that have made a case against collaborative planning using participatory principles under the premise that "neoliberalism seeks actively to co-opt and incorporate democratic resistance." (2009, 141) The concern with co-optation and absorption of politics by neoliberalism underlies concerns with participatory planning, which reflect larger debates about the potential for participation to enroll and solidify oppressive power relations at all scales, while simultaneously enlisting and repressing radical theoretical origins of participatory methods. (Cooke & Kothari, 2001b; Samuel Hickey & Mohan, 2004)

Purcell argues against the viability of collaborative planning as an appropriate response to the fragmentation of postmodern society, claiming that neoliberalism is a global practice of consolidating class power, and that "to the extent power is being fragmented it is the power of those least advantaged by neoliberalization." (Purcell, 2009, p. 158) He claims that any kind of collaborative planning practice serves to reinscribe and legitimate neoliberal hegemony. Massey noted the distinction between 'hegemony' and 'totality,' where hegemony implies dominance but not an erasure, where cracks of possibility and maneuvering still exist. (Massey, 2014) Purcell echoes Sandercock's call for a "counter-hegemonic planning practice" (Sandercock, 1998) Yet, he seeks to transform global neoliberal power relations and systemically replace it with alternative forms. The impulse toward complete overturning of global power relations as the appropriate venue for resisting neoliberalism does not adequately reflect Sandercock's politics of possibility, which locates counter-hegemony in everyday practice, and instead perpetuates the conception of the capitalist totality that Gibson-Graham refute. (2006b) Purcell calls for struggle, not partnership, which for him inherently implies cooperation and not contestation.

The Collaborative did in fact break with the communicative action approach that collaborative planning rests upon, although they did not state it directly as such, and the very choice of the name 'Vance Avenue *Collaborative'* indicates their comfort with operating within collaborative planning frameworks. However, they were willing to use a range of political practices, declining to accept communicative action as the most appropriate means of reaching their goals. They advocated a plan that was fundamentally different from the MHA, and by doing so refused to attempt consensus-building, willing to *compromise*, but not *concede.* And they did so as self-identified *partners* with the city.

Therefore, I argue that scholars who critique the participatory paradigm and collaborative planning should not continue to portray city-led participatory strategies only as methods of stifling dissent and steamrolling by private developers. Agreeing to participate, even becoming a partner, does not always entail consent or cooperation, and certainly does not foreclose the right to dissent within the partnership.

To demonstrate the possibilities for resistance within partnerships, I have used a case study of the politics of redevelopment of Foote Homes in the Vance Avenue neighborhood. The ability to call this a study of 'politics,' attests to the actions of the Vance Avenue Collaborative, in their work as a collaborative partner using participatory planning, as having created a rupture in this somewhat ordinary city planning project. Not initially envisioned by the city as a site of authentic resident mobilization, the Vance Choice Neighborhoods planning initiative ended up being one of the most politicizing events of recent history in Memphis. But the issues that the Collaborative has mobilized around are not unique. Public housing redevelopment in the era of neoliberalism is designed to generate new economic growth through privatization and financializing of public sectors, and to mix service provision with urban development. It is a key player in gentrification strategies which displace and disperse poor residents. HOPE VI is a fairly consistent design model that unfolds variously into local contexts, but is governed by some unifying principles. With the advent of Choice Neighborhoods, the imperative for community engagement may become routine itself.

I have described the way that the Vance Avenue Collaborative accepted the invitation to partner in order to implement a participatory planning initiative that was designed on radical principles that have largely been excised from the collaborative planning approach. In doing so, they faced major disagreements with the MHA over the meaning and value of participation, where the city intended to use their participatory design to supplement the competitiveness of their funding application to HUD without any genuine commitment to share power with residents, or even consult with them. In contrast, the Collaborative envisioned participatory practice as a means of transforming power relations and enabling community members to advocate for themselves long into the future. They used this partnership as an opportunity to express community opposition to broad downtown gentrification strategies, and site-based direct displacement from public housing demolition. I measure the success of their participatory design by their eventual exile from the city, which has had important effects of enabling dissent, creating visible protest, and re-politicizing normative development styles. This analysis of the Collaborative and their work within a participatory partnership with the MHA and as an activist group against the MHA's

plans to demolish public housing has offered new possibilities for thinking about the role of participatory practice in the framework of neoliberalism and contemporary planning paradigms.

One of the ways in which this case study is distinctive is the multiple spaces occupied by the Collaborative in which participatory practice was performed. They moved fluidly between the state-led participatory initiatives of the VanceCN and the participatory action research and activism, autonomously organized by the Collaborative, prior to being invited in the VanceCN project, as well as afterwards in the Improve Don't Remove campaign. The Collaborative used participatory planning in both a state-led initiative and in a grassroots activist project, at the same time, and occasionally opposing each other. Because participatory processes emerge in different parts of the political spectrum, and are informed by different political and social frameworks, there will be times when the lines between state and civil society are blurred, or when they occur simultaneously.

One particular limitation in the critical literature on participation, which was not able to appropriately encapsulate the issues I found with my case study, is the emphasis on state-led participatory initiatives, and the subsequent conflation of that with the meaning of 'participatory planning' more broadly. This has the effect of subsuming participatory activism rooted in radical popular participation, thus furthering the phenomenon of depoliticization which is being critiqued. A critique of participation which argues that social movements are always managed and co-opted by state-led urban planning partnerships is not prepared to address the ways that social movements can effectively function within, alongside, and in resistance to, dominant discourses of participation associated with collaborative planning and neoliberalism. Although the Collaborative answered the invitation to participate in an arguably neoliberal collaborative planning partnership that embodied many of the problems with participation outlined in this body of literature, they did not concede to the state when called to terminate their project when it became too political, and they enacted influential political change that will continue to seek justice through development politics in Memphis.

There are a few remaining questions that I hope to address further in my continuing research program. Alongside the movement to mixed-income redevelopment-led gentrification, is a movement toward financialization of social policy and the public sector. The decrease in direct funding of public housing and other federal programs represents not simply a decline in the provision of those services, but a redirection toward funding schemes that are increasingly complex, indirect, and reliant upon financial markets for capital. In order to address the

financialization of governance that underlies privatization, partnership, and mixed-funding that I have discussed, it is necessary to take up incentive-based funding mechanisms, such as LIHTCs, with equal weight. It may be relevant to collect and analyze data quantifying how LIHTCs compensate for housing demolition, and to compare federal budgets for LIHTCs with historical funding for direct housing construction, as well as housing units produced by each. I would like to study this in relation to other tax-based incentives such as TIF.

In continuing work on this case study, I would like to incorporate research undertaken by other Memphis-based graduate students who have worked directly with public housing residents, and have conducted research on residents' experiences with participatory planning. While I am intent on 'studying up,' and making institutional and government spaces the object of discourse analysis, my critique of that object is formulated in relation to my own knowledge and familiarity with those spaces. As I continue to develop literature based on this research, I am interested in comparing my observations and data collected from this distance that I have, with those who have been more involved in the everyday practices of this project.

APPENDIX

Appendix A. Municipalities awarded 5 or more HOPE VI grants, 1993 - 2010

	Total Amount of HOPE VI Grants	**Total Number of Grants**	**Population (2012)**
Chicago	$277,918,550	9	2,715,000
Atlanta	$207,232,035	7	443,775
D.C.	$181,153,314	7	633,427
Boston	$156,992,350	5	636,479
Philadelphia	$153,515,833	5	1,548,000
Seattle	$145,624,222	5	634,535
Memphis	$144,281,182	5	655,155
Charlotte	$141,866,409	5	775,202
Milwaukee	$136,479,798	6	598,916
Baltimore	$116,889,618	5	621,342

Appendix B: Vance Avenue Collaborative Detailed Chronology – through April 2013
Compiled by the Vance Avenue Collaborative and Dr. Laura Saija

DATE	***DESCRIPTION***	***Phase***	***CLASSES***
2008 Mar 31	The City finalizes the **Triangle Noir Plan**		
2009 Aug 29	Beginning of the Fall 2009 Semester at the UofM		FALL 2009 – Comprehensive planning studio – instructor: K. Reardon
2009 Oct 13	Community Meeting at St. Patrick's Church		
2009 Nov 9	Advance Memphis Community Meeting (name used at that time: S.O.D.-South of Downtown, a grassroots planning effort)		
2009 Nov 16	Foote Homes Mtg – residents complains about HOPE VI		
2009 Dec 10	VAC Focus Groups – Community Assets Mapping		
2009 Dec 12	Vance Avenue Collaborative Neighborhood Meeting held at First Baptist Church – **Presentation of the 1st draft of the VAC's Planning Initiative Data Book**		
2009 Dec 16	FY 2010 APPROPRIATIONS ACT H.R. 3288, Public Law 111-117 – Last Round of funds for HOPE VI and **birth of the CHOICE Neighborhood Program**		
2009 Dec 17	End of the Fall 2009 Semester at the UofM	*Vance Avenue Collaborative Planning Initiative*	
2010 Jan 14	Beginning of the Spring 2010 Semester at the UofM		SRING 2010 – 3 CRP GAs funded by HCD; I know
2010	VAC Comm Mtg		

Jan 23			
2010 Feb 15	Vance Avenue Neighborhood Clean-up (VAC + Americorps Volunteers)		
2010 Feb 20	VAC Community Mtg		
2010 Feb 26-28	Residents Interviews		
2010 Mar 4	VAC Action Teams at Mosque 55		
2010 Mar 8-14	Spring break: **Virginia Tech, University of Memphis, and Rodhes College students carry out Vance Neighborhood interviews**, as part of the Vance Avenue Collaborative Planning Initiative		
2010 Mar 20	**Vance Neighborhood Summit**, at St. Patrick Learning Center		
2010 Apr 3	VAC Neighborhood Workshop I		
2010 Apr 10	VAC Spring Festival		
2010 Apr 20	VAC Neighborhood workshop II		
2010 May 6	End of the Spring 2010 semester at the UofM		
2010 Jun 3	**Announcement of the $22 million federal HOPE VI grant to redevelop Cleaborn Homes, as part of the Triangle Noir Plan**. Lipscomb's public announcement in the Commercial Appeal that the long-range plan is to secure another HOPE VI funding grant to tear down the aging Foote Homes.		
2010 June 6	Notice of HUD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) sent to all the PH Authorities in the Country, explaining why CN is different than HOPE VI		

2010 June ???	**VAC meeting "in the basement"**		
2010 Sept 14	**VAC Planning Framework Presentation**; the agenda includes a discussion on how to address area homelessness and unemployment, ways the arts can be used to promote community building and a progress report on the Cleaborn Homes Hope VI project		
2010 Oct 6	**MHA's sponsored Mtg with PH residents to finalize the application to a Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant** for the Vance Avenue Neighborhood		
	Submission of the VanceCN Grant – is the UofM engaged in the writing of the grant?		
2011 Jan 13	Beginning of the Spring 2011 semester at the UofM		SPRING 2011 – Kath's class – I do not know the name
2011 Jan 29	Neighborhood Tour with UofM students engaged in the VAC project		
2011 Feb 26	VAC's sponsored Neighborhood Clean-up (work at the garden in preparation of the Spring season)		
2011 Mar 1	VAC Meeting at St Pat – the focus is on the implementation of projects identified within the 2010 Planning Framework		
2011 Mar 14	University of Groningen's visit to the Vance Neighborhood		
2011 Mar 18	**HUD announces that Memphis is one of the Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative Grantees**		
2011 Apr 2	VAC's sponsored Spring Fest in Foote Homes Park		
2011 May 5	End of the Spring 2011 semester at the UofM		
2011 Jun 21	1st Vance Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative (VanceCN) Monthly Community Mtg at St Patrick –	^	

	formal presentation of the Vance CN project to the community		
2011 Jul 12	VanceCN Monthly Community Mtg at St Patrick – 1st HUD Visit		
2011 Aug 16	VanceCN Monthly Community Mtg at St Patrick (agenda: guided visualization exercise)		
2011 Aug 27	Beginning of the Fall 2011 semester at the UofM		FALL 2011: Studio – instructors K. M. Reardon & L. Saija
2011 Sept 8	VanceCN Monthly Community Mtg at St Patrick (community assets mapping & distribution of cameras for the photo documentation exercise)		
2011 Oct 20	VanceCN Monthly Community Mtg at Emmanuel Center (Residents working with pictures taken by residents and students)		
2011 Nov 10	VanceCN Monthly Community Mtg at COGIC (charrette-urban design exercise)		
2011 Dec 10	VanceCN Monthly Community Mtg at the Foote Homes Community Center (workshop on the pros and con of every redevelopment option)		
2011 Dec 7	End of the Fall 2011 semester at the UofM		
2012 Jan 12	Beginning of the Spring 2012 semester at the UofM		SPRING 2012 Special Project Studio – A. Raciti & L. Saija
2012 Jan 31	Triangle Noir Charrette at Bridges		
2012 Feb 1	UofM-GA Mtg: Discussing possible scenarios of the VanceCN project, Ken for the first time introduces the BTFU strategy	Vance Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative – with UofM	
2012 Feb 4	VanceCN Monthly Community Mtg at St Pat, with Lipscomb and the Mayor coming for the first time; residents vote the redevelopment scenarios		
2012 Feb 22	UofM consultants meets the Housing group consultants – UofM consultants present residents'		

	urban design preferences		
2012 Mar 14	New website for Triangle Noir – press release; on-line voting for the "new name" of the neighborhood		
2012 Mar 15	VanceCN Management Comm. Mtg – city officials ask for consensus on the demolition of Foote Homes as pre-defined redevelopment option		
2012 Mar 22	Housing Group charrette		
2012 Mar 30	Cleaborn Pointe at Heritage Landing Renaming/Ground Breaking Ceremony		
2012 Mar 31	VanceCN Neighborhood Summit at Southwest Community College		
2012 Apr 14-15	VAC's sponsored Spring Festival during which UofM and St Patrick volunteers survey the residents		
2012 Apr 19	VanceCN Action Team Mtg (I) and 2nd HUD visit at MLK Transition Academy		
2012 May 3	End of the Spring 2012 semester at the UofM		
2012 May 10	VanceCN Action Team Mtg (II)		
2012 Aug 8	MHA send a notice of **termination for convenience** to UofM consultants	V	
2012 Aug 13	Vance Avenue's pastors meeting: all but one endorse the the Vance Avenue Community Transformation plan adopted	Λ	
2012 Aug 25	Beginning of the Fall 2012 semester at the UofM		No classes involved – three
2012 Sept 6	Stakeholders receive a letter from R. Lipscomb on the end of the "consultation" period		
2012	**VAC's community Mtg – UofM presents the Vance**		

Sept 13	**Avenue Community Transformation Plan**, for community review – participants vote to endorse the plan The Same Day MHA and HCD finalize the Heritage Trail Plan, which includes the request to establish a Downtown-wide TIF district to leverage funds for the redevelopment of Foote Homes		
2012 Sept 24	UofM submit an application to the national register of historic places to list Foote Homes		
2012 Oct 1	Press Conference at St Patrick – lunch of the Improve, don't remove campaign		
2012 Oct 10	Housing Webminar at the UofM, on negative evaluations of HOPE VI and Section 8 programs done all around the country – Special Service at St Patrick for Foote Homes residents		
2012 Oct 16	**WE ARE A COMMUNITY march to City hall & Planning and Zoning Committee Mtg** – the committee votes 4 to 0 to have the City council voting on a resolution to have the Land Use Control Board to hear the Vance Collaborative Plan	Improve don't Remove – Save Foote Homes Campaign	
2012 Oct 18	**Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Meeting** – MHA and HCD Officials present the Heritage Trail Plan		
2012 Nov 6	The resolution requesting the Land Use Control Board to hear the Vance Avenue Collaborative plan is the second Item in the **City Council** agenda: the item is postponed		
2012 Nov 13	UofM receives notification on the **negative response by the State of Tennessee to our request of listing Foote Homes** in the National Register of Historic Places		
2012 Nov 15	**Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Meeting** – the Heritage Trail moves forward		
2012 Dec 4	The resolution requesting the Land Use Control Board to hear the Vance Avenue Collaborative plan is the second Item in the **City Council** agenda for the 2nd		

	time: will they vote on it this time?	|	
2012 Dec 6	**Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Meeting** – will they vote in favor of the Heritage Trail plan?	|	
2012 Dec 13	End of the Fall 2012 semester at the UofM	|	
	HUD communications regarding City's Heritage Trail track and cutting-off of further planning process with neighborhood	| | | | | V	
2013 Jan.	Met with Commissioner Steve Basar who wrote TIF app		
2013 Feb.	CRA meeting-Heritage Trail Plan put on "indefinite hold" by applicant (Memphis Housing Authority)		
	Met with Mayor Wharton to ask for his support of the Vance Avenue Community Transformation Plan; or, at least to facilitate a compromise between the Heritage Trail Plan and the Transformation Plan		
2013 March	Met with Memphis City Council Chairman Ford, represents Vance Avenue Neighborhood; conveyed that could not be		
	University of Memphis Law School Alternative Spring Break-cohort of law students from Memphis, Charlotte, NC; and Burlington, VT research grounds for municipal ethics complaint, state board of professional ethics complaint, and fair housing complaint		
	Met with Councilman Strickland re: budget match for Choice Neighborhood Grant		
	Heard back from Mayor Wharton's Chief Administrator Officer who said the Mayor would consider both plans but did not take a position		

2013 March 21	Community meeting-attendance up to 50-60 people		
	Denied Attorney Wade opinion in writing from City Council		
	Launched National Media Campaign		
2013 April	HUD recommended applying for Choice Neighborhoods		
2013 April 12	HUD picket-Residents Denied a Voice in Choice		

Appendix C. 2013 Choice Neighborhoods HUD Notice of Funding Availability

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. FR-5700-N-25]
HUD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 NOFA for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative – Implementation Grants

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing and Office of Multifamily Housing Programs, HUD.

ACTION: Notice of HUD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Notice of Funding Availability for HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Initiative.

SUMMARY: Today's publication provides information and instructions for the FY2013 Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants program. This Notice is comprised of both Notice of HUD's Fiscal Year 2013 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Policy Requirements and General Section (General Section) to HUD's FY2013 NOFAs for Discretionary Programs, published on August 8, 2012, and this program section of the NOFA. For FY2013, HUD will award two types of grants through the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative: Planning Grants and Implementation Grants:

1. Planning Grants assist communities in developing a successful neighborhood transformation plan and building support necessary for that plan to be successfully implemented.
2. Implementation Grants support those communities that have undergone a comprehensive local planning process and are ready to implement their "Transformation Plan" to redevelop the neighborhood.

Through today's publication, HUD is making available approximately $109 million in assistance through the FY2013 Choice Neighborhoods Initiative for Implementation Grants. The FY2013 NOFA for Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants has been issued under separate cover.

A. Choice Neighborhoods Initiative – Summary. Choice Neighborhoods is HUD's signature place-based initiative in support of the President's goal to build Ladders of Opportunity to the middle class. This vision builds on the work that has been done by the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI), an interagency partnership between HUD, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, and Treasury, since 2009. Through a variety of interventions, the Ladders of Opportunity plan will help community partners rebuild neighborhoods, expand early learning opportunities, create pathways to jobs, and strengthen families. This federal partnership supports locally driven solutions for transforming distressed neighborhoods using place-based strategies to address the interconnected challenges of poor quality housing, inadequate schools, poor health, high crime and lack of capital. Choice Neighborhoods is designed to address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public housing or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. Local leaders, residents, and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers, come together to create a plan that transforms distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in

the surrounding neighborhood. The program helps communities transform neighborhoods by revitalizing severely distressed public and/or assisted housing and investing and leveraging investments in well-functioning services, high quality public schools and education programs, high quality early learning programs and services, crime prevention strategies, public assets, public transportation, and improved access to jobs. Choice Neighborhoods ensures that current public and assisted housing residents will be able to benefit from this transformation, by preserving affordable housing or providing residents with the choice to move to affordable and accessible housing in another existing neighborhood of opportunity. Choice Neighborhoods is focused on three core goals:

1. **Housing**: Replace distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality mixed-income housing that is well-managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood;

2. **People**: Improve educational outcomes and intergenerational mobility for youth with services and supports delivered directly to youth and their families; and

3. **Neighborhood**: Create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activity, that are important to families' choices about their community.

To achieve these core goals, communities must have in place a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy, or Transformation Plan. This Transformation Plan is the guiding document for the revitalization of the public and/or assisted housing units, while simultaneously directing the transformation of the surrounding neighborhood and positive outcomes for families.

Experience shows that to successfully develop and implement the Transformation Plan, broad civic engagement will be needed. Applicants will need to work with public and private agencies, organizations (including philanthropic and civic organizations), and individuals to gather and leverage the financial and human capital resources needed to support the sustainability of the plan. These efforts should build community support for and involvement in the development and implementation of the plan.

In addition, as part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, HUD is working with other Federal agencies to align programs so that place-based solutions can be more readily implemented. This interagency collaboration will assist Choice Neighborhoods applicants in identifying strategies for building upon, and leveraging, high-quality housing, academic, family and community programs and anticipated investments in neighborhood revitalization efforts funded by other Federal agencies. Examples of these efforts include the Department of Justice's Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation program, the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods program, the Department of Health and Human Services' Community Health Center program, and the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program. In addition, HUD is a core member of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, which supports communities that provide affordable housing, robust transportation choices, and greater economic competitiveness, by helping them to align federal investments in housing, transportation, economic development, infrastructure and the environment. Through these programs, the Departments intend to create

incentives for communities to focus on the same geographic area and apply for funding from more than one source.

By focusing resources in targeted places, and by drawing on the compounding effect of well-coordinated actions, HUD believes Choice Neighborhoods will result in neighborhoods of opportunity.

B. Objectives and Metrics to Measure Long Term Success: Each Choice Neighborhoods grantee is expected to develop metrics based on the objectives listed below in order to measure performance.

1. Housing Objectives. Housing transformed with the assistance of Choice Neighborhoods should be:

a. ***Energy Efficient, Sustainable, Accessible, and Free from Discrimination*****.** Housing that is well-designed, embracing not only the requirements of accessible design but also concepts of visitability and universal design, with low per unit energy consumption, healthy indoor air quality, built to be resistant to local disaster risk, with affordable broadband Internet access and free from discrimination.

b. ***Mixed-Income.*** Housing affordable to families and individuals with a broad range of incomes including, low-income, moderate-income, and, market rate or unrestricted.

c. ***Well-Managed and Financially Viable.*** Developments have budgeted appropriately for the rental income that can be generated from the project and meet or exceed industry standards for quality management and maintenance of the property. In addition, the developments benefit from high quality maintenance over time with upgrades and replacements performed.

2. People Objectives. People that live in the neighborhood benefit from:

a. ***Effective Education.*** A high level of resident access to high quality early learning programs and services so children enter kindergarten ready to learn; significant improvement in the quality of schools nearest to the target development that prepare students to graduate from high school college- and career-ready; and significant growth in existing individual resident educational outcomes over time relative to the state average.
b. ***Employment Opportunities.*** The income of neighborhood residents and residents of the revitalized development, particularly wage income for non-elderly/non-disabled adult residents, increases over time.
c. ***Quality Health Care.*** Health for residents over time is as good as or better than that of other households with similar economic and demographic conditions.
d. ***Housing Location, Quality, and Affordability.*** Residents who, by their own choice, do not return to the development have housing and neighborhood opportunities as good as or better than the opportunities available to those who occupy the redeveloped site.

3. Neighborhood Objectives. Through investments catalyzed with Choice Neighborhoods, the neighborhood has improved along the following dimensions:

a. ***Private and Public Investment into the Neighborhood.*** The neighboring housing has a low vacancy/abandonment rate, the housing inventory is of high quality, and the neighborhood is mixed-income and maintains a mixture of incomes over time.

b. ***Amenities.*** The distance traveled from the neighborhood to basic services is equal to or less than the distance traveled from the median neighborhood in the metropolitan area. Those basic services include grocery stores, banks, health clinics and doctors' offices, dentist offices, and high-quality early learning programs and services.
c. ***Effective Public Schools.*** Public schools in the target neighborhood are safe and welcoming places for children and their families. In addition, schools have test scores that are as good as or better than the state average or are implementing school reforms that raise student achievement over time and graduate students from high school prepared for college and a career.
d. ***Safety:*** Residents are living in a safer environment as evidenced by the revitalized neighborhood having dramatically lower crime rates than the neighborhood had prior to redevelopment and maintaining a lower crime rate over time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions regarding specific program requirements should be directed to the agency contact identified in this program NOFA. Questions regarding the General Section should be directed to the Grants Management Office at (202) 708-0667 (this is not a toll-free number). Persons with hearing or speech impairments may access this number via TTY by calling the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The NOFA published today provides the statutory and regulatory requirements, threshold requirements, and rating factors applicable to funding being made available today (through the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants NOFA). Applicants for the Choice Neighborhoods NOFA must also refer to the General Section for important application information and requirements, including submission requirements, which have changed this year.

Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov). If applicants have questions concerning the registration process, registration renewal, assigning an Authorized Organization Representative please contact HUD's Grants Management Office. If you have a question about a NOFA requirement, please contact the HUD staff identified in this program NOFA. HUD staff cannot help you write your application, but can clarify requirements that are contained in the General Section, this Notice, and in the Grants.gov registration materials. New applicants should note that they are required to complete a five-step registration process in order to submit their applications electronically. HUD's General Section provides step-by-step instructions for applicants who must register with Grants.gov and also provides renewal/update instructions for those who have previously registered.

Application materials and instructions are posted to Grants.gov as soon as HUD finalizes them. HUD encourages applicants to subscribe to the Grants.gov free notification service at http://www.grants.gov/applicants/email_subscription.jsp. By doing so, applicants will receive an email notification as soon as items are posted to the website. By joining the notification service, if a modification is made to the NOFA, applicants will receive notification that a change has been made.

HUD encourages applicants to carefully read the General Section and all parts of this Choice Neighborhoods NOFA. Carefully following the directions provided can make the difference in a

successful application submission.

All applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and an active registration in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) system, now part of the System for Award Management (SAM), found at https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/. Failure to meet the requirements will prohibit you from receive a grant award.

In FY2013, HUD is posting the full NOFA on the Grants.gov website rather than the Federal Register. The Federal Register publication is merely a notice of where to the find the NOFA and application forms. The NOFA posted to Grants.gov is the official version of the Notice and supersedes all other sources. If there is a discrepancy between information posted to Grants.gov and other websites, the Grants.gov information prevails.

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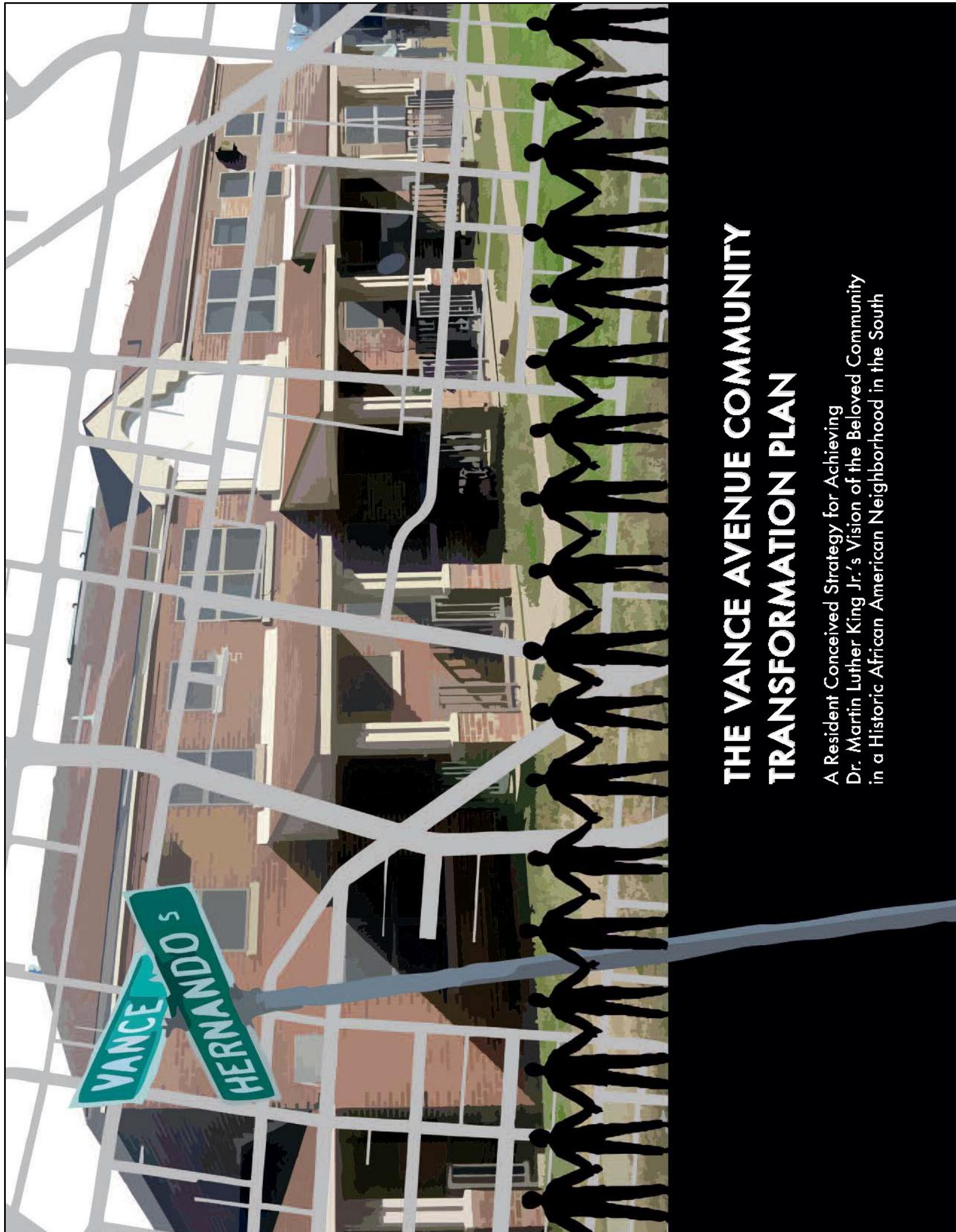

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- 8.1 Appendix A: List of Participants
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Moments of collaboration among residents and stakeholders during the participatory planning process coordinated by the Neighborhood Team within the Choice Neighborhood Project.
On the left: residents working at the community timeline during the July 2012 Community Meeting.
Below: a community mapping activity during the Sept 8th community meeting.

Above: photo analysis during the October 20th community meeting.
Left: a participatory design activity during the November 10th community meeting.

1.3 Core Planning Values

The following section describes the core planning values that shaped the Neighborhood Sub-Committee's approach this project. Among these are deep commitments to:

- **Resident-led planning** in which the hopes, aspirations, and visions of long-time residents and stakeholders have a determining influence over the content of the plan as well as the future development of the Vance Avenue neighborhood;
- **Asset-based community development** in which the knowledge, skills and networks of local residents, neighborhood associations, and social networks of this historic community, that has generated many of our nation's most influential civic rights leaders, including Robert Church, Ida B. Wells, and Benjamin Hooks, are mobilized to revitalize this long-neglected community;
- **Data driven policy and plan-making** that uses the best available information and generated needed additional information regarding existing conditions, future trends, and best practices to guide the formulation of the plan.
- **Historically informed approach** that builds upon the enduring legacy of innovative place-making, committed scholarship, internationally recognized artistic achievement, impressive athletic accomplishment, and courageous civil rights organizing to inspire current residents and leaders;
- **Highly-participatory process** designed to engage, and empower all segments of the community, especially those who have been previously uninvolved in local civic affairs, to work together to create and implement an inspired community transformation plan;
- **Developmentally-oriented model** that organizes residents to tackle highly visible albeit small-scale projects using the momentum generated by their successful completion to undertake increasingly challenging development projects that enhance the planning, development, and management capacity of local residents and institutions.
- **Partnership strategy** that recognizes the importance of bringing public, private, and non-profit organizations from outside of the community together with community-based organizations from within the Vance Avenue Neighborhood to address the area's most intractable issues such as public safety, school quality, and health care access.
- **Action-oriented approach** that seeks to move people into action around critical issues even before the plan is completed. Within this process, local residents and institutions came together to create a very popular and productive community garden, carryout six community cleanups and expand an ongoing health fair.
- **Reflective practice** that challenges participants to review their practice, on an ongoing basis, in order to identify more effective theories, methods, and practices.

1.4 Planning Methodology

In the Summer of 2011 local stakeholders organized by the Vance Avenue Collaborative and UofM students and faculty came together to formulate a planning process based on values designed to provide community leaders with the information they needed to create a cutting-edge community revitalization plan. Between September 2011 and August 2012, local residents and university-trained researchers worked together, on an equal basis, as "co-investigators" to collect and analyze a wide-range of environmental, economic, and social data needed for the purposes of planning. Within this participatory action research effort, local stakeholders and their university partners jointly undertook the following research activities:

- **Archival research** – an examination of more than a dozen former studies, reports, and plans completed by public and private organizations examining various conditions within the Vance Avenue community;
- **Historical investigation** – an investigation of the people, institutions, and sites that have played a critical role in the development of the Vance Avenue community.
- **Environmental studies** – an examination of soil conditions, topographical patterns, drainage systems, open spaces, and historical sites that have and should shape the future development of the community.
- **Demographic analysis** – a review of the population, economic, and housing trends affecting the Vance Avenue community through a systematic analysis of U.S. Census data.
- **Land Use, Building conditions survey** – a parcel-by-parcel evaluation of the current use of land and buildings, the conditions of the physical structures, and the current zoning of the 1,800 individual lots within the study area.
- **Community mapping** – an inventory of the local public, private, and non-profit organizations providing educational, health, housing, transportation and other municipal services to area residents.
- **Stakeholder visualization** – receiving local residents, business persons and institutional leaders' initial visions for a "new and improved" Vance Avenue community and preliminary neighborhood improvement statements.
- **Neighborhood documentation (aka camera exercise)** – amassing 1,500 images of community assets, problems, and resources generated by 60 community and university volunteers using disposable cameras.
- **Movers and shakers interviews** – one-on-one interviews with local institutional leaders focused on their perception of existing neighborhood conditions and preferred development possibilities.
- **Neighborhood residents' surveys** – collection of data from neighborhood residents, including 135 heads of households within Foote Homes, focused on their perception of current conditions and future improvement possibilities for the complex and the surrounding community.
- **Quality of life search conference** – organization and participation in a three-day event held on the University of Memphis Campus and in the Community Room of Foote Homes that involved thirteen leading scholars from Europe and North America who had been involved in highly successful, resident-led community transformation efforts. More than eighty local leaders, project consultants, city staff, and U of M students and faculty involved in the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative shared in this forum. The event culminated in an hour-long presentation of economic and community development recommendations from the invited policy experts based upon their independent review of Vance Avenue's community profile and preferred development pattern data.
- **Community Assembly** – a daylong forum held at Southwest Tennessee Community College during which local stakeholders had the opportunity to review the summary and analysis of existing neighborhood conditions, future development possibilities, and proposed development goals and objectives prepared by the Choice Neighborhoods Consulting Team based upon the abovementioned data (with the exception of the Foote Homes Survey) and to generate an initial list of specific improvement projects.
- **Action research teams** – monthly meetings held throughout the neighborhood following the Community Assembly during which local residents and other stakeholders worked together in issue-specific teams, assisted by Choice Neighborhood Consultants and select resource people, to refine the list of most desired improvement projects and further develop the ideas.
- **Best practice research** – University students and faculty reviewed community transformation literature in architecture, landscape architecture, civil engineering, and city and regional planning to identify best practice case studies that could be used to inform further development and distillation of the neighborhood improvement projects identified at the Vance Avenue Community Assembly in March of 2012 and further elaborated during the series of monthly Community Meetings that took place from April - July of 2012.
- **District-level site planning** –During the months of August and September university planners worked together to create a district-level site plan that illustrates how this plan's various elements reinforce each other in order to transform the quality of life within the local community.

3.3 Local Residents and Stakeholders' Perceptions of Existing Conditions and Future Development Opportunities

This section of the plan presents a brief summary of local residents and stakeholders' perceptions of current conditions and future development possibilities for the Vance Avenue neighborhood.

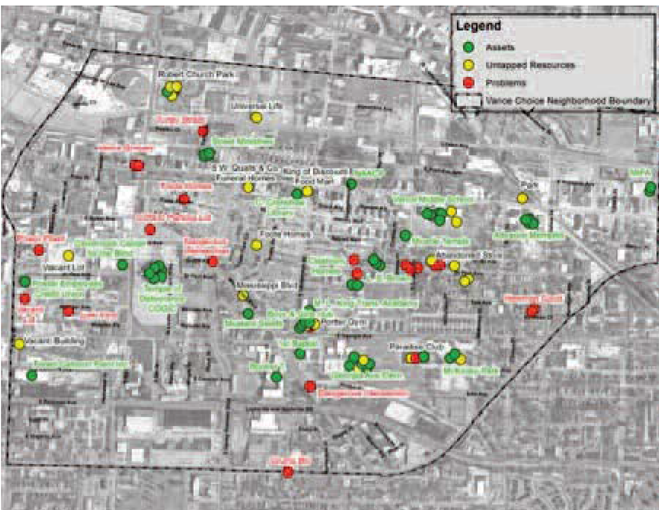
Visioning Session

Fifty local residents, business owners, institutional leaders, municipal officials and university students attending our initial community meeting in July and were asked to meet, in small groups, to imagine the neighborhood 30 years in the future and then share their individual visions for a "new and improved" Vance Avenue neighborhood with each other. The exercise produced 85 ideas, many emerging multiple times. The most frequently mentioned ideas could be grouped into the following categories: improved urban environment, enhanced playground and parks, expanded housing opportunities, re-established neighborhood retail services, expanded access to living-wage employment, high quality schools, strengthened public safety, new transportation alternatives, supports for healthy living, celebration of local history and culture, and promotion of community arts. The table presented in Appendix A provides a list of the most frequently cited visions.

Interactive Asset Mapping and Photo Documentation

Embracing an asset-based approach to neighborhood development, we involved residents and key stakeholders (from both inside and outside of the community) in a three-part interactive data collection strategy. The first, an interactive community asset mapping exercise, brought 90 neighborhood residents and stakeholders together to identify places within the neighborhood that they perceived as assets (strengths/green dots), weaknesses (challenges/red dots), and/or untapped resources (opportunities/yellow dots). Working in small groups, these participants gathered around a map covering a nearby table and placed different colored dots on the map and talked about the their reasoning for marking a particular location and the how it fit into the history and dynamics of the neighborhood. The map that follows presents a compilation of observations collected from these small maps.

Following this activity, 40 residents volunteered to take disposable cameras and shoot nine imagines of each of the following: what they most love about the Vance Avenue neighborhood, what they find most upsetting about the neighborhood, and what



they perceive to be unrecognized and/or underutilized area assets. While taking pictures, resident-photographers used a caption book to write brief descriptions of the picture (name of the building or focus of the picture), assign it a category – asset, weakness, or untapped resource – and explain why. Fifteen graduate students participating in the University of Memphis' Comprehensive Planning Studio also participate in this activity. Together, these two groups generated more than 600 photographs.

Finally, following these activities, 65 residents and stakeholders then came together to review and analyze the photographs, which had been grouped by caption and then divided among 8 tables. Eight-person resident-stakeholder groups, facilitated by the University of Memphis faculty-student research team, examined each image, placing them into one of the following three categories: Community Assets, Neighborhood Challenges, and Untapped Resources. Once the images were sorted, residents were asked to talk more about why they were in each category. Similar to the small group discussions that took place during the interactive mapping exercise, students recorded resident and stakeholder comments, stories, and insights. The summary below incorporates the information collected during both participatory research activities.

ASSETS

People - Residents and stakeholders identified the often quiet, but persistent community organizing and service delivery efforts of long-time residents and the "can-do" attitude of youth as critical resources for the Vance neighborhood. Among the specific examples they cited were:

- Betty Isom, a long-time staff member at the Emmanuel Center and president of her neighborhood association
- Ms. Woodley and Ms. Hall, leaders of the Foote Homes Resident Association,
- George Jones and Allen Stiles, both graduates of Booker T. Washington High School, who are long-time St. Patrick and community volunteers,
- Deacon Eugene Champion, Director of the Saint Patrick Community Outreach Inc.

Schools - Residents' and stakeholders' were proud that the Vance Avenue neighborhood is one of the few inner city communities that benefits from a full-range of local schools: Georgia Elementary, Vance Middle School, and Booker T. Washington High School, M.L. King Learning Academy, and Saint Patrick Jubilee School.

Faith-Based Organizations - The asset map and photographs captured a strong and diverse faith-based presence in the neighborhood. In particular, residents noted:

- Many churches are important to the historical fabric of the community;
- Serve the pastoral needs of a significant portion of the Vance Avenue residents;
- Offer non-denominational education, health, housing, and social services; and,
- Bring thousands of non-residents into the community each week.

Housing Stock - Photographs and the small group discussions identified the neighborhood's housing stock as a key asset. In particular, they pointed to:

- architecturally and historically significant 19th century homes;
- The high quality of craftsmanship and aesthetics of Foote Homes, particularly following the City's late-1990s refurbishing of the complex;
- The recent development of new residential options, including the single-family homes built by the Saint Patrick Housing Corporation, McKinley Park, University Place, and the future Cleaborn Point at Heritage Landing.

Social Services - Participants emphasized the commitment and diversity of human service organizations in the community, particularly those serving youth, families, and advancing civil rights. Among the institutions mentioned were:

- Youth: Shelby County Head Start, the Vance Youth Development Center, Porter-Leath Boys and Girls Club, JIFF, and the St. Patrick's Outreach Ministry;
- Adults and families: MIFA, Mid-South Food Bank, Memphis Health Center, Birthright, Memphis Public Library, Clovernook Center, and Mustard Seed Inc.;
- Institutions advancing Civil Rights, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and AFSME.

Facilities and Local Businesses - Participants in the asset mapping and photography activities identified community facilities and local businesses as two of neighborhood's most significant assets. In particular:

- The FedEX Forum, the Rock and Soul Museum, and Beale Street were noted as important anchors for outside investment in the area;
- The large number of long-time retail, industrial, and service firms located in the community, are examples of key local investment;
- They suggested that these facilities not only provide jobs, but brought visitors to the area who potentially represent an important source of income for local businesses.

Public Spaces, Play Grounds, Parks, and Community Gardens - The asset maps and pictures highlighted spaces where residents gather to socialize, exchange news, and watch their children. These spaces include:

- Sidewalks in front of popular local stores, eateries, and churches;
- The stoops, court yards, and basketball courts at Foote Homes;
- In and near several of the neighborhood's parks and playgrounds; and
- At the two community gardens: Lindenwood-MIFA Community Neighborhood Garden, and the Common Ground Garden.

Infrastructure - The Vance Avenue neighborhood is equipped with a wide range of well designed and built infrastructure elements, including: streets, curbs, sidewalks, water systems, waste and sanitary water systems, street lights, and traffic signals.

Murals and Landmarks - There are a significant number of historic sites, landmark properties, and murals within the neighborhood that stand as testament to the importance of the neighborhood and its residents to the history of Memphis.

- Among the landmark properties are: First Baptist Church on Beale, Universal Life Insurance Company, Booker T. Washington High School, and Claeborn Temple.
- Murals, painted by an older generation of community-based artists, celebrate the neighborhood's history of overcoming racial, class, and religious divides and suggest the importance of artistic expression to residents of the neighborhood.

CHALLENGES

Food Access - Food access is a serious challenge, as many local residents lack access to private transportation. They noted that the neighborhood has neither a full-service supermarket nor other local outlets for purchasing perishables like fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats, despite the buying potential of residents and community institutions.

Housing - While residents and stakeholders applauded recent efforts to expand residential opportunities in the neighborhood, many also pointed to a shortage of quality housing options as a challenge. In particular they identified:

- Area apartment complexes with poorly maintained exteriors and apartments;
- Limited affordable housing in the immediate area; and
- Limited options for people with disabilities needing handicapped accessible units;

Nuisance Businesses - While local businesses were recognized as important community assets, residents distinguished between those offering quality goods and services and others that sell second-rate goods at inflated prices that are not clearly marked. Additional characteristics of the latter of these businesses included:

- The absence of exterior signage or lighting, posted business hours, waste receptacles, and
- Poorly maintained building exteriors;
- Concerns about how exterior conditions contribute to residents' and visitors' perceptions of insecurity and disorder.

Deteriorated Infrastructure - While infrastructure, especially streets, sidewalks, storm drains, traffic lights, etc., was seen as an asset, small group discussions also indicated that specific elements of these systems are in need of maintenance, repair, or redesign. Specifically they identified:

- The streets and sidewalks that run through and border the former Cleaborn Homes site.
- Dangerous intersections along Mississippi Blvd.

Gang Activity - Threaded throughout participants' reflections on the challenges in the neighborhood, was the issue of violent street crime, much of which participants attributed to the sale and distribution of illegal drugs by local gangs. Participants frequently suggested that young men and women enter the dangerous world of illegal drug sales because they don't see any meaningful local employment or career opportunities.

V**acant Buildings, Unkempt Lots, and Illegal Dumping** - Maps, pictures, and stakeholders' discussions suggested one of the most frequently cited challenges facing the Vance Neighborhood were vacant buildings and unkempt lots, some of which have become sites of illegal dumping and vandalism.

UNTAPPED RESOURCES

Area Retail - Corner Groceries and Commercial Corridors - While small businesses were identified as an asset, residents and stakeholders felt that there was not only an opportunity to grow new businesses, but also the potential to work with existing business to expand their products and services available. They noted that:

- Numerous small footprint corner stores, currently selling alcohol, tobacco products, candies, and highly processed foods, could potentially be convinced to complement their current product lines with fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food options;
- Several of the east/west corridors running through the neighborhood have significant numbers of vacant commercial strips that are ripe for adaptive re-use.

Beale Street and downtown tourism - The pictures, maps, and small group discussions spoke about tourism on Beale Street and Downtown as an untapped economic and employment resource. In particular, they suggested:

- Building links between well-travelled tourist sites and local businesses;
- Bridging local history and culture with the Civil Rights Museum;
- Targeted job training and employment opportunities that provide living wage jobs for residents and support downtown tourist industry.

Stakeholder Interviews

Faculty and students at the University of Memphis conducted fifty-two interviews with a cross-section of neighborhood stakeholders, representing three groups that were identified by residents as community assets: leaders in the faith community (13 interviews with faith leaders and volunteers), local small businesses (18 interviews with business owners), and Vance Avenue Collaborative (VAC) participants (21 interviews). These groups were also chosen in an effort to expand local business and the faith community involvement in the participatory planning process, as well as to document the insights of stakeholders who have been active in neighborhood advocacy and planning for the last several years.

Interviews with the faith community represented 11 of the 17 faith communities in the neighborhood and cut across religious traditions and Christian denominations. The small number of businesses leaders interviewed represented diverse industries, including mechanical oriented businesses (machinery, long haul trucks, and automobiles), restaurants, entertainment and tourism, plumbing and fire prevention systems, electricians, construction and building companies, and dry cleaners. Interviews with members of VAC, included residents, local social service providers, community volunteers, and civic organizations.

Interviews with faith communities and small business focused on perceptions of current conditions in the neighborhood, interviewees' insights into the most pressing issues impacting the neighborhood, and how revitalization efforts can best support their respective organizations. VAC participants' interviews focused on their involvement in the Collaborative, their current assessment of the area, and what they would like to see come out of the community planning process. All interviewees were asked to share their ideas about com-

4 SWOT ANALYSIS

The following chart summarizes the major themes that emerged from the full set of citizen engagement activities we undertook which involved more than 800 individual residents, business owners, institutional representatives, and elected and appointed officials. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Chart commonly used to present "thick" descriptions of complex systems was first developed by researchers at Stanford Research International and popularized by students and faculty from the Harvard Business School.

Urban planners have been using this format to present a nuanced profile of local residents' and stakeholders perception of current and potential future conditions for nearly forty years. The chart which features four separate quadrants, incorporates in its top half, a left-side quadrant summarizing current strengths and/or community assets and a right-side quadrant presenting current weaknesses or problems confronting the community. The lower half of the chart presents potential opportunities and threats confronting the community – if local residents and officials do nothing to address ongoing economic and social trends.

CURRENT STRENGTHS

- **Presence of strong local Community and Social Service Organizations**
- **Resilient Residents/People**
- **Strong relationships within the community connecting individuals and organizations**
- **A rich emancipatory neighborhood history and culture**
- **Strategic physical location in terms of both the City and Region**
- **Numerous prophetic minded and socially engaged Churches**
- **Strong supply of architecturally noteworthy structures**

CURRENT WEAKNESSES

- **Persistent Crime**
- **Lack of neighborhood-oriented businesses – esp. grocery store**
- **Absence of job opportunities**
- **Drug use and addiction**
- **Long-term disinvestment in neighborhood; resident apathy**
- **Un-kept and overgrown yards and prevalent trash**
- **Poverty**
- **Vacant and/or dilapidated buildings**
- **Displacement/relocation of residents**
- **Low educational and literacy levels**
- **Dearth of city investment in local infrastructure and its up-keep**

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- **Entrepreneurship that builds upon current skills/culture of the current residents**
- **Creation of job opportunities with new (re)investment in the area**
- **New opportunities for investment**
- **Tapping into the history of the neighborhood**
- **More collaboration between organizations and small businesses**
- **Strategically connecting the neighborhood to downtown**
- **Preservation, renovation and adaptive re-use of old buildings**
- **Comprehensive approach to redevelopment**
- **More affordable housing options**

THREATS

- **Relocation of residents and disruption of support systems and networks**
- **Continued blight, loss of infrastructure, increased vacancies**
- **Poor treatment/negative perception of residents and neighborhood by the City and the Memphis Police Department**
- **Gentrification**
- **Escalating crime**
- **Lack of affordable housing**
- **Conflict between goals of residents and goals/approach of developers**
- **Uncertainty as to whether future changes will result in real community improvement or further decline**

5.2 The Methodological Foundation

The plan was prepared using an empowerment approach to community development developed by Reardon, Andrejasich, and Orland of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Campaign's East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP) that integrates the core theories, methods and practices of participatory action research (PAR) articulated by William F. Whyte, Davydd Greenwood, and Fals Borda, direct action organizing (DAO) as described by Ernesto Cortez Jr., Michael Gecan, and Edward Chambers, and popular education (PE) as practiced by Paulo Friere, Danilo Dolci, and Myles Horton into a fully integrated approach to community capacity-building. This model of community-based planning and development is designed to increase the influence low-income and working-class individuals and families, and the community-based institutions they support over the public and private investment and management decisions that play a critical role in determining the quality of urban life.

5.3 Principles Used to Shape the Plan's Implementation Strategy

Local stakeholders participating in the Vance Avenue Renaissance Planning Process identified more than seventy-five specific policies, programs, and projects to advance the overall development goals and objectives that follow. With the assistance of issue-specific resource persons and the guidance of "best practices" research as well as recommendations made by thirteen international scholars participating in the Quality of Life Conference co-sponsored by the Vance Avenue Choice Neighborhood Initiative and the University of Memphis Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning local stakeholders identified thirty-six neighborhood improvement projects which they believed could make a significant impact in transforming conditions within the historic Vance Avenue neighborhood.

Using the following prioritization criteria, local stakeholders selected six signature projects to receive maximum attention during the implementation period, believing that they will have a transformative impact on the quality of life offered current and future residents. These projects are described in some detail in the second half of this plan while the remainder of the neighborhood improvement initiatives are presented, in a more abbreviated form, in Appendix III. The phasing of these projects with the signature efforts being presented as "immediate priorities" while the remainder of the improvement efforts are listed as short, intermediate, and long-term priorities reflect Mintzberg's "Ready, Fire, Aim" Theory of Organizational and Community Change pioneered by the Rensellear Institute. In theory and practice such a prioritization seeks to overcome inertia and skepticism by encouraging immediate action on critical issues. Using the momentum created by early advances to broaden the internal and external base of support for constructive change needed to take on more ambitious economic and community development challenges.

5.4 The Plan's Prioritization Matrix/Decision-Making Tool

Each of the resident-generated and community-supported improvement projects that emerged from our community process was evaluated according the following criteria. The seven projects identified as signature efforts within this plan were determined to embody at least five of the seven criteria listed below.

Neighborhood Development Initiatives	Meets a Critical Community Need	Potential for Significant Impact	Will Generate Local Support	Capable of Leveraging Outside Resources	Improves Local Business Climate	Local Jobs/ Business Generator	Builds Local Capacity
Public Housing Preservation	x	x	X	x		x	x
Cooperative Grocery Store	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Community-Based Crime Prevention	x	x	X	x	x		x
Little Betty Bayou Greenway (Day lighting)	x	x	X	x	x	x	
Weavers' Walk Freedom Trail	x	x	X		x	x	x
Expanding Transportation Alternatives	x	x		x	x	x	
Community School Center	x	x	X	x		x	x

5.5 Resident-Generated Vision for A More Vibrant, Sustainable, and Just Vance Avenue Neighborhood: Inspired by a Dream!

During the first eight months of the planning process local residents, business owners, institutional representatives worked together to share their vision of a stronger healthier and more sustainable community. The following vision statement, inspired by Dr. King's ideal of the "Beloved Community" emerged as a consensus expression of the Vance Avenue neighborhood's collective hopes and aspiration for the community. It reflects the kind of community and place that local stakeholders would like to work with their municipal, county, state, and federal officials to create.Dr. King's ideal of the "Beloved Community" emerged as a consensus expression of the Vance Avenue neighborhood's collective hopes and aspiration for the community. It reflects the kind of community and place that local stakeholders would like to work with their municipal, county, state, and federal officials to create.

Transform the historic Vance Avenue neighborhood into the nation's leading example of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideal of the Beloved Community – a place where local residents and leaders are working together to overcome the legacy of economic and social justice by providing individuals, of all ages and backgrounds, quality educational opportunities, access to critical health and wellness resources, opportunities for living wage employment and entrepreneurship, convenient retail services and a range of attractive housing choices, in a sage, nurturing, and uplifting urban environment.

During a Neighborhood-Wide Assembly organized to mobilize a broad cross-section of the Vance Avenue community to develop a planning framework to achieve this vision, local residents identified the following community development goals and objectives to guide their ongoing planning, development and design activities for the next two decades.

Goal 1: Preserve and expand quality-housing options for residents.

1.1. Preserve and enhance the neighborhood's supply of permanently affordable housing by saving Foote Homes.
1.2. Seek opportunities to redevelop the neighborhood's significant stock of historic homes for possible use as assisted living apartments for seniors and their caregivers.
1.3. Work with new firms being recruited to the area to develop employer assisted, workforce housing within the neighborhood.
1.4. Pursue every opportunity to maximize the local job training and employment positions connected to the proposed housing rehabilitation, new construction and ongoing maintenance.
1.5. Maximize the care of local residents in the process of transformation (minimize relocation, maximize information about housing options, and on-site assistance for making sure residents qualify for the preferred options and in general more on-site services than other redevelopments in other areas of the city.
1.6. Seek opportunities to connect existing and new housing to an improved urban landscape that features public recreational spaces with regular programmed and staffed activities.
1.7. Address local residents' needs (affordability, ADA requirements, houses for extended families, minimization of upper floor living , fire protection measures, guarantees against the loss of the property-value for first time home owners).
1.8. Emphasize quality affordable rentals with safety-net measures rather than homeownership opportunities.
1.9. Incorporate green building and infrastructure design to the maximum extent possible.

Goal 2: Promote Local Job Generation and Business Development

2.1 Work with area producers, faith-based organizations, job-training agencies and public and private lenders to establish a cooperatively owned and managed supermarket/grocery store.
2.2 Establish a linkage policy requiring those companies receiving significant subsidies within the Downtown and South Main Business Improvement District to enter into community benefit agreements committing themselves to an enforceable number of jobs for Vance/Foote Homes residents.
2.3 Pursue the establishment of a "buy local" program by the City and County to support the growth of local businesses and payrolls.
2.4 Collaborate with firms and institutions within the Medical District, Southwest Tennessee Technical College and the Consolidated School District to develop specialized curricular, internship, externship, and scholarship programs to prepare Vance Avenue residents for living wages within the ever growing health and hospital sector.
2.5 Engage Advance Memphis, The Evolutionary Institute and the Englis Cooperatives

Association in an effort to explore the job generation possibilities of industrial cooperatives inspired, in part, on the experience of Mondragon in the Basque Region of Spain.

Goal 3: Enhance public safety by establishing an ambitious neighborhood-level, community-policing program

3.1 Shift the focus of our public safety efforts to supporting the crime prevention efforts of our existing neighborhoods rather than the creation of new "safer" ones.

3.2 Initiate a comprehensive community policing effort to compliment our City's Blue Crush enforcement effort.

3.3 Create new opportunities for neighborhood youth to pursue their dreams as an alternative to the challenges of the streets.

3.4 Encourage closer collaboration between community leaders and Memphis Police Department officials on crime prevention efforts

Goal 4: Promote resident health and wellness through improved educational, service delivery, physical fitness, and urban design programs.

4.1 Address the lack of accessible primary care physicians and health services that require local families to use the Emergency Room of The Med as their sole source of medical care.

4.2 Enhance access to fresh, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and competitively priced foods.

4.3 Challenge area medical, dental, social work, and public health schools to work together to establish a cooperatively funded and managed health clinic in the proposed community school center facility at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Learning Academy.

4.4 Encourage more active lifestyles among area residents, including youth and seniors, by restoring the neighborhoods' existing playgrounds and parks and reclaiming and designing the former Little Betty Bayou as an attractively re-designed greenway.

Goal 5: Celebrate the rich Civil and Human Rights History of the community.

5.1 Mobilize area high school and college students to work together to increase the number of Vance Avenue residents and stakeholders who have shared their stories of community building and social justice advocacy through the Crossroads to Freedom Oral History Project.

5.2 Work with local residents and urban historians to undertake the research needed to develop the Weavers' Walk Freedom Trail in the Vance Avenue neighborhood.

5.3 Engage local students and artists to work together to produce high quality public art installations highlighting the Civil and Human Rights History of the community.

5.4 Encourage local elementary, middle, and high schools to incorporate a local social history component into their history and art courses that produce tangible products that can be displayed and, in some cases, sold at the Annual Foote Homes Community Fair.

5.5 Initiate a fundraising effort to support the establishment, on a joint basis with the Memphis College of Art and Southwest Tennessee Community College, of a week-long summer arts camp for children and adults to encourage residents to develop their creative capacities.

5.6 Recruit local African dance and drumming organizations to establish an after-school program involving large numbers of Vance youth, in age appropriate, study, practice, and performance.

Goal 6: Strengthen residents' ability to access the economic, cultural, and civic resources through improved public transit services and new transportation alternatives.

6.1 Improve connectivity with the rest of the City through the improvement of public transit.

6.2 Create alternative transportation options within the neighborhood (walking and biking trails).

6.3 Increase public and shared transportation opportunities as a way to improve job opportunities, especially through enhanced connectivity with business.

Goal 7: Advance public education and lifelong learning through the establishment of a community school center.

7.1 Address the low educational attainment levels of children, their parents and caregivers with comprehensive literacy and lifelong learning programs encompassing early childhood, K-12, post-secondary, and adult programs. as well as out-of-school time youth development programs and parenting support.

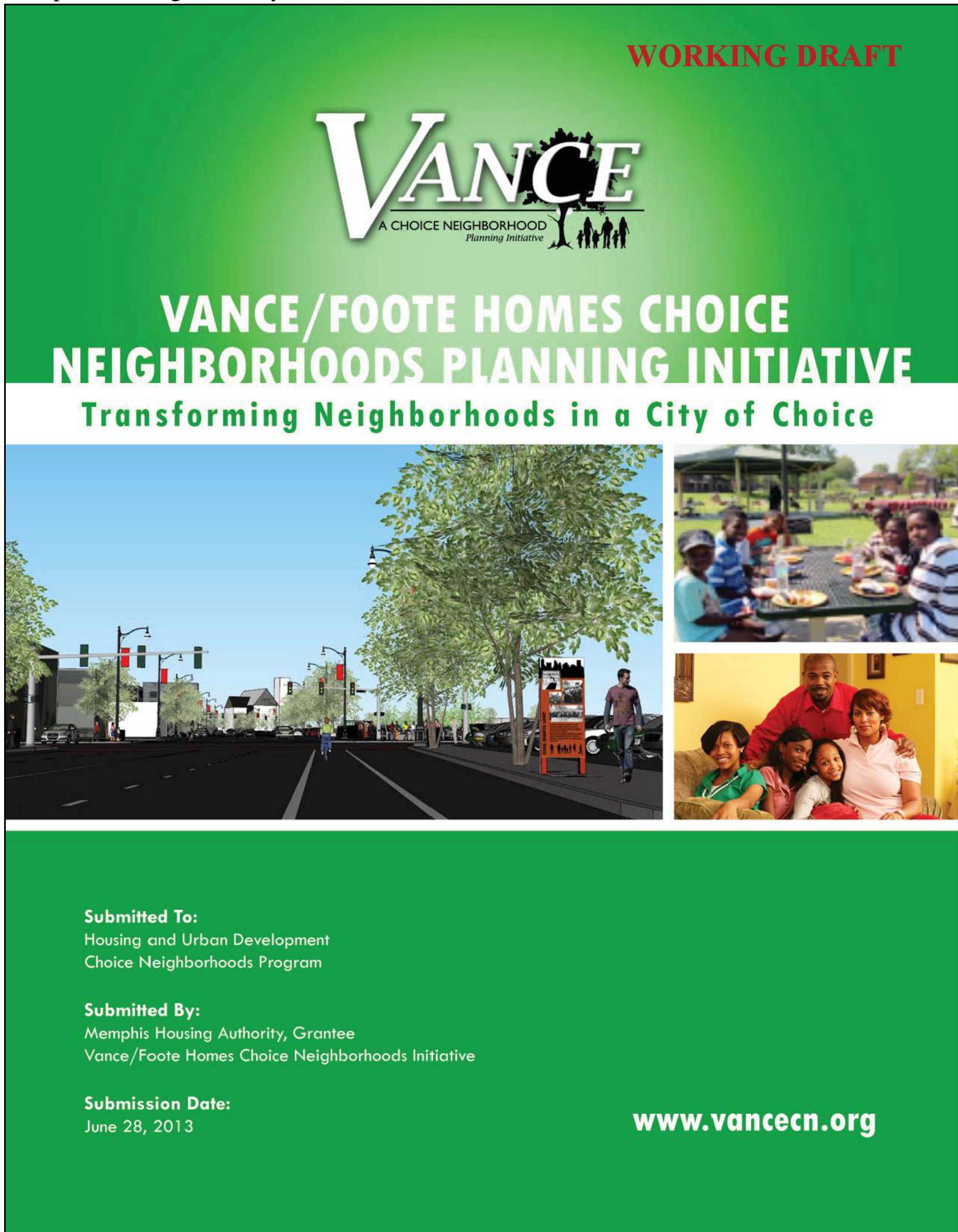
7.2 Mobilize members of local religious congregations and college students with an interest in public education to join Streets Ministries in-class and after-school tutorial and mentorship programs to encourage young people to finish high school and pursue appropriate additional educational opportunities.

8.2 APPENDIX A: Complete List of Economic and Community Development Projects Vance Avenue Renaissance Plan

Plan Elements	Short-Term 4 - 6 years	Long-Term 7 – 10 years
Preserve and expand quality affordable housing	***Assisted living cottages*** – adaptive use of larger Victorians as scattered site assisted living units. ***Senior home repair***- use contribution from publicly assisted Downtown firms to fund an expanded senior home repair program (more and larger grants.)	***Employer assisted housing***- Work with neighborhood, Downtown and Medical District firms and the city to encourage new in-fill housing in the Vance Avenue community. ***Student housing***- Collaborate with area colleges and universities to develop new housing for students, staff, and faculty in the community.
Promote local job generation and business development	***Restore MHA maintenance jobs***- Rehire public employees who formerly maintained Foote Homes. ***Section III jobs***- Improve the effort to hire current Foote Homes and Vance Avenue residents for Choice Neighborhood-funded construction under the federal Section III Program. ***Linkage/Community Benefit Agreement jobs***- Establish a city policy requiring firms receiving public support in the form of grants, zoning, and infrastructure assistance within the Downtown or South Main BIDs to negotiate local employment and minority contracting agreements featuring third party enforcement.	***Medical District employment pipeline***- Collaborate with the firms and institutions in the Medical District, area higher educations, Consolidated School District, and area non-profits to develop curriculum, internship, externship and other programs to maximize living wage employment for Vance Avenue residents. ***Vance industrial cooperative initiative***- Work with the leadership of Advance Memphis, Evolution Institute, Industrial Cooperative Association, and the Cooperative Bank to establish a worker-owned industrial cooperative to generate living wage jobs especially for youth, ex-offender, and other abled workers.
Enhance public safety	***Community crime watch***- Cooperate with area law enforcement agencies and participants in the Vance Avenue Collaborative to establish a crime watch and reporting program. ***Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)***- Incorporate defensible space and CPTED design principles into proposed rehabilitation and new construction projects	***Expanded alcohol/drug treatment***- Establish a new residential treatment program focused on the needs of area teens based upon a Therapeutic Community Model. ***Establish a community-based restorative justice program***- Create a community-managed restorative justice program based in non-violence principles as an alternative to incarceration promoting healing solutions that facilitate individual and community recovery.
Enhance health and wellness	***12-Step Programs***- Work with local substance abuse professionals, area health providers and the AA Intergroup Office to establish local AA, NA, Al-Anon, Alateen Meetings within the Vance Avenue neighborhood. ***Lets' Move***- Organize local public, charter and private schools, the Grizzlies, Streets Ministry, and other area non-profits to involve at least 50% of area youth in after-school programs that provides at a minimum the recommended weekly exercise suggested by this program.	***Cooperative health center***- Work with the Shelby County and Tennessee Departments of Health and area medical, dental, public health and social work schools to establish a cooperatively funded and staffed public health clinic providing primary care services to low-income Memphians. ***Residential treatment program***- Create a community- based substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment program in collaboration with area medical schools and professional associations, the U of M Social Work Program, and leaders of the local 12-Step community.

Celebrate local history and culture	***African dance and drumming program for youth-*** Initiate with the assistance of local performing arts programs a large-scale African dance and drumming program as an after-school program. ***Public murals project-*** Work with local art institutions to recruit area artists to work with youth and adult groups to design and install installations celebrating Vance's rich Civil and Human Rights history. ***Clayborn Temple Social History Museum-*** Investigate the feasibility of restoring Clayborn Temple as a shared used facility housing a social/environmental justice charter school and a social history museum highlighting the role that local Black businesses, fraternities/ sororities, churches and other institutions have played in advancing the Civil and Human Rights agenda of people of color.	***Ida (Tarbell) arts and communications initiative-*** Work with the writing at the U of M, the Benjamin Hooks Institute, and the National Civil Right Museum to develop age-appropriate curriculum materials on social justice that can be used to generate student poetry, short-story, plays, script, and songs as well as various visual arts projects that can be brought together for exhibition, presentation, and sale as part of the April in Africa Festival. ***National Park-*** Work with local historical societies and Civil Rights activities, area colleges and universities, Memphis Heritage, Shelby County and State of Tennessee Historical Societies and Museums, National Park Service, and the U.S. Department of the Interior to establish Downtown, Vance Avenue, and South Memphis neighborhoods as the nation's newest National Park celebrating the contribution that African Americans have made to advancing the cause of Civil Rights, community-problem-solving, and nation-building, similar to the National Parks now operating in Lawrence and Lowell, MA and Paterson, NJ.
Improve public transit and expand transportation alternatives	***Create Little Betty Bayou Greenway-*** Construct a linear walking and biking path along the excavated (Day lighted) Little Betty Bayou connecting South Memphis, Vance, and the Downtown. ***Restore MATA bus service cuts-*** Work with the MATA Board to restore service cuts in the Vance Avenue neighborhood.	***Vance Avenue transportation loop-*** Create a strong walking, biking. driving, and bus riding connection between Vance and the proposed multi-modal transportation hub at the Memphis AMTRAK Station. **Vance Avenue car and van sharing program-** The organization on a non-profit agency to purchase quality used vehicles that can be shared by local residents to commute to school, training or work.
Advance public education and lifelong learning	***Memphis Summer Literacy Corps-*** Mobilize local college and university students to participate in a three-year summer literacy program to increase the percentage of high school graduates in the Vance Avenue community from 60% to 75%. ***Youth Empowerment Conference-*** Organize an annual youth summit to identify issues requiring new policy approaches and solutions. ***Middle College Program-*** Investigate the feasibility of creating a jointly sponsored Middle College program offering upper level Booker T. Washington Jr. High School and Martin Luther King Academy students the opportunity to earn college credits at the University of Memphis.	***Memphis environmental sustainability education initiative-*** Convene the city's public and private secondary school leaders, trade school administrators, and college and university administrators to explore the creation of a coordinated curriculum designed to prepare the next generation of youth and adult learners for key leadership positions in the field of green design, building, and management. Memphis preservation arts academy- Take steps to establish a historic preservation trades school in cooperation with Memphis Heritage and the U of M to prepare students to stabilize and restore historic structures and statuary in the community and across the country. ***Vance Avenue re-entry resource collaborative-*** A cooperative effort by local social service organizations, faith-based groups, and ex-offender organizations to insure ex-offenders who are returning to the community and their families with east access to the services they need. This network will also work together to identify and remedy missing links in the ex-offender service delivery program.

Appendix E: Sample pages from Vance/Foote Homes Choice Neighborhoods Planning Initiative, Memphis Housing Authority



Executive Summary

In March 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced that Memphis had been chosen among the first seventeen Choice Neighborhood Initiative grantees. The award would fund planning efforts to transform the respective communities nationwide. For nearly two years, the Memphis Housing Authority, the City of Memphis, consultants, residents of Foote Homes and the surrounding Vance community, and many public, private, philanthropic, and institutional stakeholders have engaged in a planning process to develop a shared vision for the Vance Foote Homes Choice Neighborhood. Since July of 2011, these partners have participated in one-on-one meetings, interviews, focus groups, design charrettes, community cafes, and other resident and community meetings to document and discuss conditions existing within the community; as well as the future development possibilities.

An overarching management committee was formed during the application process with the purpose of guiding the Choice Neighborhoods Planning effort and coordinating the development and future implementation of the Transformation Plan; incorporating the people, housing, and neighborhood revitalization strategies. Since the CNI award, the committee, comprised of residents, public representatives, and neighborhood stakeholders have met regularly toward this goal.

Recognizing that it is critical to insure meaningful resident and community participation, a resident and community advisory committee has also been organized. The committee will validate the areas of greatest focus, serve as committee chairs for specific focus areas, and engage in leadership development activities that will build on the existing leadership infrastructure within the Foote Homes and Vance community.

For the past several years, the private and public sectors in the city of Memphis, led by Mayor AC Wharton, have been systematically developing and implementing a set of policy and programming activities to make Memphis a City of Choice with a clearly drawn Blueprint for Prosperity for all citizens. This movement towards establishing Memphis as a City of Choice involves a comprehensive public housing redevelopment strategy, coupled with a focused downtown development plan accented by an innovative arts, education, and heritage expansion plan. Memphis has also been working toward the full development of a multi-modal transportation system with a world class airport at the hub. The centerpiece of the Blueprint is the Human Capital development program, which seeks to enhance opportunities to succeed for all Memphians.

Local leaders from the public, private and non-profit sectors have worked together to form partnerships to take full advantage of opportunities to attract federal funding. As a result of several unique and noteworthy public/private partnerships, the City of Memphis and the State of Tennessee have had unusual success in attracting highly competitive grants for a variety of initiatives.

For this reason and in a show of support and commitment to partnership, the Vance/Foote Homes Choice Neighborhood Initiative was selected by the Governor's Office to be a pilot project. It is hoped that Memphis' Prosperity Agenda, will transform the culture of poverty in this community by tearing down public housing and what it signifies as well as tearing down the mutual blame between public housing residents and others in the community.

The presumption is that a Prosperity Agenda is achieved by transitioning people out of poverty and into stable housing environments, where they can be connected to the supportive services that they need. The Vance Foote Homes Choice Neighborhood is our first opportunity to accomplish eliminating poverty in the City of Memphis.

Through strong partnerships, MHA has revitalized all but one remaining severely distressed public housing development. This effort has strengthened neighborhoods throughout the City, deconcentrated poverty, and provided opportunities to thousands of residents. The CNI team contends that it is time to bring these same opportunities to the Vance Community; and specially to residents living in Foote Homes.

The Vance/Foote Homes Choice Neighborhoods Initiative will enable the partners to test and refine several guiding principles aimed at:

- capitalizing on limited resources by first discovering and testing and then scaling up best practices in neighborhood and housing revitalization, economic development and human capital development;
- designing metrics to monitor increases in overall community economic growth in the Vance Foote Homes Choice Neighborhood footprint;
- capturing, monetizing and reinvesting the decreases in state and local public funding needed for social and economic services support in the Vance Foote Homes Choice Neighborhood geographic boundaries;
- fully engaging and incorporating the best ideas of representatives from a variety of community sectors including community leaders, faith-based organizations, health and educational institutions, business, non-profit organizations.

aligning major stakeholders of the public and private sectors in the City of Memphis to make the Revitalization of the Vance Foote Homes Choice Neighborhood much more than the sum of its parts

Introduction

1.1 | The Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative

In March of 2011, residents of Foote Homes and the Vance Community, business owners, institutional leaders, and appointed and elected officials were pleased to learn that the Memphis Housing Authority's (MHA) proposal to secure a Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was successful. Memphis became one of only seventeen cities out of nearly 120 that had applied for these new Federal funds for community revitalization.

The goal of the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant Program is to transform distressed neighborhoods and public and assisted housing developments into viable and sustainable mixed-income neighborhoods by linking housing improvements with appropriate services, excellent schools, public assets, transportation, and access to jobs. A strong emphasis is placed on local community planning for access to high-quality educational opportunities, including early childhood education. Choice Neighborhood Planning Grants build upon the successes of public housing transformation efforts undertaken under HOPE VI to provide support for the preservation of the neighborhood housing stock, where feasible, and rehabilitation public and HUD-assisted housing. In addition to public housing authorities, the initiative involves local governments, non-profits, and for-profit developers in undertaking comprehensive local planning with residents and community stakeholders.

In Memphis, the Vance community is in the process of developing a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy (Transformation Plan) meant to become the guiding document for the redevelopment of the public and/or assisted housing units and the transformation of the surrounding neighborhood in order to significantly improve quality of life for local families.

1.2 | CN Organizational structure and planning methodology

At the center of successful Choice Neighborhood Grants are actively engaged residents and community stakeholders. To that end, the structure of the Vance Foote Homes Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant as shown above includes:

- **Grantee/Lead Grant Planner** – Memphis Housing Authority is the CN Grantee. The City of Memphis, Division of Housing and Community Development (HCD) serves as Lead Planner and assists MHA with grant administration. MHA and HCD work with the team of consultants to guide the creation of the Transformation Plan.

- **Sub-committees, led by consultants (accountable facilitators)** that focus on different set of core goals:

  ⇒ **The People team**, led by Consilience Group, has focused on how to support positive outcomes for families who live in the target development and the surrounding neighborhood, particularly outcomes related to residents' health, safety, employment, mobility, and education.

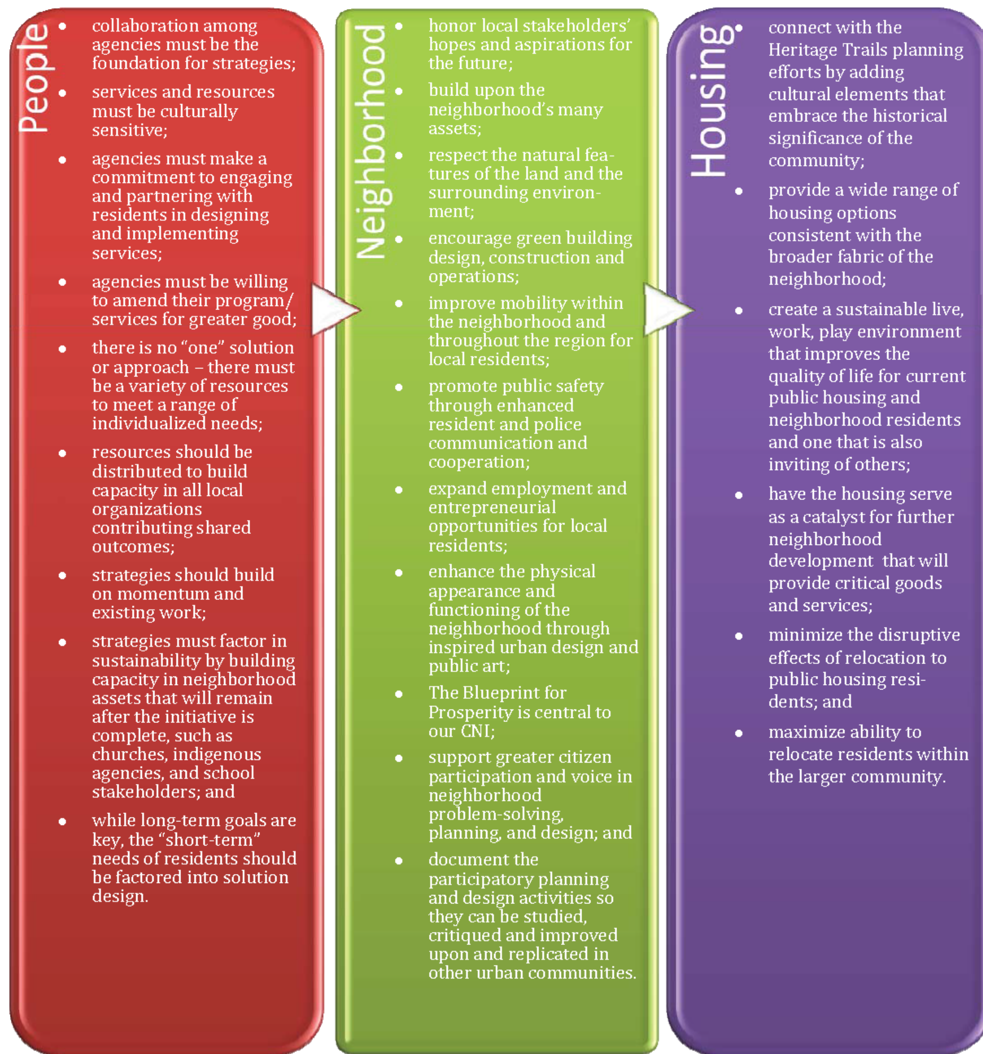
  ⇒ **The Neighborhood team**, led by MHA and HCD, has focused on how to transform the "declining" Vance Neighborhood into a viable, mixed-income neighborhood with access to well-functioning programs, high quality public schools and education programs, effective early learning programs and services, public assets, public transportation, improved access to jobs, and community engagement.

  ⇒ **The Housing team**, led by a partnership between Pennrose Properties and Community Capital, has focused on how to transform distressed public and assisted housing into energy efficient, mixed-income housing that is physically and financially viable over the long-term.

Note: Organizational Charts for each subcommittee can be found in the Appendix.

1.3 | Guiding Principles and Values

At the beginning of the CN planning process those participating in sub-committees reach the following terms of agreement:



1.4 | Sub-committees' planning methodology

The "Neighborhood Team", working with students and faculty from several local higher education institutions, case managers, and MHA/HCD staff have completed several research activities to gain a deeper understanding of current conditions and local stakeholders' hopes and aspirations for their future within the Vance Foote Homes neighborhood. Among the research activities local residents have worked with their academic partners to complete are:

- Parcel-by-parcel land use: building conditions, and site condition surveys were completed offering a detailed record of the physical condition of more than 1,400 neighborhood building lots and structures;
- Institutional interviews: More that fifty one-on-one interviews were held with local institutional leaders to elicit their views of current conditions and preferred future development alternatives;
- Community visioning exercise: Forty-five local residents formulated a detailed picture of an improved Vance Avenue neighborhood that they are prepared to work together with city, county, state, and federal officials as well as other external allies to create;
- Best practices research: Specific improvement projects surfaced that have been successfully undertaken by other economically-challenged neighborhoods to address local employment, public safety, school performance, food access, and affordable housing issues;
- Resident Interviews: More than 180 resident interviews conducted in 2009 were re-analyzed to verify the major research findings and recommendations emerging from the above mentioned data collection and analysis activities; additionally, more that fifty face-to-face meetings were held in 2012 to gather direct information about specific Foote Homes resident concerns and challenges faced during relocation;
- Archival research: A review of 14 historic studies and plans documenting existing neighborhood conditions and possible improvement strategies was done;
- Population and housing trends -An examination of recent demographic, economic, and housing patterns shaping the neighborhood;
- Community asset mapping: Nearly eighty significant landscapes, historic sites, educational and cultural institutions, local businesses, and community-based organizations that represent important forms of social capital were identified;
- Neighborhood conditions Inventory: Fifty local residents and university students took more than 1,200 digital photographs documenting the neighborhood's most important strengths, challenges, and underutilized resources;

The "People Team", co-chaired by four agency leaders and two neighborhood residents. Summary of the research activities.

- Engaged dozens of local residents and other stakeholders as well as over 100 representatives from 30 local and community agencies specializing in education, early childhood development, youth development, healthcare and social services, workforce development and higher education.

- In-depth interviews were conducted with 19 agency executives to explore needs, assets and opportunities to better serve the Vance Avenue Neighborhood, and agencies completed comprehensive written inventories of 78 individual programs.

- Local school leaders were engaged through an in-depth brainstorming session, and local high school students were trained to serve as advisors to the "people" work groups.

- Two (2) "community cafés" were conducted with neighborhood residents and parents to explore root causes and possible solutions to improve public safety and better support parents to support their children's academic achievements

- 60 stakeholders participated in five workgroups focused on specific "people domains".
  a) early childhood development/school readiness; b) youth development and academic achievement;
  c) adult education, economic self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship; d) health and wellness, and e) public safety.

- The full "People Team" developed potential strategies that are reflected in later in this document.

The "Housing Subcommittee", is a team composed of the developer entity, architects and engineers, city representatives, local residents and other stakeholders concerned about the future course of the targeted neighborhood. Guided by the ideas listed above, the Housing team has:

- Set out on a two (2) year development plan of how we, working in unison, might be able to change the current perception of the neighborhood, restore its rich history, and connect it to the greater Midtown and Downtown areas of Memphis.

- Hosted several design charrettes at sites within the community to imagine, create, and better inform how the future Vance Neighborhood should look.

- To address housing specifically we commissioned the Vance Avenue – Community Vision Survey on October 25, 2011, and had an online version of the survey run throughout 2012. This afforded residents – both public housing and neighborhood – the opportunity to provide their input on

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