

Research Topic: Gentrification

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Gentrification in East Liberty

Introduction

East Liberty is a wonderful place with housing and stores, but over time it has changed due to gentrification. We seek to understand how gentrification has changed East Liberty over time. Specifically, we are studying how gentrification affects the low-income residents of East Liberty. We also want to know if East Liberty residents think gentrification is an urgent problem that needs to be fixed.

Gentrification happens in urban areas over the country. It mostly affects low-income and African-American residents. Gentrification is important to investigate because by learning more about it, we can prevent more residents from being displaced and small businesses from being closed. Learning more about the issue is also important to help inform possible solutions.

Literature Review

We reviewed the literature to better understand what current research exists about gentrification and its impact on low-income residents. Research shows that 59,415 people were evicted from 1999-2001 because of gentrification (Chum, 2014). Back in 1950 when gentrification started, it affected black people the most since they were the ones who were displaced (Zuk et al, 2015). When they left, they could not afford the housing that replaced where they used to live, so new people with higher incomes moved in. The literature shows that the Target on Penn Ave used to be a 519 unit apartment complex called the East Mall, but when the Target was built in 2009, everyone living in the East Mall was forced to leave (Davis, 2018). According to (DiGregori, 2020, who did a study on the effects of gentrification on Pittsburgh neighborhoods, found that gentrified neighborhoods felt less connected to the physical location of their community, but they felt more connected socially. We are contributing to this research by asking residents and non-residents of East Liberty about their attitudes about and experiences with gentrification to see how East Liberty as a whole has changed as a result of gentrification.

Methods

Researchers conducted a survey on gentrification. Researchers created this survey using questions developed during an in class assignment. The survey consisted of 22 questions. The

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first set dealt with demographics. The second set included community needs. The next set explored study-specific questions. Respondents were asked the following:

- What do you like about your community?
- On a scale of 1-5, gentrification is a problem in East Liberty?
- Have you noticed any new changes since you have been in East Liberty?

We chose these questions because they allow the respondent to give their honest opinion on gentrification.

Results

Our study sought to explore the issue of gentrification. Results reveal that mostly African American/Black residents of East Liberty have been making less income as expected. The following section provides further insight into how the Black/African American community is affected by gentrification.

Respondent Profile

Survey respondents provided the community's thoughts and feelings about gentrification in East Liberty. Our total survey population included 40 respondents. Of those surveyed, our typical survey respondent fits a unique profile of Black/African American females.

Community Needs Assessment

Respondents provided important feedback on their community. They noted that 59% of our participants agreed that they feel safe in their neighborhood during the day. But, when they answered how they felt in their neighborhood at night, 37.5% answered that they didn't feel safe. Not only that but 32.5% of our respondents answered that the police safety in their neighborhoods was outstandingly great.

Study Specific Findings

Results from our survey questions suggest the following: most people agreed that gentrification is harmful to everyone and are eager to find a solution to stop the problem. Residents believe that the wealthier people are trying to kick out the middle class citizens and move in. This can result in residents being displaced and having nowhere to go. There are a lot of abandoned buildings and city workers are not repairing them up to the proper standards to become a place they can go when they are being forcibly displaced.

Overall the results from our survey reveals that the newer East Liberty residents had no idea how bad of a problem gentrification was, but it mostly affects the middle class and African

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Americans. Within our study, we noticed that most residents are affected by gentrification, while some are not. The majority of residents and community members agreed that their own rent had significantly increased over their time that they spent in East Liberty.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we studied gentrification and how it affects middle class residents and moved them out of their homes. Throughout our experience we noticed that many people didn't even know that gentrification is a problem. Newer East Liberty residents were unaware and unfazed by gentrification in Pittsburgh, particularly in East Liberty as it didn't have a negative effect on their lives. We noticed the more we walked around East Liberty and talked to the residents that there are many more houses and apartments than there used to be. When we talked to some residents, they informed us that rent was over \$1,000, and most residents were African American. We hope this can make a difference by pointing out the issues facing the residents in East Liberty.