The Carver Terrace Community Building Project

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Community Background

- Carver Terrace housing community, Northeast Washington D.C.
- Average household income: $24,763
- Median income: $27,030
- Average Monthly Rent: $787
- 53% of households receive rent subsidy
- Average post-subsidy rent: $195
The Renovations

Telesis Corporation purchased Carver Terrace in 2002, completed $33 million renovation.

- 312 residences
- The Patsy Hartsfield Community Center
- New landscaping
Demographics

- 725 residents
- 292 households
- Average age of 28
- Largest sector of population (19.3%) is 35-49
- Average family size of 2.5.
- 45% are single parent households
The Homeownership Project

- Corporate Partner: The Telesis Corporation
  - Purchased residences to sell back to residents below market rate
  - Apartments designed and renovated to attract mixed-income
  - Attractive Features of Neighborhood
    - National Arboretum
    - Langston Golf Course
    - Proximity of Capitol and Union Station
    - Easy access to public transportation
    - Grocery stores, other amenities
    - Reduction in crime of the neighborhood over the past few years
Background

The Georgetown University Research Team, led by Professor Sam Marullo was subcontracted by Telesis to research:

- Residents’ likes and dislikes about the community
- Residents’ interest in owning their property
- Residents’ interest in community development
- Residents’ confidence in the homeownership project
Research Methods

- Focus Groups

- Four groups of residents
  - Selected residents
  - Protected Residents
  - New Residents
  - Youth

- Prompts included:
  - General likes and dislikes of the community
  - Views towards the Resident’s Association
  - Views on Community Leadership
  - Desired Services
  - Homeownership
Research Methods

- Student and resident surveyors
- 92 completed adult surveys
- 35 completed youth surveys
  - Door-to-door
  - Phone

Questions included:
- Community strengths
- Community weaknesses
- Interest in community development
- Interest in homeownership at Carver Terrace
- Demographic information
Research Questions

- What perceptions do Carver Terrace residents have regarding the ownership of their current housing units?
- How may these perceptions hinder or support the Telesis Corporation’s plan to transition the residents from renting to homeownership?
- What feelings of trust of distrust do Carver Terrace residents have towards:
  - The Telesis Corporation?
  - The Georgetown University Research Team?
  - The homeownership project as a whole?
Findings on Perceptions of Homeownership

- Residents generally interested in homeownership (83.5%)
Findings on Perceptions of Homeownership

Positive perceptions - 6 mentions

- Homeownership is a long term investment
- Build Equity
- More control
- Respect
- Create new community dynamic
- Can’t be “priced out”
MR6: I’m gonna – I’m gonna take the opposite view ...here. I want to own.
FR3: I want to own, too.
FR2: Me, too.
MR6: I want to own. And if I own, that means, I now have control...All the stuff we talk about that the rental office is not doin’, if you own in a co-op, then guess what? You can do whatever it is that they’re not doin’.
Findings on Perceptions of Homeownership

- General lack of desire to own within Carver Terrace
- Negative perceptions - 15 mentions
  - Sub-standard building materials
  - No security
  - Rodents
  - Issue of space
Focus Group Excerpts

**FR11:** I don’t want to own.

**SM:** Ok, so I’m hearing some people - some people are saying no. Tell me why and why not.

**FR11:** Because they’re not sturdy. The walls is like cardboard. The carpet ain’t worth it - it’s indoor/outdoor carpet that’s shaggy in places. So why you want to own somethin’ that’s tearing up after bein’ here for 4 years?
SM: Well, let’s stick on that homeownership question for a little bit. Are you all interested in homeownership?
CTMR: What, the apartment?
SM: Yeah.
CTFR 1: Yeah, if you’re going to give me the whole top floor where I am. Not that little box I’m in right now.
Findings on Perceptions of Homeownership

Another Factor: Concept of a “home”

CTFR 2: It doesn’t have a balcony. I am interested in owning something, but...

CTMR: I want a home, a house.

CTFR 1: A real house....Have a garden and stuff, yeah.
Findings on Perceptions of Homeownership

- 50% of residents not likely to stay at Carver Terrace despite prospect of purchasing unit
Findings on Trust and Telesis

- Residents were overwhelmingly distrustful of the Telesis Corporation (25 expressions)
  - frustration with apartment construction and relationship with residents
- Many residents did not know who the Telesis Corporation was
- 84% were willing to work with an outside organization for project
Findings on Trust and Telesis

Willing to have outside organization help with ownership process

- NO
- YES
- Missing
Findings on Trust and the GRT

- 12 mentions of distrust towards the Georgetown Research Team
  - suspicion of the GRT’s presence
  - suspicion of GRT’s use of data
Findings on Trust and GRT

All Focus Groups Expressions of Trust

- Trust Telesis
- Distrust Telesis
- Trust GRT
- Distrust GRT
- Trust Project
- Distrust Project

Number of Expressions

Trust/Mistrust
Findings on Trust and Project

- Residents generally did not trust that the homeownership project would be completed successfully.
  - Focus groups: 22 total mentions of distrust
    - Frustration with project and condition of apartments
  - 82% were not aware of ability to purchase units
  - 67% had confidence project would be completed successfully
Findings on Trust and Project

Aware of the possibility of purchasing CT unit

- NO
- YES
Findings on Trust and Project

Confidence there can be a successful transition to ownership?

Percent

Confidence there can be a successful transition to ownership?

NO  YES  DON'T KNOW

0  70  60  50  40  30  20  10  0

Confidence there can be a successful transition to ownership?
Moving Forward

Changes at Carver Terrace:

- Residents organize and form a functioning residents’ association
  - Residents work with GRT and Telesis in neighborhood development
  - Residents organize to voice concerns about neighborhood and work better with management

- Telesis more open concerning homeownership project
  - Residents cannot invest in project they are not familiar with
Suggestions for Future Research

- Residents’ concepts of homeownership
- History of residents’ experiences in D.C. that lead to their suspicion of outsiders
- Successful mixed-income and mixed-race communities in large cities across the U.S.