

***Inclusive growth in Indianapolis: Will we mess it up?***

The sharing of the essay, “The hyper-gentrification of Fountain Square” via (Garfield Park) Next Door Digest caused quite a stir. Here it is: <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Hyper-gentrification-of-Fountain-Square-Erasing-a-working-class-community-and-their-network-of-mechanisms-for-survival-by-Angie-Calvert.pdf>. Surprisingly, there was a 50-50 split in reactions. There were many criticisms given. And, there were those for gentrification. This montage could be a typical one:

“It’s a shame that gentrification has become such a problem. I am a big fan of Good Bones on HGTV, and those two women buy houses that most of us would snarl at and turn away. Homes full of squatters feces, rotten furniture, bug infested clothing and more. Homes where the foundations sometimes aren’t good at all. These homes are turned into some really nice places to live. It’s just a shame that THIS is a problem. “

Here’s another recent commentary representing a valid concern for gentrification:

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Opinion by Abby Chambers

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Downtown is expanding and the tidal wave of neighborhood revitalization surrounding the mile square is seeping farther away the city center to areas where crime, unemployment, and poverty rates are high.

**Instead of lifting all boats, however, this revitalization – or, let’s be honest, gentrification – is, as has happened in the past, pushing our biggest urban challenges toward our municipal borders.**

Fortunately, thanks in part to UNIGOV, Indianapolis is uniquely and advantageously situated to do something about this. As our urban challenges creep away from the city center, there are still within city limits and government reach and city leaders, decision-makers, and influencers seem ready to coalesce their public- private partnerships around the idea of inclusive growth. If they can figure out how to engage with residents and grow distribute economic and social wealth differently, our city can grow more equitably and inclusively.

Unfortunately, some red flags indicate Indianapolis might mess up this opportunity to be a model city for inclusive growth. For example, on the near Eastside, a place full of dedicated residents the dogged with urban challenges, Lilly Endowment granted \$4.3M through its Arts and Cultural Innovation grant program to establish the 10 East Arts + Design District.

I saw shock and outrage from residents when a grant writer presented the proposal, which by then had already been submitted. It appeared that writers had created the plan from the top down, without sufficiently engaging with people and efforts already in the area. The plan seems to gloss over the cultural diversity of the community without allowing for enough integration of existing efforts or fully considering residents’ visions for their neighborhoods future.

**Despite some city leaders denial that gentrification is not a problem in Indianapolis, I hear residents in places like the near-Eastside, near-Northwest side express worry that money and power will take their neighborhood away from them through the façade of urban revitalization “for a common good” that is actually composed of--whether intentionality or not--top-down structures and processes that exclude more than they include. Residents worry about being economically and culturally displaced.**

We deliberately catalyzed economic development in disinvested places to increase their profitability, knowing not everyone can keep up with increases in cost-of-living and that economic and cultural displacement will likely happen. Inclusive growth should take intentional shift toward

prioritizing human centered economic development and not tolerate indifference to revitalization's known consequences. We must slow down revitalization efforts and build structures and processes that appreciate and include all residents. But will we?

**How invested will Indianapolis be in inclusive growth?**

If we are not all-in on doing the slow and challenging work of full-on inclusion, we will most certainly mess it up.

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