



Atlanta Regional Housing Forum

Gentrification in Atlanta

Wednesday, June 3, 2015 9:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 435 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA

As Atlanta's economy improves, there is significant growth in residential real estate development – and with this growth, concerns about gentrification are heightened. Many in-town neighborhoods like West End, East Atlanta, Kirkwood, and Old Fourth Ward have been growing in popularity – and price – much to the dismay of some long-term residents. New investments in the Westside and along the Beltline are creating even more angst and concern about the gentrification of formerly affordable neighborhoods.

Coined in 1964 by sociologist Ruth Glass, gentrification generally refers to the process of neighborhood change when an influx of wealthier residents move to poorer neighborhoods that are undergoing increased economic investment. Simply put, development activity improves conditions, results in new assets, increases desirability and places upward pressure on rental rates and home prices. When rental rates and property taxes soar, it ceases to be a choice for low-income residents to stay in the neighborhood they call home. Many feel overwhelmed by the rapid development and changing socio-economic and racial makeup of their community. Others report a loss of community identity, cultural heritage and political clout.

But there are those who tout the benefits of such housing market activity. They point to stabilized neighborhoods, increased job opportunities, decreased crime, more attention to public infrastructure and services, increased tax revenues, and increased property values.

Beyond the challenge of creating opportunities for low-income households to remain in gentrifying communities, there's the unprecedented challenge of addressing the impact of displaced families relocating to car-dependent suburbs. Many suburban jurisdictions are lacking the program infrastructure needed to accommodate the shifting demographics. According to the Brookings Institution, Atlanta's suburban poor population rose 159% between 2000 and 2011, compared to 67% nationally. In fact, 88% of the metro area's poor live outside the city of Atlanta – a statistic surely impacted by Atlanta's ongoing issue of gentrification.

No one wants blighted, disinvested, and impoverished neighborhoods. But for many, the solution seems to be kicking the can down the road – to the suburbs. How can all parties involved examine and address the issue in a manner that serves everyone equitably? What tools are new to the gentrification response toolbox? Where is the most current and accurate data? A decade ago, the Reynoldstown community worked hard to manage the impact of gentrification. What lessons can we learn from Reynoldstown? Can we apply those lessons in new developments on the Westside and along the Beltline?

Join us at the next Atlanta Regional Housing Forum as we discuss the issue of gentrification. The Forum will be held Wednesday, June 3 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 435 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA. Free parking is available in the pay lot across the street from the church.

Presenters to be announced soon.

Please bring canned or nonperishable food items for donation to Atlanta Community Food Bank!

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