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Situating Social Sustainability on Spartanburg's Northside: An Engaged Neighborhood Study of Community, History, and Place Making

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Community, History, and Place Making

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Table of Contents

<i>Situating Social Sustainability on Spartanburg’s Northside: An Engaged Neighborhood Study of Community, History, and Place Making</i>	3
<i>Preserving Community</i>	3
<i>Arrival Scene</i>	5
<i>Positionality</i>	8
<i>Methods and Methodologies</i>	9
<i>Discussion and Analysis of Findings</i>	12
<i>Nostalgia</i>	12
<i>Responsibility</i>	15
<i>Healthy Living</i>	17
<i>Younger Generations</i>	19
<i>Sustainability</i>	20
<i>Discussion of Research Process</i>	22
<i>Broader Impacts and Future Directions</i>	24
<i>Living Alongside Change</i>	26
<i>References</i>	29
<i>Appendices</i>	31

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Preserving Community

From the very beginning of my research, I have been interested in sustainability and what it means to be sustainable. I was previously partial to environmental sustainability but came to the realization that understanding social sustainability is a more relevant and important topic for the Northside at this time. When a neighborhood is socially sustainable, they are investing in the next generation, building sincere relationships founded on trust, are adaptable, and have networks with civil society organizations such as schools, churches and businesses. Saffron Woodcraft defines social sustainability as, “a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote well-being by understanding what people need from the places in which they live and work” (Woodcraft 2015, 133). Being an outsider to the Northside neighborhood, my initial question was can being socially sustainable coexist with social inequality?

Historically, cities in the United States are reflections of social inequality due to policies and governmental neglect. Various factors, such as symbolic and structural racism, create heavily stratified cities that perpetuate suffering. The regulation of certain neighborhoods that diminishes property values combined with the government failing to continue public services, condemns these areas as sites of urban blight. The areas of so-called urban blight are primarily nonwhite, the Northside neighborhood itself being majority African American. The schools in these districts are discriminated against by receiving less public funding and thus failing to equal the quality of education compared to schools in other neighborhoods. The Northside is negatively impacted by social inequality and consequently suffers from unequal opportunities and distribution of resources.

In an initial reflection on my conversations with Northside residents I wrote that a lack of community is one of the neighborhood's biggest challenges. I wrote that due to the rising levels of poverty a tight-knit community feel is hard to come by. This lack of community is an important issue to resolve in order for redevelopment because the initiatives and projects would only be as successful as the community wants them to be. Further, I wrote that the Northside required a greater commitment to the goal of fostering places that people can thrive in to improve social inequality.

This research is evidence against that initial reflection and face value understanding. The ethnography aims to provide outsiders with the flip side of the coin; adding to the knowledge that exists about the neighborhood that does not come from a negative place. Through the research, residents reminisced on the Northside's past, present, and future. The ethnography gave residents an opportunity to reflect on what once was and what continues to be. I believe by recording these memories and thoughts, they stand on their own as a testimony of the community that thrives on the Northside. Binding these resident's stories and memories together in a unified fashion is a tool not only for outsiders to gain perspective, but also for residents to solidify their desire to protect and share their home and history.

The Northside community has a genuine care and recognition of the past, but their eyes are focused forward. The community recognizes when outside entities are not willing to work with them, but on them. For any revitalization project to be sustainable, they must focus on having long-lasting effects and people and programs that will be continuous. Just by putting social sustainability on the forefront, the likelihood of living in a progressive neighborhood increases.

I am also emphasizing social sustainability due to Wofford College and other various institutions and organizations who are working to build a relationship with the Northside neighborhood. Research such as this ethnography, grounded in qualitative theory and evidence, can serve these outside entities with opinions and recommendations from residents themselves.

I argue that the Northside's sense of community is strong, prevalent, loving, powerful in overcoming the odds and that understanding the responsibility of protecting the neighborhood is significant. Help, care and compassion are generated from a sense of solidarity. It stems not from any outsider, but from the community itself. The Northside has and continues to look out for one another, to love one another despite not always feeling love or supported from outside people or places.

Therefore, this ethnography is a romantic interpretation of the Northside. By acknowledging this deliberate choice from the start, I hope my intentions are clear and that readers know I was not blind to other opinions and facts about the neighborhood. Many experiences in the field and conversations showed me the drawbacks of the Northside that tend to be heavily emphasized. My research does not challenge that those drawbacks exist, but instead states what many Northside residents shared with me: there are many positives of the neighborhood that are focused on, boasted, and celebrated by those who live there.

Arrival Scene

On a day that felt more like summer than fall, I rode my bike over the train tracks toward a narrow building tucked behind a recently renovated café. The door to the old-fashioned train depot is kept locked at all times, so I waited for someone to let me in. A woman opened the door without much of an introduction and guided me down a hallway filled with paper diagrams.

Within minutes three other women converged around a small circular table in an equally small sized room. Each with her own legal pad and pencil, they looked at me expectantly.

I began hesitantly, with a quiver in my voice and a hopeful glance around the table. After several minutes of introducing myself and my research, I was met with silence. I continued onward, hoping something I said about the Northside's resilience would eventually connect with the women. Finally, someone interjected. The woman clearly in charge, who had a short, blunt haircut and quizzical look, asked me where I was getting my ideas from. I was taken aback and as words tumbled out of my mouth, I wondered if I was in the right place.

My ideas came from being in the Northside and hearing from the people who lived there. Granted, at that point, I had spoken with just a few residents, but nonetheless they were folks who were apart of the neighborhood. Again, I was interrupted with a caustic remark about the personality of the community. I had known going into this introductory meeting that this group had experienced difficulties with the Northside in the past, but I had failed to realize the utter lack of relationship between the two. Just last week, I had spoken with a woman in charge of another organization in the same vicinity. An awkward moment had passed between us, when she was unable to remember the name of the woman who worked across the parking lot every day. The two women occupy the same space, work surrounding the same topic of food, and yet never interact.

Over the course of an hour, I was able to paint a better picture of the group of women in relation to where their organization is located, and their activities take place: at Harvest Park in the Northside. They felt ignored by the neighborhood, as if their efforts to promote healthy food fell flat at the feet of local residents. The group had attempted to create a community garden further up on Brawley St., but after faltering from lack of participation, the garden was officially

shut down. The urban garden that exists now is closed off to the public, supported by one employee and several interns who are not from the community. Trying to understand, I asked questions about the types of farmers they support. One woman spoke with intensity about their acknowledgment of the Farmer's Market being led by white people. I couldn't help but make a connection aloud. If there were more minority group vendors, I said, then perhaps there would be more minority groups in attendance. In response I was given a number: a mere 1.7% of farmers in Spartanburg are of a minority group. Obviously, we cannot make more people of color be farmers, they told me. A fair point, which caused me to shut down, and I stopped asking my questions. This organization was guarded, possibly rightfully so. The women had turned their focus on the greater Spartanburg county, running a Mobile Market that makes four hundred stops, all the while giving up on including those within blocks of their market and garden.

I left the meeting discouraged, but aware of what I needed to do next. I would no longer begin with outside organizations who were attempting to make externally driven changes in the neighborhood, but rather concentrate my efforts in getting to know the people who lived there. Digging myself into the community and learning straight from Northside voices gives me hope that solutions for this disconnect of community engagement will eventually appear. I want to hear from Northside residents and understand how they perceive where they live and the change that is occurring. Listening to memories and feelings are an important tool in continuing conversations about culture and place. By allowing agency to develop first and understanding who those agents are and what kind of changes they envision, before implementing any further ideas of betterment, the Northside can feel greater ownership of its revitalization and the changes can be culturally appropriate. Establishing a base of how the Northside feels about its neighborhood will create better potential of having successful projects in the future.

Positionality

My positionality greatly influences my research firstly by being the motivation behind engaging with the Northside community and hearing resident's thoughts and experiences, and secondly, affecting how the resident's respond to me and how I must approach new environments. The motivation of this project comes from my own understanding of what home means, how one's definition of home can change with place, and how important it is to feel a part of a community. Being only twenty-one years old, I am fortunate to have lived in few different places. Each place holds its own uniqueness and requires an understanding of its background and history. The Northside, although it is not my personal home, is like any other home. The people who live there either have attachments to the place or they don't. I am interested in what distinguishes the two attitudes toward seeing the Northside as home, and whether there are factors that can increase place attachment.

I am a white female student from Wofford College, an institution that has not had the most favorable relationship with the Northside neighborhood in the past. Several residents in the Northside were previously displaced from the neighborhood called "Back of the College" when Wofford decided to expand its' campus. Among other factors, such as various groups coming into the neighborhood for a short while to volunteer how they see fit, many residents are wary of more Wofford students coming into the community. Briefly touching on reactions toward my presence and research, most commented that they were very surprised that I was unlike the typical Wofford student. From these experiences, I came to understand that commonly, Northside residents tend to perceive Wofford students to be wealthy, entitled, and unhelpful.

These aspects of my positionality, in regard to my ethnography, will be further developed in my discussion of the research process, but are noted here to emphasize the importance of

acknowledging how my circumstances impacted my interactions and understanding of the Northside. Despite certain intersecting factors, such as race and class, I am the right person for this research because I appreciate the opportunity to be part of a community that will challenge me, teach me, and accept me. I am humbled to be able to participate in furthering the relationship between Wofford College and the Northside and lessen the distance between them. I am grateful for all the people on the Northside who have welcomed me in and allowed me to be a part of their journeys. Personally, I feel very touched to be able to experience the incredible love of community that exists on the Northside and it fuels me towards making more engaged and meaningful connections with others.

Methods and Methodologies

The methodology of my ethnography centers on community engagement, engaged anthropology, life histories, and place making. Setha Low and Sally Merry understand engaged anthropology as being, “committed to an anthropological practice that respects the dignity and rights of all humans and has a beneficent effect on the promotion of social justice” (Low and Merry 2010, 204). My engagement, social and civil, involves listening to Northside residents and learning from these conversations to better construct a broader understanding of the neighborhood. By collaborating with the Northside community, spaces in the neighborhood come alive through oral histories. The strongest connections we have to place are our own personal experiences. By creating a written ethnography of these memories and traditions, I hope that more ties to the neighborhood are sustained and shared with others to establish an even stronger community and attachment.

Paulo Freire guides me with his understanding of community engagement. Freire writes, “It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to

impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours” (Freire 1970, 36). Community engagement, at its core, requires dialogue and reflection. Having open dialogue and reflecting on Northside’s history leads to future action. Freire advises, “Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection” (Freire 1970, 32). This work is never-ending, instead a constant evolution that has no deadline or progress goal.

My own research may have a timeline, but my intention is for it to be a part of future dialogue that goes far beyond myself. Listening to the community without imposing my reality is important, but so is recognizing that the community is also interested in hearing about how I am situated in this world. Especially in my work with younger children, I hope to show the Northside pieces of my life that expand their perceptions just as their realities have opened my eyes.

Personally, community engagement looks and feels like love and respect. Connecting with the Northside community requires sensitively listening to the residents and their experiences. Community engagement is the opportunity to establish a permanent relationship of dialogue that is intentional. Being forthcoming, delicate, respectful, honest, and genuine are all crucial in approaching how I talk with residents and learn from them. The power of dialogue is not merely words and actions but in transformation. My end goal is not only to produce a tangible piece of written research, but also to disseminate that research back to the community and assist in this dialogue, this beautiful ebb and flow of communication about understood realities.

My methods include:

Literature review: Research based on ethnography methods, urban community engagement, and sustainable initiatives.

Informal/formal interviews: Semi-structured and unstructured conversations with neighborhood residents to develop relationships and record life histories of the Northside.

Focus groups: Collective events where Northside residents can hear from one another and collaborate on brainstorming ideas for create positive, community-driven change in the Northside.

Participant observation: Attending various community programs to further integrate myself into the neighborhood as well as to see the Northside in terms of their actions and relationships with one another.

The following evidence is the result of fifteen formal interviews, six of which are transcribed in the appendices, one focus group comprised of sixteen people, and seven months of participation observation and informal conversations. Relationships and interactions were initially created through various organizations working in the community and then relied on word of mouth and asking residents to connect me with their friends and family. I spent several months working on and leading a cooking club at the Cleveland Academy of Leadership, the local elementary school, as well as time at the Northwest community center, which helped me to integrate myself within the community and hear from a diverse range of residents, both in age and gender.

My interview questions surround topics such as where residents grew up, their childhood memories, how the neighborhood has changed since, their current understanding of where they live, the importance of sustainability in their lives, and how they approach future change.

Follow-up questions reflect more deeply into specific memories and family traditions to connect them to the present and broader conversations about the Northside.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The purpose of this ethnography is to argue and document that the Northside has a strong sense of community, widening the perception of the neighborhood. It is a collection of memories and oral traditions as well as a documentation of the history of the landscape. The ethnography provides better insight into the background of the neighborhood and the sense of pride the residents have. Common themes from life histories are included as well as potential future ideas from residents that can be implemented in the neighborhood. By capturing the Northside's own perspective of their community and their visions for change, I am arguing that the residents have a strong agency over the developmental projects taking place in their home.

My evidence is categorized through codes, which are meaningful identifications of a central principle where other common themes fall under (Saldana 2015). The codes appear frequently throughout my research and are core ideas that easily relate to other topics. They provide a vehicle for different concepts and thoughts to connect to one another and support my argument. Although I have separated my findings into five codes, they are linked to each other in significant ways and this interconnectivity is relevant in understanding the Northside as a comprehensive neighborhood.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a powerful tool. It can hold people back in the past, create resentment towards how the present is, and spur on the future through appeals for the return of certain elements of what once was. Maria Lewicka in *Place Attachment* discusses the positives of nostalgia through place attachment as well as arguing that duration of residency is not always the

primary indicator of attachment (Lewicka 2014). Place attachments are the ties that bind a resident to their home and are commonly contrived through habit memories. British sociologist Paul Connerton coined the term habit memory as the theory of relation between place attachment and duration. It is a type of memory that is embedded in specific places, bound by routines developed over time. However, Lewicka's research discovered several other phenomena that create place attachment. These alternatives are helpful in explaining why mobility, or the movement from place to place, is common despite powerful personal attachments. Place attachment despite lack of duration relies primarily on the power of memory and history to successfully replant or reattach people to a new place.

Connecting habit memories to the Northside is the reason behind why I recorded life histories. Writing down older resident's memories and experiences preserves or captures moments in time on the Northside. They are often idyllic telling's of the past. They serve a purpose of not only hearing and sharing about the Northside, but also as momentum for the future. For example, resident Elijah Lee¹ comments, "I think that's what the Northside is trying to get back to... affordable housing, because that's what we grew up with. There were professional people on Aden St. all the way back up to Howard Street: school teachers, masonries, you know, there was just a mixture of professions." A strong sense of community vibrates through these life histories, making you recognize the character of the residents and causes you to not approach the Northside with a deficit mindset. In many ways, what existed back then still exists now, and will continue to exist. There is concern for others' welfare and constant observation and willingness to account for one another on the Northside. If certain

¹ All Northside resident's names have been changed for confidentiality.

attributes of the neighborhood did fade away, or were systematically torn away, they can and will return again because of the power of community.

Involuntary relocation is important to address. Forced mobility can undermine place attachment and create root shock. Root shock, defined by Mindy Thompson Fullilove, is the, “traumatic stress reaction to the loss of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem – occurs with upheaval” (Lewicka 2014, 124). Many people are constantly moving into the Northside, often with no introduction to the neighborhood. This attention to life histories provides newcomers with a tool for learning about the past in order for them to feel more welcome and develop a deeper bond with the Northside. Through intentionally focusing on the past, you can learn about the place’s history and situate yourself into becoming at home. Resident Mariana Williams shares, “My family actually lived on that land since the early 1920s. They were one of the first African American families to live on that land.” By integrating yourself into the Northside’s long history, you are actively choosing to connect your own autobiography, all your past experiences and memories, to the location. In addition, historical places, such as the Northside, tend to be more personally meaningful. I think this is a potential way for the new faces in the Northside to be successfully enmeshed into the community.

On the other hand, root shock is relevant in the Northside in regard to those who are being displaced out of the neighborhood. Eviction and displacement due to development is a common experience for some Northside residents, which I believe definitely falls under the category of root shock. Disrupted place continuity can be devastating to one’s life, which makes reattachment to a new place a difficult transition. Nostalgia steps in through Northside life histories by being a tool to restore balance. Northside resident’s reminiscences, which tend to lean more on the side of glorifying the past, can be powerful to rely on for self-continuity,

especially after a major life event. One's past positive feelings and experiences can provide a sense of comfort, even when in an entirely new place or time in their life.

Responsibility

Responsibility and sense of community are closely tied. Sense of community, in general, is the topic of my entire ethnography because it encompasses so many different aspects. Understanding the community, its sense, why it is that way, how it has changed throughout time, how will it continue to change, and how different residents perceive their community are all relevant and important questions.

A significant factor in protecting space is fostering a united front to create a more sustainable and livable neighborhood, which will be discussed further in the sustainability code. This element of protection or responsibility for the neighborhood is largely determined by whether there is a strong sense of community present, hence why the two are interlinked. The family oral traditions that have come up in residents' life histories show emotional attachments to the Northside that support unity and hope for the future. These feelings are powerful in their own right and can be combined to strengthen communities towards positive change and development.

Projects for betterment must be driven by the community's own sense of responsibility, desire for personal growth, and commitment. Isabelle Anguelovski in "Place Remaking through Environmental Recovery and Revitalization" summarizes how feelings are attached to community engagement and thus drive place remaking. Since this ethnography is an act of recollecting and reminiscing on the Northside's past, present, and future and the intent behind the research is to further unification and reflection, it is inherently capable of place making.

Place making or strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, is vital in growing together as a community and sharing responsibility for creating a home or a

neighborhood that is of shared value and is the heart of the community. A challenge that does exist on the Northside and has come up frequently during my research is the lack of centralized places for the community. Communal spaces used to be the Northside's main attractions. Residents spoke fondly about memories surrounding places such as the Little Red grocery store and various cafes that sold hot dogs and other foods on hot summer days. Resident Mariana Williams recalls, "We had a natural springs water system that flowed through and was on Howard St. where the Oak View apartments were. People, not just from the Northside, but all over South Carolina would come and get water there." After economic recessions and when the Northside became a food desert, the public spaces that once existed began to decay. In the past few years, new establishments have come to the Northside with various success. The community is certain about the need for more local businesses, but the inspiration behind them must be organic and be imagined and invented through or with the Northside's best intentions. The goal must be to determine sustainable solutions to connect development projects to the community and ensure that a place attachment grows between the new buildings and the residents of the neighborhood.

Through my literature review, community responsibility tended to be referenced as who benefits financially. I have found that there are many different opinions about the changes and redevelopment that is underway in the neighborhood. During interviews, when asking about their opinion on the Northside Development Group, the land bank operating in the Northside, the majority of residents tend to give non-personal answers. Northside resident Elijah Lee said, "I mean change is change, you can't just stay the same. Things change, communities change, and when you're orchestrating change you have to keep in mind how can I best take care of these people who are going to be affected in a negative way." This begs the question of who the

majority of Northside residents find to be responsible financially, or if there is fault to be found at all. Overall, as I have already discussed, responsibility is not just the economic windfall that might potentially one day result from development, but also includes of the overall welfare of the community.

Healthy Living

Healthy living groups together two main aspects of the Northside, food and the outdoors. As mentioned in Responsibility, the Northside lacks food stores and popular outdoor recreation spaces. This is not something that goes unnoticed by residents or isn't wanted. In fact, all of the residents I spoke with either in formal interviews or during causal conversations mentioned wanting to have safer spaces outdoors for both themselves and the kids of the neighborhood. Resident Jasmyn Porter notes, "Teenagers in this town literally have nothing. That's one thing we do need. Some nice, safe recreation for children, for teenagers." Therefore, recreation is tied closely with security and younger generations.

Families in the Northside want healthier food options, especially in schools and at home for their children. They want the neighborhood to feel safe at all times of the day, in particular at places of recreation like parks. The number one request for change is for the Chapel St. park to be lighted, like how Cleveland Park is now. Older community residents want walkable sidewalks for strolls during the day. The neighborhood has many fantastic ideas but not always the time to advocate for the changes they desire.

The most important factor to acknowledge, especially as an outsider to the community, is that the urban poor, a name given by society, are not passive spectators in life. I, along with many anthropologists, disagree with any institutions defining the urban poor as a closed category because like any other group, they interact and have relationships with all classes of people.

Worthy of noting however, is that for the urban poor, their lives are constantly being shaped by experiences that go beyond their control. The status quo is challenged by threats of demolitions, displacement, and forced eviction. Struggles regarding housing and safety run deep and prohibit action in other areas of life, like food and the outdoors, because they are time consuming activities. There is no straightforward path to understand the systematic ways of power, advantage, and possession placed against the urban poor, but to understand and accept they exist when striving to conceptualize situations is crucial.

Veena Das and Shalini Randeria suggest that, “the movement of urban poor between everyday rhythms and effervescence of daring, revolutionary fervor, or other moments at which an act of daring might defy the everyday” (Das and Randeria 2015, 11). I hope that this interpretation, that only a sudden and uncharacteristic impulse can result in change is not true and that the Northside can work towards healthy living while maintaining their everyday routines and addressing the challenges they already face. This is where NGOs and other civil society organizations can play a role.

NGOs need to be organic and generate ideas for change from the community they intend to serve. How united the community is on what their needs are creates the strength to advocate for those needs to organizations that support the urban poor. This connects back to sense of community and the necessity of being unified in collective action. There must be constant communication between the organizations and the community, a back and forth dialogue of what is a need and how to go about achieving that need. For example, a grocery store or local restaurant is not only necessary for livelihood but will also strengthen community by being a centralized space for the neighborhood to interact and create relationships. However, a grocery

store, its location and other factors such as affordability, must be considered in line with Northside residents for it to be successful.

Younger Generations

There is great emphasis on children because the older community members recognize that the younger generations are the leaders for the future of Northside. Many comments were made to me about younger parents needing to have greater responsibility for their children, thus responsibility and younger generations are intertwined. Suggestions given were mentoring programs, hygiene training for parents, and tutoring all surround children and parents. Northside residents argue that depending on how responsible the community is for raising the younger generations, the children can firstly be proud of who they are and where they are from, and secondly, become successful adults.

Empowerment is key for the children on the Northside. Spending time at the community center and with grandparents, parents, and kids has shown me that no one wants to live in a place they feel embarrassed or ashamed of. You want to raise your child in a safe environment, one where they feel happy spending time. The consensus is that the kids in the neighborhood don't always feel that way. I have heard several similar stories about children and teenagers being embarrassed about where they get on and off the bus for school, because other kids can see where they live. Kids from other neighborhoods experience the same challenges. This reinforces the necessity of remembering context and that this is not a Northside specific problem but that it exists in all cities and neighborhoods.

Although it isn't an exclusive issue among the Northside youth, it is something that the community can and wants to work towards changing. Partly, it is the issue of perception. How and who forms perceptions of the neighborhood may be out of the Northside's control. What

Northside residents mention themselves is providing the younger generations with objective proof. This means leading by example, which is something that requires more time and effort. Thoughtful programs that can teach new skills, provide guidance and role models for the kids are one way to start. Resident Kaylee Johnson comments, “The people who do know how [how to recycle] have to do it and then invite the people who don’t know how – or the kids, it’s always good to involve the kids”. Spreading knowledge is another way to empower the younger generations of the community.

Another simple way to encourage the Northside youth to be proud is involving them more in the already existing projects and initiatives. Northside resident Mariana Williams said, “When you involve the younger generation that’s teaching ownership. And that brings about pride”. Being allowed to participate is always appreciated for kids, as they want to feel involved and it is also a vehicle for them to better understand the community they are a part of.

Sustainability

Generational solidarity, providing a livable planet to the grandchildren of our grandchildren, is the focus of most Northside resident’s in regard to sustainability. Livability is defined by Peter Evans as concentrating on livelihood, having jobs close to affordable, decent housing with access to necessary services, and sustainability, meaning this livelihood should not degrade the environment, or else it is not really livable in the long run (Evans 2002, 2). Currently on the Northside are a lack of jobs easily within distance to the neighborhood, some housing is affordable but not in the best conditions, and there are little to no services provided, such as a grocery store.

The real battle for sustainability is being fought in urban communities where mass amounts of the population live, thus having the greatest impact on our planet. Often

sustainability relies heavily on the city's relation to neighborhoods. This relationship is compounded further in areas of poverty, commonly found in urban areas, like the Northside neighborhood. Solving everyday livelihood issues, like the lack of affordable housing or accessible food, while living in poverty pushes issues of long-term sustainability to the background.

The significance of communities feeling empowered, which has come up frequently in my research on the Northside, is vital in efforts of sustainability. Since poorer communities are not always endowed with social capital, or the confidence of having a broad safety and support network, empowerment within the community inspires collective action. NGOs, because they tend to have a strong affinity for place-based struggles, help with this process by facilitating collaboration amongst the community.

Livability does not relate only to environmental sustainability but also to social sustainability. When a neighborhood is socially sustainable, they are more likely to be successful environmentally and economically because of the social collaboration built on relationships, respect, and adaptability. Northside resident Kaylee Johnson states, "Sustainability means an on-going process full of failures and mistakes but growth from that experience. All those experiences, from the successes and from the mistakes and being able to grow from those." Community collective action supports one another in times of failure and successes, it is the glue that holds networks together in order to achieve basic needs, awareness, and betterment.

The new housing developments that are under construction on the Northside have been proposed as being mixed-income. This effort is to reduce poverty and improve education by deconcentrating low-income people. The reality is that mixed-income housing more often than not displaces people, which commonly results in the loss of urban communities of color. Schools

become mixed-income, dividing students due to district policies. People's roots are devalued through urban renewal, ruining the sense of communities. Pauline Lipman writes that this act, "empties communities of meaning as spaces of identity, solidarity, cultural and political resistance, and material survival" (Lipman 2009, 17). Relating the Northside as such a community, vibrant and culturally and historically rich, makes these impending changes seem disastrous.

Gentrification is one of the pillars of urban economy. It creates spatial inequality, displacement, homelessness, racial containment, among many other consequences. The culture of poverty theory legitimizes gentrification by dismantling public housing and replacing it with mixed-income developments. This primarily effects African American communities in the United States. Resident Jasmyn Porter said, "I'm not sure where African Americans fit in the scheme of things... I'm not in on the planning, or the big wigs navigating this, but I'm hopeful it will clean up this side of town, so that it is a decent place to live for whomever lives here. Because this is a great place, a great space in Spartanburg". The projected apartment units of the developments do not equal those demolished on the Northside, however the entity in charge of the project boasts its efforts to return the displaced residents back into the revitalized areas. The new developments may not be the most sustainable for the Northside community and I have struggled with trying to come to terms with the fact that gentrifying the area might be the natural cycle or evolution of the neighborhood. Regardless, this ethnography is one way to highlight all the ways the Northside neighborhood is a community and culture worth protecting.

Discussion of Research Process

My ethnography has been a process of engaged anthropology, focusing on sharing and support. Seta Low and Sally Merry describe engaged anthropology as, "focusing on micro

social situations framed by macroeconomic and political forces; its examination of the way social situations is made meaningful through discourse, symbols, and language; and its analysis of the small site's embeddedness in larger structures of power" (Low and Merry 2010, 204). Many anthropologists consider their research as engaged, as taking action in issues of social justice and lessening of human suffering are becoming more commonplace.

Conducting engaged anthropology through sharing and support emphasizes sincerity over authenticity. Sincerity is your inner commitment and treats your relationship to the community with higher value, seeing them for who they are, as individuals. Authenticity seeks to understand people as authentic members of their group or community. In some ways, looking for authenticity reduces a person to an object, rather than a human being. I appreciate this distinction because my own interest in anthropology stems from trying to understand the world through personal connections, the humanistic and collaborative experiences.

Sharing and support requires responsibility and reciprocity. Through shared commitments, communities are stronger together in regard to social problems. You are attached to one another through your daily interactions with one another and feel greater responsibility in protecting the community. This is something I find to be very prevalent in the Northside, especially in my own commitments to the neighborhood through the Cleveland Academy and other networks.

While I listened to resident's life histories or observed and participated in programs on the Northside, I was aware of how I would present the community's history. There are many ways to tell a history or a legacy, but when it is not your own to tell, it becomes difficult to navigate. These histories and legacies have changed considerably over time. On the Northside, one legacy used to be the magnificent fruit trees spread all over the neighborhood. Resident

Mariana Williams recalls, “There were berry trees all over the outside of that area. There was a creek back there as well. All of that helped to contribute to a healthier environment”. Preparing food and cooking was a central element of everyday life, embedded in the history of the Northside. Things have changed considerably in that regard, and it has been hard to shift and try and tell the Northside’s history as whole as possible.

My positionality affected the stories and memories I was told, and the way I was treated in social situations. I stand out on the Northside as a young white female, and this has led me to having to prompt residents to speak truthfully, assuring people I won’t be offended. This is important to note, because people may not have been as honest due to my presence. Truth itself is always partial and I am unable to know everything. This ethnography of course cannot be truly objective, nor was it meant to be, as it is told through my perspective.

Broader Impacts and Future Directions

Below are a list of suggested changes or ideas for projects that were provided directly by Northside residents, either during individual interviews or in focus groups.

1. More programs for children focused on tutoring. Allowing kids to better keep up with their classes, especially in math and reading comprehension. These programs should come from both community centers and schools.
2. Yoga at the community center, or just more active programs in general.
3. Swimming lessons for all ages at the new community center.
4. More walking trails outdoors. Places that feel safe.
5. Speeding boxes on streets. Not just on main streets like Howard St., but on side streets as well.

6. The return of National Night Out. This still occurs in some neighborhoods on Tuesday nights (ex. Tuesday celebration at C.C. Woodson), but it no longer comes to the Northside. National Night Out had music, grill outs, and was fun for all ages. It was suggested that this could be started up again through St. Paul Baptist Church.
7. The effort to get people off the streets who are doing drugs has been really appreciated, and is something that needs to continue for everybody, but especially the kids, to feel safer.
8. Hygiene training and basic training on how to raise kids for parents and young adults.
9. Recycling initiatives that hopefully involve the kids.
10. Education for kids on how to take care of the environment, this teaches them ownership over their neighborhood and creates pride.
11. Keep the homeless and those who drink or do drugs out of the parks.
12. Lighting for the Church St. Park to make it feel safer and increase security, like how it is at Cleveland Park.
13. More consistent policing.
14. A grocery store, either in the Northside, or easily accessible through the bus line (thus, a need for more convenient bus stops and routes).
15. Greater emphasis on outdoor activities for children.
16. More small businesses run by Northside locals.
17. Mentoring programs, both for kids and for young parents, because they need role models.
18. A place for kids and teens to gather and hang out (this used to be at the Hanger at First Baptist Church, sometimes now at the public library).
19. Better transportation for kids to get to school.

20. A way for programs and organizations to better communicate with the neighborhood about what they are doing on the Northside and the ways they can help.

- a. An information board of sorts or database (ex. SNAP benefits information, after school programs for kids, college class opportunities, summer camps, job applications, etc.)

Addressing the challenge of continuity for these changes is essential for their success.

Any organizations or volunteers interested in becoming a part of the suggested programs or in implementing change in the neighborhood must be aware that their opinion of success may differ from the residents. The Northside requires the ability to choose how and with who they want to work on community projects. There needs to be options in order to have successful outcomes.

Speaking directly to the Wofford community, it is my greatest hope that this research and these initial years in working towards building a stronger relationship between the college and the Northside will be beneficial for all involved. By creating this concrete list of feasible and necessary ideas for change, this allows for future Wofford students or other interested parties to begin based on the knowledge that these potential projects came from Northside residents themselves. However, before anyone begins any endeavor it is important to reflect, and ask: How readily are you able to give what you have to others? Can you add value to what already exists in the community? I encourage you to begin with building relationships and understanding the neighborhood with empathy.

Living Alongside Change

My ethnography has changed substantially since I began this research back in October. It started as a personal want to create a project surrounding environmental sustainability, perhaps creating a community garden or giving children personal herb boxes to grow at home. Then it

became an entirely different entity that took a shape all on its own, directed by the neighborhood. There is a lot to understand about the Northside before anyone, whether that be a Wofford student, or any volunteer or organization establishes a project or assists on a preexisting one. That need for understanding is where this ethnography was born from. It is a tool not only for outsiders to read to gain a more comprehensive, less negative understanding of the Northside, but also a tool for the residents themselves, as a way to remember and appreciate their neighborhood and unite together for the changes they want to see. This ethnography created an opportunity for Northside residents to discuss and reflect on their past, present and future of their neighborhood. This reflection and focus on their community support their ownership of the Northside and impacts their sense of place and the desire to protect and improve. Documenting the Northside's rich history is one way to showcase its importance despite change.

When I was first introduced to the Northside, I learned about the neighborhood through a deficit mindset. I learned about all the faults, the problems, the challenges, and the negatives. Then I learned about the recent changes spurred on by an entity working on developing the area, and I learned that the crime rate has decreased. Then I was told that there's still a lot to be done. There are projects and programs needed. The perception of the Northside must be changed. It can be argued that the Northside itself must rise to occasion and change the wider Spartanburg area's understanding of who the Northside is.

However, I argue that it is the wider Spartanburg area that needs to educate themselves and understand the sense of community the Northside has and has always had. Our wider society has generated all these negative perceptions of the neighborhood, partly due to the rising rates of poverty which are factually based, but also through generalizing and labeling. Bias is something that everyone needs to work on overcoming and is not just a job for Northside residents.

As I stated initially during my time as an ethnographer on the Northside, I did not turn a blind eye to the negatives of the neighborhood. What I did do was try and understand from an insider's point of view and think through explanations of any downside of the community. Regardless of whether I was able to fully come to terms with the complexities of the challenges, at the end of the day, I knew I wanted to give voice to those who didn't always have the opportunity to be heard.

The voices I heard from spoke with sadness about the changes in the neighborhood and the hard times the community fell on, but they also voiced light and hope in those they grew up with and the families and friends they help raise. These voices are not naïve. The revitalization efforts and possible gentrification from the redevelopment will look different across the neighborhood. Residents see the change coming, and just like any change that has already occurred, they are ready for what is to come. The future is and always will be uncertain, but the Northside is resilient, and they have taught me a great deal about how to be strong myself.

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Appendices

Interview with Kaylee Johnson*

*All resident's names have been changed.

All italicized words indicate Helen Seddelmeyer speaking.

All non-italicized words indicate the resident speaking.

How long have you been living in the Northside?

Moved to the Northside in 2006, became a voyager shortly thereafter.

What do you see as your role in the community, and how has this changed over time?

I am a community activist as far as my volunteer times, but for my work, I work at a community center (northwest center). Located in the Northside will be moved to Howard street - center of Northside (deeper in) T.K Gregg center - will be completed in about 2 years. That's my job but it's also a lifestyle. That's how my job and the Northside Voyagers collide together and I'm able to be who I am all through the day. I've been working at the parks and rec the same amount of time I've been living in the Northside, since about 2006.

How do you view the Northside now, versus, when you moved here in 2006?

It was really crime invested, pretty much out of control. When I say out of control, people was doing whatever they wanted to do, and had no expectations of self-improvement, community-improvement, and when the community neighborhood association leadership transitioned - they invited a lot more people who had just moved to the Northside: historians of the Northside, teachers and the businesses, and people who love to see community improvement and empowerment. So people who don't even live in the Northside are welcome to come over and help dream of a better Northside. We have business classes, through the NDG called StartMe. That's getting people to start thinking of ideas to start businesses in the community and then it helps the people who live in the community as well as anybody who wants to see improvement in the Northside to come in and dream a little bit more about how the community can help itself. And when I say that I mean taking that existing talent, dreams, goals that individuals have and combining them together to be on one accord to make this a better community eventually. So it's an on-going project, growing process that all of us are - starting with ourselves, with our blocks, with our individual sections of the community and then we start to see as a whole, in Spartanburg too. It all comes together in the end.

When you say 'with our blocks' what do you mean by that? Reaching out to your neighbors?

Trying to talk to them (your neighbors), seeing if you need to borrow anything, and when you see something going wrong like (for example), back then, when I wasn't married at the time, my neighbors saw that I was having trouble cutting my grass that would come over and cut my grass, NDG would form groups every Saturday to go around every 2-3 months to cut grass, show others how to cut grass, just know about home ownership. That was a way to get out and learn and teach what you know... and what you don't know you learn.

Is there something that you see as a problem in the community?

I think people are not used to recycling. So those kinds of initiatives being put out are hard to individual people. So we have to lead by example. The people who do know have to do it and then invite the people who don't know - or the kids, its always good to involve the kids - then the parents want to know what their kids are involved in.

On the other hand, is there a particular problem that you see the community has overcome?

The community center, working with teenagers, we can actually form programs (volunteer programs) that they sign up for to do for their community service, around the needs of the community. So it gets young people who look like them to join in with them who are on a leadership path. And then they want to join in on the program... so through my job I'm able to organize different events that will complement the community and also help improve.

Is volunteering required at school?

We have a Boy Scout program called the Career Exploring program for teenagers, 6th grade through 2nd year of college. And so even when I don't have participation from the kids from the community, we can start the initiative with the neighborhood kids who come to the center and the ones who are bused or dropped off here. So nothing is to prevent to us from growth, because even when we don't have a good number from the neighborhood, we have examples that come in to the neighborhood so they can't tell who is from the neighborhood and who is not.

How many of the activities/programs are for the outdoors?

We have a walking partnership (the Northside) with VCOM. At least one a month they are scheduled to come over and do walks with us throughout the community. Which includes community engagement and also community pick-ups and they are aware of the community - community awareness. We walk strategically around the farmers market and things being improved so we can have casual conversations while we are walking about the projects. That's mainly done in the summer and spring time.

Do you see outdoor programs increasing when the T.K. Gregg Center opens?

Oh yeah definitely. It will be a community friendly landmark. It will be so huge and so brand new that everybody will be able to see and come to it, and be able to share in the project and the growth of it. It don't just happen and it's done, it's a growing project too so all the funding is not there yet. The first phase is being done, will be completed in 2 years, then there is more to come. So it won't be finished completely, and some other parts that need to be done, that includes like a multi-use field. The condition of the school and the rec center, butterfly creek and all of the colleges that are in the community. It will all work out.

What does sustainability mean to you?

Sustainability means an on-going process full of failures and mistakes but growth from that experience. All those experiences, from the successes AND from the mistakes and being able to grow from those.

I've been doing this for 20 years, I ain't just wake up and became a community leader. 20 years of experience, this stuff on brain 24/7. I go to sleep, I wake up with it. There is nothing you can ask me - if I don't know the answer, I will find it, you hear me? My personal email address is **name** 4-1-1 and I mean that.

Interview with Mariana Williams****All resident's names have been changed.****All italicized words indicate Helen Seddelmeyer speaking.****All non-italicized words indicate the resident speaking.**

I grew up there as a baby. I'm 68, so I've lived there off and on. Went away for college and got married. Then I came back and was a news reporter there. I lived across town in a neighborhood for a couple years and then I lived in Duncan Park for several years with my children. So, I guess I have been living there for about 59/60+ years. But I would go away, but I was always returning. My family was actually lived on that land since the early 1920s. They were one of the first African American families to live on that land. My grandfather rented on that land, and then eventually purchased that land. He was a contract brick-layer, so he eventually built a home on that land. The house still stands although you know it's had some repairs done.

We had, which I loved, the benefits of a natural spring. We had natural springs water system that flowed through and was on Howard St. where the Oak View apartments where and they've been torn down. That's where the T.K. Gregg center will be. People, not just from the Northside, but all over South Carolina would come and get water there. Fill up jugs and take them back to their homes. But the water was just delicious, it was naturally cool, it was running over rocks. So, it dried up and of course we definitely missed that, those of us who lived there during that time. I think, the creek that used to be (they called it the Nasty Branch Creek, they don't call it that anymore) now it was replaced. With the new redevelopment there's focus on revitalizing as much as possible, elements in the community that would help benefit the ecosystem. *Like the Butterfly Creek?* Right, like the Butterfly Creek. We also, we actually, and what I loved so much, is that we had, it was like fruit trees in everyone's yard. We had pomegranate trees, (we had a pomegranate tree in our yard), some neighbors had a peach tree, they had apple trees, even just canterberry... ? Anyway, we had all type of trees in our yard. Which actually helped with the water erosion. It helps to feed the birds and other animals and you know, I think those are some of the positive things we had going that helped with the environment as a whole.

We also had, course our, I think my grandfather had a huge, one of the biggest gardens in the community. Everybody had some type of garden and of course that helped with the ecosystem. Now, right across from us we had, what was a naturally – nature carved field, a ball field, man-made nature created. That ball field covered several acres of land. Right there where Victoria Gardens is now. *Do you mean a baseball field?* Well when I came along and was old enough to play in it, it was already carved out. Somebody from the past, and I don't know who actually turned that area in front of me into a baseball field. *So, was that an attraction, did a lot of people gather there? Or was it mostly just for kids to play in?* Children gathered there. Surrounded in that field, there was a whole section just for people to play. I'm sure the adults that are in our life now, played there then. Surrounding that field was nothing but trees. There were blackberries, plums mostly. We were able to pick those, clean them, our families made pies, the kids got stuck with them. It was berry trees all over the outside of that area. There was a creek back there as well. All of that helped contribute to a healthier environment. The breathing was better, you know because we had more oxygen because of all of the trees. Speaking of the ecosystem those were the benefits we had. We took care of it, but I guess we took it for granted as well. It was a blessing to us but when it was gone, we surely missed it. And so part of building, bringing more

people into our community, that area was completely changed. *So, all of it was torn down and that's where Victoria Gardens was put in?* Yep, all torn down. Bringing more people into a community but not having provisions to sustain that community/environment... it can take a toll on the environment. I mean we had people coming in, I mean wonderful people, but too many. A population that was too much for a small area. So, those are things that helped in the development of our community. Over there at Wofford, when it rains, you get worms coming out of the ground. That's rich soil. When I was growing up the worms were coming up. That was rich soil. Eventually different factors contributed to eroding the soil and so, those are some of the things we miss. Education about the environment is being presented on the Northside is being performed in many ways, it may not be in the ways I'm describing it, but it is. Especially with gardens, encouraging people to eat healthier, Hub City Farmer's Market down the street which we are trying to get more people to utilize, those are things we are trying to make more people aware of.

We actually had a store nearby. We had a store in the community. It was like a little community store, called the "Little Red Store". The owner would allow families to pay when they got paid. They didn't have to pay right off the bat, so that was good. It was a variety store, so it had a little bit of everything. We had a lot of meat too. Some of us had turkeys and chickens, we did. But those are some of the things that helped sustain us. It (the store) burned a couple years back. In fact, one of the water commissioners in Spartanburg now, used to live in the Northside, was the grocer. He was the first young man that I knew that rode his bike to deliver groceries. His name is **name**.

Of course, in the process of the redevelopment, there's a lot of planning and dialogue about helping the environment. Increasing the benefits of the ecosystem on the Northside. *You were saying they are increasing the education about the environment and you mentioned gardens?* Right, the gardens in the past were almost every other house at least. *So currently would you say there's more awareness about gardening?* No, I wouldn't say more awareness. There is the opportunity to education. I think the children really need to be educated about and how to take care of the environment. I think what you are doing would be excellent. Because our young people are going to be carrying this on when we're gone. And they need to understand the importance of it now. What you're doing is crucial. It's awesome and well worth all of the planning and effort that you're putting into it. I applaud you for it. The kids, the people who have moved in, I'm talking about when people live there, some who have moved away need to know. People coming in, I mean when you start feeding information that they may take for granted. It will help, people will start thinking about it. It may not be everybody that you are trying to reach, but there will be people who will make a change, who will encourage other people. So, I think what you are doing is bringing an awareness, hands on, the importance of the environment, how we can maintain it, live healthier, however you're doing it will be a benefit.

And you know when you involve the younger generation that's teaching ownership. And that brings about pride. They will understand the fruits of their labor when they can **see** something. When you can see something developing, from when it first started sprouting or whatever. And it's nothing, just a little sprout and you can watch it develop that's just phenomenal. That's one of the biggest things, we had the spring and the gardens and people shared. There were people who shared. We made some money sometimes. Our father sold chicken eggs, little to nothing

inside by outside the community for a little bit higher price. Then we had vestibules that we shared. He had a huge garden. When I was growing up, we had anywhere from 9 to 12 people in our house. It was a big house though. We were able to can. Canning is, wow, canning goods is almost absolute. We were able to can good and eat off it all winter with all the people in our house. He was buying meats. But we were able to persevere the foods, people have no idea what canning is. We were able to persevere the foods and, in the summer, before we could play, we had to sit. We sat on chairs or turned over buckets or whatever and learned how to shuck stuff. Shuck corn or whatever, string beans, learned how to pull the strings off and break em and all that for the canning process for the mothers in our family. There're some people who probably still can or know about canning. These kids, once they do just one project, because they have done it themselves, that brings ownership and more pride in what they are doing. I'm sure you're going to make it known that these are the kids that participated and did this. *Right, and they can show their friends and talk about it.*

Interview with Jacob Hill*

***All resident's names have been changed.**

All italicized words indicate Helen Seddelmeyer speaking.

All non-italicized words indicate the resident speaking.

Gives a brief statement of research project

You all are really writing a new chapter in the history, and I hope at on your end someone at Wofford is taking the time to recognize that and then secondly to record it and get the history of it. Because these things have never been done before.

Tell me a little bit about your history with the neighborhood, how long you've lived here.

26 years last month. I came as a barber, I am a former military guy. Was in the Air Force, and um came here and decided I wanted to do something different. Air traffic control was just something I did and then it was very tedious, so I decided to do something totally different.

So, when I was in my college days, I cut hair to make money to help with my college costs and uh, so when I came out of the military, I went right back to that, so I became a barber. Being a barber is what led me to becoming involved in the community. People would come, sit down and talk to me about different issues so um, we were talking one day and one of my neighbors said, "you would be good if you'd help us with this community because we need more men in the community" so I had to set up and be voice and be a voice for the community. So that's when I attended the first neighborhood association meeting and that was about 12 years ago. And then I became the president shortly thereafter. They said, "we will nominate you as president if you'll take it," and I said sure and the next thing you know I was president. So I remained president for about 5 years, 4 year and 8 months to be exact and uh, then I had a transition of power, but that was how I got involved with the community. The first way I got involved in the community, and I should rewind this. This was before I became a voyager and all that, this was we had no access to healthy food and the there was no grocery store and we had later on, classified as a food desert by the federal government... everybody knows what that is now. I've donned a broccoli suit. I was working for Partners for Active Living, at the time Michelle Williams who is a member of our board, but we got together and partnered with PAL and I donned this broccoli suit so that I could emphasis to the community, cause we have high rates of

hypertension and diabetes effecting our community – very high. And it’s because of the diet. You know, the traditional diet that most of us ate. Which my mother, she changed our diet from a lot of pork fat to more healthy options – that how I got stated. And then Bill Barnet and the mayor decided they wanted to implement this plan to redevelop the Northside they came to the community *looking* for people like us, working toward a concern of making Northside better. And um, we came up with a team of 12 of us, that lived in the community. We went through extensive training and um with Stan Davis (?). I am grateful for his leadership. We trained for 8 months, nearly 8 months. And then we went to work in the community. We made ourselves Voyagers and we sat at the table, I designed the logo that we have on our card, I was an artist, always have been an artist, but I said I’ll design a logo. I didn’t think at the time I would do it, but then I did! I came up with something that everybody liked, but um after that we graduated. And that’s when I began my work in the community as a Voyager. And um, they knew that, therefore with this plan, with 400 acres that we have, that he needed to work with the community you know, instead of coming in and making decisions for the community. So that’s what they did. They came in and identified us, and said, we want yall to be a leadership team. It was, felt like a bridge between our stakeholders and partners and the community and we bridged that gap. You know the Voyagers go between that liaison if you will, to share and uh filter information to the community and make sure.. That at the end of the Voyagers are advocates for the community. We advocate for the well-being and the things that are most beneficial to the community. That’s our job.

So are you from Spartanburg before though?

Yes, I was born and raised in Spartanburg county.

But not the Northside?

Right, not the Northside. I was born in Pauline. I was born in Spartanburg Regional, but was raised the county, in Pauline, South Carolina.

So, when I was teenager in junior high school that’s when we moved to the city. After college I worked in Maryland for a while, in D.C. I came out of the Air Force and worked in D.C. for about 4 or 5 years. I was a grant writer for Prince George’s Association for Retarded Citizens, which is no longer correct because it’s politically incorrect but back then that is what it was. So um after my stint with that I decided to move back home due to my mother’s illness and that’s how I built my career here as a Voyager. So I was a barber but then the Voyager thing, took off. I’ve done so much more, that I don’t even wanna talk about it. You know, I’m 53 years old. So I’ve been at this, I’ve been all over the place, different places around the world, I’ve had a lot of experiences. I’ve lived in California, Georgia, Maryland and now here. So I’ve had a lot of experiences, but this has been the most rewarding at this point in my life. You know, doing this work is what I’ve found to be most fulfilling thus far because I like helping people, always have. So when I found this and people identified with Voyagers, people that they can come to to share this information with and get it out to the community that was the whole point. That we want to work with the community. We don’t want to come in and make decisions and do things, as Bill Barnet says, he’s our executive director, he says, “This is your party, we’re just guests. I don’t live here, so I wanna know what is your idea, what are your goals for the community” And so we told him what we wanted, we said this is what we’d like to see over here. So we went to work. He’s been a champion as far as philanthropy and getting team members and boards and things to donate all kind of money. We’ve got those kinds of checks (points to those framed on the wall)

all of the place here. In the back, I'll take you to the back, but we have checks and grants and money that has been donated to us, oh man, like I said, we're working on 55 million-dollar projects right now.

Back when you were a barber and you were approached to be the President, did you already have a lot of ideas for the community? Were there lots of things that you saw needed attention? Yeah, we had been in discussions, people in the community had been in discussions about what we would like to see. And we really didn't have any clue that anybody would take us seriously, because if you will, at that time, the Northside was really rough. It was kind of crazy, it was a lot of things going on, a lot of nefarious activities, you know, it wasn't conducive to a place where people wanted to be. And I took a, nonchalant, apathetic attitude towards it all, until they keep coming to me saying, "Tony we need help, this community needs help" And then I said you know what, this is about the third time somebody's came to me like this, so that's when I got involved in PAL and it went from there. **Name** was the leader of NDG at the time, he was the Tammie of the day. **Name** was our project manager at that particular time.

Was it called NDG?

It was called NDC, Northside Development Corporation. That was when **name** was here, well he was still here when they changed NDC to NDG. The reason for that was, they wanted to go from the corporation, which sounded big and monstrous to development group which sounded more personal and that was the reason for that. Because I asked **name**, why did you go from NDC to NDG, well because we wanted to be a little bit more personal it was smaller, more intimate per say, then to be a corporation, you know. And they weren't really a corporation that wasn't really what they were.

*Was **name** one of the people who approached you asking for your help?*

Absolutely, **name** was one of the one's who said Tony we are doing some projects over here would you be interested in being a part of a community lead team? I said sure, I would. And uh, we got together, he assembled all of us together. **Name** was very instrumental, he had worked in the Northside for 20 years. He had an extensive history with the Northside before I came. So um, he knew, he had worked with the President I had replaced, **name**, who is a Northside Voyager too. He had worked with her for several years before I came on the scene.

And how did you get involved with PAL?

I didn't work for PAL, they approached me because of their relationship with **name**. **Name** knew them and **name** and they said you might want to talk to this guy, you know he's saying some good things about what he'd like to see, he's very vision for the future and that's how we got together.

You were saying that one of the first things you guys were involved in was the access to healthy foods, how do you see that's changed over time and how that is now?

It went from us out there in broccoli suits to us having a mobile farmer's market. The bus, the mobile bus, which delivered food to us during the growing season twice a week. And they would come to our park, Chapel St. park, and allow the residents and the community to come out and you know, purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. And those of us who receive SNAP benefits would get double our benefits on the SNAPs. So if you got ten dollars on your SNAP card you

can spend that and get twenty dollars worth of produce. So that was an incentive for us to use that mobile market. The mobile market was such a great success that it sold so many metric tons of food that year, that they eventually came a time where they wanted to relocate the farmer's market and we said right here! So we ended up with the farmer's market in our community, even though we didn't have a grocery store and nothing like that to sustain us, they moved in. And um, became you know, a very integral part of what we are trying to do.

Something that has come up, is the fact that there are all these wonderful services in the community but maybe there's a lack of sharing information – do you have any personal feelings about that?

Well I think that the community knows, I just think that the community has to, and it takes time, but it speaks to what **name** was speaking about yesterday, about the shame factor. About people being embarrassed to know that they have SNAP or they're on food stamps. So we deal with those issues by you know providing privacy for people, you know if they don't people to know they're using SNAP because people will do that, they just won't use the service instead of telling you their ashamed. So we try and provide it at the market down the street here where people can, you know. Liberty has fresh fruit and vegetables that she sells, so they have a corner there where people can have some privacy. And that's what it's really all about, as far as our services are concerned we have a case manager **name** that deals with all the services we provide and she has active facebook presence, she goes on facebook and the voyagers go out into the community and we deliver door hangers, different things, we have our monthly meetings where we inform the community and try and get out information to the community. But anytime you're dealing with a community that's been depressed and that hasn't been dealt with in the past with in kind ways, there's always that apathy, and that hesitation to get involved. Because people don't know, they're curious about what's your intent, what's your purpose. So we deal with that more than anything. And perceptions, you know Northside is about perceptions because everybody perceives it to be this really dangerous place and as a resident for 26 years I can tell you it's not, it's really not. Many times it's because the people who decide to do things over here that become known in the news or the law, the killings or the drug activity... it's usually from people who don't live here. And they decide this is a docile community of old people and we can come over here and if they say anything we can come over here and wave our gun and shut them up. But that was the whole purpose of the Voyagers again, so that these groups, we let them know. This ain't no place you want to be, if you're not here to do anything dealing with education, growth, or job training or you know, whatever you're doing, if it's not conducive to what we want to be, you don't want to do it here. That was the whole purpose. And the Voyagers are located throughout this community and we talk to each other. I get calls, **name**, this girl at the park, she's using the park for a restroom, okay well call the law. We had to take a stance where, we own the community. We have to take responsibility for what happens in the community. And that's the message the Voyagers have always tried to give to the residents. We have the power to do this, but we have to work together. So **name** on the corner, and then **name** on the corner by Cleveland Park. Then **name** is on the corner right here by Victoria Gardens. **Name** is on the corner of _____. And I'm right here on the corner of _____. So we see things and we talk, that's kind of how we keep a handle and the crime rate in this community went down 80% over the years the Voyagers have been together. It's amazing, they even moved our neighborhood watch police officer off to another community. They were like well you've done so well over there. He's like it's not me, it was the community neighborhood association and those Voyagers. They need Voyagers in every

community. SO that was the purpose of us and we've fulfilled those purposes but our task is just beginning really, with all the things, once these brick and mortars go up, then our job really begins. And that it to make sure that the community is utilizing them first and that they have the opportunities to utilize these things pretty much first. That's the on-going challenge now, to make sure going forward you know that we are able to sustain what we started. That's why we have 10 new Voyagers coming on and training in January. We was wondering what the next was going to look like. But we came up with some very dedicated people who we didn't have to recruit. They kind of came to us, they said hey I wanna be a Voyager. But we had to stress to them the importance of being a Voyager, not just to say you're a Voyager and wear a shirt, but to do the work. We condensed the training, this is our third class, our second class they went through training for about 5 months. So we were about to condense the training from about 8 months to 5. And then we facilitated, the Voyagers facilitated with the system from Stan Davis who trained us originally. So he comes in and does spot training and checks in on us and gives us incentives to keep going.

With the new buildings that are coming up in the Northside, especially the T.K. Gregg community center...

Dr. T.K. Gregg. Some people tend to forget that, I like to give him credit, posthumous respect because he was a pioneer. He was major, you might want to look his history up, he was a major guy. He was big time. Yeah, he used to do, care for, take people any time day or night, all night. He was a really, he was a real saint. He died at a very young age, I think 36, 38 when he passed away. But that was his mission, was to make sure that the African Americans in the Spartanburg community had a recreation place. And the first one was like a tin building, tin roof. And then after he passed away they built the one that was torn down here, few years back. And when they said where we gonna build a new community center, we said Northside! We want it over here, and we rallied and you know, we had meetings and sessions about it and we finally agreed that it would be right there, next to us.

Right now, from what I've understood, there is a very transient feel in the community; people are moving in and out, renting and different factors, and there's also this nostalgia I've been hearing about. You know, back then everyone was really tight-knit and watched out for each other, and obviously the Voyagers watch out for the community, but it's hindered if people are coming and going all of the time. I think there's great opportunity for the rec center and other buildings to be a hub, or center for everyone to gather, and hopefully that would help foster a greater sense of community – was this something that was a major draw for the construction of the new buildings?

Well yeah. The ladies who live in Oak View which is where the T.K. center will be located, they were moved out but they get the first choice to come back when we build the new housing. There's going to be 5,000 residents in this community when all this is said and done. Right now it's about 1,700/1,800.

Have most of them committed and said they will return?

A lot of them have, some are happy where they are. And we said if you're happy where you are that's fine, stay. But you will be afforded opportunity to move back to this community where you grew up, if you want to do. So won't be mad if they don't, but we will give them the opportunity. It was essential for us going forward, because everybody talks about gentrification and

destroying African American communities all over the country so we said how do we combat that and how do we deal with our stakeholders and the public at large., who are gonna have these kind of feelings about it. Well so we said we have to give those opportunities to come back, and move back into the community, and that's what we do. And that's part of the Voyagers mission as well, we didn't rely on Spartanburg Housing Authority to do the tracking, which they are mandated by the Federal government to track people who move for 6 years. But what we did, we had to tell them the Voyagers are gonna track these people because they are members of our community. We don't want to lose them. So the Voyagers have their own database. Our own database of who moved out of Oak View. We call them once a month, to keep up with them and see what they're status is. The requirement is that they remain in good standing with their vouchers, whatever assistance they may be receiving, because that has to be in place for when they move back – they have to be in good standing. So we want them to know, you know, you keep a good standing where you are, keep your bills paid, everything you got to do right, and when we get home we'll be calling you and then you can decide whether you want to come back or not. And I tell them, when you see what's gonna happen here you gonna want to come back. "Oh no I'll never come back over here, I don't wanna come back over here" and I said okay, we'll see. Just know that you have an option, that's all we want you to know, that you have an option. Now some of the ladies who lived in Oak View have houses on Brawley St. We already moved some of them in there. So that was a great thing, to show that we weren't trying to displace people we were just trying to provide better homes and housing and livable conditions for people because Oak View was not in any state. It had black mold, it had sewage problems, it had insufficient heating in the winter, insufficient cooling in the summer. It was just a mess. So we had to sue the owner, **name**, for the land and ownership of it. And we sued him, took it through the year, came back and gave it to us through eminent domain, and uh we hired the case manager **name** to handle the 98 families or ladies who lived there. We placed every one of them in housing, we gave them 1500 buck checks to go towards either down payments towards their next place they were moving to or to just take that money and do whatever they want, open a college fund or just have a merry Christmas with it. So that's what we did for the community and when people said you moved people out, no, no, not us. I won't be the face of destruction of my community... as a Voyager, I told them that, if you think I'm here to destroy my community you got it wrong. The Voyagers are here to make sure our residents and this community benefit on every level from this revitalization and that's what we want and that's what we're here to do. We don't work for NDG, we're advocate, we work in collaboration and partnership with NDG. But we're strictly advocates for this community and NDG wanted us to be that way. They wanted that, they want success, they want their dollars to go and their investments to go and work out. We don't expect someone to go well here's two million dollars, we were donated 6 million dollars to our neighborhood, that was about 3 years ago. I was the one who accepted it and a big ole' to do down at the Monarch Café, but um that money, we used that money towards the Franklin school. Towards the Butterfly creek park and all these different things that we're working on. So we want people to know, you know that this is our community, we want other people to come and join our community, but we want to have a community where people can stay if they want to and other people can come if they desire to. That's what we want! And also we definitely want the relationship between VCOM, Wofford, the hospital, the fairgrounds, all of that, we want this relationship to be broad and inclusive and diverse. Because that's what this community has always been.

At the Northwest Community Center there is this amazing dynamic where people not from the Northside convene there. I see it sort of as a precursor to what's to come. More diversity, more influence, greater leadership and mentorship opportunities, and I think mixed-income housing could help. Especially with Wofford and VCOM students – I know there's a big emphasis on cradle to college. Was that the force behind the Franklin school?

As you know Cleveland Academy is a charter school. So they've been having some struggles, even right now, but what we found is that the early we can get the kids into STEM, which is science, technology, engineering and math, that that would stem the tide of the deficiency and the disparity that's happening at Cleveland Academy. Because they're right there and when they go to Cleveland they'll be in a better place to learn and to grow. And from there on up. Because we're working on other initiatives now, with junior high schools and high schools and all of the projects you guys are on, especially **name** and **name**, that are going to help us funnel these kids to the education system in a better way, that they are benefited from and learning more. Reading comprehension is one thing we work on and I think one of you project teammates is working on, **name**, was going to do, this reading program. She's going to partner with **name** who is a Voyager, but for some reason the school had some issues with that about things with their curriculum about how it has to be approved. So we want those to create, that program is going to go forward somehow I think, through working with Victoria Gardens because they have a learning center there that I think she is going to utilize and because we need to kids to not just read, but understand what they're reading because if we ask a kid to read they'll read but if you ask them to explain to me what you read and you ask questions about it, they're like um not sure. So reading comprehension is as important as being able to read. So we're gonna work on that, but the early learning center and that cradle to career was a must in chomping away at the bit of that, that problem in the neighborhood. That kids weren't in elementary school and couldn't perform, couldn't pass standardized tests, or were having problems you know with basic skills, so we gotta start early. So that's gonna be 6 weeks to 5 years in STEM, not day care, STEM. Actual STEM. So I said to myself, how do you teach a 6 week old about STEM? But they have ways, they showed us a video that I cannot sit here and tell you about but they showed us how it was done and it's interesting. Very intriguing.

Where there a set number of goals? Or have they adapted?

No, we had a plan, we knew exactly what we wanted to do. You know going forward. And they said as we go forward, as we get projects done, the new projects we don't know, we'll just have to play it by ear. But these projects, on the way now, were intentional, and on purpose.

What is the long-term plan after these projects are completed?

We just had a meeting yesterday with our partners about what does NDG look like after the next 5 years or so and what does it gonna be going forward. Well we decided to continue to do development in this community and NDG will act as a focal point or source for that redevelopment. Actually NDG is a land bank, and what they do is they acquire land in the community and they own 25 acres this time. But they acquire the land to provide home ownership opportunities for residents. So they acquire the land, work with contractors and developers to develop the land and to build into homes and whatever else. Single family homes, some units on Brawley are duplexes. So we work with developers to do that. There will be more single-family homes located in this other, in the streets right across from Wofford. Right now they are building condos pretty much and they just finished 7 news one on Brawley. So it's

gonna look a lot different here in the next 5 years. You're gonna see gradually more people moving into the community, it's gonna be diverse. It won't be all African American. You know it will be a diverse group. And we want that, that's what we want. So going forward, NDG is going to continue to be a focal point for the community and I can say like a quarterback. Same priorities as we have now: education, home ownership, job training. Those are our top priorities.

Can you tell me about Start: ME?

That's the business incubator. We got 62 people interviewing this year, that's how it's grown. The first year, this is our third year implementing Start: Me, the first year we had like maybe 15. This year, our third year, 62. And in the past few years we've graduated a bunch of individuals who have started their own businesses. And there are some that are even gonna open up in the Northside when we get the stuff built.

That was my next question, do a lot of people who go through these types of trainings get located elsewhere?

Well some of them now are located elsewhere, but a lot of them are still waiting for their opportunity, cause that was part of the model for Start: Me was that your business had to support, grow the Northside in some way.

Are there any personal goals you want to see the Northside to fulfill, outside of NDG or the Voyagers?

Personally I just want to always be able to work in the community for myself, I just like being a part of the community, you know um, organization. Just making sure that this community is doing things that are beneficial to the residents and keeping the residents informed. You know sometimes we find ourselves a little out of the loop of things that are happening in the greater Spartanburg area but just, for me, making sure this community is progressive, making sure its informed, and making sure its, its, its, working. Doing everything it can to be self-sustaining, independent, um people feel like they're contributing back to, you know, greater Spartanburg community. Cause you know a lot of the time they see communities like ours as you know as a leech, or they consume more than they give, all these concepts you know, sometimes they're not true. So we want a community that's more, more proactive than reactive.

Do you feel like other communities, like Wofford or other, that the tide is starting to change and the perception of Northside is improving?

Well, YES. Oh, absolutely. When we first did our charrettes back in 2013, you know um we had the Wofford students as our scribes. They wrote, just like you, in every meeting, they were writing down notes, keeping notes, and detailed notes – they were very good. Word for word notes they didn't miss a dotted 'I' or crossed "t". That's when we learned that the students were willing, that a lot of them share, you know, things that they're parents shared with them like don't cross the river. Northside is the river, everybody knows this story now, and stay in the bubble of Wofford and uh, don't cross the river, known as North Church Street, to that back community. But the students that came here, the Bonner students that came here years ago, I'd love to meet them now because that's been seven years. But, they were excited about it, they always wanted to help us. They told us they didn't necessarily believe, you know, in the polarization that had been occurring. And they wanted to bridge the gap, and they did. They did

an awesome job at it. And I think what they did was set the precedent for you all. You know, and that was seven years ago. You might have been in elementary school then.

I'm glad you feel that way. I know I've heard that some people still feel the same way though.

Oh yeah. Some alumni still feel that way. I was just asked to be about of, **name**, asked me to be a part of the um Diversity and Inclusion committee and I accepted it. We've had our second meeting Thursday, no last Friday. And it's great. I told him, **name**, I'm gonna be frank with you now because that's how it should be going forward, there should be no any kind of ambiguity, we gonna deal with the hard issues. We're gonna deal with the hard topics that nobody wants to talk about, the big elephant in the room over there, then I'm with this. I said if this just for show, I don't wanna be a part of it. I said, I was very frank with it, I told not only him but everybody in there. **Name, name, name**, all of them, everyone in the room. I just wanted to be clear, I wanted to be a part of something that was gonna be, it was gonna work, deal with the issues that needed to be dealt with, you know, and that's just perceptions really. The story of Wofford and the land graph they did with the community and how they got the land, that's very, um, hurtful to a lot of people. And you'll probably meet some people who will talk to you about that, who know more than I do. I just remember that area over there that's now part of Wofford's campus was a community. I remember that as a child, so um, how they acquired it, I was never aware, the tactics or the methods they used to acquire the land, but in many instances it wasn't fair, but we gonna talk about and there's gonna be some concessions made. Now, **name**, who just got 2.2 billion dollars from the sale of **name**, he owns the 14 acres of land that exist back there, now that I've been able to gather and learn. So, I'm interested to see what he will actually do with some of it, in respect to that situation. Like what can we do to not rectify, because at this point there's nothing, you can't make it right, but you can recognize what was done and maybe do something to, um make do, or something.

I've heard a rumor about putting a museum in.

I've heard that too. It would ease a lot of the tensions. Because even to this day you hear people say, yeah, they did this and that and they did this and that, you know, I heard stories back in the day about the magnolia trees. You know, in the South, I don't know if you know this, but in the South the magnolia tree was known as the lynching tree. And, so when you look at Wofford, not necessarily on that side road, where the new basketball facility is built, but on the front, and along there you've got all these magnolia trees. The community, they say, that was a sign to the black community that we aren't welcome. You'll find your black ass in one of these trees. So, (scoffs) I'll say "Woah I didn't know that!" they were like yeah, **name**. Then they named Magnolia street is where the court system is so, if you're black you'll end up in the court system on Magnolia and you're gonna get lynched in the court system. So the history here is, is deep. And it's kind of quirky. But I've growing up in the city, I've never experienced it to that depth. I dunno if it's because of my skin color, or I wasn't dark enough to be called a n-word or whatever. I never felt the intensity of racism that I've heard some other people speak of. My mother was about education, about you know, getting a long with people. She always taught me you gotta go out into the world and deal with everybody. You can't have these preconceived notions and these ideas about folk you don't know. You have to deal with people so, go out into the world with an open mind and an open heart. So that's the way I was raised to think, but um, I learned when I moved to Northside 26 years ago, all these stories. There was another story about a man who was accused of offended a female student, a white female student and um he went to

court and he was acquitted of it and they told him, get on, get out of town. He got on the train and he was never seen again. So you know, stories like that, they linger. And word of mouth doesn't make it any better. Cause when you tell the story about the time about here, it gets totally different. When you go back and look these stories up you find, the ethicacy, is a lot of embellishing probably have been done, people added their own little twists here and there, but at the end of the day, it's, you've heard this before, there's always some element of truth to a story or a tale. There's an element of truth. Well there's an element of truth to these, but I'm sure there's a lot of embellishment that's occurred over the years, so it's good to go back and clarify things like that. We said, we want to set the record straight on this, you know. And sometimes when you don't do that, it makes you look more guilty than not. You know, when you're not willing to address a situation, and a lot of times Wofford said we won't deal with it, you know, we got what we want, we don't want to talk about that anymore. So it's like NO, we have to talk about it. We want to talk about it. Let's clear this up. So with Wofford taking the stance that it's taking today, with diversity and inclusion and you know the relationship that they're trying to build with the Northside community now, it's a new day and it's a good day. Because a lot of our students they don't even know, they don't look at Wofford – they're kids. They don't know that Wofford is attainable. You can go to Wofford – wait really?! I think about it, I was accepted to Wofford but I decided to go to Tuskegee because I just wanted to go away. I don't want to be here I wanted to leave home. So, it wasn't about the history because at that time I didn't know about all this stuff. I knew Wofford was a good school, I had some friends, former older friends of mine, that were in my community that played football at Wofford. Um, **name**, he was a great football player at his time, he was well-known. You might want to look his history up. Running back for Wofford back in the day, in the early years of bring African Americans in. **name**. They called him "Rabbit", put that down, because he could run like hell. But um that was one of the stories too that inspired me. When I was accepted, I said well Rabbit went to Wofford. He lived right across the street from us, he played football there. I was like whhat, so **name** who was the student affairs officer way back, back in the 80s, he um, I said way back, can't believe I'm saying that, he um, he told me go to Wofford, you'll love it. It's a great liberal arts school, you'll love it. And I visited campus you know, and I felt back then you could really feel the... the fact that people weren't really comfortable with me there. And it was like what are you doing here. So I felt that but it didn't bother me because that was pretty much everywhere back then. It was prevalent just about everywhere you went. But I decided to go to Tuskegee because I wanted another experience, I wanted away from home, that black college experience. And another reason why, is because when I was in high school, I was in the class with mostly white kids. There were very few black kids in my classes. I had trig, I had pre-cal, I had all those classes that a lot of black folks just weren't in, and I used to get angry at my guidance counselor, I said there's no black kids in my classes, they're all white, they don't like me. He say's well you are there for a reason. You represent your people. And I've always been that. I've gotta represent my people, representing black folks everywhere I go. But, that was the message that they gave me and I did. I said okay, I'll look at it that way, I'll go through it, that I was representing my people, and on this level. Just to show that we can achieve, on those levels. That was important back then, you know for other black kids to see that. So that was why I decided to go to Tuskegee because I wanted a different experience. Cause I went to school with white kids, white kids were in all of my classes. I used to go to their houses after school, at least they were open to me, we used to go to their houses after school for homework or for swim, you know, one particular young lady, her name was **name** her father is a good friend of **name** right now, to this day, and they moved to

Charlotte because the **name** and all that. And their friendship with **name** and all that, but **name**, she was the president and I was the vice president of the student body when we graduated high school. And **name** was always invited me over to their house, they had a pool, tennis courts, and it was like **name** do you want to swim, and I was like “can I?”. Really? So I swam in their pool, played tennis, her mother **name** and **name** were very kind to me. They had a lot of dogs, made me antsy, but you know it was great. And that experience I was able to share with others. I said well everybody is alike, in the black community you have this perception that all white people are like this, and white people is similar, all black people are like this. And those relationships I had helped to dispel some of that, because I would go right back and go no, no they like fried chicken too. They eat watermelon like we do, you know whatever was the issue. I was always playing that role of dispelling myths dispelling misconceptions about certain things. And I don’t mind having that as long as it was gonna change people for the better. I wouldn’t mind doing it as long as it brought understanding, and clarity, and made people feel better about each other. And I’ll tell you this, we have black history at my high school and when I was the first president, I was a junior then, to go to my principle and say, I don’t think the white kids should be excused for black history assembly, you know, uh and get credit just because they don’t want to come to our assembly. So **name** got on there and said well, on the intercom after school, no one will be excused from being absent tomorrow morning at 11 o’clock for the assembly. White people were like what?! Parents were calling up saying that’s not for us, that’s for them. So **name** said nooo, it’s black history is American history. Oh, I thought he was gonna lose his job because people were like what?! So that was the first time, the first year, in the history of Spartanburg high school that white folks, white kids, actually attended our assembly. And they loved it. They said, that was beautiful, I didn’t know that. It was amazing. Instead of becoming like this, this pariah, people embraced me they said **name**, I didn’t think it was gonna work, thought I was gonna be hated for it, but I was actually embraced for doing that. They said that was awesome. I said, well we all should know about each other, you know, so the white kids were like, didn’t like it at first but then they came up slowly every day, **name** that was cool, man. I didn’t like the fact at first, but it turned out to be cool, man. I was like thanks, I knew you’d like it you know. So those are the kind of things I’ve always wanted to do. Bring people together, I don’t like division, I don’t like you know conflict. I think that we can find solutions through just conversations. And sometimes we’re afraid to have conversations because we are so caught up in our misconceptions that we can’t lay all that stuff out and say hey, what’s up, talk to me. That’s all we have to do. Not believe what your mother said. Not believe what your father said. You know, they came from a different era, and back then it might of be, politically correct to feel that way, but in these days, with America becoming more and more diverse we need to have understanding. People need to have shared understanding.

Interview with Monica Jones*

***All resident’s names have been changed.**

All italicized words indicate Helen Seddelmeyer speaking.

All non-italicized words indicate the resident speaking.

**Gives a brief description of the research* I believe you are from the Northside?*

I was raised - not really, I was raised up at back of the College, you know where Wofford College is, I was raised up on Cummings street. Uh and I moved to Northside when I was 17, I got married and moved up on Fremont Ave with my mother-in-law.

Name told me you live across from a park?

Yeah, right across from Chapel street park. So, I've lived in there twenty years.

Do you still live there?

Yeah I still live right across from the park. On Fremont Ave. The same house.

How would say the neighborhood has changed since you first moved there?

Uh, it's a lot better. Much better.

Any specific ways its better?

Talking about the good ways?

Either good or bad.

Well... where I live at. It has changed a lot, and it's uh not really, sorry if I talk loud, I just got off a 6 hour night shift, when I moved there, the park where I live at, we had a lot of, I had a lot of complaints about it. I had to call the police a lot about it. But, it's kind of, it's a lot better I'm gonna put it like that, like not completely, you know like it should be. Now that it's gonna get warm, a lot of the, a lot of the people who probably don't have anywhere to be, more of the homeless over there and all kind of activity going on. So that's why I had to call the police and like I'm telling ya, it's better, but it's not like it's really supposed to be. Like the big park, you know where the other clean park, the big park at, across the street? *Yes.* Okay now it's much better, they have lights, they have it lit up and all that activity don't go on in that park, but up where I live at, it go on at night. And I used to call the police all the time. But lately I haven't called the police. Like at night, like 1 or 2 o'clock at night they in the park, and one night I had to call the police, because this been about a year and half ago, but they was over there cooking and so, I called the police all the time. And he told me that they was cooking so he had them stayin' over there! And one time I had to go to the chief of police, so they start, you know, coming back, you know seeing about it. It kind of, almost stopped. But now it's starting back, because you know they really don't care. But... like I said it's getting better. That's all I can say about that.

So, you think the police really don't care?

To me, they don't. No. Because I used to call them all the time, 8,9, 10 years ago when I first moved there I would call em', call em', call em'. So finally, I went to the, up to the city hall and reported to, uh they've got the same uh, I guess he was the chief of police then, but he got to start checking the area. And then maybe about, 3 years ago they had a officer, and he did a good job on checking the area. And he would come around, he would ask you questions, would make... I called him last time and he would over and see about it... a lot of em' don't like to call but when they come back they don't pay him any attention, they just start coming back. And I had a lot of problems, you know, stuff like that. I put up no trespassing signs in my yard on my house, so they could stay over there on that park.

Are your neighbors also bothered by the park?

Erm... I believe so because, all the time, I mean, the house on the side of Fremont Ave (for sale?), now I don't see any problems with them. But the house behind me, but they didn't move.

So, now you have to ask **name** and the rest of them, down on the street from me, but I think it do. One neighbor, she live on, Vernon St, but I really live on Fremont, but I think it bothers her, I know she calls the police all the time. So... you know I just can't really say if it bothers her that much or not.

Do you know more of your neighbors now – or not so many of them – since you moved there?
Erm... not so, not so many of them. Because I just know to kind of stay to myself. You know stay to yourself, twenty years or so, but I know **name** she's the older lady, **name** across the street, I know her. And uh, there's a house empty, where the person lived, used to live, I know him. But girls on down the street, I just kind of you know, keep going, stay to myself.

Did you stay to yourself when you first moved there too?
Ahaha, yes, yes ma'am.

Haha okay, because some people say when they first moved to the Northside, you know twenty or so years ago, there was a better sense of community. But for you...?
Just like I said, when I first moved there, it in August of 1999, when I met the neighbors across the street, he was nice...then I think 3 families lived in the house next to him, the person in that now, she's gone somewhere, she my age, but she older now. And **name** across the street, the house behind me, it was just a mess, but they had... The neighbors there now, I don't see them. But the other neighbors – that's all I really know over there. And I've been there twenty years.

Are there other things in the neighborhood that you either like or don't like besides the park?
But you know, even with all the activity going on, I really like, I really like living there. But, I really like it up there. And my grandchildren, my great grandchildren, go over to the park and play they love it. But the park is really nice, if they get, keep the people who drink, smoke, marijuana whatever they be smoking, if they can kind of get them... the park is nice so, so it's a shame, that park is. Now let me tell you this, the people who be over there, they don't live in this area! There come from somewhere else! They don't be from the Northside, they be from the other side of town.

How do you think they get there?

Some of them walk! It's a lot of males, they know the activity, that go on over there so they know where to come! Yeah, so it's like, it makes people mad. One time, this guy, I think he hadn't been long out of jail, it was early on Saturday morning, he comes from across the street. I had to really get rid of my dog, so they come and just pick at my dog. And he's a boxer mixed with a pit and he was at the fence just beatin' on the fence, but I had my dog tied. If the dog kind of got loose and I had to call the police on about that. He was trying to get to me, stuff like that, most of the time the neighbors that know each other, we look out for each other, but the people over there just beating on my fence, just trying to... you know provoke my dog. I won't let them, when it started getting cold, keeping my dog in the house. And uh, when I take him out in the morning, I couldn't get him tied back because he was so strong, cause he weighed a hundred pounds, he just pulled me, and then in order to keep my dog from jumping over the fence when they was messing with him I just... (says something) but it hurt me right back. Yeah that was my baby.

You mentioned that your grandchildren go to the park? Has most of your family stayed in the Northside?

Uh noooo, they don't live in the Northside. Most of my, all of my grandchildren except for one, 16 and 19, they go and play basketball over there sometimes. But all of my smaller grandchildren, they out of town, but when they come home from where ever. They're all over, one Atlanta, one Las Vegas, they come from all over the place.

Do you plan on staying in the Northside?

Yes ma'am, this is still my house. I plan on staying. I don't plan on selling, but it's a big house. Sometimes I think it's too much for me to keep up. Sometimes I think about getting a senior apartment, but it's not anyone making me leave. But if I wanted to get a senior apartment, like I said, I like it there. I really do.

Are there any changes you'd want to see in the neighborhood?

Mostly just having better security at the park. And maybe they might put some lights in the the park like they did at the one down at the bottom because, the homeless used to get over there in the park, they all get up under the benches, stay in the park a lot.

Is the upkeep of the park okay?

I think the upkeep of the park is great. Someone come over there every morning, someone from the city, and do the park and they always plant and put trees out. They did a good job of upkeeping the park, that's the biggest change that park has had, uh, people not in this area just come over here and take the benches. It's nice, they keep the upkeep of the park.

Is there anything else you want to say about the Northside?

No...that's all I can think of. Other than that I like living there.

Interview with Elijah Lee*

***All resident's names have been changed.**

All italicized words indicate Helen Seddelmeyer speaking.

All non-italicized words indicate the resident speaking.

Gives brief description of the aim of the research project

Are you thick-skinned? You're not thin-skinned, are you? When it comes to the reality in this, a lot of people miss out on, the reality of the time I grew up there. Segregation, all that played uh a part in growing up there, and I'm glad that's changing in a sense because you're right, the demographics will change, so but anyway I'll start with growing up there. I was born in Roanoke, Virginia. My Mom is from Roanoke, my Father grew up here. And it's interesting because he grew up Back of the College. And Back of the College is Wofford and that played a pretty big part of the Northside. Um, so I was started at Cummings Street. Have you seen Cummings Street? *Yes*. It was a very nice school, but I walked – have you been on the Northside? Do you know where Vernon St., Aden St. is? - *Yes sir, I do*. Oh okay, well I lived on the corner of Vernon and Aden St. And it was a working-class neighborhood. Most of the people work at Spartan Mills or the hospital. Um, it was a mixed neighborhood. You know, even though you had segregation, it was mixed. For instance, on the street that I lived on, Vernon, you could go up that street, uh it was mostly Black. And on the right-hand side were Whites. And on Aden

St. from the corner back up to Fremont, was White. But we all, we got along. Black, Whites, uh, and we went to school at Cummings Street. Even though they had bus service, we walked from Vernon over to Cummings Street school. And we often take routes that took us by General Hospital, Spartanburg General Hospital, which you wouldn't believe existed when you look at Spartanburg Regional now. But, you know, it was walkable, and we did that. We'd catch the bus and go to Cummings Street sometimes. But the interesting thing during that time was that was Fremont (the elementary school) right there at our front door. But because of segregation, we couldn't attend. Uh, Cleveland where you are working, we couldn't attend there either but we, on the weekends as children, play on the football field. Yeah, that's where we would have our games. And Fremont, where there are apartments now, when it was a school it had a great big ball field. And on weekends, when school was out, that's where we were able to play. So you know, we were able to access those facilities during the weekends. Um, and then you know other than that, like I said most of the jobs in that area were Spartan Mills and the hospital, those types of things.

I've heard stories about the ball field – were there fruit trees around it?

This is a different one. The ball field on Cleveland, where you are, was pretty much open. I don't recall... it may have had some trees, I know Fremont just had Oak trees on the back side where the homes were. On the side going down on Vernon, it was all open. And it was very elevated, I mean you wouldn't know it now, but it was very elevated and so we used to go up and down, I guess playing up and down the hills and stuff like that.

How old were you when you moved from Virginia to here?

I was maybe about two, three years old.

How long did you live in the Northside?

We stayed on the Northside until about, I want to say '72 or '73. I left Cummings Street to go to the high school on the South Side. So, again, during the segregated time frame. So, we sometimes, most of the times, walked, caught the bus going over to Carver. Carver high school. And the school systems, if you're on the Northside is Cummings Street, and there were some kindergartens in what we call Back of the College, um can't think of the name of them, but the transition was from Cummings Street, I attended from 1st grade to 9th grade and then 10th, 11th, 12th at Carver.

I've heard a story that you worked for the grocery store?

Oh yeah, there was Little Red Grocery Store up on the corner of Vernon and Chapel... and Fremont. Over there where the park you were referencing was Chapel Street, and so I'm playing in my... my Grandmother worked in the school system, she was a cook and she was well-known in that area and the store at that time, you could access credit. The proprietor for that store was like okay pay me next week, that type of thing, that don't do a lot of today, but at any rate he came down and said, "Name, uh I need one of your boys to come work for me," And I being the oldest, I got the finger and course I went and started working for him and my job was to deliver groceries. People would call in and, I wish I had taken picture back then but I didn't but, I never really thought about it, but the bicycle was pretty much a bicycle but it had this basket the size, half the size of this table, and I would ride that bike up and down Ashville Highway all Vernon St, all around the community, delivering groceries. Twenty dollars a week, and you know at that

time the proprietors of that store, we would sometimes work for him at his house, but he was very good. I was able to, at some point when I was able to prove myself, uh showed me how to operate the cash register. So, small things that people would come in and buy I was able to, you know, operate and wait on them from that perspective.

Was the name just Little Red grocery store?

No, actually, the guy who owned the store, ran the store, his name was A.C. Paris (sp?) So it was, and people in the community, basically referred to it as Little Red store, but I knew, that Paris was the one who owned the store. A.C. Paris was the guy who owned the store. His son was a policeman, wasn't a very friendly guy. And I remember where his father had taught me, and this is one of the most impactful moment of my young life growing up. Um, and being confronted with racist words and stuff like that, and I'm back here cutting meat and stuff like that because his father had taught me and he would come to the store and use the bathroom and then he saw me back there with my hands on the meat and that's when he said – using the N word – “Take the hand of the meat”. So that was very impactful, since, that era, you know. But you know, it didn't, I kept working so.

Was the grocery store still open by the time you graduated high school?

Yeah, yeah it was still there. I left in '73 and went to college in North Carolina, and I don't know exactly the time frame that store closed, but it changed hands and several different people went through that, that's how it ended up.

Right now, one of the biggest issues is that there isn't a grocery store.

Well maybe, and I'm not sure that's a grocery store – no that's not a grocery store, down by across from the college... *Monarch Café?* Oh Monarch, okay that's a café, so it's not really a grocery store. It would be nice to have a little grocery store there because people are just, in that area, they had credit, and you know, had fresh greens and very operable stores.

Most people say Little Red was the last grocery store.

Yeah, I don't think they had as close to full capacity. I mean people would come up and set up different things and stuff like that.

You mentioned your Father is from Back of the College. How long as that side of your family been here?

Oh well, he grew up here. Back of the College, and my Grandmother and my Mom. My Grandmother was from Fairfield county. So she met, you know her side of the family were peoples, so she moved in her time coming up to Spartanburg is when she met her father's father. And so they later got married and they lived in Back of the College at that time so, I don't know what time frame they moved from Back of the College to Vernon St, but um, apparently it was, I got there '52, '53 so she was on Vernon Street at that time.

Is most of your family still in this area?

My Mother had 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls and uh, we all went off to school except for one sibling. And she stayed here, and so, I came back here in 2007.

Do you spend much time on the Northside?

There's nothing over there now, so no. I go through there, **name's** over there, but uh I just go through there. Just for memories and stuff like that.

Are there any things you've taken note of that have significantly changed since you grew up there?

I mean the transition for me, was growing up there, it was like I said, a blue-collar neighborhood. People worked, um took care of their surroundings, and stuff like that and coming back, and I don't know if you've seen the tape that I did, I noticed that things had changed. It was more crime, a lot of people rented. Because when I grew up there weren't re-rented, but people owned their homes. Uh, so there was, and I think that's what the Northside is trying to get back to, but you have affordable housing, you have this type of renters, because that's what we grew up, and uh, there were professional people on Aden St. all the way back up to Howard St. School teachers, masonries, you know so, there was just a mixture of professions and stuff like that. So, coming back, the house that I lived in was torn down, cut off Vernon St. and most of the people there, in that area now, are renters and low-income folk. No jobs and you know, there's no pride in community. It's just a matter of hey, I just need a roof over my head and hopefully I can find a job. So, with the redirection now with the Northside Development and with the college there and the hospital's growing, hopefully there will be other types of businesses where people can be able to have jobs. And once they get the house up and going that area will open back and be proud, a proud part of the growth that we are seeing downtown.

An idea I've come across is that if you tie nostalgia and the history of the past to the present and newcomers, they feel more welcomed and attached to the community.

I think that's good. We should all know our past and uh, if you're moving into a new, what was it before? Was it always this way? So...

And I believe there's lots of elements that residents would like to see come back. Like the upkeep of houses and gardens.

I mean those homes, if you go, most of those homes are rented. Once you cross Chapel St. all the way back down, all that was White. And you know, once you had White flight, those homes were either bought by African Americans or others and or rented out to them. But over time, when there's no interest in the neighborhood it goes down. And over time, people, ideas on how they want to live change and people, often times, think they want a big home, or live in something. But when you are there you have to do yard work and this falls apart that falls apart and well, I'm not making enough money to do that, so you have a lot of homes that just fall into despair.

Since you work for the city, in your opinion, do this Spartanburg as a whole has greater interest in the Northside than it did say, ten years ago?

I find, I find, Spartanburg to be divided, sectionally. East side, West side, South side, North side. Um, and because of the history of the Northside I'm not sure that areas like Converse Heights, Hampton Heights, um really care what goes on in the Northside. Because right now there's no, because it's undergoing this development thing, there's nothing to attract them there. You know, why go to the Northside, I've never gone to the Northside. You know so, until there's something to attract them. There's some reason for them to go, I think Spartanburg is very clique-ish and it will probably remain that way for some time.

Most people at Wofford are the same way.

Yeah, and you know once they put in the center over there – the T.K. center – that may help, because if they do what they say they are going to do, in regards to the scale of it and the program they're going to have, then you have another place, like people go the Y or places like that, but people can't afford to go the Y. So now with T.K. Gregg you're going to have people from all over areas come and you know, utilize that facility.

From the past few months, there has been a lot of emphasis on NDG. Do you think it's too focused on the organization? Or should more of the community be involved?

Yeah... I think a lot... a lot of the change that's coming, people are going to see it. And again, back to clique-ishness, whose doing this and whose doing that and why are you doing that and why are you doing that comes into play sometimes. Even when people mean well, people are suspicious to as well why is Bill Barnet doing this? You know, and this type of thing. And you know I know Bill and I'm glad he's in the position that's he's able to do that. Um, so yeah people have the question as to why and what's the bottom line and this type of thing.

Your feeling is that most people want this change?

Yeah, I think that most people want to see the change, development hadn't gotten to the point where people can see something. It's just like, okay this is Bill Barnet and he's doing this and then we want to see what that outcome's gonna be. And I'm hoping that he's successful and that most people can see, they like tangible things, you know, see this, touch this, feel this, this type of thing. So, it's just not there right now. So it's going to be a mixed-income, mixed group, but until people, you know you have the housing and you start moving in, and you have the jobs in that area – and to me the jobs are mainly going to be the hospital and the college, Wofford college, VCOM, but there probably need to be other industries close by because those entities only going to hire, I mean Wofford's not going to put a lot of money into domestic work, you're going to hire professors, you know professionals, but you know you're going to have people working in your kitchens and domestic stuff. And part of that history, that's what people remember basically about Back of the College. You got jobs but the only jobs that you got were domestic jobs. You didn't have jobs that would allow you to move into a house or a high-income apartment and those type of things. So, until they can figure out what type of jobs they're going to have, and I think they are doing some things, training people to do different skill level jobs.

I'm interested to see how the development retains people in the communities.

One of the biggest things, and I'm sure you're familiar with the term gentrification, because loads of those people are probably going to have to move out, already moved out, so once they move out, they can't come back in unless they have moneys to afford rent and jobs and stuff like that. Because most of the people living over there, most of them have been there for a long time, all they have is retirement income. And you know, then you have those who have no job skills and so when all this building comes, they're going to have to leave and they aren't going to be able to afford to come back.

Name has told me that a lot of people who were moved out are now not interested in coming back.

A part of that is because, okay I don't like moving. You've moved me once and you'll move me back. You'll move me here and with the length of the program, by the time you're ready for me

to come back I may be dead and gone or I may have grown used to where I am now. And I don't want to move just to come back. I think the whole focus is once those people move out, they have the opportunity to come back, but I don't think you're going to see a whole lot of them coming back. You're just going to see, maybe people coming into that area, uh, because hopefully the mixed housing will be affordable.

With that people with definitely criticize it to be gentrification, but do you see that more of the natural course of change?

I mean change is change, you can't just stay the same. Let's say you didn't do anything at all, people just die there. And you're not going to get anything to be improved in that situation, so you got to be, change is inevitable. Things change, communities change, you just have to be able to, and when you're orchestrating change, you have to keep in mind how can I best take care of these people who are going to be affected in a negative way, about when change comes. So, if I can find another place where they can go and they feel safe and secure and affordable, then I've done my part. But it's like moving chess pieces around a board. You know, okay I've got to move over to here, move over there. If I get comfortable in one spot I don't want to move again. And any time I moved, I don't know how many times I've moved in the military, and that's no easy thing. So, you know.

We spoke about when you grew up it was heavily segregated, is that something that you see in Spartanburg and the Northside today?

Not prominent, you know you have overt and covert. And in the Northside growing up, like I said, we got along. You know, you knew what the rules of engagement was. I can share things that concern me that, made me understand that I'm Black and you're White and there are certain lines that you don't cross. But socially, in the community, we got along, spoke, and you know, and everybody was civil to each other. That's one of the things I enjoyed about growing up. Because of the mixture, we had White folk living right across the street, down on the corner, you know we'd go by we'd wave say hi, stuff like that, um there was no real social gathering, you know. We stayed over there, and we stayed over here. We, and I don't like the word, but we tolerated each other, so to speak. But now, now, I, I don't know how to quite phrase it because I don't want people to think there is no... we are not in a perfect society, we are still, some of it is social some of it is, again this is where I grew up this is where I want to go, like the Southside, Northside, Eastside, you know. And so, you still have that. And I still think we live in a world where we tolerate each other but we don't embrace each other. And I don't think we are there yet.

Some of the people who I've talked to, say that the ongoing crime are people who aren't actually living in the Northside, but that they come in from different areas of Spartanburg, do you believe that as well?

Yeah, I can believe that because that area is not, and again, I think placing is different than what they do now. But anytime a person wants to something that they feel is wrong and want to get away with it, they look for areas that are not heavy policing. And general areas like that, where you see oh, I'm going to go here because we know that, number one police presence is not going to be there and number two, the people are not going to say anything because they're going to be afraid. You know, and fear drives a lot of that because there's a threat that if I say something then this person's not going to be a jail a long time and then they're just going to get a wrap on the

knuckles and then they'll be going back at my door, you know, to get back at me because I turned them in. You know, so, if the Northside, and I think the change is coming for the Northside and will push that out. Because now there's going to be this emphasis and showcase on the areas, nobody's going to do as they are doing now. But in low economic areas where there's no jobs, no police presence and things just look in despair, it's a cover for crime.

It sounds like there's been waves of police presence.

And sometime that has to do with the squeaky wheel gets the attention you know, whoever reports and is on the phone and is calling the chief of police and these folks. They're going to get the attention, the people now on the Northside don't feel empowered. I can call all day long but they're not going to come. And cause, we're not important people, we're not presidents and council people and you know, professional people, so they don't feel empowered to pick up the phone and call.

Besides the things NDG is doing on the Northside, are there any other aspects that you would like to see addressed in the neighborhood, or things that you had growing up that you've noticed are no longer there?

Again, back to what you were saying earlier, I nice little country store, grocery store would be good because most of the people have to, trying to think, other than the place down there near VCOM, there is no place that you can go and do grocery shopping. The other thing is there, I don't even think there are bus routes, one on Howard St. and they'd have to catch a bus there, but they'd have to look at you know bus routes maybe to make it a little more convenient to get to shopping areas. We're looking from Vernon St. all the way to downtown, there's nothing where you can go to a grocery store or something like that. And I think that would be a good model, if they're trying to build mixed-income housing, um, everything that you have is right here, is to have some type of store, not just a convenient store, it needs to have, that's another thing convenient stores are just bad and um, they're overpriced and they take advantage of low-income people because they know they can't go anywhere else. So, there is no, you know, you either have this or you have to walk I don't know how many miles to affordable and those types of things.

The Hub City farmer's market has a truck and they go around and with your SNAP benefits you can get produce for double the amount of you SNAPs. The kids at Cleveland that I work with, have no experience with produce.

That's the thing, they're supposed to be doing something like that, a community garden area. I know they're trying to do something. There was one right downtown, behind Wild Wings and then down where I live on the Southside, they're doing some type of community garden so, again community gardens would be good to help students, you know young people, understand where food comes from and utilize, best utilize space, for growing foods and stuff like that.

A community garden did exist for a little while, but there wasn't enough interest in the community yet, do you think that will change once there is more home ownership?

Yeah, because right now, until the project is near being finished, and people are seeing, touching and feeling, nothing is going to happen. Because right now you have people who don't have jobs, you know, not knowing where they're going to go. And eventually everybody up there, are going to have to go, you know, uh, and I don't know how far that project is going to go down.

Because if you go past Cleveland school, a couple miles down there the city ends, and becomes county. You know, so... It'll be interesting when it comes to fruition.

Is there anything else you would like to say about the Northside and growing up there?

Just you know, it was a satisfying experience. I mean, I didn't think about going to college or anything but then I did it, I did end up going to college and um, a lot of people from the Northside, like I said it's a mixture. You had teachers, um professional people, during the era that I lived there. And so, when we left, people were successful, and I think most people on the Northside would remember it as you remember most communities that are segregated it was all family. You know, you knew everybody, it was family oriented, and like I said, if it was a mixture, you got along with people that didn't look like you. But because the neighborhood was just a working-class neighborhood, by the time you got off work there's nothing else to do. And going to school you had access to ball fields, we played ball when we probably wasn't supposed to be up there, but no one, the school didn't do anything different. Same thing with Cleveland, I think one of the things Parks & Rec doesn't do like they used to, is man the parks. I remember growing up in that park and in the summer time, basically, they had people that the park was open from, you had programs, you had games, and that's what you looked forward to. When you got up you were getting ready to go to the park. And I don't see that with Park & rec now. They may have the parks, but they don't have people whose putting programs on, teaching them how to play horseshoe, doing colors, or hopscotch, this type of thing.

I feel like they're more focused on indoor activities.

Yeah! It's more indoor activities, it's more walking space and trails and all this kind of stuff, but we need to do something to get our kids out and get away from the computers and the T.V.'s and stuff like that. You know, people are, we interact, we interacted more with each other as kids, young folk, and adults. I think one of the things, people are less civil today, is they're not used to talking to people, they're more like punching buttons and this type of thing, so somehow you need to do things more about human interaction. And I think that's what we had, uh, and growing up in the Northside. Because we had our churches, um, and the playground, and the school we went to, even though we had to go by other schools, but another thing in regard to the community, we had a school teacher that lived behind us. So, we knew those teachers and those teachers knew us, knew our parents. "Oh, I taught your father, I taught your mother, your sister and you brother". So that was sort of the glue of that fabric that makes it a community because, but you don't have that now. You don't have that closeness, you don't have that glue. You don't have the teachers that know your parents, so a lot of that has changed.

Can you imagine that again in the future or do you think our society as a whole has changed?

I think our society as a whole has just changed. And I think that's why we see as much crime, and meanness because I'd rather talk to my computer than to talk to you. The same thing with race. We're – it's going to be a long time until we are interested in talking about the issue of race, you know, ain't going to want to use a word that's impacted a whole lot of people, and just broken it down to just a N. You don't understand the pain until you hear the word, right, so you know to say the N word, to say the N word without saying the word, you've just... When I grew up it wasn't just the N word it was the word, and you felt the word. And it was both sides, because one of the things I think hip-hop has done has really taken that word and made it worse. You know they just use it, normalize it, they don't feel the pain anymore and this type of thing.

So, I don't know in that regard. I think that has really turned back the hands of time a little bit and it's made it not so bad, like you're doing it and this type of thing. But no, I just think that the Northside, when I grew up there, was a real community, and you know, while, people, like I always looked at is as working class, I didn't see poverty. I saw people struggling, but you know, we were, we didn't think about it, it wasn't like it is today, where it is a show stopper. We knew at some point, we would move, move up. And I think, our parents were a key. Because they pushed us to do more than I'm doing. And I think that's what's missing with a lot of people. Especially in the low-income communities, parents are children themselves. And um, they don't have time to focus, to set the kids in front of the T.V., they take the kids and the school has become a babysitting mechanism and so, you know when you have. And again, if you took the Northside and the redevelopment, and once all the buildings up and you have programs, that engage people and if you have that mixed-income type thing. You know as I used to say, you build an apartment and you've got a person going from a structure that they didn't really take care of it. There are certain things that needs to be done in that apartment, there needs to be a class or something, to tell people like if the water goes bad, this is what you do, when your electrical something happens, this is what you do, you don't ignore it. You know, and if you want to keep the rats and the rodents out of the way, these are the things that you do. You know, so we just build structures, herd people into them and we're through with it. And that's all you do, is collect the rent and stuff.

Tells a story about a woman and running her own household

Yeah, like the thermostat, you don't turn the thermostat all the way up when you're cold because now you have a bill that people don't think about those things, now especially if you don't know how to do it, before, you know. So, it's, homeownership and going into new structures, when that happens there needs to be some form of education. Especially if, um you're coming from a place that's different. *Like an orientation.* Yeah, like some type of orientation to get people in the right spot. To get people in the Northside, bring back the community center, the close-knit community.

Do you talk to some people from when you grew up?

Yeah, **name** is still in the same house and then uh, and which is good, she came from very professional family, I think her people were brick mason father always on business and her mom was a teacher or some stuff like that. But my Mom, Father, worked, well they worked all over. I still talk to my Mom, today, and she talks about this job where they worked a dollar an hour and I'm thinking, well you know, the basic hourly wage now is just like eight dollars an hour now maybe, so that's just like, it hadn't grown that much since. And that's the problem! Until we start paying and giving people salaries that keep up with this change, I mean, just like you're building all this Northside stuff, but it's going to take money in order to be able to afford, even though they say it's going to be affordable – what is affordable? You know, until you define those things and you put people in jobs and say okay when I come home, you know when you look at the cost of getting to work, having one or two kids, um, paying utilities, um, and if you haven't owned a home, paying a mortgage, all the things that you want to do. If you don't have a job that's going to sustain that, then that's why we have so many homeless, so much homelessness, people cannot afford the things that go with owning a home or being in an apartment because, uh I think they're supposed to be doing a whole lot of things about homelessness and stuff like that, some people prefer being homeless because they don't have to worry about all this other stuff. If I can get through the day and psychologically, they process, well I'm gonna die some time, you know

we're all going to pass, but I'm okay out here, and I don't have to earn no high expectations, there is, you know I can find a cover or something, I'm fine. I think a lot of people who are homeless prefer that. I hate to say that, but um, where we're going, we're driving more and more people to that, livelihood.

Interview with Jasmyn Porter*

***All resident's names have been changed.**

All italicized words indicate Helen Seddelmeyer speaking.

All non-italicized words indicate the resident speaking.

Gives brief description of the aim of the research project

I moved to – my father was a teacher with district 7 – and the first home that we had was on the Southside. Somehow, he had the opportunity to buy a house on Howard St. And so, 2003 Howard St. I will never forget that address, it was right on the corner of Howard and Weeping Oak, right up the road here. And the reason he bought the house was because he, in addition to teaching, he was a mechanic. He taught automobile technology because at the time teachers didn't make any money back in the 50s, late 50s. So, you always had to have something on the side. And my mother was a beautician, so the lot was big enough for his garage and he added an addition on the other side of the house for her to have her beauty shop at the house. So, she could be stay at home mother and work at the same time. I was kindergarten when we first moved up there. What I liked the best about living on Howard St. was the sense of community. Up and down Weeping Oak was all Black families. But on Howard St. was white families. I moved up here when I was in Kindergarten like I said. My parents needed a bigger home, we were in a smaller home up on Georgia St. side of town off of College. We just had a little two-bedroom home, very small, he was growing his business so he moved up here. What I liked up here was the community, all up and down Oak St was Black families. We had a café. My daddy's shop was the garage where people could get their cars fixed. My mother was the beautician she took care of all the hairdressing needs so everybody in the area. And across Howard St. over by the railroad tracks was a Black community. Cause', you know that's where our communities usually wound up being near the railroad track, because that wasn't land that anybody else wanted. And usually there were white home owners who rented the little houses, we call them shotgun houses, you look in the front door and out the back. Uh, that's where they could afford to live. And then there were people who worked on the railroads, and people who worked for the Mills, and of course the Mill was down the road here, and it was on the bus line.

What was the café like?

It was Ms. Ula's (sp?), what was her name, we just called it Ms. Ula's. Of course it was in a little house like, on the left-hand side of Weeping Oak St. that's where we would get our hot-dogs and. Of course it was a night club by night so I have to think about the name, you give me your name and your number and I'll text you the real name of it when I get to – I meant to find that little brochure for you! But yeah we had Ms. Ula's café and then we had a store. Ms. Addie Young (sp?) had a store on the other side of the street. And of course, that's where you go to get your cokes and your candy and your loaf of bread. You know, you know, kind of little convenient store, very small little wooden construction.

Do you know when those things closed?

Well, um, they ran on through the 60s. And I guess as the people got older, because most of the families stay right there in that spot, they didn't move, and a lot of them are still there owned the land, of course some of them died out, sold the houses, or laying desolate because they aren't worth living in anymore, not worth repairing. But I imagine the families still own the land. There is a lady, in the nursing home and she's in her right mind, um, Ms. **Name**, her house is still standing. It's a two-story brick construction. My house was on the corner, its torn down, but when you turn the corner her house is the first one on the right. You can go by and look at it. It's still sitting just like she still lived there. But of course she's too old to live alone. Um, and her name is **name**. Her daughter, **name**, taught in district 7, taught music at **name** elementary school for many years. When school opened this year **name** passed away. That was her granddaughter, her son's daughter. She passed away. She would always keep me up on Ms. **Name** because we would sit on her porch, listen to her talk, and of course, she'd feed us cookies and stuff like that. Those were fond memories, but she **name** is in her right mind. She had one daughter who lived in upstate New York. Um, and one son who lives here in Spartanburg. But yeah, um, if you needed anything. Like borrow cup of sugar, flour, anything, that was the neighborhood you could do it. Um, they had chickens and stuff running around with eggs because we were out of the city limits so, you know, you were able to have chickens in your yard and things like that. My daddy usually had chickens, always had a big garden in the yard, always believed in gardening, we always had a garden. To prepare for the winter.

Would you say there was a village mentality?

Yes. It was a lot like a Mill village but not a Mill village. But the sense of community. And like I said right across Howard St. near the railroad track that was called Goodwin Line because that was the railroad lines and that was another Black community. And there was always church, always Sunday, everybody went to some church. And the churches were the main Black churches that we still have majority, **name** and **name** and there's a little church over on Chapel. Those were the main Black churches and they still are. And the richer folk went to the Methodist church, so that was just the way it was in the Black community. Um, or to the Catholic church. Growing up, we played. Outside play. Television had come along but it was black and white and there wasn't much on. It was Hoody Doody, Little Rascals, uh, I can remember the Hit Parade coming on Saturday night. Jimmy Durante singing Mr. sand man give me a dream I used to go to sleep with him singing Mr. sand man give me a dream. Christmas, holidays, were a big thing in the Black community. Easter, Christmas, those were, Halloween, those were big, fourth of July, I guess that's what we held on to. Everybody in the community got together, there was good times, the children got new outfits everything like that. It was just, life was so much simpler then. Uh, we didn't know anything about the world war's we didn't know what was happening in the big world, but our little community was a safe place. You could run up and down the street and never had to worry, your parent's didn't have to worry about where you were, who you were with, cause everybody's parent could discipline you, and they would call your parents and tell on you. But I'll tell you something that I do remember. The white young people would come in a do bible studies. They would come into people's homes and we would go to the homes. Line up on the couch. And they would teach us bible stories. Sing songs. As a child I remember that. I don't know where they came from or how or why but the Black people trusting them to come into their homes and teach us. They taught us bible. I guess it was like an at-home vacation bible study or I don't know. But I remember that. Something else I remember, and I've been wondering about this. There was a man who used to come around, a white man, in a BIG blue van, and we called

him the Bubble Man. And he would come on Saturday mornings and we run out with our little money, our parents would give us money if they had anything to give us, and we could buy coloring books and bubbles and jump ropes and jack stones out of the back of his truck. And we called him the Bubble Man. And I would love to know the history behind that, because he'd just drive up and down the street and he stop and we'd run out to the truck and we just couldn't wait till Saturday mornings and we knew the Bubble Man was coming. Because you couldn't get to town, you didn't, we didn't go to town a lot. You went to town to get your shoes, and clothes for school. You went to town to get your shoes and clothes for Easter, that was a big thing. For the fourth of July your parents just probably picked up you something and brought it back. And when I got old enough, when I got into fourth grade, when I was 9, my mother would let me cross the street in front of our house, there was a bus stop, and board the city bus and ride straight downtown to Main St. I knew how to get off the bus, cross the street, go to Rice Drugs, cause that's where we would get our shoes, those ole' buster brown shoes those big ole shoes or those black and white Oxfords. And the guy would put our feet in the x-ray machine, and we'd get out shoes. Then I'd go across to the other side, over there where the Montgomery building and all the new little cafes, they had a ten-cent store there. And she would have given me a couple of dollars and I could buy paper dolls. Paper dolls were a big thing. Playing with paper dolls, cutting them out, dressing them, that was a big thing. And I remember there were singers and there were paper dolls of them. What were those singers' names, there were on television every Saturday night? But anyway, we would buy those paper dolls. There were no Black paper dolls of course. There were no Black dolls period at that time haha. I can't remember getting a Black doll until I was on the other side of town and then I remember getting a Black doll for Christmas. I don't remember getting any Black dolls before then, I don't think they made any.

Can I ask what year this was?

When I got my first Black doll – when I got to ride the bus, I was 9. So... 1948 plus 9... 57'. I would go downtown, and I would cross the street on the other side of town by myself like I said. And I had sense enough to buy my paper doll and sit there on the side and wait for my bus and it would bring me back up Howard St. and I would get off the bus and go into the house.

Do you have siblings?

I had five brothers and no sisters.

Are the youngest? Oldest?

Next to the oldest. I have one brother older than me and then I'm the next. And so I raised all the rest of the kids. And back then as a child, you had a lot of responsibilities. Because most of the mothers worked. So usually you kept the younger children at 9 and 10. You changed diapers, you made bottles, you cleaned the house, you cooked food, you did laundry. We had an old wringer type washing machine and I would do the laundry when I was 8 and 9 and my arm would get caught in the machine and it would pop open. And you had to hang them on the line there were no dryers, all your clothes on the line, and I can remember doing that at 8 and 9 years old. Got to get up and wash the dishes, make the beds, you had a lot to do as a child.

Were you also involved in gardening and cooking?

Oh, absolutely they taught you how to do all those things. Yes, you had to get the weeds, do the planting, yes, and of course gathering the crop.

Do you think food is an important way to celebrate and come together as a community today? Or has that changed?

Yes. Yes, the African American community mother, that was what she could give her family. Good food. A good meal. Most of the week she worked really hard, but on Sunday it was very important to have a sit down, full set table of food in the Black household. And we called it Soul food because it's comforting to sit around mama's table and eat her good cooking. Much of it was not healthy, but it was good, cause it would be slathered in pig grease, fat or whatever! Who know, but that was what we grew up on because as African Americans having come to this country, and you know as slaves that was what the slave owners would give you. What they considered the refuse, or what they were not willing to eat, but the black women learned to make good meals out of that. They learned to dress it up, season it, pig feet, hog jowl, and all of that stuff, they made it good. And then of course the little greens, the potatoes, whatever they got. The corn pound cakes or whatever and they just learned to make good meals out of it.

Is the Sunday meal a tradition you have continued in your own family?

When my children were growing up, yes, every Sunday. My mother always had fresh lemonade, always had tea, you always had a desert. Now I didn't do all that, because I banned the sugar in my house, I realized how harmful sugar was. So there was no sugar in my house! Kool-Aid was a big deal. Kool-Aid on hot summer days. Kool-Aid and cookies. We'd go out and play ball on the streets and somebody's mother would always get some Kool-Aid, grape Kool-Aid, and some twofer cookies or however many cookies and get those from the little store. And just get out and play, drink Kool-Aid and eat cookies. Good time. That was a good time, we got baloney sandwich. Nothing like a baloney sandwich with fresh tomato lettuce. Fresh tomatoes out of the garden. With white bread. It had to be white bread, that ole no good for you white bread, haha! My mother would make biscuits for every meal. Biscuits. She would make them so fast, they would melt in your mouth. You put some butter in there, oh my goodness. Some of that homemade jelly, that would be a meal. And you always had a hot breakfast. Always got up to make grits, eggs, and bacon. And you'd get up and smell the coffee brewing when you wake up, always had a hot breakfast. Yeah, these children now don't know what they're missing. But there was no McDonalds, there was no drive-through, there was none of that. The first, I can remember, the first drive through that we got was the Hardee's on Kennedy St. And of course we couldn't even go there and eat. Go there and buy something and take it with you but you couldn't sit down and eat there. But that's the first, I remember. That was in high school when we got that Hardee's. That was the beginning of the end, haha! They killing us ever since!

What are some of the other major changes you've seen?

The major changes I've seen was the Howard apartments that were here, they were all White. Only whites could live in those. And then of course it transitioned to Black and now they're gone. So that's a major change. All the house on Howard St. were all white and you know you would drive by and look at all the beautiful yards and the homes, and just dream, one day I want to have a home like that. And now a lot of them are in disrepair, falling down, which is why I know they are revitalizing this side of the neighborhood, but like on Aden St. that's where the Black teachers lived. That was our middle-class so to speak. Yeah, and uh, those houses are still standing. **Name**, one of our teachers, lived in Aden St., and then another one of our teachers lived, **name**, and one of her daughters still lives in that house and she could tell you a lot, she's

lived there all her whole life. They had one of the nicer homes. They didn't live in one of the slum, landlord, with the bathroom on the back porch houses. A lot of the houses are gone now. I had a best friend live right here across from, they had a beautiful white home she lived in with her grandmother, it was always well kept, just nice, cause that was the area where the middle-class white people lived, like I said, they had money, whether their fathers were porters on the train or whatever, that house is gone. Of course the grandparents died and nobody wants to live in Spartanburg. There's nothing to do in Spartanburg! Everybody heads for New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Pennsylvania, getting out of here, getting out of small-town USA.

When you were growing up families tended to stay?

We didn't have the money. These children. My age when they grew up and went to college, they just didn't, for most part, didn't come back to Spartanburg, they took their talents elsewhere.

Do you think that's still the trend today?

For Black children, for the most part, they don't stay. They get better jobs elsewhere. The children who stay are the ones who go to work at like, BMW, or Michelin, they are the ones who stay, they can get a good job and buy decent homes in decent areas. And the children who have to work at McDonalds or Hardee's, you know, that kind of work, they end up here in section eight housing, or built on income, and for most part it's generational poverty. They just didn't escape.

With the new apartment building, will more people be inclined to stay?

Well the white people will be inclined to stay. Because it will work for them. They will find jobs, they will get good jobs at Regional, because they can be the doctors and the attorneys. Now some of them, attorneys and things, you know whose families have grown up here, they've stayed and found decent homes and they like the downtown area and the new apartment areas. Or if they're professors at Wofford, or professors at Upstate, yes, they will stay. Cause they like small-town USA and bringing their children up in the area because it is a great place to rear children. My husband chose to stay. He was one African American young man who chose to stay. He grew up in the Highland area, you know what that's like. Poverty plus poverty plus poverty. Still is. And of course they've been revitalizing some of that. But he chose to stay. I begged him, I went to school in North Carolina, he chose to stay here and go to Wofford. I begged him, he got many job offers out of the state, he would not take them, he said, no, I'm going to prove that you can stay here and rear your family here, your children get a good education and good foundation right here. I'm not running. I'm going to stay here and make a difference in this town. And he chose to stay. But it's a great place to rear your children.

With all the changes, will families be displaced?

If they don't own their homes, its already displaced them. Those people who lived there, like I said, the Howard eight apartments, there torn down, okay they're scattered. They're all over the place, I had a niece that lived there. She's got a house out on Hilcrest area or something through section eight. You know, they just put them where ever they could. You know, a lot of them end up in the apartment building down by E.P. Todd. Many of them ended up there because that's where they could find affordable housing. Finding affordable housing if your poor is really difficult. It's difficult, especially if you're a single parent, and you're working and you're working at a job that's paying you just bare minimum wage, well there's rent, child care,

groceries, car, car insurance, apartment insurance, so many things, and the little check just doesn't cover that. So as you can imagine, you get kind of stuck. But some of them do get to college, and that's one thing that I like about what they're doing here, those that want to, they try and get them jobs at the hospital. They are trying to get them jobs, college courses, do something to help them. And the housing they're putting over here is really nice, it's not a place that you'd be ashamed to live. And that's the other thing, you want the children in the area don't have to be ashamed when they arrive home and don't want anybody seeing them going in their apartment, like the one over behind the Beacon? Violence, gun shots, those who live, its awful. And those little children come to school here.

Is that something that's affected the community feel you were talking about earlier?

And drugs. Drugs have impacted a lot. Because of the generation that came along the time when drugs were becoming popular, that was an escape mechanism. The children weren't thinking that when they started experimenting, that this was going to be a life-time sentence. Unless I have enough will power to get off of this, or to stop this. So that's... we have these drug babies. They're here with us.

Has the drug problem gotten better?

There's still a lot. Especially marijuana, which no one thinks is harmful. But it doesn't allow you to get anything done, so it's harmful! And I think the effort is being made in this area, to really life those families up and support them in their efforts to, but once you've smokin' pot for so long you just don't want to do anything else. It's just kind of like, well... You... know... Have you heard that song "I was gonna go to class, but then I got high"? "I was gonna get a job, but then I got high"! That's pretty much the theme, but then I got high! Some of the young ladies are so young. They need mentoring. They need somebody to really show them how. To move forward, for their lives, for their children, many of them are. They're, since we have the schools like Upstate, SCC, it's more accessible, and you know they were trying to go to college like Virginia College, and places like that, and of course when that fell through, it sent a lot of them back to... that was kind of discouraging. They thought they were getting ahead and then all of sudden, this for-profit place is just using me. Or seemed that way anyway, I don't know.

Do you see neighbors looking out for one another?

Yes, they still do.

Even with less home ownership?

Well, yes, um, there's a lot of drama. Among the young people. Because of Facebook and all that stuff now with social media. And they are all on social media and starting messes all the times. But for the most part they are still looking out for each other, neighbors still trying to help neighbors. Especially, you need help with your kids or you need to borrow a few dollars, or you need a ride somewhere, they still do that. But the girls, you know, she tryin' to take my man and yada yada yada. You know, all that low-life drama like you see on T.V. It's with us! Even on college campuses you've got that going on! And that's a matter of growing on up, it's not, that's not a life-time sentence. They do basically grow out of that. But they are just so young. Trying to rear children, with no experience. And if you don't have a mother or a strong family member or a matriarchal role model, you just out there trying to wing it. So you out there acting like your girlfriends do, and nobody is getting anywhere with this mess.

Some people I've talked to have mentioned a generational gap. So there's senior citizens and then little kids, would you agree?

I see that. We have a lot of grandma's rearing children. And they're too tired. Too old to have to try and get them, help them with their homework. They barely getting them fed, clothed, and getting them to school. But having to see about, how our parents did with us, sit down with them, check it, make sure you've done it, get to bed on time, or make sure you're getting to the doctor. Many of them can't leave the house, they don't drive or anything anymore. They just getting them on the bus or whatever, getting them to school, but in the middle, the daughters had the children or the sons had the children and brought them and dropped them off and they've got their own issues whether it's alcohol, drug use, they're battling that, or their children have been taken away from them because of the alcoholism and the drug use. So you're right, we've got the older generation and we've got these young ones here, these children, that we're struggling to educate – and it is a struggle, even if they're will their parents, they're struggling to provide for them. And they have their priorities all screwed up because they think its important to have their hundred-dollar sneakers and have all nice clothes and they're not worried about the education so much because they didn't have a good experience with school. And they didn't have a good experience with school, they're not coming down here to talk with us, no all I remember about school was getting pulled out, getting suspended, the teacher didn't like me, you know, yada yada yada. Even when we call them sometimes they're reluctant. But when they find out that, we're trying to help you. But grandma's just – and then a lot of times there are agencies here that can help, but the young people don't know about them. They don't know how to get in touch with those agencies and that's one thing that this Northside initiative has been trying to do. To get them in touch with the job initiatives, what do they call it – there's one down on Church St. where they try and help them if they have alcohol problem or drug problem, job training and that kind of thing. Uh, so...

Is there a way you think there could be better advertising?

Yes, we do need more publicity with that. And, many of our children do hang out at the public library. They love the public library. They love hanging out there. That would be an avenue of how, occasionally having, and I know they do have some job fairs and help fairs or, the churches, the Black churches would be a good place, but of course not all the young people are in the church either so sometimes just – VCOM, that's in walking distance, sometimes they have activities, job fairs, or things that, initiatives, telling people how they can get help for different things. So the agencies can come set up out there, and have a fun Saturday or Sunday afternoon, or something and advertise some of these things. You know, like I'm on the board for Healthy Smiles. Gives health care who have no insurance, no nothing, but I'm not sure how many people really understand that we're that and what it takes to get their children the help. We see children coming in with many cavities, they've never been to a doctor – like I said, grandma's got them. Grandma can't – I had a lady, who had her grandchild cause her daughter was loony, chasing after her man, not taking care of her kid, so the kids was – well actually she wasn't the grandma, she was the great aunt – she would call us here at the school and say, you've got to come over here I can't get this child out here under the bed and get her dressed to go to school, we have to go over literally fish the child out from under the bed, get her clothes, and this is a first or second grader, what was this grandma supposed to do with this child once she got older? If she doesn't come home from school, if she goes off with her friends, and if grandma did go any where she'd

have to catch the city bus. And we said, we need you over here, we got to have a meeting over here, we had to wait till she, or sent **name** to get her. Every school doesn't have a **name**, he's our parent involvement facilitator. So that's another thing, meeting the needs. Immediate needs. Of the children. Otherwise, you just starting a whole other generation. Drop outs. Because there's nobody in the home, no role models, no one to... Mentoring! Mentoring is one of the biggest things we need.

Are there other things you see that need to be addressed?

Well... when they clean the neighborhood up, when they finish cleaning the neighborhood up, and getting rid of the structures that are condemned or the structures that are dilapidated so that they children can be proud of where they live. Putting the center down here is going to help. Nobody wants to be embarrassed of their home. Like our children live, used to call *name* over behind the Beacon. No child wants to say they live there.

People have mentioned they would like more lighting in the neighborhood.

I don't know what kind of police presence they have around here either. I'm not sure.

From what I understand, it comes in waves. So not entirely consistent.

So, if you're an elderly person, living by yourself you could have plenty to fear on the weekends. Because I think most of the activities on the weekends, you know, people start getting rowdy and out of control. The other thing is teenagers get out of control. You know the little gang presence. Which is not really a gang, if you ran to the big cities and saw a big gang you'd see a real gang, you'd go home crying to yo' mamma. You would never make it in Charlotte or New York, or California! That little thing you got, but still, they could have guns, they could be stupid. Because they're young and immature, looking for something. And that's why I say mentoring. Teenagers in this town literally have nothing. That's one thing we do need. Some nice, safe recreation for children, for teenagers. And every time they try and start a little club for whatever reason it shuts down and I'm not advocating a club, uh, like at First Baptist Church where they have the Hanger. They just need a place to go with their friends, play their video games, listen to their music, or just hang out in a safe place. And that's why the library is so popular, cause it is a place where.... It's there.

What's the Hanger?

It's not as popular as it used to be, like when my son was coming along, that was the place to be. It's at First Baptist Church. They have a big recreation thing there. Hanger. They got a big airplane up in the ceiling and all. But I don't know if the kids, I don't think they hang out there like they used to. And they used to have Young Life and all the different churches. And I don't think the kids are drawn into those things like that anymore. Cause my son all of his friends where white. Haha! Bless his heart. Because their values were his values and that's really became friends with at Spartan High, took classes with, his AP classes and stuff. And so he just became friends with them.

I wonder if the new community center will be a place for teens to hang out. But there also is the Northwest Community Center.

That place – that's a big place for kids over in that neighborhood. You see, all of our neighborhoods, all our Black neighborhoods had community centers. When we were growing up,

so that was our place to hang out. We had our Girl Scouts there, Cub Scouts there, our Boy Scouts there. We had our little dances in the afternoon. We had study buddies there. You went to the center, you stayed there until dark. When you got home it was time to eat your dinner, go to bed. So we had that. Sort of like what Boys and Girls Club has. Everybody doesn't have that. But, we did. We had CC Woodson on the Southside, Northwest this side, we had one off of behind Back of the College where the Black neighborhood was back there, we had one back there. So, everybody had a community center. So maybe that will help. Maybe it will.

Something I've noticed at Northwest is there's a problem of transportation. Parents are working and the kids might not be able to get to the center.

And parents don't know who their with, they don't know anything about you! They don't ever ask. Nobody asked when I was principle of **name**. I'd take kids off, pick kids up. Nobody ever looked out the door to see who they were going with. In the Highland neighborhood the white church would send a bus in, pick them up take them to their church, bring them back, the parents never looked out the door. Never know where their kids were going! Haha! Their lives are just taken up with survival. So the kids are kind of left to rear themselves. Or big brothers or sisters are trying to do it. And then when they get a certain age, of course the oldest go off on their own. And they have to decide for themselves. Either I'm going to go this way or I'm going to go that way.

I feel like if there were better communication between organizations or programs and families and schools...

You almost need to go out and recruit them! Come here child! Let's... let me show you what you could be doing. Let me put you on a bus and go to a tour of BMW. This is a kind of job that you should, you could have. Go here, look here. All these plants in this town you could get a job at. They don't... all they know is McDonalds and Hardee's. That's where their parents worked. Or Burger King or... but that doesn't need to be the answer. Or they need to be, at least, understand what Daniel Morgan has to offer. And what kind of jobs they can get, the money they can make. They can go into welding, or automobile technology, or plumbing, or carpentry, or... electricity. You don't have to go to college, you can come right out of there and go to work.

Thinking about the future of this neighborhood... what is your mindset?

I'm hopeful. I'm not sure where African Americans fit in the scheme of things, cause I don't, I'm not in on the planning, or the big wigs navigating this, but I'm hopeful it will clean up this side of town, so that it is a decent place to live for whomever lives here. Because this is a great place, a great space in Spartanburg. This close to downtown, and putting the center here, and cleaning it up, that's a lot of hope. They've cleaned up a lot of the dilapidated mill houses, they need to finish cleaning that up, and making a nice, aesthetic, I mean opening up the park and we used to call Nasty Branch – the guy from USC was opening that up, and I our kids named that – Butterfly, so that you can walk through the neighborhood, kids can play. And enjoy the neighborhood where you reside. And the older people are taken care. And the younger people have something to do. You know. I'm hopeful. I really am. I see a lot of good potential, a lot of good things that can happen here. But this school has to meet the needs of the children who live in this area also. Of this footprint as they call it. They have many needs. Um... especially the teens.

Do you think the African American community will be able to stay here?

Well I don't think that's going anywhere. That housing development there. And the home owners will be here. And I'm not sure what will happen to the houses on Howard St. I know there are some home owners on Howard St. too. And they keep their houses nice, but the ones that are just falling in... you know, dilapidated whatever, are they gonna tear them down? Repair them? Remodel? And make them available to people in the community who want to continue to live on this side of town? There's a young lady who works here, I don't know if you've talked to her, **name**, she bought a home in this area. I'll go get her and introduce you to her, she could talk to you about what it's like to live on this side of town. She's reared her daughter here, her daughter went to school here, she's the same age as my granddaughter. She's um, just turning 17, and um, rearing her in this community, and her mother lives in this community, she wanted her home in this community, she wanted to stay in this side of town. And her son, her baby boy's in the Franklin School. So she can talk to you more about what it's actually like to live her now. I know what it's like to live here in the 50s and early 60s. Before I moved to the Southside of town and it was... we didn't have anything but it was a good place to be, it was a safe place to be. You know... people worked, reared their children, sent them to school, those kids have gone on to do big things, but NOT here! In New York, D.C., you know. Went on and got their education and took their talents elsewhere. We want them to stay here, to want to be here. To buy a home and enjoy small town U.S.A. We're constantly looking at Greenville. Greenville's downtown. Such a good place to be! Why can't we grow like that! What is it? And we've started. We're on the move. When I go past that Montgomery building now I just smile. Because that's where we used to walk and go to the movies. So that building has a lot of history, I'm so glad that they remodeled it. And I see the little coffee shop in there and I thought yes! And Cleveland Park. They've done a great job with that, that's a great place for kids to go. Cleveland Park has always been a favorite. Of course, they've closed the pool. See in Highland we had a pool and tennis courts and all those things. When we were growing up. So we always had something to do, somewhere to go. Everyone comes to Cleveland Park. For their children to play. And the little red park is still a favorite (**Chapel Street Park**). We take the kids at the end of the year to Cleveland – they love it, just get out and run.

Some of the neighbors around the Chapel St. Park want it to be lit up like Cleveland Park.

That's right. Because of the homeless. That is a problem we have now. I see them out at, what's the big park? *Barnet Park*? Yes. I see the homeless sitting down there... that's a deterrent. But it's really a nice big open space. That's good. But it still leaves a gap for the teenagers. So maybe this will fill in some of that. We don't have a bowling lane or anything on this side of town. And if the kids don't have transportation... We don't have a nice ice cream parlor on this side of town they could go to. Or snow ball machine! Nothing! For the teenagers to hang out at.

Does the bus line still connect through Howard St.?

Mhmm. Yeah, because I see the people over here getting the bus. Yeah the bus still comes down Howard. It stops right out here in front of the school. You see people standing out here waiting on this bus. Takes and connects to Sparta and takes them wherever they going. Especially if they going to school. Because the bus takes them out to community college too. So they have to catch the bus, if they don't drive. That's a good thing. Because most cities the bus lines aren't making any money. Difficult to keep them running because they don't have the cliental anymore. Maybe not as often, but it does. Some parents when they don't drive, they take

the bus. One little girl who goes to school here, I'm not really sure where she lives, but sometimes her mother will come to get her and they walk to the stop and wait for the bus, and if they miss it here, they have to walk all the way downtown to Sparta to get it to go to...

Observation Compilation #1

My first introduction to the Northside community was through a series of conversations and interactions with the Northside Voyagers, a group of residents selected to advocate on behalf of their neighborhood with the Northside Development Group (NDG). In addition to the Voyagers I also spoke with employees at NDG. This being my first experience and the beginning of learning about the neighborhood, this collection for observation compilation #1 includes primary information and more of the basics about what types of programs are on the ground running and the ways in which NDG's revitalization is taking place. Below are notes taken from a few of these experiences, names excluded. It is also important to note that during a majority of these interactions, I was interested in potentially finding an environmental project to work on, possibly having to do with gardening.

1. Voyager A
 - a. Discussed her own experience as being a Northside Voyager
 - b. Not everyone is going to listen, but you can do your best at spreading knowledge to as many people who are willing
 - c. Does not matter the circumstances, anyone can improve their life
 - d. Her work with the City of Spartanburg - spoke about it as transitory, did not go into much depth
 - e. Talked about her own aspirations
 - f. How she started with the program Start:ME by taking business classes and continues her education with hopes of beginning her own hair styling business in the one of the new buildings
 - g. Personal feelings: great disbelief about being able to own her own home; wouldn't sleep upstairs for the first month because it didn't feel like hers
 - h. She wished that she had more knowledge about how to own a home beforehand, and that it requires A LOT of management skills and the ability to pay bills on time
 - i. Talked about how her jobs' belief in her inspired her to believe in herself: she had asked them for a specific amount of pay, because that was what she needed to pay her bills, home, etc., and they responded by paying her DOUBLE
2. Employee A & B
 - a. Currently there are 1,800 people living in the Northside ... after revitalization hopefully will be 5,000 people living in the community
 - b. Cleveland Heights: owner occupied, to preserve housing
 - c. Where the Mill was: new housing/construction
 - d. This plan is 20 plus year plan
 - e. Goal for the construction is to make the Northside have a more "extension of downtown - urban feel"
 - f. TK Gregg Wellness community center: will be a huge source of pride in the community, example - 2 swimming pools

- g. On tour of the Northside:
 - i. Took note of the unmaintained sidewalks (Is the city in charge of this? Why is one neighborhood lacking maintenance while others don't? Does it have to do with income levels?)
 - ii. Important recycled use of the demolition materials to level the field for the new community center!
 - iii. Told stories of how children play - important concept to feel of a neighborhood (these kids bike the dirt hills, sled in the winter) where are other places kids play?
 - iv. Went into depth about who gets the contracts for the development project - seems fair and important to ensure that the goals/ideals of the organization align with NDG
 - v. Art-lets (how often do they actually get used? Is there a maintenance schedule in place for them?)
 - vi. Brawley St.: can't tell the difference, truly mixed income housing - huge source of pride
 - vii. Harvest Park: talked about some of the difficulties getting community involvement
 - viii. Garden *used to be* for the community, lack of interest, now is a "urban" garden
 - ix. Monarch Cafe - realistically, can people/do people that live in the Northside afford the Cafe prices
 - x. Idea of having Wofford students take over the tours
- 3. Employee C
 - a. All about finding a middle ground, education is KEY
 - b. Society built on respect, the law, and education
 - c. Wofford = a "defined grouping" - It is a safe, healthy community
 - d. The 550 kids at Cleveland are all impoverished
 - e. Concentrated poverty = crime
 - f. Gentrification = a problem
 - g. Must find a balance to disperse poverty, make affordable + market rate
 - h. EX: Spartanburg Regional Hospital has 5,000+ employees.... NONE of them live on the Northside... even though the Northside would be the most convenient location, 5 minutes from work!
 - i. A lot of history, already documented out there (i.e. go look at interviews of the Voyagers - assumes I have little knowledge)
 - j. Challenges: money and 'black people have an issue with trust'
 - k. They trust **name** b/c they know her background (she grew up without a father, drug addicted mother, in the child protection services in Chicago)
 - l. Franklin school = early learning center
 - m. Calls this an OPTIC: shows hope, a constructive way to believe in the neighborhoods
 - n. Comments that he (NDG) owns enough land in the Northside that he has the ability to control what develops, how, etc. (therefore he can create a more positive environment, versus a more negative one)
 - o. Safety is an issue - think about the location

- p. Comparison: Glendale (pristine, fairly isolated) - Northside (Wild West)
- q. Needs to be shared by someone (introducing Wofford + VCOM)
- r. Harvest Park/Urban Garden: did not attract the energy that they would have hoped
- s. Cafe geared towards people with money, too expensive, NDG 'missed the mark for affordability'
- t. Cleveland = still the lowest performing school in the county: things take TIME, require PATIENCE, nothing is fast
- u. Everybody has to move forward TOGETHER - which makes things very complicated, takes longer, but is necessary
- v. Advice/inspirational speech:
 - i. You have to have vision
 - ii. The easy something is, the less it will make an impact/change the world
 - iii. Green St. Baptist Church - a place for a possible garden???
 - iv. Talk to voyager with the nickname
 - v. Find underclassmen to carry project on - has to be something important that is also sustainable
 - vi. Wofford voyagers? Okay... but they have to be diverse (literally looked at me and we could have one white, blond girl but the others would have to be different - minorities)
 - vii. Northside = a canvas for learning (Wofford needs to change its thinking about this, there are many opportunities to be had)
 - viii. People don't think about Spartanburg - The biggest impacts are made in the smaller towns - small enough to make a difference - Bigger cities do not have this
 - ix. Challenges for me: continuity, you have a restricted timeline
 - x. Is this **name's** job?
 - xi. He notes that he has 3 years left
 - xii. Northside: cost to the city was HUGE, revenue from the neighborhood was NONE -> SOCIAL ABANDONMENT!
 - xiii. Must be a safe, decent investment
 - xiv. Public on the Sunshine Motor site - they must agree that it would be a safe investment
 - xv. Making a package deal: Northside + Wofford + Hospital
 - xvi. Importance of mixed income housing

Observation Compilation #2

Branching out from NDG, I began to speak with other organizations working in the community. Here, I am still focused on environmental sustainability, which lead me to speaking with certain groups over others. Below are notes taken at a few meetings, two which resulted in a partnering relationship with the local elementary school for a club.

1. Meeting A
 - a. He is a servant leader (Christian)
 - b. Cleveland = a desert of literacy, hope & opportunity -> making it an oasis
 - c. Has been there for 7 years

- d. Must align behavior and academic expectations
 - e. GT (gifted and talented) all about exposure - the educator & achievement
 - f. Fremont Elementary was the old existing school
 - g. Every church had its own district
 - h. Goes to 9th grade
 - i. Title 1 school = has been underperforming for 20 years w/ a high index poverty rate (98+ for the last 13 years)
 - j. This makes this job DEEPLY EMOTIONAL
 - k. A BURN OUT FACTORY
 - l. Since being an administrator - feels more connected to failure
 - m. Must tie together their CULTURE into the curriculum = better understanding for the students
 - n. No school has the right to fail their students
 - o. S7: not able to *PROVE* that their theory of educating black students works
 - p. Racism -> trauma + poverty -> needing HIGH ENGAGEMENT learning
 - q. Hope for a 90/90/90 school! (proficiency, poverty, minority) would be the only school in SC if achieved
 - r. Currently the only public school in SC with an extended calendar
 - s. Charter school = experimental, but does not share their formula of success with others (meeting street school)
 - t. Should have the RIGHT to choose
 - u. Deconstruction history - national teacher certification after desegregation, lessoned minority teachers - SC scandal
2. Meeting B
- a. The garden is owned and operated by Hub City Farmers Market NOT Harvest Park/ Butterfly Foundation, **name** is the executive director, girl who works the garden always there from 10-1
 - b. Thinks the homeowners would be more interested in the project than renters would be
 - c. Why is this?
 - d. Voyagers would be the best bet for a community partner
 - e. * interest in the public housing? (she points towards W Pearl St.)
 - f. Talk to the housing manager - go to neighborhood meeting, that is where a lot of the Cleveland kids live
3. Meeting C
- a. Three people at meeting
 - b. United way: **name**, creating a “IKEA hanging garden” in the Southside? Northside?
 - c. Community garden at Brawley St. intersection - failed
 - d. Felt because of the “personality of the community”
 - e. Felt ignored by the neighborhood
 - f. Urban garden: about education, raising awareness, and produce (supplies the food for the mobile market)
 - g. **Name** working to train community members about gardening
 - h. This year = the pioneer year for the Cleveland Academy farm tour “seed to table”

- i. Working towards increasing supply and demand - increasing healthy options (began in 2014)
 - j. The mobile market makes 400 stops in the entire county, helps build business for farmers
 - k. There is a current community garden at N. Church St BUT doesn't operate like a normal community garden - local businesses are the ones renting out the plots for their benefit
 - l. Farmer's markets are *white-led* trying (?) to be more inclusive
 - m. **name** - very turned off by widening their mission statement to being more inclusive towards minority groups
 - n. A possible connection in research between having more minority farmers/vendors and having more attendance of minority groups
 - o. 1.7% of farmers in Spartanburg are minority (very hard to boost this)
 - p. Began SNAP at the FM in 2009, doubled it in 2014, 2015 got a two-year grant for the token system, makes it more anonymous, profit driven?
 - q. Why does everybody keep saying they began offering SNAP just last year?
 - r. Lack of communication with the neighborhood? WHY?
 - s. Serve 35 families per week in the summer
 - t. 200-250 families per year / 600 transactions (this includes outside of the county as well)
4. Meeting D
- a. Three people at meeting
 - b. **Name** works as the science coordinator for *all* district 7 schools, her office is at Cleveland
 - c. Currently have an enclave @ Cleveland shared with science & arts
 - d. A raised garden bed with 5 sections already exists
 - e. Wants to have children address questions such as, where does food come from?
 - f. An **outdoor learning space**
 - g. Focused on nutrition
 - h. Interested in expanding - creating an orchard (because of memories of the wonderful orchards that used to exist in the Northside community)
 - i. Sound garden (?)
 - j. Create biodiversity
 - k. Hummingbird nectar sites as a class project? Spread out into the housing communities OR community coming to Cleveland to do a learning workshop & *they* take it back out into the community (assisted by Mr. Wilson?)
 - l. Game cameras? Could ask **name**
 - m. Kids could interview neighbors, debrief afterwards
 - n. Ideas are come up with between **name and name** - try to flesh out all the details before bringing it to the teachers
 - o. **Club days:** 4 or 5 per year (2 in the Spring) [Or meet twice a month?] 8-9AM: ELA block (not a efficient use of time, nothing really gets done) 9-10:30AM: club time (kids go with sponsor) *who is the sponsor/what does this mean??* 12-3: kids go home, teachers have professional development
 - p. Kids need to meet learning standards - communication skills = important, needs work

- q. 4th/5th graders (8-10 years old) Can't be unsupervised (a lot of restrictions and safety rules in place) Supervisors would be "inactively active"
 - r. **Leadership group (!)**
 - i. 2 smaller groups? 5th grade girls? 2/class for a total of 8?
 - ii. Focus on: environmental empowerment, community beautification, ecological diversity
 - iii. Lunch and learn
 - iv. July block = a lot of time to program develop, focus on developing the kid's problem-solving skills
5. Meeting E
- a. Ideas to talk about: hummingbird feeders, learning about pollination, nature diaries (observations about outdoor spaces, plants, wildlife, weather, etc. using your senses), drawing, press & drying plants, web of life, food chains, interdependent relationships, creative projects with alternative uses for trash, composting
 - b. Combining with **name**
 - i. An urban scrapbook/cookbook with creative writing reflections on one side, recipes on the other side
 - ii. My side: focusing on *observing, reflection, finding your VOICE, developing communication skills*
 - iii. EX. Tasha Tudor's cookbook - a blending of recipes and stories about her life
 - iv. A SLICE OF LIFE: being able to describe in detail, have emotional attachment
 - EX. Tasha Tudor's cookbook - a blending of recipes and stories about her life
 - Bringing in speakers, family members, etc.
 - Showing them your own journal
 - c. 4th grade students, focused on the Top Tier (because they are not focused on, attention to the bottom kids - this will really allow them to develop their leadership skills) more opportunities for enrichment
 - d. 20ish kids, bigger impact, can become mentors in the following year
 - e. Application: give clear parameters, outline specific goals, involve the kids - what would you like to do?
 - i. Have two teacher recommendations
 - ii. Need to discuss with the teachers
 - iii. Will need one teacher in the room
 - iv. App needs to be completed between Thanksgiving & Christmas (Nov. 30) Hold info sessions for the kids Dec. 6 & 11
 - v. Apps must be completed by Dec. 18/19
 - vi. Parents info session - sometime in January
 - vii. First session: Feb. 7 introductory, 21 sessions in total, April 25 last session
 - viii. During lunch on Tuesday and Thursday - 11:45 AM

Observation Compilation #3

This compilation of observations during program events, interactions, and conversations came later, as my ethnography began to change by taking a life of its own. They are more from an observation point-of-view rather than participation, although that began to change as I went to more and more Northside activities. These observations are built on relationships and trust, rather than meetings with people I had never met before. These experiences gave me the knowledge and feeling that I was beginning to understand the community.

1. Event A

- a. A family feel, people coming and going, always polite but always friendly
- b. Exploring program (seems to me comprised of the kids who are ‘regulars’)
- c. Leadership Spartanburg, chamber of commerce
- d. Thursday night 4:30-5:30
- e. Sat. 12-1pm
- f. Mon. night, music, through Elephant group
- g. Village mentality
- h. Only here to serve the kids
- i. Dance class at Chapman
- j. Teen night contact: **name**
- k. Line dancing group has been going on for 15+ years! Started as all women
- l. Not just a job, but a lifestyle
- m. Want Chapel St. Park to feel safer, that’s where she likes to play basketball
- n. Kids need to have safety – lights
- o. Need safe places OUTSIDE
- p. 14-year-old girl – Westfield Pines, **name** helps people and communities through programs
 - i. Favorite = the play truck, for example used to go to Cleveland and the kids would all go play
 - ii. Teen nights
 - iii. Where her friendships are built
- q. She’s noticed the crime rate, it’s still prevalent

2. Event B

- a. SAILY program for 14+, how to apply for jobs, can work for the city starting at 15 years old
- b. Brainstorming session for interested careers
- c. Leadership for/of (?) Spartanburg: coalition of leaders from various organizations (Milliken, BMW, developers, health non-profits, churches)
- d. In the room = 5th-9th graders (approx. 20)
- e. Poorly run, did not directly interact with the kids
- f. Gave a confusion explanation for why they were there, starting this career program in the Fall
- g. **Name** explained to me later the kids would have been there anyway working on their SAILY application, this group simply wanted to come in, either way the kids are the ones she cares about
- h. Ideas come up with: detective, engineer, shoe designer, fire fighter, coach, nurse, orthopedic surgeon, teacher, physical therapist, computer programmer, interior designer, government employee, entrepreneur, twitch streamer, cosmetologist,

doctor, basketball player, oncologist, trauma surgeon, case worker, supreme court judge

- i. Felt this could relate to a previous experience with another organization...
 - i. Relationship of outsiders coming in
 - ii. Questions of intention, WHY?
 - iii. Lack of 'real' interest
 - iv. Change for the better, better for who? Who benefits?
3. Event C
- a. In charge of leading a discussion for what event to have for Earth day
 - b. Under 14 group, April project ideas
 - c. 14 + doing a resume workshop with **name**
 - d. What is your spark? What are you passionate about, enjoy doing in your free time?
 - i. Sports, what kind of sports, basketball
 - e. What is your flame? A community issue that you are inspired to work on?
 - i. Trash, seeing trash in the neighborhood, on the sidewalks, etc.
 - ii. Could do something with recycling
 - f. Creating a basketball tournament where the price of admission for a team of 5 is bringing in 50 recyclable items
 - g. Felt like the kids were engaged as the idea began to evolve
 - h. They were taking their own notes, writing down the different things we would need, the age group requirements, etc.
 - i. Presented the idea themselves, each taking turns

Focus Group

Towards the end of my research timeline, I organized a focus group of residents of the community to hear their thoughts on the neighborhood and collaborate on ideas for change in the area. These suggestions are unrelated to the work that NDG is doing and comes from their own experiences and history with the Northside. Below is a list of ideas discussed during this time, which are integrated in my conclusion of this ethnography. The group was comprised of residents, ranging from 35 to 80 years old, 16 people in total.

1. More kid programs focused on tutoring, to allow them to better keep up with their classes, especially in math and reading comprehension. This comes from a feeling of being unable to assist with homework, as the skills being taught are different from when they were in school. These programs should come from both community centers and schools. The general feel is that 'they' give up easily, don't use all the resources available. The lack of structure in some homes also affects school performance.
2. Yoga at the center, or just more active programs in general. Perhaps at the new center, swimming lessons. Also, the want for more of a walking trail outdoors. Some place that feels safe.
3. Speeding boxes on streets, not just on main streets, but on side streets too.
4. The return of National Night Out. This still occurs in some neighborhoods on Tuesday night's (Tuesday celebration at CC Woodson), but no longer comes to this area. It had music and hot dogs and was a lot of fun. Perhaps start this up again through St. Paul Baptist Church.

5. The effort to get people off the streets who are doing drugs has been really appreciated, and is something that needs to continue for everybody, but especially the kids, to feel safer.
6. Hygiene training and basic training for how to raise kids.