Analysis of Literature

When thinking about affordable mixed-income developments, a few main questions come to mind. I wanted to know what type of income levels work best together and what type of housing structures should be placed together? For example, would it be good to place single-family homes next to affordable apartments? Could you feasibly put a condo next to a townhouse and make it work? After looking up a few articles about affordable mixed income housing, I stumbled upon the Metropolitan Planning Council in Chicago. The article I found was describing some of the many different mixed-income developments, or communities as they called them that had been built recently in the Chicago area. There are ten communities that were listed, each will have anywhere from three hundred total new units to almost sixty homes that are being rehabilitated for use inside one of these mixed-income communities. They also had a link to a brochure that explained more about what they defined as mixed-income communities and also what affordable housing was.

They define affordable housing as being “decent, quality housing that low-, moderate- and middle-income families can afford to buy or rent without spending more than 30 percent of their income. This is the same standard used by the banks to approve home mortgages” (Metropolitan Planning Council). The MPC wanted to offer people a place that is not only attractive to live and affordable, but offers a wide variety of housing types like mixing single-family homes with luxury condos, townhomes and affordable apartments. Overall the brochure does a good job of explain their concept of mixed-income communities and show the importance of mixing ethnicities as well. They are trying to pitch this idea by being as non-biased as possible and they also want to make sure that people who might be interested in living in one of these communities understand that diversity is a huge part of what makes these communities work. I feel like this type of promotion might work in the Avondale area. A lot of people living in the Avondale area could use affordable housing and Avondale itself could use new construction or rehab to help spur development in the area.
Another website I found through Blackboard was the Design Matter site. This is basically a catalog of the best affordable housing developments in the US that they felt were worthy of being modeled after. The City Design Center at the University of Illinois is the mind behind this catalog. “Design Matters was created to fulfill a long-standing need for a readily accessible, user friendly, free resource on affordable housing design” (Design Matters). They describe in detail eight different design objectives that they felt each development needed in order to make their list, including how a household fits into both the neighborhood as well as into what the residents need and having the feeling of safety and security. I mentioned these two here because I feel out of the eight objectives, these two fit what Avondale needs the most. Sure, Avondale could use a face lift with new aesthetic standards but the real problem Avondale faces is that it is lacking a feeling of safety. Obviously by adding new affordable mixed-income developments by themselves will not solve the problem of crime, but if it can help the residents have a better feeling of being secure in their own homes, then it would be worth looking into.

**Analysis of Precedent**

The Ninth Square District redevelopment project is located in New Haven, Connecticut. New Haven is located along the southern edge of Connecticut. Since the 1990s, it has had a decrease in population, going from one-hundred and thirty-thousand in 1990 to one-hundred and twenty-three thousand in 2008. In the year 2000, New Haven was forty-three percent white, thirty-seven percent African-American and ten percent other, showing a fairly mixed racial composition (census.gov). It was one of the original nine squares that was a part of New Haven’s 1638 town plot. While most of New Haven was being redeveloped, the Ninth Square was left behind and was the final area of the city to receive any sort of developmental attention. Because of this, many of the Ninth Square’s historical buildings were either vacant or not used to their fullest potential. In the early 1980’s a group came forward to help put together a plan for the Ninth Square and created the Ninth Square Association that was made up of property owners as well as some tenants. Their main goal was to create a “revitalized safe, attractive, well-managed, urban district where a diversity of people live, work, shop and play” (designadvisor.org). By 1985 however, the city realized that this association would not succeed on its own, so they worked together to bring in outside sources that could better plan the redevelopment. They
brought in McCormack Baron and Associates, Inc, and the Related Companies in 1986. McCormack specialized in urban affordable housing which was exactly what the Ninth Square Association needed.

One of the things that make this project so unique, besides its final development, is how it was funded. McCormack and Related were able to draw from various resources in order to fund this project. One major investor was Yale University. They gave fifty million dollars to be used as seed capital for the city of New Haven and part of that investment went towards the Ninth Square District. They also pulled money from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority for a total of forty-one million, eight hundred dollars. Ten million were taxable bonds that were purchased by Yale and the rest were made up of tax-exempt bonds. Other funding resources were the city of New Haven itself, the State Department of Housing and Economic Development, and the Urban Development Action Grants from HUD (Shutt, 4). The total for this project was eighty-six million, six hundred dollars. “Additional money came from the Connecticut Redevelopment Act” and also a “Tax Increment District was established around the project…. Incremental rises in taxes due to property value increases are used to pay off the loans rather than being directed into general revenue funds as property taxes ordinarily would” (Shutt, 4). The Connecticut Redevelopment Act was

“Under the Connecticut Redevelopment Act, the City of New Haven is authorized to finance redevelopment by floating bonds secured by increments in property tax receipts. In order to finance the project, the City established a Tax Increment District which includes the Ninth Square and surrounding properties that were expected to benefit from the effects of redevelopment. In addition, the developer raised project equity through sale of Historic Investment Tax Credits and Low Income Housing Investment Tax Credits” By expanding their resources, not only did the city of New Haven find developers who specialized in what their city needed but they were also able to find the funding for such a redevelopment.

The end product was a rehabilitated Ninth Square District that will provide new housing to over five hundred people in mixed-income apartments and mixed-use developments. “Low-income housing tax credits helped finance the development and provided the guarantee that more than half of the apartments would be affordable to such households” (designadvisor.org). On the Design Matters site, they explain a little more that “half of the apartments were reserved for low-
to moderate-income tenants, and one large courtyard was turned into a residential community center” (Design Matters). This redevelopment wasn’t just about rehabilitating the city’s historic buildings or creating new apartments for people to live in, it was also about creating a space where people of mixed incomes, lifestyles and ethnicities could live together. In addition to new housing opportunities, the area was now a vibrant place for students to visit and hopefully would draw more people into the city of New Haven because of the Ninth Square District. The restoration of the historic architecture played a major role in this, according to Herbert S. Newman, whose architecture firm was a part of the redevelopment. All of the old architecture was restored to its original form, and what really made the new development work was how they designed it to match that original architecture. The spaces that were filled with new mixed-use buildings were designed to flow with the existing rehabilitated buildings next to them (designadvisor.org).

The redevelopment of the Ninth Square District showed a lot of strengths. First off, it took an area that was slowly deteriorating and turned into a very vibrant place to live, work and visit. They were able to create mixed-income housing opportunities by creating a Tax Increment District as well as other apartments for those who had a higher income. The only downfall with this TID is that not all of the surrounding areas that were taxed may have gotten to use these new facilities or really benefitted from all of the redevelopment. Another strength the Ninth Square District has is that while it does mix incomes, it also is in a great location near Yale University. Since they were the last “square district” to be redeveloped, that means they probably have more attractive amenities that could draw in more people who might be visiting Yale. One of the weaknesses that may come out of this is that the new mixed use developments may not be suitable for those who are living in the more affordable, low-income apartments. They might not have the money to use those new stores and this could cause some animosity, but at the same time, this also created more jobs in the area. The low-income residents might be able to find a new job that would be within walking distance of their apartment, thus cutting down on their travel expenses.
Works Cited


