Mixed-Income Neighborhoods in Grand Rapids:
A Report of Findings

Primary Researchers:
Dr. June Thomas
Dr. John Schweitzer
Julia Darnton

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Urban Collaborators

Working to help revitalize Michigan's cities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our investigation of mixed-income neighborhoods focused on Grand Rapids, Michigan. We were particularly interested in seeing which neighborhoods in Grand Rapids were able to maintain an income mixture over the time period from 1990 to 2000, and in determining what was similar or different about these particular neighborhoods.

Our study included three major components:
- a review of the literature about similar topics;
- an analysis of census data from 1990 to 2000;
- three sets of focus group interviews in selected neighborhoods.

Review of Literature

Our review of the literature summarized what is known about mixed-income neighborhoods, looking at both the literature that concerns interventions such as public housing projects that are moving to mixed income levels, and at the literature that relates to integrating communities racially. Concerning public housing we found that some high-profile programs have contributed to greater income mixing and that the results for low-income residents have been positive but that true mixing is still very limited. Concerning racial integration, we found that some residents choose racial mixing, but that the results are not well understood. The mobility literature shows that pressures to move can be counterbalanced by ties to the community, better neighborhood quality or better housing.

Analysis of Census Data

Analysis and mapping of census data showed that the population of Grand Rapids is clustered by non-White status, African-American proportion, and median income. We also found that the most prosperous African-American families were located in areas that are not predominately African-American. We found that the lowest quintile or fifth of the city in terms of income also tended to be clustered in the center of the city with a few exceptions. An assessment of changes from 1990-2000 identifies many block groups that have experienced both an increase in relative status of family income as measured by quintiles as well as a decrease in lower-income quintiles. Using this same method, we identified four specific areas that seem to have experienced marked changes of this sort or "gentrification," between 1990 and 2000.

We defined areas with stable income mixture as areas having a stable percentage of the population in the two lowest of five quintiles, which means having a representation of lower-income residents that remained over time (no high-level gentrification) without tipping over into "too many" lower-income residents (no major movement downward in terms of socio-economic status). We found a total of 11 census block groups, which we used as a proxy for neighborhoods, which met the criteria we established for stable mixed-income neighborhoods over that 10-year period of time. Of these 11, we selected

four because they showed stable characteristics as compared to the metropolitan area, and seven because they displayed stable characteristics as compared to the city as a whole. These 11 represented 8.4 percent of the total of 131 census block groups in the city as a whole, in 2000.

We found that the stable census block groups were indeed slightly different than other block groups in the city. They tended to have less vacant housing in 2000, less rental housing in both 2000 and 1990, lower median income for families in both years compared to metropolitan median income, lower proportions of families in poverty in both 1990 and 2000, and fewer people of color. Part of our analysis includes an assessment of why our mixed-income block groups tended to be predominantly White. In 1990, the median income for families in the mixed-income block groups was higher than for the city as a whole.

Analysis of Focus Group Interviews

We carried out focus group interviews in three neighborhoods out of the 11 described above. These neighborhoods were picked with the help of a member of the Extension field staff as fairly representative of all of the 11 neighborhoods. In general, we found that existing residents' opinion about having a mixed-income neighborhood varied from our expectation. In some cases people saw this as a benefit, and in some cases they saw it as a detriment. We also found that our selected neighborhoods had certain stabilizing influences, which are listed below:

- Religious communities such as Catholic parishes have kept people in neighborhoods;

- Positive feelings about schools in the neighborhood—respondents cited the ability of their children to walk to local schools;

- Strong social networks between and among the neighbors;

- Emotional or familial connection to the neighborhood—some residents inherit or buy from parents or grandparents, others buy in the neighborhood because of family and have affective connections to the area; and

- Neighborhood associations—Grand Rapids has well organized and in some areas professionally staffed neighborhood associations. All three neighborhoods assessed through focus groups had active neighborhood associations.

These neighborhoods were in some senses fragile, however. Respondents were concerned largely about the influx of rental households, if those households did not take care of their properties or if their landlords did not do so. They were also very concerned about the changing quality of schools, and about municipal decisions such as proposed changes in local parks. Here are the major threats identified:

- <u>Poor school quality</u>—some respondents reported increasing dissatisfaction with public schools or the relocation of parochial schools;

- <u>Problem neighbors</u>, this includes <u>poorly monitored rental property</u>—respondents were aware of renters in their area that cause noise, visible blight, and neighborhood change;

- Respondents cited <u>economic decline</u> as forcing many people to relocate from the city or the state to follow employment opportunities. Allied with this are the economic fortunes of residents who may smaller property maintenance budgets; and

- <u>Racial change</u> was mentioned by some respondents as a factor in neighborhood change—other respondents were neutral about this issue.

List of Tables and Figures

INTRODUCTION

About the Project

Mixed-income communities have become a new ideal among many urban scholars. They may de-concentrate poverty in inner cities, improve distressed communities, provide role models to low-income residents of those communities, create economic opportunities, and provide more housing options in densely populated cities. Few studies have been done of mixed-income communities that have not been created either through public housing redevelopment or vouchers. It is important to understand these communities and the social dynamics that are present in them.

This project is an extension of previous research on communities in cities in Michigan. Earlier studies dealt with sense of community, citizen participation in community associations and government, and the role of local government in promoting neighboring behavior in cities. This study looks at the process of change in terms of mixture of income levels. One concern that led to this study was the fear that low-income residents would not be able to co-exist with new residents of better circumstances because of rising property values.

The hope is that this research will help scholars and residents of communities understand the nature of areas which have bridged the gap of income levels. This research shows, however, that tensions exist within mixed-income communities, as well as benefits. Initially, the project called for comparative studies of Grand Rapids and Lansing by examining a mixed-income community and a more homogeneous income community in each city. When the researchers examined the existing literature, however, they noted that other studies examining income or racial integration in communities were longitudinal but not comparative between two cities or

communities. We decided that comparative work would be more beneficial after developing an approach to studying one city, Grand Rapids.

About Grand Rapids

Grand Rapids is located on the western side of Michigan and is the second largest city in Michigan by population, with just under 200,000 residents within the city, and just over one million in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)[1]. From 1990 to 2000[2] Grand Rapids and West Michigan experienced an increase in population with a growth rate higher than the rest of the state and the nation.[3] Grand Rapids, however, is still described by residents as a "city of neighborhoods." There are thirty-two organized neighborhood associations covering most of the city of Grand Rapids.[4]

Once a hub of furniture manufacturing, Grand Rapids is now home to a diverse group of employers that includes Steelcase, Johnson Controls, Meijer Inc, Alticor, and General Motors. It is located between the economic centers of Detroit and Chicago and benefits from its proximity to Lake Michigan's sunset coast. The city of Grand Rapids is home to Grand Valley State University, one of Michigan's public universities. [5]

A quick statistical profile of Grand Rapids gives us a glimpse of the racial and ethnic diversity there and the economic status of the city's families. The 2000 Census reported the racial/ethnic count of the city as White, 62.46 percent; Black, 19.92 percent; Hispanic, 13.05 percent; Asian, 1.59 percent; and other, 2.98 percent. The percentage of racial and ethnic minorities in the city is growing; in 1990, non-Hispanic Whites were 74.9 percent of the

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[1] Grand Rapids MSA in 2000 is comprised of Kent, Ottawa, Allegan, and Muskegon Counties. The cities of Muskegon and Holland are included in this four county area.
[2] Figures are from the United States Census of Population for 2000
[3] This data was gathered from the Grand Rapids Community Research Institute (CRI) website maintained by Grand Valley State University: http://www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/cri/data/demographics/index.html
[4] According to the CRI website: http://www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/cri/profiles/neighborhood/index.html
[5] CRI, http://www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/cri/data/econdev/index.html

population as a whole. When comparing the 1990 Census with the 2000 Census, we see that the percentage of non-Hispanic Whites decreased over the next ten years, even as the total population of the city increased 4.6 percent.[6] Although many nationalities are represented in the city, racially, a majority of the population is White. The largest nationality group claims Dutch ancestry (22 percent).[7] Figure 1 is a map of Grand Rapids divided into its block groups showing the distribution of the Non-Hispanic White population in 2000. The area with the fewest Whites, and consequently the bulk of the Hispanic and African-American populations, is the center of the southern part of the city. Figure 2 shows the African-American population as a percentage of total population. This shows that African-American people were more highly concentrated in 2000 than other non-Whites and Hispanics, as we can see by comparing Figures 1 and 2. The ten census block groups which feature more than 70 percent African-Americans are, as is apparent in Figure 2, clustered together.

The median family income reported for Grand Rapids in the 2000 Census was $44,224 and the median income of the Grand Rapids MSA was $54,118. (The median family income of Michigan was $44,667.) The percentage of families with incomes below the poverty level was 11.9 percent for the city, and for the Grand Rapids MSA 5.9 percent of families fell below the poverty level. (The percentage of Michigan families with incomes below the poverty level is 7.4 percent.)[8] Figure 3 is a map of the range of the median income of families for each block group. From this map, we can see that low-income families are concentrated in the center of the city as well. One exception is the area in the center of the map that represents the area bounded by I-196 on the north, College Avenue on the east, Fountain Street south, and Barclay Street and Ransom on the west, which is characterized by a high number of relatively prosperous families. This area

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[6] Figures are from the United States Census of Population for 2000 and the 1990 Census of Population
[7] ERsys website: http://www.ersys.com/usa/26/2634000/index.htm
[8] All income data is from the American Fact Finder website: http://factfinder.census.gov/

is the northern part of the Heritage Hill Neighborhood Association.   The outlying areas had higher median incomes than the rest of the city (Figure 3) and were also mostly White (Figure 1).

These maps also show that some block group areas with relatively high proportions of non-Whites (Figure 1) also had relatively high income levels (Figure 3), suggesting that middle-class minorities are clustered in these areas. Comparing Figures 2 and 4 leads the observer to conclude that more prosperous African-American people do not live, necessarily, in areas which are predominantly African-American. Although Figure 2 shows that African-American population is concentrated in the central southern portion of the city, Figure 4 shows that the wealthiest African-American families do not live in the central core sections of what might be called the African-American community. Instead, those African-American families with median incomes in 2000 above $75,000 tended to live in selected block groups in the northern part of the city. This particular pattern, which has been noted by some urban scholars in other metropolitan areas, may reflect the fact that predominantly African-American residential areas no longer contain all of a locale's lower, middle and upper income African-American families, in great part because of the greater number of residential choices which are open to middle-class African-American families than was true in the past.

Most analysis in this report is based on family income. Our examination of the difference between "family" and "household" in Grand Rapids suggests that this approach does not miss a large number of same-sex partners, but does leave out some of the analysis single residents. On the other hand, this approach, which is consistent with many standard census analyses, highlights the relative status of households with children, or with related adults.[9]

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[9] Using "family" to examine income in an area has been used in much, but not all, scholarly writing. The analysis is less effective looking at the status of the elderly, but missed only 512 same-sex partner households out of a total of 73,217 households in Grand Rapids.

Figure 1: Non-Hispanic Whites as a Percentage of Total Population, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000

Percent White

- 5.1 - 23
- 23 - 50
- 50 - 70
- 70 - 86
- 86 - 98
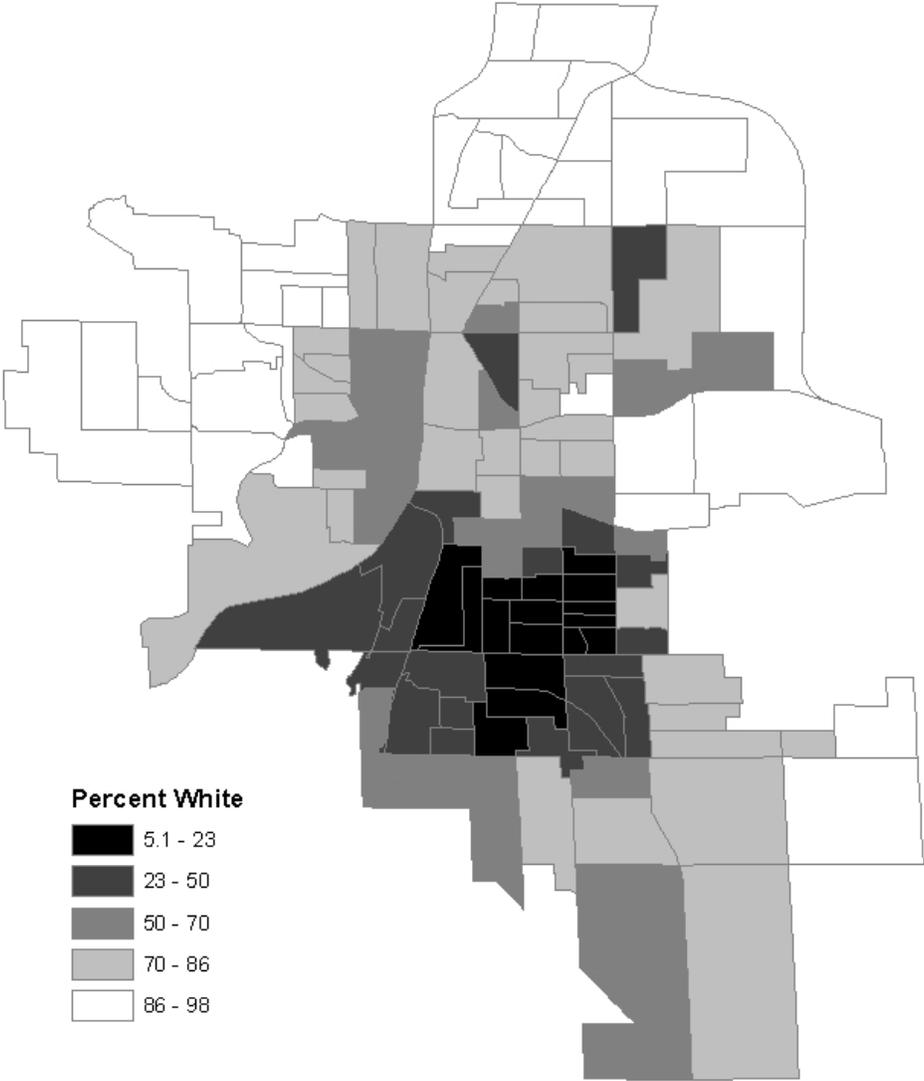
Data Source: Analysis of U.S. Census data

Figure 2: African-Americans as a Percentage of Total Population, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000

Percent African-American

- 0 - 8
- 8.1 - 19.39
- 19.4 - 43.28
- 43.29 - 70.64
- 70.65 - 90.2
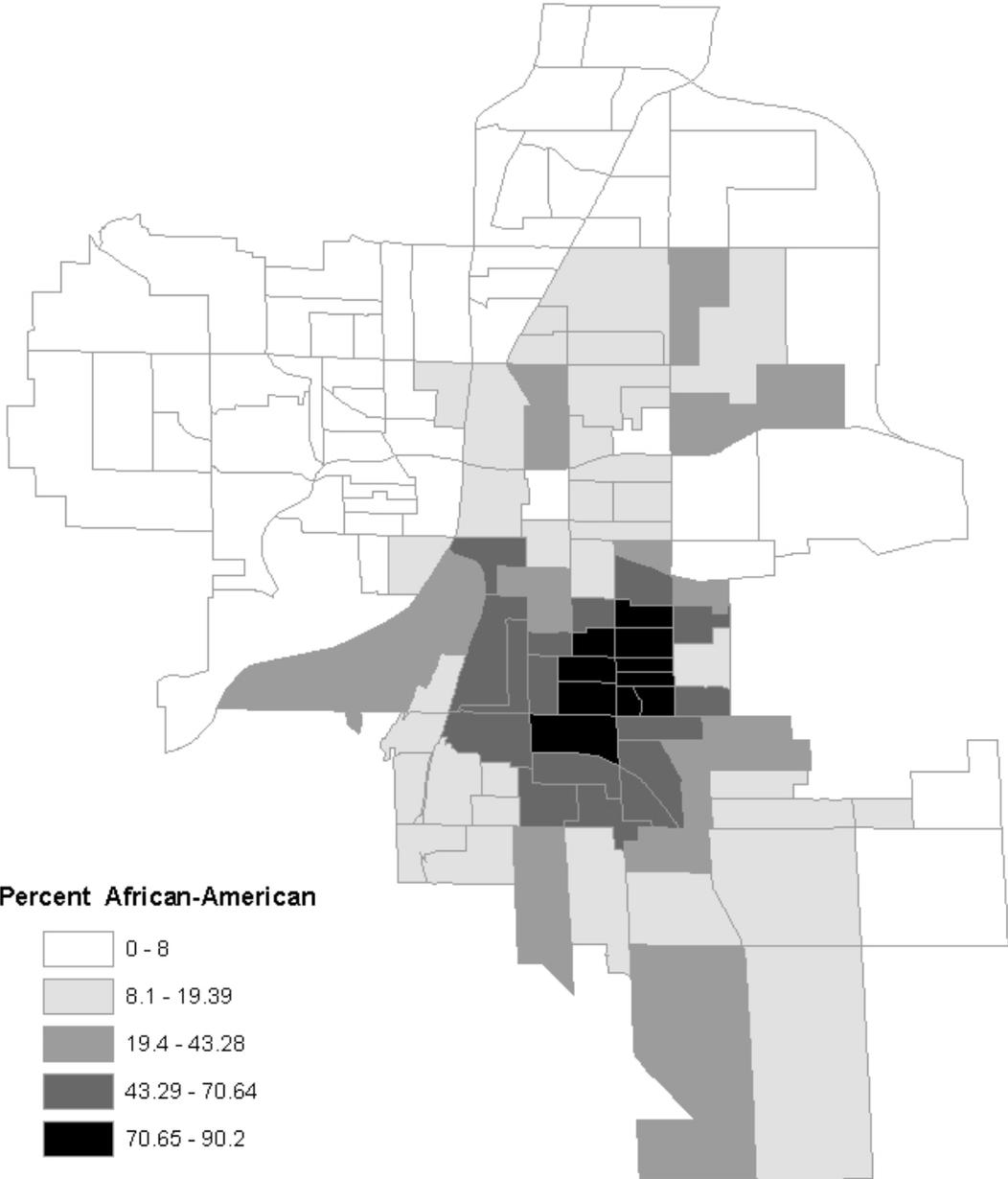
Data Source: Analysis of U.S. Census data

Figure 3: Median Income for Families, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000

Median Income 2000

	9,464 - 23,971
	23,972 - 34,750
	34,751 - 45,208
	45,209 - 55,966
	55,967 - 72,330
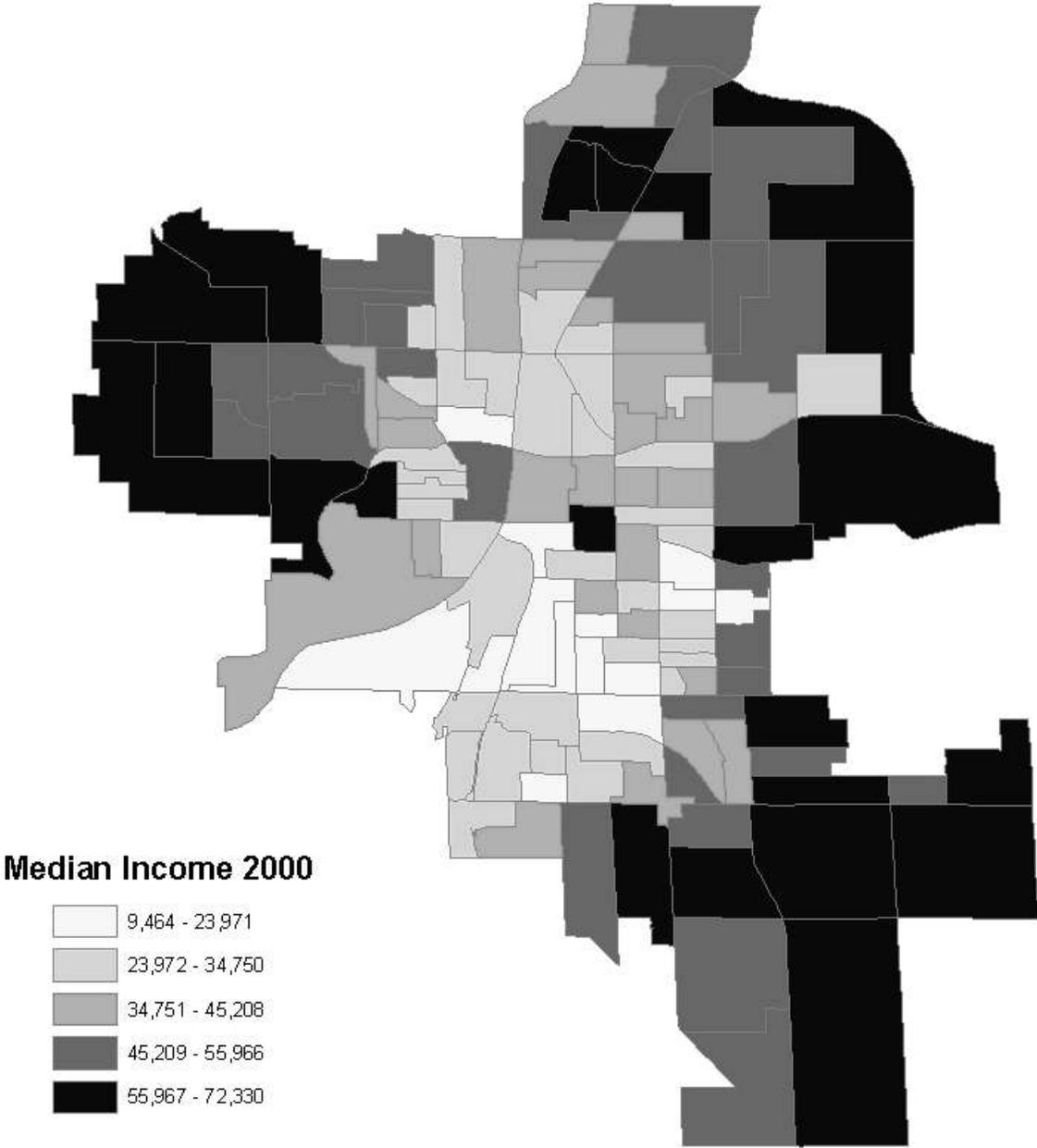
Data Source: Analysis of U.S. Census data

Figure 4: Median Income for African-American Families, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000

Median Income 2000

- ☐ 0 - 11,786
- ☐ 11,787 - 30,221
- ☐ 30,222 - 51,250
- ☐ 51,251 - 75,487
- ■ 75,488 - 127,308
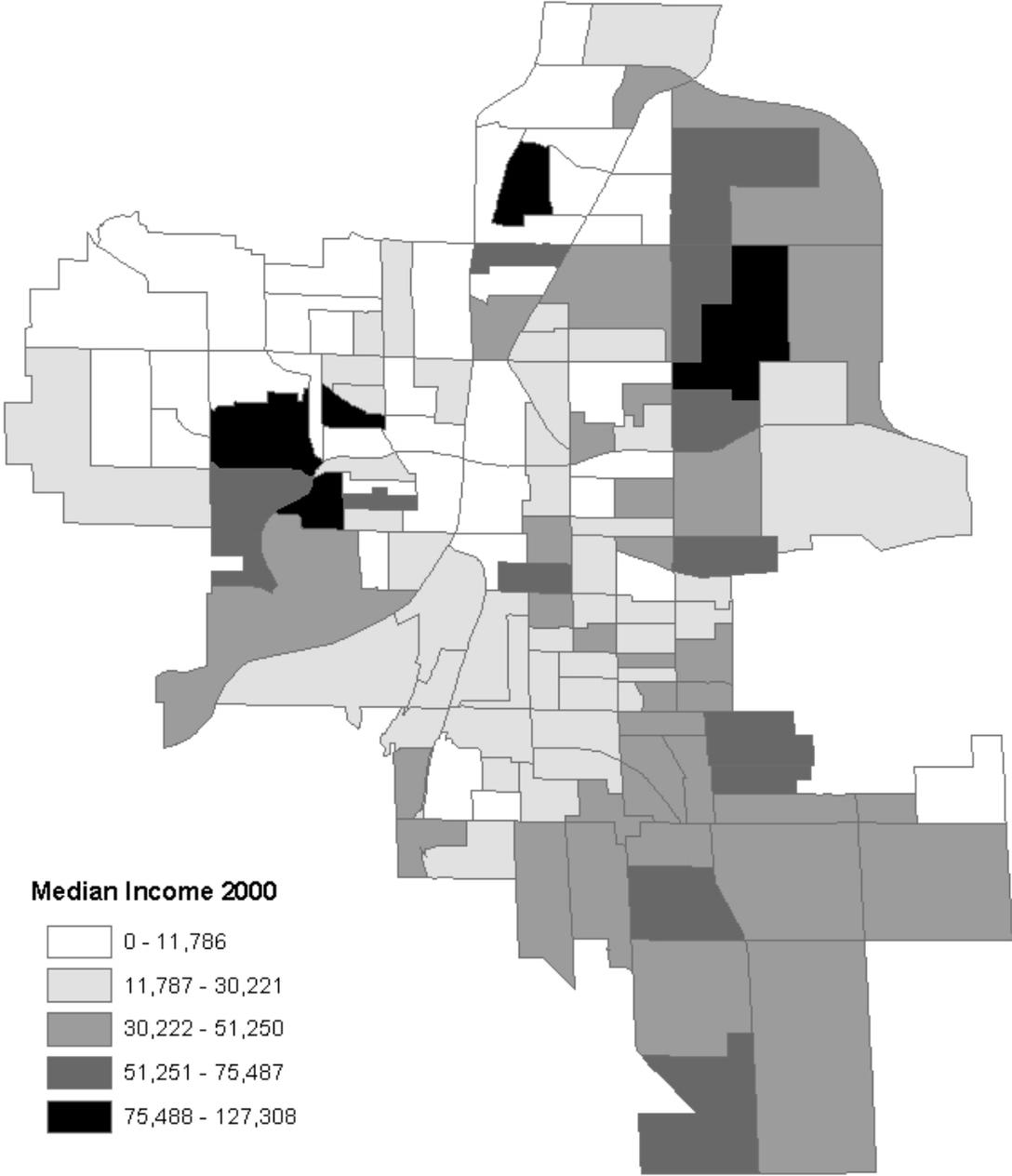
Data Source: Analysis of U.S. Census data

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature that we examined for our project came from two major literature streams. The first deals with mixed-income communities that are the result of intervention, such as public housing projects that are moving to mix their occupancy of low-income families with working-class and middle-class neighbors. The second deals with literature related to integrating communities and maintaining integration over time, which is most often concerned with racial integration—not income integration. Both of these literature streams have something to offer our consideration of mixed-income communities. The literature on mixed-income public housing communities or interventions to create mixed-income communities helps us understand why mixed income might be desirable and whether low-income residents are benefiting from these interventions. The literature on racially integrated neighborhoods helps us understand the statistical tools used to measure neighborhood stability over time, definitions of 'integrated', and ways that neighborhoods are studied. We have also considered some literature about mobility and neighborhood attachment.

First, however, we will note that no agreement exists about the definition of "mixed-income." However, Jargowsky and Bane (1991) define "mixed-income" neighborhoods as a process of trying to identify "ghetto" neighborhoods. They define ghetto neighborhoods as those with 40 percent poverty rate, and mixed-income neighborhoods as those with 20-40 percent poverty. Besides being rather arbitrary, this percentage of poverty is high for purposes of our study. We are looking for a more dynamic mix of all income categories where possible.

Mixed-Income Public Housing

One of the first interventions which aimed to promote income mixture was the Gautreaux program in Chicago that was created as the result of a lawsuit by Chicago Housing Authority residents, filed because they were living in segregated and poverty-concentrated

neighborhoods. This program gave Section 8 rental-housing subsidies to participants in the program and allowed them to move to suburban areas or different areas of the city. Popkin, et al. found that the Gautreaux program movers experienced economic gains and were more likely to be employed (Popkin et al., 1993). The Gautreaux program and other mobility programs sought to overcome the problems of inner-city poverty. These include spatial mismatch of jobs and skills the lack of positive role models for low-income people as outlined by William Julius Wilson in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) and poor safety and education for children in inner-city neighborhoods. The Gautreaux program was based on racial integration—movers were only allowed to relocate to areas where the black population was less than 30 percent (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum, 2000). Later programs, such as HUD's Moving to Opportunity, sought to relocate residents based on the concentration of poverty (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum, 2000).

Schwartz and Tajbakhsh (1997) overviewed the interventions the government has implemented to integrate communities via income including programs like HOPE VI and Section 8 housing vouchers. These efforts are based on the idea that mixing low-income residents with middle-income residents can create important benefits for the low-income residents. These benefits include improved schools, neighborhoods, and social capital as well as economic benefits. HOPE IV required that a proportion of the residents of a redeveloped public housing project have incomes below a certain level but that redevelopment open up spaces for new middle-income residents. Section 8 vouchers help to relocate low-income people in "scattered sites". These programs are seeking to reduce the concentration of poverty in urban areas (Schwartz and Tajbakhsh, 1997). Early results show that public housing residents using the vouchers have experienced improvement in some aspects of their lives as a result of the move— most notably higher levels of school satisfaction among the children of voucher users (Goetz,

2002). As Strait (2001) points out, traditional public housing projects have created poverty concentration which then causes a loss of non-poor residents and further concentrates poverty. The results of that study suggest the residential composition is based more on class concerns than race.

Enhanced social capital is a theoretical benefit of mixed-income communities that has been forwarded by many scholars but has not yet been verified. It is also not clear how the presence or absence of social capital has impacted residents of public housing. "There is a growing consensus among urban analysts that inner-city neighborhoods suffer from a lack of social capital" (Temkin and Rohe, 1998). In their study of the Lake Parc Place development in Chicago, Rosenbaum, et al (1998) found that there was some interaction between the residents of different incomes. The community residents were intentionally shuffled to insure that "project" residents (those being relocated from prior public housing residences) and "non-project" residents (those who never before lived in public housing) were immediate neighbors. The residents of the development were racially homogenous—all were African-American—and this may have encouraged interaction (Rosenbaum et al, 1998). The positive reasons for mixed-income housing were outlined by Popkin et al (2000): Communities will be more stable with less turnover; services, management, and maintenance will be better because the developments must attract and retain higher-income residents; the developments are more likely to attract investment from business and institutions; budgets can include services to residents because they are mixed-income developments; and there is more political support for mixed-income developments because a wider range of people are assisted. It is not clear that these developments address the problem identified by William Julius Wilson in *The Truly*

Disadvantaged (1987) because it is not clear that the lowest-income tenants will benefit economically from these efforts (Popkin et al, 2000).

Racial Integration of Neighborhoods

Donnelly and Majka studied the same integrated neighborhood, Five Oaks of Dayton, Ohio, at two different times, once in 1984 and again in 1992. They called this an ideological community because a high number of the residents of the neighborhood were college-educated liberals who sought out a diverse community. Their 1986 article contradicted a large body of literature that forwarded the idea that community ties decrease as heterogeneity increases. "Persons with little appreciation of racial and economic diversity are less committed to Five Oaks. They're unlikely to feel comfortable in a neighborhood which is both racially and economically diverse and which has become more so in recent years" (Donnelly and Majka, 1996). They found "residents who are homeowners, have a greater appreciation of diversity, have more years of schooling, who are older, and who are White are more likely to report higher commitment levels" to the neighborhood (Donnelly and Majka, 1996). They also found that length of residence is positively associated with ties to neighbors. Socioeconomic status seems to affect ties to neighbors as well—"more affluent persons are likely to have more of their close friends and associates live outside than are persons with lower incomes" (Donnelly and Majka, 1996).

Ellen (1998) did a study looking at the stability of racial integration in neighborhoods by using census data from 1970, 1980 and 1990. Important to our work was Ellen's definition of a neighborhood as a block group or census tract because there is a need for "statistical neighborhoods for which data have been collected." (28) This confirms our choice of census divisions as neighborhoods even though both are larger than what most would consider a

neighborhood. Ellen also defined "racial integration". She discussed the many ways to approach

this including mirroring the actual distribution of the population, and a 50/50 split. The problem

with either of these is that they do not necessarily represent integration. Integration, she argues,

is contextual and varies across metropolitan areas. "[I]ntegration should be about sharing spaces

on relatively equal grounds. It should be underscored, however, that any definition of integration

is to some degree arbitrary" (Ellen, 2000). Ellen also did not consider an area integrated if the

population is still changing. The main statistical measure she used was the change in the

proportion of the racial make-up of an area. If there were more than a ten percent change in a

positive direction (an increase in the number of White residents), Ellen labeled this a

"succession" neighborhood. If there were more than a ten percent negative change in the

relevant proportion, this was a "displacement" neighborhood (Ellen, 1998). Mixed-income

requirements have also become popular with private developments. Goodman and Monti (1999)

examined the effectiveness of corporately sponsored private redevelopment interventions in the

1970s and 1980s in St. Louis, Missouri, using census data and creating case studies of the five

neighborhoods. Because redevelopment in urban areas often displaces poor residents the authors

were interested in the degree to which redeveloped areas were able to maintain some income mix

in the neighborhood. The neighborhoods were all racially mixed to some degree and were in

varying levels of decline. One of the common goals of the redevelopment efforts studied was to

use federal funds to "create racially and economically mixed residential populations in these

areas" (Goodman and Monti 1999). The authors did not look at income. Instead, they looked at

demographic change in racial, age, educational, and occupational composition of the

neighborhoods. They found that redevelopment could "attract and hold people from different

backgrounds, stages of life and social classes" (Goodman and Monti, 1999, 101).

Mobility

The mobility literature shows that pressures to move--such as low satisfaction with neighborhood quality, neighborhood safety and housing quality as well as employment decisions--can be offset by ties to the community, improved neighborhood quality, and better housing amenities (Kirschenbaum, 1983; Rosenbaum et al, 1998; Varady and Wang, 2001). Varady and Wang found that mixed-income public housing was a stepping-stone for many residents, both the upwardly mobile and those who had lived in public housing previously. They found that residents moving out had weak ties to the community. We have learned from the literature that many important qualities are necessary for mobility into and the stability of racially diverse neighborhoods. Racially integrated schools provide a pull into a community and they are a factor that maintains stability in diverse neighborhoods (Saltman, 1991). The stability of racially mixed neighborhoods is also an element that draws people to heterogeneous racial neighborhoods (Ellen, 1998). Donnelly and Majka (1996, 1988) also found that college-educated liberals—specifically those with an appreciation for diversity—created and maintained an "ideological community" where racial and economic heterogeneity was valued. Along this same line, people who have experience in diverse environments, such as workplaces, are more likely to feel comfortable in diverse neighborhoods (Cohen, 1998). Redeveloped public housing has intentionally sought to mix people and has implemented rules and security measures to insure that mix is maintained. Housing amenities have also drawn people into these refurbished former public housing sites (Rosenbaum et al, 1998). All of these things need to be taken into account when looking for the reasons that heterogeneity has been maintained over time.

Conclusion

Programmatic (Government sponsored) and non-programmatic (non-profit and institutional) responses have somewhat alleviated the situation of concentrated and segregated pockets of poverty, but the income- and race-based polarization in our urban areas is still a stark reality. Mixed-income public housing is increasingly common and scholars are studying these communities to find out if the goal of improving the communities for public housing residents is becoming a reality. These mixed-income communities are structured to help low-income people but in reality the mix is shallow—the poor and the working poor who qualify for housing subsidies are being mixed with the working class and the middle class in these housing developments. There are few areas where there is a more dynamic mix. As Vale (1998) has pointed out, more research needs to be done to prove that mixed-income communities produce benefits for low-income people. The goals of mixed-income communities are not standardized. Some believe that there will be an economic benefit to low-income residents while others posit an increase in social capital, which could lead to many different positive outcomes. Studies of racially mixed communities that have formed organically give us insight into why this mix exists, how the mix is quantified, and how it has been maintained overtime. Our understanding of maintaining diversity has also been increased by mobility literature. It seems that diversity and appreciation for diversity encourages some people to maintain diversity and live in heterogeneous neighborhood.

<u>**OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY**</u>

Our search for mixed-income neighborhoods began with two initial questions: How are we defining mixed-income?, and How are we defining neighborhood? Most of this section will attempt to explain the former so we will begin with the second question.

<u>**Defining Neighborhood**</u>

We know from our previous research that people associate "neighborhood" with their immediate neighbors. Unfortunately, there is not much data compiled and available at the "face block"[10] level. For a longitudinal study, it made the most sense to use geographic boundaries that were somewhat standardized. As Ellen (2000) points out, census tracts and block groups are already established boundaries for which data is gathered. Efforts have been made throughout the project, however, to connect these areas with specific neighborhood association boundaries in Grand Rapids because these boundaries have so much meaning for Grand Rapids residents. Census tracts are geographic divisions based on population that have between 2500 and 8000 residents. Tracts are usually larger than one person would think of if asked to describe his or her own neighborhood. Census tracts are divided into block groups, and block groups are made up of individual blocks. Blocks are smaller divisions used by the census, but because this is sample data, specific data about income are unavailable for these narrowly focused areas. Block groups seem to be the most manageable geographic divisions we could find for this study. Not necessarily "just right," because boundaries are sometimes odd or have changed somewhat from census to census, neither are they "too small" or "too large." Data are available on block groups from 1990 and 2000 only.

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[10] A face block is an area between two corners, where one row of houses faces another.

Defining Income

In attempting to define mixed income, we realized that there is no absolute way to measure the degree of mixture of income in a given neighborhood. The degree of mixture is a relative concept that depends on the mixture of income in the greater urban area of which the given neighborhood is a part. We decided that a neighborhood or block group that had the greatest degree of mixture is one that largely reflects the mix of incomes that exists in the greater urban area. The proportion of each income category in the neighborhood would be the same as the proportion of that category in the entire city or in the entire metropolitan area.

To apply this definition, we had to make sense of the income data that is available for block groups. First, income is recorded in categories by dollars such as "$10,000 or less" or "$45,000 to $49,999". For each census year, different income categories are reported and the intervals are not equal across all categories. Some categories represent a spread of five thousand dollars ($4,999) others represent a spread of fifty thousand dollars ($49,999). In other words, we needed a way to represent income data that was more standard for each census year so that we could compare the 1990 data with the 2000 data.

We decided to divide the family income data of the whole city, for each census year, into quintiles (five categories of equal numbers of people) and then find the income cutoffs based on that division. [See Table 1 below] Each quintile represents 20 percent of the population of either Grand Rapids (left side of Table 1) or the 1990 Grand Rapids MSA (right). The top two tables are the quintiles for the year 2000 Census and the bottom two tables are the quintiles for the 1990 Census. Table 1 represents family income in Grand Rapids and the 1990 Grand Rapids MSA as reported in the 1990 and 2000 census. The dollar amounts in Table 1 are estimates of

the incomes based on 20 percent of the people in each spread. They do not represent actual reported incomes because that detailed information is not available.

In Table 1, the "lower bound" shows the low end of the income scale, and the "upper bound" represents the high end of the income scale for each quintile. Suppose the "Smith" family in Grand Rapids reported their income as $40,000 on their 2000 Census form. This would place them in Quintile 3 on the Grand Rapids (City) part of Table 1 for the 2000 census.

When you compare the "Smith" Family with the 2000 Grand Rapids MSA, they would find themselves in quintile 2 (see table for 2000 on the right). Every other family that also completed their 2000 Census forms would be in a range of income represented by a quintile. Every quintile has approximately 20 percent of the total number of families. In this way we can understand the spread of incomes in the city or metropolitan areas.

In the year 2000, 20 percent of Grand Rapids city families earned between $36,923 and $53,336 (quintile 3). In the year 1990, 20 percent of families in the Grand Rapids MSA earned between $44,045 and $61,635 (quintile 4).

Table 1: Quintile Family Income Ranges for Census 2000 and 1990, Grand Rapids City and MSA

GRAND RAPIDS CITY

2000	lower bound	upper bound[1]
Quintile 1	$0	$21,536
Quintile 2	$21,537	$36,922
Quintile 3	$36,923	$53,336
Quintile 4	$53,337	$75,512
Quintile 5	$75,513	$200,000

1990	lower bound	upper bound
Quintile 1	$0	$15,291
Quintile 2	$15,292	$26,835
Quintile 3	$26,836	$38,207
Quintile 4	$38,208	$54,047
Quintile 5	$54,048	$150,000

GRAND RAPIDS MSA[1]

2000	lower bound	upper bound
Quintile 1	$0	$30,894
Quintile 2	$30,895	$43,909
Quintile 3	$43,910	$66,404
Quintile 4	$66,405	$92,262
Quintile 5	$92,263	$200,000

1990	lower bound	upper bound
Quintile 1	$0	$20,234
Quintile 2	$20,235	$32,483
Quintile 3	$32,484	$44,045
Quintile 4	$44,046	$61,635
Quintile 5	$61,636	$150,000

Quintile 1 represents the poorest fifth and Quintile 5 as represents the wealthiest fifth of families of the Grand Rapids or Kent/Ottawa Counties.

These income cutoffs were then applied to each of the block groups in the city for each census year. We then wanted to compare each quintile that we calculated with one-fifth of each block group, which represents an equal distribution of incomes for each block group. This number offers us a comparison of the number of families in the block group whose income falls within the range of that quintile with the number that we would expect to be in that quintile if there were an equal distribution of incomes around the city. The closer this number is to 1.00 in each category, the closer the block group is to having its fair share of families in that income category for the whole city.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used to gain insight into the selected communities. We were interested in residents' opinions as to why their neighborhood had been stable over time, as measured by relative stability in the lowest quintiles and what factors contributed to the area maintaining a mix of incomes. There was an average of seven participants in each focus group. Each participant was compensated for their time and encouraged to speak freely. The moderator asked questions of the group and made every attempt to balance the response so that every person had a chance to respond to questions.

Focus groups were chosen because they target well-informed individuals rather than a representative sample. The purpose of the group interview is to allow participants to expand on one another's thought and provide rich detail about a topic. Fontana and Frey (2000) point out the advantages of the group interview as, "inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative, over and above individual responses"

(365). Participants made to feel as though they are contributing to scholarly pursuit or that their

opinions are important to the researcher are most apt to be at ease and respond well to this type

of interview. This interview format does require the researcher to become a moderator for the

discussion, using skills to manage the flow of response, to keep some from dominating the group

and to encourage others to share their opinions. The moderator sets the tone for the discussion,

letting participants know that they will be doing most of the talking. Our focus groups were

taped and transcribed for later analysis.

FINDINGS

The following sections offer an overall summary of findings. Categories include income distribution, gentrification, mixed-income, and focus groups.

Income Distribution by Quintiles

Figure 5 shows the distribution of low-income quintiles, as calculated by relative income status via quintiles across Grand Rapids. This means that, for example, the areas which are darkest have less than their "fair share" of the lower two quintiles, which means that they do not have the percentage of relatively low-income families that one might expect if income categories were spread fairly evenly. In contrast, the areas that are White on the map have more than their "fair share" of low-income families, and the areas that are gray have an expected portion of relatively low-income families. In that sense, therefore, the gray areas are places where low-income families are able to live but are not an unusually high proportion of the families. Several of the gray areas were census block groups that our study examined because they maintained stability of a percentage of low-income families overtime.

In Figure 6, we see the reverse side of Figure 5. Figure 6 shows where high-income quintiles tend to congregate in Grand Rapids, as well as where you find fewer high-income families than might be expected looking at quintile proportions. Figure 6 is somewhat different than the median income map because it shows that there are some areas on the outskirts of the city that may have median income at a relatively high level, as illustrated in Figure 3, and yet they do not have the expected portion of high-income families. This is in part because the median income illustrated in Figure 3 only shows the midpoint of a range of incomes for families, so that half of all families in that particular area are above the median income, and half are below the median. However this could be misleading because it does not show variation.

Figure 5: Distribution of Low-Income Quintiles
Across Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000
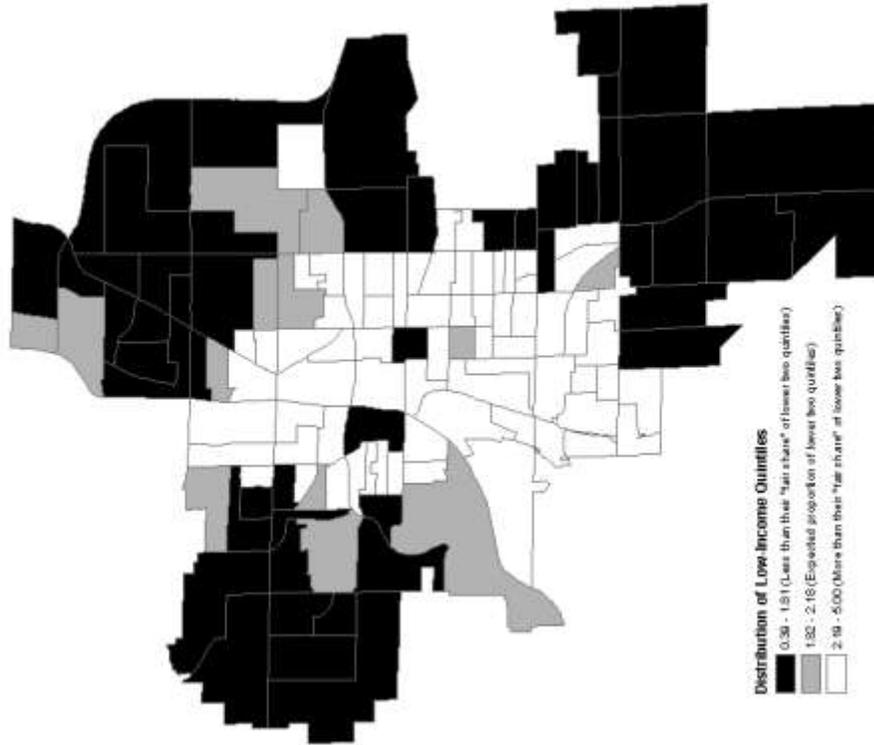
Figure 6: Distribution of High-Income Quintiles
Across Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000

Distribution of Low-Income Quintiles

- 0.39 - 1.81 (Less than their "fair share" of lower two quintiles)
- 1.82 - 2.18 (Expected proportion of lower two quintiles)
- 2.19 - 5.00 (More than their "fair share" of lower two quintiles)

Distribution of High Income Quintiles

- 0 - 0.64
- 0.65 - 1.30
- 1.31 - 2.42

Data Source: Analysis of U.S. Census data

Data Source: Analysis of U.S. Census data

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In contrast, the quintile system helps us to see how the higher incomes or lower incomes are clustered according to the metropolitan area or the city as a whole. In this particular case, Figure 6 shows the clustering of higher income quintiles in the city itself, as opposed to the metropolitan area.

Gentrification

Please note in Figure 7 an unusual way of documenting what some might call gentrification. As far as we could tell, there was no standard, widely accepted, quantitative measure of gentrification. However, we suggest that relative increase in family income is one way to assess gentrification, and that such gentrification is taking place in a census block group or tract when that tract experiences both an increase in the highest or fifth quintile and a decrease in the lowest two quintiles from 1990 to 2000. As shown in Figure 7, quite a few block groups met this criterion, because we included census block groups that experienced both an increase in the upper quintile and a decrease in the lower quintiles at any magnitude. Therefore we mapped block groups experiencing only slight changes in those categories. Figure 8, however, takes into account magnitude. In the census block groups which are mapped in Figure 8, and listed in Table 2, the upper quintile increased at least 0.5 from 1990 to 2000, while at the same time the decline in the lowest two quintiles was at least 0.2. Therefore these census block groups could truly be said to have experienced a marked increase in relatively wealthy families, as well as some form of declining poverty, in other words gentrification.

Figure 7: Block Groups Experiencing Relative Increase in Family Income, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990-2000
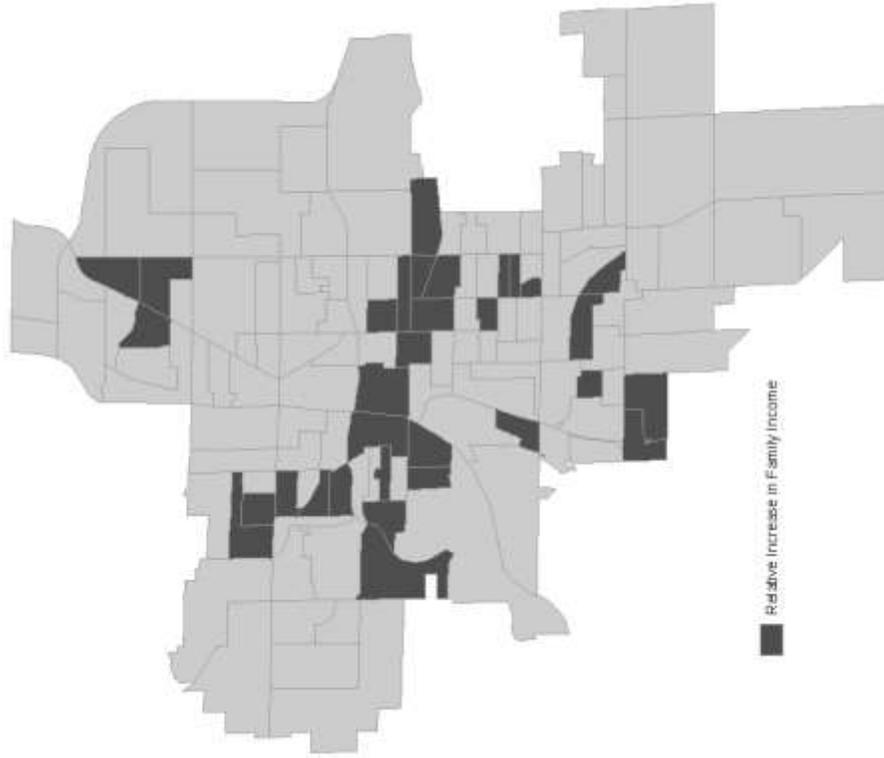
Relative Increase in Family Income

Figure 8: Block Groups Experiencing Pronounced Relative Increase in Family Income, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990-2000

Pronounced Relative Increase in Family Income

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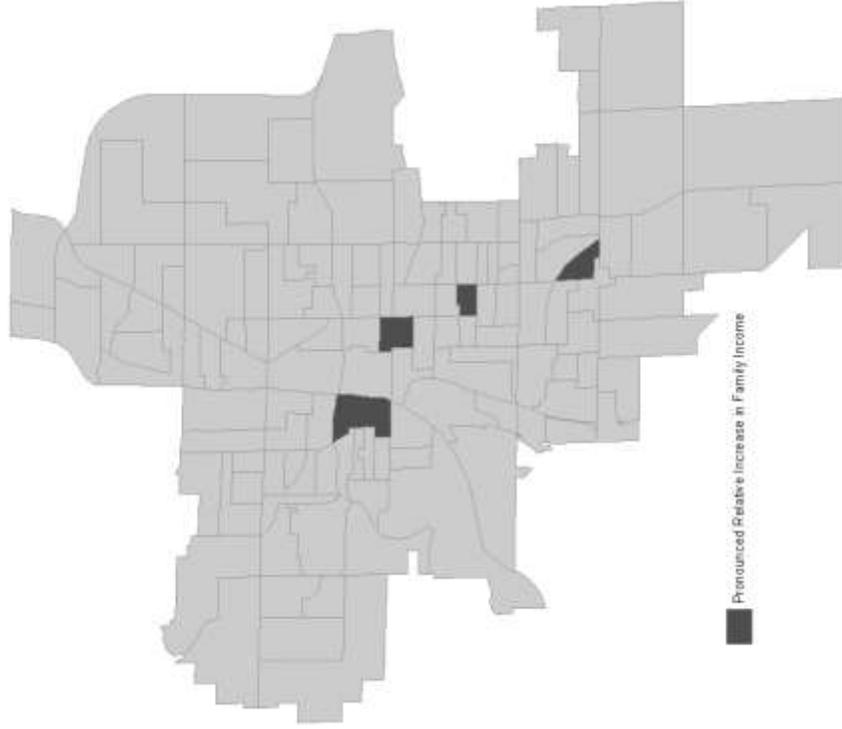
Table 2: Quintile Changes for Census Block Groups Experiencing Pronounced Relative Increase in Family Income, 1990-2000, Grand Rapids

Census Block Group	Neighborhood Association Covering the Area	Quintile Proportion			
		Upper Quintile		Lower Two Quintiles	
		1990	2000	1990	2000
19001	West Grand/SWAN	0.17	0.64	4.09	1.19
21002	Heritage Hill/Heartside	0.31	1.28	3.79	0.97
30002	South Hill/Madison Area	0.28	1.23	3.48	2.35
35004	Oakdale/South East End	0.42	1.40	2.39	1.90

Note: See Appendix A for detailed maps of these four block groups.

As noted in Figure 9, census block groups and Grand Rapids experienced varying changes in terms of the relative proportion of lower income families, as represented by the bottom two quintiles of our analysis. The darkest areas experienced an increase in those two lowest quintile categories between 1990 and 2000, ranging from 0.17 to 0.54. This particular matter is very interesting because it shows those census block groups which may be in some senses "at risk" of losing relative family income status. In another sense, this could simply indicate that these particular areas have become more open to relatively lower income families, perhaps through an increase in affordable housing. It might be useful for community organizations to examine the reasons for these changes and to determine if such changes represent greater inclusiveness or economic deterioration. Notice, for example, when comparing this map with Figure 3, which showed median income for families, that the eastern portion of the city still retains relatively high median income even though it may be experiencing an increase in proportion of lower income families. In contrast, the extreme western portion of the city does not show an increase in the percentage of low-income families to a high degree, although Figure

3 indicated that this area had relatively high median family income. It could be that fringe areas
are showing an increasing percentage of low-income families as opposed to centralized areas and
the implications of these findings need to be assessed.

Figure 9: Areas Experiencing Changes in the Relative Proportion of Low-Income Families,
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990-2000

Changes in Quintiles 1 & 2: 1990-2000

High Decrease
Decrease
Stable
Increase
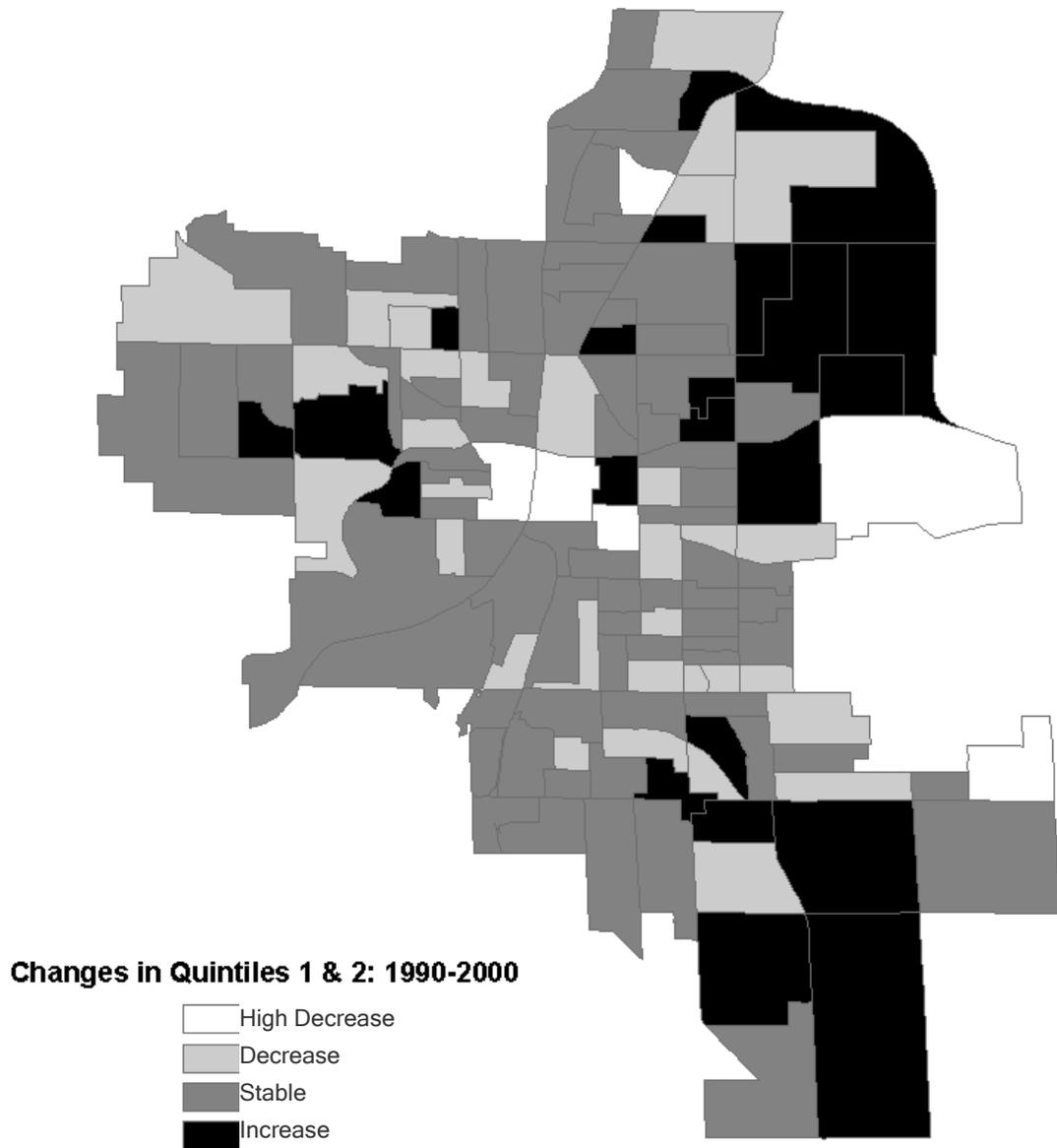
Mixed-Income

      After trying different statistical methods to gauge how well the mix of incomes in the block groups reflected the mix of incomes of Grand Rapids, we decided to revisit our conception of mixed income. What is the most important aspect of income distribution that we were looking for? Is a mixed income neighborhood one where most of the people are in the middle quintile but there are some on either end of the scale? Or is it a neighborhood with families in both the highest and lowest quintiles? After consultation with staff in the field, we decided that the areas that we were most interested in finding were neighborhoods where the distribution of families in the lowest two quintiles was close to the overall distribution of the city. In other words a mixed-income neighborhood is one that has "its fair share" of the two lower quintiles, without having too many and not too few. We decided to combine the ratios we calculated for the lower two quintiles and see which block groups had a combined ratio of close to 2.00, that block group's fair share of people in the lowest two quintiles. We created ranges to identify the 10 percent of block groups that were closest to 2.00. The range for 1990 was 1.75 to 2.25. This range identified 14 block groups of 145. The 2000 range was narrowed to 1.82 to 2.18 to identify 13 of the 131 block groups. The two years were then compared to identify those block groups with a mix that was stable over time. The seven block groups in the overlap were the tracts we investigated with help from an Extension field staff member in Grand Rapids. We used the same process to identify four block groups that were compared to the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) for Grand Rapids and included these in our investigation. [11] These block groups are mapped in Figure 10; Appendix B includes more information about these block groups.

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[11] The MSA for Grand Rapids that we used was defined as the 1990 MSA. Kent and Ottawa Counties (including Holland, Michigan) comprised the 1990 MSA. The MSA for the 2000 Census included Muskegon and Allegan Counties. The data from these counties was subtracted from our calculations for the year 2000.

Figure 10: Block Groups Identified as Mixed-Income, Defined as Stable Proportion of Lower Two Quintiles, Grand Rapids, Michigan,1990-2000
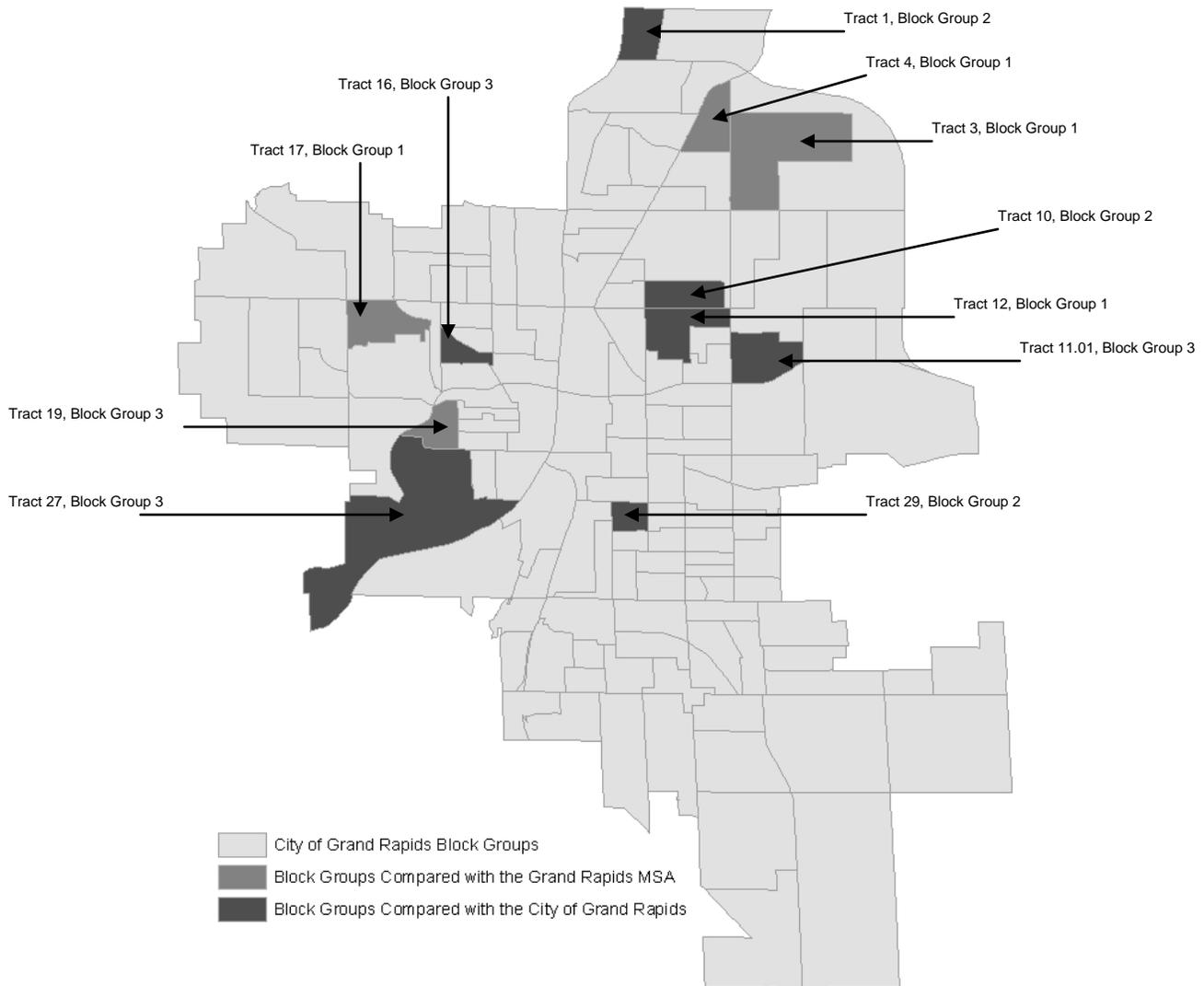
Our investigation involved gathering demographic data about each block group and a windshield survey of each area to see if we could understand what made these 11 block groups unique. Demographic data was gathered on all the tracts from the 2000 Census. Data for comparison was gathered from the 1990 Census. The data sheet for each block group includes: the total number of families in 2000, the total housing units and the number occupied and vacant, the number of housing units that are owner or renter occupied, the number of housing units in

1990 as well as the number of rental housing, the median family income for both 1990 and 2000, the number of families below the poverty level in both 1990 and 2000, the racial breakdown and Hispanic origin, the White population in 1990, the number of householders over 65, and the educational attainment of people over 25. The 11 block groups we chose were all majority White, mostly in the northern area of the city (except one) and were not, as we thought they might be, close to the center of the city [See Figure 10].

Our visual survey gave us an idea of the amount of multi-family housing in each of these areas, the size of homes in the area, and the presence of any isolating factors such as topographical differences among areas. We were also looking for evidence that the income mix was not spread throughout the block group. We reasoned that there could be two or three very distinct income areas within a block group. These areas would not experience the same interaction among people of differing incomes. We were interested in finding out if there was public or multi-family housing of any kind that might cause our income data to reflect a mix that was not really there. In one of the identified block groups, there was indeed a retirement home and in another there was a middle- to upper-income housing development that was walled-off from the surrounding low-income community.

We found that the stable census block groups were indeed slightly different than other block groups in the city. The 11 selected stable mixed income block groups were compared to the other block groups in the city and the MSA to assess the difference and identify factors that distinguished them. Using a single sample t-test, the means of the selected block groups of each of the available census variables were compared to the city and MSA values. Variables where statistically significant differences were found are presented in Table 4. The 11 stable mixed-income block groups tended to have less vacant housing in 2000, less rental housing in both

2000 and 1990, lower median income for families in both years compared to metropolitan

median income, lower proportions of families in poverty in both 1990 and 2000, and fewer

people of color. In 1990, the median income for families in the mixed-income block groups was

higher than for the city as a whole. Here is more detail about these overall findings. We have

trained these details in the form of a series of questions about the data.

Table 3: Comparing Mixed-Income Block Groups and Grand Rapids City and MSA on
Measures of Occupancy Status, Income, Poverty Level and Race

	Average of selected mixed-income block groups	Average of Grand Rapids (city)	Average of MSA of Grand Rapids
Vacant housing units 2000	3.8%	6.1%*	6.3%*
Renter occupied units 2000	23.8%	40.3%*	
Renter occupied units 1990	23.4%	40.1%*	
Median Income of Families 2000	$47,258		$54,118*
Median Income of Families 1990	$34,947	$32,049**	$38,626*
Families below poverty level 2000	7.6%	11.9%**	
Families below poverty level in 1990	5.0%	12.6%*	
RACE (2000)			
Total Not Hispanic or Latino	94.8%	86.9%*	
White alone (not Hispanic or Latino)	85.6%	67.3%*	
Black alone (not Hispanic or Latino)	9.6%	20.4%**	
Other races (not Hispanic or Latino) +	2.9%	9.1%*	
Two or more races alone (not Hispanic/Latino)	1.9%	3.2%**	
Hispanic or Latino	5.2%	13.1%*	
Hispanic or Latino - Black alone	0.6%	3.8%*	2.4%*
White Population in 1990	90.0%	76.4%**	

* p < .01   ** p < .05
+ Other races (not Hispanic/Latino) includes: American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian, Hawaiian Native and Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other
Race

1. How do the selected mixed-income block groups differ from the city as a whole?

From the MSA as a whole?

The difference in the average of some demographic categories of the selected block

groups from the city and MSA were significant.

- In housing categories there were differences in housing vacancies as well as rental housing. The selected mixed-income block groups had less vacant housing in 2000 compared to both the city and the MSA. The mixed-income block groups had less rental housing than the city in both 2000 and 1990.

- The mixed-income block groups differed significantly from the MSA in median income. In both 2000 and 1990, the average median income for families of the mixed-income block groups was lower than the MSA median income for families. However, in 1990, the median income for families of the mixed-income block groups was higher than the city as a whole. (The 2000 median income was higher for the mixed-income block groups than for the city as a whole but the difference was not significant in our test.)

- In terms of poverty status of families the mixed-income block groups have lower proportions of families in poverty in both 2000 and 1990 than the city. (The proportion of families in poverty of the mixed-income block groups didn't differ significantly from the MSA proportion of families in poverty.)

- In terms of race, the studied mixed-income areas had significantly fewer people in the racial/ethnic categories of Black (not Hispanic/Latino), Hispanic/Latino, other races (not Hispanic/Latino), and people of two or more races than the city as a whole and many more non-Hispanic White people. The mixed-income block groups had a higher proportion of Whites in 1990 than the city as well. The mixed-income areas we studied did not differ from the MSA in any racial/ethnic categories except for Hispanic or Latino – Black alone.

2. Why are most of the block groups of "mixed income" predominately White?

Block groups with individuals identifying themselves as Black are clustered in the southern part of Grand Rapids. Many of these block groups had more than their fair share of families in the lowest two quintiles. Some were close to being within the range of those block groups closest to 2.00, but in two cases, block groups were found that had less than their fair share of the lowest two quintiles meaning that they were relatively well-to-do. Others had more than their fair share. Many of the block groups with high percentages of African-Americans (over 50%) had more than their fair share of families in the lowest two quintiles. None of the block groups represented both a majority of Black people and a stable mix of incomes over time.

3. What are general trends in mixed-income neighborhoods?

We were able to identify only four census block groups that remained stable according to our criteria when compared with the metro area as a whole. We were able to find seven such block groups when each was compared with the city as a whole. This could be due to the fact that the relative wealth of the metro area is outpacing the relative wealth of the central city block groups. In fact, as is evident in tables 3.1 and 3.2 (below) there are fewer block groups with a disproportionate number of families in the highest quintile of the MSA income distribution than the City income distribution. In fact, both Table 4.1 and 3.2 show a shift in the income distribution over time in the highest quintile. Fewer of the block groups are over represented in the highest quintile in 2000.

4. How do the selected mixed-income block groups compare to the rest of the city? The MSA?

Block groups varied widely in Grand Rapids according to income mix as measured by our system. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show how many block groups have more than their fair share of the income distribution for a particular quintile. In the tables, the number of block groups is the number of block groups in the city with a disproportionate or higher proportion for each quintile as compared with the city (in Table 4.1) and the MSA (Table 4.2). Not a lot of block groups have as many wealthy people compared to the MSA, but compared to the city, a respectable number of block groups (31.3 percent in 2000) have more than their fair share of families in the highest quintile. Important also, is the high number of block groups (74.0 percent in 2000) that are in the lowest quintiles compared to the MSA. This further illustrates the concentration of poverty in the central city. It seems that gentrification is not occurring in relation to the wealth of the MSA, that is high-income areas are doing better in relation with the city and not as well in relation to the MSA.

Table 4.1 City Block Groups with a Disproportionately High Rating in Quintiles (City data)

Block Groups with a Disproportionately High Rating for:	Number of Block Groups in 1990		Number of Block Groups in 2000	
Highest Quintile (5)	33.1%	(48)	31.3%	(41)
High-middle Quintile (4)	40.7%	(59)	48.9%	(64)
Middle Quintile (3)	45.5%	(66)	48.9%	(64)
Low-middle Quintile (2)	53.8%	(78)	49.6%	(65)
Lowest Quintile (1)	47.6%	(69)	49.6%	(65)

Table 4.2 City Block Groups with a Disproportionately High Rating in Quintiles (MSA data)

Block Groups with a Disproportionately High Rating for:	Number of Block Groups in 1990		Number of Block Groups in 2000	
Highest Quintile (5)	19.3%	(28)	11.5%	(15)
High-middle Quintile (4)	24.8%	(36)	22.1%	(29)
Middle Quintile (3)	36.6 %	(53)	30.5%	(40)
Low-middle Quintile (2)	62.8%	(91)	64.9%	(85)
Lowest Quintile (1)	63.4%	(92)	74.0%	(97)

Focus Groups

We carried out focus group interviews in three neighborhoods out of the 11 described above. These neighborhoods were picked with the help of an Extension field staff member as fairly representation all of the 11 neighborhoods. In general, we found that existing residents opinion about having a mixed income neighborhood varied from our expectation. In some cases people saw this as a benefit, and in some cases they saw it as a detriment. We also found that are selected neighborhoods had certain stabilizing influences, which are listed below, as well as certain threats to stability, which are listed below:

Stabilizers for Mixed-Income Neighborhoods

- The **parish structure** of the Catholic Church has provided neighborhood stability in some areas. When asked about if the mix of incomes was surprising, one respondent said of the parish system "it didn't matter what your income was, if you were in that parish, that was your church." One respondent mentioned that the church helps new immigrant communities. Parochial schooling is another important link to the neighborhood.

One respondent mentioned that the Catholic Church helps new immigrant communities.

- Respondents identified strong **social networks** in their neighborhoods. One respondent explained that through involvement with schools in the area (parenting, volunteering) "you just get to know people, . . . it is a big social [neighborhood]." Another respondent said, "It is nice to walk into the local grocery store and know everybody."

- Respondents identified **emotional connections** to the neighborhood that engender **love, trust**, and **loyalty**, to the neighborhood.   "[T]here is much [pride] in this neighborhood. I mean if there is garbage on the ground people generally pick it up . . ." Another respondent said, " . . . I love it, the neighbors . . . are wonderful." About comfort in the neighborhood a respondent said, "there is trust [in the neighborhood], you don't have to worry about walking down the street [at night] . . ." Others spoke of a sense of ownership of the neighborhood.

- Many respondents reported that they had **deep roots, family connections including multi-generational housing** to the neighborhood. "I bought [the house] from my parents." One respondent shared this observation "there [are] a lot of families that have the deep roots and they keep coming back and now they have children and grandchildren and it is just . . . a good place to live."

- Good local **schools, both private and public**, have helped to keep people in the neighborhoods we studied. "There are these good local private schools that your kids can walk to . . . [I]f those schools didn't exist we probably wouldn't be in Grand Rapids." A respondent says her children live in the neighborhood with her grandchildren: "they liked the school system and so that's why they are in the area . . ."

- Factors such as **housing value, upkeep of property and 'good' landlords** have stabilized the neighborhood. "You get a lot of house for your money in this neighborhood compared to other areas." Problems with rental properties are ascribed to absentee landlords. "[T]here [are] not very many absentee landlords in our neighborhood. Most of the properties are up kept, you know, they are neat, lawns are mowed, the garbage is picked up."

- **Neighborhood associations** were identified as helping to stabilize neighborhoods. Respondent reported that they feel comfortable taking problems to block captains and the neighborhood association. Neighborhood associations our study area have activities around parks and pools as well as taking on issues of education, crime, health and in addressing city policies that affect their neighborhood. Specifically, a neighborhood organization in our study is focused on saving a local park. "[I]f we have problems, we all get together and solve the problem."

- Other stabilizers we identified were: **home ownership, openness to others, an orientation to pedestrians, and a good location**. "[The neighborhood] is

centrally located and it is such a quiet lovely neighborhood, gorgeous old homes and nice people and who wouldn't want to live here."

Threats to Mixed-Income Neighborhoods

- In addition to being stabilizers, **schools** and the quality of local schools can also be threats to neighborhoods. School closings have negatively affected some residents of these neighborhoods. For others, a change in the quality and leadership of the public school system became a threat to the neighborhood. Several persons thought "the Grand Rapids Public Schools are in chaos." One respondent talked about the importance of advocating for the public schools: "[I]f you can't get families to move in with kids and stay and keep their families in the neighborhood, you are washed up . . . if people don't understand that the schools [are a] major issue in keeping your neighborhood stable, you might as well forget it. Nobody else in this city seems to get that . . ."

- Many respondents see **rental property** as a negative, especially if there are **problem or absentee landlords**. "We have had just a plethora of absentee landlords and that the greatest detrimental (sic) . . . the landlord is not taking care of . . . problems." Respondents talked about absentee landlords who used to live in the neighborhood but have moved out and owners who live out of state. College students may be renters that residents see as undesirable. Many renters were characterized as not having the same investment in the neighborhood as homeowners.

- **Economic decline** in the area was also cited as a threat to neighborhood stability. " [P]eople [are] losing their jobs and losing their homes, there are more homes on the market." Mobility out of the neighborhood is one effect of the economy but there is also threat to local businesses. Respondents talked about the loss of stores near the neighborhood.

- Respondents also mentioned the effects that **bad neighbors** have on the neighborhood. "People that don't take care [are a threat] . . . [they] have trash, cars and they don't take care of their house." Respondents told about working to enforce codes about trash problems and "junk cars" through their neighborhood association.

- Some respondents acknowledged **racial change** as a threat to stable neighborhoods. One respondent explained that people become intimidated by racial change in neighborhoods and in the public schools, which have experienced racial change in the last 10-15 years and are now 60% minority. "I think our neighborhood tolerates people of different races as individuals. We are not overwhelmed. We have a family here or, you know, a neighbor there." Other respondents talked about overcoming race as a barrier through interaction with individuals in the neighborhood. "You have to take that first step yourself to get to know your neighbors . . . of a different culture."

- The **<u>reputation</u>** of a neighborhood or area of the city can keep people out of a neighborhood. Some respondents reported that people negatively assessed their community from the outside. "I was completely shocked at what a bad reputation this area has, because our crime statistics don't bear it out, we are a very low crime area." The reputation exists because of a perception of crime in the area.

- Other issues that are threats include: **<u>single-family homes being used as multi-family homes</u>** and **<u>uncertainty about the fate of proposed development</u>** near the neighborhood. "It is just how many families are going to move in [to the house], that's what they worry about." Our respondents in John Ball Park neighborhood suggest that concerns over the plans for the park and its zoo may have caused some residents to relocate. "It is always a little bit of a gamble of what are you going to have across the street from here if you buy this house . . ." The residents further explained: "The zoo's master plan . . . was to blow out the bottom of the park [and] . . . take it over with big parking lots and . . . there are houses for sale."

"I was completely shocked at what a bad reputation this area has . . ."

". . . how many families are going to move in[?] . . ."

"It is always a little bit of a gamble of what are you going to have across the street from here if you buy this house . . ."

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE REPORT

Literature Review

The literature review we carried out for this project indicates that no agreement exists about the definition of a mixed-income neighborhood. In 1991, one set of authors defined mixed-income neighborhoods as those with between 20 and 40 percent poverty, but this is because the article was focused on identifying ghetto neighborhoods, which had more than 40 percent poverty.

One set of literature deals with mixed-income neighborhoods that are the result of intervention, such as those that tend to decentralize public housing. The most well known set of studies is from Chicago, where the Gautreaux program decentralized the Chicago Housing Authority residents to surrounding neighborhoods and to suburban areas. They found that those who moved tended to experience economic gains as well as greater chances of employment. Another set of authors found that programs which created integration such as HOPE 6 and Section 8 housing vouchers created benefits for low-income residents such as better schools, neighborhoods, and economic benefits. Such studies also found that when residents of different income levels were mixed, such as in the Lake Parc Place in Chicago, some interaction between neighbors took place, although in that case all of the residents were African-American. In general the studies seem to imply that mixed-income housing is very good for those in the lower income brackets.

Another set of literature studies racial integration. Some of this research suggests that mixed-race and mixed-income communities such as Five Oaks in Dayton Ohio are comfortable largely for those people who appreciate diversity. One author suggests that integration varies across metropolitan areas, and it depends on the context. For example, if a population is

changing, then it is difficult to call income mixture or race mixture a success, because the neighborhood is simply in the process of flux.

The mobility literature shows that pressures to move can be counterbalanced by ties to the community, or by better neighborhood quality and better housing. Racially integrated schools can be a draw for some people. It seems that college-educated liberals most appreciate racial and economic heterogeneity, as do people who have experienced diversified environments.

Census Data

As the full report notes, we used census block groups as an indication of neighborhood. We define stable income mixture as those census block groups which continue to have a stable proportion of their population who were fairly low income, without that proportion tipping over into too few low-income (gentrification) or too many low-income (increasing poverty). We looked at the 11 of 131 census block groups that seemed to show this definition of stability from 1990 to 2000. As noted in the Executive Summary, these block groups tended to have less vacant housing than average, less rental housing, lower median income, lower proportions of families in poverty, and fewer people of color.

1. Not surprisingly given our definition, mixed-income neighborhoods will require making sure that the proportion of residents who are of low income does not become overwhelming. This means that means will have to be found to maintain middle-class residents.

2. Supporting home ownership will be an important part of a strategy needed to maintain mixed-income housing. This suggests that tapping government or private programs that support home ownership could be an important strategy for maintaining a balanced population. Support includes not only purchase programs but also home repair, mortgage counseling, and other means to keep lower income owners.

3. The fact that in 2000, our selected blocks actually had lower median income for families suggests that it is still possible to maintain mixed income within neighborhoods that are not wealthy or even middle-class when compared with the city or region as a whole.

4. It appears that in Grand Rapids the "stable" areas are not necessarily characterized by racial diversity. However our comments from the focus groups may help with the need to create strategies. Focus group dialogue, for example, indicates that race is not necessarily a barrier to neighborhood stability.

5. It appears that in Grand Rapids neighborhoods with a high proportion of African-Americans tend to be low income. This suggests a need for further investigation, especially since some researchers such as William Julius Wilson believe that mixed-income African-American neighborhoods give greater access and mobility to low-income populations.

Focus Groups

We carried out focus group discussions in three neighborhoods, which appear to have some sort of stability according to our definition. These discussions allowed us to hear knowledgeable opinions by people active in their community associations. Here are a few implications for direct intervention:

1. It appears that the parish structure of the Catholic Church had a great deal to do with neighborhood stability in some areas. This implies that as church affiliations and policies change, it will be necessary to replace this stabilizing influence with something else.

2. The "something else" could perhaps include social networks in neighborhoods, or strong neighborhood associations, which several people mentioned as stabilizing influences. Along the same line were emotional connections to the neighborhood, which could be heightened with focused strategies.

3. The fact that multi-generational housing was also an attraction that helps maintain stability suggests that neighbors should work to make sure that such housing is possible, particularly in terms of legal codes and zoning.

4. The need to protect the quality of schools came through loud and clear. Our focus groups suggested that if the schools declined drastically, the neighborhood would too.

5. The need to ensure that housing value is maintained and not pulled down by poor property maintenance is extremely important as well. This means that strategies will have to be found to pressure bad landlords to perform up to par, and in addition means will have to be found to enforce building codes. The quality of housing upkeep seemed, for most of our respondents, much more important than the racial characteristics of new residents.

6. Some residents do exist, however, who see racial change as a threat. In areas where housing is changing racially, an opportunity may arise for direct stabilization efforts that build on increasing neighborhood bonding. This could be a worthy project for intervention by outside parties such as MSU Extension.

7. The city government seems to have a role in all this. In addition to assuring property upkeep, it will also be of assistance if city employees (such as the police) help maintain the positive reputation of a particular neighborhood.   It will also be necessary to approach with care mega-projects that could have negative implications, such as the expansion of John Ball Park Zoo.

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A Closer Look at the Block Groups Experiencing Pronounced Relative Increase in Family Income[12]

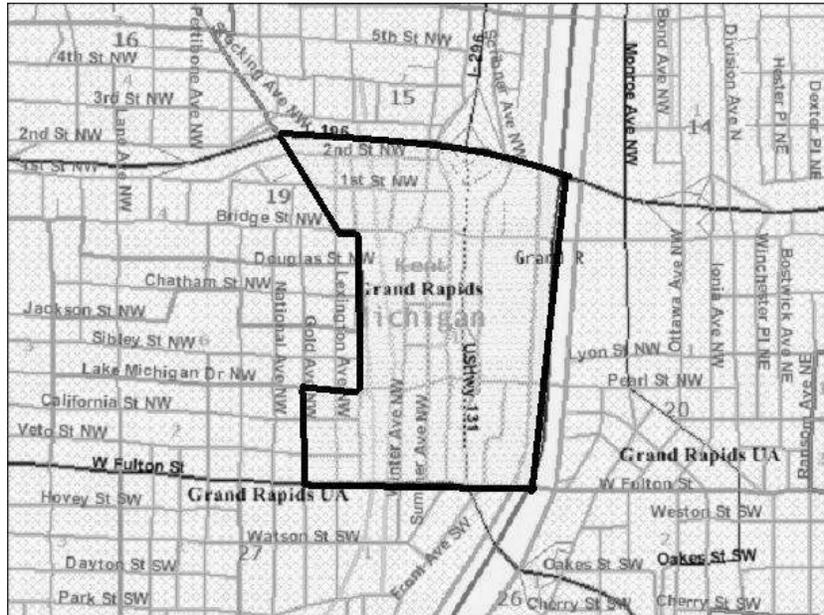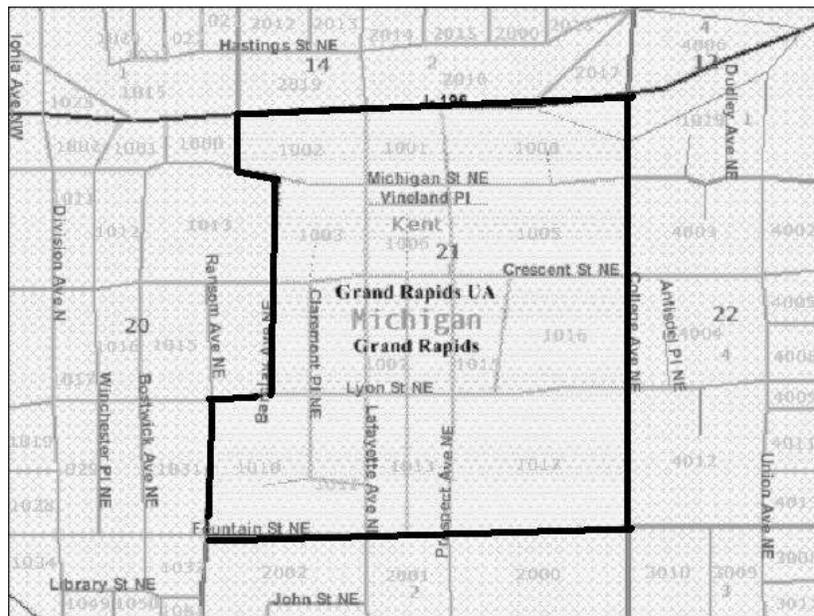**Figure E Tract 19, Block Group 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)**

Figure F: Tract 21, Block Group 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

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[12] These maps have been downloaded from the U.S. Census website: http://factfinder.census.gov. They do not appear in same scale.

Figure G: Tract 30, Block Group 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
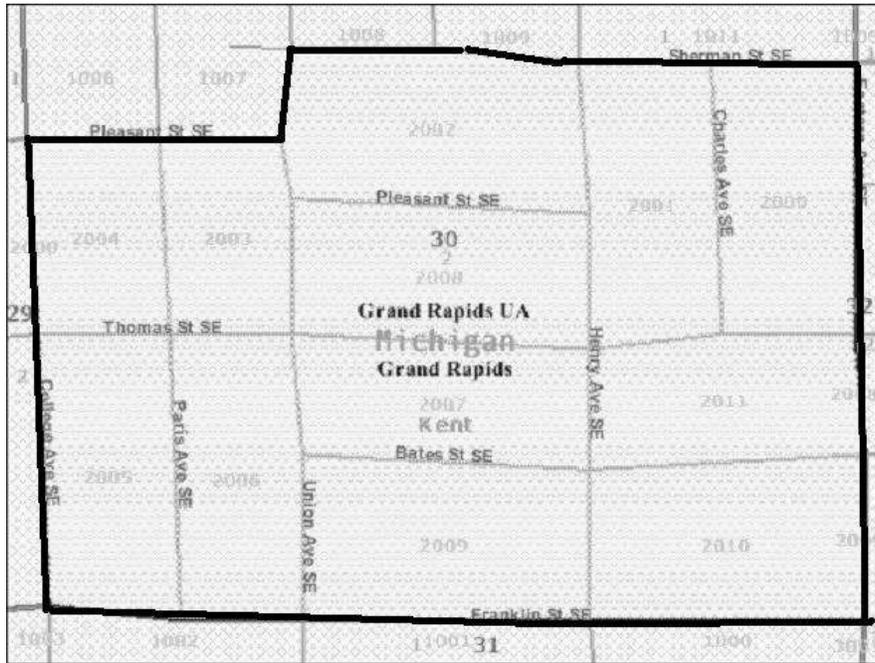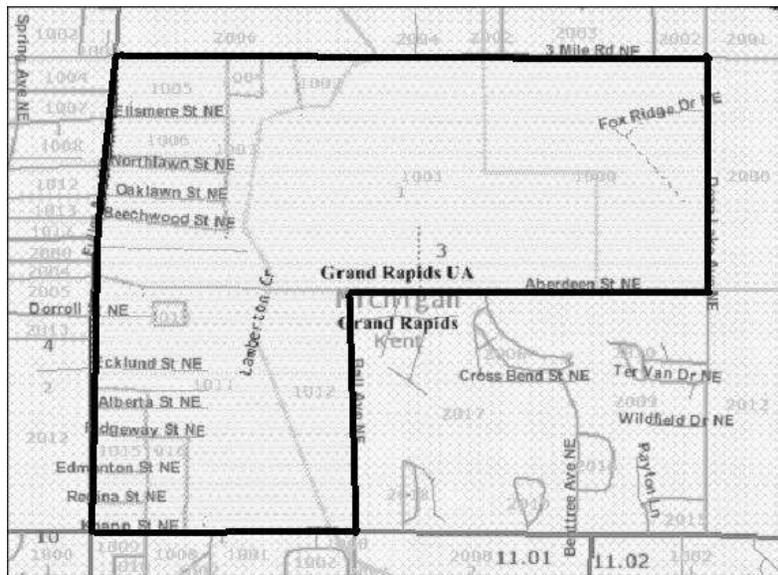

Figure H: Tract 35, Block Group 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
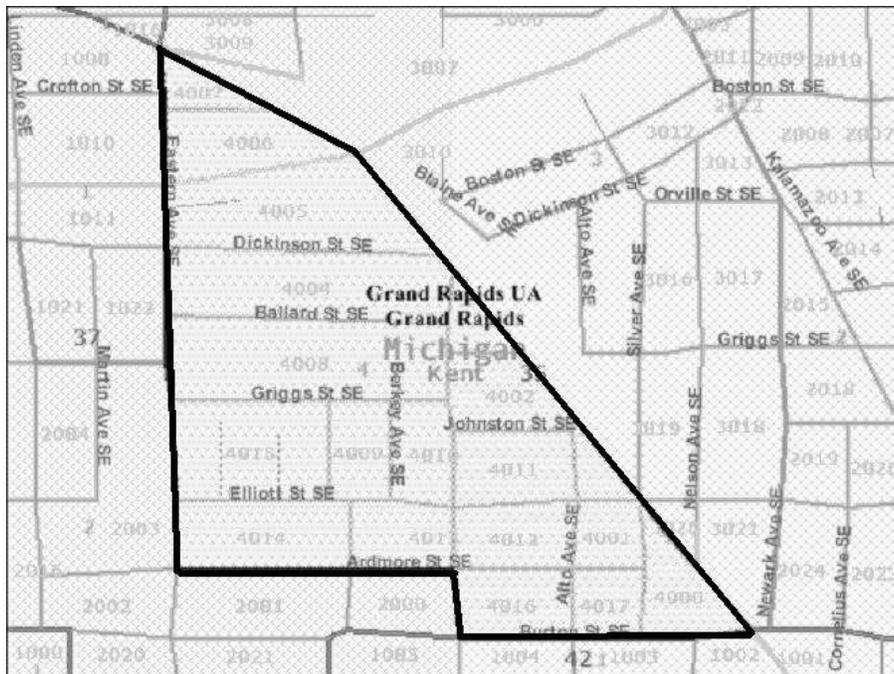
Appendix B

A Closer Look at Block Groups Identified as Mixed-Income, Defined as Stable Proportion of Lower Two Quintiles[13]
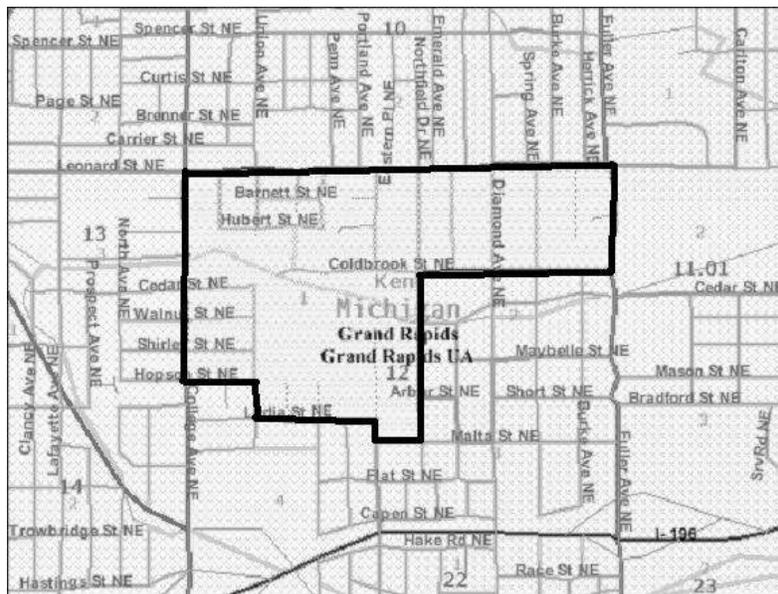
Figure I: Tract 1, Block Group 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Figure J: Tract 3, Block Group 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Figure K: Tract 4, Block Group 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
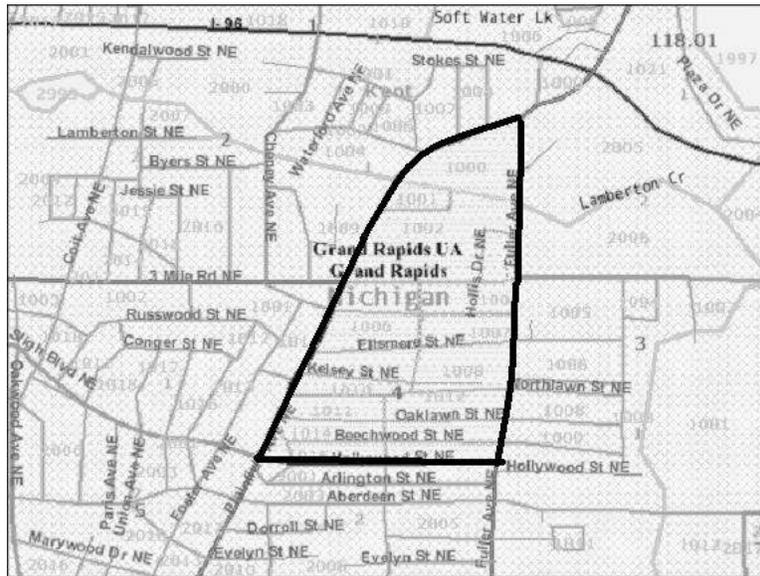
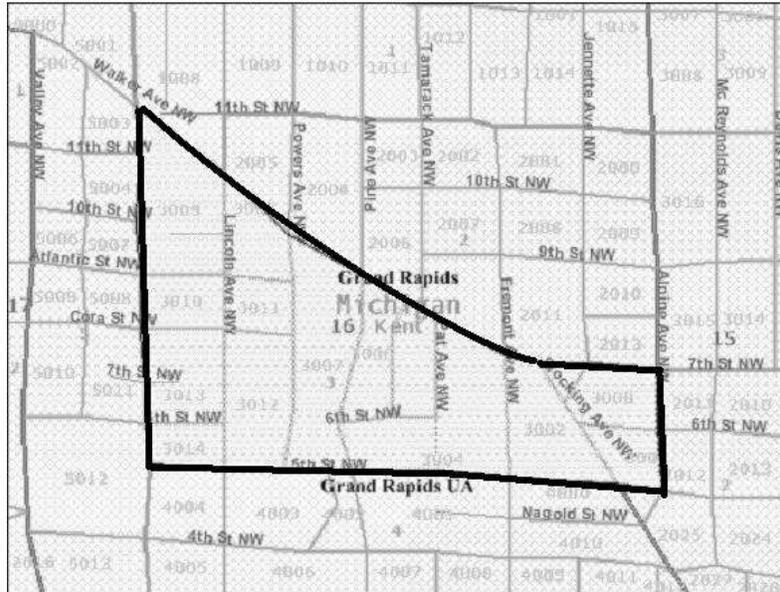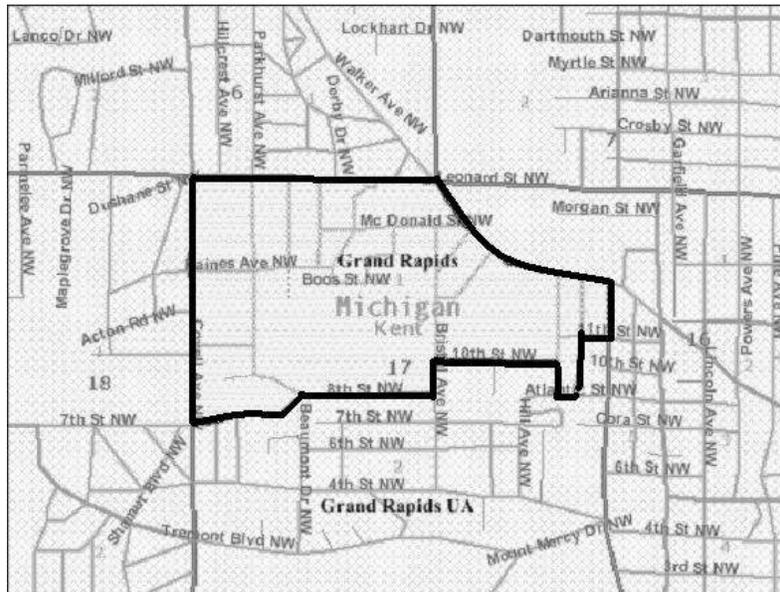**Figure L: Tract 10, Block Group 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)**
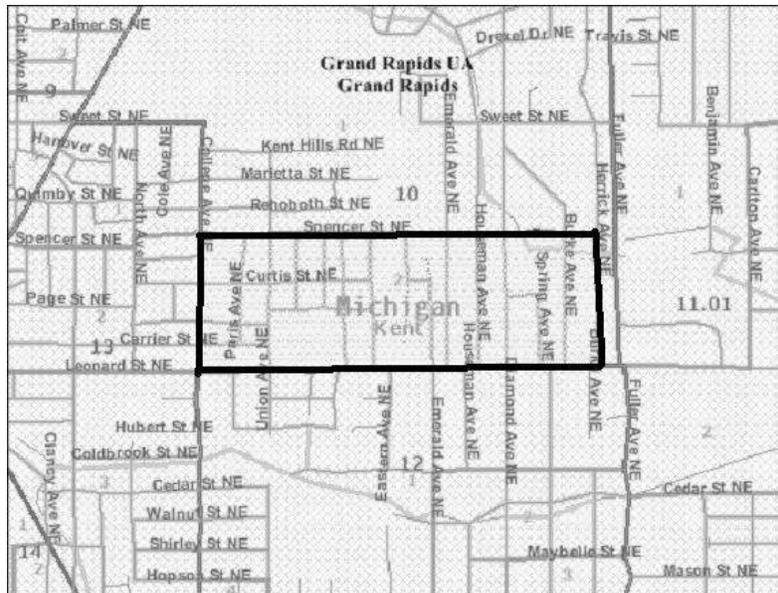
Figure M: Tract 11.01, Block Group 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
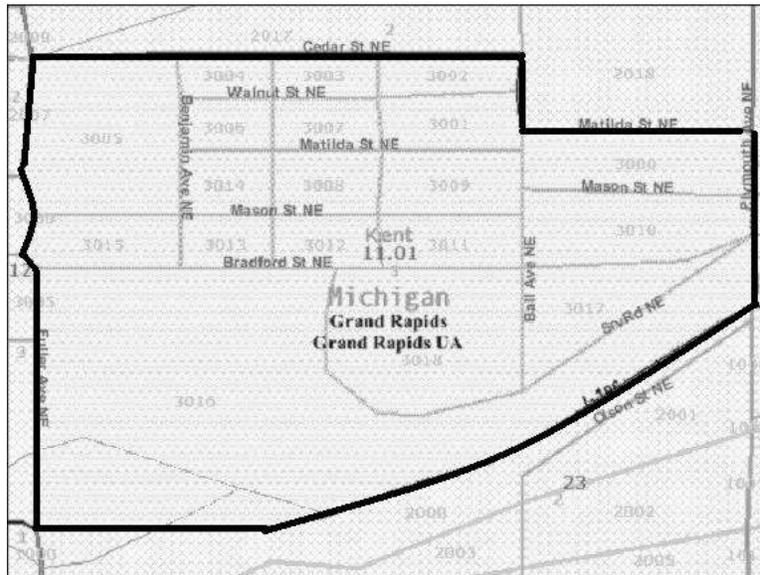
Figure N: Tract 12, Block Group 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Figure O: Tract 16, Block Group 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Figure P: Tract 17, Block Group 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

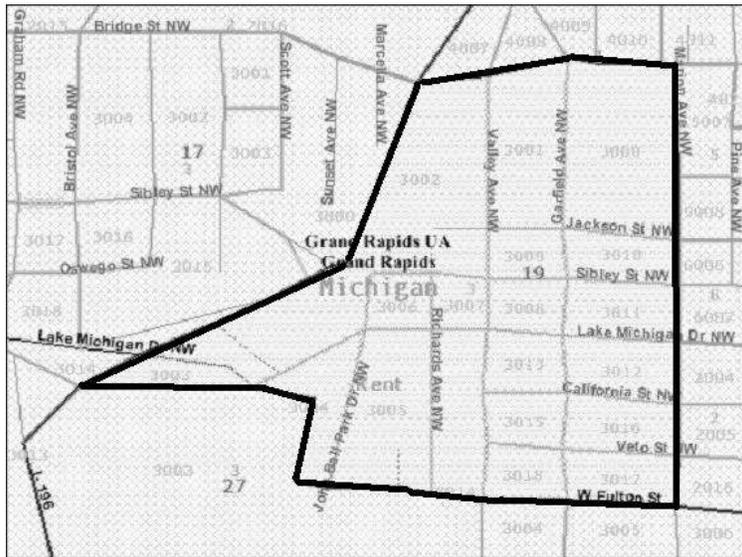**Figure Q: Tract 19, Block Group 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)**

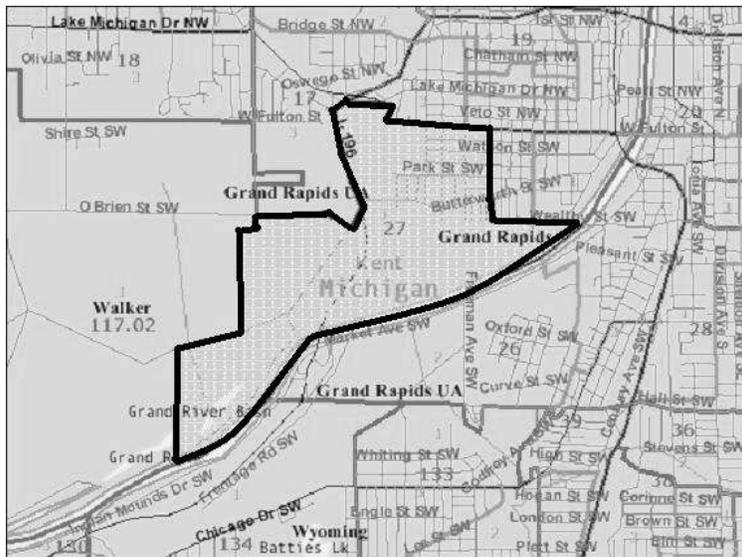**Figure R: Tract 27, Block Group 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)**

Figure S: Tract 29, Block Group 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan)