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Sandtown-Winchester—Baltimore's Daring Experiment In Urban Renewal: 20 Years Later, What Are the Lessons Learned?

By: Stefanie DeLuca, ***Johns Hopkins University*** **and Peter Rosenblatt,** ***Loyola University Chicago***

In the early 1990s, Sandtown-Winchester was a struggling neighborhood. Entering that decade, more than 40% of the families living in the neighborhood were below the poverty line, and more than one in six were unemployed. A neighborhood of 72 square blocks just northwest of downtown Baltimore, Sandtown-Winchester in 1990 was home to roughly 11,500 people in just under 5,000 homes.[1] Journalistic accounts paint a picture of a neighborhood rife with crime, where prostitutes walked the main streets and open air drug markets were common (*Baltimore Sun* July 21, 1991). Once a thriving part of Baltimore's middle class African American community, the neighborhood saw Billie Holiday sing at the Royal Theatre on Pennsylvania Avenue, Thurgood Marshall graduate from the local Frederick Douglass High School, and families live on steady paychecks from local employers like Schmidt's Bakery *(Baltimore Sun* November 23 1993). But by the 1990s, the bakery had closed, many middle class families had left, and the glory days of the neighborhood seemed to be in the past.

In the late 1980s, newly elected Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke helped to orchestrate a partnership between the city, community leaders including Baltimoreans United in Leadership and Development (BUILD), and the non-profit Enterprise Foundation that would re-invest in Baltimore's struggling inner-city neighborhoods. The Enterprise Foundation was established a decade earlier by James Rouse, the widely-celebrated developer behind the city's Harborplace "renaissance," and founder of Columbia Township. Rouse was looking for a project that could showcase a comprehensive approach to neighborhood renewal, one that would address all of a community's needs at once (Brown, Butler, and Hamilton 2001). In Sandtown-Winchester, he found a neighborhood that could serve as an example of this kind of renewal, one where, in partnership with residents, the Enterprise Foundation could "demonstrate the successes of raising up understandable models… to transform the neighborhoods in which the very poor people live in this country in a serious and constructive way" (quoted in *The Baltimore Sun*, July 23, 1995).

Over the next decade, the neighborhood transformation would grow into a comprehensive effort to not just rebuild physical structures, but also empower residents, through employment, education, and health services outreach. Drawing on public and private funding, the neighborhood transformation efforts raised more than $130 million to invest in the neighborhood through the year 2000[2]. These efforts have attempted to transform the quality of life in Sandtown-Winchester and make the neighborhood a place where families and children can realize opportunities long denied to many of the nation's poor.

In this report, we examine the long-term legacy of these reforms by looking over time at changes in the fortunes of the neighborhood and its residents. We find increases in homeownership that were likely associated with the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. The neighborhood also benefited from declines in poverty and crime that represent, in part, trends throughout the whole city of Baltimore during the same time period, making it hard to conclude that the revitalization effort led to these changes. We also uncover challenges that remain in the neighborhood, including high rates of foreclosure, unemployment, and weakly performing schools.

Background

The Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood Transformation Initiative

Since the late 1980s, residents, local government, and private foundations have worked together to bring new opportunities to Sandtown. Physical redevelopment of the area has been the most high-profile aspect of the neighborhood transformation. The transformation began in the later 1980s with a plan to construct 223 new houses for low-income homeowners. Former President Jimmy Carter was on hand in 1992 as Habitat for Humanity announced that it would renovate 100 vacant homes in the area, a pledge that was fulfilled in 1998. Almost 600 units of public housing in Gilmor Homes were modernized in the early 1990s.

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Mayor Schmoke also pledged to renovate 600 vacant houses in the neighborhood within one year, although this timeline proved overly ambitious—in 1996, the *Sun* reported that the city was only beginning to make good on its pledge. Funding for further development came in 1997, when Sandtown was selected as one of six neighborhoods in the country to receive a $5.2 million federal "homeownership zone" grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This grant attracted another $30 million in public and private funding, and in 2000, the Enterprise Foundation began selling renovated and newly built homes to first-time homebuyers. By 2005, Enterprise's Sandtown Square development was complete, and included 236 homes for low and moderate-income homebuyers in the neighborhood. By the early 2000s, 700 houses and apartments had been built or renovated in the neighborhood (Proscio 2004).

Housing was not the only aspect of the project, however. In 1994 the community established a "Compact Schools" agreement to increase student achievement through developing curriculum, instruction, and increasing parental involvement in the three elementary schools in the neighborhood—Gilmor Elementary, George C. Kelson Elementary, and William Pinderhughes Elementary. Curriculum development took place over the next three years, with Direct Instruction, a teacher-directed curriculum, introduced in the 1997 and 1998 school years.

The reforms also extended to employment and health. From its inception, the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative employed residents in "community improvement jobs," such as health outreach workers, family and youth counselors, or writers in the community newspaper (Costigan, 1996). In 1996, Sandtown Works began job readiness training and placement services to teens and adults in the neighborhood, and the following year Jobs Plus was established to provide employment services to residents of Gilmor Homes, a 571-unit low-rise housing project in the neighborhood. In 1993, Sandtown was included in Baltimore's "empowerment zone," a Clinton-administration program that provided tax credits to employers who hired residents from the area.

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On the health front, the Vision for Health Consortium (VFH), made up of staff from established Baltimore hospitals including Bon Secours, the University of Maryland School of Nursing, and the Baltimore City Health Department, undertook a number of initiatives to improve resident well-being. Door to door visits and case management were undertaken to reduce infant mortality in the neighborhood, and in 1998 the VFH began substance abuse treatment and prevention.

Overlapping efforts, which incorporated resident input throughout, made Sandtown-Winchester's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative one of the most well-known urban revitalization projects in the country (Goetz 1996; Schorr, 1993). The neighborhood transformation spurred residents, local government, and private developers to act together to overcome what James Rouse referred to as the "great failure in the United States" to recognize the deplorable conditions of inner city neighborhoods and come together to do something about them (quoted in the *Baltimore Sun* September 30,1995; see also Brown, Butler, and Hamilton 2001).

Data and Methods

We marshal a variety of data sources on the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood, spanning the period from 1990 (before any of the reforms began) to 2011 (twenty years later). We use multiple sources to capture the possible effects of the reforms on housing, education, employment, and to explore changes in quality of neighborhood life, including crime and overall life expectancy (for more detailed analysis, see the full report, available at www.abell.org/publications).

Our analysis involves two components that help us understand the scope of the changes in Sandtown-Winchester. First, we compare census and school data from before the major reinvestment provisions were started, to the most recent census and school data available. These comparisons give us a basic picture of how each component of the intervention (i.e., housing revitalization, school reforms) changed the neighborhood. Second, we compare the changes in Sandtown-Winchester

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to those seen in similar neighborhoods in Baltimore City and their zone schools. We have chosen three "control" neighborhoods that were similar to Sandtown-Winchester in 1990: The Upton/Druid Heights neighborhood just east of Sandtown-Winchester, the Penn North/Reservoir Hill neighborhood just to the north of Sandtown-Winchester, and the Greenmount East neighborhood in east Baltimore.

While not a perfect research design for testing whether or not the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative *caused* the neighborhood changes seen in Sandtown-Winchester from 1990-2010, this analysis allows us to imagine what the impacts might have been had the program never occurred. We do this by comparing the change in Sandtown-Winchester's neighborhood and educational opportunity to that in the three matched "control" neighborhoods that did not take part in policy interventions like those that occurred in Sandtown-Winchester. These "control" neighborhoods did not take part in the Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, but they were other very low income, racially segregated neighborhoods that were facing similar social and economic challenges in the 1980s and 90s. However, given the time period covered in this analysis, it is not surprising that they were sites of other reform efforts, notably the demolition of Murphy Homes, a large housing project in Upton, which was demolished and rebuilt as a mixed income community as a result of the HOPE VI program in the early 2000s. We further discuss these neighborhood changes and their implications below.

Findings

Neighborhood Demographic Changes

In 1990, Sandtown-Winchester was among the poorest neighborhoods in Baltimore. Table 1 shows that the neighborhood had a poverty rate almost twice as high as the average Baltimore neighborhood, and almost four times as high as the average neighborhood in the Baltimore metropolitan area. Fewer than half of the residents of the neighborhood had completed high school, while only 4.4% had college degrees. More than one in six adults in the neighborhood – or 17.6% -- were unable to find work in 1990, an unemployment rate which was higher than that in the average Baltimore neighborhood, much higher than the metropolitan average, and even higher than in the city's other segregated neighborhoods. To put this in context, the 1990 unemployment rate in neighborhoods that were more than 70% black was 14%, compared to 5.9% in the city's majority white neighborhoods (Source: 1990 Census). The neighborhood was 98% African-American, part of the city's segregated west side that stretched northwest along Liberty Heights Ave almost to the Baltimore County line.

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"There was also a significant increase in the percentage of homeowners in Sandtown-Winchester, from fewer than one-quarter of the neighborhood's population in 1990 to more than a third (35.6%) in 2009."

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Table 1 (page 4) also shows how the neighborhood has changed in the two decades following the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. The lower sections of the table profile the change in the average Baltimore city neighborhood and the change in the average metropolitan neighborhood. There have been some notable shifts in the demographic profile of Sandtown-Winchester over the past 20 years. The poverty rate dropped significantly, by more than eight percent, to 33.1% by 2009. This is especially significant given the overall lack of change in the poverty rate of the average Baltimore city neighborhood. The neighborhood also saw an increase in the number of high school graduates and people with college degrees. The census data do not follow the same families over time, so we do not know if these changes are due to more educated families moving into the neighborhood, or greater numbers of long-term residents finishing school. There was also a significant increase in the percentage of homeowners in Sandtown-Winchester, from fewer than one-quarter of the neighborhood's population in 1990 to more than a third (35.6%) in 2009. This increase is likely a result of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative's focus on homeownership, especially given the large increase in homeownership from 24.2% to 32.6% of the population between 1990 and 2000.

Despite these positive changes, the neighborhood still lagged behind the rest of the city and metropolitan area in important ways. The median household income increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, but remained well below city and metropolitan averages. On average, families in Sandtown-Winchester were of lower socio-economic status (both income and education level) than most families in Baltimore and in the metropolitan area. It isn't clear whether this is a function of more people moving to the area who are above the poverty line but still low income, or changes in the existing residents' incomes. There were fluctuations in the unemployment rate across the two decades following the start of the neighborhood transformation initiative, but by 2009 more than one in five adults—or 21%—in the Sandtown CSA was unemployed.

Table 1 provides some context for the changes in Sandtown-Winchester by showing city and metropolitan-level

Table 1

	Sandtown-Winchester		Baltimore City		Baltimore Metro Area	
	Value	Change since 1990	Value	Change since 1990	Value	Change since 1990
1990						
Percent Below Poverty	41.4 %		23.0 %		11.0 %	
Median Household income (2009 dollars)	$23,776		$42,683		$65,918	
Percent African-American	98.2 %		55.6 %		25.5 %	
Percent with High School Diploma	45.6 %		58.9 %		73.0 %	
Percent with BA	4.4 %		15.0 %		22.4 %	
Unemployment Rate	17.6 %		10.0 %		5.6 %	
Percent Owner-Occupied Homes	24.3%		48.6%		63.4%	
2000						
Percent Below Poverty	37.0 %	- 4.4%	24.6 %	+ 1.6%	12.1 %	+ 1.1%
Median Household income (2009 dollars)	$25,079	+ $1,303	$39,063	- $3,620	$64,107	- $1,811
Percent African-American	98.6 %	+ 0.4%	62.8 %	+ 7.2%	30.5 %	+ 5.0%
Percent with High School Diploma	54.1 %	+ 8.5%	66.2 %	+ 7.3%	78.8 %	+ 5.8%
Percent with BA	4.8 %	+ 0.4%	9.9 %	- 5.1%	15.5 %	- 6.9%
Unemployment Rate	18.2 %	+ 0.6%	12.4 %	+ 2.4%	6.6 %	+ 1.0%
Percent Owner-Occupied Homes	32.6%	+ 8.3%	50.3	+ 1.7%	66.7	+ 3.3%
2009						
Percent Below Poverty	33.1 %	- 8.3%v	22.4 %	-0.6%	12.1 %	+ 1.1%
Median Household income (2009 dollars)	$22,237	- $1,539	$40,036	-$2,647	$65,005	+ $913
Percent African-American	99.0 %	+ 0.8%	64.4 %	+8.8%	33.2 %	+ 7.7%
Percent with High School Diploma	64.5 %	+ 18.9%	75.0 %	+16.1%	84.3 %	+ 11.3%
Percent with BA	6.2 %	+ 1.8%	23.4 %	+8.4%	31.1 %	+ 8.7%
Unemployment Rate	21.0 %	+ 3.4%	12.3 %	+2.3%	7.5 %	+ 1.9%
Percent Owner-Occupied Homes	35.6%	+ 11.3%	51.1%	+2.5%	68.4%	+ 5.0%

Table 2

	Sandtown-Winchester		Greenmount East		Upton/Druid Heights		Penn North/ Reservoir Hill	
	Value	Change since 1990	Value	Change since 1990	Value	Change since 1990	Value	Change since 1990
1990								
Percent Below Poverty	41.4 %		42.0 %		49.0 %		38.8 %	
Median Household income (2009 dollars)	$23,776		$27,702		$22,735		$28,110	
Percent African-American	98.2 %		98.6 %		98.1 %		94.0%	
Percent with High School Diploma	45.6 %		40.7 %		47.1 %		55.0 %	
Percent with BA	4.4 %		2.7 %		6.1 %		12.6 %	
Unemployment Rate	17.6 %		21.2 %		16.3 %		11.4 %	
Percent Owner-Occupied Homes	24.3%		30.2%		22.7%		23.1%	
2000								
Percent Below Poverty	37.0 %	- 4.4%	37.1 %	- 4.9%	47.4 %	- 1.6%	35.1 %	- 3.7%
Median Household income (2009 dollars)	$25,079	+$1,303	$24,099	-$3,693	$19,543	-$3,192	$29,175	+$1,065
Percent African-American	98.6 %	+ 0.4%	97.0 %	- 1.6%	95.7 %	- 2.4%	93.1 %	- 0.9%
Percent with High School Diploma	54.1 %	+ 8.5%	53.5 %	+12.8%	52.6 %	+ 5.5%	64.2 %	+ 9.2%
Percent with BA	4.8 %	+ 0.4%	4.3 %	+ 1.6%	9.3 %	+ 3.2%	13.9 %	+ 1.3%
Unemployment Rate	18.2 %	+ 0.6%	20.8 %	- 0.4%	20.7 %	+ 4.4%	19.0 %	+ 7.6%
Percent Owner-Occupied Homes	32.6%	+ 8.3%	40.0%	+ 9.8%	16.1%	- 6.6%	28.4%	+ 5.3%
2009								
Percent Below Poverty	33.1 %	- 8.3%	34.1 %	- 7.9%	47.4 %	- 1.6%	23.0 %	- 15.8%
Median Household income (2009 dollars)	$22,237	-$1,539	$19,691	-$8,011	$16,995	-$5,740	$31,116	+$3,006
Percent African-American	99.0 %	+ 0.8%	95.5 %	- 3.1%	94.0%	- 4.1%	93.5 %	- 0.5%
Percent with High School Diploma	64.5 %	+18.9%	66.8 %	+26.1%	61.9 %	+14.8%	79.0 %	+24.0%
Percent with BA	6.2 %	+ 1.8%	8.1 %	+ 5.4%	10.6 %	+ 4.5%	16.0 %	+ 3.4%
Unemployment Rate	21.0 %	+ 3.4%	19.7 %	- 1.5%	17.5 %	+ 1.2%	19.0 %	+ 7.6%
Percent Owner-Occupied Homes	35.6%	+11.3%	38.0%	+ 7.8%	16.2%	- 6.5%	32.3%	+ 9.2%

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changes over the same time period. But how did the neighborhood change relative to other places that were also disadvantaged in 1990? Table 2 (page 5) compares demographic change in Sandtown-Winchester to our three "comparison" neighborhoods: Greenmount East, Upton/Druid Heights, and Penn North/Reservoir Hill.

The top rows of Table 2 show that the three comparison neighborhoods were similar to Sandtown-Winchester in many ways in 1990. All were much poorer and more segregated than the average city neighborhood, had median incomes well below the citywide average, and double-digit unemployment rates. They were also located in the inner-city, and were of similar geographic size to Sandtown-Winchester.[3] Greenmount East was the most similar to Sandtown-Winchester in 1990, but we also chose one neighborhood that was slightly worse off (Upton) and one that was slightly better off (Penn North/Reservoir Hill) to give upper and lower bound comparisons. These three comparison neighborhoods allow us to explore the changes that were happening in similar places during the past 20 years, and so give some idea of what might have happened in Sandtown-Winchester had the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative not taken place.

The comparisons show that the drop in poverty rate we saw in Table 1 was not unique to Sandtown-Winchester. Greenmount East, which did not have a comparable neighborhood transformation strategy, saw a similar drop in poverty during both the 1990s and 2000s, although the neighboring Upton community did not. Penn North/Reservoir Hill had an even greater drop in poverty rate during the 2000s, down to 23% poor by 2009. Other measures of neighborhood socio-economic status also improved in Penn North, which saw greater gains in the median income and the number of high school and college graduates than Sandtown-Winchester in both the 1990s and 2000s. Upton and Greenmount East had comparable proportions of college and high school graduates to Sandtown-Winchester in both 2000 and 2009, although the median income of individuals in these neighborhoods lagged behind that of Sandtown-Winchester residents. Greenmount East and Penn North also saw an increase in homeownership, although the increase of 11% in Sandtown was the most dramatic of the four neighborhoods. We look further at changes in the neighborhood housing market in the next section.

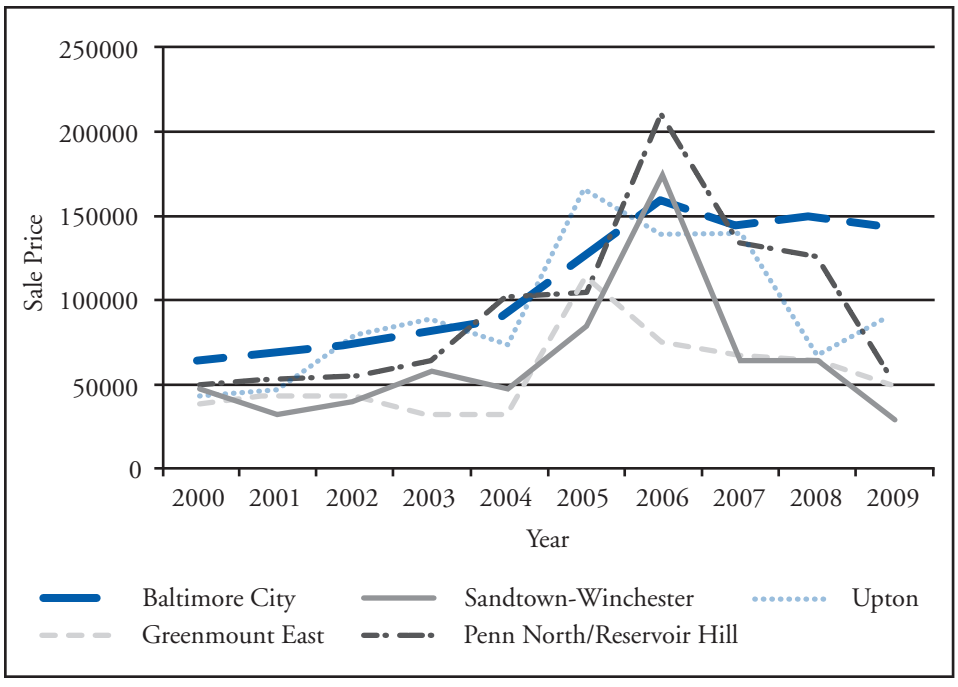
Table 2 further highlights the challenge of reducing unemployment in Sandtown-Winchester. While the unemployment rate also increased in Upton and Penn North/Reservoir Hill since 1990, Sandtown-Winchester was the only neighborhood of the four that saw an increase in unemployment during the 2000s (i.e. that had a higher unemployment rate in 2009 than in 2000). By 2009, Sandtown-Winchester had a slightly higher unemployment rate than any of the three comparison neighborhoods[4].

On the whole, Table 2 suggests that the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood still faces a number of challenges. The decline in neighborhood poverty and increase in the proportion of high school and college educated residents is promising for the overall prosperity of the neighborhood, but our comparison analyses show that similar improvements were taking place in other poor neighborhoods that did not have the same revitalization strategy as Sandtown. Most striking in this respect is the change in Greenmount East, which was similar to Sandtown-Winchester in 1990 in terms of concentrated poverty and neighborhood socio-economic profile. Yet despite not having the same kind of intensive community transformation efforts as Sandtown-Winchester, the Greenmount East neighborhood saw similar declines in poverty, and by 2009 was still comparable on a number of selected census measures to Sandtown-Winchester, including home ownership.

Housing

Rebuilding the neighborhood's housing stock was one of the central components of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. While

Figure 1 – Median Housing Sale Price



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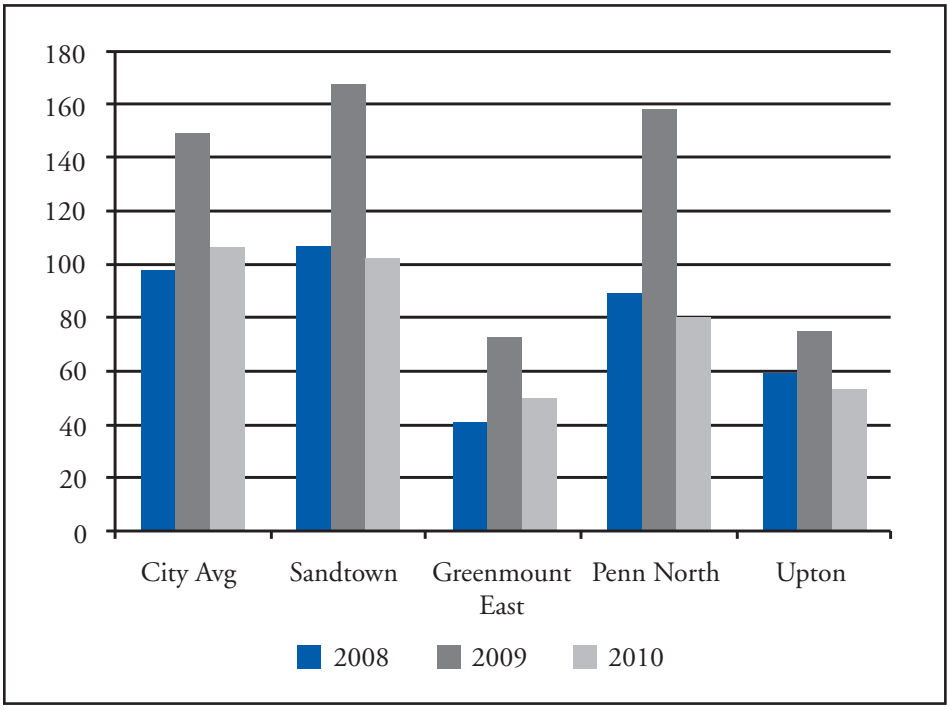
most of the Sandtown housing developments were initiated during the 1990s, these data allow us to look at how the neighborhood housing market fared in the decade following the major reforms, and how it compared to similar Baltimore neighborhoods.

Figure 1 looks at changes in neighborhood housing markets by showing the median sale price of housing in each of the four neighborhoods, as well as in Baltimore city as a whole. The solid red line in the figure shows that the median housing sale price more than tripled during the housing market boom between 2004 and 2006 but that prices plummeted when the national housing bubble burst in 2007. In 2006, the median house in the neighborhood was selling for slightly more than the median house in the average Baltimore city neighborhood, and the median sale price of a home in Sandtown-Winchester increased by more than $100,000 since 2001. This increase far surpassed that in Greenmount East, and the gentrifying community of Penn North/Reservoir Hill was the only neighborhood to have a higher median sale price during this time.

Yet Figure 1 also indicates that the fluctuation in housing prices in Sandtown-Winchester was more likely due to the local economic climate than to any neighborhood-specific reforms. All three comparison neighborhoods saw a similar cycle of housing price increases followed by declines. The figure also emphasizes the fleeting nature of housing speculation: by 2009, housing in all four communities was again selling for much less than the Baltimore city average.

The bursting of the housing bubble led to a wave of foreclosures in many communities, and Sandtown-Winchester was not spared. Figure 2 shows how the number of foreclosures in Sandtown and the comparison neighborhoods changed between 2008 and 2010. The leftmost columns show the annual number of foreclosures in the average Baltimore city neighborhood. We can see that, of the four neighborhoods in our comparison, Sandtown was the hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis. In each year between 2008 and 2010, the community area saw more than 100 homes face foreclosure filings, with a peak of 167 filings in 2009.[5]

Figure 2 – Foreclosures by Year



Sandtown-Winchester benefitted from the booming housing market of the mid-2000s. Not only did home prices rise, but the neighborhood saw an increase to more than $10 million in conventional mortgage loans in the mid-2000s (see longer report for more detailed analysis). Unfortunately, however, this level of investment was not sustained as Sandtown was hard hit by the foreclosure crisis, and also saw an increase in vacant and abandoned buildings toward the end of the 2000s. This increase in foreclosures and vacant buildings suggests that the housing reforms were not enough to stave off the kind of decline that was happening in the larger community, and also in similar neighborhoods during the past decade.

Education

Education reforms in Sandtown-Winchester focused on the neighborhood's three elementary schools, Gilmor Elementary, George C. Kelson Elementary, and William Pinderhughes Elementary. In this section we explore student achievement in the years following the "Compact Schools" agreement to develop curriculum, improve instruction, and increase parental involvement in these three schools. As we did with neighborhoods, we also compare changes in elementary school performance in the three Sandtown-Winchester elementary schools with three elementary schools that serve each of our comparison neighborhoods[6]. All of these schools were more segregated (99% African-American on average) and served a predominantly lower-income population (84% eligible for reduced price lunches) than the average elementary school in Baltimore City or Central Maryland during the two decade period of this study.

Our research looked at school performance on statewide tests between 1993 and 2011. Most of the neighborhood

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schools we profiled struggled to reach state and federal benchmarks for student achievement during this period. Schools in Sandtown-Winchester showed some improvement in math following the implementation of new curriculum in 1998, but as a whole the schools continued to perform below the average for Baltimore City across the 1990s in both math and reading. Figure 3 compares the performance of elementary schools in the four neighborhoods to city and statewide averages in reading under the No Child Left Behind assessments, which began in 2003. The dark dashed and dotted line shows the proficiency rate in all Central Maryland schools, while the lighter dashed line shows the proficiency rate in all Baltimore City schools. There is a general increase in the number of students scoring at proficiency levels across the decade of the 2000s. Yet we also see that Sandtown-Winchester schools (solid red line) performed worse than the schools in other neighborhoods across the decade. As a whole, the schools in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood did not experience the same increase in reading and math proficiency that other neighborhoods' schools did.

Overall, the education data suggest that Sandtown-Winchester's three elementary schools continued to struggle in the two decades following the Compact Schools agreement. While our data are limited in their ability to tell us what triumphs or barriers teachers and students have met in the classroom, the persistent difficulties to reach state and federal benchmarks for achievement tests show that the Sandtown schools have not reached the performance level of other city and metropolitan schools.

Health and Public Safety

While crime or policing programs were not as central to the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative as housing and education were, changes in crime and violence in the neighborhood give us a picture of the overall quality of community life, and could have been affected by the other reforms as residents became more empowered by the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. Figure 4 shows changes in reported crime per 1,000 neighborhood residents for Sandtown-Winchester, the three comparison neighborhoods, and Baltimore city as a whole.

We can see that the *overall* crime rate declined across the city during the 2000s. The crime rate in Sandtown-Winchester was very close to the Baltimore average, as was the crime rate in Greenmount East (dashed green line) and Penn North/Reservoir Hill (dash-and-dotted light blue line). Only Upton had a markedly higher rate of crime during this period, although it declined by more than half between 2000 and 2009.

Finally, we look at the overall life expectancy in each neighborhood, as calculated by the Baltimore City Health Department. This figure provides a dramatic way to understand the quality of life in a neighborhood, by looking at how long residents live on average, compared to the city as a

Figure 3 – Percent Proficient or Higher, Reading

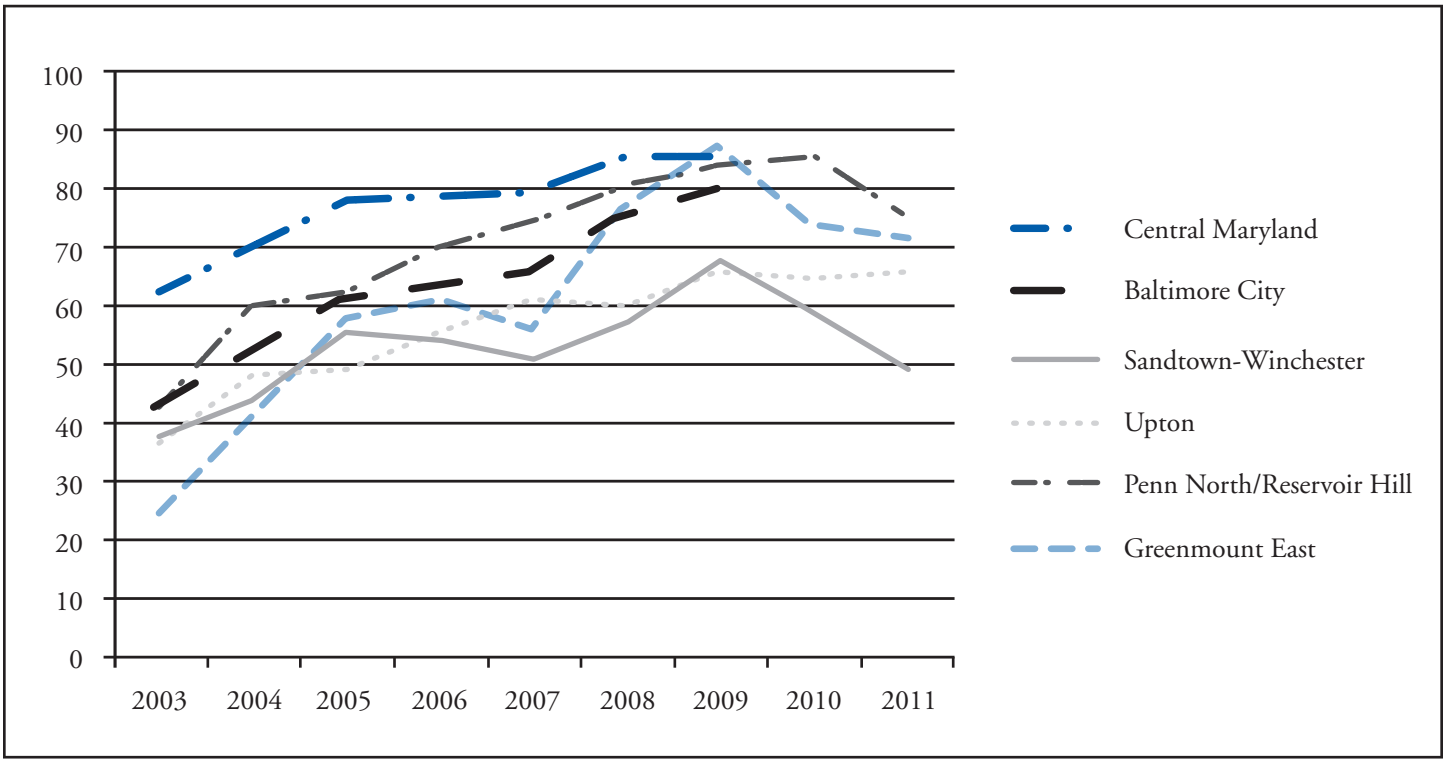

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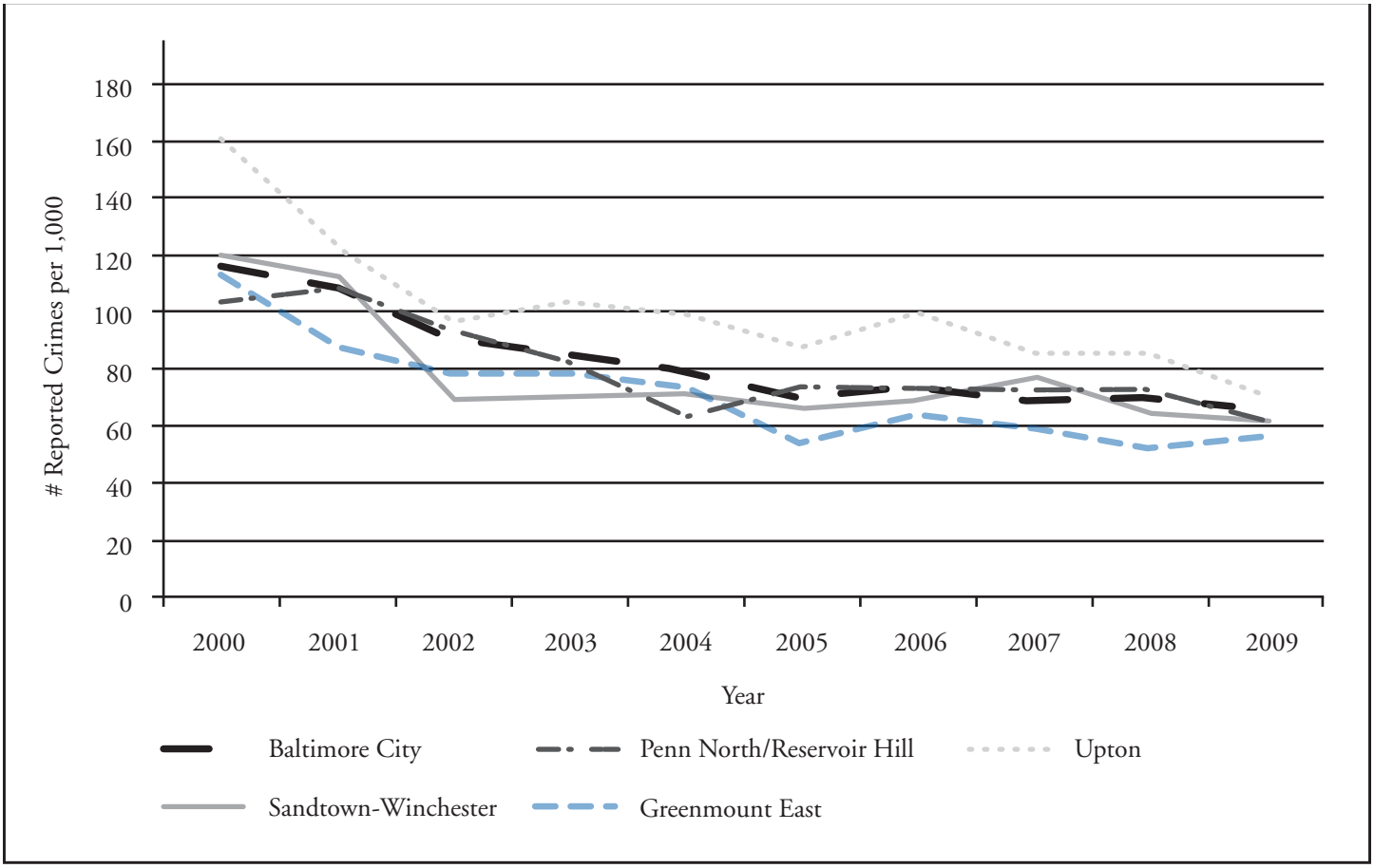
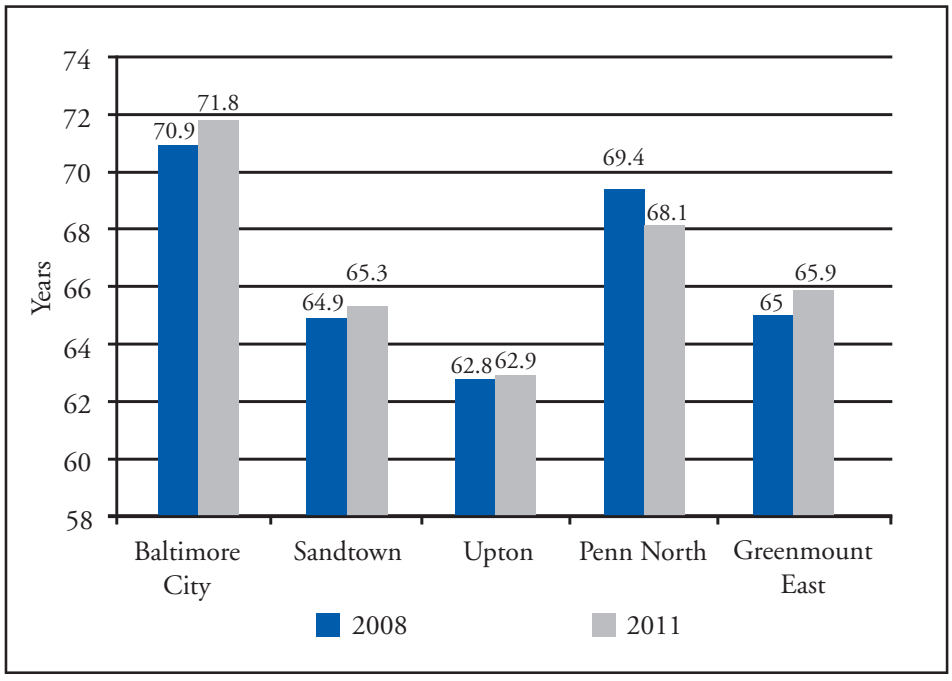
Figure 4 – Crime Rate *The number of reported criminal offenses per 1,000 residents (as reported by 2000 Census); Part I offenses include murder, aggravated assault, rape, attempted rape, burglary, larceny, and auto theft.*



whole. Data from 2008 and 2011 are presented as a comparison. All four comparison neighborhoods had shorter life expectancies than the city average. Upton, with a life expectancy eight to nine years lower than the city average, had the lowest of any neighborhood in the city. Yet Sandtown was not much better off, with an overall life expectancy of around 65 in both 2008 and 2011, six to seven years shorter than the city average.

Figure 5 – Life Expectancy in Years



Conclusions

Sandtown Winchester Over 20 Years

In this report, we profile the neighborhood-level changes that residents of Sandtown-Winchester have experienced over the past two decades. There

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are some positive changes to report—the poverty rate of the neighborhood dropped in this period, and more people in the community became homeowners. The neighborhood also became home to a greater proportion of people with high school and college degrees. Crime data indicates that Sandtown-Winchester became a less violent place during the 2000s, as both the violent crime rate and the overall crime rate fell. Baltimore City as a whole also saw a decrease in crime during this period.

Challenges still remain in the neighborhood, however. Unemployment remained high throughout the 1990s and 2000s. This could be due to the recession during the later years of the 2000s, which affected employment opportunities for many families, and has also hit African-American families particularly hard (Weller and Fields 2011). The unemployment rate in 2009 was higher in Sandtown-Winchester than in the city's other segregated neighborhoods.

Our housing analysis shows some potential benefits from the reforms in Sandtown, as the neighborhood saw a dramatic rise in homeownership, from less than a quarter of the population in 1990 to more than 35% in 2009, and millions in mortgage dollars flowed into the neighborhood in 2006 and 2007, while housing prices reached levels higher than the city average. While this rate was not as dramatic as that which took place in neighboring Penn North, it was much greater than the level of investment in Greenmount East. However, Sandtown was also hit hard by the foreclosure crisis —more than 100 homes in the community area were foreclosed on in recent years. The reinvestment in Sandtown-Winchester also seems to have done little to arrest the growth of vacant housing in the wider community area, which in 2009, comprised nearly one third of properties in the neighborhood. These findings also highlight the challenges of community development strategies that focus heavily on housing. Homeownership brings the potential for generating wealth, and is especially significant given the history of redlining and lending discrimination that has limited homeownership in African-American communities, especially in Baltimore. However, homeownership can become a burden on poor families if the rest of the neighborhood does not improve, by anchoring them to low-resource communities and also putting them at risk of predatory lending practices which have been shown to target families in less advantaged and minority neighborhoods (Shlay 2006; Stein 2001; HUD 2000). Further research is needed to uncover the factors driving the foreclosures in Sandtown.

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The data also show that despite the educational investments made in Sandtown-Winchester, the neighborhood elementary schools have struggled to improve their academic performance in statewide reading and math assessments. Across the 1990s and 2000s, Sandtown schools lagged behind Central Maryland and Baltimore city on reading and math assessments, and did not stand out when compared to schools in similar poor neighborhoods.

Journalistic accounts of Sandtown in the early 1990s portrayed a community struggling with the oppressive environment that high crime and open air drug dealing create. We show that crime decreased in Sandtown across the 2000s, mirroring a citywide trend. Yet there were still more than 8 homicides per 10,000 people in the neighborhood in 2011, a rate that is double the Baltimore city average and higher than comparison communities. Sandtown residents also have shorter life expectancies than the Baltimore city average, speaking to the level of material and physical hardship still present in the community.

We have attempted to put the changes seen in Sandtown-Winchester in context by comparing them to three neighborhoods that were similar in 1990, to see which changes might have been brought on by the redevelopment, and which were likely rooted in broader economic or political processes. For example, the drop in the neighborhood crime rate, while important for understanding the quality of life in the neighborhood, was shared across all four neighborhoods and the city as a whole, suggesting that it was probably a result of citywide trends, rather than reforms specific to Sandtown. By contrast, the increase in Sandtown's homeownership rate between 1990 and 2009 was more dramatic than in other neighborhoods, a result that is likely due to the housing focus of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative.

Overall, the picture that emerges from the data underscores the durability of social inequality and the persistence of overlapping social problems in high poverty and racially segregated neighborhoods (Sampson 2012). All four neighborhoods profiled lag behind Baltimore City and the greater metropolitan area on most measures. Low family incomes, high unemployment, high crime, high poverty rates, and racial segregation are intimately linked in American cities, and have proven tenacious in the face of changing economic and policy contexts (Sampson 2012, Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson, 2012). Yet rather than give up on the families and

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children who continue to face danger in their neighborhoods and diminished prospects for educational and employment opportunities, we believe that this descriptive look at Sandtown points to the need for more evidence-based social policy intervention alternatives.

Implications for Research and Policy

In the recent past, we have seen a great deal of research attention and scrutiny given to programs that provide poor families with resources to live in less poor neighborhoods (Ludwig, 2012; Edin, DeLuca, and Owens 2012). However, despite significant federal and local investments, we rarely see community level or place-based policies held to the same empirical evaluation standards—which prevents us from learning as much as we could from these efforts. We need to develop rigorous standards for research that evaluates community level interventions with methods that allow us to distinguish between program-specific outcomes and outcomes which are due to broader economic or social trends. *Our design has the advantage of using comparison neighborhoods that could have been candidates for a revitalization effort, but stops short of being able to parse out the degree to which the programs in Sandtown's Neighborhood Transformation were a direct cause of the changes observed. Future research on place-based programs could work to improve basic pre-test / post-test evaluations through the use of more sophisticated comparison groups and statistical models that account for differences between neighborhoods (see also Galster et al. 2004).*

In addition to understanding how to estimate the effects of community redevelopment efforts on neighborhood, family and child outcomes, it is also important to evaluate the *implementation* of place-based programs. Understanding the consequences of programs through rigorous evaluation provides a picture of what works or does not work, but understanding how to repeat successes or adjust to challenges requires understanding the details "on the ground." Prior work on the implementation of the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative by Brown and colleagues (Brown, Butler, and Hamilton 2001) has highlighted the importance of nurturing partnerships with the neighborhood's residents and negotiating the race and class divides that make comprehensive community initiatives challenging. *Future evaluations could include examinations of: how much local community involvement and "buy-in" exists; how partnerships are formed (and severed) between community organizations, state, local, and federal agencies; how the populations of these communities change over time; cost-effective ways to handle these dynamics and their related administrative challenges; and best practices culled over more than 20 years of experience.* This research should also seek to understand the interface between policy change and the dynamics of daily life for low-income families. These families face myriad challenges, from mental and physical health concerns, to family and kin networks that provide social support but also present challenges, to exposure to trauma and violence. All of these factors influence the way low-income families respond to policy opportunities (Sharkey, 2010; Theodos et al, 2012; DeLuca and Rosenblatt 2010). We strongly encourage the Obama administration to support such evaluation and implementation research alongside the administration of its more comprehensive urban development initiatives, such as Promise Neighborhoods and Choice Neighborhoods.

The findings here point to the difficulties of overcoming the overlapping disadvantages that accrue in poor and segregated neighborhoods, even with ample resources and, as in the case of Sandtown-Winchester, in full partnership with community members. While mobility programs and community development are sometimes seen as at odds with each other, these results suggest that we need to understand how both types of programs can be used to help families escape persistent neighborhood disadvantage. Mobility programs allow poor families

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to leave violent neighborhoods in the short run, instead of being trapped in the low-performing schools and poor quality housing that exist while their communities await larger redevelopment investments. Rigorous research on mobility programs that considers causality and compliance has revealed some of the pitfalls as well as the successes of that strategy (DeLuca, 2012). The same evaluation standards applied to community development approaches can help us understand what works and what does not, and allow us to develop policies to preserve inner city communities and increase the scope of benefits to extend to families already living there. While there are no single policy solutions to reduce inequality in our urban communities, we need to ensure that high quality research is conducted on all of these innovative programs to show us what kinds of resources matter, and how they should be targeted. The depth of this challenge means that we cannot afford to leave any potential policy solution out of the equation.

About the Authors

Stefanie DeLuca is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Johns Hopkins University. She conducts research involving sociological considerations of education and housing policy. She has carried out mixed-methods studies of programs to help public housing residents relocate to safer neighborhoods and better schools, understand the tradeoffs low and moderate income parents make in deciding where to live, and the behavior of urban landlords. Her other research examines the timing of educational transitions, and the transition to college and work for inner city young adults. She contributes regularly to national and local media, and her work has been published in numerous academic journals.

Peter Rosenblatt grew up in Baltimore and holds a Ph.D in Sociology from Johns Hopkins University. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago. His research focuses on housing policy, urban inequality, and education. He uses mixed methods to understand the way individuals respond to constraints and opportunities in the housing market, and the way housing markets themselves shape and are shaped by housing policies. His work has resulted in multiple publications for both academic and policy audiences, and includes studies of policy interventions such as Moving to Opportunity and HOPE VI.

Endnotes

[1] These data are aggregated from 1990 census block groups.

[2] In August 1996, The Baltimore Sun reported "$100 million spent or earmarked for housing alone." The largest of these expenditures were on housing, including $17.4 million for the Nehemiah homes, a $5.2 million "homeownership zone" grant from HUD, which attracted an additional $30 million that the Enterprise Foundation used for its Sandtown Square development in the neighborhood. These figures do not include non-housing expenses, such as the $4 million renovation of Lafayette Market, but housing was certainly the largest expenditure over the course of the neighborhood transformation initiative. In other words, the financial investment in Sandtown-Winchester was significant. By way of comparison, the city was granted $128 million through the HOPE VI program in the 1990s to demolish more than 3200 units of public housing and rebuild mixed income communities in five neighborhoods in the city, including $31.3 million to demolish and rebuild the George Murphy Homes public housing high rise in neighboring Upton in 1997.

[3] For this analysis, we used Community Statistical Areas (CSAs), which are locally-defined geographic areas comprised of 3-6 census tracts. Sandtown-Winchester and the three "counterfactual" neighborhoods each consist of one CSA, and so are of similar size. There are 55 CSAs in Baltimore City. In analyses not shown here, but available in our longer report, we also profiled the changes in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood using census block-group data.

[4] It is possible that more residents of the neighborhood were looking for work in 2009. In analyses not shown here, we looked at the percentage of people out of the labor force and found that it declined since 1990, down to 45%, although this percentage matches that in Greenmount East, which had a lower unemployment rate.

[5] A foreclosure filing is a legal action in the Baltimore City Circuit Court, representing the initiation of a legal procedure by a lending agency to reclaim the title to a property due to non-payment on a mortgage loan. Not all filings result in actual foreclosures. Under Maryland law, foreclosure filings take place no sooner than 90 days after the loan is in default.

[6] The comparison schools are Eutaw Marshburn, Furman L. Templeton, and Samuel Coleridge Taylor in Upton; Westside Elementary, John Eager Howard, and Mt. Royal Elementary/Middle in Penn North; Dr. Bernard Harris, Johnston Square Elementary, and Harford Heights Primary/Intermediate in Greenmount East. We use test score data from 3rd and 5th grade reading and math in order to maintain our focus on comparing elementary school performance.