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The Revanchist City: Downtown Chicago and the Rhetoric of Redevelopment in Bronzeville

Theodoric Manley [α], Jr., Avery S. Buffa [σ] & Caleb Dube [ρ]

Abstract- This paper examines and interprets the contrived cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment in Bronzeville—the original settlement area of Blacks in Chicago. The historical political, economic, and social policy of confinement and segregation in Chicago created a high concentration of public housing in Bronzeville. Data reveals that the disinvestment process in Bronzeville correlates with the concentration of public housing. As the cost of local, state, and federal practices to maintain and concentrate public housing in Bronzeville increased, a new public policy of housing demolition to create mixed income housing development, coupled with decline of Chicago's manufacturing base and subsequent rise in information and consumption-based economy, sparked reinvestment. Our data reveal that the process of disinvestment and reinvestment—gentrification—doesn't just happen by chance but in fact is socially contrived and planned. Under the rhetoric and language of being concerned for the well-being of the urban poor, the primary goal of downtown Chicago and other public and private interests is to reclaim urban space for the creation of a middle and White upper-class elite consumer base in Bronzeville, as well as a space of cultural consumption for tourists. This process entails interlocking linkages between local, state, and federal resources tied to private developers, banks, savings and loan companies, and local media to construct a local growth machine to ultimately weed out the urban poor and minorities.

I. Introduction

The Chicago School of urban sociology relied on theories of land use economics and ecology to arrive at concepts like 'natural areas' and invasion and succession to analyze redevelopment in the built environment of Chicago (Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925; McKenzie, 1924; Alonso, 1978). These theories followed "rational" choice models of urban development where logical decisions were said to be made by calculated risks in an ever expanding or contracting market. Therefore, the built environment of the urban landscape is more a product of natural circumstances rather than contrived plans linked to the private and public interest of urban capital and city money (Suttles, 1972; Clark and Ferguson, 1983). Since the early 1980s, the process and practice of gentrification has become integral to the economic, political, and social composite of cities throughout the United States. The nascent efforts at gentrification in the 1980s soon expanded and in some cases exploded beyond small, elite urban enclaves; as major cities in the U.S. began experiencing gentrification *en masse* during the 1990s and continuing up until the present day. The so-called 1990s boom economy provided not only the needed capital for the bricks and mortars of gentrification (i.e. disposable income, building materials) but also the capital to assist mass culture's marketing of the urban and urbane to consumers (Mele, 2000). The efforts of political and economic elites to impose gentrification *en masse* in cities represent what Neil Smith characterizes in his book *The New Urban Frontier* (1996) as the "revanchist city."

The Revanchist City is the reclaiming of physical space in the urban frontier of cities by downtown growth machines in "reaction to the supposed 'theft'" of the city by minorities and the urban poor (Smith, 1996: 211; Logan and Molotch, 1987). In its hyper form the Revanchist City represents an urban territorial dispute between the cultural and class privileges of middle and White ruling class elites and overwhelmingly low-income people of color—the clear majority of whom are women with children. While the primary effort of middle class and White ruling class elites in the revanchist city are ultimately tied to reclaiming urban space, and defining it as homogeneous, this reality is often transparent as cultural and racial icons (i.e., low-income African American and Latino men, the homeless) are stereotyped by the local media, newspapers, and civic institutions as a threat to the safety and "vitality" of the city (Zukin, 1995). The response from city government to this threat is to, "mobilize police power to provide a cordon sanitaire to protect revenue-producing, upper-income consumers from potentially hostile—or at least worrisome—confrontation by an indigenous rabble," (Reed, 1999, p.92).

Certainly, the new urban frontier of the Revanchist City is not simply a late twentieth century phenomenon. The Revancist City has ideological antecedents in the historical vicissitudes of 'manifest destiny' in the United States with the violent treatment of

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Native Americans/Indians (e.g., Indian Removal Act of 1830 and their subsequent removal to 'reservations'), and African Americans (e.g., Enslavement, Lynching, Plessy vs. Ferguson, Restrictive Covenants, Redlining, and employment discrimination), as well as the forcible conquest of Mexico. The legal and extralegal practices of revanchist cities in the early and late twentieth century, to reclaim urban space, are found in the hyper-segregation of low-income African Americans and their subsequent social isolation reinforced by institutional discrimination and racism, as well as labor market segmentation (Massey and Denton, 1993; Steinberg, 1995). Therefore, whether it is former New York City mayor Rudolph Guiliani and police commissioner Bratton's "quality of life" policy initiatives or Chicago and its Mayoral legacy of King Richard I and King Richard II with the formers use of the Illinois Slum and Blighted Act of 1948 or the latter's use of Tax Increment Financing in the 21st century, a combination of elite political and economic policies have worked in concert to take back the city and make it amenable to its middle to White upper class residents and tourists. The actions and behaviors of the middle class and the White ruling elites in revanchist cities is "cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values, and neighborhood security" (Smith 1996:211; Zukin, 1995).

The city of Chicago is certainly representative of this revanchist pattern. Gentrification in Chicago is no longer isolated to Lincoln Park and pockets of Uptown and Edgewater but has spread as far north as Rogers Park; to the Near North Side (i.e., 'Old Town and River North'); to the Near South (i.e., the 'South Loop'); to the Near West and West Town (i.e., 'Buck Town' and 'Wicker Park') and; as far west as Lawndale (i.e, Homan Square). In recent years, three of Chicago's most racially and ethnically distinct communities, Pilsen (Mexican, Mexican-American), Humboldt Park (Puerto Rican), and Bronzeville (Black), have come face to face with rampant changes in community infrastructure and housing. Bronzeville—the original settlement area of Blacks in Chicago—provides a key example of how the classic cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment and the strategy of the revanchist city have conflated to gentrify the neighborhood. While much of the political and media discourse surrounding Bronzeville and the New South Side (see: Chicago Magazine, February 2004) centers upon the current *reinvestment* in Bronzeville, scant attention is paid to the years of protracted *disinvestment* by local, state, and federal government policies, as well as private sector stakeholders. The data provided in the paper examines how the gentrification of Bronzeville is not simply an out-growth of fluctuations in the economy or changes in consumer taste but of how gentrification is both contrived and planned. Therefore, it should be seen as no accident that the reinvestment in Bronzeville has neatly coincided with the city of Chicago's marketing of Bronzeville as an icon of Black culture and the Great Migration of Blacks to the Mid-west. Under the façade of multiculturalism and diversity Bronzeville is marketed as Chicago's epicenter for Black culture. Similar to the discussions around the reinvestment and revitalization of Bronzeville, the marketing of historic Bronzeville elides the long-standing history of segregation, discrimination, and institutional racism that exploited and undermined the life chances of the majority of Bronzeville's Black residents. The end result of this historical transformation led to a contrived policy of neighborhood disinvestment, public housing concentration, and Black confinement (see Hirsch, 1998). Under the rhetoric and language of being concerned for the well-being of the urban poor, the primary goal of downtown Chicago and other public and private interests is to reclaim urban space for the creation and reproduction of a middle and White ruling class consumer base in Bronzeville, as well as a space of cultural consumption for tourists. This process entails a history of interlocking linkages between local, state, and federal resources tied to private developers, banks, real estate companies, savings and loan companies, and local media to construct a local growth machine to ultimately weed out the urban poor and minorities (Feagin and Parker, 1990; Palen and London, 1984).

a) Disinvestment in Bronzeville

In the 50s and 60s, after the second wave of the Great Migration of Blacks to Chicago, the rhetoric and language of Mayor Richard J. Daley (a.k.a. King Richard I) was exemplified by the way he met the demand for Black housing by concentrating large tracts of public housing in Bronzeville. The language used then was to meet the needs of a growing Black constituency that had been disenfranchised by the regime of Martin Kennelly (Hirsch, 1998; Girmshaw, 1992). Yet, at the same time, King Richard I was set on assuaging the fears of his White voting constituents—who were threatening to move to the suburbs—by assuring them that the "theft" of their neighborhoods by Black demands for housing would not occur. It is well documented by Hirsch (1998) that King Richard I used his authority to persuade members of city council to build public housing contiguous with the expansion of the 'Black belt' (Hirsch, 1998) Moreover, while supporting a policy of racial segregation to avoid the loss of his White voting constituency to the suburbs, King Richard I invested in urban renewal in Bronzeville only when it was deemed necessary by private interest to attract Whites back to downtown Chicago (Hirsch, 1998). In 1966 King Richard I responded to Dr. Martin Luther King's visit to Chicago, and the King-led protest against housing segregation and discrimination, by eliding the tremendous efforts his administration contrived to confine the Black population to the South and West sides of Chicago.

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> "Well, I asked for their (King and his group) answer to the solution of any of these questions. And they had no solution. They had the recitation of the problem. But I said, 'how do you eliminate the slum and blight overnight?' What would you men do, that we haven't done in Chicago?"[3]

The urban renewal of Bronzeville in the 50s and 60s resulted in the removal of working class and working poor African Americans from the east side of Douglas (i.e. 26th to 35th Street bounded by King Drive and Lake Michigan—census tracts 3501 and 3510 see map below) and their subsequent relocation into public housing concentrated along the west side of Douglas (i.e., Dearborn Homes—census tract 3504 and State Way Gardens—census tract 3515) and Grand Boulevard (i.e., Robert Taylor Homes A and B—census tracts 3805, 3806, 3816, 3817—bordered by State and Federal streets and the Dan Ryan Expressway (i.e. Interstate 94)) (Hirsch 1998) (see map below—dark grey represents the community area of Douglas and light grey represents the community area of Grand Boulevard).

Map 1: Bronzeville Census Tracts: Douglas (dark grey) and Grand Boulevard (light grey) Community Areas of Chicago

The shifting of racial, class, and gender residential boundaries in Chicago, which dates back to the establishment of the Black Belt in the 1920s, has been a continual part of the city's policy of racial confinement and segregation of Blacks in public housing (Drake and Cayton, 1945; Spear, 1967; Hirsch, 1998). Just as in the 1940s and 1950s when the Illinois Redevelopment Act was enacted to address deterioration in both downtown and its surrounding 'slums,' the 1998 Bronzeville Redevelopment Plan (BRP) is a revanchist tool that the City is using for "working out a new geographical accommodation between races" (Ibid: 5) through capital.[3] The strategies that middle and White ruling class elite communities used in the urban renewal era of the 1950's, are the same as those used by private residential and commercial business developers today in Bronzeville. Hirsch tells us that during the period of the 50s "there was talk of age, obsolescence, neglect, uneconomic uses, but little mention was made of the changing color of the area's population" (Hirsch, 1998: 38).

b) Reinvestment in Bronzeville

In order to apply and make the label of Revanchist city "stick" to downtown Chicago we examine the current administration's position on the redevelopment of Bronzeville. In particular, we demonstrate that the city's revanchist program is evident in its stated and unstated intentions, and the rhetoric that was created to veil these intentions. The City of Chicago's policy and position on the redevelopment of Bronzeville is contained in several documents, among them the Bronzeville Redevelopment Plan and Project (BRP); 47th Street and King Drive Redevelopment Plan and Project and; City Ordinances adopting these plans. In addition to these, the city's position is contained in the development plans of other city agencies and federal bureaucracies (e.g., the Chicago Housing Authority's Transformation Plan and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Developments, Hope VI Plan).

On November 4, 1998 the city council of Chicago approved the Bronzeville Redevelopment Project Area Tax Increment Financing Program Plan (BRP). The purpose of this plan was to subsidize private financial and development investments in Bronzeville by significantly reducing the cost for land (i.e. the ground rent) made possible by a contrived city policy of housing confinement during the 50s and 60s in the city of Chicago. We argue that any analysis of the city's position should address the following questions: What is the rhetoric or language of redevelopment? What is being redeveloped? Who's in? Who's out?

i. *The rhetoric and language of redevelopment*

Our goal in this paper is to tie structure and agency to the process of understanding reinvestment in Bronzeville. To do so, we rely on redevelopment reports commissioned by key city institutions in Chicago and the speeches by Mayor Richard M. Daley (a.k.a. King Richard II) to assess the rhetoric and language of the Revanchist city in the 21st century (Smith, 1996; Feagin 1990; Harvey, 1985; Lefebvre, 1971). Structure involves institutions with a vested interest in profiting from the history of disinvestment in Bronzeville—these institutions include local, state, and federal government along with private financial, construction, and real estate companies—and their involvement in both disinvestment and reinvestment in Bronzeville. Agency refers to the middle and White ruling class elites that comprise a consumer bloc and hold key leaderships positions in public and private institutions where market based strategies and political and economic leverage is used to create cycles of disinvestment and reinvestment for their own programmatic gain. The notion of agency provides the framework for explaining the role individuals and group play at local, state, and federal levels and in private institutions. Indeed it is the government and private corporations that use the legal apparatus of decision-making to create economic incentives, usually in form of tax and land acquisition subsidies to development corporations and firms, to facilitate reinvestment. We recognize that economic classes and political institutions are abstract concepts and thus we focus on individuals and private sector organizations as the "basic element for building networks that make up and that locate institutions in

[3] Quoted from Eyes On the Prize II America at the Racial Crossroads: 1965 to 1985 "Two Societies 1965-1965"

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sociological space" (Feagin and Parker, 1990: 24). Furthermore, it is the actions of individuals and private organizations that inform, guide, and ultimately direct political and economic processes that benefit themselves and other elite interests, while simultaneously dictating who does and who does not have a voice regarding those political and economic processes (Reed, 1999).

To contextualize this framework we examine the City of Chicago's seemingly altruistic role in the reinvestment of Bronzeville, as a manifestation of revanchism. Some of the legal revanchist tools that the City of Chicago used can be found in federal programs such as HUD's HOPE VI (i.e., Housing Opportunities for Everyone); the Illinois Slum and Blighted Act of 1948; the 1949 Housing Act and; the 1954 Community Conservation Act. These legal tools are used in the speeches of Mayor Richard M. Daley as rhetoric to elide the historical legacy of racial segregation in Chicago and the long term disinvestment in Bronzeville promoted by his father the late Mayor Richard J. Daley (a.k.a. King Richard I).

As gentrification studies have shown another tool used by revanchist cities such as New York, is local culture or the "cultural mode of production" especially when visual and performing arts are being viewed as "high culture" (Smith 1996: 42-43; Zukin, 1995; Palen and London, 1984). The arts are used to cleanse and thus increase the value of a neighborhood before developers come in. In Bronzeville, the African American cultural heritage represented by the blues, jazz, gospel and its rich historical heritage found in the Great Migration (Drake and Cayton, 1945; Spear, 1967) is being used as a means of attracting middle and White ruling class elites to the neighborhood. This revanchism is evident in the Bronzeville Redevelopment Plan. The city of Chicago's rationale and rhetoric to undertake redevelopment in Bronzeville was to reduce or eliminate conditions which qualify the neighborhood as blighted. Nine out of the fourteen factors used to determine if an area is blighted were found to be present in Bronzeville, including such factors as housing age and dilapidation. Age was found to be present in 513 of 647 buildings (79.3%) and in 58 of the 103 blocks in the area. Dilapidation was found to exist in 139 of the 647 buildings (21.5%) and 33 of the 103 blocks (Bronzeville Plan 1998: 15-17). There was also the existence of depreciation of physical maintenance. Thus, the area was found to be in need of revitalization. The city (Bronzeville Plan 20) also wanted to "proactively implement the Plan's policies to protect, attract and support residential and commercial investment within the Area." The 47th and King Drive Eligibility Study (20) reiterates this position: "The eligibility findings indicate that the Study Area contains factors that qualify it as a Conservation Area in need of revitalization and that designation as a redevelopment project area will contribute to the long-term enhancement of the City."

In addition to removing blighted conditions in Bronzeville the city's policy was guided by the need to maintain "a balanced and viable economy" and "to preserve and enhance its existing historical communities" (Bronzeville Redevelopment Plan, 2) for the benefit of downtown. Some of the Plan's stated goals suggest this intention: for example, "to establish a link from Bronzeville to the City's tourist and convention industries." Although the plan does recognize that Bronzeville "…was at one time the center of the City's African American cultural, economic and social life—The Redevelopment Project Area still maintains some of the same elements that made it such a viable neighborhood in the past: *close proximity to the central business district* (our emphasis), excellent local/regional public transportation, easy accessibility to the City's lakefront and the Museum Campus. It is surrounded by McCormick Place on the north and the Museum of Science and Industry and the University of Chicago on the south and Lake Michigan to the east." In essence, while the rationale and rhetoric of the city to redevelop Bronzeville is veiled in blighted conditions, the language used in the plans for Bronzeville's redevelopment clearly link the city to reclaiming the neighborhood for the protection and benefit of downtown businesses and middle and White ruling class elites.

Previous city plans testify to the contention that the ultimate beneficiary of any neighborhood redevelopment in Chicago is downtown and the White ruling class elite (see Hirsch, 1998: 38; Cohen and Taylor, 2000: 217, 528). Since the noted examples of the 1898 Chicago World's Fair; the 1909 Plan of Chicago sponsored by the Commercial Club; the Burnham Plan of the 1930s; the Illinois Slum and Blighted Act of 1948; the Housing Act of 1949; the Community Conservation Act of 1954 and; the CHA's Transformation Plan of 2001—the entire city's redevelopment policy has been dictated by public and private White ruling class elites (Cohen and Taylor, 2000: 528-529). Similarly, the city's position on Bronzeville's redevelopment is driven by the same group. The city's goals and policies for growth and capital development strategies are premised on three major areas: centers of employment and commerce, the neighborhoods, and infrastructure and services. The maintenance of more attractive neighborhood's and economic incentives to neighborhood business and industry is healthy for the CBD or downtown (*Chicago Central Area Plan*, 1983).

What is being redeveloped—who's in and who's out?

Bronzeville at the end of the 20th century provided downtown Chicago, whose economic survival depends primarily on the service industry, an opportunity to bolster its economy through residential and commercial redevelopment and the tourist consumption of African American culture and heritage.

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African American cultural heritage, in particular blues, became a resource unique to the city that Chicago drew upon to market itself as a global city (Smith 1996: 38-39; Manley and Dube, 2001). Race to a large extent and class to a lesser extent were the cornerstones of the city's position on the neighborhood's redevelopment philosophy. Redevelopment happened at the expense of sitting residents of Bronzeville to benefit downtown and its immediate environment of middle and White ruling class elites and their institutions. According to the BRP (22) some of the strategies for redevelopment included promoting "amenities which would make" Bronzeville "attractive for new residential development," and "encouraging new residential development through the use of governmental mechanisms." The rhetoric of the agents of change in the 21st century is not new because the city of Chicago has had a history of racially motivated housing policies in Bronzeville since the 1920s (Spear, 1967; Hirsch, 1989).

The BRP and the 47th Street and King Drive Plan along with the Mayor's public speeches provide substance to interrogate the language and rhetoric of the city's economic reasons for redeveloping the neighborhood. In a speech on May 28, 1998 commemorating the development of $124 million new affordable rental housing units in neighborhoods throughout the city, Mayor Daley set the tone for the city's redevelopment strategy:

> "Thanks to the public and private partnerships that are a necessary component for a redevelopment project of this scope, many Chicago neighborhoods are truly coming alive. In a very short time, you will see this area of blight and urban decay transformed into a vibrant community where people can raise their kids in safety and the elderly will have public amenities right outside their front door. This will allow us to continue rebuilding the City of Chicago block by block and neighborhood by neighborhood."

In another speech on August 1, 2000, the Mayor reiterated the City's resolve to clean up the city from the 'threat' of encroaching blight and decay:

> "Over the past ten years, we have worked very hard to build a city where our children can learn, businesses can thrive and where we have neighborhoods that are affordable and enjoyable—a city where the water runs freely and streets are smooth and well-lit. We've invested more than $6 billion into our neighborhoods to achieve those goals. They are essential to maintaining quality of life for all Chicagoans. And, here in the 3rd Ward those investments are proving invaluable to old and new residents alike. They are very much a part of the rebirth of Bronzeville, an opportunity to return this historic part of Chicago back to the prominence it enjoyed for so many years. You just have to look around: the new Police headquarters, the Bronzeville Academy, the Chicago Bee Library, new, affordable homes throughout the area created through the City's New Homes for Chicago and City Lots for City Living programs…What's happening here in the 3rd Ward is happening throughout Chicago. When you improve housing, parks, schools, libraries and infrastructure, it attracts people to the community. Then businesses want to set up shop. They, in turn, attract more people and create new job opportunities."

The mayor does not link the reinvestment in Bronzeville to a history of contrived public policy disinvestment since the 1950s and up until the late 1980s. Also, we should note that what the Mayor fails to mention is while these improvements attract middle and White ruling classes to Bronzeville, they equally push out 2/3rds of low-income Blacks—most of whom are women and children. For example, the Chicago Housing Authority's Transformation Plan promises to provide 25,000 new or rehab units by 2009. These units are alleged to be available for the 25,000 CHA families that were housed in either Robert Taylor, State Way Gardens, or Washington Park and Madden-Wells homes that were slated for re-developed and "mixed-income' housing under Hope IV and other private and public funds. However, since 2003 the CHA demolished 13,909 units (67%) of the total while building less than 910 new public housing units in 2003 (less than 4% of the total required) (National Center on Poverty Law, 2003). The CHA is ahead of schedule in demolition while tremendously behind in building new and rehabilitated units for CHA families displaced by the Bronzeville Redevelopment Plan (BRP). The demolition of public housing in Bronzeville provided revanchist Chicago the rationale and rhetoric to reclaim public housing stock and the land on which it was sitting (Smith 1996: 62). The city capitalized on the federal government's rethinking of public housing as a bad practice because it isolated poor Blacks from mainstream society (Vanketesh, 2000). As noted, King Richard I used federally subsidized low-income housing to socially and economically isolate the poor from opportunities in the city creating a massive cycle of disinvestment coupled with financial and commercial decline (Neal 1999: 131). The BRP, 47th street and the King Drive Plan, and the mayor's speeches spell out the City's redevelopment strategy, mainly, through private enterprise and cultural heritage tourism. That is, before such redevelopment could occur, private investors (and tourists) demanded assurance that their investments would be safe from "those people living in the projects along State Street." In the BRP (10, 33) the City pledged "to create an environment in which private investment can occur…Public investments will create the appropriate environment to attract the level of private investment required for rebuilding the area." Another redevelopment strategy of the City was "cultural tourism." The language and rhetoric about the City's commitment to preserving African American heritage and culture in Bronzeville is a veil for reclaiming the neighborhood as a potential tourist destination.

Gentrification has always had a cultural or artistic element with the arts usually serving as a means or way to "tame" a neighborhood (Smith 1996: 15-20). One of the objectives of the 47th and King Drive Plan

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(15) sponsored by 3rd Ward alderwoman Dorothy Tillman is to "promote the Chicago Blues Entertainment District on 47th Street as a tourist attraction and excellent location for cultural and entertainment venues." The Mayor's statement on the African American Showcase of Homes, one of the accomplishments of the African American Home Builders Association, testifies to this strategy and is veiled in rhetorical language:

> "This project is a wonderful example of a community being built by its own residents. And that's exactly how Bronzeville became the center of African-American business and culture during the period between the two world wars. The members of the community built their own homes, churches, clubs and businesses. Families were strong, and people looked out for each other. The result was one of the strongest and most exciting neighborhoods, not just in Chicago but in the United States. Unfortunately, things went downhill after the war. From 1950 to 1990, Bronzeville lost almost two-thirds of its population, and when that happens, you're going to lose businesses and community anchors, as well. Fortunately, a great many Chicagoans were unwilling to let this historic community die."

The Revanchist rhetoric of King Richard II elides the prominent role King Richard I played as the American Pharaoh in Chicago (Cohen and Taylor, 2000). His support for and creation of policies to residentially confine and segregate the Black population in Chicago was coupled with the use of redlining by the federal government and private bank and real estate companies resulting in the largest concentration of public housing in Bronzeville and the United State. As Bronzeville became the dumping ground for public housing the Black institutions of the 30s and 40s that were the heart of soul of a city within a city, declined precipitously.

Another component of the Plan (12) was to: "Maintain and improve historically and architecturally significant structures and reestablish Bronzeville as a historical African American cultural center." Historically significant structures documented in *Black Metropolis Historic District* (BP: 2) were: the Chicago Bee Building, Chicago Defender, Eight Regiment Armory, Liberty Life/Supreme Life Insurance Co., Overton Hygienic, Douglas national Bank, Sunset café/Grand Terrace Café, Unity Hall, Wabash Avenue YMCA, and Victory Monument. The 47th Street and King Drive Plan (7), it seems, was put in place specifically to tap into the neighborhood's history, heritage and cultural potential primarily for the benefit of downtown businesses. The blues and jazz traditions were envisaged as a means of speeding up the "clean-up" of the neighborhood. In other cities such as New York that experienced similar gentrification processes, culture and art via artists served as "pioneers" before the arrival of incoming middle and White ruling class elites (Smith 1996: 24-25). In Bronzeville, the process was slightly different in that it was more of the cultural product, the historic cultural district, than artists that was used to sanitize and attract middle and White ruling class elites to the neighborhood catering to the cultural consumption preferences of this group. The cultural district became another part of the rhetoric to renew the strength and vitality of the neighborhood.

> "While the area has become known for persistent poverty and crime, the spirit and culture of the residents remain. Many have worked tirelessly to create the resources and energy needed for the area's revival. In recent years, the proposed developments on 47th Street Blues District and the 47th Street Cultural Center have sparked hope for a rebirth. The current cultural influences extend beyond jazz and blues to rap music and multi-media visual arts. With this wonderful cultural infrastructure and social capital, the Douglas/Grand Boulevard Community Area has an opportunity to set the cultural and economic agenda for the City and influence both the national and international scenes for years to come. The preservation of this cultural heritage will, in fact, celebrate Chicago's rich diversity."

Carefully crafted rhetoric, whose main objective is to veil the revanchist agenda of the City, is contained in both the redevelopment plans and public speeches by the Mayor. The rhetoric is built around notions of supporting and maintaining ethnic identity, minorities, women, and low income residents, and the elderly while at the same time removing a vast majority of these groups from the area through displacement and relocation assistance.

II. Results

The gentrification of Bronzeville illustrates and illuminates how redevelopment and its corollary—reinvestment—are intricately connected to the historically contrived plans that led to the neighborhoods disinvestment from 1950s to the late 1980s. In Chicago, disinvestment and reinvestment are part of a cycle of urban redevelopment that began in the 1950's with city, state, and federal policies enacted to promote vast amounts of disinvestment in Bronzeville by concentrating public housing in the community while simultaneously building a small enclave on the east side of Douglas between 26th to 35th Streets to protect private interest represented by downtown capital—Marshall Fields & Company—and local private and public institutions in Bronzeville, mainly the Michael Reese Hospital and the Illinois Institute Technology (IIT) (Hirsch, 1998; see Map 1 census tracts 3502, 3501 and 3510). Investment in the "mixed income" apartments and condominiums of South Commons, Prairie Shores, and Lake Meadows was the first stage in the plan to bring middle class and White ruling elites into Bronzeville. At the same time, Major Richard J. Daley simultaneously located on the western boundary of Douglas and Grand Boulevard (along State Street from 35th to 55th Street see Map 1) the largest concentration of public housing in the United States; the building of these housing developments alone demonstrated the power

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of downtown Chicago to keep public housing out of white working and middle class neighborhoods (Hirsch, 1998).

a) The Rent Gap

One concept that has been developed in the literature on gentrification and is used to measure the revanchist city hypothesis outlined in this paper is the *devalorization* cycle measured by the size of the 'rent gap' in Revanchist cities (Smith, 1979 and 1996). This cycle entails a set of racialized decisions—made by public policy makers, private financial institutions, developers, landlords, and real estate agents—to determine the best and most profitable time to reclaim and reinvest in the value of property in disinvested areas (Smith and LeFaivre, 1984: 49; Omi and Winant, 1994). The devalorization cycle includes five stages. The first stage is the appearance of new construction or the first cycle of use that occurred in the 1950s when Downtown capital and local, state, and federal interest converged to produce the Chicago Land Clearance Commission (CLCC) to make way for the building of South Commons, Prairie Shores, and Lake Meadows in the 1960s. The area where these new "mixed income" housing complexes were slated for development was defined as "slum and blighted" under the Illinois Slum and Blighted Act of 1948 (Hirsch, 1998). However, as noted above, the city and downtown private interest simultaneously built public housing on the western border of Bronzeville which led to the second stage of the devalorization cycle.

In the second stage there is a transition to landlord control and disinvestment of financial savings and loans institutions and retail and commercial establishments. This stage is linked to a plan to disinvest in the core infrastructure of the community. That is, the construction of mixed income apartments on the eastern border of Douglas was contiguous with the Lakefront, Michael Reese Hospital, and the McCormick center—all areas with anchored institutions and employees that needed residential space close to work. These developments were built with spacious picture windows and out door patios resembling hotel complexes along the water fronts of Hawaii or Miami. Thus, the rhetoric about mixed-income housing in the 60s was another revanchist strategy for attaching subsidized housing to market development (Smith 1996: 24-25, 46). Along the western border and further south through Bronzeville, housing projects took up vast amounts of land leading to a cycle of landlord control and the White flight of private financial and savings institutions, commercial and retail establishments, and the eventual flight of the Black working and middle class. This process was also steered on by the practices of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and its discriminatory policies which led to the third stage—redlining.

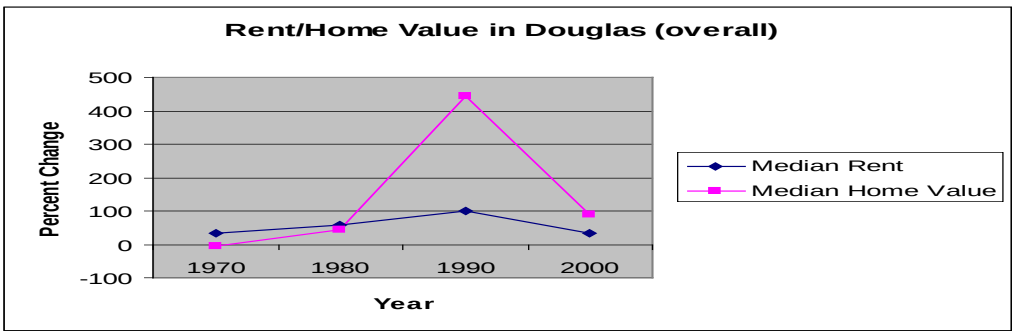
Redlining was made possible by the FHA, the Home Owners Loan Corporation, and the blockbusting tactics (fourth stage) of real estate brokers who took advantage of White homeowners by encouraging them to sell their homes soon before the value of their property declines because of Black 'invasion' (Hirsch, 1998; Massey and Denton, 1993; Mahoney, 1995). The final stage is abandonment. The result of the devalorization cycle is the creation of a rent gap.

The devalorization cycle accomplishes a systematic decrease in the ground rent of a neighborhood. The end product of the cycle is reflected in lower median rent for an area and a relatively low median home value in the selling price for structures in a disinvested area (Smith and LeFaivre, 1984: 50). The *rent gap*, the primary variable to analyze when disinvestment is occurring over a long period of time, is the percent change in the median value of housing and the median rent over time. When the percent change in the median value of housing falls below or near the percent change in the median rent, an area is said to be ready for reinvestment because this is when the "value gap" or the highest profit can be made by private developers, financial institutions, and real estate brokers (Smith, 1996). Thus, the rent gap is the maximum difference between the percent change in median rent and median home value. When both the median rent and home value are at their lowest, reinvestment is predicted to begin. City officials, private developers, land speculators, and real estate brokers take full advantage of low cost land, especially when they've been initiated by long-term plans and policies for a specific area. The rent gap is expressed when developers take advantage of the low median value of housing that has fallen below the median rent and purchase at a low price property for rehabbing and new construction while all along making low mortgage and interest payments with a large return in profits from the sale or rent of the property (Smith and LeFaivre, 1984). What follows is a dissection of Bronzeville into the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community areas of Chicago to measure the historical patterns and trends that gave rise to the cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment in the area.

i. *The Rent Gap in Bronzeville: Douglas*

The Douglas community area of Bronzeville (see Map 1) is contiguous to the lake and the South Loop—Downtown areas of Chicago. It is in Douglas where the first urban renewal effort took place to reclaim the eastern border of the community area adjacent to the Lakefront, Michael Reese Hospital, and the McCormick Center. Figure 1 below depicts trend data from 1960 to 2000. Between 1960 and 1970 the percent change in median rent was (34.4%) compared to a negative percent change in median home value (-5.8%) (See Figure 1).

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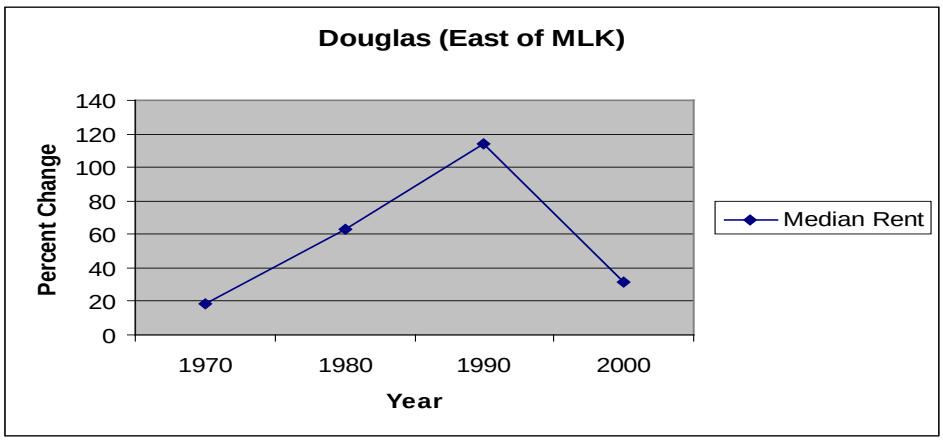
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 1: Douglas Percent Change Median Rent and Home Value (1960-2000)

The data point for 1970 represents a twenty year period of disinvestment and stagnation in the median rent and median home vale in the Douglas area of Bronzeville. Portions of the area were declared 'slum and blighted' and new 'mixed income' apartments were built. The negative percent change in median home values between 1960 and 1970 represented the first step in the devalorization process as housing prices began to fall along with stagnation in median rent. Between 1970 and 1980 the percent change in median rent rose (59.3%), up roughly 25%, while the percent change in median home value rose as well (42.7%). This change represented the urban renewal investment on the eastside of Douglas during the 1960s with the building of South Commons, Prairie Shores, and Lake Meadows (See Figure 2). Between 1980 and 1990 a cycle of reinvestment surged in the Douglas area of Bronzeville as the percent change in median home value went up ten times (444%) while the percent change in median rent only doubled (101.1%). The phenomenal percent change in median home value represents the profit made from disinvestment when the ground rent (median rent value) stagnated in 60s, 70s and 80s, signaling cheap prices for houses and vacant land. We contend that from 1950 to the late1980s the Douglas area of Bronzeville was in a contrived cycle of disinvestment while being primed for reinvestment that would occur in the area between1980-1990—to take full advantage of the rent gap. Although the percent change in median home value and median rent declined to (90.4%) and (32%) between 1990 and 2000 there is still roughly a 60% rent gap of profit (see Figure 1 above).

ii. *Douglas East*

To more accurately determine the size of rent gaps in the Douglas area of Bronzeville we divided the Douglas area into east and west. Our dividing line was Martin Luther King Drive (formally South Parkway). Our rational was based on awareness of the historical disinvestment in the area, south and west in Douglas—especially the building of two housing developments south of 35th Street and east of King Drive; the Ida B. Wells and Madden Park homes (built in 1948 and 1962 respectively), the Dearborn Homes (1954) and State Way Gardens (1958). Data on median home value was not available for the time frame 1960-1990 and, we suspect it is a direct result of the clearing of land for the concentration of public housing along the southeast boarder of Douglas bounded by Cottage Grove to the east, Martin Luther King Drive to the west and 39th Street to south. Figure 2 shows the percent change in median rent for the east side of Douglas from 1960-2000. The percent change in median rent between 1960 and 1970 was less than 20% (18.5%).

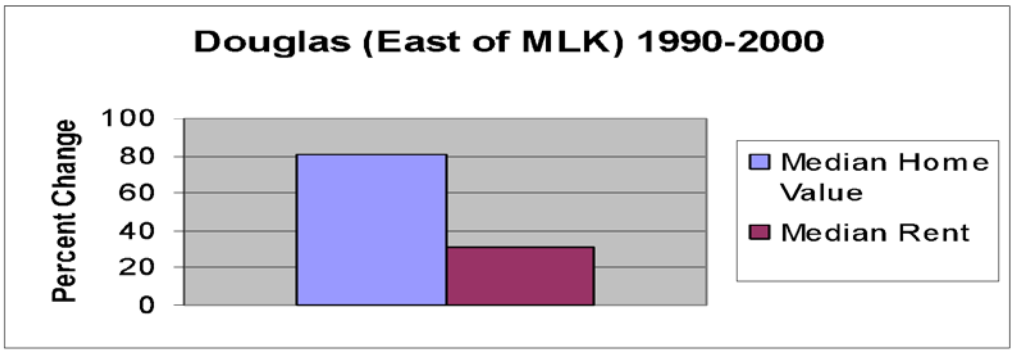


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2: Douglas East-side Percent Change in Median Rent 1960-2000

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It is rose between 1970 and 1980 (62.7%) as a result of the urban renewal completed on the east side of Douglas between 26th and 35th Streets along Martin Luther King Drive. The percent change in median rent continued to climb and reached a high of just under 120% before falling to a percent change of less than 30% by 2000. In 1990 median home value data became available (see Figure 3 below).



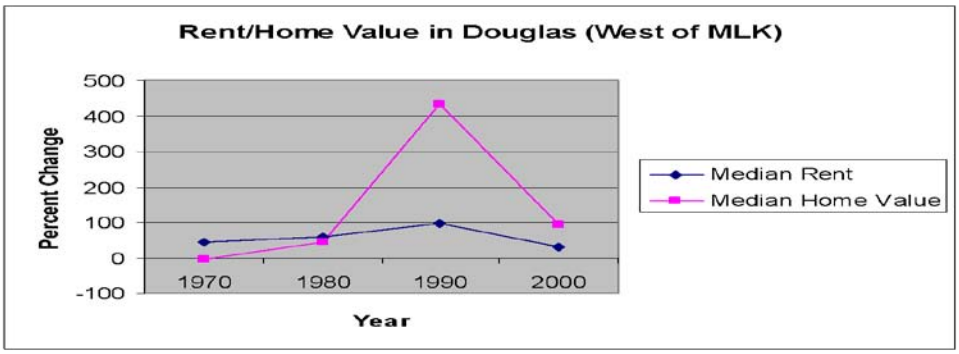
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 3: Percent Change in Median Home Value and Rent in East Douglas 1990-2000

Between 1990 and 2000 the percent change in median home value was (81.1%) while median rent was (31.1%)—evidencing a rent gap as the percent change in the median value of homes in east Douglas was over half the percent change in median rent.

iii. *Douglas West*

The rent gaps in Douglas west are comparable to the overall area of Douglas. The percent change in median home value between 1960 and 1970 was (-5.8%) compared to the percent change in median rent (42.6%) (see figure 4).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4: Douglas West-side Percent Change in Median Rent 1960-2000

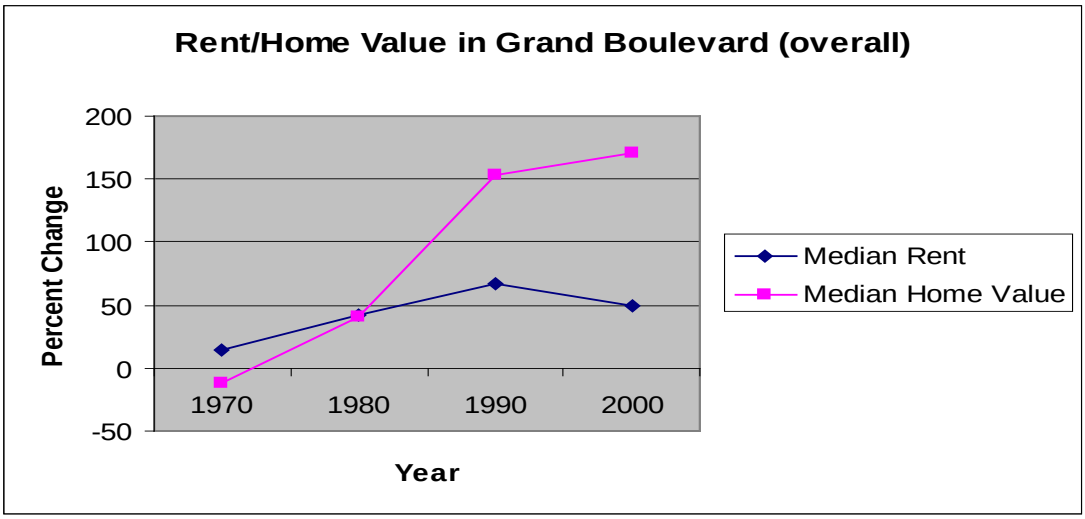
As with the overall data for the Douglas area of Bronzeville the percent change in median rent is flat or stagnate, rising modestly in comparison to the enormous percent change in median home value between 1980 and 1990 (431.6 %) compared to (96.5%) for percent change in median rent (see Figure 4). In fact, the percent change in median home value between 1980 and 1990 was over ten times the percent change in median home value between 1970 and 1980 (42.7%). As with the overall results for Douglas, the east and west side comparisons show that private developers, financial institutions, and real estate brokers made huge profits in the housing market of Douglas evidencing the intricate relationship between the devalorization process (disinvestment) and the rent gap (reinvestment).

b) The Rent Gap in Bronzeville: Grand Boulevard

The Grand Boulevard area of Bronzeville is located between 39th Street and 51st Street and bound by Cottage Grove, on the east, and Federal Boulevard, on the west (See Map 1). It was affected quite differently by the initial urban renewal process in Douglas. It did not receive any urban renewal resources for "mixed-income" development but instead became home to the largest concentration of public housing in Chicago and the United States. In Grand Boulevard alone, there are five public housing developments—Ida B. Wells Extension—Washington Park, Robert Taylor Homes (the largest); Darrow Homes, Calumet Homes, and the Prairie Court Homes. The Darrow and Calumet homes have been demolished, while only three buildings out of

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twenty-eight remain of the Robert Taylor Homes. The process of disinvestment in Grand Boulevard while remarkably similar to Douglas is less dramatic in terms of the profits made from the rent gap. Indeed, because it is further south of the city and not contiguous to the Lakefront, the rate of profit from the rent gap has been slower but still evidential. Figure 4 shows between 1960 and 1970 the dramatic impact the concentration of public housing in Grand Boulevard had on disinvestment. The percent change in median home value (-12.7%) fell well below the stagnant percent change in median rent (13.6%). Both percent change in median home value and median rent converged between 1970 and 1980 because developers took advantage of the low prices for homes and land in the area ($15,000) in 1970. Between 1980 and 1990 a rent gap emerged. The percent change in median home value almost quadrupled (153.3%) compared to 1980 (41.2%). The percent change in median rent inclined slightly during the same period but at a much slower rate of change (67.6%). The growth in median home value doubled the percent change in median rent (see Figure 5 below).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

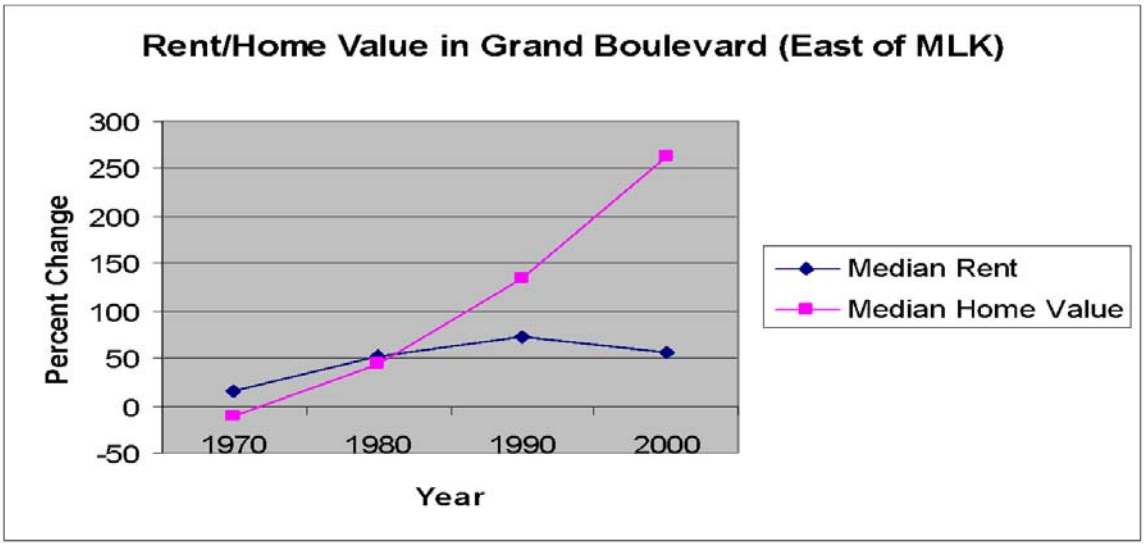
Figure 5: Grand Boulevard Percent Change in Median Rents and Home Value (1960-2000)

While the percent change in median home value between 1990 and 2000 continued to increase in the Grand Boulevard portion of Bronzeville the percent change in median rents declined during this same period. The reason for this increase in the rent gap is that the construction of new single family homes and town homes was the dominant industry in Grand Boulevard while investment in multi-family rental housing was on the wane. Still, the profits from the rent gap are not as large as those found in the Douglas area overall and east/west. Nevertheless, the rent gap between 1990 and 2000 as measured by the difference of percent change in median home value (170.6%) and the percent change in median rent (50.1%) tripled in the Grand Boulevard area of Bronzeville.

i. *Grand Boulevard East*

The east side of Grand Boulevard is contiguous with the community areas of Oakland and Kenwood/Hyde Park; the latter is home to the University of Chicago. The east side of Grand Boulevard is bound by King Drive on the west and Cottage Grove on the east between 39th and 51st Streets (see Map 1). Arnold Hirsch (1989) brilliantly documented the efforts of the University of Chicago and local community organizations in the 50s and 60s to conserve the Kenwood/Hyde Park area from the potential in-migration of low-income African Americans. The Community Conservation Act of 1954 assisted the University of Chicago in purchasing land to reclaim areas on the fringes of the neighborhood adjacent to Washington Park and east Grand Boulevard—the infamous 'Black Belt.' These actions were consistent with the cities building of more public housing on the east side of Grand Boulevard to further confine low-income and working poor African Americans. To achieve this, the city built the Ida B. Wells extensions—Madden Park, Darrow Homes, and Washington Park Homes.

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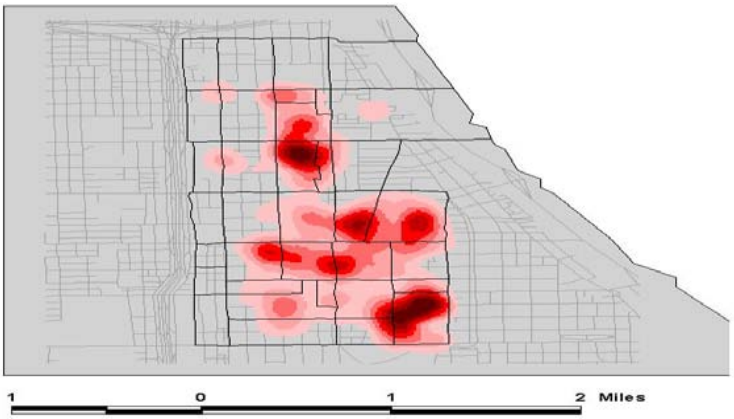


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 6: Percent Change in Median Home Vale and Rent for Grand Boulevard East) (1960-2000)

The trend data in Figure 6 (see above) confirm the disinvestment on the east side of Grand Boulevard from 1950 to 1980. The percent change in median home value from 1960 to 1970 was -11.7% while the percent change in median rent was modest and stagnant 15.3% (see Figure 6). The reinvestment in the community occurred when the ground rent was at its "lowest"—indicative of low home and land prices, stagnating rents, and vacant lots. Thus, Bronzeville through the devalorization/disinvestment cycle is primed for profit (reinvestment) with most of the beneficiaries tied to the city of Chicago's middle and White ruling class elites, private developers, bankers, land speculators, and real estate brokers.

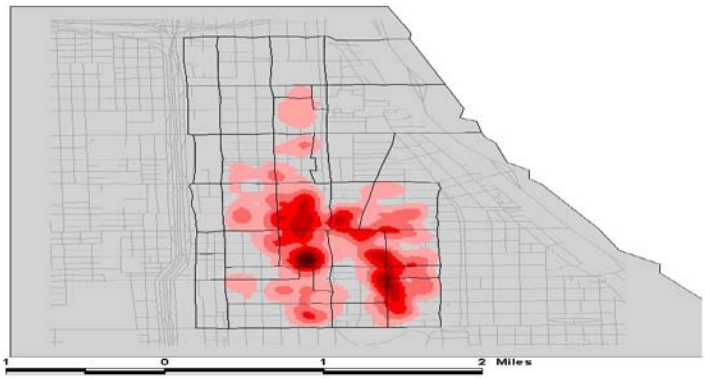
The modest increase in the percent change in median home value and rent between 1970 and 1980 was followed by a three time increase in the percent change in median home value (from 44% to 133.7%) from 1980 to 1990. The reinvestment along the eastside of Grand Boulevard continued from 1990 to 2000 with the percent change in median home value increasing to 263.1%. Meanwhile the percent change in median rent declined from 1990 to 2000 (71.9% to 56.4%) along the east side of Grand Boulevard. This is a result of the new housing vintage on the east side of Grand Boulevard comprised mostly of single family homes, Town Homes, and Condominiums. The available rental market on the east side of Grand Boulevard is shrinking. The reinvestment in Grand Boulevard east is contiguous with the recent reinvestments plans in the Chicago community areas of Oakland and the western border of Kenwood/Hyde Park. Moreover, reinvestment on the east side of Grand Boulevard correlates with the high density of vacant lots in the same area (see Density Maps 2 and 3).



Source: Black Metropolis Physical Quality of Life Database

Map 2: Density of New Construction in Bronzeville 2000-2004

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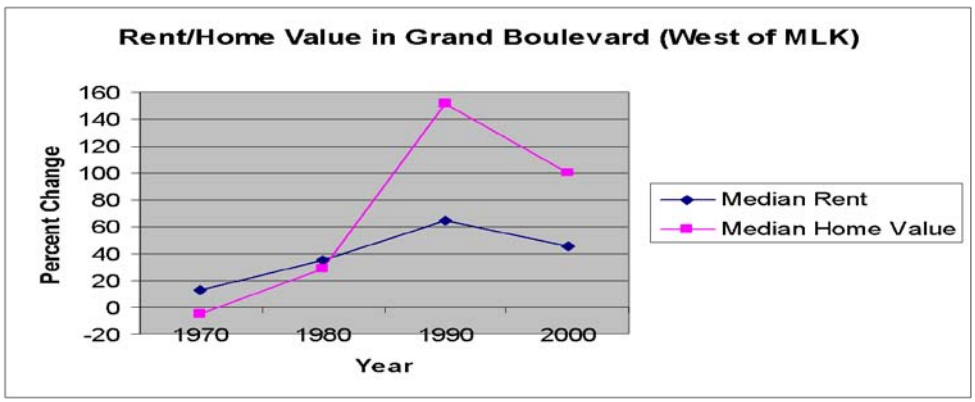
Source: Black Metropolis Physical Quality of Life Database

Map 3: Density of Vacant Lots in Bronzeville 200-2003

The above two Density maps show significant over lap of reinvestment areas and vacant lots in Bronzeville specifically on the east side of Bronzeville were the highest densities are located.

ii. *Grand Boulevard West*

The west side of Grand Boulevard is bounded by King Drive on the east and Federal Boulevard on the west between 39th and 51st Streets (See Map 1). Located on the far west side of Grand Boulevard are the Robert Taylor Homes found between State and Federal Streets and extending from 39th to 51st Streets. Figure 7 shows that reinvestment on the west side is not expanding at the rate of growth found on the east side of Grand Boulevard. Although the same reinvestment cycle and profit pattern is consistent with the east side of Grand Boulevard the percent change in median home value and rent declined between 1990 and 2000 (see Figure 7 below).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 7: Percent Change in Median Home Value and Rent West Side of Grand Boulevard 1960-2000.

We predict that these slow rates of growth on the west side of Grand Boulevard will expand with the completion of the demolition of the Robert Taylor Homes and the proposed "mixed income" development plans for the area by the City of Chicago Housing Authority's Transformation Plan and the Hope V1 Housing and Urban Development Plan.

c) *Future Growth Projections*

A ten-year projection was done to examine the growth of the rent gap in Bronzeville to 2010 (See Figure 8). The polynomial equation below estimates that the median value of homes in Bronzeville will reach $400,000.000 by 2010 ($R^2$ is .9975).

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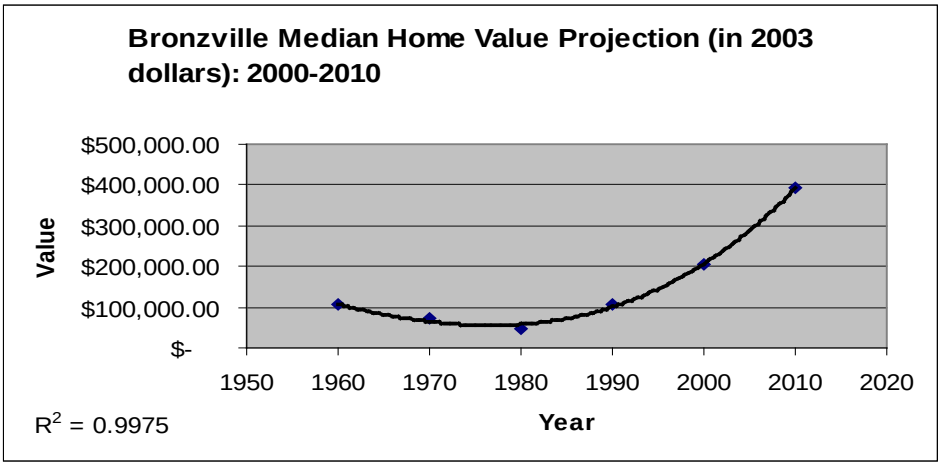


Figure 8: 2010 Projections in Median Home Value

A second ten-year projection of median rent (see Figure 9) estimates that rents will climb slightly above the 1960 median rent value of approximately $500.00 (R^2 is .8934). Thus, by 2010 a rent gap of $399, 500.00 is estimated to be the profit made in Bronzeville per household from the new construction and remodeling of condominiums, town homes, and single family housing stock vintage. Moreover, the population of Bronzeville declined steadily from 1960 to 1990; leveling off by 2000. A ten-year projection estimates that the population of Bronzeville will begin to increase (see Figure 10).

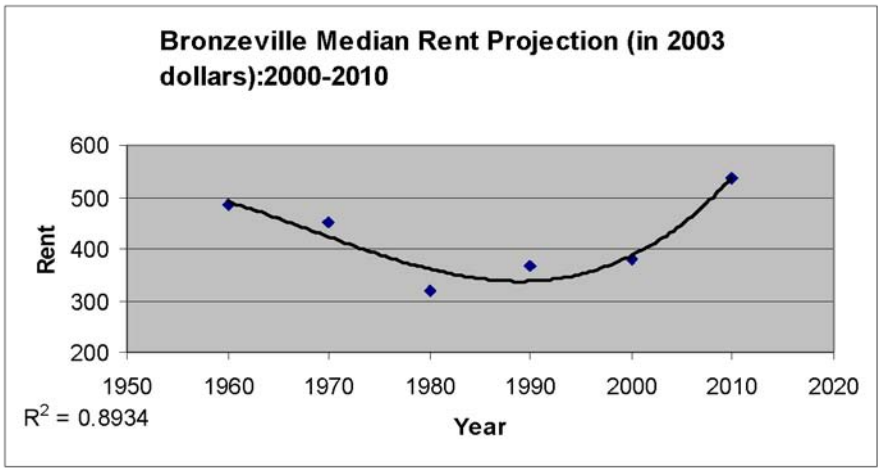


Figure 9: 2010 Projections in Median Rent

By the year 2010 the Bronzeville population is estimated to climb back to its population size in 1980 (see Figure 10 below).

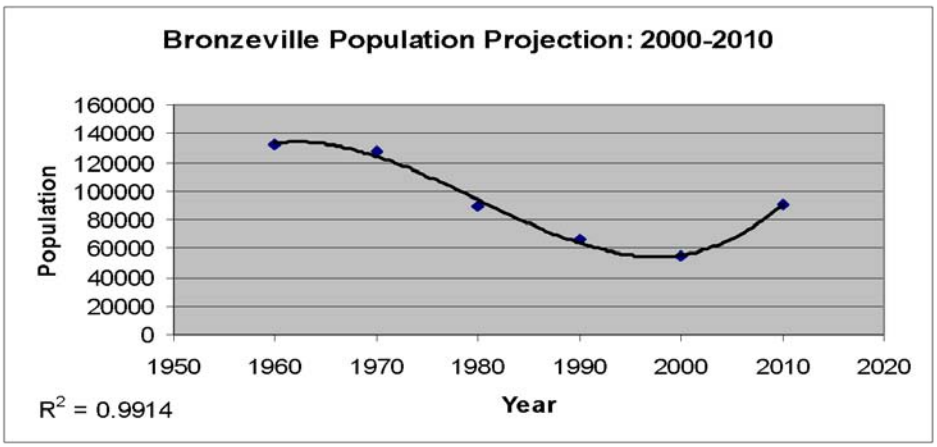


Figure 10: 2010 Population Projection

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So who's in and who's out? Our projection for the Black population in Bronzeville reveals a steep decline from 92% in 2000 to an estimated 85% by 2010 (R^2 is .9835) (see Figure 11). Alternatively, our projection for the White population reveals a remarkable and steady increase from 4% in 2000 to just over 14% by 2010 (R^2 is 1) (See Figure 12).

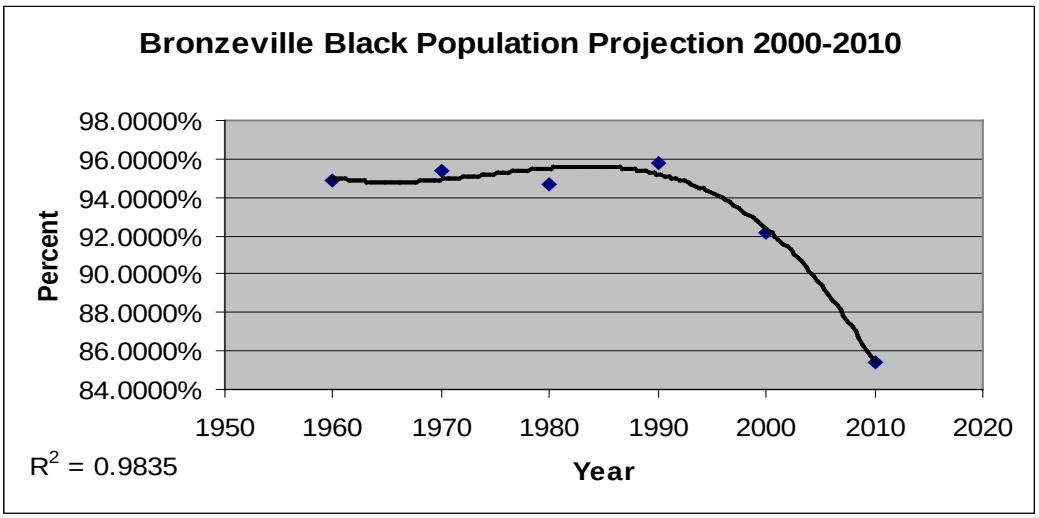


Figure 11: 2010 Black Population Projection

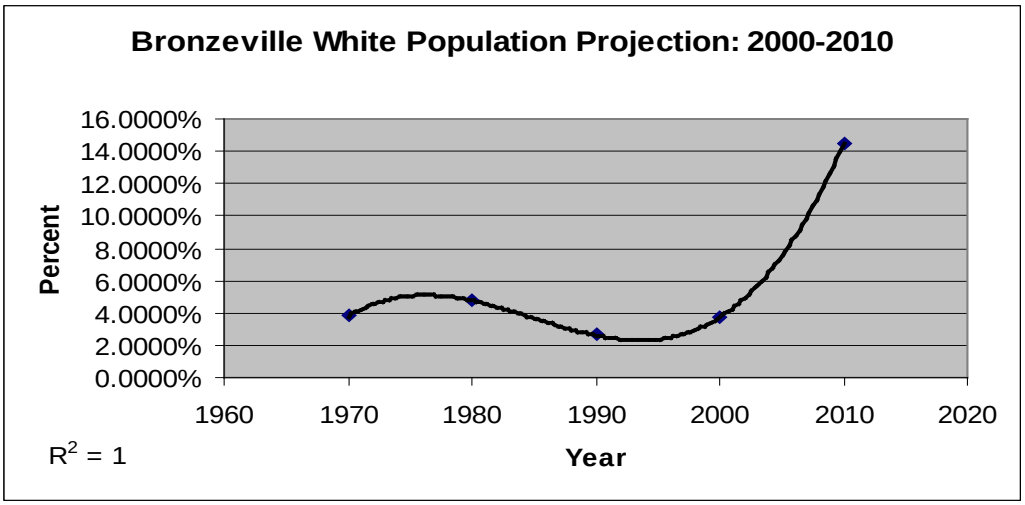
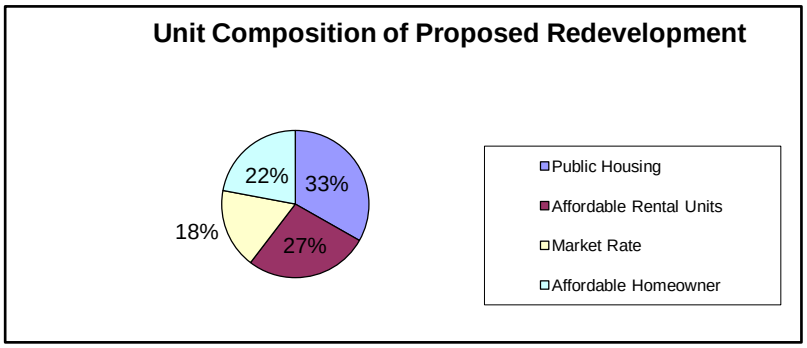


Figure 12: 2010 White Population Projection

III. Discussion

The recent reinvestment in the Bronzeville community of Chicago fits the Revanchist City model outlined in the beginning of this paper. The city of Chicago historically disinvested in Bronzeville by concentrating the largest public housing complexes in the community to confine inner city low-income, working poor, and indigent Black populations. Investments on the east side of Douglas in the 1950s and 60s were consistent with the City's reclaiming of areas contiguous to downtown from those population groups stigmatized or stereotyped as a threat by private and public city, local, state, and federal institutions and businesses. The contemporary reclaiming of Bronzeville by middle and White ruling class elites is evident in the Hope VI plan (see Figure 12 below).

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Source: Robert Taylor Homes – Phase A 2001 HOPE VI Application June 22, 2001

Figure 13: Robert Taylor HOPE VI Redevelopment Unit Composition of Proposed Development

The plans allows for only a third of housing development tenants to remain in the area. Of the third, all will have to meet stringent requirements to gain approval to stay in the community (e.g., the one strike rule of no late lease compliances, no criminal or drug record and, no pending cases with the Illinois Department of Children and Family services) (The View From The Ground One Strike Discussion on WBEZ 06/17/2002).

The efforts of downtown Chicago have historically been tied to a cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment in Bronzeville—its eventual gentrification and absorption by downtown capital and middle and White ruling class elites. The rent gap, the final outcome of a contrived devalorization cycle, indicates how low the median home value and rents (ground rent) are allowed to go before the area is declared 'slum and blighted' and prime for reinvestment and the reclaiming of the area by middle and White ruling class elites, officials, private developers and their financial and real estate agents.

IV. Conclusion

The new urban frontier of the Revanchist City fully describes the patterns and trends involved in the devalorization cycle that captures the intricate link between disinvestment and reinvestment—with the end result of gentrification and massive displacement of poor and working poor families (Smith, 1996). The Chicago School of urban sociology typically relied on theories of land use economics and 'natural areas' to analyze redevelopment in the built environment of Chicago. These theories followed "rational" choice models of urban development where logical decisions were said to be made by calculated risks in an expanding or contracting market. Therefore, the built environment of the urban landscape is more a product of natural circumstances rather than contrived plans linked to the private and public interest of urban capital and city money (Alonso, 1978). We affirm that the gentrification of Bronzeville is tied to a new urban frontier of the Revanchist City. We articulate the 'racialized' transformations that were historically grounded in the vicissitudes of evolving plans and practices dating back to the first wave of Blacks to Chicago during the Great Migration (Spear, 1967; Drake and Cayton, 1945; Hirsch, 1998; Massey and Denton, 1993; Omi and Winant, 1994). The historical and contemporary evidence substantiate that the massive disinvestment and now, reinvestment in Bronzeville are not rooted in beneficent private and public policies but rather, are tied to a racial code of confinement and displacement that has been the historical and contemporary treatment of low-income, working poor and indigent African Americans in Chicago since 1890. We have demonstrated in this paper how the rhetoric and language of local politicians in the 50 and 60s to simultaneously reclaim and disinvestment in Bronzeville are remarkably similar to the rhetoric and language of reinvestment in Bronzeville in the 21st century. The data provided in the paper evidence how the disinvestment and reinvestment in Bronzeville is tied to a rent gap that is not simply an out-growth of fluctuations in the economy or changes in consumer taste but of how gentrification is both contrived and planned. Therefore, it should be seen as no accident that reinvestment in Bronzeville neatly coincided with the city of Chicago's marketing of Bronzeville as an icon of Black culture and the Great Migration of Blacks to the Mid-west. Under the façade of multiculturalism and diversity Bronzeville is marketed as Chicago's epicenter for Black culture. Similar to the discussions around the reinvestment and revitalization of Bronzeville, the marketing of historic Bronzeville elides the long standing history of segregation, discrimination, and institutional racism that exploited and undermined the life chances of the majority of Bronzeville's Black residents. The end result of this historical transformation led to a contrived policy of neighborhood disinvestment, public housing concentration, and Black confinement (see Hirsch, 1989). Today, under the rhetoric and language of being concerned for the well-being of the urban poor, the primary goal of downtown Chicago and other public and private interests is to reclaim urban space for the

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creation and reproduction of a middle and White ruling class elite consumer base in Bronzeville, as well as a space of cultural consumption for tourists. This process entails a history of interlocking linkages between local, state, and federal resources tied to private developers, banks, real estate companies, savings and loan companies, and local media to construct a local growth machine to ultimately weed out the urban poor and minorities (Feagin and Parker, 1990; Palen and London, 1984).

The effort in this paper is to expose how a well known policy of racial segregation in Chicago can be hidden by the rhetoric and language of safety and community quality while eliding the city's direct role in orchestrating historical plans for the contemporary demise of low-income, working poor, and indigent Blacks in Bronzeville (Vanketash, 2000).

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