

Brett Theodos Transcript

REX:

Well, I'd like to welcome you to our Resizing Communities in a Just and Equitable Manner webinar series. My name is Rex Lemore, I am with the Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development and I'll make a few introductory remarks and then introduce our presenter today.

The webinar series is really designed to provide participants with information from leading edge practitioners and scholars from across the world on the methods and strategies that we might use for resizing communities in a fair and equitable manner. And also the webinar series is about facilitating thoughtful discussion and innovative collaboration amongst partners and stakeholders engaged in resizing communities throughout Michigan. It's more than just a webinar series however, it's also an accessible site that you can replay sessions from at meetings and times appropriate to your work and community and economic development and bringing together others who might also join with you and be informed about this topic. There's also a set of reading materials that are available on our website on Resizing Communities in a Just and Equitable Manner, and that's available at ced.msu.edu/annualinstitute2011 and we encourage you to visit that site to see additional materials about this particular topic and phenomenon.

Now if you haven't registered, that's no big deal this is a free and open event, however we would like you to indicate, let us know who you are so that we can send you additional materials about this webinar series and/or this topic in the future. So if you have the opportunity please sign up at ced@msu.edu to help us keep you informed on this topic of resizing.

As we go through the webinar you will see in the lower left hand corner of your computer screen a chatroom box, and we encourage you to ask questions of our presenters in that chatroom box, and as time permits at the end of the presentation, we'll respond to those questions.

And with that let me introduce our presenter this afternoon, Mr. Brett Theodos is a research associate with the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute in Washington D.C. In that capacity he has conducted several performance evaluations of government programs and independent research demonstrations. He's an expert on affordable housing, economic and community development, access to capital for low income individuals, and is currently co-directing an evaluation of seven models of shared equity home ownership opportunities. He's researching financial outcomes for businesses and communities under the new market tax credit program. He recently completed a three year outcome and performance evaluation for SBA programs. Additionally Mr. Theodos has conducted several research studies of household mobility, including examining relationships between mobility and neighborhood change.

Before joining the Urban Institute Mr. Theodos was contracted by the Neighborhood Works of American, a organization I know many of us are familiar with, and McAuley Institute to assist in designing the Success Measure Data System, a participatory internet based management and evaluation system for nonprofit groups. He received his MPP, Masters of Public Policy, from Georgetown University and Bachelors in Economics and Political Science from North Western. And with that let me introduce Mr. Theodos.

MR. THEODOS:

Thanks very much Rex and thanks everyone for joining us today. A bit of housekeeping before we get started, there is a toggle button on the bottom left of your screen, and since we are a relatively small group today I think it would be all the more helpful if people could use the little speed up, speed down buttons and I will absolutely gear my remarks so I can be most helpful to you all. This is really is a session for you, I am happy to go into greater detail where you find it helpful and skip over parts that are less interesting to you. So please interact as we go along. In the chatbox there are opportunities for questions, go ahead and put them in as we are moving forward and I will respond to them at that moment, or circle back to them at the end. By all means participate in the webinar, this is yours.

Thanks again for joining, I am going to talk today principally about the research that I've been doing in Chicago looking at public housing. Rex assured me it wasn't a problem that I didn't know anything about Michigan and about the resizing communities efforts that were going on there. So I will put forth some lessons that we're learning and hope and trust that they will be of some use to you and the work that you all are doing. I have done a number of other research studies that Rex mentioned, that inform mobility and neighborhood change and understanding some of the dynamics there looking at economic development. I haven't centered my remarks so much around those, I've focused really on the task I was given today which is to talk about the relocation program that we were studying in Chicago, but as questions come up or if you're interested in some of those broader questions, happy to share some lessons there as well.

Not quite sure how long I'll be with you today we were given an hour slot, not sure if we'll need the whole thing or if we'll go through it quicker but let's dive in. So to start, and I'm not sure how I get to toggle these, okay there we go. So I am going to start with the context in Chicago, we are looking specifically at public housing residents in Chicago which will be somewhat different, obviously, from residents that are market rate home owners or even market rate renters. But the context we were looking at in Chicago was the public housing authority and its efforts to relocate populations that lived in those high rise developments.

So a bit of background, some of you may be very familiar with this setting, some of you may not. So a bit of background on public housing in Chicago, Chicago was perhaps the most infamous case and public housing was perhaps the most infamous program as an example of the symbol of a failure of the federal anti-poverty policy. And indeed by the late 1980s under the Bush I administration, they convened a high level commission to look at the needs of public housing and residents and the level of distress there. And this ultimately resulted in a program called Hope 6 which several of you are probably familiar with. And that program has really resulted in a large change of public housing in many ways, at least of the most stressed environments.

So what were these environments characterized by before they were revitalized? Often this was the housing of last resort, there's legacies of segregation, at times very racialized selection and location of these developments. They are often in very poor physical condition, the management of them was often very poor as well, plagued by drug trafficking and gang violence and deeply troubled residents. So these were the most distressed environments, the most distressed urban environments in the country. They are not only in Chicago but Chicago was indicative of them and no doubt there are some communities like this that are in Michigan as well.

Then we have seen some sweeping changes to public housing. We have seen HUD stepping in and taking over a few public housing agencies in Chicago and Washington D.C. and

New Orleans and resulting in improved management. As I mentioned the Hope 6 program which has dispersed nearly 7 billion dollars since it was started in the early 90s and the focus has been on poverty de-concentration so that it is front and center involving relocation. And the idea is in some cases that people would leave as the developments are being constructed and then that they would come back and be part of new mixed income communities. Or the preference, according to their preferences they could move out with vouchers and live in private market rentals using housing choice vouchers.

So specifically now the Chicago context. Chicago really started the most sweeping transformation of its public housing in the nation, the most dramatic changes. It was in some ways the most distressed so it had the furthest to come. They've called in the Plan for Transformation, it was initiative in 1999. It was hoped that in ten years they could transform, rehabilitate, reconstruct and in some cases tear down and rebuilt 25,000 units. We are now fifteen years plus in and the plan is not complete, they have made some progress but they have not yet finished including not yet rebuilding the 25,000 units that are planned. So the first lesson is what a long process this really is. But as part of this plan, there's a shift to an asset management model, privatizing management and most relevant for our discussion today is that residents were largely relocated. And those options included, as I mentioned private market housing with vouchers and then the newly constructed mixed income developments that were being rebuilt in the former footprints of these big public housing developments that were in the pictures a slide ago. As well as then some traditional public housing was kept in locations in Chicago and residents were able to move there as well.

The CHA, the Chicago Housing Authority, had some early challenges with relocation. In particular before they began the plan for transformation, they had little experience relocating residents. These residents had to relocate, there wasn't a choice in the matter, the buildings were getting torn down. The question was what type of move were they going to make? Was it going to be a move towards what the Housing Authority called opportunity neighborhoods which were characterized by low poverty and less racial segregation or were they going to move to the poorest and most crime ridden neighborhoods of the city? That is the extent to which this relocation process was really part of empowering these individuals to move into better neighborhoods and better schools or the extent to which they may have moved homes, but their environments were not noticeably improved.

So the early relocation challenge was first and foremost that the CHA had little experience relocating residents. In addition, the residents that they are working with are especially disadvantaged. Often times folks who haven't completed high school degrees or even necessarily middle school so reading levels are low, substance abuse is high, rates of single family headed households are high, child welfare involvement is high as is criminal involvement in the justice system. So all of the disadvantages that you might imagine folks in public housing living in so in some ways they were dealing with one of the toughest populations in trying to get them to relocate in this process.

And early on it was a very contentious process. There were two lawsuits filed that eventually culminated in a Relocation Rights Contract in 2000 between the CHA and residents. And they set forth in that contract what the terms of relocation were in terms of what rights were owed residents, what obligations they had, and who got to return and under what conditions. And that process evolved over the early 2000s and really by the mid-2000 and when we started studying it specifically the CHA had developed a relocation system and a case management system. So over those six years they had absolutely learned as an organization and developed

some systems and processes to help facilitate relocation, which isn't to say then that it was necessarily easy, but there were processes in place.

So Hope 6, reflecting on it in the Chicago context, but also we here studied as part of a Hope 6 panel study a cross site study of other cities as well, found a mixed legacy for residents. On the upside, many residents were able to relocate to better housing and safer neighborhoods, and I think a bit take away from this should be that they preferred and indeed were on post reflection they are happy with their living situations. That's not to say that they were eager at the beginning, but it is to say that ultimately the communities that they moved to, they became a part of and were involved in, so much so that actually some advocates are critical of the Hope 6 program because relatively few people—compared with what was originally anticipated, which was perhaps too optimistic—relatively a smaller share of families returned to the original sites to live in the mixed income developments.

So while Hope 6 was promising for folks who are better able to access housing, improved housing opportunities and safer neighborhoods, better schools, etc, Hope 6 was not a real help to the most vulnerable populations. And so that's really the origin of our research is trying to better understand relocation experiences and broader experiences of public housing residents, segmenting them out and understanding the differences between these populations a bit. So in 2005 a group of us came together specifically around this question to wonder if Hope 6 was not enough to reach the needs of these what we called "hard to house residents", what then could be done? And a consortium of groups including the Housing Authority and then some nonprofit service providers Heartland Alliance and Housing Choice Partners; I should say Housing Choice Partners was the relocation services provider and I'll talk at greater length about what they did and also about relocation outcomes. And then a few of us at Urban were involved as well to be the evaluators and outside informers to the process and so that culminated in some enhanced support of services for all residents in specifically two Chicago housing authority developments that were going through redevelopment, that is to say for which all residents would have to relocate. So the demonstration was designed to focus more on intensive case management options.

I'll say a word about the research so you can get a handle on how we know what we know about these people. We did a baseline and a follow up survey of residents, of household heads and that was in 2007 and again in 2009; the services rolled out in '07 and lasted until 2010. We did interviews with residents, children and then also with service providers. And then we have administrative data from the Housing Authority about what services residents were referred to as well as where they lived, conducted a process study to understand how this rolled out and how the relocation and other experiences for residents was throughout the course of the study, and also did an assessment of costs which are clearly important when we try to think about what makes sense when taking this to scale.

So the two developments that we were specifically involved with were Madden/Wells which is perhaps known to some of you, fairly infamous development became known in the early nineties when a 10 and 11 year old pushed a five year old out of the top story of a building allegedly because he wouldn't steal candy for them. It achieved some national notoriety then and shortly thereafter was included as a Hope 6 site and has gradually been getting replaced with a mixed income development that's rising in its place. So the development was closed in August 2008 and all the residents were relocated either to the mixed income development or with vouchers or to traditional public housing.

And then Dearborn Homes is also in the State Street corridor of Chicago public housing high rises. That's where Robert Taylor Home was and Stateway Home all there in a row of really distressed public housing. And Dearborn is being kept as traditional public housing by the Chicago Housing Authority, it's less tall than the high rises at Madden/Wells you can see the building there is six stories, they also have some nine stories. The Housing Authority is rehabbing that building which necessitated that everybody move at least once from their residence.

So the components of the demonstration were to focus on increased engagement with families through case management activities. In part that was accomplished by decreasing the case manager to client ratios so that case managers could be in more frequent contact with the families they were working with. Previously before the demonstration it had been about once a month which is a fairly light touch, and under the demonstration it was increased to two to four times a month. The intention was to work with the whole family, not just the lease holder and case managers stayed with their families they were assigned to for three years rather than for 3 months after moving. So this was a relocation model that really entailed long term follow up with residents over time.

There were a number of services that these case managers either directly provided or referred people to including financial literacy training, a matched savings program, clinical services, mental health clinical services, substance abuse inpatient/outpatient services, there's a transitional jobs program which is a employment subsidy that is provided to pay the wages of the resident in a job for a set number of months and there's also training that goes along with that. And then specifically focusing on the relocation counseling, there's some relocation services that were provided to residents at all developments, and those included things like neighborhood tours where the relocation counselor would arrange to drive residents, if they were willing, to other neighborhoods in the city which may sound like something that wouldn't be needed but a lot of these residents had very little familiarity with other locations even within the city, even locations that were not that far away. So the neighborhood tours were designed to point out amenities, access of other neighborhoods, specifically of opportunity neighborhoods in the city.

The relocation counselors provided help with navigating apartment listings, these folks were not in positions to buy homes, so I understand that's a difference from some of the efforts that are going forth in Michigan, but they were getting help accessing apartment listings, navigating relationship and negotiating the relationship with the landlords and assistance and timing especially as it relates to the voucher program. And then the augmented services included in addition some workshops around how to live in these housing environments, how to access better schools, as well as second mover counseling. And that we found was an important component actually because it was naive to think that these families were only moving once and then staying in place, in fact many of these families would move and then make a second move so it was important to follow up with them even on that second move. And then the demonstration also had increased training.

Okay so one thing that we did with the baseline data that we collected is try to get a better handle on some of the differences that we were seeing in the residents. I imagine this plays out in Michigan as well is that there's a lot of diversity even among populations that may appear from the outside to be more homogenous. So as I mentioned before these communities who are entirely African American, largely very low income and on public housing, and yet that being said we still found some real diversity among residents in terms of their connection to the labor market, their mental and physical health and their substance use and abuse. And so we created a

typology of residents to better understand what were the needs of those individual families as they related to relocation and also employment and mental health?

And then recognizing that resources were scarce, this typology became one way, along with case manager relationships and assessments, of understanding where to put the scarce resources; not all of the families needed an equally heavy touch. Throughout the course of the demonstration things came up and problems arose and case managers may need to attend to things but some families were needier than others and this was one attempt to try to understand from a kind of empirical perspective how it is that we could assess who needed more intensive services and who did not.

So using an analytic technique called cluster analysis we created a typology of residents. Nearly four out of ten we said were striving, these were the best off residents who were connected to the labor market, they were in the best mental and physical health, they were younger and often had children. Then there's a group that we called aging and distressed. They were not actually that old, this group, but in their mid fifties at the median but also some older than that. But these folks were facing real and serious health challenges; they had very little connection to the labor market, very high rates of substance abuse. These were mostly unlikely to have children in the home. And then there was a group that was somewhat in between these two that we called high risk. They were also younger and had low employment levels although they hadn't been disconnected as long from the labor market, and they had high rates of poor health. But it appeared that this group could either go more the route of the aging and distressed as they aged or they could shift up potentially if they were connected to the labor market and services and good neighborhoods and good schools to look more like the striving group.

So I don't think it's important for you all necessarily to absorb the specifics of these groupings rather than to take away the overall lesson which I'm sure you already can see and appreciate, that's there's considerable diversity out there of residents and resident needs match with that diversity and some way of assessing how we can align the scarce resources that we have to supply services with residents needs is an important effort. And there's a lot of thinking going on forward now in the field about how best to create ways of understanding what needs are and how to link them with services.

So a few brief findings about the overall demonstration and then I will drill into the relocation part in specific, but I think these findings will help inform what is to come. So first is that resident engagement increased considerably from 50 to nearly 90 percent. Engagement meant being willing to meet with the case manager and create a plan, an action plan that the residents were working on with concrete goals and engaged residents met on average three times per month with their case managers. And when we went back in 2009 we heard that residents felt that case managers were more trustworthy, more prepared and better motivators than at the baseline. So there was something notable about the increased contact that these case managers were having with their residents. They were building trust and that was an important intermediate outcome in understanding their perceptions and perceived improvements.

The costs of the services were in part, they were in part funded by the Chicago Housing Authority, they were in part funded through philanthropic efforts, some of the services were Medicaid or other public health or welfare services. So there were a range of funding sources that came together, so when I'm talking about total costs I'm not necessarily just talking about the costs that were borne by the service providers but rather the costs from a more society-wide perspective and some of those were borne by the Housing Authority, some of them were not. So

the total cost of the demonstration as we estimated it was somewhere around \$2,900 per year per household.

And a couple of things to keep in mind with that figure is that is all of the services, not just the relocation and it includes the job subsidy, and the meeting with everyone in the household and the clinical staff and the mental health clinical wellness staff as well as matched savings program. So it's, that's the figure that we saw per year per household. That's an estimate because we don't have reliable data for sure on how often people showed up to the services they were referred to so that was our best estimate relying on the service provider's accounts of the percent that showed up for each individual service that we had referral data for. At a top end if everybody showed up for every service, which is clearly not the case, that would have cost \$3,600, but the \$2,900 is probably the more accurate figure.

And not every service costs the same so employment and substance abuse services were the most cost intensive. The housing services, most of which were relocation services, are perhaps the most pertinent here, that's the second line. It was the second most costly total cost but that's because everyone in the demonstration received it whereas mental health services which are expensive, and substance abuse services which are expensive on a per unit basis, were used by fewer residents. So housing in particular the largest component of that was relocation was a costly part of the demonstration, but on a per unit basis relatively less than some of the other services.

Okay, so that's the background. I am going to spend the rest of the time talking about the relocation findings and then some implications. And I want to make sure again to say that if people have questions to make sure to chime in as we're going forward, I'm happy to pause or speed up as is helpful. So the relocation findings, here are some summary takeaways that people can hopefully leave with is that through the relocation services the participants were able to access better quality homes and apartments. So there was an improvement in housing quality and that I think is sometimes lost in the relocation debate that often focuses on neighborhoods and overlooks what from literature and research is actually more important to people's wellbeing's, which is the characteristics of their individual homes. So through the demonstration, and clearly this context is somewhat unique and focused on public housing, but the relocation was structured in a way that individuals were able to access better quality homes and that certainly relates to improved wellbeing and welfare.

Second take away big picture finding is that residents accessed areas where they felt safer but relatively few made moves to opportunity neighborhoods, and I will break down that distinction in greater detail in the coming slides. So a mixed picture really in terms of neighborhood access. And then also focusing on relocation counseling is that for vulnerable families there needs to be more of a high touch, intensive, long term, integrated with other services approach to achieve the desired ends.

So first starting with the higher quality housing, we asked individuals about their housing problems and that was a number of questions that asked about water leaks, broken heat, cockroaches, mice, mold, peeling paint that sort of thing. And really stunningly in the follow up at 2009 when individuals had relocated more than half had virtually no housing problems whereas many more did in the beginning. So this is part of the picture of why people were more satisfied after relocating.

Turning to the neighborhoods, this is a map of Chicago. The little boxes are census tracts and the shading relates to crime levels of those particular areas. The lowest is the light blue, the gray is outside of the city of Chicago but these blue segments the lowest is the light blue and

ranging to the darkest blue. So you can see that the lightest blue parts if you don't know the city of Chicago or if you do this map will immediately make sense to you, but the lightest blue that is the lowest crime rates are immediately in the loop and on the north side of the city. So what we looked at is when people relocated, where did they go to? First I'll show you with the cursor here, I'm not sure if you can see it but this cluster right here on the near south side of the city where some of those red dots are is where the previous public housing developments were. So you can see that most of the residents elected to stay either nearby to their previous development or to a more analogous neighborhood on the south side of the city with a few on the west side of the city and very few residents relocated to the north side of the city which was the lower crime communities. So most residents remaining in high crime neighborhoods, we saw no overall change or improvement in the crime levels of the communities that residents relocated from and to, that is to say we looked at the two points in time at the crime levels of where they were living and where they relocated to and we didn't see improvements there. So they were in better housing but they were not necessarily in lower crime communities, at least as measured by the data from the police department.

Now one thing that we tested in the different colored dots there—the dots represent where people lived at the follow up after relocating—one thing we tried to test is did it matter based on the kind of housing subsidy that they received? For example whether they moved to a mixed income development, whether they moved with a housing choice voucher, whether they moved in a traditional public housing development? And the answer by and large was not big differences. We did see that housing choice voucher folks were slightly in higher crime areas than mixed income families but we didn't see big differences by the type of housing subsidy.

And Rex had a question that asked, "In our typology we had striving, aging/distressed, and high risk, were there differences by those groups for the outcomes that I'm talking about"? By and large, well two answers. One those groups were salient differences at follow up in several categories but housing assistance and relocation was actually not one of them which was a little surprising to us. But what we found is that families in all of the groups were able to access the different types of housing and the different types of neighborhoods were largely consistent across groups. Where they differed was in their engagement with the labor force and in their mental health.

So the next slide shows a somewhat similar map, now these are not census tracts but what Chicago calls community areas. This is the finest level granular level of detail we could get on this indicator. Previously we looked at crime and this map looks at racial concentration, so this is the percent African American for these community areas. And again perhaps not surprising it's the northern part of the city, the loop and a little bit to the southwest of the city that are predominately white and it's the west side of the city and in particular the south side of the city that have high rates of African Americans. And again, perhaps not surprising but even with the relocation counseling and the neighborhood tours, most the residents in the original developments elected to move to communities that were highly African American. So we saw only a very limited deconcentration by race as a result of the relocation. So we're creating a story here and I think that it's consistent in that most people either wanted, or felt capable or were constrained by—we can talk about some of the reasons—but by and large they are moving to communities that most closely resemble the communities that they had come from. Same picture, here this time we're looking at poverty rather than race. Again, by and large we're seeing the story that residents are in the poorest parts of the city even after relocating from their original developments.

Okay I want to pause on this slide for just a minute to talk about resident perceptions and I think it's important as researchers that we grapple with understand the complexity of life and that is to say that sometimes our data sources are telling us a different story. And so what we showed with the pervious slides was that from all of the secondary data sources that we can measure—that is poverty, racial concentration, and crime—we saw very marginal differences in residents' neighborhood quality. But when we ask residents about how they felt about their new neighborhoods, they felt a lot better about them. Their perceptions were that these neighborhoods were a lot safer and a lot better across a number of indicators. So I think this is a challenge for the research community to do a good job of understanding how people value their neighborhoods and what data sources are the best way of understanding that.

So specifically looking at some of these measures we asked people at the baseline in their previous developments the extent to which they thought for example that drug selling was a problem in their immediately surrounding area and 8 out of 10 people said that it was but at follow up only 3 out of 10 did. Similar story with gangs dropping by over half, attacks and robberies, rapes or sexual attacks, and shootings and violence. So this is telling a very clear and consistent story that residents are perceiving their neighborhoods to be improved and there could be a couple reasons for the discrepancies between the administrative data sources and the residents' perceptions. But rather than necessarily thinking that one is wrong and one is right we are trying to understand the different ways that they are measuring things and at the different levels. And in particular what I take away from it is that there may be something different about living in a public housing development than living in a neighborhood with a public housing development, that is to say there is something materially different about being in these concentrated high rise developments that is perceived to be and in fact may be less safe than even living two or three blocks away. So it gets into some of the importance of place in understanding people's experiences and their willingness and unwillingness to relocate to different communities.

Next I wanted to talk about some of the challenges that residents had experienced with relocation and in particular some of the challenges that the Housing Authority had experienced with trying to relocate families. First off as I discussed, very few families made what the Housing Authority called opportunity or mobility moves; that is moves to low poverty or less segregated neighborhoods. And there were a number of reasons that residents articulated and that service providers articulated in our interviews with them. First was that, at least at Madden/Wells, the nature of the move was what the Housing Authority called an emergency move which meant that there was less time for planning and residents had to leave more quickly, they had to find a place and that may have pushed them to the neighborhoods that they were most familiar with. Next was the design of the counseling services, we thought that there was some real areas for improvement there and the implementation in the end did not necessarily meet with the needs best articulated. In part some of difficulties arose because there was one agency that was providing the case management services and a separate agency as I mentioned at the beginning provided the relocation services. And as anyone might guess the two did not always communicate well one to the other and there was gaps in time and cases that got lost or that were not followed up on clearly along the way. So that relates to the third bill that the coordination of the case managers and the relocation providers.

The other thing about the design of the counseling services that I wanted to mention is that the role of the workshops in terms of their value was questionable. Residents certainly enjoyed coming and getting a grocery store card for twenty bucks or whatever the incentive was

to get people there, but it wasn't clear how that resulted in a practical help to people as they navigated their decisions. It seemed much more that it was qualified people who were coming alongside residents and helping them in the moment that they were making their decisions that was important. Also in outreach and in allaying fears about the process there was lots of suspicion—and I am sure this was a relatable fact—but there's a lot of suspicion among public housing residents that the Housing Authority does not have their best interests at heart, and in fact there's historical precedent for that. And so with the Housing Authority now trying to encourage folks to make moves that the Housing Authority feels is are their best interests, residents are not necessarily willing or eager to listen to the Housing Authority's opinions about that matter. So the relocation counselors building trust and the case managers building trust with residents was an important part of whatever gains were achieved.

And next was residents had barriers to accessing certain neighborhoods in terms of their transit needs, or in terms of their access to their communities, their churches and so their preferences were shaped as well. Their families were in these areas, they had grown up in these areas, they knew them well, they had long standing ties there and so that of course played a role in deciding where folks decided to move to. And again another challenge was for lack of opportunity and mobility moves was the need for expanded second mover counseling which wasn't necessarily achieved as well as had been hoped in the design of the program.

So a few conclusions to take away from the research that we've been doing in Chicago; the first is that relocation services were necessary to help distressed residents navigate moving and that incentives alone would not have been sufficient for this population. And this conclusion is obviously steeped in the specific public housing context but I would argue even many people who are out on vouchers, housing vouchers or even some home owners may have need for relocation services. So I think the critical question is what is the appropriate level of intensity for those services, what is the appropriate design and then also who are the actors that can most efficiently and effectively provide these services and what residents need what levels of service because as I mentioned earlier, of course it's not the case that all residents have the same needs. Ideally and more than that, I think to be efficient relocation services need to be integrated with other services that are already ongoing in these communities. That could be workforce, that could be schools, there's often very many different silos that residents are involved with and the extent to which relocation services can be integrated with those rather than becoming a new separate silos is certainly preferred.

And then a conclusion that we took away from watching this experiment unfold was that the authorities have to be willing to take risks and experiment with service provision, see what works, see what fails in different contexts. But there has to be space both politically as well as financially to try and to see what works and how and why. These are incredibly complicated efforts that are affecting the most intimate details of people's lives: where they live, where they go home to, where they worship, where they are educated, where they have their friends, where they exercise. The stakes are very high which of course we all understand, but even amongst those high stakes we can't revert to a risk averse approach but still need to experiment and see what are the settings that can bear the most fruit moving forward?

Another conclusion that we took away from this research was that it is necessary to follow up with families and help them make second moves. It is not sufficient to just make sure a family is in a house, but there needs to be some ongoing long term contact, especially for the neediest families to make sure they stay in the house successfully. Certainly the foreclosure crisis has taught us something about that. To make sure that families are able to stay in their homes

successfully, afford utility payments and whatever may be different in their new homes, if they have new mortgages or different rental arrangements. But then also to help families as they make second moves.

The last two conclusions to take away are that relocation counseling, whatever process is ongoing there needs to be ample time to work with residents prior to their move. This takes a lot of lead up, multiple months for individuals to get their heads around what it may mean to move let alone to actually go through the process of looking for a new community, looking for a new home. So there needs to be a lot of lead time here for counselors, especially if they are building relationships and creating trust, that doesn't come quickly.

And the last plug I'll make is that any relocation effort needs to have robust administrative systems. These are imperative to track residents as well as to evaluate and measure the performance of any model and see how it's working and see how it's not working so there can be lessons learned going forward.

So that's the presentation today. We wrote one specific brief about the relocation experience in particular under the demonstration and that is available at this URL. Happy to take questions now and also my contact information is there. Happy to talk further as is helpful.

REX:

Thank you Brett I appreciate that excellent presentation. I have a question while folks are formulating those and let me suggest you look at the chatroom, I think there are some coming in. But did you get any indication; was there a difference in people who resisted the change from those who were anxious for the change to relocate? Any insights on that?

MR. THEODOS:

Yeah as I alluded to the history between residents and the Housing Authority was very contentious. I don't know how to quantify it, but most of the residents were very skeptical about moving, reluctant to move. They had their networks, their social networks, their entire lives were in these communities and often these were long standing residents who had grown up in these developments and had lived there their entire lives. And these places had become, even though they may have been only a few blocks, they had become communities unto themselves that residents in some cases had never left or rarely left the footprints of the developments. And so in terms of outcomes we asked people where, what sort of environment they hoped to end up in at the beginning wave and the story was largely that people were not entirely good at predicting where they would end up or in what housing subsidy they would end up and that there weren't necessarily correlations between that and how satisfied people were in the end. So I don't quite know what the take-away is other than people didn't always anticipate how they would feel and perhaps we would be the same were we to go through a relocation program.

REX:

We have a couple of questions there Brett; you might take a whack at them.

MR. THEODOS:

Great so Jen asked, "Based on our research with public housing residents relocation, what are some of the challenges that might be faced by shrinking cities considering relocation of residents in low service areas to higher service areas"? Right so the question is getting at if these services can be provided to residents. So a few things, one lesson that we took away is that we

need to understand the needs of the residents well. And some residents are going to need something akin to some more guidance and direction and walking through the process and some residents are not. For some residents the financial incentive may be sufficient and for others it may not be. Some residents are going to be reluctant to leave no matter what, no matter how good the offer is they've dug in their heels. The context was different here in Chicago, they still had to leave and as I understand the Michigan context at least as it relates to Detroit, we're not talking about a requirement to move we're talking about inducements to move. But perhaps over a long enough time span residents will be convinced if cities really follow through on de-marketing certain areas for different levels of services and that will become something that takes on its own life over time.

So it's clear one of the first challenges is financial: providing monies for incentives as well as for services is expensive and in environments that are facing incredible demands on their tax revenue and that are seeing a tax base that is not growing and even in many cases is decreasing, it is a challenge to spend upfront money in hopes of consolidating some of the residents and services down the road. So there absolutely is a cost benefit question here that comes up but I would set forth if we can appropriately target services and incentives to help residents move that we can then hopefully be effective in meeting the challenges that remain with the limited resources that are available to the cities and indeed the state as a whole moving forward. Not sure what other specifics might be helpful there Jen, so feel free to write in with a follow up.

Sarah wrote, "What measures were taken to help residents keep and redevelop their social networks and neighborhood culture in their new communities"? And this is an important question, one that residents themselves cared a lot about. And what was interesting is we found often times that residents were heading back to their old communities at a surprisingly high rate at the beginning, that is to say in communities where their children were still in school they often times kept their children in their old schools in their old communities. Now gradually that's started to change, as we follow people over time they are building lives on their own in their new communities, they are sending their kids to schools that are closer by.

So I think a key component is just time and then another part of the outreach was that the relocation counselors in this effort were specifically charged with helping residents integrate into their communities. I'm not sure honestly how effective or ineffective that particular component of the demonstration was but that could entail a number of things: helping people access where the schools were, where the grocery stores were, where the bus routes were, getting them acclimated to those communities. In terms of some things people are pretty often willing to drive. To their places of worship people drive or take the bus even far distances from their communities, so the biggest thing really was the social networks and the peers. And as I alluded to, most of the residents ended up moving to communities that looked fairly similar to the ones they were leaving and they moved to communities that were closest by to the ones that they were leaving so certainly that helped somewhat with mitigating the disruption of social networks and neighborhood culture in their new communities.

REX:

Well let me thank you Brett, for your participation today and helping us to understand some of the challenges of relocating residents in these neighborhoods. And let me invite participants to continue to watch the series as we look at the upcoming events. We will have a second session today followed by a session next Thursday and then finally on the 31st. Also on

June 7th we will be gathering at the Hannah Center in East Lansing for those who are available to join us here in East Lansing to discuss the implications of what we've heard in the series, what strategies seem to be most appropriate, what might work in Michigan and what can we do to, what strategies seem to be most appropriate, what might work in Michigan and what can we do to help advance those strategies in our state?

If you haven't already registered, again let me encourage participants to register so we that we can keep you informed as other opportunities present themselves regarding this topic and information is made available to us. I want to thank our co-sponsors from around the state who have helped us organize this event and identify participants and presenters and I'd also like to thank our advisory committee who made this event possible. With that I'd like to thank Brett again for his participation today and thank you.

MR. THEODOS:

Thank you.