

# Understanding Gentrification in a Resident-Led Urban Health Intervention

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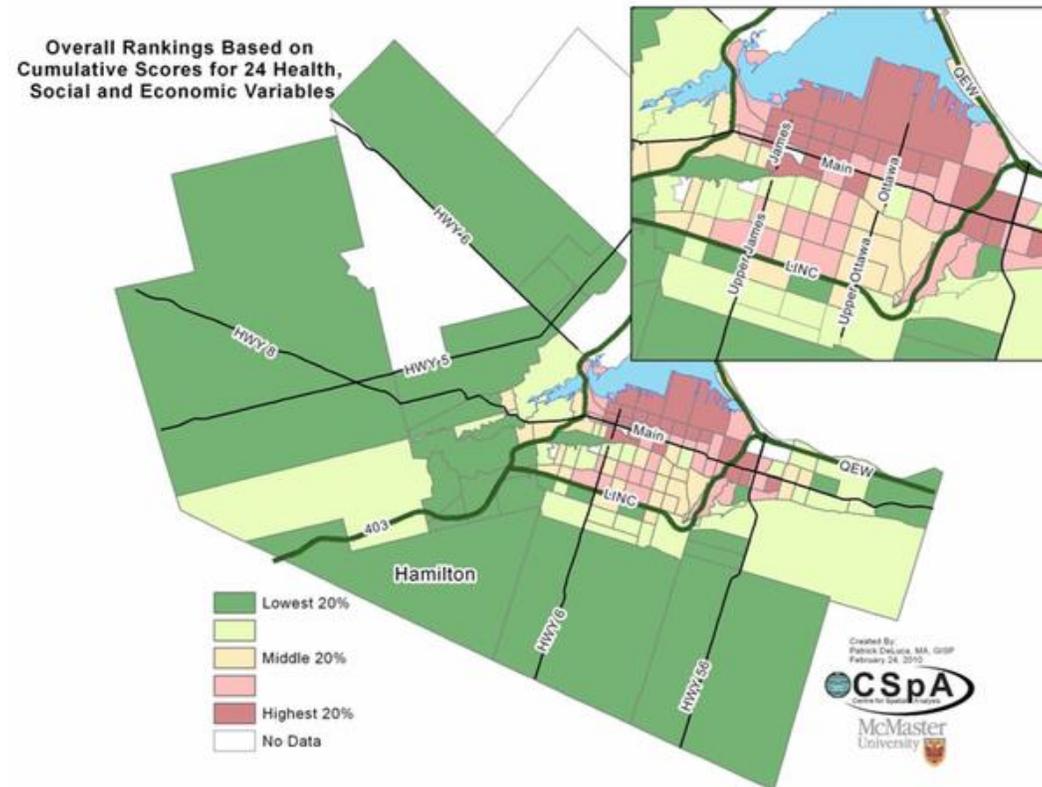


# Presentation Overview

- Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS)
- Evaluation Methods
- Understanding gentrification
- Discussion
  - Perceptions of gentrification among NAS Actors
- Implications for Public Health

# Code Red and the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS)

Cumulative Ranking of Hamilton Neighborhoods by 24 Measures of Health Status



# Responding to inequities through Neighbourhood Action

**2002:**  
Hamilton  
Community  
Foundation  
establishes  
“neighbour-  
hood hub”  
initiative

**April 2010:** ‘Code Red’ Series,  
Hamilton Spectator



DeLuca et al. (2012). The Code Red  
Project: Engaging Communities in Health  
System Change in Hamilton, Canada.  
*Social Indicators Research*, 108, 317–327

**December,  
2010:** City of  
Hamilton  
creates  
Neighbourhood  
Action Strategy

**February 2014:** ten  
neighbourhoods  
have completed  
Action Plans;  
implementation of  
plans underway

**September  
2012:** 1st four  
neighbourhoods  
present Action  
Plans to Council

**November 2015:**  
evaluation to date  
presented to City of  
Hamilton  
Emergency &  
Community Services  
Committee

# Neighbourhood Action Evaluation (NAE): Evaluation Methods

- **Evaluate the Planning and Implementation of the NAS**
  - How is the NAS being implemented?
  - How is the NAS evolving over time?
  - What challenges and opportunities do stakeholders face in working towards their goals?
- **Evaluation Components**
  - “progress tracking” through annual **focus groups**
  - In-depth semi-structured **interviews** (n=117)
  - **Participant observation** at monthly Planning Team meetings

# The NAS influences gentrification...

- “We’re helping gentrify the neighbourhood. I don’t think anyone would deny that, **so by gentrifying I mean beautifying**, making it safer for people with money to feel comfortable coming into a new neighbourhood.” – **Community Developer**

# ...which in turn influences the NAS

- “A big portion of our population lives in residential care facilities or rents an apartment or is low income and they’re **not really represented** around the table but they’re the ones who got the NAS’s attention. [T]hose aren’t really the people around the table but ... **they’re the statistics that brought the NAS** to select that neighbourhood so that’s a huge problem because **we’re just giving resources to people who just want nicer neighbourhoods.** – Resident

# Research Question

- How is gentrification **perceived** and **responded to** by residents and institutional actors in the NAS?

# What is Gentrification?

- “gentrification happens when a **more affluent** population moves into a previously **low-income** community, **displacing** longer term residents who are often working class and/or people of colour.” – Pothier, 2017

# Actors in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy

- The ways in which different actors **perceive** gentrification will inform how the NAS **responds** to it

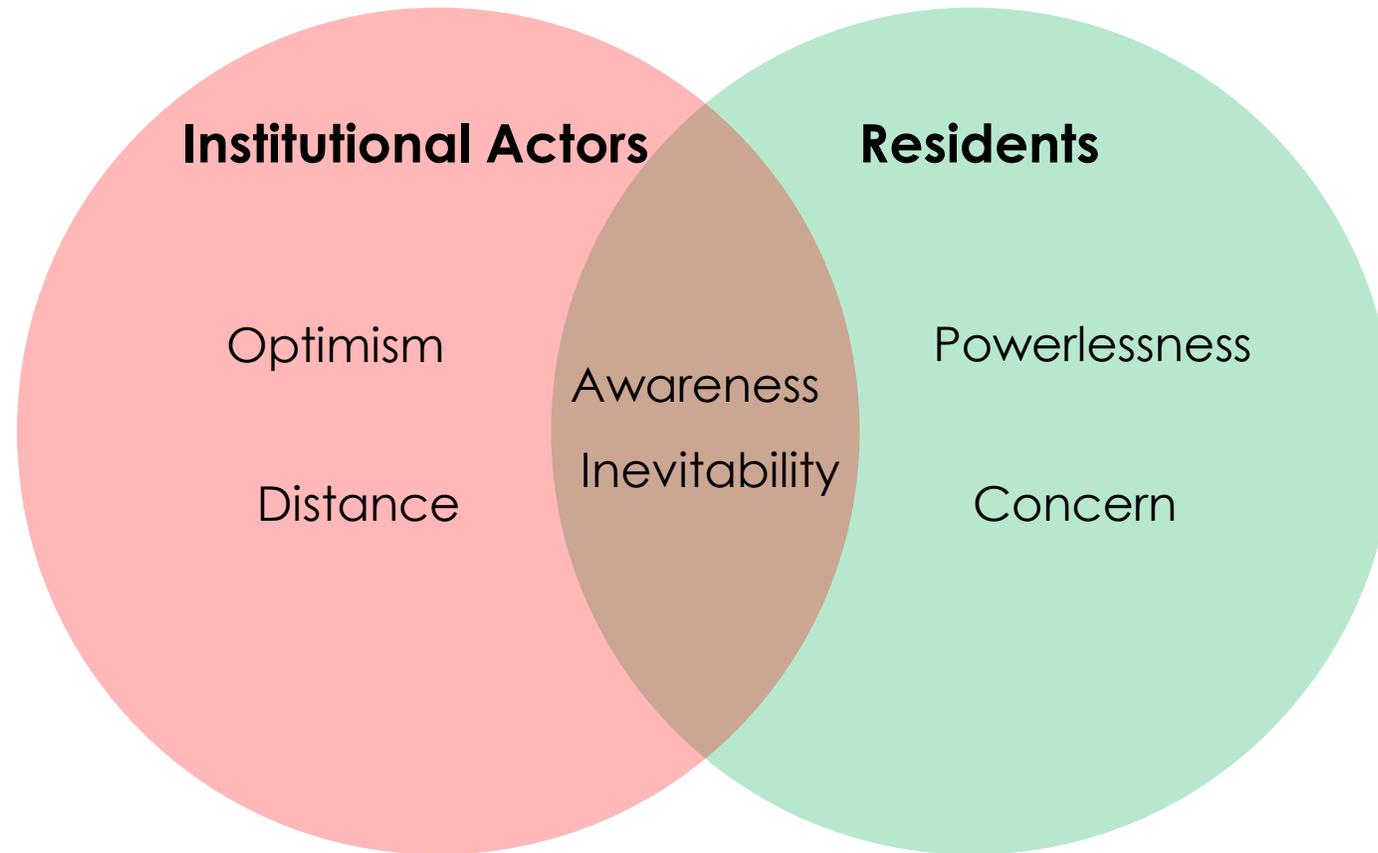
## Institutional Actors

- City Staff
- City Councillors
- City Departments
- Community Developers
- Universities
- Foundations
- Service Providers
- and many more...

## Residents

- Neighbourhood Associations
- Planning Teams
- Community Hubs

# Different Actors Perspectives of Gentrification



# There is consensus that neighbourhood change is occurring...

- **Different actors in the NAS share an awareness that neighbourhood change is occurring**
  - “There is **so many changes** with neighborhoods that seem to be happening in a short period of time... different people **moving** into the neighborhoods or changing neighborhoods... so I think there’s people being **displaced**” - **Resident**
  - “So we’re starting to see a **change** in terms of the demographics. It’s still a very diverse neighbourhood, so you know, that’s a very good thing but we’re starting to see the **displacement** of people.” – **City Staff**

# ...and this change is framed as inevitable

- **Neighbourhood change is largely understood as an inevitable processes**
  - “The selling of buildings is completely uncontrollable from a neighbourhood standpoint” - **City Staff**
  - “I get concerned when I hear comments like, ‘Let’s just ride the wave’” -**Resident**
  - “It’s pretty much out of the hands of probably a thousand sort of residents that it’s affected” -**City Staff**

# Perspectives of Institutional Actors

- **Neighbourhood improvement is often conflated with gentrification resulting in a sense of optimism**
  - “There’s a lot of great work for infrastructure but it’s the people in downtown have made it pleasant to come there now” - **City Staff**
- **When acknowledging gentrification as a problem, there is often distancing from the issue.**
  - “With those investments come rising rents and with rising rents comes the displacement of people...It’s not necessarily people are being forced out of their homes ... but overtime we’ll see fewer immigrants choosing [this neighbourhood]” - **City Staff**

# Perspectives of Residents

- **Longstanding Residents concerned about gentrification as a threat to housing stability:**
  - “There’s no sort of supplement or rent supplement or anything being done. These buildings have been taken over by new management. They want to **kick people out** and then improve the standard of living for neighbourhoods.” - **Resident**
- **New Residents are also aware of this dynamic, and acknowledge more needs to be done:**
  - “I **moved** from Toronto. Like, I’m not a bad person, the fact that I now live in the neighbourhood, but the gentrification issue needs to be one that’s **discussed**. It’s not about kick me out ‘cause I’m some carpetbagger from Toronto that’s coming to Hamilton’, but it is about a **balance**” - **Resident**

# Perspectives of Residents (cont'd)

- **Both longstanding and new residents feel powerless in the gentrification process**
  - "We're just this **little community association** full of volunteers, half of whom would probably flinch if they were asked walk up stairs and take a look at some of these places" - **Resident**

# Where might the NAS go from here?

- **Address gentrification through the NAS**
  - The NAS **must** be concerned with the health and wellbeing of the city's **most marginalized**

# Implications for Public Health

- The impacts of gentrification and displacement should be considered in **tandem** to urban health interventions

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# Thank you! Questions?

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