

The Divergent Paths of Irvington and Maplewood, New Jersey

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Abstract

This paper will compare the townships of Maplewood and Irvington, New Jersey. Although the towns share a geographic border, the difference between the two communities is considerable. In Part I, I survey the financial differences and fairly typical Census measurements. In Part II, I will review how opportunity for class mobility is present or not present in each community. For this analysis, I am looking at how concentrated poverty in Irvington restricts mobility as compared to Maplewood where such hyper-segregation and concentrations of poverty do not exist. I focus mainly on opportunity outcomes in housing and education in both towns and address additional issues such as race relations and crime.

In this research I was curious to see how two communities that are positioned so closely to one another could have such differences of wealth and opportunity. Additionally, I wanted to see how the paths of both communities compared to the typical population patterns described by the leaders in regional equity studies, which we have read throughout the semester. In particular, I was curious about how and why Maplewood's racial diversity defies tipping point data explained by Myron Orfield, David Rusk, Douglas Massey and Thomas Shapiro, among others. Thus in regards to regional equity, I asked: 1) What solutions exist to diffuse the concentrated poverty of Irvington? 2) Do all of the residents of Maplewood have increased opportunities because of its diversity? 3) Is this diversity sustainable? Replicable? 4) What does Regional Equity entail when municipalities that are so close in proximity but so different in wealth and opportunity?

Introduction

I. Irvington and Maplewood

Irvington and Maplewood are two New Jersey towns located directly to the west of Newark. Irvington Township's 2.8 square miles is surrounded on three sides by the Newark City, but shares a fourth boundary with Maplewood. Maplewood, slightly larger at 3.8 square miles, borders Newark, Irvington, Union and South Orange. Irvington residents outnumber the number of Maplewood residents by about a two to one ratio.¹ In appearance and feel, Irvington, although technically a suburb of Newark, now resembles the outer, forgotten edge of Newark's urban center.² Most of Maplewood resembles more of a small suburban town.³ While I chose to compare these two towns because of their stark differences, their small geographic size and close proximity makes the discrepancies all the more troubling.

Although both towns were once part of a larger farming community, Irvington broke off and incorporated as its own municipality in the 1800s.⁴ Thanks to the electric trolley, Irvington transformed from a "country village" to a substantial Newark suburb at the turn of the century.⁵ From the 1880s through the 1970s, Irvington experienced a large influx of German, Jewish, Polish, Italian and finally, Ukrainian immigrants. The various groups typically created their own ethnic enclaves within the East,

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Demographic and Housing Estimates 2008-2010 for Irvington and Maplewood*, American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_3YR_DP05&prodType=table (finding relevant information by plugging in relevant geographies).

² Andrew Jacobs, *The Town that Prosperity Forgot; Blighted, Broke and Crime-Ridden, Irvington Seems Helpless to Help Itself*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 11, 2000, at B1 (describing one nearly abandoned neighborhood's "Dresdenesque landscape of fire-blackened homes, collapsing front porches and trash-filled lots").

³ George James, *Maplewood's Tangled Taxes*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 14, 2001, at NJ6 (describing Maplewood's "well-scrubbed look of an ideal suburban village: a trim downtown with a small train ... substantial brick and clapboard homes with broad lawns; new cars and S.U.V.'s of German and Japanese vintage in the driveways and along the tree-lined streets.")

⁴ Alan A. Siegel, Esq., "The History of Irvington," <http://www.irvington.net/index.asp?pageId=16>.

⁵ The population from 1900 to 1930 increased from 11,877 people to 56,730. *Id.*

West or North Wards. In the 1970s, almost all Irvington residents were white. However, the mass exodus following the Newark riots of 1967 drastically and quickly changed the racial make-up of Irvington. By 1980, Irvington was 40% black and 70% black by 1990.

Irvington today shows the visible wear and tear of its own severe population depletion, massive foreclosures and soaring crime rates, but as recently as the late 1980s, Irvington represented the safe suburban experience that attracted racially-diverse, middle class families.⁶ Most streets are filled with prewar apartment buildings and two family homes.⁷ By the 1990s, Irvington was experiencing rapidly increasing density, more racial isolation and rising crime rates. The 1996 state-mandated property reassessments, which increased property taxes by 30%, created an additional burden on residents.⁸ From the 1990s to the past decade, many municipal scandals surfaced, harming resident confidence in local government, and harming the financial well-being of the town.⁹ Because of this tax hike and the town's quickly dwindling appeal, Irvington experienced major foreclosure issues in 2000, and then again later in the decade with the national foreclosure crisis.¹⁰ Most recently, Irvington has experienced its own mass exodus as the total population dropped 11.2 percent from 2000 to 2010.¹¹

⁶ Andrew Jacobs, *The Town that Prosperity Forgot; Blighted, Broke and Crime-Ridden, Irvington Seems Helpless to Help Itself*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 11, 2000, at B1. The article featured the experience of resident Margaret Jackson who had moved to Irvington in the 1980s in order to avoid the danger and crime of Newark and to enjoy what she thought was a stable housing investment, only to be virtually stuck in a nearly abandoned neighborhood twenty years later. *Id.*

⁷ *See id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *See e.g.*, Richard G. Jones, *A Cruel Turn for Irvington, A Town Already Battling Crime and Blight*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 20, 2007, at B4. All three mayors preceding the current mayor have been charged with and/or indicted on corruption charges, typically related to taking city funds.

¹⁰ *See* Andrew Jacobs, *The Town that Prosperity Forgot; Blighted, Broke and Crime-Ridden, Irvington Seems Helpless to Help Itself*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 11, 2000, at B1; Kareem Fahim & Janet Roberts, *Foreclosures with No End in Sight*, N.Y. TIMES, May 17, 2009, at NJ 1.

¹¹ Richard Pérez-Peña, *New Jersey's Ethnic Makeup Shifts, and Population Drifts Southward*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 3, 2011, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/04/nyregion/04jersey.html?_r=1 (reporting overall declines in population in predominantly black cities and towns and noting increases in Hispanic populations). Notably, Essex County shrank 1.2

In the 1920s, Maplewood succeeded from its northwest neighbor, South Orange Village. Although Maplewood is incorporated, the two towns function as one in many ways, including a combined South Orange/Maplewood school district. Much of Maplewood was developed by 1930 as it became a bedroom community with a mixture of large and moderate, middle class homes built for commuters to Newark and New York.¹² Like Irvington, it is considered a “first suburb,” which means it shares characteristics of both urban and suburban living and that it is fully developed with a much older housing stock than the outer suburbs that were converted from farm land to the suburbs much later than “first suburbs.”

The mass exodus after the Newark riots did not immediately change the demographics of Maplewood and South Orange. Pockets of Maplewood eventually began to diversify, and from 1970 to 1990 Maplewood’s black population grew from less than 5% to 13%.¹³ The 1980s and 1990s were marked by some white flight, increases of black population did not occur evenly throughout the town.¹⁴ Incidents of racial division and even racial harassment certainly occurred, but immediate responses, such as a coalition in the 1970s to prevent white flight and encourage diversity and a peace coalition formed in the 1980s to address vandalism and threats against black residents, seemed to have successfully allowed for a slower process of integration.¹⁵

percent from 2000 to 2010, making it now the third most populated county in the state, rather than the most populated county. *Id.* Conversely, the total population of Maplewood has remained consistent for over 60 years.

¹² James Kaplan, *Hanging On In the Burbs; Too Rich For Their Blood*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 9, 2000, at S98.

¹³ Andrew Jacobs, *Preserving a Delicate Balance*, N.Y. TIMES, May 18, 1997.

¹⁴ James Kaplan, *Hanging On In the Burbs; Too Rich For Their Blood*, N.Y. TIMES, Section 1 p. 98 (April 9, 2000).

¹⁵ Antoinette Martin, *Media-Savvy Campaign Promotes Living in 2 Towns*, N.Y. TIMES, May 5, 2002; *see also* Gary Gately, *2 Towns Uniting to Fight Bigotry*, N.Y. TIMES Apr. 27, 1986, at NJ4 (describing the peaceful rally and other ways the coalition responded to an unprecedented outburst of racial harassment and attacks. Residents helped victims paint over racial slurs and stood watch with them throughout the night, raised money for rewards to catch the culprits, and worked to improve relations between blacks and whites).

In 1996, when Irvington took a hard turn for the worst, two significant changes positively changed Maplewood's trajectory: the New Jersey transit Midtown Direct line and the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition ("Coalition"). The new Midtown Direct line, which previously went through Hudson tunnels to a direct line into Midtown, shaved thirty minutes off of the former commute to New York. Within three years, property values rose 10%.¹⁶

The creation of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition also substantially helped to boost the town's reputation, and therefore its appeal.¹⁷ From its inception, the Coalition employed a variety of strategies to entice new residents into the community.¹⁸ Started with a contribution of \$50,000 from each town, the Coalition targets community advertisements in areas where potential buyers prefer integrated communities, it offers low-rate second mortgages, runs tours of the community that pointedly travel through every single neighborhood of the community, works with lower performing schools in the district that have less than typical racial diversity, and spearheads various campaigns that focus on the towns' diversity as a primary selling factor.¹⁹

Thus despite Irvington and Maplewood's many originally shared characteristics as suburban, residential towns, the current appearances and community structures are quite different. Roughly modeled after the case studies in concentrated poverty, completed by factions of the Federal Reserve and the Brookings Institute and spearheaded by Alan Berube, as well as from other key readings in class, I isolated some variables that I think paint a social and economic picture of both the individuals living in each town as well as the economic resources available to each town.

¹⁶ Antoinette Martin, *Media-Savvy Campaign Promotes Living in 2 Towns*, N.Y. TIMES, May 5, 2002.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ Dennis Hevesi, *Selling a Rainbow, and a Pot of Gold*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 13, 2003. The Coalition's strategies and effects of such efforts will be analyzed in greater detail in Parts II and III of this paper.

Current Demographics

For 2010 demographic data and most Census data hereafter, I used 2008-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) 3-Year Estimates provided by the U.S. Census tool, “American Fact Finder.”²⁰ I have also chosen to focus primarily on comparing percentages of black and white residents in the two municipalities and overall in Essex County. While I do not mean to discount the experiences of other races or ethnicities, the black/white comparison is most relevant in this context as I am typically comparing my findings to studies in the 1980s and 1990s about white flight and the compounded effects of highly segregated and isolated black communities.²¹ Moreover, the percentage of residents who identify as white and non-white Latino families is relatively constant between Maplewood and Irvington²² and due to changes in Census measurements, too difficult to compare to prior years or relevant studies.²³ Also, 96% of Essex County residents reported that they were one race, rendering a mixed-race inquiry interesting but negligible for comparison purposes.²⁴

²⁰ The ACS is a departure from the official Census model, but is based on yearly surveys rather than once every ten years.

²¹ See, e.g., Douglas S. Massey, *Segregation and Stratification: A Biosocial Perspective*, 1 DU BOIS REV. 1 (2004).

²² The Latino populations in both Irvington and Maplewood fall between nine and ten percent of the total population. In both townships, about 2% of the total population is Puerto Rican and about 1% is Mexican. One difference may be that most white residents in Irvington may also identify as Latino (based on the fact that 4,817 identify as white, but only 1,507 residents claim to be non-Hispanic or Latino and white). See U.S. Census Bureau, *Demographic and Housing Estimates 2008-2010 for Irvington and Maplewood*, American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_3YR_DP05&prodType=table.

²³ DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-239, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010*, 2, n. 2 (2011) (“Data users should exercise caution when interpreting aggregate results for the Hispanic population or for race groups because these populations consist of many distinct groups that differ in socioeconomic characteristics, culture, and recency of immigration.”).

²⁴ The percentages for Irvington and Maplewood are even higher – 99% and almost 98% respectively. *ACS Surveys*. Also, the option to report more than one race is new and therefore redefines all race groups as individuals who reported being in a single race group (i.e. “Black alone”) or as being in multiple race groups. DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-239, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010*, 2, n. 2 (2011)

Currently, Maplewood's population is about one-third black and about two-thirds white.²⁵ The South Orange/Maplewood school district however, is closer to a fifty percent white and forty percent black.²⁶ Conversely, 86% of Irvington residents are black alone and 9% are white alone.²⁷

Individual Wealth Indicators: Income, Educational Attainment & Employment

To further compare the wealth potential of the average household in Maplewood to that of Irvington, I chose household income, levels of educational attainment and employment. These are just some factors studied by Thomas Shapiro in his study of black and white wealth differences.²⁸ Shapiro argues that wealth is a critical indicator of not only a family's well-being, but more than mere income or occupational comparisons, wealth comparisons serve as superior indicators of a family, or arguably a community's economic potential.²⁹ Therefore, the selected data is meant to paint a collective picture of the wealth within Maplewood as compared to the wealth within Irvington.³⁰ Shapiro makes a compelling argument against limiting comparisons to income alone because while income may pay for food and basic needs, wealth, or assets such as savings, inheritance and ownership of property create

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Demographic and Housing Estimates 2008-2010 for Irvington and Maplewood*, American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates. This is relatively consistent with the total population of Essex County, which is 49% white alone and 41% of black alone. *Id.*

²⁶ See New Jersey Department of Education, *2010-2011 Enrollment*, http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/enr/enr11/stat_doc.htm; One reason for the difference is that South Orange has slightly more black residents and that a greater number of elderly residents are white as compared to residents with children who have more recently located to the area.

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Demographic and Housing Estimates 2008-2010 for Irvington and Maplewood*, American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates.

²⁸ THOMAS M. SHAPIRO, *THE HIDDEN COST OF BEING AFRICAN AMERICAN: HOW WEALTH PERPETUATES INEQUALITY* 52 (Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁹ *Id.* at 33.

³⁰ Shapiro uses factors such as income, age, marital status, family size, region, job, education, inheritance, and home ownership to determine a family's net worth. Shapiro 52-53. Some of these variables are more difficult to attain broken-down by town and some variables are simply not as relevant.

longer-lasting stability.³¹ Thus, gaps in a family's net worth often provide a starker contrast than a comparison of mere income. Home ownership broadens the picture of residents' wealth and is important factor, however, for this paper, particularly in Irvington, it is directly related to municipal stability/instability and will be discussed later.

	Maplewood	Irvington	Essex County
median family income	\$120,330	\$45,125	\$68,236
per capita income	\$46,993	\$19,380	\$31,120
in labor force (percent of population 16 and over)	71.3%	69.8%	66.10%
unemployed	6.2%	10.4%	7.50%
Percent of population 25 years and over who obtained high school graduate or higher	94.70%	81.10%	82.9%
Percent of population 25 years and over who obtained Percent bachelor's degree or higher	63.40%	13.30%	31.7%

In all wealth categories, except percentage in the labor force, Irvington residents fare worse than averages for Essex County. Generally, Maplewood residents fare better than residents across the county. Although best if combined with other variables, income remains the most important variable in determining individual net worth.³² Residents of Maplewood therefore far exceed median incomes of Irvington residents. Level of education also correlates with family income and rates of poverty. Higher numbers of years of education typically lead to higher incomes. Although Shapiro found that a change in a family's education status (from no college degrees to college graduates) did not significantly increase a family's wealth, the number of years of education and a bachelor's degree was listed as a

³¹ *Id.* at 34-35.

³² *Id.* at 52.

contributing factor to a family's net worth and a family's net financial assets.³³ Moreover, years of educational attainment was included in other related equity audits.³⁴

Jurisdictional Indicators: Poverty, Housing & Tax

In addition to viewing disparities of individual household wealth, researchers of regional equity also compare economic disparities between jurisdictions.³⁵ I have adapted David Rusk's measures of economic disparities by jurisdictions³⁶ and focused on the poverty rates as well as the stability of the housing market of both Maplewood and Irvington as compared to their surrounding towns and to Essex County.

Poverty Rates

The poverty rate comparison between Maplewood and Irvington as well as to their surrounding communities is important for identifying areas of concentrated poverty and to determine whether a town is supporting its "fair-share" of poverty as compared to the surrounding areas. Concentrated poverty

³³ *Id.* at 42-45. In defining and discussing a family's assets, Shapiro studied variables that may or may not lead to an increase in the family's net financial assets, and found to a disturbing degree that often asset variables led to a greater increase in net financial assets for white families than black families. *Id.* Shapiro also points out that higher levels of educational attainment lead to higher levels of personal debt, which may offset the family's net financial assets. *Id.* at 65. However, for the purpose of this paper, educational attainment remains an important element of a strict equity audit as the higher number of years of education, does correlate with greater income potential, even if it does not immediately correlate with net financial assets.

³⁴ TRENDS, POLICIES, AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AFFECTING POVERTY IN AMERICA'S CITIES AND TOWNS, A DISCUSSION PAPER, NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES (2004), <http://nlc.staging.10floor.com/ASSETS/F0E351C9D25A4C07B2CDB3D6B506FDB2/rmppovertydiscpaper04.pdf> (citing levels of unemployment, share of people with a high-school degree, and share of households receiving public assistance as key indicators of well being in neighborhoods); FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM & BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, THE ENDURING CHALLENGE OF CONCENTRATED POVERTY IN AMERICA: CASE STUDIES FROM COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE U.S. (Berube et al., eds., 2008), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/1024_concentrated_poverty/1024_concentrated_poverty.pdf (comparing percentages of adults without a high school diploma and adults with a college degree).

³⁵ David Rusk, *Measuring Regional Equity*, (Draft, May 27, 2005).

³⁶ David Rusk creates and compares three measures: fair share of poverty index, the city-suburban income gap and median family income as a percentage of the regional median. The point of the comparison is to study what burdens a given community disproportionately deals with in comparison to the surrounding community. Thus, while I do not use the same exact measurements, I think that my two main measurements: poverty and housing stability show how Maplewood and Irvington compare to other Essex County towns. *Id.*

creates additional burdens for the individuals and government structures within such neighborhoods or municipalities.³⁷ Disproportionately high levels of poverty across a region indicate a huge injustice for children as such concentrated poverty has major repercussions for children's health, education and future economic mobility.³⁸

According to the ACS 3-Year Estimates, 30% of Irvington children under 18 were living in poverty, but in Maplewood, only 2% of the children lived below the poverty level.³⁹ The average poverty rate for Essex County has hovered around 15% in the last few years, making its poverty rates the third worst in the state.⁴⁰ Importantly, such poverty rates are vastly different among the Essex County municipalities – making the Maplewood/Irvington difference pale in comparison between municipalities with less than 1% poverty rates and Newark City with about 35% poverty among children under 18.⁴¹ Notably, Irvington's poverty rate is the fourth highest in the county (behind Newark, East Orange and closely behind Orange.⁴² However, according to one 2010 Census report, Irvington's poverty rate for children under 18 is *16% higher than the fifth highest poverty rate in Essex County.*⁴³ In other words the poverty rate is 0-8.5% for all other 18 municipalities in Essex County.⁴⁴ Without

³⁷ For studies of concentrated poverty, researchers typically look at census tracts or neighborhoods. For this abbreviated comparison I have focused on entire towns.

³⁸ See David Rusk, *Measuring Regional Equity*, Draft (May 27, 2005).

³⁹ NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 2010 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY POVERTY STATUS PAGE, <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/industry/incpov/2010poverty.html>.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ For most data, I relied on the 3-year ACS reports. However, in order to compare all of the municipalities in Essex County, I needed to use the 5-year ACS report because municipalities with fewer than 20,000 residents are not included in 3-year surveys. Also, the one-year series, three-year series and five-year series are not comparable with each other, so one should not compare the 30% rate of the 3-year study with the 5-year data. NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 2010 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY POVERTY STATUS PAGE, <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/industry/incpov/2010poverty.html>.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

including the four municipalities with the highest rates of poverty, Essex County would have one of the lowest poverty rates in the state, rather than one of the highest.⁴⁵

An additional poverty measurement that is helpful for comparison is the number of economically disadvantaged students in each school system, which is often measured through alternative means: measuring the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch in a given school district.⁴⁶ Orfield explains that as the percentage of poor children in a given district increases, housing becomes less stable and therefore poverty rates among school children increases more quickly than overall poverty rate.⁴⁷ Thus, at Columbia High School, 22% of the students receive free or reduced lunch and 49% receive such aid at Irvington High school.⁴⁸ The difference between the two measures may demonstrate a significant number of residents who are “near poverty” since “free and reduced lunch” status reflects an income of 100-185% of the federal level of poverty.⁴⁹ For purposes of regional equity analysis, this difference is a bit problematic as different researchers use different measures and it is not

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Myron Orfield identifies schools and tax wealth as the “leading indicators of community wealth.” MYRON ORFIELD, *AMERICAN METROPOLITICS: THE NEW SUBURBAN REALITY* 9 (Brookings Institution Press, 2002). Both Orfield and Rusk also use free or reduced lunch indicators when comparing rates of poverty. *Id.*; see also, Rusk, p. 28. “To qualify for free lunch, a student’s family must be at 100 percent or less of the federal poverty standard (now \$22,350 for a family of four). Reduced lunch is available for families with incomes up to 185 percent of the standard (\$41,348 for the same family).” Gordon MacInnes, *Opinion: Doing the Math on the Department of Education Charter Report*, NJSpotlight, (March 24, 2011), <http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/11/0323/1843/>.

⁴⁷ Orfield compares poverty rates within elementary schools as indicators for future poverty trends. I chose instead to compare the percentages of children who qualify for free and reduced lunch across the district or at each high school. One reason is for simplification, later in the paper I focus on the differences between Irvington High School and Columbia High School. Also, although there was a broad range among the elementary schools, there was not a significant difference between the district-wide average and the elementary school average.

⁴⁸ For this data I divided the number of student receiving free and reduced lunch by the total number of students per school. The difference between the districts is actually much worse (Irvington District, 66%; Maplewood/South Orange 18%). My hypothesis for the almost 20% difference between Irvington District and high school is that younger children are coming from even poorer families *and* a disproportionate number of economically disadvantaged children are dropping out of high school. However, that is poor speculation. NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 2010 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY POVERTY STATUS PAGE, <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/industry/incpov/2010poverty.html>.

⁴⁹ Gordon MacInnes, *Opinion: Doing the Math on the Department of Education Charter Report*, NJSpotlight, (March 24, 2011), <http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/11/0323/1843/>.

quite clear whether using the differences between using just “free lunch” or “free and reduced lunch” would lead to differences in recommended percentages. I do not purport to know the answer, but have decided to use free and reduced lunch as children living within 185% of the poverty line and in a state with such a high cost of living most likely face the burdens of poverty that may negatively affect one’s educational and therefore social mobility.

Housing

Both Maplewood and Irvington have limited room for development. As first suburbs, the land is literally completely developed. Maplewood property taxes pay for most of its total revenue and there is little space for additional property tax revenues.⁵⁰ Commercial and industrial revenue is practically negligible. Irvington similarly has limited room for new development⁵¹ and despite the lower levels of wealth, lower property values and insufficient provision of services, Irvington’s effective tax rate was slightly higher than Maplewood’s in 2010.⁵²

As described above, Irvington developed as a working class/immigrant residential area. Thus, its housing stock at the time of middle class flight from Newark was largely uniform, older, compact row homes. Although most communities surrounding Newark, including Maplewood, were affected by the flight of middle class families, Irvington demographics seem to have transformed much more quickly, perhaps owing to the proximity to Newark, large availability of row houses for middle class families

⁵⁰ Maplewood derives 71% of its revenue from residential taxes, 21% from non-residential or miscellaneous taxes and 8% from state aid. Irvington derives a mere 15% from residential tax and 50% from state aid. Most of Maplewood’s spending goes to schools whereas most of Irvington spending goes to municipal expenditures. *Taxing and Spending by New Jersey Towns*, THE STAR-LEDGER, <http://www.starledger.com/str/indexpage/taxes/taxtown.asp>.

⁵¹ Irvington Master Plan, <http://www.irvington.net/usr/Redevelopment/IrvingMasterPlan2002.pdf> [hereinafter Irvington Master Plan] (“Today, aside from a few scattered sites, there remains very little undeveloped land or open space.... Because the neighborhoods were developed in clusters around streetcar stops.... It has moderate to-high residential densities, a large proportion of rental units, a mixed-use pedestrian-oriented downtown, mixed-use buildings and residential neighborhoods, and a compact building pattern conducive to walking and biking.”)

⁵² *The Star-Ledger Tax Trauma Index*, THE STAR-LEDGER, <http://www.starledger.com/str/indexpage/taxes/countyranked.asp?frmrank=avgvalue&frmcounty=013> (showing that Irvington’s effective tax rate is 3.03%, Maplewood’s is 2.51% and Newark’s is a mere 1.86%).

and of course, discriminatory real-estate practices that we know were typical of urban sprawl. During the economic booms of the 1980s and 1990s, such small houses were less appealing to middle class homebuyers who could easily move farther out into the suburbs and enjoy larger homes and yards. Additionally, Irvington's 2002 Master Plan reports that a high percentage of single family homes were illegally converted to multifamily homes between 1970 and 2002,⁵³ while at the same time more multifamily building and units were developed to meet the increasing population density.⁵⁴ Such circumstances undoubtedly contributed to the current abundance of rental properties and dearth of single-family houses which produce more property tax revenue for the town.⁵⁵

However, unlike Maplewood, Irvington has greater percentages of renters,⁵⁶ high residential vacancy rates and a much more volatile housing market. Although its tax rate is similar to Maplewood, property values are far less. Therefore, Irvington's ability to collect revenues from property taxes is not as great.

Irvington's last Master Plan proposal from 2002 reported:

There are many vacant and boarded-up houses and apartment buildings along Irvington's eastern edge with Newark, not only in the East Ward, but also in the South Ward. In community meetings, some residents stated that the North and West Wards were also experiencing housing abandonment. Due to high taxes, decreasing property values, high crime, and fear of crime, some homeowners have moved away and split their former houses into multiple rental units.

⁵³ Compare this lack of government and community enforcement, with the Maplewood uproar over having three nail salons move into the downtown business area for fear of the deteriorating effects on the local businesses, or the community push to prohibit for sale signs following moderate white-flight from one neighborhood.

⁵⁴ Almost 70% of Maplewood's total housing units are single, detached homes. As of 2010, only approximately 20% of Irvington housing units are single-family homes but almost 18% of its housing units are in a structure of 20 or more units. See U.S. Census Bureau, *Demographic and Housing Estimates 2008-2010 for Irvington and Maplewood*, American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_3YR_DP05&prodType=table

⁵⁵ See Irvington Master Plan.

⁵⁶ Compare, Irvington 2010 Census Summary File showing about 29% of all occupied housing units are owner-occupied and about 71% are renter occupied to approximately 78% of Maplewood's occupied housing units are owner occupied and 22% of the Maplewood's occupied housing units are renter occupied.

Such absentee landlords are typically less attentive to property maintenance than homeowners, potentially accelerating the cycle of housing deterioration.

Such problems plaguing Irvington residential areas have merely worsened since the foreclosure crisis of the last decade.⁵⁷

II. How opportunity is constructed in each place

The above section focused on basic difference between Irvington and Maplewood. This section will focus on how such differences relate to the opportunities available in each municipality. For this purpose, I define “opportunity” as 1) the ability to move or choose one’s neighborhood or residence and 2) the potential or ability to increase one’s wealth and consequently move up in social class.

Based on my findings above and various studies we have read in class, opportunity in both towns seems extremely linked to the causes and effects of racial and socio-economic integration, which led to Maplewood’s stability and segregation, which then led to Irvington’s concentrated poverty. While there are historical factors such as pre-1970 housing stock, or geographical factors, such as proximity to Newark that play a role in the opportunities in each town, the segregation/integration factors may best explain municipal trajectories in the last twenty years and certainly encapsulate the present identities of each community today.

1) Residential Mobility

Crime

A defining feature of Irvington’s concentrated poverty is the extreme levels violent crimes that currently occur in Irvington. Over the last 30 years, infrastructures have deteriorated and as poverty has

⁵⁷ Census data reports 13-16% vacancy rates (20,431 out of 24,430) from the Irvington Selected Housing Characteristics, 2008-2010 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates. This is an increase from the 9% (22,032 out of 24,116) vacancy rates reported in 2000. Irvington General Housing Characteristics: 2000 Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data (“Vacant” typically means no one occupies the housing unit, however, it may also indicate a “nonresponse Follow-Up.” <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf>). Cf. Maplewood 2010 General Housing Characteristics showing that in 2010, almost 96% of Maplewood’s total housing units were occupied (down from 98% in 2000) .

increased, violent crimes have come to define the Irvington experience.⁵⁸ Irvington has one of the highest levels of violent crimes per person in the state.⁵⁹ Not only do the crime rates far exceed the crime rate of Maplewood, they also exceed the index crime rates of Newark.⁶⁰ Residents complain of slow response rates as well as complete failure to police drug or prostitution infractions as such incidences are not emergencies. Community response has occurred in the form of complaints to government officials and some rallies. However, the Irvington generally seems unable to curb the constant violence.⁶¹

The crime rates and the huge percentage of vacant and abandoned homes intermingle to create significant reductions in housing values and therefore deter housing sales and even rentals.⁶² Moreover, the local government has been fairly ineffective at curbing the detrimental effects of crime and abandoned lots. For instance, some nearly abandoned blocks are actually caused by failed or abandoned

⁵⁸ In every single news search through Google, Lexis-Nexus or local New Jersey news vendors, the search term “Irvington,” populates reports of homicides and other violent crimes. Even a search for “Irvington schools” leads to violent incidences in or around the schools. See generally, Damien Cave, *Newark’s Smaller Neighbor Is New Jersey’s Crime Capital*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 27, 2004.

⁵⁹ Richard G. Jones, *A Cruel Turn for Irvington, A Town Already Battling Crime and Blight*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 20, 2007, at B4. In 2007, State Police reported that Irvington had the highest violent crime rate of the state's 15 major urban areas, with 22.4 incidents for every 1,000 residents.

⁶⁰ In 2010, Irvington’s violent crime rate outnumbered Maplewood’s by a 9:1 ratio. The total crime rate per 1000 people was 61 for Irvington, 21 for Maplewood and 44 for Newark. Even though Irvington’s population is only about double that of Maplewood, there were 1,024 reported violent crimes in the same year that Maplewood reported 57 total violent crimes. Irvington’s violent crime rate almost double Newark’s violent crime rate. See Town Stats Project, <http://www.townstats.org/Compare%20Maplewood%20Township%20-%20Essex%20and%20Irvington%20Township%20-%20Essex%20and%20Newark%20City%20-%20Essex?f=qsci> (comparing all three municipalities). [Hereinafter *Town Stats Project*]

⁶¹ One factor may be an inappropriately small police force. These numbers represent 15.7 crimes per police employee as compared to Maplewood’s 6.5 crimes per police employee and Newark’s 7.4 crimes per police officer. See *Town Stats Project*.

⁶² Richard G. Jones, *A Cruel Turn for Irvington, A Town Already Battling Crime and Blight*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 20, 2007, at B4. (Interviewing a man living in one of very few occupied homes on a block where a gas explosion had just flattened an almost finished new home, "I tried to rent [my house] out, but no one wants to come here.")

government construction plans.⁶³ In 2010, despite the fact that Irvington spent the majority of its town revenues on municipal spending, not education, its crime rates still surpassed those of Newark.⁶⁴

Susceptibility to Volatile Markets

The 2010 ACS data paint a bleak picture of Irvington stability for the current market. Even though the population of Irvington is twice that of Maplewood, approximately the same number of residents own homes with a mortgage. Of those Irvington homeowners, the majority of them (approximately 68%) spend more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. Only about 37% of Maplewood homeowners with a mortgage pay such percentages. Generally, spending less than 30% of one's income on housing is considered "affordable housing."⁶⁵ This fact, coupled with the high rates of vacant homes in Irvington demonstrate an incredibly weak housing market and show the limited options that even middle class homeowners have in moving out of the city. If one is spending more than 30% of one's income on housing costs and housing prices are less than the original price paid, or significantly less than housing costs in the area, one is left with very few options.

In 2009, Essex County, particularly Irvington and Newark, had mortgage foreclosure rates that were double that of the rest of the region.⁶⁶ This second round of foreclosures within a decade has left clusters of homes boarded and abandoned throughout Irvington.⁶⁷ Unlike Maplewood, where average residential sales prices are gradually climbing since the price drop between 2008 and 2009, Irvington

⁶³ *Id.* (reporting that 35 properties in the neighborhood around 20th Avenue had been purchased by the Schools Development Authority in order to build a new school. These homes and the surrounding homes were vacated and some were demolished and some merely remained abandoned in the neighborhood.)

⁶⁴ See *New Jersey Property Taxes* THE STAR-LEDGER, <http://www.starledger.com/str/indexpage/taxes/taxseg.asp> (find information by clicking on Newark or Irvington).

⁶⁵ New Jerseyans and residents in Essex County often pay more than 30%.

⁶⁶ See Kareem Fahim & Janet Roberts, *Foreclosures with No End in Sight*, N.Y. TIMES, May 17, 2009, at NJ 1.

⁶⁷ *Id.* (quoting a resident of Irvington who explained that when she moved to Irvington it was such a pretty area that Newark residents wanted to live there. "Now every other house is abandoned or burned down. It went straight downhill. Not a bumpy road—straight down.")

prices continue to go down each year, rather than show recovery.⁶⁸ Statistics show that between 2005 and 2007, Black and Hispanic borrowers were more than three times as likely to end up with high-cost loans as white borrowers. In a town where 100% of its residents fit that description, the outcome was devastating. In 2009, Newark received about \$64 million in federal neighborhood stabilization funds to help nonprofit groups acquire and renovate small rental properties.⁶⁹ I have not found any evidence of any such grant or payment to Newark's smaller, but more troubled neighbor.

Homeowners in Irvington are trapped. They are living in largely abandoned neighborhoods susceptible to extraordinary levels of crime. Even if they bought their home in the last few years, they are likely to lose some of the equity that they put into the home. Additionally, residents are not only free to move, but they are not free to live healthfully as their neighborhoods are so full of crime and riddled with garbage and hazardous materials that pile up when homes are abandoned.

2. *Opportunity through education*

Davis Rusk argues similarly to Myron Orfield, that public school enrollments provide telling demographic pictures of municipalities. Moreover, Rusk has found that a poor child who attends an 80% middle-class school is likely to score an average of 12-15% higher on test scores than a similarly situated child who attends a school in which the majority of her classmates come from low-income families.⁷⁰ A brief comparison of student achievement scores between South Orange/Maplewood's Columbia High School and Irvington High School could support this argument.⁷¹ For instance, 71.9%

⁶⁸ See New Jersey Division of Taxation, *1994-2011 Average Residential Sales Price* <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/lpt/class2avgsales.shtml> (click on each year and find a list of all averages for each town in New Jersey).

⁶⁹ Kareem Fahim & Janet Roberts, *Foreclosures with No End in Sight*, N.Y. TIMES, May 17, 2009, at NJ 1.

⁷⁰ David Rusk, *Measuring Regional Equity* DRAFT, May 27, 2005. Pg. 25

⁷¹ I chose to compare high schools because unlike elementary schools and middle schools in both municipalities, there is only one high school in each district, thus children from all neighborhoods within the municipality attend that school. Although high school dropout rates may distort some of the data, the two high schools are about the same size.

of economically disadvantaged Maplewood students scored proficient or better on the math portion of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).⁷² This is compared to the 19.8% of economically disadvantaged students in Irvington who scored proficient or better.⁷³ This supports Rusk's findings to a disturbing extreme. In fact, economically disadvantaged students lagged behind their classmates by a mere 2% whereas an economically disadvantaged student scores in Maplewood lagged behind their classmates by almost 20%. We know that statistically, economically disadvantaged students do perform worse than middle class or affluent classmates in standardized tests, but here it is clear that as Rusk postulates, students in schools where more than 20% of students live in or near poverty do better.⁷⁴

The HSPA scores alone tell many other interesting stories. For instance, as dismal as the difference between economically disadvantaged students of Maplewood and Irvington are, the divide between the general populations is far worse. Last year, about 72% more Maplewood students scored proficient or higher in Maplewood as compared to Irvington.⁷⁵ Students take the HSPA in the 11th

⁷² State of NJ Dept of Education, 2010 NCLB Report, Columbia High School. "Economic Disadvantage" should correlate with students receiving free and reduced lunch, which is approximately 17% of Columbia's total enrollment of 1,797. I do not have data for how many students taking the HSPA were "economically disadvantaged," as the 2010 New Jersey Guide to the School Report Card oddly does not define the term. However, following a call to the Department of Education, I was directed to county, district and school level data with racial, sex and economic breakdowns, which also provides the number of students in each school and district who receive free or reduced lunches. NJ Dept. of Education 2010-2011 Enrollment Data, http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/enr/enr11/stat_doc.htm.

⁷³ As above, I only have data from a separate source, showing that 45% of students at Irvington High School receive a free or reduced lunch, although this number seems slightly distorted as the district average is closer to 60% of students receiving free and reduced lunches. For HSPA scores see <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc10/dataselect.php?c=13;d=2330;s=050;lt=CD;st=CD&datasection=all> (click on "details for subgroups for mathematics" to get the racial and economic breakdowns).

⁷⁴ There are exceptions to this rule. Some charter schools and innovative public schools around the country have begun to defy this rule through alternative means of teaching such as extended school days, college-focused curriculum, alternative discipline and reward structures, concentrated higher expectation setting, etc. In these schools, children living below or near poverty levels are the majority and yet, they are achieving levels of academic attainment (such as going to college) at rates equal or better than their more affluent peers. However, such exceptions unfortunately do not yet defy the rule, as is painfully obvious in this study of Irvington.

⁷⁵ Irvington HSPA scores are dismal, not only do they lag far behind the state average of proficiency rates, they also lag far behind their District Factor Group, which is a group of economically similarly situated schools across the state. <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc10/dataselect.php?c=13;d=2330;s=050;lt=CD;st=CD&datasection=all>.

grade and must pass in order to graduate from high school. Even though New Jersey's HSPA has been criticized for not being a rigorous measurement of college readiness, test results from Irvington indicate that less than 20% of Irvington students can pass this exam.⁷⁶ The majority of students graduate by taking an Alternative High School Assessment. In other words, students in Irvington are graduating without basic knowledge that one is expected to obtain after eleven years in a New Jersey public school system.

Conversely, not only are 90% of all Columbia High School 11th graders prepared with such basic skills, the majority of students take the SATs, enjoy a selection of 21 Advanced Proficient (AP) courses (compared to 5 courses offered in Irvington) and about 70% of graduating seniors are headed to four-year colleges (compared to about 38% of Irvington graduates).⁷⁷ High School students at Columbia may choose among a range of extra curricula activities including an award-winning school newspaper, a school dance troupe, and a competitive fencing team.⁷⁸ Thus, children who live on the Maplewood or South Orange side of the border enjoy better post-high school academic prospects, more opportunities for diverse learning experiences, college-focused curriculum and better basic skills training.

However, getting back to those HSPA scores, since No Child Left Behind laws require score breakdowns by sub-group (unlike SATs and AP tests), HSPA scores are reported for each race.

According to such data, 96.8% of all white students at Columbia High School scored proficient or better

⁷⁶ <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc10/dataselect.php?c=13;d=2330;s=050;lt=CD;st=CD&datasection=all>.

⁷⁷ See Irvington and Maplewood 2009-2010 School Report Cards. Future data worth researching is how many graduates from each school complete their intended degree and how many students who attend a two-year college program move on to complete a bachelor's degree. Also, I have purposely not compared graduation rates or drop-out rates as such statistics are entirely suspect as they are per year and as they are self-reported. For example, for the 2008-2009 school year, Irvington reports a 1.3% dropout rate but a 92.4% graduation rate. Moreover, in 2006-2007 Irvington had 509 9th graders, the next year, they reported 399 10th graders, then 327 11th graders and in the 2009-2010 school year Irvington had 303 12th graders. While more research needs to take place, it is clear that students are simply disappearing out the school system. Finally, this troublesome data may also indirectly skew college attendance rates as the percentages of students depend on the size of the graduating class, thus although the comparison is telling, I think that percentage of students going on to two-or four-year colleges is an over-statement.

⁷⁸ See, e.g., Columbia High School, <http://www.somds.k12.nj.us/chs/site/default.asp>

compared to a mere 77.1% of black students who took the HSPA. Worse, 56.8% of all white students taking the exam were considered “advanced,” but only 9.6% of all black students scored in this category. Students of both races scored better than students of the same race throughout the state.⁷⁹

Despite Columbia’s well-touted diversity and the “integrated” community advertising, the school is struggling with a significant racial achievement gap. So while the students at Columbia High School have a competitive edge over students around the state and particularly compared to Irvington, place does not completely eliminate differences between whites and blacks or for students of economic disadvantage.⁸⁰ The effect is visible, as despite the fact that black and white populations hover around 50%, with black students often outnumbering white students, the advanced classes at Columbia are primarily populated by white students.⁸¹

Maplewood is unique in its community attention to and involvement with finding solutions to the current racial gap. For instance, after years of discussion and even student-led protests, the School Board is eliminating the leveling system that had originally been put into place.⁸² The stakes are high for such a program to succeed. As any program that helps black students, to the detriment of white

⁷⁹ A score of “proficient” or higher is necessary for graduating high school:

		Partial	Proficient	Advanced
White	Columbia H.S.	3.2%	40%	56.8%
	New Jersey	10.8%	60.6%	28.6%
African-American	Columbia H.S.	23%	67.5%	9.6%
	New Jersey	42.9%	52.3%	4.8%
Total School Population	Columbia H.S.	20.8%	44.2%	35.1%
	New Jersey	25%	50.7%	24.3%

⁸⁰ I could not find data including the number of Black children at Columbia who received free and reduced lunch, although anecdotally through newspaper articles, it seems that more economically disadvantaged children at Columbia are Black rather than white.

⁸¹ Jeffrey Gettleman, *The Segregated Classrooms of a Proudly Diverse School*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 3, 2005, at 31 (“...[Columbia’s classrooms are largely segregated....white students make up the bulk of the advanced classes, while black students far outnumber whites in lower-level classes, statistics show. "It's kind of sad," said Ugochi Opara, a senior who is president of the student council. "You can tell right away, just by looking into a classroom, what level it is.")

⁸² *Id.*

students will be seen as a failure and if Maplewood does not successfully find ways to close the racial achievement gap, its reputation for integration and equity will be harmed.

In the meantime however, Columbia's racial demographics still defy the "tipping point" often described and often demonstrated phenomenon with its almost 50-50 make of up black and white students.⁸³ Such a balance is rarely sustainable, and therefore makes Columbia unique, not just in New Jersey, but throughout the country.⁸⁴ Conversely, the economic diversity at Columbia does not yet "defy" the theory that schools with percentages of poverty greater than 20% harm the potential academic achievement of all students.⁸⁵

3) *Analysis*

Thus, in conclusion, a resident of Irvington is much more limited in his opportunity. On average, he is significantly less wealthy than Maplewood residents, less likely to own a home, or in fact more likely to be living below federal poverty levels. Because of such concentrated poverty around him, he is more likely to be additionally burdened by extremely high levels of crime, ineffective government infrastructures, poor schooling, and disproportionate taxes and housing costs. Although Irvington is strategically located between urban centers and close to jobs that may be available in affluent suburbs, Irvington seems to be the forgotten land between Newark and wealthier suburbs.

Maplewood by contrast, provides continual opportunities for its residents by providing good schools, maintaining safe neighborhoods and by fostering community activism that aggressively fights racial segregation. On the other hand, the opportunities are not a foregone conclusion as the services are continually protected through extremely active community involvement and Maplewood is placed

⁸³ See Douglas S. Massey, *Segregation and Stratification: A Biosocial Perspective*, 1 DU BOIS REV. 1, 6-7 (2004).

⁸⁴ Columbia faculty and students are often surveyed and studied as the racially mixed suburb remains a rarity in American education and because such a school is a critical venue for finding ways to close the black/white achievement gap. See, e.g., Michael Winierip, *Closing the Achievement Gap Without Widening a Racial One*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 14, 2011, at A13.

⁸⁵ See MYRON ORFIELD, AMERICAN METROPOLITICS: THE NEW SUBURBAN REALITY, at 12. ("As a rule, middle-class families with residential choices do not select communities in which more than 20 percent of the school population is poor.")

between communities of extreme poverty and high levels of crime on one border and much wealthier, stable communities on its other side. Depending on which data is applied, South Orange/Maplewood may be approaching the maximum “ideal” rate of impoverished children in their schools. Although the school has successfully defined typical movement of whites away from blacks, the towns may not be able to defy typical middle class movement away from communities where more than 20% of school children receive free lunch.

Thus much of the futures of both communities depend on the future balance of racial and socio-economic diversity. For instance, a true concern for Maplewood is not knowing how much socio-economic diversity, or rate of poverty is “too much.” To what degree can the town resources and school quality sustain more residents living below or near the poverty line? Conversely, if Irvington does not have the infrastructure to attract middle class or affluent families (and it most certainly does not), what is a reasonable timeline for such reforms?

III. Approach to Greater Equity

Economic mobility tactics

Although at one time, Irvington and Maplewood may have experienced similar fates, it seems that at this point in 2012, most next steps for economic growth for Irvington cannot be modeled directly after Maplewood’s actions in maintaining and promoting economic growth. Other than its transportation structure, Maplewood has prospered by avoiding the white-flight, property deprivation and skyrocketing crime rates that Irvington has experienced. At no point did its government structures deteriorate to the present level of Irvington. David Rusk argues that “mobility strategies,” which move poor families to opportunity, have a greater impact on communities with such high levels of poverty and segregation than do “in-place” strategies, which move resources such as jobs and tax subsidies into a community.

Considering the current state of Irvington, prioritizing mobility strategies (without eliminating other strategies) makes sense.⁸⁶

The primary reason why Irvington should begin with “mobility strategies” before “in-place” strategies is the excessive crime rate and depleted infrastructure that exists currently in Irvington. Starting with mixed-used development or with commercial re-zoning would be futile as any such developments would fail to attract new businesses or residents who, if presented with a choice, will not choose to live in a town with a higher crime rate than where they are living or currently working.⁸⁷ Thus, most potential homebuyers or business owners would probably not choose to live or work in Irvington right now.

Therefore, I would propose three strategies that may increase the mobility of Irvington residents. The first would resemble a successful strategy employed by Maplewood: improved transportation. Irvington should benefit from its proximity to New York City, much in the way any suburban town benefits from the proximity – especially since Irvington is actually closer! Although it does not enjoy a Midtown Direct train station, Irvington could increase its local transportation to local train stations, as well as more direct and frequent lines to commercial areas in Newark. For instance, to reduce parking and to increase access to the Midtown Direct Line, Maplewood created the jitney line, which goes to each neighborhood in Maplewood. Increased local lines could better connect Irvington residents to local train and bus terminals so that a car is not needed to actually access the public transportation. Irvington neighborhoods were historically built around electric street car stops, and so restoring some of the commuter-based identity of the town could yield greater economic gains than attempting to bring

⁸⁶ Rusk, p. 64.

⁸⁷ Sadly, Irvington’s 2002 Master Plan relies heavily on re-development strategies despite its lack of resources, and drastic population *depletion*. Moreover, the Plan repeatedly touts the “pedestrian friendly” aspects of Irvington. This hardly seems to be a residential draw when many commercial areas are also partially vacant. Not to mention, with a crime rate of 61 crimes per 1000 people, the ability to walk around a neighborhood may not hold that much appeal.

business into Irvington at this time. Communities at the receiving end of such transportation should bear some of the transportation cost, especially in the outer suburbs where residents of Irvington may be filling labor or administrative needs that more affluent communities lack.

Although Irvington's housing situation was weakened prior to the recent foreclosure crisis, the clear targeting of minority homeowners further weakened the market as is evidenced by the drop in average home prices from 2008 to 2011. Although litigation and mitigation of harm for some may be too late, data show that the few remaining homeowners are still burdened with housing costs beyond rates of affordability, and often based on property assessments which occurred when the house was worth more than it is currently. In the last few years, towns such as Irvington have fallen below the radar for major mortgage reform and neighborhood recovery efforts. Some do exist,⁸⁸ but they need to occur at a greater rate. Additionally, this injustice is an issue that all members of the region should aggressively fight against, not just residents and community organizers of Irvington.

The last suggestion may seem bizarre as so many regional equity strategies look for ways to diffuse concentrated poverty by looking outward rather than to inner cities. However, the Irvington structure may gain some relief by combining some municipal services with Newark. A key element of Irvington's history is that its downturn began with the flight from Newark's riots, yet this much smaller municipality has reaped absolutely no benefit from Newark's slow but steady revitalization. The first shared service should be to combine the police force and unify crime prevention strategies. Often aggressive anti-crime campaigns in Newark lead to immediate influx of crime and havoc in Irvington. By combining forces, perhaps strategies may be employed to better contain and reduce crime in both Irvington and Newark.

Rusk notes the limitations of "small box" areas where it is difficult to diffuse rates of poverty or segregation in areas of many smaller municipalities. While combining services with Irvington would

⁸⁸ *Operation Neighborhood Recovery*, SHELTER FORCE, June 3, 2009, <http://www.shelterforce.org/article/print/1587/>.

hardly convert Newark into a big box area, it would create a larger space and greater *potential* for economic and racial diversity (in the long-term). Essentially, this could be one small step towards tax-base sharing, with greater potential throughout the region occurring later. Moreover, Irvington could benefit from Newark's greater potential for commercial and industrial growth and remove itself from the forgotten zone between urban areas and more affluent suburbs. If Irvington were to benefit from such a combination, in-place residential growth would be much more fruitful and could eventually lead to a greater diversity of housing options for both Newark and Irvington.

Finally, one reason additional reason to look towards Newark rather than Maplewood for shared services is that following this analysis, I am not fully convinced that Maplewood does not shoulder its "fair share" of poverty. Based on rates of children receiving free and reduced lunch, the South Orange/Maplewood School District supports the maximum levels of poverty that a community can most effectively support. The towns on the other side of Maplewood however, have lower poverty rates, lower housing densities and significantly higher populations of whites (85-95%). The challenge therefore is to increase diversity at both ends of Essex County, without overly disrupting fairly healthy levels of diversity that currently exist in Maplewood, South Orange and Montclair. Thus, Irvington should share services and revitalization strategies with Newark and its most inner-ring suburbs, while policies aimed at providing greater county-wide equity should be explored.

Integration strategies

The most critical lesson that I learned from this equity analysis is that integrated communities do not occur naturally. In fact, patterns of population movement tend towards segregation and isolation of poor, black residents. In order to sustain a healthy racial balance, community members must be vigilant, if not aggressive in their protection of such diversity. Accordingly, I believe that such balance is extremely fragile and consequently, such efforts should be supported, rewarded and continually

improved. Also, despite the positive aspects of Maplewood's diversity, the academic racial gap within the schools must be remediated for true equity to occur.

In its decisions and policies, Maplewood residents seem to be unified in their goal of integration and therefore, the ordinances, policies, studies and plans have successfully aligned with the ultimate goal. Therefore, I believe that the power of investment in the goal of *inclusion* rather than *exclusion* is critical.

Again, such mindsets are not natural. In his chapter, "Unpacking Regional Equity" Manuel Pastor argues that true regional equity will be best achieved through a social movement rather than through policy reforms or community development alone.⁸⁹ I believe this to be true and I believe the key elements to be building consensus around a primary goal and then applying a huge mix of strategies across community groups, policy groups, and state and local government structures. However, I think that the exclusionary mindsets, more than any factor, serve as the greatest barrier towards regional equity. Therefore any movement towards regional equity must foremost convince, persuade, and educate residents throughout all regions of the negative aspects, and even the human rights infractions that occur in such hypersegregated communities. Thus, breaking down and challenging each and every social assumption that we have studied throughout the course should be the absolute priority of any pro-regionalization social movement.

This is why the continual success of integrated communities is critical as it serves as a tangible, meaningful, counter-acting proof against many societal presumptions, such as the misperception that distancing oneself from poverty is necessary in order to preserve a middle-class standard of living. But for true change to occur, Maplewood's integration is not enough to breakdown misconceptions fostered

⁸⁹ See generally, MANUEL PASTOR, JR., & C. BENNER, M. MATSUOKA, *Unpacking Regional Equity* 22-58 in THIS COULD BE THE START OF SOMETHING BIG: HOW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FOR REGIONAL EQUITY ARE RESHAPING METROPOLITAN AMERICA (Cornell, 2009).

by individuals who hold common misperceptions about people from different backgrounds. Consider for example, the child (of any race) growing up in Essex County. What does he *see* on a regular basis? He sees concentrated poverty in areas that are almost 100% black, he sees integration in Maplewood, but not in advanced classes, and he sees extremely affluent communities such as Essex Fells that are almost all white. Without aggressive, direct education about the causes and explanations for all of these visual realities, that child will be more likely to grow up harboring the same misconceptions that we are trying to fight today. While this seems entirely lofty and theoretical, I do think that adjustments to school curricula, particularly in the areas of history and civic education, could contribute significantly to the breakdown of misperceptions and misunderstandings of the regional segregation that we currently endure.

Thus, building a social movement that embraces integration will absolutely involve large-scale awareness and collaboration around particular goals such as the civil rights issue of the racially targeted mortgage crisis or the human rights issues of unhealthy living in our cities *and* towns of concentrated poverty. Through such enhanced awareness, the barriers to opportunity in communities such as Irvington may be removed.