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**Sweep the Streets**

City revivial projects are supposed to overall help a city by renovating run-down areas that previously lacked much income and business. However, as cities begin to tear down run-down buildings to put up expensive housing projects, they start to neglect the poor people already living in these areas. The poor individuals ultimately get pushed out of the only place they have been able to afford to live for the past several years, creating the question of who city revivil projects really benefit, and if cities take the poor into account when considering to begin one of these projects.

Residential segregation is the segregation of one or more groups in residential areas. Economists have studied this phenomenon for several years now and have found that residential segregation has more to do with people who choose to live near people who “look like them,” verses any economic inequalities which may separate these two groups. Additionally, “white flight” has left many of the city areas composed of poor minorities, while most wealthy white individuals move to the suburbs. This consequently pulls businesses out of the city as well in order to move closer to the wealthier individual. However, those poor minorities who reside in the city find barriers in finding transportation to the suburbs for work, so they end up stuck in the city. Thus, one may argue this city revival projects may benefit the poor minorities residing in these areas because it will bring business (and jobs) closer to those who need it most. The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council claims “environmental racism is a result of the unethical practices of some environmental consultants.”

From an economist point of view, city revival projects will bring growth and, ultimately, more money that increases efficiency in these run down areas. Since most of
Erika Madsen

des these areas have higher unemployment and levels of poverty, by bringing businesses back into this area, they may reduce unemployment which is very desirable. Furthermore, cities hope to achieve a cleaner environment within the city as another consequence of renovating old buildings and parks. However, what about the homeless, drug addicts, and other poor individuals who don’t have housing but rely on these run down buildings and parks as an area of refuge?

Using Denver as an example, many homeless individuals will hang out in-between the Denver Rescue Mission and the Samaritan House at a park called “Triangle Park.” However, the city has begun to revive this once drug infested area, and have already put up several new housing projects. When more wealthy individuals move into these apartments, they will probably complain about the homeless residing outside their apartment; thus, the homeless will have to find somewhere else to go. Again, this may be efficiency increasing because those who move into the upscale housing projects may have a greater utility gain than the poor person who has to find an alternative place to hang out. In North Carolina upon the renovation in Charlotte, the city found an increase of $25 million in investments within a four and a half block span. Should this amount in investment and growth outweigh the homeless and pours utility from these renovation projects?

Furthermore, as discussed in class it is arguable that society does not see the poor or homeless with rights, or at least the same as wealthy individuals have. Most poor individuals are ignored or tossed aside in society, but does that mean we shouldn’t give them the same rights as us?
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The issue of city revival falls into the category of environmental justice, which has come to include every place we work, live, and partake in leisure activities. Dr. Robert Bullard mentions how environmental justice works to mobilize and empower those who were once disregarded (the poor) and tries to reduce the inequalities between that marginalized group and the rest of society. Furthermore, he does mention another topic we discussed in class regarding disposing of pollution into poor areas, which is more efficient from an economic standpoint. However, Dr. Bullard disagrees and thinks this ultimately decreases efficiency, because society then creates more health problems among the poor and when they go to the doctor, the taxpayers pay for it.

West Harlem recently claimed it would renovate several old buildings because it would help create a healthier environment for the entire community. However, was the city even considering the poor as members of their community who would be most affected from these changes? In most cases, the poor lack any say in policies which affect them the most, i.e. city renovation projects.

Overall, the problem lies in where these poor individuals will go when the wealthy begin to inhabit the place where they once used to live. Economists might argue as to whether this would be more efficient or not, local governments would love it because of the potential for massive amounts of new revenue, while most social justice workers who work with the poor on a regular basis might object to these projects.