THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE, MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT, AND PLACEMAKING: A CASE STUDY OF TWO NEIGHBORHOODS IN SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

By

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A TERMINAL PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

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To Kristian, the best editor and source of support that I could ask for.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Gentrification?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Placemaking?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Frogtown and Rondo?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Impacts of Transit Development to Strategy Recommendations</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Community Development</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Growth</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Communities Initiative</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness Thus Far</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a Tool for Improving Regional Planning Partnerships</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a Tool for Equitable Development</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the Twin Cities Region</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentrification</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Impacts of Gentrification</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentrification in the Twin Cities</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and Decision Making as a Sustainable Development</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity and Collaboration</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in Engagement</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placemaking</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place and Participation</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place and Displacement</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY NEIGHBORHOODS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic and Economic Characteristics ................................................................. 52
History .............................................................................................................................. 54
Planning Context .............................................................................................................. 56
Summary ............................................................................................................................ 59
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ........................................... 61
Research Design .............................................................................................................. 61
Methodology ...................................................................................................................... 63
  Local Planning Process .................................................................................................. 64
  Archival Documents ...................................................................................................... 64
  Sustainable Communities Initiative and Collaborative Documents ......................... 65
  Current Planning Documents ....................................................................................... 66
  Observation of Placemaking Activity .......................................................................... 67
  Interviews ....................................................................................................................... 68
Methodology Conclusion ................................................................................................. 71
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS ..................................................................... 72
Local Planning Process .................................................................................................... 73
  State of Minnesota ....................................................................................................... 73
  Metropolitan Council .................................................................................................. 76
  City of Saint Paul .......................................................................................................... 77
Archival Documents ......................................................................................................... 79
Sustainable Communities Initiative Documents .......................................................... 82
  Program Overview and Work Plans ............................................................................ 83
  Engagement Strategy ................................................................................................... 86
Current Planning Documents .......................................................................................... 89
Interviews .......................................................................................................................... 91
SCI Grant ......................................................................................................................... 93
Gentrification Concerns ................................................................................................. 94
Lasting Impact .................................................................................................................. 95
Summary ............................................................................................................................ 96
Observation of Placemaking Activity .............................................................................. 97
  Small Business Retention .......................................................................................... 98
  Old Home Mixed-Use Development & Preservation Project ..................................... 100
  Victoria Theater and Ray-Bell Films ......................................................................... 101
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 3-1: Median Income, Saint Paul vs. Frogtown and Rondo</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3-2: Selected Economic Indicators, Saint Paul vs. Frogtown and Rondo</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3-3: Race and foreign-born population</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5-1: Categories of PSC and State of MN Agencies</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5-2: SCI Regional Planning Grant activities and funds</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3-1: Study area in Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3-2: Interior of Rondo Ave grocery co-op, 1948</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3-3: Construction of Interstate 94 through Rondo, 1966</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3-4: Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods in Saint Paul</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5-1: Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Model</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5-2: Central Corridor stations in the Rondo &amp; Frogtown neighborhoods</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5-3: Old Home Dairy Building</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5-4: Victoria Theater, 2016</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5-5: Ray-Bell Films, 1928</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5-6: Dale Street Station art</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5-7: Little Mekong Plaza</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEDA  Asian Economic Development Association

ASANDC  Aurora/Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation

DOT  U.S. Department of Transportation

EPA  U.S. Environmental Protraction Agency

HUD  U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

LRT  Light rail transit

Met Council  The Metropolitan Council, the regional planning body in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area

NDC  Neighborhood Development Center

PSC  Partnership for Sustainable Communities, an interagency federal partnership that includes HUD, DOT, and the EPA

SCI  Sustainable Communities Initiative, a HUD program

SCRCP  Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants

ABSTRACT
Abstract of a Terminal Project Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning

THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE, MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT, AND PLACEMAKING: A CASE STUDY OF TWO NEIGHBORHOODS IN SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

By
Sarah M Emmel
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Chair: Kristin Esther Larsen
Cochair: Ruth Steiner
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As sustainable development policies encourage public transportation expansions, including light rail lines, urban neighborhoods, low income and other underrepresented communities struggle with associated rising rents and costs of living. This dynamic was in full effect in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods of Saint Paul Minnesota, during the planning and construction of the Central Corridor light rail line. This case study examines how a federal program, the Sustainable Communities Initiative, helped to address concerns about gentrification at the local level, in part, by creating capacity and opportunities for community-led placemaking activities.

The Central Corridor planning process in these neighborhoods was analyzed through an examination of state and city policies, observation of placemaking activities, and interviews with community members and planners involved with Central Corridor development, engagement efforts, and the SCI grant. The results showed that the meaningful community engagement and collaborative practices mandated by the SCI program within the context of Frogtown and Rondo helped to create and improve
resources, communication, and capacity within the neighborhoods, which led to self-defined responses to strong fears of displacement. However, since the program was not institutionalized within the state and local processes, these gains showed signs of receding after the completion of the light rail line construction.

These findings highlight the value of community-set priorities and decision-making as they relate to mitigating the effects of gentrification caused by major development projects. They also illustrate a structure for better-balanced sustainable planning that elevates equity to a more level footing with economic development and environmental protection.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Major development projects in cities exert pressures on neighborhoods that lead to changes in the physical environment as well as the socio-demographic mix and business types. Transit development in particular can lead to pressures to upgrade, which in turn, pushes existing residents out of their communities in favor of new residents and businesses that often pay higher rents--a process called gentrification. The negative impacts of gentrification create a dilemma for neighborhoods because transit and transit oriented development are often key components to sustainable development practices. These development ideologies have come to include equity as a major factor in achieving a place that can sustain itself environmentally, economically, and culturally in the long term (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2016, n.p.).

In order to promote sustainable development in tandem with equitable development, approaches must consider different aspects of a community, from the engineering of the transit itself, to the housing situation and income levels of current residents where the development will occur (Agyeman & Evans, 2003, Zapata & Bates, 2016). Recognizing the need for this kind of approach, the federal government began an interdisciplinary grant program called the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) in 2009, which aims to “integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments” to improve regional planning work (Sustainable Communities Initiative, n.d., n.p.). Significant elements of this initiative include involving community members in decision-making in a way that impacts outcomes and fosters a broad range of partnerships in the region where development is occurring (Sustainable Communities Initiative, n.d., n.p.). The grant initiative is an offshoot of an interagency partnership between the Departments of
Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (Partnership for Sustainable Communities, 2015).

The Sustainable Communities grant was awarded to the Minneapolis–Saint Paul metropolitan area during the planning and construction phases of a new light rail corridor that opened for service in 2014. Along this corridor, evidence exists that citizens are involved in the process of making their neighborhoods sustainable and resilient in the face of the pressures that this new development may bring. In this case, citizen involvement takes the form of support for community businesses, public arts, and preservation of the built environment that reflects the neighborhoods’ histories while maintaining affordable spaces. The emphasis on community-led decision-making and partnerships formed and strengthened through this initiative may have provided the impetus for these opportunities.

This terminal project uses a case study approach in order to begin the process of documenting how this locally-implemented grant has produced opportunities for community-led placemaking and why these opportunities are important ways to respond to the negative impacts of gentrification. I begin with a review of the literature that focuses on gentrification and placemaking to establish the need for this relationship to be considered in transit development strategies, as well as a review of the SCI and its impacts to date. Next, through a case study of the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods in Saint Paul, Minnesota, I describe how policy and planning documents for these neighborhoods address collaboration and engagement, and respond to concerns about gentrification that emerged during the planning for the Central Corridor by creating
opportunities for community-led placemaking activity. In total, this case study contributes to an understanding of possible strategies for mitigating the effects of transit-based gentrification.

**Why Gentrification?**

First it is important to establish why the study of pathways to slow gentrification-based displacement is worthwhile. For the purposes of this paper, gentrification is defined as the displacement of existing residents by new upwardly mobile occupants that leads to a complete change in the socio-economic and cultural character of a place as it becomes more desirable (Sanneh, 2016, n.p.). This does not mean that gentrification refers to investment in or improvement of an area. In many neighborhoods, including those that comprise the study area, investment and improvements are important steps for bettering the quality of life for residents. Problems arise when improvements are not accessible to existing residents due to rising housing prices, the absence or loss of cultural institutions and resources, and lack of control over the development of neighborhood identity in the face of outside investment (Grube-Cavers & Patterson, 2015). Determining ways to encourage economic development in previously disinvested areas and make them more desirable while also maintaining accessibility for current community members is an important step in equitable and sustainable development for cities. Continually dislocating low income and other marginalized populations as neighborhoods become desirable is not only inequitable, it is an inadequate long-term development strategy. This sentiment is reflected well in a statement from the President of the Project for Public Spaces, Fred Kent, who argues, “Everyone has the right to live in a great place. More importantly, everyone has the right
to contribute to making the place where they already live great” (Equitable Placemaking, n.d., n.p.).

**Why Placemaking?**

Community participation can be used in many ways to reimagine shared space and capitalize on existing assets can occur. This process, which serves to strengthen the connection of community members to the identities of public spaces, is known as placemaking (Project for Public Spaces, n.d.). Effective placemaking can also help to ensure that a neighborhood’s needs are met by its physical environment. Examples of placemaking include public art, investments in vibrant streetscapes, historic preservation, and many other activities. One way in which residents of Frogtown and Rondo are working to remain resilient and gain a share of the benefits to their neighborhoods that are now served by rail transit is by engaging in a community-led effort to ensure that remaining historically significant places are not lost to redevelopment. In Frogtown and Rondo this historic preservation effort functions as a placemaking tool, binding the neighborhood to its history as a prominent African American community and as a home base for new Americans in Saint Paul. The maintenance of Rondo and Frogtown as distinct places reflects the agency of the neighborhoods to determine what is important to their identities and emphasizes the components that physically make up these places (Lin, 2011, Main & Sandoval, 2015, Longo & Sukaraman, 2007). This process of setting preservation and identity priorities has at times been difficult for low-income areas, immigrant neighborhoods, and communities of color (Saito, 2009). The Sustainable Communities Initiative, which aims to place decision-making capacity in the hands of citizens and stakeholders, may help
to address that difficulty and provide increased avenues for placemaking opportunities and priority setting where its strategies are used. Achieving a greater balance is important because the literature suggests that the loss of cultural assets may lead to displacement, a negative impact of gentrification (Anguelovski, 2015).

**Why Frogtown and Rondo?**

In Saint Paul, the new light rail line that connects its downtown to that of Minneapolis is situated geographically and historically within two neighborhoods that are home to a long-standing African American community and many immigrant residents. On University Avenue, Frogtown, rich in cultural organizations and establishments owned by Hmong, East African, and Latino residents, overlaps with the northernmost edge of what once was Rondo, the historic home to prominent African American figures, including National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Executive Director Roy Wilkins and photographer Gordon Parks. These neighborhoods are ideal for studying gentrification and placemaking opportunities due to their unique characteristics, development pressure exerted by the light rail line, and the long history of community led efforts to establish and strengthen neighborhood identity. The fact that the SCI was implemented here also provides an opportunity to study how the program interacts with neighborhoods that are potentially vulnerable to displacement.

The pressure that the rail line construction has exerted in Saint Paul is evident in housing and real estate statistics. Rental prices have increased considerably in the metropolitan area, and multifamily development along transit lines has inspired discussion about gentrification and displacement of residents and businesses due to a tightening rental market. By 2014, the year the Green Line opened, rents for two-
bedroom apartments near train stations had increased 46% since 2009 (Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, 2014, p.9). As of June 2015, an estimated $3 billion in development had taken place spending along the line, the bulk of which is market rate housing (Metropolitan Council, 2015). These increases are consistent with findings that rail line development has been associated with displacement. As Pollack, Bluestone and Bellingham found in their 2010 study of transit rich neighborhoods (TRN), “Many TRNs therefore experience gentrification, a pattern of neighborhood change marked by rising housing costs and incomes” (p.33).

Along with these new concerns, the Rondo neighborhood has felt the effects of changing transportation infrastructure before. During the 1960s, the development of Interstate Highway 94 bisected the neighborhood, ultimately changing the physical place, disconnecting residents, and disrupting identity and cultural spaces (Avila, 2014). Though the highway was an engine of economic development that connected the downtown districts of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the Rondo neighborhood was largely excluded from highway access and consequently did not realize any economic benefit. The legacy of I-94 resulted in a distrust of change and outside intervention among longtime and generational residents, along with a desire to remember the Rondo name even after the city had officially departed from it. In an oral history project, resident David Vassar Taylor explains that, “The name ‘Rondo Neighborhood’ became the rally cry of former and present residents of the area who attempted to… raise the consciousness of our residents to the unique history of this area of the city” (Cavett, 2005, p. xiii). Due to the distrust of planning systems, much of this neighborhood defining activity has been outside of official channels. This legacy of community
members asserting the identity of the neighborhood and raising it in the consciousness of its residents and others has carried through to the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods of today. The legacy of distrust of outside intervention means that the SCI’s emphasis on collaboration and citizens as decision-makers may lead to more successful planning efforts than those that rely upon outsiders.

**From Impacts of Transit Development to Strategy Recommendations**

Chapter 2 presents a literature review that, after outlining the goals of sustainable development policies, summarizes the impacts associated with gentrification generally, and relates this to transit development. This relationship is especially important for the neighborhoods included in the case study in terms of changes in socio-demographic characteristics and cultural amenities. The literature review also summarizes the collaborative aspect of the SCI, and its impacts on planning to sustain neighborhoods in the face of pressures brought on by large transit infrastructure improvements. Chapter 3 provides a description of the current conditions and historical context of the neighborhoods. The case study methodology applied here is described in Chapter 4, which includes a review of planning documents relating to the development of the Central Corridor, as well as interviews with collaborators from community-based organizations, and an analysis of placemaking projects that have resulted from the development process. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the study and summarizes the possible strategies used for mitigating the negative effects of gentrification as well as lessons learned from the Initiative’s interdisciplinary and collaborative approach in Frogtown and Rondo, and applies that back to the existing literature.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable development, smart growth, and transit-oriented development have been gaining ground in the U.S. for several years, as populations have been returning to urban centers. Stemming the tide of urban sprawl and the need for alternatives to increasing congestion on city streets and highways has led many cities to look to public transportation investments such as light rail transit as sustainable options that also act as amenities that can attract residents (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999). In many cases, cities are also using these infrastructure projects as economic development tools to revitalize neighborhoods that have previously experienced disinvestment (Miller, de Barros, Kattan, & Wirasinghe, 2016). However, observed effects from many of the development projects that occurred in close proximity to rail stations included rising rents and property prices, and shifts in neighborhood culture that often shut the existing residents out of affordable spaces and cultural amenities needed to sustain them in place (Pollack, et al, 2010). Many academic studies have described these effects (see Grube-Cavers and Patterson, 2015; Feinstein & Allen, 2011). Further research has also contributed to an understanding of the significant causes of the displacement that can occur as a result of economic development efforts (see Bates, 2013).

To further understand and counteract the detrimental side effects of transit oriented development, additional studies have been conducted such as those exploring an increased emphasis on community driven decision-making and priority setting within the sustainability framework (Montesano, 2012; Fernandez Milan, 2016). Along these lines, several researchers have debated the importance of neighborhood identity to counteracting displacement, which often involves the process of placemaking. This is
the framework within which the SCI is operating, with its emphasis on both sustainability and meaningful engagement within the communities where it has been deployed.

This chapter outlines several of the underlying topics and related literature that contributes to the foundation of knowledge necessary to investigate the interaction of this partnership of federal agencies with community agents, regarding major transit development through a neighborhood, and placemaking actions to mitigate negative externalities. In order to analyze how opportunities for community-led placemaking resulted from the SCI at the local level, it is first necessary to understand concepts of sustainability as they are addressed in the literature and how they shaped the foundations of the program. This includes an exploration of the influences of Smart Growth on the SCI, the role of public transit and transit oriented development in sustainable planning, and the interaction of sustainability with equity. Next, in order to consider how the SCI responded to local concerns about neighborhood change, this chapter explores the historical context of these concerns, as well as the equity implications of development that is associated with gentrification and displacement. Researchers have conducted several studies regarding the effects of gentrification and displacement that will also lead to a better understanding of community apprehension regarding redevelopment and transit planning. The chapter concludes with a discussion about community identity and decision-making, highlighted by an overview of several papers that address the importance of placemaking and community-driven priorities in equitable planning decisions.
Sustainable Community Development

Understanding the history and theories behind the sustainable development concepts that the SCI is promoting provides a better understanding of how the program works both broadly, and on the local level. Academics in planning and related fields, including Mark Roseland, a noted sustainable development scholar, have noted that enthusiasm for sustainable practices and development has taken hold as communities envision their futures (Roseland, 2012, p.3). This may be due to the need to accommodate steady population increases projected both worldwide (Roseland, 2012, p.3), and in individual cities, including the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Metro Area (Orfield & Luce, 2010, p.14). Specifically relating to transit, these increases in population lead to highway traffic congestion, and a focus on infrastructure since these roads accommodate sprawling land uses that then add additional growth in vehicle miles traveled (Roseland, 2012, p. 134). This congestion has cities searching for more sustainable transit options.

Other factors in the shift toward sustainable development include the need to reduce pollution and emissions that contribute to climate change (Roseland, 2012, p. 6). This is also related to concerns about over-consumption of nonrenewable resources as nations continue to develop and urban centers continue to grow around the world, demanding more and more resources to improve the quality of life of residents (Roseland, 2012, p.6). Global initiatives to address these challenging issues began to develop in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the United Nations (Roseland, 2012, p.6). When the World Commission on Environment and Development released its 1987 report, Our Common Future, concepts of inclusion and equity were also folded into the
major tenets of sustainable development principles, as many of the concerns outlined in the report revolved around the inequitable distribution of the use of natural resources and the financial gains of this consumption throughout the world (Roseland, 2012, p.6). In addition, this report defined sustainable development as we know it today as, “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Roseland, 2012, p.6). Roseland (2012) proposes that sustainable development “requires fundamental economic and social change to improve human well-being while reducing the need for environmental protection...It must be a proactive strategy to develop sustainability” (p.7). The author further asserts, based upon the evolution of sustainable concepts, that this strategy contains three main components, the environment, the economy, and society (Roseland, 2012, p.7).

Local governments have absorbed guidance about sustainability into their development policies. While the highest levels of the U.S. government have been somewhat slow to take up sustainable policies, in 2009 the Partnership for Sustainable Communities was formed between the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the US Department of Transportation (DOT) (Roseland, 2012, p.6). The goals, according to Roseland, were to “help improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment in communities throughout the US” (Roseland, 2012, p.6). This partnership, born out of this multidisciplinary conception of sustainability, is the parent of the SCI grant that was awarded to the Minneapolis-Saint Paul regional planning body to support transit system development, including the Central Corridor.
Researchers have also explored the planning profession’s embrace of sustainability principles, and unearthed concerns and conflicts regarding tensions that arise. Gunder (2006) argues that, while in theory the diverse goals of sustainability (environmental, economic, and social sustainability) are of equal import in planning, in practice, planners often apply sustainability as economic development, which fails to reduce inequalities or injustices in the social and environmental spheres, and often is ineffective in situations of complex economic disparities (p. 209). Thus, the processes and outcomes associated with programs touting sustainability, such as the SCI, should be studied within the context of the communities where they are implemented to determine if they are meeting the goals of sustainability in planning. In the case of the implementation of SCI in Frogtown and Old Rondo, this terminal project focuses on social sustainability given the prior disinvestment in the area, lower than usual incomes, and history of interventions that undermined the social and economic fabric of the area.

While Gunder (2006) addresses the challenges of sustainable development associated with pressures outside the planning profession, Campbell (2012) examines the challenges of potentially competing interests among the sustainability goals within the context of planning. Using a triangular model, he examines the components “green, profitable, and fair” posted on each corner, and makes the argument that the interests of the environment, the economy, and social justice genuinely clash, and that achieving sustainability based upon harmony between these goals may be more idealistic than realistic (Campbell, 2012, p. 413). This clash is evident in initiatives such as rail transit, considered an environmentally sustainable approach and driver of economic growth that tends to contribute to inequitable social effects such as gentrification. Campbell (2012)
further argues that while optimal achievement in all branches of sustainable planning may not be achievable at the same time, the conflicts that occur between competing interests are useful in planning discussions, as the conversations that arise from these seemingly negative clashes allow for innovation in finding solutions and creative coalitions that may not otherwise have been formed (p. 414).

**Equity**

The goal of social sustainability, or equity, is often subordinated to economic and environmental interests (Gunder, 2006; Campbell, 2012; Agyeman & Evans, 2003). However, it is an important component in a sustainable and livable city, and has been incorporated into the principles of the SCI (Zapata & Bates, 2016) in a way that may have had an impact on the deployment of the program in the study area. In addition, questions of equitable development and social sustainability are relevant to the case study area, as the Frogtown and Old Rondo neighborhoods contain populations with lower than average median incomes, as well as higher numbers of ethnic groups that have been historically marginalized in the planning process.

In order to document this equity balance, researchers analyzed several examples of sustainable initiatives and compared them with desired characteristics of sustainable communities, including aspects of environmental, economic, and social components (Evans & Agyeman, 2003). Evans and Agyeman (2003) found the programs where equity concerns achieved the greatest balance with environment and economics occurred where community members were empowered to make decisions regarding land use and transit planning. Agyeman (2008) further reinforced the importance of the social justice and equity side of sustainable community development, claiming, “In
recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the issue of environmental quality is inextricably linked to that of human equality” (p.752). The “Just Sustainability Paradigm” offers an emerging way of thinking about sustainability in the U.S., which places increased emphasis on both meaningful engagement and decision-making regarding equity and social justice in city policy. Federal programs have a specific definition for equitable development, as outlined by the EPA:

**Equitable development** draws on both environmental justice and smart growth and generally refers to a range of approaches for creating communities and regions where residents of all incomes, races, and ethnicities participate in and benefit from decisions that shape the places where they live.

- Equitable development emphasizes that all residents should be protected from environmental hazards and enjoy access to environmental, health, economic, and social necessities such as clean air and water, adequate infrastructure, and job opportunities.
- To achieve this, equitable development approaches usually integrate people-focused strategies (efforts that support community residents) with place-focused strategies (efforts that stabilize and improve the neighborhood environment).
- Equitable development typically calls for a regional perspective to reduce health and economic inequalities among localities and improve outcomes for low-income communities while building healthy metropolitan regions. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2016, n.p.)

This definition shows the aforementioned balance of development interests, and elevates community participation as a means for achieving equitable development within federal policy.

**Transit**

One of the major components in environmentally sustainable cities is public transit (Newman and Kenworthy, 1999). Three models of cities, the Walking City, the Transit City, and the Automobile City define urban transportation paradigms (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999). While key features of the Transit City and the Walking City are mixed use and high densities, the Automobile City is characterized by low density and
separated uses leading to more driving and gasoline consumption (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999). In their comparative analysis of three major cities and their suburbs, Newman and Kenworthy (1999) found the walking and transit-oriented suburbs showed lower fuel consumption and vehicle miles traveled than the auto-oriented outer suburbs. Oil consumption, increased carbon emissions, and smog are major sustainability concerns that span global and local levels and impact both environmental protection efforts and equitable living conditions (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999).

Consideration of the negative environmental impacts associated with solely automobile-oriented cities is apparent within the framework of the SCI. The program’s underlying focus on increased transportation options includes a desire to, “reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, [and] reduce greenhouse gas emissions” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d., n.p.). After establishing the environmental drawbacks of auto-oriented cities, the authors include a discussion of planning mechanisms that are similar to the Central Corridor project in Saint Paul. This includes a policy recommendation for encouraging more sustainable modes of transportation like public transportation infrastructure, and especially light rail, as well as policies that promote higher densities and mixed uses (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999)--strategies that are evident in the station planning documents associated with the Central Corridor.

Development of public transit is also at the forefront of the social sustainability goal, which focuses on achieving social justice in the face of growth and development. The social aspect of transit development is evident in Roseland's (2012) survey of sustainable communities, “Auto-dominated communities marginalize those
without cars by restricting their access to resources and amenities. The groups most commonly affected are the elderly, disadvantaged, disabled, youth and two-parent families with only one car, which represent between 40 to 60 percent of the population in North American cities” (p. 134). In addition, “Aging populations will also increase the need for car alternatives” (Roseland, 2012, p. 134) as a means for considering age based equity. Clearly, locational disadvantage can occur in areas where services, amenities, and jobs are primarily accessible by car (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999).

Encouraging additional mass transit infrastructure, and specifically rail transit, aligns with the economic development goals of sustainability. Light rail transit can serve as an amenity for a region, and can attract riders that choose to use public transit as well as those who do not have other options available (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999). Accessible, frequent, quality service is the key to increasing transit ridership for people who are otherwise able to choose different modes, such as driving (Roseland, 2012). With those considerations in mind, rail is more competitive with cars than other modes of public transit (Roseland, 2012). More riders on the public transit system mean economic benefits, such as private development at station areas and increased densities in transit nodes and corridors (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999, p.154-155).

**Smart Growth**

Along with influences from global sustainability trends, equitable sustainability practices, and sustainable achievements through transit, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and resulting Sustainable Communities Initiative was influenced by a specific sustainable development strategy, smart growth. A strategy heavily championed by the EPA, and taken up by a loose coalition of organizations, smart
growth advances a technique of development that works to reduce cities’ sprawl based upon social, aesthetic, environmental, and public health considerations (Duany, Speck, & Lydon, 2010, p.xii). Smart Growth also advocates for policies that encourage mixed-use development and emphasizes diversity of uses as a key component for thriving communities, along with reduced dependency on automobiles. As a guiding principle it can be adapted to encompass different priorities that fit within this general scope (Duany, Speck, & Lydon, 2010, p.xiii). This adaptability to differing priorities and focus upon outcomes makes smart growth an appropriate foundation for the SCI, which needs to balance the conflicting interests that sustainable development entails. It also sets the stage for a growth strategy that can accommodate the challenges of the neighborhoods within the case study area. *The Smart Growth Manual* outlines the planning priorities and techniques that lead to the desired sustainable outcomes. This includes strategies such as the development of as much housing density “as the market will bear” (5.10), providing transit choice (3.4), and many other techniques included in the planning strategies within the case study areas. In addition, the EPA emphasizes the connection of smart growth to equitable development, stating “Smart growth approaches to development can help address long-standing environmental, health, and economic disparities in low-income, minority, and tribal communities” (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2016, n.p.). The EPA explains that smart growth can address these disparities through the interdisciplinary nature of sustainable development practices, which include:

- Cleaning up and reinvesting in existing neighborhoods.
- Providing housing choices for people of all income levels, household sizes, and stages of life.
• Offering transportation options that are affordable, reduce air pollution and associated health impacts, and give residents who do not drive more mobility.
• Improving access to jobs and services by creating development that is walkable and transit-accessible. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2016)

These are the types of practices that require collaboration across different types of agencies and specialties, and a solid understanding of what residents need in order to make progress on addressing the aforementioned disparities.

**Sustainable Communities Initiative**

After reviewing the general literature on sustainable planning and development that influenced the philosophies and techniques promoted by the SCI, I now turn to an overview of the program, its formation, and its relationship to other federal sustainability programs. The SCI effort is not the U.S. government’s first foray into city planning or sustainable development grant programs. HUD previously focused programs on economic resilience and revitalization for cities during the mid-1950s and the late 1970s. At this time the department made grants for comprehensive planning that enhanced housing, transportation, and resource management, and for investment in job creation activities and redevelopment in distressed urban areas (Tregoning, 2015, p.189-190). In addition, the federal government formulated a sustainable development policy in the 1990s called the President’s Council on Sustainable Development that urged federal agencies to apply sustainable development concepts to their work. The agencies that successfully created programs under these policies were the DOT, the Department of Energy, and the EPA (Chifos, 2007, p.436-439). The multiagency programs of the 1990s, like earlier HUD grant initiatives, were also focused upon cities. The work in the 1990s set the framework for the prioritization of community participation at the heart of the new federal programs. The reliance upon community-led decision
making in the 1990s was initially a way to create buy-in for environmentally sustainable policies at the local level while minimizing the appearance of infringing upon personal freedoms (Chifros, 2007, p. 437). Along with this historical context, the SCI launched in the face of recovery efforts from a recession in 2010, which influenced an elevation of the importance of the economic component in the programs (Tregoning, 2015, p. 191).

Moving on to contemporary and complementary federal programs, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (PSC) is the interagency effort between Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which launched the SCI (Partnership for Sustainable Communities, 2015). It has at its foundation six livability principles that provide guidance for this partnership. They are as follows.

1. **Provide more transportation choices.**
   Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.

2. **Promote equitable, affordable housing.**
   Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

3. **Enhance economic competitiveness.**
   Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.

4. **Support existing communities.**
   Target federal funding toward existing communities through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.

5. **Coordinate policies and leverage investment.**
   Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

6. **Value communities and neighborhoods.**
Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods rural, urban, or suburban. (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d., n.p.)

The SCI grew out of and functions in consort with this partnership, and these guiding principles also govern the program, which is fully housed within HUD.

The SCI is a community grant program administered by HUD, for which regional planning bodies and their partners can apply. Like the PSC, the SCI is also interdisciplinary in focus, as shown in the description of the program that, “Provides grants to improve regional and local planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions, and increase the capacity to improve land use and zoning to support market investments that support sustainable communities” (Office of Sustainable Communities, n.d., n.p.). Together the SCI and PSC employ a cross agency commitment to sustainable development guiding large infrastructure developments that involve federal funding with these sustainable development principles. The SCI provides funding for adjacent development in order to achieve better sustainable outcomes across the various interests involved in these projects.

The evidence of collaborative conversations leading to successful interactions between the conflicting aspects of sustainable development influenced programs like PSC and SCI to include partnerships as a significant component of how they function within communities. These interagency partnerships are paired with strong emphasis on engagement within the SCI grant mandates. The prioritization of collaboration and meaningful engagement is evidenced in the organization description of the grants:

Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants support metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments. The Regional Planning Grant Program places a priority on investing in partnerships
that direct long-term regional development and reinvestment, demonstrate a commitment to addressing issues of regional significance, utilize data to set and monitor progress toward performance goals, and engage stakeholders and citizens in meaningful decision-making roles. (Office of Sustainable Communities, n.d, n.p.)

The incorporation of partnerships and collaborative strategies better balances conflicting sustainable development interests, and emphasis upon community participation and decision making in the federal programs has significant influence on the planning process in communities that receive SCI grants.

**Effectiveness Thus Far**

Because the SCI has been making grants in US cities for over five years, studies have been conducted regarding the program’s effectiveness in reaching desired outcomes. A sustainable development program can be assessed in a number of ways. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), an organization that launched an interdisciplinary sustainability initiative prior to the launch of the federal program, has developed a method for studying outcomes of this previous program, which was also deployed in the Twin Cities region (Walker, Winston, & Rankin, 2009, p.3). When LISC compiled a paper on quantitative strategies to gauge neighborhood outcomes, the authors acknowledged the difficulties in measuring the effectiveness of a program that includes the many facets of sustainable community development in its purview. These challenges include the lack of ability to quantitatively demonstrate the benefits of previous programs in the neighborhoods in which they operate (Walker, Winston, & Rankin, 2009, p.3). LISC separates qualitative analyses of these programs—assessing how neighborhood changes occur through the program—from quantitative analysis, which measures whether those changes occurred on a statistical level (Walker,
LISC’s recommendation for quantitative analysis of overall neighborhood impacts of these types of programs is through long term monitoring of neighborhood indicators in impact sites. Due to the short amount of time that the SCI funded projects have been present in communities, this type of overall analysis is likely yet to come, but some researchers have contributed analysis of the effectiveness of SCI and PSC in relation to specific development goals.

**As a Tool for Improving Regional Planning Partnerships**

As demonstrated above, one of the primary goals of the SCI grants is to encourage integration of decision making across federal government agencies, local agencies, and community-based organizations in order to broaden the considerations of development at the table at any one time. The Urban Institute offered an assessment of the success of this effort in 2013 by looking both at the federal agency level and at several case sites where the grants were disbursed. This multiple level study offers insights into the differing mechanisms of collaboration in these different settings, and helps to illustrate the progress toward collaborative outcomes. Ultimately, the study determined a high level of success in collaborating across agencies at the federal level due to several factors, including shared goals and high levels of commitment from agency leaders, and detailed consideration of what grant requirements should be in order to achieve the desired results, along with a selection process that required that recipients truly complied with the requirements (Pendall, et al, 2013, p.1).

At the regional level, researchers also found evidence of success in creating lines of communication across specialized organizations. This was evidenced by the following outcomes that were apparent in the case study regions:
- new resource flows to disadvantaged communities and stakeholders not previously involved in regional planning efforts;
- expansion of collaborative structures at the regional level;
- development of new problem-solving approaches; and
- cooperative creation of new regional policies that focused on wider regional interests and a larger array of stakeholders (Pendall, et al, 2013, p.2).

However, researchers also concluded that to make these results more widespread and long lasting so that they become a more standard way of conducting sustainable development in the future, state governments would need to become significantly more involved to reinforce federal policies that can support collaborative structures and stakeholder engagement over the long term (Pendall, et al, 2013, p.27)

**As a Tool for Equitable Development**

In addition to assessments of the effectiveness of the SCI in encouraging partnerships and collaboration, researchers have also examined the initiative in terms of its ability to promote equitable development. Following the first round of Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants that were awarded in 2010, Zapata and Bates analyzed the plan proposals to determine whether they, “represent a new equity planning where places articulate clear definitions of equity and who will benefit from equity planning” (Zapata & Bates, 2016, p.1). The referenced concept of equity in planning for this study means clearly outlining and institutionalizing equity goals within city and regional plans (Zapata & Bates, 2016, p.2). The study compared the regional plans supported by the SCI grants to this explicit method of equity inclusion, and also explored less explicit methods that the grantees used to incorporate equity into the proposed plan if those goals were not stated explicitly. Findings from these comparisons show that these SCI proposals do implicitly address equity based planning through the
inclusion of programs and activities that address equity, rather than stating the goal of equity outright. It is important that the proposals do include these goals. However, most applicants place greater explicit emphasis on the other competing interests of the multidisciplinary program, such as economic growth and environmental sustainability (Zapata & Bates, 2016, p.13). However, even with the low explicit focus on equity from the applicants found in the above study, another researcher found that the SCI made advances in the process of equity assessments for regional plans. The SCI grant process included a requirement for participating regions to perform Fair Housing and Equity Assessments, which are being further institutionalized into other HUD programs (Tregoning, 2015, p.192). This research reveals a somewhat mixed result with regard to the social component of sustainable development within the SCI framework.

**Within the Twin Cities Region**

The goals of the engagement process in the Twin Cities region were aligned with the livability principles set forth by the PSC, according to a regional case study undertaken at the inception of the process (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2010). In addition, a final evaluation conducted by the regional planning coalition found that several of the initial objectives were nearly at the projected target levels by the close of the Central Corridor project. The noted successes include affordable housing, transit oriented development, small business retention, and engagement with historically underrepresented communities (Shelton, Pittman, Steel, et al, 2014).

**Gentrification**

While the above sections have explored the background and benefits of sustainable development and the PSC and SCI programs, in practice there have been
some noticeable drawbacks of this planning philosophy, especially when it is linked to the construction of light rail transit. Gentrification is one major drawback to the process of growth and development, a significant challenge to equitable planning and social sustainability, and a relevant concern within the case study neighborhoods. A great deal of scholarship exists regarding gentrification and displacement, how these processes happen, and their effects on communities. Gentrification, as defined in this paper, refers to neighborhood changes that physically displace existing low-income and/or minority residents with middle class newcomers, which changes the social and cultural identity of the neighborhood in a way that affects remaining older residents (Sanneh, 2016). A more specific quantitative definition explains that in order to gentrify, a neighborhood, must have been poor, or ‘working class’, prior to there being a marked change in socio-economic status. For an area considered gentrifiable to gentrify, its social status needs to increase faster than that of the city. At the same time, rents and house values should be observed to increase faster than the city as a whole. (Grube-Cavers and Patterson, 2015, p.179).

This is not to say that all neighborhood improvements constitute negative effects. Residents in gentrifiable neighborhoods often support forms of revitalization and quality of life improvements in their communities (Bates, 2013, p.10). It is when these improvements uproot community members and leave them out of the potential benefits of revitalization that problems arise for inclusive and equitable development.

Bates, in an assessment of equitable development in relation to gentrification for the City of Portland, explains that turnover and displacement can affect both residential spaces via increasing housing costs, and commercial spaces when stores that serve neighborhoods turn over to higher priced stores that do not fit with the needs of the pre-existing community members economically or culturally (Bates, 2013, p.8). This is the
mechanism of displacement, and is in conflict with the goal of equitable considerations in sustainable development. In order to remain balanced, sustainable development policies must include deliberate mitigation strategies in order to reduce the potential displacing factors of the project, and to balance the economic improvements with social justice goals.

Recent scholarship relates the presence of rail to desirability, which accelerates rising housing costs, ultimately leading to displacement. This occurs in close proximity to stations due to land use changes associated with transit systems (Revington, 2015, p.159). These effects run counter to the social equity goals of public transportation that champion accessibility in underinvested neighborhoods (Revington, 2015, p.152). However, both the SCI and PSC programs include equity as one way to validate rail investment as sustainable development.

Much of the quantitative literature regarding transit specific gentrification is distinct to particular places. This includes Grube-Cavers and Patterson’s analysis of transit systems in three major Canadian cities that showed evidence that the proximity to rail was a significant factor in gentrification in two out of those three cities (2015, p.179). It also includes a legal study based in Boston that found evidence of rising housing costs, “uprooting of established residents,” and demographic changes associated with proximity to the Red Line within the Boston metro area (Feinstein & Allen, 2011, p.87). A more general 2010 study of the relationship between transit and gentrification focused on status indicators such as income and car ownership in “transit rich neighborhoods” in a total of 12 metro areas was completed in 2010, (see Pollack, et al, 2010). In this study, the authors found that rail transit was associated with changes in
many of the examined neighborhoods (Pollack, et al, 2010). The results were not identical in every situation, but the most frequent outcome was one in which housing prices rose along with neighborhood resident incomes and car ownership percentages (Pollack, et al, 2010, p.1). While results varied to some degree, these studies indicate that a sustainable development plan must consider vulnerability to gentrification in neighborhoods like Frogtown and Rondo in order to balance equity with economic growth and environmental protection.

**Negative Impacts of Gentrification**

The most visible impact of gentrification is physical displacement of established residents who then ultimately do not benefit from the improvements made within their communities. This is exacerbated by the disparate impact of neighborhood redevelopment policies that claim they will provide improvements for low income citizens and people of color, but instead rarely increase social equity and justice within a city and largely displace residents and businesses with those who can pay more for the new spaces and amenities (Fainstein, 2011, p.149). Reasons that this displacement occurs include rising rents, evictions due to redevelopment, lower numbers of low-income housing on the market, rising property taxes, as well as shifts in the sense of community that occur when family and friends begin to leave, and shops and institutions do not meet the needs of existing residents (Bates, 2013, p.10). This cultural aspect of gentrification was demonstrated further in a study of Latino food stores in a changing neighborhood in the Boston area. The closing of stores within the researcher’s study area affected both the availability of culturally relevant and affordable food options, and through a series of interviews, she determined that many Latino residents felt alienation...
and fear about their place in their community as a result (Anguelovski, 2015). These negative cultural impacts are further explored in case studies of Treme in New Orleans, where the researcher explores the conflicts between remaining residents and newcomers in a gentrifying neighborhood (see Parekh, 2015), in an examination of the impacts of gentrification in an immigrant neighborhood in Brooklyn (see Stabrowski, 2014), and in a work by Lance Freeman (2006) that explores the cultural effects of gentrification and changes to daily life from the perspective of remaining residents in gentrifying Clinton Hill and Harlem in New York.

The loss of cultural amenities also reduces existing community members’ ability to identify with their neighborhood and feel as though they have the political capital to set neighborhood priorities. This is reinforced in one study conducted in Philadelphia that tracked the identity of a historically Black neighborhood and its boundaries throughout a period of gentrification. The study concluded that as demographics changed, the way that the neighborhood was identified became exclusionary and focused on smaller areas, often separated by socio-economic conditions (Hwang, J, 2016).

**Gentrification in the Twin Cities**

There is mixed information regarding whether gentrification is at work in the Twin Cities region, even after the expansion of the rail transit system. Observations show evidence of redevelopment of properties within the case study areas and elsewhere along the transit line. One annual report noted a 46% increase in rents for two-bedroom apartments along the Central Corridor line since 2009 (Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, 2014, p.9). However, a recent study contends that there is no quantitative
evidence of gentrification at work within the Twin Cities. This study was conducted by the Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, a program of the Law School of the University of Minnesota that is dedicated to studying policies that affect racial disparities and poverty. The study was undertaken in response to worries about rapid upgrading in several areas in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, including the potential impacts on some of the poorest areas in the cities. Researchers there dispute that gentrification is occurring at this time in the Twin Cities based upon the following indicators within neighborhoods between the years 2000 and 2013:

Changing composition of population
- Median household income
- Population in households above and below the poverty line
- Low-income students in neighborhood elementary schools
- Non-Hispanic white population
- Non-Hispanic white students in neighborhood schools

Changing composition of housing stock:
- Owner occupancy rate

Pressure on housing market:
- Vacant housing
- Median owner-occupied house value (from two sources)
- Median contract rent
- Housing affordable at 50 percent of the regional median income (Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, 2016).

After an analysis of these indicators, researchers found that many of the poorest neighborhoods in Minneapolis and Saint Paul showed evidence of decline rather than upgrading during the study period (Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, 2016). The authors argue that a misplaced focus on gentrification may hinder economic development efforts in urban centers, or negatively affect policies aimed at the provision of affordable housing in suburban areas based on the perception of the intent to
displace those living in poverty (Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, 2016). However, it is worth noting that the study period ended prior to the opening of the Central Corridor project, and although data points to indications that gentrification is not occurring, it was still a major concern voiced by community members about the impacts of light rail development in the Frogtown and Old Rondo neighborhoods (Dube, 2014).

**Collaboration and Decision Making as a Sustainable Development Tool**

All of the above scholarship about the negative effects of gentrification, both physical and cultural helps to explain why the residents and business owners within the case study area brought this issue forward as a major concern during the engagement process for the Central Corridor project. With awareness of this literature on gentrification, its relationship to transit development, and the vulnerability of the case study neighborhoods, I now turn to the qualities that the SCI requires of its awardees in the regional plan that may function as mitigating factors of gentrification surrounding major transit development efforts. The following section demonstrates that community concerns about gentrification and displacement can be expressed and heard more effectively through the SCI’s emphasis on meaningful engagement and collaboration that brings underrepresented parties to the planning process.

A focal point of the program is an insistence upon meaningful community engagement, collaboration with stakeholders, and community led decision-making. In a guide to Community Engagement based upon the SCI and PSC, the authors write, “As community members set joint tables with advocacy groups, planners, business leaders, policy makers, local development organizations, universities, and foundations to develop a blueprint for future prosperity, a shared vision will only materialize if the
residents of historically marginalized communities see themselves as full partners. That entails having a voice and decision-making input to own the change they want to see” (Bergstrom, Rose, Olinger, & Holley, 2014). This engagement then, is a major component of the equity strategy within the sustainable development practices promoted by the federal programs.

**Equity and Collaboration**

Substantial literature exists regarding engagement as an equitable planning and development strategy. Outreach to populations that rarely have opportunities to provide input can help to ensure that infrastructure and development projects are consistent with community needs and preferences, and the process of engagement can grow trust between communities and government agencies while creating buy-in for community plans (Montesano, 2012, p.2). One researcher found that social sustainability outcomes such as increased social capital—networks and access to community resources—while present in traditional planning models, are increased significantly when participatory approaches to the planning process are employed in transit oriented development (see Fernandez Milan, 2016). Furthermore, in designing the equity and engagement strategy for the Central Corridor project, a process highly prioritized by SCI policy, the coalition sought these benefits. In a case study of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul engagement strategy, Smart Growth America notes, “For equity and development to coexist, proactive outreach must be a focus, and we must have a good understanding of what equity means in the communities in which we work” (Smart Growth America, n.d.). This emphasis on equity-focused engagement in the Central Corridor case will be made clearer in my analysis of the planning process at work in the case study area.
It is the above understanding of the relationship of engagement and participation to equitable and socially sustainable development that makes it a useful strategy for bolstering a community against the negative effects of gentrification. If one of the main components in displacement is the process of a neighborhood ceasing to meet the needs of its residents, participatory planning helps to ascertain these needs so that strategies to meet these needs can be incorporated into the development plan. If, for example, affordable housing or low commercial rents are important for a neighborhood, these equity priorities will emerge in the course of seeking underrepresented voices for consideration as part of sustainable development strategy. This is in line with the recommended engagement policies found in the SCI, and helps to balance the competing interests of sustainable development.

**Challenges in Engagement**

However, challenges are embedded within the engagement and participatory processes. Disputes and disagreements may arise during the participatory process, especially as community members have increased decision making capacity in the effort to seek equitable outcomes, and as many different perspectives come to the table (Forester, 2012). Rather than backing down from the engagement process, the recommendation is to innovate by treating the participation process as a negotiation or mediation and balancing diverse interests (Forester, 2012, p. 212). An additional challenge to expanding the influence of community decision-making is that relying solely upon community engagement and participation to set priorities may not present the voices of those in need in a strong enough manner due to a lack of resources allowing all people to engage, and lack of knowledge to advocate for policies in their best interest.
(Fainstein, 2011). Knowledge of these issues with participatory processes and strategies to overcome them are part of an effective engagement strategy.

Another challenge in the engagement process is, when engagement policies exist, determining whether or not the engagement is really meaningful or if it is an “empty ritual” (Arnstein, 1969, p.216). Arnstein, an important writer on the subject of engagement, devised the concept of the Ladder of Participation, which has eight rungs and ranges from manipulation on the bottom rung to citizen control at the top. The theory is that many types of engagement practices occur simply because they are mandated, and often do not include meaningful input from community members.

Categories of meaningful input include:

1. Partnership, where citizens and those in power share in decision making authority;

2. Delegated power, where citizens have a dominant decision making role;

3. Citizen control, where citizens or neighborhood groups have complete control over planning with no intermediary (Arnstein, 1969, p. 221-223).

In an assessment of this theory’s application to the transportation planning context, a more recent study used the ladder concept to gauge the type of participation that community members in Kentucky and Arizona perceived to be in use for several projects (Bailey & Grossardt, 2006). The researchers determined that even though transportation planners were aware of the need to prioritize participation, the perceived levels of engagement were approximately 2.5 rungs below the desired level of partnership (Bailey & Grossardt, 2006, p.339). This will be a relevant concern to be
aware of when assessing the success of policies advocating for meaningful engagement in the case study area.

**Placemaking**

One impactful way in which local decision-making power and community engagement can manifest is through the process of placemaking. The definition of placemaking used by Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is the framework for how the term is used within this paper. Placemaking for PPS means community participation that reimagines shared space and capitalizes on existing assets, which results in strengthened connections of community members to physical, cultural, and social identities of public spaces (Project for Public Spaces, n.d., n.p.). The importance of the ability for community members to express and promote their own ideas about public spaces and define community assets is also a crucial component of placemaking (Project for Public Spaces, n.d., What is Placemaking?). PPS connects the importance of community collaboration for improving and reimagining public spaces, and emphasizes that placemaking is, in fact, “the process by which a community defines its own priorities,” rather than the design of the physical elements of the place itself (Project for Public Spaces, n.d., Equitable Placemaking). This community-based ownership of priorities, part of the meaningful engagement encouraged by the SCI, is an important component of the path that planning followed in the Central Corridor case in response to neighborhood concerns about displacement and gentrification. As we have seen in the above literature about displacement, the impact of existing residents feeling as though they lose ownership of their communities and no longer identify with its physical form can accelerate displacement. A collaboration with a diverse array of
organizations, stakeholders, and community members can help these community-led priorities became clear, and the identification of these priorities during the planning process can lead to channels of communication, capacity, and relationships that foster engagement in placemaking projects. These placemaking projects may reduce the perceived loss of connection to the neighborhood for existing residents as the neighborhood undergoes revitalization.

**Place and Participation**

The above definition of placemaking as a participatory process means that it includes a broad umbrella of activities, though arts projects, the creation of accessible outdoor spaces like parks that reflect an area's culture, and historic preservation are some commonly recognized placemaking efforts. The diversity of activities and outcomes that can fall under the definition of placemaking makes studies of its relationship to population changes or trends in economic development difficult. This is acknowledged in a paper that examined several case studies and illustrated the outcomes of placemaking efforts in cities across America (Silberberg, 2013). Regardless of this difficulty, the study looked broadly at placemaking to understand how it functions and to help determine how the placemaking process can lead to positive results for communities. This study makes a significant observation, that “the most successful placemaking initiatives transcend the ‘place’ to forefront the ‘making,’” which reinforces the idea that the process of participation and community-determined priorities are key to placemaking that can improve the quality of life for community members (Silberberg, 2013, p.3). A strong theme incorporated into this research is that placemaking is a tool for communities to regain political capital and decision making
power after a period where the form of the built environment was largely determined by voices outside of a community (Silberberg, 2013, p.3). The placemaking activity underway in the Frogtown and Rondo areas is based upon community set priorities, is community led, and is facilitated by inclusion in station planning as a response to neighborhood concerns during the Central Corridor development process.

**Place and Displacement**

To further understand the idea of placemaking as a response to concerns about gentrification, I turn to literature that discusses community identities and senses of place in relationship to neighborhood change and gentrification. The identity of a neighborhood is highly informed by its physical form, and the ability of existing residents to guide the physical form of a community may influence the way the neighborhood identity holds up when faced with changes. If equity is a priority for residents, this will be reflected in the physical surroundings. If community history or arts are important, evidence will appear on the physical landscape if residents have the political capital to make decisions about their space. This concept is touched upon in a case study regarding the ability of communities of color to identify structures that are historically significant within their neighborhoods and designate them for preservation. The study found that without the opportunities to engage in the redevelopment process, and facing physical displacement, the ability to define place and what was important in the physical environment was eroded in three communities in San Francisco (see Saito, 2009).

Additional compelling literature exists on the importance of community history and a reflection of this history in the physical environment to community identity. This includes a study on the impact of a loss of history in North Minneapolis’ communities of color
(see Longo, Dawson, & Sukuraman, 2007). The authors argue that the loss of physical history in the neighborhood has eroded the sense of place for residents, leaving them vulnerable to displacement if the area ever becomes desirable. As they examined the neighborhood, they found social and cultural connections that lent themselves to a strong neighborhood identity that was not represented well in the physical sphere or connected to the physical environment (Longo, Dawson, & Sukuraman, 2007). Another study on place conducted in Los Angeles outlines the importance of creating a sense of place in immigrant communities and the way in which opportunities to influence the physical environment, in turn, creates increased agency for immigrant residents along with stronger emotional connections to their neighborhoods (see Sandoval and Main 2015).

Another study, conducted in 100 U.S. metro areas, offers empirical evidence that creative placemaking activities undertaken via commercial arts industries, often coming in from outside revitalizing communities, are associated with accelerating neighborhood change (see Grodach, Foster, & Murdoch, 2014, p.27). This emphasizes the importance of community led “making” in order for placemaking to act as a tool of equitable and sustainable development, which is in line with the engagement influenced path found in the Central Corridor placemaking opportunities. PPS emphasizes these complementary equity and participatory components within the placemaking process by arguing that, “Rather than watching passively as private developers or public agencies determine the use and value of a neighborhood’s public spaces, placemaking enables citizens to create and maintain their own places, while highlighting unique strengths and addressing specific challenges” (Project for Public Spaces, 2016, n.p.).
Summary

The above literature discusses sustainable development practices, and the challenges of balances varying interests within the field. One vulnerable interest is social sustainability, or equity, because of a lack of voices representing the need for equitable planning involved in the development process. This is why coalitions and expanded engagement efforts are needed. The creative coalitions and innovations that the literature points out as necessary for sustainable and equitable development are evident in the SCI as it is examined within this case study, as it is a collaboration itself at the federal agency level, as well as a driver for the creation of coalitions on the local level.

One of the major roadblocks to balanced sustainable development, especially when rail transit development is involved is gentrification. This can manifest on both economic and cultural levels. A discussion of this consequence of development is pertinent when considering growth and development efforts within the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods, because the lower relative incomes and property values in the neighborhoods leave them vulnerable to gentrification if these geographies become more desirable. One major change brought by the Central Corridor project that increases the desirability of these neighborhoods is better public transit in the form of light rail, which has been shown to increase gentrification in some cities.

One way to elevate the concern of equity is to incorporate engagement in the planning process that brings often underrepresented voices into the planning process. Evidence of these techniques is present in the development goals along the Central Corridor, where diverse income levels, stages of life, and cultural communities are
accounted for in inclusive planning strategies. However, engagement can manifest in several ways from truly collaborative to manipulative, and the policies surrounding the Central Corridor project in Frogtown and Rondo may fall into any of these categories upon further examination. The goals of the SCI grant policies and the plans in the neighborhoods are most likely aiming for a partnership level of involvement along this spectrum.

Placemaking as a form of engagement and sustainable development was also examined in the literature. The ability to collaborate and use community decision making capacity to define neighborhood identity is also a key component in the response of the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods to the challenge of gentrification, and the relationship between these factors and the placemaking activity occurring there will be included in the analysis chapter of this paper.
CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY NEIGHBORHOODS

To provide context for the case study, and to further illustrate why these two neighborhoods are useful for studying a program aimed at elevating equity in sustainable development, this chapter will provide demographic and economic characteristics of the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods and a brief history of the areas. This information helps to demonstrate that the areas are susceptible to the pressures of gentrification due to low-incomes and property values, as well as a history of marginalization and mistrust of the planning process. The cases of Frogtown and Rondo are also characterized by a history of community-led action outside of the formal planning process. See figure 3-1 for the location of the study neighborhoods within the Twin Cities metro area.

Figure 3-1: Study area in Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area
(Source: Metropolitan Council, 2016)
Demographic and Economic Characteristics

The literature pointed to low-income areas as particularly vulnerable to gentrification and displacement in general, because residents and business owners are least equipped to adapt to rising rents and other costs of living. Frogtown and Rondo have median incomes that are significantly lower than the rest of Saint Paul. (Table 3-1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Median income based upon ACS 2010-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Saint Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1: Median Income, Saint Paul vs. Frogtown and Rondo (Source: MN Compass, 2016, n.p.)

In addition to median income, there are several other economic indicators that highlight the differences between the case study neighborhoods and the rest of the city, including income below poverty, unemployment, housing costs, and vehicles per household. (Table 3-2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected economic indicators based upon ACS 2010-2014 and 1990, 2000 Decennial Censuses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income Below Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frogtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rondo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-2: Selected Economic Indicators, Saint Paul vs. Frogtown and Rondo (Source: MN Compass, 2016, n.p.; Minnesota Population Center, 2016, n.p)
These statistics reinforce the notion that these neighborhoods are less economically prosperous than the rest of the city. Frogtown and Rondo both have more than one third of the population living below the poverty line, and unemployment rates are more than four percent higher than the rest of the city. In addition to the low incomes, prior to the completion of the Central Corridor line nearly half of all households in Frogtown and Rondo were cost burdened, meaning that more than 30% of these households’ income went to housing costs. Higher rates of cost-burdened households means a lower level of tolerance is present within the existing community for increases in the costs of housing—something that, as the literature showed, rail lines have stimulated in several other cities. Significant percentages of households in the case study area also do not have access to personal vehicles, meaning that the community may be more transit dependent and would be negatively affected by displacement away from high frequency routes along University Avenue.

The case study areas also have concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities that are substantially higher than the rest of the city. (See table 3-3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Alone</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Color</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53
| Race and Foreign Born Population based upon ACS 2010-2014 and 2000 Decennial Census |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Two or more races               | 9.5%            | 7.2%            | 4.6%            |
| Foreign born                    | 18.2%           | 28.4%           | 24.2%           |
| Speaks English less than “very well” | 13.5%      | 23.8%           | 18.1%           |

Table 3-3: Race and foreign-born population
(Source: MN Compass, 2016, n.p.; Minnesota Population Center, 2016, n.p.)

As the table above shows, Rondo and Frogtown are home to higher percentages of people of color than the rest of the city. Along with the higher concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities in the neighborhoods, foreign-born community members have a more significant presence in the study area. Language and culture may present barriers for traditional forms of engagement in these groups. For example, almost one fourth of Frogtown residents speak English less than very well. This means that efforts may need to be expanded in order to achieve meaningful engagement and representation for these groups in the planning process. There are also shifts in the neighborhood and city demographics apparent since the 2000 census. The city as a whole has become more diverse, with a decrease in the population reporting “white alone.”

**History**

Along with the low income and minority characteristics of the population, which impacts vulnerability to gentrification and barriers to traditional engagement, the Rondo neighborhood has a history of marginalization and disruption that fostered a distrust of the planning process over several decades. The historically African American neighborhood was established in the early twentieth century as a home to railroad workers and their families, including a number of diverse immigrant groups (Avila, 2014,
Over the years, Rondo prospered and was home to historically significant figures including leaders within the national NAACP organization, one of the first African American city architects in the nation, and a well-known photographer. The neighborhood was also home to a number of small businesses and institutions that served the community, many located along Rondo Avenue, which ran through the middle of the community and was considered something of a Main Street (Avila, 2014, p.102) (See Figure 3-2). This crucial street and several surrounding blocks in the center of the neighborhood were threatened by incoming freeway construction, which was in the planning phase as early as the mid-1950s (Avila, 2014, p.102). Community leaders and residents’ attempts to negotiate alternate routes failed, and compensation for relocation and the “institution of antidiscriminatory measures in the local housing market” for those who were uprooted, were unsuccessful (Avila, 2014, p.102). Interstate 94 displaced more than 400 households and led to an increase in the concentration of people of color in the Rondo neighborhood who were not able to move to other areas where their white neighbors dispersed (Avila, 2014, p.103). See figure 3-3, which shows the freeway construction in progress. Many of the current Rondo residents were impacted by this upheaval and the lack of negotiation on the part of the state and other agencies in the 1960s, and therefore remain distrustful of the planning process. Residents who lived through the interstate construction perceive planners and engineers as removed from their community, and insensitive to the fact that major development projects affect the ability of people to live comfortably in their homes. Rondo residents respond less openly to engagement that offers only choices rather
than asking for ideas, as this method seems like a continuation of the loss of control of the community that began with the advent of the freeway.

Figure 3-2: Interior of Rondo Ave grocery co-op, 1948
(Source: Minnesota Historical Society, n.d.)

Planning Context

The planning context in the Rondo and Frogtown areas during the Central Corridor development process was complex. This is because the planning of the light rail transit line alignment itself is under the authority of the Met Council, which is the

Figure 3-3: Construction of Interstate 94 through Rondo, 1966
(Source: Minnesota Historical Society, n.d.)
regional planning body in the Twin Cities that oversees transportation networks (Office of the Revisor of Statutes, 2016). Planning for development strategies in neighborhoods surrounding the line was undertaken by the City of Saint Paul. The city adopted an overall development strategy that encompassed the area along entire rail line (within the study areas and outside of it), along with small area plans that applied to specific station areas. Four of these small area plans apply at least partially within Frogtown and Rondo (City of Saint Paul, 2007). This is a departure from the usual planning geography in Frogtown and Rondo; which falls within two of the seventeen planning district council areas in Saint Paul. The district councils are the primary venue for traditional engagement in Saint Paul, and they conduct official public meetings and committee hearings regarding development within their boundaries. It is worth noting that the district council borders do not always conform to the vernacular understanding of a neighborhood within Saint Paul. For example, the Frogtown neighborhood is located within the Thomas-Dale planning district, and the Rondo neighborhood is included within the larger Summit-University district, which also is home to several wealthy and historically designated neighborhoods, including Crocus Hill and Ramsey Hill. This division may create confusion about where public meetings are held, and the inclusion of areas with vastly differing priorities and existing conditions may make it difficult for low-income areas to be represented meaningfully.

The administration of the federal SCI grant was conducted by yet another entity, Corridors of Opportunity, which was formed in January 2011 after the Metropolitan Council was awarded the grant in 2010. This organization is closely related to the Met Council, and was co-chaired by the chair of the Met Council along with a representative
of the McKnight Foundation. The purpose of this group was to form a coalition to promote the regional transitway network and corresponding development goals, specifically related to the SCI funding and additional Living Cities grants (Corridors of Opportunity, 2016). They were active along the entire Central Corridor, in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul, as well as in the initial planning stages of the Southwest Corridor—a line that went from Minneapolis to the southwest suburbs (See figure 3-1 for the entire Central Corridor, noted with the green line. See figure 3-4 for the location of the neighborhoods within Saint Paul.)

Figure 3-4: Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods in Saint Paul (noted in red) (Source: City of Saint Paul, n.d.)
Along with the official planning entities, many development focused non-profit organizations also have an impact in the study area. These include organizations specifically focused on Rondo revitalization, organizations that focus on areas of poverty in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul (of which the study area is one), and organizations that are focused on Saint Paul immigrant communities, many of which are concentrated in Frogtown. Priorities for these organizations include job creation, affordable housing, the promotion of cultural activities, entrepreneur development, and improvements to the streetscapes in Frogtown and Rondo. These priorities overlap in some ways with the city’s development strategy and small area plans, as well as the goals of the Corridors of Opportunity group. These corresponding interests and any collaboration between these entities in Frogtown and Rondo will be covered in further detail in Chapter Five.

**Summary**

This chapter has provided insight into the history and current conditions of the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods, as well as the planning context. The low-income nature, as well as the high concentrations of communities of color in the study area align with the types of characteristics of neighborhoods that have been underrepresented in the planning process, per the literature. Along with the known history of underrepresentation in the transportation planning process, these characteristics may contribute to the desire to establish more meaningful engagement practices in these communities. This desire is especially relevant as the goals of the SCI include improved outreach specifically in low income communities and among
groups that have previously had little input on the process. Those goals will be examined further in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This terminal project examines how the federal Sustainable Communities Initiative, which targets sustainable development through integrated transit systems, generated community-led projects and placemaking on the local level. The exploration of this process was undertaken in order to contribute to existing recommendations in the literature that address effective strategies for ensuring that the equity component of this sustainable development is included in areas that may be vulnerable to transit based gentrification. Two research questions are central to this study:

1. How did the Sustainable Communities Initiative help create community-led placemaking opportunities at the local level?
2. How do these opportunities respond to neighborhood concerns about the negative impacts of gentrification related to transit development?

In response to the research questions, this study proposes that the SCI influences the creation of community-led placemaking opportunities through its emphasis on meaningful community engagement. In addition, these placemaking activities are a response to concerns about neighborhood identity and potential changes that may have been associated with the light rail transit development.

Literature on the subjects of sustainable development, placemaking, and gentrification is complex and interdisciplinary, often reflecting tensions between these concepts. The planning, development, and construction process for the Central Corridor project was completed recently. Rail service began in 2014, just over two years prior to the beginning of this study. The intrinsic complexities of sustainable development as
well as the contemporary setting of the event under analysis necessitated a case study design. An inquiry into a contemporary phenomenon, as well as a study that “relies on multiple sources of evidence” and “benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis,” is most appropriately examined as a case study (Yin, 2009, p.18). In addition, the case study is suggested for situations with many interrelated dimensions that the researcher wishes to examine on a holistic level, and when a researcher seeks to add clarification and development to themes in the existing literature (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991).

This terminal project analyzes the application of the SCI program within the local planning context in St. Paul, MN with a focus on its effect within two neighborhoods. To do so, several sources of evidence are examined, including the local planning process, station area planning documents, and interviews with members of the planning and nonprofit community who were involved in the Central Corridor project through the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods. These listed resources are the multiple sources of evidence that Yin noted would lead to the effective application of the case study method. In addition, the dimensions of community engagement, gentrification, and sustainable development are all interrelated here, and looking at them within a specific situation may help to broaden and clarify the existing literature, particularly the role of community engagement to mitigate potential gentrification impacts in these light rail projects.

The unit of analysis, in this case, is the neighborhood. Frogtown and Rondo have been chosen as a single case study in Saint Paul where they overlap along the route of the Green Line. The rationale for the single case design is that the circumstances within
these neighborhoods act as a somewhat representative or typical case of the existing conditions of neighborhoods where infrastructure projects similar to the Central Corridor are likely to lead to some level of displacement (Yin, 2009). These conditions are explored further within the Neighborhoods chapter (Chapter 3), but include lower than average median incomes, a concentration of minority racial groups, high numbers of immigrant residents, and lower than average car ownership among residents. In addition to the representative nature of the conditions in the case study neighborhoods, the pre-existing level of advocacy and social justice work through community based organizations within these communities may also be typical of cases where the mitigation strategies like those explored in this study would be likely to achieve success. This will also be explored further in Chapter 3.

**Methodology**

In order to conduct the case study, I examined different types and sources of data in order to provide a detailed picture of how the SCI processes worked in the case study area. I began with the local planning process in order to set the context for the introduction of the SCI grant and its corresponding mandates and goals. To establish additional context, I examined archival documents including oral histories and court case summaries related to the early planning process. Next, I included documents submitted to HUD regarding the planning goals and objectives for the grant funds, as well as current planning documents that apply to the study area. Finally, I took account of observations from the practical sphere, including interviews with people working in the study area and descriptions of placemaking projects in Rondo and Frogtown.
Local Planning Process

In order to study the influence the SCI had on the process and substance of community engagement and collaboration during the planning period for the Central Corridor light rail transit project, I conducted a brief analysis of the pre-existing local planning process in Saint Paul. This includes an overview of the existing engagement process, as well as the policy structure accommodations for collaboration across organizations. I reviewed Minnesota state statutes for community-based planning goals and requirements (Minn. Statutes 2016 394.232), as well as any city policies that address engagement and sustainability. This analysis helped to evaluate how the processes established during the Central Corridor planning period differed from existing policy, and how any pre-existing procedures and collaborative relationships evident in the Frogtown and Rondo areas complemented the SCI goals. Providing this policy context would be useful in studying similar programs in other areas because it establishes a local baseline for comparison to the federal mandates and program goals. It also helps to illustrate the existing policy support for the types of planning that the SCI grant seeks to encourage.

Archival Documents

Court cases, newspaper articles, oral histories, and other media that include the viewpoints of citizens and business owners in the neighborhood illustrate the concerns of Rondo and Frogtown community when faced with LRT development. The news-based resources also illustrate the negative perceptions and conditions in the study area in the latter portion of the 20th century. They also demonstrate the history of engagement within the community through efforts to improve the built environment and
quality of life in the neighborhoods. Consistent with Yin’s (2009) suggestion regarding the design of case studies, these types of documents will be used to “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” regarding the Frogtown and Rondo case (p.103). Furthermore, these sources reveal the anxiety among community members regarding potential negative effects when gentrification and displacement may be imminent. They also provide descriptions of conditions prior to recent development efforts that also help to justify the need for equitable and socially sustainable planning and development within the neighborhoods. In addition, these sources—alongside planning documents and interviews—help to shed light on specific neighborhood concerns that planning in the corridor must address. Including known needs and concerns of the study area communities is a necessary step in evaluating how a program of this type worked, and to ascertain whether improved engagement efforts were effective.

**Sustainable Communities Initiative and Collaborative Documents**

Several documents are reviewed that outline the collaborative efforts that were undertaken during the planning and construction process for the Central Corridor light rail, as well as community engagement and planning guides. These include engagement strategy documents from a region-wide multidisciplinary coalition termed “Corridors of Opportunity” (2012), which was partially funded by the SCI grant, along with results reporting from this organization (2014), as well as a regional case study and program descriptions from the SCI itself (2010). These documents also include the program overview and work plan that Corridors of Opportunity submitted to HUD in the early days of the program. These documents and reports illustrate how the community
engagement employed during the course of the Central Corridor project aligns with the type of meaningful engagement and decision-making power described in the literature. In addition, the documents highlight the local challenges to economic sustainability and equity in transit improvement that in this situation, also evident in the literature. These challenges are particularly relevant to the neighborhoods described in this case study, as lower income, previously disinvested locations. Moreover, the documents show how broad collaboration brought these considerations further to the forefront of the Central Corridor’s planning and development process. In conducting a study of how a program or initiative works in a geographic area, it is necessary to review the program documents, goals, and intended outcomes to see how they apply within the context of the area. In this case, the study evaluates improved engagement and collaboration that leads to opportunities for community members to engage in placemaking. Therefore, the program documents were analysed for evidence of financial commitments and action items addressing increased engagement for underrepresented populations.

**Current Planning Documents**

An overall development strategy for the University Avenue area was created in the process of planning for the rail route. This plan also produced station area plans that were later adopted as components in the City of Saint Paul’s comprehensive plan (Urban Strategies Inc, 2008 & 2011). This development strategy provides insight about the way in which city planners and officials addressed neighborhood concerns regarding equitable development and pursued meaningful community engagement prior to the region receiving the SCI. They also show the structures already in place for meaningful engagement as required by the SCI to ensure a responsive development strategy.
Further, an analysis of these documents offers a means to determine whether city planners and officials include accommodations for future community based decision-making and pathways for residents to assert their idea of identity in public spaces. These efforts may ultimately lead to broader opportunities for placemaking activity. Examination of the plans that are currently in effect serves two purposes. First, any plans that were implemented after the grant program was deployed can provide evidence of inclusion of the mandated policies and goals of the program, as well as any reflection of the community issues that came up during the engagement process. Secondly, any plans still in effect that were implemented prior to the grant program can provide additional insight into the supportive context for the SCI policies and desired outcomes.

**Observation of Placemaking Activity**

In addition to the station area plans, some of the community led placemaking projects undertaken since the adoption of these plans are examined. These projects are placed within the context of the SCI and current planning documents, along with the literature regarding the motivations and effectiveness of placemaking as a response to concerns about gentrification. Many sources in the literature review provide evidence that the process of defining community identity and the reflection of this identity in the built environment can have an impact upon displacement (Anguelovski, 2015; Zukin, 2010; Lin, 2011). In addition, the literature includes an assessment of successful placemaking as intrinsically tied to meaningful community engagement and decision making (Silberberg, 2013). Field observations of the community projects in Frogtown and Rondo helps identify them as products of community engagement efforts and
responses to neighborhood concerns, which adds evidence to the impacts of the grant program in the area and its focus on increased outreach and collaboration.

**Interviews**

In order to gain additional clarity regarding community-led aspects of the Frogtown and Rondo case, interviews were conducted to document the experiences of those involved in the planning and development process, including enconomic development specialists who worked for the city of Saint Paul during the process of preparing for the Central Corridor, and those who worked within the University Avenue area within the study boundaries. Interviewees also included employees and leaders of nonprofit entities active within the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods, and whose organizations were involved in the collaborative efforts encouraged by the SCI. The individuals interviewed offered community-based perspectives of the planning process in the Frogtown and Rondo areas, and included community organizers, placemaking specialists, and economic development professionals. This type of data is important to incorporate into the case study, as it offers additional detail regarding the implementation of the SCI policies, and how all of the different entities interacted in the real world.

The typical questions and issues discussed with interviewees are included in Appendix A. These questions address knowledge of the SCI in operation within the community and its guidance regarding meaningful engagement, experience with the Central Corridor planning process, observations about city staff efforts in both engagement and communication throughout the process, examples of any community concerns the interviewee was directly aware of, awareness of any specific efforts to
address gentrification or equitable development, the process of assessing priorities and community identity, any direct known relationship to resulting placemaking activities, and the interviewees’ perception of the impact of the Central Corridor in the neighborhoods.

It may prove difficult to connect the Central Corridor engagement process and the resulting activities directly to the SCI, because these may be products of existing policies or shifting trends within planning in Minnesota independent of the federal program. Interview questions related to the knowledge of the SCI, and any particular knowledge of the program’s guidance regarding engagement, help to clarify whether the SCI had a significant influence in the way that planners conducted engagement and used their findings throughout the planning process. Related literature discusses the successful aspects and intricate guidelines for the general engagement strategy of the SCI (Bergstrom, Rose, Ollinger, & Holley, 2016), but these questions help to determine if this guidance carried through into the practical sphere. Interviewees are also questioned about their perceptions of city staff conduct in the community, in order to lend further evidence to whether the type of engagement encouraged by SCI was fully utilized in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods.

Several questions focus on equitable outcomes as a result of the development and planning process and any explicit focus upon reducing the potential for negative effects of gentrification in the neighborhoods. The literature discusses the SCI program in general as an equity endeavor (Zapata & Bates, 2016). However, it is also at times contradictory regarding whether light rail development leads to displacement, and whether gentrification is a factor within the Twin Cities community (Institute on
Metropolitan Opportunity, 2016; Bates, 2013; Sanneh, 2016; Grube-Cavers & Patterson, 2015). These questions help to identify whether planning authorities and community leaders considered matters of equity as a challenge of this project, and whether measures were taken to specifically address these concerns.

Much of the literature review addressed the question of community identity, community priorities, and community decision-making as components in gentrification trends, as well as a topic of meaningful engagement. Thus, I asked interviewees questions that addressed whether concerns about community identity ever came up during the Central Corridor planning process, as well as questions about their experience with ascertaining community priorities throughout. In addition, I asked whether aspects of community-defined identities were incorporated into station planning, in the interviewees' view, to determine the policy effect of these conversations, and to see if any of the placemaking activity occurring in these areas sprang from this engagement process.

Finally, sustainable communities aim to be environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable (Roseland, 2012, p.7). The explicit focus on sustainability in the Central Corridor project is why I included a question addressing whether interviewees noticed any difference in this process from the existing planning and engagement processes, as well as a question regarding the perceived impact of the project on the neighborhoods. Responses may shed light on whether the SCI encouraged all three of these components of sustainability to be addressed in an effective way, as well as if the interviewees have observed signs of social change and displacement or took note of
any significant activity in the economic and social spheres, such as community-led placemaking activity occurring within Frogtown and Rondo.

**Methodology Conclusion**

The study of preexisting policies, planning and collaborative documents, direct observations of neighborhood activities, and personal accounts of the Central Corridor planning process, will provide a well-rounded analysis of this case. In addition, the examination of these interrelated parts in Frogtown and Rondo is intended to suggest an emphasis on creating opportunities for deep engagement and community-led placemaking that address the cultural and physical needs of the neighborhood as a tool for mitigating the fears of gentrification in low income neighborhoods that are particularly vulnerable to rising costs and a loss of cultural amenities. This study also helps to show how the context of an interdisciplinary collaborative federal program assisted in the utilization of collaborative and creative mitigation strategies for addressing these concerns, including that of placemaking.
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study explores the case of two neighborhoods in Saint Paul, Minnesota, that have embarked on the path of placemaking and defining their identity by initiating community-led projects in physical space. I explore how this occurred as a response to concerns from community members about the possibility of gentrification caused by a transit project that runs through the neighborhoods. I also analyze planning agencies’ responses to these concerns through the channels of meaningful community engagement encouraged by the use of an SCI Regional Planning Grant and its corresponding requirements and priorities. In analyzing these responses, this chapter adds to the existing academic literature that studies concerns about displacement related to sustainable development. First, the local planning context prior to SCI influence is examined to determine any differences between local policies and the SCI priorities and requirements. Next, analysis of documents—both archival and those related to the SCI—will be conducted to illustrate the genesis of neighborhood concerns as well as the planning structures influenced by the initiative. The corridor planning documents that directly affect the case study area will also be examined for evidence of responsiveness to these concerns and collaborative planning structures. Examples of placemaking activity in the case study area illustrate the types of community-led projects that have been implemented since the light rail planning process began. Finally, interviews with local and regional planners, non-profit managers, and community leaders, provide additional insight into the planning process and outcomes, including those influenced by the SCI priorities.
Local Planning Process

State of Minnesota

Several Minnesota state statutes influence the local and regional planning process. The pertinent statutes influencing the neighborhoods of Frogtown and Rondo are those related to sustainable development, comprehensive planning, and community planning. The first statute of concern is the authority to plan. Cities are granted the authority to prepare and implement comprehensive plans in statute 462.353 Subdivision 1, provided that this activity is within the parameters of the planning policy statement. This statement, statute 462.351, provides the reasoning for comprehensive planning in Minnesota cities by saying that such measures should, “insure a safer, more pleasant and more economical environment for residential, commercial, industrial and public activities, to preserve agricultural and other open lands, and to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare,” along with a directive to “assist in developing lands more wisely to serve citizens more effectively,...[and] make the provision of public services less costly, and...achieve a more secure tax base” (Office of the Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota, 2016).

Along with the general authority to create a comprehensive plan for a municipality, a section in the state statutes encourages these plans to be “community-based.” This statute addresses both the goals of citizens and coordination with surrounding cities, counties, and government agencies as elements of community-based planning. The first two subdivisions are below:

394.232 COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING.
Subdivision 1. General.
Each county is encouraged to prepare and implement a community-based comprehensive plan. A community-based comprehensive plan is a comprehensive plan that is consistent with the goals of community-based planning.

Subd. 2. Notice and participation. Notice must be given at the beginning of the community-based comprehensive planning process to the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Transportation, local government units, and local citizens to actively participate in the development of the plan. (Office of the Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota, 2016)

Further subdivisions of this statute establish the authority to form joint planning districts that span the borders of municipalities and counties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership for Sustainable Communities Agencies</th>
<th>State of MN Agencies Required to Receive Notice of Comprehensive Plan</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Board of Water and Soil Resources, Pollution Control Agency</td>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Housing and Urban Development</td>
<td>Department of Employment and Economic Development</td>
<td>Economic Development &amp; Equity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-1: Categories of PSC and State of MN Agencies
(Source: Office of the Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota, 2016; Partnership for Sustainable Communities, 2015)

These state statutes set the context for the comprehensive plan as the primary form of directing development in the case study area, as well as the document through which the state encourages participation and collaboration across agencies and between municipalities. Here, it is evident that there is a framework in place for the
inclusion of many of the subject areas that are important in developing a sustainable plan, and also that the agencies included in the requirement for notice reflect the types of federal agencies involved with the PSC. The corresponding roles of these agencies can be seen in table 5-1. Granted, the Minnesota statute simply requires notice to be given across agencies and to the public. It does not require the active collaboration of these agencies, or outline a way to ensure that the community or collaborative vision is communicated or implemented effectively.

In addition to the planning process, the state statutes also offer a definition for sustainable development for use by local governments. For example, Minnesota statute 4A.07 Subdivision 1(b) reads:

"Sustainable development" means development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Office of the Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota, 2016)

The definition of “sustainable development” at the state level demonstrates the local understanding of this concept, and allows for a comparison to the livability principles that guide the PSC and SCI programs. The definition also suggests that sustainable development is enough of a priority to be addressed at the state level. However, while this definition is found within a section of statutes that suggest the creation of a sustainable development guide at the state level, there is neither a mandate nor a suggestion that municipalities, counties, or regional planning bodies should follow said guide.
Metropolitan Council

The regional planning body in the Twin Cities area is the Metropolitan Council. The state grants the Met Council authority in the 13-county metro area that do not apply to the planning process in other regions of the state. This authority is important to the case study in relation to the comprehensive planning process, and because the Met Council initiated the SCI grant process. The Met Council chair was also co-chair of the collaborative organization that received the grant funds and executed the corresponding programs. This relationship with the SCI’s Regional Planning Grants will be explored within the analysis of the SCI documents below. Regarding the relationship to the comprehensive planning process in the case study area, the state grants the Met Council three key responsibilities, which are to prepare a development guide for the metro, as directed by public hearings, to transmit system statements to municipalities within the metro area, and to review each city’s comprehensive plan for compatibility with each other and compliance with region wide policies. (See Appendix II for the full statute.) (Office of the Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota, 2016)

These policies shows some level of mandated cooperation in the regional interest built into the comprehensive planning process. Because, at their core, the PSC and SCI programs are collaborative, this preexisting level of collaboration across municipalities may have contributed to an environment where programs, especially the SCI’s Regional Planning Grants, were likely to succeed in reaching sustainable development goals. However, while this policy shows formalized collaboration across municipalities, it does not show evidence of the type of dialogue across the different
interests of sustainable development, which the literature has suggested is necessary to balance environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

City of Saint Paul

The planning mechanisms in Saint Paul include the comprehensive plan along with planning, zoning, and administrative ordinances. In the city ordinance that establishes the planning department, their function is defined as follows:

*Departmental functions.* The department of planning and economic development shall develop and implement programs to strengthen the city’s neighborhoods, encourage a favorable business and investment climate, and direct financial partnerships with other public and private organizations in economic development. The mission of the department of planning and economic development is to improve the quality of life in the city by:

1. Working in partnership with residents, neighborhood-based groups and housing development providers to strengthen housing and the quality of neighborhoods;
2. Working in partnership with the business community to retain and attract jobs and to stimulate economic growth; and
3. Working in partnership with the community as a whole to provide an effective and responsible planning framework for decision-making for both local and citywide issues.

(Ord. No. 17857, § 1, 7-18-91) (City of Saint Paul, 2016)

This wording within the city codes demonstrates that the idea of partnerships is a pre-existing priority for planning in Saint Paul. In addition to the mandate to work in various partnerships, policies require community liaison work as a responsibility of the planning and economic development department:

Sec. 10.05. - Director’s office; neighborhood liaison and administration. Within the department of planning and economic development under the supervision of the director, the staff shall:

2. Provide information and training to city staff, district council staffs on citizen participation, city processes and neighborhood needs; provide training as requested to citizen volunteers to maintain organizational structure and monitoring ability.

5. Provide grants/contract management, technical assistance and support services to city departments, neighborhood and community organizations for the
various federal, state and local programs as directed by the mayor and approved by the city council.
(Ord. No. 17857, § 1, 7-18-91; C.F. No. 04-131, § 1, 3-3-04) (City of Saint Paul, 2016)

These policies show existing provisions for citizen participation and cross-departmental collaboration at the city level. Along with the provisions for community based work and collaboration within the statutes that establish the planning department, an appendix to the city code includes a policy and procedure for an “Early Notification System” that comes into play when developments or plan changes will affect a neighborhood. The preamble to this procedure reads:

The Saint Paul City Council has long recognized the needs of residents and neighborhood organizations for timely information concerning local development and change which may have an impact on the community. Further, the Council finds significant value in the views and concerns of local residents and neighborhood organizations as input for the decision-making process involved in such matters as granting or denying approval of applications for various licenses, permits, land use changes, and zoning variances. (City of Saint Paul, 2016)

The procedure goes on to outline the notice and public hearing process for activities such as zoning changes, variances, site plan reviews, and conditional use permits. Much of this public notice is conducted via the district council, the official group for city-designated neighborhoods (City of Saint Paul, 2016).

These citywide policies reflect the ideas of partnership and collaboration, which the literature points to as facets of successful sustainable and equitable development that help to balance the conflicting aspects of sustainability. The policies also provide evidence that cross-agency considerations, which are foundational elements of the federal sustainability programs, were already present in the city procedures when the SCI Regional Planning Grant was introduced into the Central Corridor planning process.
Saint Paul’s Early Notification System further provides some mechanism for including citizen engagement in the planning process, which the literature points to as a crucial aspect of ensuring that social equity considerations are weighed as heavily in sustainable development as environmental and economic components. However, this engagement is realized through a District Council hearing and public meeting process, which relies on the public attending meetings to offer input, and the District Council geography may not match up with citizen’s perceptions of their neighborhood identity. Ultimately, the existing framework in Saint Paul and the Twin Cities metro area for collaborative and cross agency processes, as well as citizen input created a solid foundation for the SCI policies. However, in further analysis below, I examine how in practice the grant policies helped to improve these practices and encouraged a more “meaningful” style of citizen engagement and increased collaboration with the public.

**Archival Documents**

An important component of this study is to understand the SCI policies’ ability to respond to neighborhood concerns and elevate them in the planning process. To explore this, I identify some of these concerns through archival documents and highlight evidence showing the importance of gentrification and neighborhood identity in the Frogtown and Rondo communities. I do this by examining court cases, newspaper articles, and oral histories. One of the most significant sources of information addressing this topic is a lawsuit that community members brought against the U.S. DOT and the Met Council for activities relating to Central Corridor light rail planning and development. The suit was filed in 2011, and was brought by the Saint Paul branch of the NAACP, the Rondo community based Aurora/Saint Anthony Neighborhood
Development Corporation, and several University Avenue businesses. The background information relating to the case outlines concerns that were brought up in the corridor planning engagement process:

During the public comment period, more than 570 people attended four public meetings and more than 900 parties (people, agencies, and organizations) commented... Some comments were directed at the impacts that the CCLRT would have on the Rondo community that was displaced in the 1960s as a result of the I-94 project and during "urban renewal" policies of the 1970s. Other comments expressed concern regarding the effects of gentrification on minority populations and the need for business interruption mitigation for low-income and African-American businesses impacted during construction. (Saint Paul Branch of NAACP v. U.S. Dep't of Transp, 2011, n.p.)

Ultimately, the community members who filed the suit did not believe that the planning bodies addressed their concerns about gentrification and displacement effectively within the environmental impact statement for the Central Corridor. These concerns are directly related to the questions of neighborhood identity, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and history of marginalization present in the planning process that were outlined in chapter three:

In their Complaint, Plaintiffs allege a single count under NEPA. Plaintiffs assert that they are entitled to summary judgment because: (1) the FEIS fails to adequately analyze the cumulative impact of displacement/gentrification caused by the CCLRT, construction of the I-94, and urban renewal policies of the 1970s; (2) the FEIS fails to adequately analyze and consider mitigation of the business interruption caused by the construction of the CCLRT; (3) the FEIS does not adequately analyze or consider mitigating the displacement of Central Corridor residents and businesses. (Saint Paul Branch of NAACP v. U.S. Dep't of Transp, 2011, n.p.)

The terms of this lawsuit convey concerns that are consistent with the literature’s overview of the displacement and gentrification that can occur in tandem with transit development, and the anxieties of existing community members when faced with major changes in their neighborhoods. It is worth noting that the engagement for Central
Corridor planning that occurred prior to the Impact Statement was also conducted prior to the SCI grant, and outside of its guidance for the implementation of meaningful engagement strategies. The suit also demonstrates the frustration of community members who felt their concerns were not addressed in the final plans, even though they were voiced during the engagement process. Furthermore, the engagement process up to this point did result in the addition of two light rail stations within the case study area, Western Avenue and Victoria Street, which were added in response to concerns about the line mimicking the isolating effect of the I-94 development in the 1960s (Saint Paul Branch of NAACP v. U.S. Dep't of Transp, 2011, n.p.).

Newspaper coverage of the planning process also gives voice to neighborhood concerns regarding displacement and changing neighborhood identity that are related to the cultural consequences of gentrification cited in the literature. Articles of note include community concerns regarding the displacement of a predominantly African American church in relation to the Dale Street station planning (Sawyer, 2015, n.p), community members with concerns about affordable housing (Jacobson, 2015, n.p), and interviews with longtime residents about being shut out of the beginning of the Central Corridor route selection process (Yuen, 2010, n.p.).

Other sources that convey neighborhood anxieties include oral histories, which touch on both Frogtown and Rondo. In a photography and oral history project on Frogtown, community members discuss struggles with poverty and violence in the neighborhood and disparities with other areas in Saint Paul, but also celebrate residents’ deep connections to the area (Huie, 1996). Another oral history project focuses on Rondo and provides further evidence of feelings of marginalization in
relation to the planning process stemming from midcentury displacement, and keenly felt roots in the neighborhood’s cultural identity (Cavett, 2005).

These archival sources come together to provide substantial insight into neighborhood concerns at the time of Central Corridor planning, and up until the time that the SCI planning grant was obtained for transit development planning in the Twin Cities region. Further insight will be offered later in this chapter via interviews with community members who were involved in the engagement and placemaking processes that have since occurred.

**Sustainable Communities Initiative Documents**

Many documents are associated with the SCI and its application in the Twin Cities area. The focus of this case study is to determine the SCI’s effect on creating placemaking opportunities that specifically respond to neighborhood concerns about gentrification. The documents that best illustrate this process will be examined below. As noted in the literature review, an effective way to ensure social sustainability is to collaborate across interests so that the varying facets of sustainable development are addressed, including social equity; gentrification is a threat to social sustainability, so incorporating meaningful community engagement in the development process may be a way to reduce its negative effects. In this section, I examine documents relating to these elements of the Central Corridor planning process. I begin with the coalition formed to administer the grant after it was awarded to the Met Council in November 2012 (Smart Growth America, n.d., p.22). Then I move on to the engagement strategy for the corridor via the work plan and best practices documents.
Program Overview and Work Plans

In 2011, the year in which the Corridors of Opportunity group was formed, the coalition submitted a summary of their goals, purpose, and work plan to HUD as part of the Regional Planning Grant process. The purpose of this submission was to describe the collaborative structure of the organization, in keeping with the SCI goals, and to outline the activities that the $5 million grant awarded to the area would support. In addition to the $5 million for the SCI grant, the coalition was awarded additional funding from Living Cities, “a collaboration of 22 of the nation’s largest foundations and financial institutions,” for complementary sustainable development implementation projects (Corridors of Opportunity, April 2011, p.2). Table 5-2 below presents several of the projects that apply to Central Corridor planning and implementation, which of the potentially conflicting sustainability interests they represent, whether they address Frogtown and Rondo neighborhood concerns, and the dollar amount of the grant dedicated to this interest. All activities and $ amounts listed here have portions of funds targeted to the Central Corridor in the Frogtown and Rondo areas; other activities funded through the grant that applied only to other areas were not included here. The corresponding guiding values of the SCI grant are also included in the table, which the Corridors of Opportunity coalition describe on their website:

In particular, the program encourages participating communities to consider the interdependence of:

- Economic competitiveness and revitalization
- Social equity, inclusion and access to opportunity
- Energy use and climate change
- Public health and environmental impact (Corridors of Opportunity, 2016, n.p.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corridors of Opportunity Activity</th>
<th>SCI Planning Grant Goal</th>
<th>Sustainability Interest</th>
<th>Rondo Frogtown Concerns</th>
<th>$Amount of Grant Dedicated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement and Outreach</td>
<td>Social Equity and inclusion</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Inclusion in Planning Process</td>
<td>$750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs Central: An Employment &amp; Workforce Cluster Project on Central Corridor</td>
<td>Economic Competitiveness</td>
<td>Economic Social</td>
<td>Economic Disparities and Poverty</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Corridor: Stormwater &amp; Green Infrastructure Planning</td>
<td>Energy Use and Climate Change</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Further Fair Housing</td>
<td>Social Equity and Inclusion</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance HousingLink Services¹</td>
<td>Social Equity and Inclusion</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancing Local Implementation Capacity</td>
<td>Social Equity and Inclusion, Economic Competitiveness</td>
<td>Economic, Social</td>
<td>Inclusion in Planning Process, Affordable Housing</td>
<td>$953,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other metro area transit corridor planning</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Economic Disparities and Poverty (via access to employment)</td>
<td>$1,425,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-2: SCI Regional Planning Grant activities and funds

The relative high dollar amount allocated to community engagement of the SCI grant money indicates the importance of meaningful community engagement that the local

¹ HousingLink is a service that provides resources and information about affordable rentals and subsidized housing in Minnesota.
planning coalition placed upon this process. Table 5-2 also illustrates that the social components of sustainable development are well represented in the Corridors of Opportunities activities. Such representation was a major feature of the literature regarding successful incorporation of equity into sustainability initiatives. It is also worth noting that the SCI grant included planning activities for the entire regional transit system as a high dollar priority, seen in the last row of the table, including future LRT and BRT corridors like Bottineau, Gateway, and Southwest. The community engagement allocation is also regional, but more than 25% of subgrantees were located along the Central Corridor (Corridors of Opportunity, July 2014, p.35-36). This shows that areas relevant to the case study are a major component of these efforts. The implementation capacity activities also refer to nine transit oriented development projects, five of which are located along the Central Corridor, and one in the case study area (Corridors of Opportunity, July 2014, p.16-17). This development project will be examined later in this chapter as an example of placemaking in the Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods that was directly impacted by the SCI grant.

The detailed work plan also includes a list of the required outcomes outlined by HUD for the SCI grant funds. These include several environmental sustainability goals, including reducing VMTs, as well as several economic and equity components, including a reduction in costs for housing and transportation. Significantly, a decrease of concentration of poverty and racially segregated areas is included in these outcomes, as well as a call for increased decision-making capacity in marginalized communities. (See Appendix II for the full text of the required outcomes.) (Corridors of Opportunity, April 2011, p.15)
These mandatory outcomes again emphasize the balance between the different aspects of sustainable development that must be represented in order for successful results, along with the explicit focus on equitable outcomes and increased participation from underrepresented groups. As the previous chapter helped to illustrate, members of the Frogtown and Rondo communities have been historically underrepresented in the planning process. In addition to historic marginalization, the referenced economic disparities for both low income and communities of color are present in Frogtown and Rondo. Because of this, the mandatory focus through the SCI is beneficial in gaining representation in these neighborhoods.

**Engagement Strategy**

In light of the importance the literature casts upon citizen engagement in addressing socially sustainable and equitable development, along with mitigating potential negative effects of gentrification, the engagement strategy that was produced by the Corridors of Opportunity group is an important document to include in this analysis. The first evidence of the engagement philosophy from the coalition is in the detailed work plan provided to HUD. In this document, the group describes the engagement and outreach project, along with the team made up of representatives from four area organizations, including the Met Council (Corridors of Opportunity, April 2016, p.1). The values behind the engagement process are listed here:
1. Sustainability means equitable investments in all of our communities and neighborhoods that support residents leading healthy, safe, affordable and productive lives within a clean environment. The CET [Community Engagement Team] will bring this vision and these values to the work.

2. In our regional planning processes, we will
   a. Ensure that populations traditionally marginalized – low income, new immigrant and communities of color – participate in the long range vision for our region and our regional transitways.
   b. Engage all stakeholders – underrepresented and traditionally marginalized communities – in meaningful decision making roles.
   c. Ensure greater transparency and accountability to communities in planning, research and data collection, evaluation, implementation, and investments in our region.

3. Reduce social and economic disparities in our region.

4. Respect, value, and support local communities and neighborhoods.

5. Build inclusive sustainable communities free from discrimination.

6. Prevent displacement of communities along transitway corridors and mitigate negative impacts of gentrification.

In our commitment to these vision and values, the Community Engagement Team will be accountable and transparent to our partners – populations traditionally marginalized-low income, new immigrant, and communities of color, local communities and public agencies. (Corridors of Opportunity, April 2016, p.2)

These values reflect both the SCI mandatory outcomes surrounding engagement, as well as the ideas and themes in the literature regarding meaningful engagement in the pursuit of equitable development. The community engagement process can be seen in Figure 5-1:
Figure 5-1: Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Model
(Source: Smart Growth America, n.d., p.23)

The Corridors of Opportunity group’s engagement process resulted in a community engagement strategy document in 2012 that included best practices for transit corridor engagement based on work done along the Central Corridor in Saint Paul. Among the recommendations were suggestions that community based organizations should do the bulk of engagement work because they have existing relationships with community members. This recommendation included statements from a Frogtown based organization about the importance of deep and continuous relationships throughout the engagement process in their neighborhood (Montesano,
2012, p.5). The importance of frequent and early engagement is also emphasized in this best practices document, especially in relation to creating trust and buy-in from communities that may associate development projects with past marginalization (Montesano, 2012, p.6). This process includes asking community members for ideas rather than presenting them with predetermined choices (Montesano, 2012, p.8), which allows communities to begin to define and set their own priorities—a strategy that, according to the literature, can help to address neighborhood concerns about gentrification, and create a path toward impactful placemaking.

The suggested best practice of taking the engagement to the community members rather than expecting them to come to the process is outlined below:

Nieeta Presley, of the Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) spoke of the long process of pulling together coalitions between community groups, community-based organizations, businesses, and church groups. This involved numerous approaches, including community meetings, and going door to door visiting residents. Presley also spoke of her organization’s hard work in order to recruit and train neighborhood leaders to lead work addressing light rail development. Transit-oriented development is complex, and ASANDC spent time recruiting and training neighborhood residents so that they could be knowledgeable, skilled leaders in the organizing effort. (Montesano, 2012, p.6,8)

This approach is markedly different from the City of Saint Paul’s Early Notification System procedure, which sends community information and engagement opportunities through district councils that can be held at inconvenient locations or times for community members.

**Current Planning Documents**

The station plans that resulted from the Central Corridor planning process were initially drafted as part of the Central Corridor Development Strategy, and were later adopted as addendums to the city’s comprehensive plan. Three stations—Victoria
Street, Dale Street, and Western Street—are located completely within the case study area, where the boundaries of the neighborhoods overlap. (See figure 5-2.)

Figure 5-2: Central Corridor stations in the Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods. (Source: Frogtown Rondo Homefund, 2016)

While the development strategy and station area plans provide important context for examining policies around community led activities in the station areas, it is important to note that the development strategy and the Dale Street Station Plan were both drafted prior to the receipt of the SCI regional planning grant, and prior to the addition of two of the three stations in Frogtown and Rondo. The strategy document includes principles and objectives that have influence upon the case study area, and address the regulatory ability for citizens to lead placemaking efforts. They objective speak to increased diversity, inclusive economic activity, and design of the physical
space in which the community is given a voice (City of Saint Paul, Oct 2010, p. 13-16). (See Appendix II for relevant principles and objectives text.) These principles and objectives show recognition of the community concerns regarding gentrification along the Central Corridor. The focus on current neighborhood character as an asset, and objectives that include strengthening the position of existing residents and businesses, allows for sensitivity to the cultural aspects of gentrification, as well as a willingness to let community defined priorities and identity lead some of the development process. The potential for these objectives to lead to placemaking opportunities is further reflected in the following strategies:

3.2.2. Expedite planning approvals for proposed developments that assist in meeting a demonstrated community need and/or meet development design standards.
3.3.1 Create opportunities for marketing and business partnerships. Coordinate with local employment centers, ethnic chambers and neighborhood-based CDC’s to offer financial assistance
3.5.1 Invest in an attractive, accessible, connected and safe pedestrian streetscape environment and public spaces that invites people to linger and explore local shops and businesses. (City of Saint Paul, Oct 2010, p. 15)

The existence of this policy framework corresponds with recommendations in the literature regarding equitable development and gentrification as well as effective placemaking. These existing policies within the Development Strategy, in combination with trust building engagement efforts, as well as attention paid to meaningful participation, likely influenced the number of community-led placemaking projects that have materialized in recent years.

**Interviews**

Interviews with leaders of community-based organizations, economic development professionals, and individuals involved with placemaking, help to shed
light on the application of policies in the practical sphere. Two of the community-based organizations that I engaged were direct sub-grantees of SCI grant funds for community engagement. One of these organizations, the Aurora/Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC), represents the African American community, and the other, the Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA), is based in the Hmong community. A third economic development organization, Neighborhood Development Center, administered a forgivable loan program aimed at small business retention along the line. Finally, Friendly Streets Initiative, a Saint Paul based placemaking organization, has been very active in the development of outdoor public space in the Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods. Of these organizations, ASANDC operates completely within the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods, and AEDA and Friendly Streets do a majority of their work within these boundaries as well. NDC is located within the study area, and also does work in three other low income areas in both Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The organizations’ specific focus on the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods means that they help to promote the needs of these neighborhoods in balance with the concerns along the rest of the corridor. I also interviewed city staff involved in the economic development efforts and project management of activities that were adjacent to Central Corridor development. Representatives from each of these organizations and the city offer a different perspective and valuable experience with both the Central Corridor development process and ongoing work in the neighborhoods.
SCI Grant

All of the interviewees were aware of the HUD grant and believed that it had an effect upon the level of collaboration and ability for community-based organizations and community members to offer input into the development process. Isabel Chanslor, a Project Manager (now Chief Programs Officer) at Neighborhood Development Center that was brought in for Central Corridor work in 2009, talked about attending meetings with both regional and city planners, not as attendees of public hearings, but as collaborators (personal interview, Oct 2016). This collaborative status allowed her to express concern that the amount of the forgivable loans for business retention through construction was too low (it was initially $10,000, and was increased to $20,000). Ms. Chanslor also noted a difference between the support and access her Frogtown based organization received in the early stages of planning and after the SCI grant was received. She offered an opinion that the equity mandates within the grant language led to better engagement practices, even though the policies were already somewhat in place in city and regional policy prior to that time. Ms. Chanslor also noted that the public perception of the Frogtown and Rondo segments of University Avenue was very negative prior to Central Corridor planning, and that these perceptions may have kept planners and other officials from coming to the areas often enough to solicit opinions or to enforce codes.

Ms. Presley, Executive Director of ASANDC, was more skeptical of the influence of the SCI grant in elevating the voice of the community. She also pointed out the tendency of city and regional planners to follow engagement guidelines more closely at about the time the grant was received, compared to earlier in the Central Corridor
planning process. However, she noted that the planning work was substantially complete at this time, and that the increased care within the African American community may have been in response to the Rondo community and NAACP lawsuit against the regional planning agency and the DOT that was working its way through the courts at the same time (personal communication, Oct 2016).

**Gentrification Concerns**

Interview subjects also listed gentrification as a major concern among the residents and business owners they spoke with prior, during, and after Central Corridor construction. One interview subject stated that gentrification was the only concern that they encountered when they approached community members (L. Christiansen, personal interview, Oct 2016). This concern is consistent with the literature that finds a correlation between transit and gentrification, as well as planning documents that prioritize gentrification as a community concern as revealed through public hearings. Ms. Presley put this into the historical context of the Rondo neighborhood by explaining that many existing community members lived through the disruption of Rondo when Interstate 94 was constructed, and therefore drew parallels with the Central Corridor process. These concerns were elevated when early on in the planning process community members perceived that their preferred alignment had been ignored, and two essential Rondo stops were missing from the plan, leaving the neighborhood with just one station. In response to these concerns, Ms. Presley made clear that the number one priority of ASANDC during the light rail development was to accommodate the needs of existing residents—whether this was housing, commercial space, or community services. The second priority for ASANDC was to create an environment
that would welcome back prior residents who wanted to return after being displaced decades ago by I-94. The organization’s third consideration was to address the needs of transit dependent newcomers to the neighborhood (N. Presley, personal interview, Oct 2016).

Another perspective, from the City of Saint Paul, noted that the receipt of the SCI grant potentially helped negotiation with the Met Council for funds for outreach, engagement, and placemaking projects that the city already wanted to do in relation to the Central Corridor project (E. Muller, personal interview, Oct 2016). They noted that negotiation and securing regional funding for city specific initiatives took longer than expected. However, eventually the city obtained funding for five additional community engagement positions, and support for a project that conducted door to door interviews in the Frogtown and Rondo areas regarding unemployment and underemployment. These funds may not have been a direct SCI subgrant, but the engagement goals espoused by the Met Council and Corridors of opportunity, as well as the additional funds for other areas, may have influenced their availability for this purpose.

**Lasting Impact**

I gained valuable insight from the interview subjects about the lasting impact of the SCI grant and the increase in community engagement and collaborative processes that accompanied it in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods. Initially I hypothesized that the collaborative nature of the SCI would have built relationships that created opportunities for future projects using pooled capacity and resources. There is some evidence, through the interviews and in the following placemaking observations, that this has in fact occurred. For example, Ms. Chanslor discussed a facade improvement
program the organization started in targeted locations along the corridor as a joint effort both born of partnerships formed during construction, and with the support of the business owners with whom they built trust during the outreach process (personal interview, Oct 2016). However, each interview subject from non-profit groups noted that with the close of the grant program and the opening of the light rail line in 2014, the resources and access to decision-making agencies have largely fallen away. The organizations have built capacity to navigate these systems, but the loss of regular communication and organized collaborative efforts that likely increased economic development effectiveness. Some interview subjects suggested that a longer-term system of support would have been more beneficial to the goal of reducing displacement. One recommended a ten-year period of maintenance where communication and financial resources could continue to support existing residents after construction has ended (N. Presley, personal interview, Oct 2016). This way, businesses could be supported through the survival period and begin to ramp up and grow with access to new customers brought by the light rail, and affordable housing could continue to supplement higher priced units as the market improves. However, another interview subject cautioned that attempts to further institutionalize the type community participation and visioning that has come about in recent years may lead to a devaluation of this process, or changes into a less inclusive model (L. Christiansen, personal interview, Oct 2016).

**Summary**

The interviews showed that many community based organizations gained a seat at the planning and negotiating table that they felt did not previously exist. This view is
consistent with the promotion of balanced sustainable and equitable development according to the literature. Their voices elevated the social equity needs of these previously marginalized neighborhoods and changed some policies in the communities’ favor. Some of the interviewees attributed this new voice to the influence of the SCI grant mandates, while others emphasized different contemporary events.

In terms of meaningful community engagement, relating back to Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation (1969), there seems to be some variation in the activities in the neighborhood based organization and the corresponding rungs of engagement. In many scenarios, the CBOs were given subgrant money for a specific purpose, and were largely left to conduct engagement and visioning activities as they saw fit, as well as to apply implementation money in a way that corresponded to the outcomes of the visioning process (I.Chanslor, et al, personal interview, Oct 2016). In at least two instances, the Old Home Dairy project and the Victoria Theater restoration, the community visioning process changed the outcomes or scopes of the project, which implies a level of partnership. However, overall, the SCI mandated engagement was conducted after the completion of the rail alignment, so participation is limited to individual projects along the line rather than the entire project planning process, which lends an element of tokenism to the participation.

**Observation of Placemaking Activity**

Community led placemaking projects have taken a variety of forms in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods. Examples of historic preservation, arts, and public green spaces are included below. The projects in each of these categories help to communicate the priorities and identity of the neighborhood where they are located,
which in turn can respond to the cultural pressures of gentrification as the neighborhood experiences changes associated with the Central Corridor.

**Small Business Retention**

One of the most significant placemaking efforts that occurred in response to the impending LRT line is explicitly related to the effort to reduce displacement of the many small businesses along University Avenue. Three interview subjects were involved in business retention efforts. At first, considering the methods employed to keep small businesses in place—including technical assistance and outreach to each small business along the corridor, forgivable loans for sales lost during construction, and general marketing—it was unclear whether business retention could be considered a placemaking activity. The “main street” style of much of University Avenue contributes to a sense of place on the streetscape, but the motivations for development activity were unclear in documents related to the process. These motivations were clarified when an interviewee representing a Rondo non-profit explained that the idea for marketing the cultural nodes along the corridor was presented by a Rondo community member who came to the visioning process after researching the impact of cultural businesses on displacement (N. Presley, personal interview, Oct 2016). The interviewee remembered that this community member suggested expending effort to save immigrant and African American businesses through construction, both as a way to keep the businesses themselves from being displaced, and as a way to assert a unique identity in the Frogtown and Rondo areas, after recovering from the construction period, this could be used as an attraction for visitors and a path toward growth.
The marketing efforts came to fruition, led by the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, a group of local and national foundations that offered additional financial support to economic development and equitable development efforts along the line. Within the Frogtown and Rondo area, there are two nodes. One is focused on history and arts near the Victoria Street station, and the other is near the Western Avenue station and is rooted in Asian immigrant culture (N. Presley, personal interview, Oct 2016). In an additional development effort, a forgivable loan program was initiated by the City of Saint Paul in 2010, and joined by the Met Council with SCI grant funds in combination with other sources in 2011 according to a non-profit project manager of the forgivable loan and technical assistance programs (I. Chanslor, personal interview, Oct 2016). These loans included up to $20,000 in lost sales for each year the street in front of the business was under construction, and were issued to over 200 University Avenue businesses in Saint Paul. A community-based organization administered the loan program, and benefitted from its position in the Frogtown neighborhood, which gave staff the ability to go door-to-door and assess the needs of each business.

While this does appear to be an instance of meaningful community engagement being incorporated into policy, as well as a community-led placemaking effort directly aimed at displacement, a Rondo based organizer had some doubts. She pointed out that the increased efforts and resources offered to the business retention program came after citizens and organizations of the Rondo community sued the Met Council for failing to include negative impacts on small businesses in the Environmental Impact Statement for the corridor (N. Presley, personal interview, Oct 2016). Therefore, the business retention efforts may have been more a response to this suit than a result of the
relationships and engagement strategies encouraged by the SCI grant. Considerations such as these demonstrate the complex processes that promote balancing the interests of sustainable development in the practical sphere, but citizen participation and direct responses to gentrification concerns were most definitely at play in this effort to bolster the sense of place through cultural nodes along the line.

**Old Home Mixed-Use Development & Preservation Project**

This project, located on University Avenue, was included within the SCI grant funds under the category of “advancing local implementation capacity.” Aurora/Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC), a Frogtown/Rondo community based organization, initiated this development project in partnership with a private development firm (Affordable Housing Collaboration, 2014, p.1). The project preserves and reuses a historic building that had been vacant since 2006, and was once an important center of employment, while adding affordable housing units close to the Western Avenue LRT station (Affordable Housing Collaboration, 2014, p.1). In a report, ASANDC director Nieeta Pressley discussed the impetus for taking on the project, “It is critical that we celebrate the cultural and ethnic roots of this neighborhood. One way in which we can do that is by seizing this moment of change as an opportunity for the community. We have the buying power, attractions, places of historical interest,
and the business base to increase visitorship to the area and to make the neighborhood an even greater place to live and work” (Affordable Housing Collaboration, 2014, p.4).

Figure 5-3: Old Home Dairy Building
(Source: Affordable Housing Collaboration, 2014, p.1)

The community partnerships fostered by the SCI’s collaborative and engagement mandates directly influenced the ability of the community to engage in the placemaking project here, as the funds were provided in part by the grant. ASANDC also went through an extensive community visioning process to determine the community needs that would be met with the project, and received additional financial support from the city (Affordable Housing Collaboration, 2014, p.4).

**Victoria Theater and Ray-Bell Films**

Like the Old Home project, the Victoria Theater was threatened with demolition during the construction of the Central Corridor light rail. (See figure 5-4). When the owner of the building next door attempted to purchase the theater and turn the space into parking for their redevelopment, community members and local organizations, in
partnership with the Twin Cities Community Land Bank and with support from a city grant, purchased the building in order to turn it into a community art venue (Bitters, 2016, n.p.). The Victoria Theater was originally built in 1915 as a silent film house and was then converted into a speakeasy and later a retail space. It has been vacant for several years, and is situated next to another significant arts related building on the corridor, Ray-Bell Films. (See figure 5-5). The Ray-Bell building is currently split between an Ethiopian restaurant and a Hmong owned wholesale bakery. Business owners are receiving facade improvement and historic preservation funding and support from a coalition of community based organizations, including Historic Saint Paul and Neighborhood Development Center. The Ray-Bell project is intended to complement the Victoria Theater restoration and help to create a historic and cultural node at the Victoria LRT station that capitalizes on existing community assets and neighborhood support for the preservation of these particular structures. In support of the preservation of the two buildings, the Executive Director of Historic Saint Paul wrote to the city council and argued that, “Together, the two buildings represent a cutting-edge industry of their era..."
and speak to the nature of street life along University Avenue in the early 20th century” (Victoria Theater Arts Initiative, n.d., n.p.).

Figure 5-4: Victoria Theater, 2016
(Source: Historic Saint Paul)

Figure 5-5: Ray-Bell Films, 1928
(Source: Minnesota Historical Society)

The ongoing preservation efforts near the Victoria Street station are indicative of the framework of collaborative development strategies put in place during Central Corridor
development. An interviewee who works with one of the community-based organizations involved in the Ray-Bell project noted that the trust between business owners and organizations that was built through Central Corridor outreach efforts helped in the process of asking business owners about their needs for improving the appearance of their buildings. Motivations for facade improvement and preservation on this block included both the preservation of neighborhood character and the desires of business owners to remain competitive and attract new customers as they pass through the Victoria Street station.

**Light Rail Station Art Projects**

![Dale Street Station art](Source: Metro Transit, n.d.)

One way in which arts based placemaking activities were incorporated into the Central Corridor planning process was at the stations themselves. Art at the Dale Street station, created by a Frogtown resident, Seitu Jones, reflects the neighborhood’s history as a landing place for new Americans. (See figure 5-6). The artwork "uses symbols from
the textile traditions of the many cultures who settled at the crossroads of University Avenue and Dale Street. The metal panels are designed to recall a set of quilts” (Metro Transit, n.d., n.p.). Artworks at the Victoria and Western stations similarly represent elements of Asian culture and honor civil rights and union leaders (Jahn, 2014, n.p.). In total, these works offer evidence of the weight given to existing community identities and cultures in the areas surrounding the stations.

**Little Mekong Plaza and Rondo Commemorative Plaza**

![Little Mekong Plaza](image)

*Figure 5-7: Little Mekong Plaza (Hansen, Sept. 2016, n.p.)*

Community members have also been active in the recent development of outdoor green spaces with ties to community identity. Two of these projects are the Little Mekong Plaza on University Avenue near the Western Avenue station, and the Rondo Commemorative Plaza near Victoria Street, on what was Rondo Avenue prior to the construction of I-94. Both of these projects celebrate the ethnic identity and histories of the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods respectively. Little Mekong Plaza was
initiated by the Hmong American Partnership and the Asian Economic Development Association, who like ASANDC, was a subgrantee of the Central Corridor’s SCI planning grant funds for community engagement. This plaza celebrates the Hmong immigrant community in the neighborhood, and is seen as a symbol of vitality and a gathering space for the community (Walsh, Sept. 2016, n.p.). (See figure 5-7).

Similar to the Little Mekong Plaza, the Rondo Commemorative Plaza was recently dedicated as a way to celebrate the African-American community in the Rondo neighborhood, and to commemorate the loss of the many homes and businesses due to construction of the interstate. This project was initiated by residents of Rondo, and was recently backed by the City of Saint Paul and several foundations as funders (Walsh, Oct. 2016, n.p.). In reference to the park and to the neighborhood’s identity, one of the community members who brought the project to life urged attendees at a groundbreaking ceremony, “Claim it, own it, protect it. Make it a place where people can sit and talk forever” (Walsh, Oct. 2016, n.p.). These projects are concrete examples of community-set priorities that are realized in public spaces and incorporated into the physical form of the neighborhood. Though one project is directly connected to an organization that was involved with the Corridors of Opportunity-directed engagement process, it is likely that the processes put in place to facilitate projects that serve community needs and foster more direct visioning from citizens throughout the Central Corridor planning process, brought these projects to fruition.

Summary of Placemaking

Each of these examples illustrates community set priorities, and attempts to bolster the identity of the neighborhood in a way that supports existing residents or
represents its history. Some were explicitly aimed at reducing displacement, and others may slow changes to the culture of the neighborhood, which the literature pointed out as influential in gentrifying neighborhoods both as a factor that influences decisions of community members to move and one that affects the lives of remaining residents. Many of these efforts were led or facilitated by community-based organizations and partnerships that were formed or increased in capacity due to the SCI grant. These organizations, per the interviews, increased their knowledge of official processes and grew or strengthened connections with city and regional agencies during Central Corridor development. All of these factors show that the SCI likely had influence in creating the connections and opportunities for placemaking activities, but they also exist in a complex planning and development context during a time of rapid change in which a number of outside influences also played a role.

**Summary of Findings**

This case study has shown how community capacity was influenced and built through the engagement and collaborative processes and policies put in place during the development of the Central Corridor in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods in Saint Paul. While some of these policies were already written into city and state statutes, as well as the corridor development strategy, according to interviews, the collaborative and engagement mandates that were included in the SCI grant helped to enact the spirit of these policies, and bring underrepresented groups into the formal planning process. The involvement of community-based groups and the effort to reach out to as many community members as possible led to lasting connections that resulted in continuing collaborative problem solving. This continuing collaboration, at times,
manifested in placemaking efforts, such as the preservation of historic employment centers and art venues, community led art projects, outdoor spaces, and events that physically assert the cultural identity of the neighborhood.

In the case of Rondo and Frogtown, concerns about gentrification and displacement were at the forefront of the planning process due to these low-income neighborhoods’ vulnerability to rising prices, and their history with disruptive transit infrastructure projects. The Central Corridor planning process, while not without conflict, included programs and projects that attempted to directly address these fears, while network building during the development process created relationships that enabled community members to act upon their priorities after construction was complete. The use of this community capacity to create places that reflect history and existing cultures helps to bolster the visible indicators of neighborhood identity that community members do not want to lose.

However, the collaborative and participatory structures that were put in place during the HUD grant process were not well institutionalized, and have to some extent been diminished since the end of the program. Interview subjects who were associated with community-based organizations observed this and lamented the lack of access to policymakers and the breakdown of previous relationships after the opening of the Central Corridor line. This reaction is consistent with the literature that addresses the effects of the SCI program for de-siloing agencies and organizations at the local level in the Twin Cities area. Without ongoing state and regional support for these efforts, the collaborative atmosphere at the agency and governmental level has been largely
diminished, even though the relationships between community based organizations and community members have been better maintained.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this study—from the examination of state and city policies, along with the observation of placemaking activities, and interviews with community members and planners—are supported by literature that points to the benefits of meaningful engagement in successfully balanced sustainable development. Increases in communication, supportive resources, and decision-making power were shown to occur after SCI grant money began to flow into the community, which enhanced engagement policies already in place. The SCI mandates complemented the existing structures and successfully brought underrepresented groups into the planning process. Fostering these connections and building capacity, especially in community-based organizations, created opportunities for placemaking projects that, as demonstrated through interviews, were often direct responses to concerns about gentrification and neighborhood change.

These results are consistent with research that showed the SCI policies increased resource distribution to previously underserved areas, and encouraged creative problem solving methods at the local level (Pendall, et al, 2013). The ability for citizens in low-income or minority communities to be present in the planning process and build trust in the system helped to elevate the issue of equity in comparison with other considerations through these resources and collaborations. The elevation of equity through voices not often involved in the planning process is also a reflection of effective sustainable development practices as touched upon in the literature from Evans & Agyeman (2003) and Agyeman (2008), which illustrated how equity is often the component that is left behind. The resulting increased emphasis on equity does seem to
bolster the existing literature regarding deep community engagement as the key to prioritizing social sustainability and equitable development, and is likely applicable on a broader scale. Notably, community based planning policies were in place prior to the implementation of the grant program in the Twin Cities area, but they were applied in a relatively superficial way in the case study areas prior to the SCI directed outreach. This superficial application of engagement likely occurs in other cities, and seeking improvement in this realm is a path toward the improvement of balanced sustainable development. This also related to the concept of the Ladder of Citizen Participation that was discussed in the literature (Arnstein, 1969). While policy structures existing for participation and engagement, from interviews it seemed that the city was going through the motions of the statutes and achieving token levels of engagement rather than partnership or delegated decision-making. The SCI process initiate systems that improved the meaningful levels of participation, but was still not completely consistent with the higher rungs of the participation ladder. The failure after the development period to maintain the collaborative systems and participatory processes put in place while administering the SCI grant also indicates the superficiality of existing policies, and suggests a path for improvement. Providing increased support in communities vulnerable to gentrification even after construction is completed is an avenue to investigate further as a strategy for limiting displacement, and attempting to reach participatory partnership.

Increased capacity and resources in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods were deployed, at least partially, for placemaking measures. These results are consistent with research that finds developing decision-making capacity in immigrant
communities leads to a physical environment that fosters residents’ connections with their neighborhood (Sandoval and Main, 2015). It is also consistent with literature that discusses existing residents’ fears surrounding the cultural impacts of gentrification, and community desires for physical spaces that reflect existing residents’ identities and serve their needs. By investing in the making of physical spaces during the time that increased lines of communication with planning bodies and additional resources were available, Rondo and Frogtown residents demonstrated the importance of placemaking as a response to the communities’ anxieties about neighborhood change. Spaces such as these that are born out of meaningful engagement and collaborative processes may provide a way forward for cities grappling with strategies to reduce gentrification related to transit development. The effects of placemaking activities in mitigating the damage of gentrification in the Frogtown-Rondo case are tied to the ability of the communities to select and guide the projects themselves, in a way that means that these places can often serve many community needs at once. Combinations of affordable housing, commercial space, and community arts space with historic preservation; and business retention with the creation of vibrant streetscapes and cultural nodes are strategies that demonstrate how these places both display community identity in public space, and serve the needs of residents and businesses that might make them vulnerable to displacement as prices rise and cultural amenities shift. For this reason, implementing pathways for community-led placemaking opportunities may be a valuable step in minimizing displacement in large-scale transit development projects.
Further Research and Next Steps

The processes and pressures that occur along with transit development and other sustainable development efforts in urban neighborhoods are complex and multifaceted. This is particularly true in the case of the Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods, where a planned light rail transit line and corresponding transit oriented development led to neighborhood concerns about gentrification and fears surrounding rising costs of living and doing business. These kinds of instances lend themselves to thorough research into the impacts of transit and transit oriented development, especially in neighborhoods like Rondo and Frogtown that are home to populations that have been historically underrepresented in the planning process. In order to fully develop this project, further research into the quantitative effects of Central Corridor development would be prudent over a longer period of time after the opening of the rail line. This research would be conducted in order to measure displacement and the real impact that collaborative and participatory processes had on these indicators in the study area in contrast to similar neighborhoods in regions that did not receive SCI guidance. This research could also include investigation into the impacts of any placemaking activity on these indicators.

Policy elements in Minnesota and in Saint Paul, as well as a history of citizen engagement in the Rondo neighborhood, may have had an impact on how well the participatory processes responded to concerns in the case study area. It would be useful to conduct further research on previous Minnesota statutes that have outlined goals for sustainable development in a way that balances competing sustainable interests, and how these statutes influence city policies to include community based
language in corridor planning documents, even prior to the SCI grant. Further investigation of the differences in the planning process between initial development and the introduction of SCI funding would also shed more light on the true impacts of this particular program, as this case study addresses these differences primarily with the interview subjects.

Further exploration of the relationships between sustainable transit development, meaningful collaboration and engagement, placemaking, and gentrification, may lead to strategies that could help to mitigate displacement in low-income and other marginalized communities. This case study offers a first look at how sustainable development policies, such as those written into the SCI regional planning grant, can take a step in the right direction toward equitable results by thoughtfully balancing competing interests and building community capacity.

In addition to the above steps that would provide further depth to this project, a valuable option for further research would be a comparison with the SCI grant program’s effects in low-income neighborhoods in other metro areas. The Rondo and Frogtown areas have a foundation of existing community engagement processes that are, per the text, focused on representing the voices within the community. In addition, there are several non-profit organizations working out of these neighborhoods, for the direct benefit of the neighborhoods. In other areas with a less solid policy foundation, and a lower presence of non-profit organizations, the outcomes of the SCI policies encouraging meaningful engagement may be different. Referring back to the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969), the non-profits that the SCI trusted with engagement and implementation work in this case were relatively representative of the study
neighborhoods, which led to higher level of participation. However, if the non-profits in other cities did not have these same qualities, the work might remain as more token participation regardless of the increased outreach efforts.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe your experience with the neighborhood planning process in relation to the Central Corridor development?

2. In what way were you aware of the Sustainable Communities Initiative Partnership involvement in the project?

3. Were you aware of the Sustainable Communities guidance regarding meaningful community engagement?

4. Do you think this guidance had an impact on the way city staff, planners, community members, and organizations interacted during the planning process?

5. What are your observations regarding city staff efforts in community engagement during the Central Corridor planning process?

6. What city or other government entity staff positions were involved with the engagement process?

7. What were the community concerns that you recall regarding the Central Corridor development in the Frogtown and Old Rondo areas?

8. Was any part of the planning process specifically aimed at mitigating the potential displacing effects of the transit development?

9. Was any part of the planning and development process specifically aimed at placemaking?

10. How were community priorities ascertained during the process of planning for development corresponding with the Central Corridor project?

11. Did concerns about community identity come up during the planning and development process? Or, were ideas about community identities incorporated into the station area plans? If so, how were these identities formed?

12. Have there been any community-led project outcomes that you have seen as a response to Central Corridor development? If so, do you feel that they are related to the partnerships formed or types of engagement that occurred during the planning phase?

13. How do you think the Central Corridor project has impacted the Frogtown and Old Rondo areas?

14. Do you feel like the planning and engagement process for the Central Corridor differed from other local planning efforts?

15. How important was the concept of equity in the development of the Central Corridor?
APPENDIX II: TEXT OF PLANNING STATUTES

- Metropolitan Council Responsibilities
  - 473.145 DEVELOPMENT GUIDE. The Metropolitan Council shall prepare and adopt, after appropriate study and such public hearings as may be necessary, a comprehensive development guide for the metropolitan area. It shall consist of a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, programs, and maps prescribing guides for the orderly and economical development, public and private, of the metropolitan area. The comprehensive development guide shall recognize and encompass physical, social, or economic needs of the metropolitan area and those future developments which will have an impact on the entire area including but not limited to such matters as land use, parks and open space land needs, the necessity for and location of airports, highways, transit facilities, public hospitals, libraries, schools, and other public buildings.
  - 473.856 METROPOLITAN SYSTEM STATEMENTS; AMENDMENTS. The council shall prepare and transmit to each affected local governmental unit a metropolitan system statement when the council updates or revises its comprehensive development guide for the metropolitan area.
  - 473.175 REVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANS. Subdivision 1. For compatibility, conformity. The council shall review the comprehensive plans of local governmental units, prepared and submitted pursuant to sections 473.851 to 473.871, to determine their compatibility with each other and conformity with metropolitan system plans.

(Office of the Revisor of Statutes, 2016, n.p.)

- Corridors of Opportunity required outcomes:
  - Creation of regional transportation, housing, water, and air quality plans tied to local comprehensive land use and capital investment plans.
  - Decrease in per capita [vehicle miles traveled] VMT and transportation-related emissions for the region. Increased proportion of homes and rental units affordable to a full range of household incomes close to high-quality transit service.
  - Aligned federal planning and investment resources that mirror the local and regional strategies for achieving sustainable communities.
  - Decrease in overall combined housing and transportation costs per household.
  - Decreased number of neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty and minority segregation.
o Increased participation and decision-making in developing and implementing a long range vision for the region by populations traditionally marginalized in public planning processes.

o Increase in the share of residential and commercial construction on underutilized infill development sites that encourage revitalization while minimizing displacement in neighborhoods with significant disadvantaged populations.

o Increased use of compact development as a tool for regional planning to accommodate population growth.

o Reduced social and economic disparities for the low-income populations, communities of color, and other disadvantaged populations within the target region.

o Increased proportion of low-and very-low income households within a 30-minute transit commute of major employment centers.

(Corridors of Opportunity, April 2011, p.15)

• Central Corridor Strategic Development Strategy Principles and Objectives:
  o Benefit and Strengthen the Diverse Communities Along the Corridor Objectives
  • 2.3 Create opportunities to explore and celebrate the many cultures, identities and stories that make up the history of Corridor neighborhoods.
  • 2.4 Assist the entire community to share in the long-term benefits of the LRT investment.
  • 2.5 Protect and enhance existing neighborhood character as a core asset. Clearly identify areas of change and stability, and enforce objectives for each through the regulatory framework.
  • 2.6 Help stabilize and support the retention and enhancement of area households. Implement “stay in place and thrive” programs. Those who choose to stay in a rapidly-developing area, whether young singles, families or seniors, should have the opportunity and support to do so through, for example, a greater range of housing options.
  • 2.7 Leverage LRT investment and related development activities to improve quality of life and foster various wealth-building opportunities for existing residents and businesses. Ensure options for living wage employment, job training, affordable housing (homeownership and rental) and business development opportunities are captured in investment along the Corridor.
  • 2.8 Commit to easing the transitional periods of LRT construction. Identify and minimize both short-term disruption and any possible long-term negative effects of LRT infrastructure requirements.
2.9 Research, evaluate and explore the possible effects of displacement and gentrification in the area. Identify policy options for vulnerable areas, and work to avoid potential short and long-term negative effects associated with LRT investment. Place special emphasis on providing timely support and options for groups most at risk (e.g seniors, people of color, small businesses, low income households, and the disabled).

- **Link and Foster Inclusive Economic Activity**
  - 3.1 Ensure commercial development is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and supports the vision for the Corridor. This includes the retention, enhancement and growth of local small minority businesses, a strengthened Midway Shopping district, major employment opportunities, and locally-owned businesses and incubator spaces.
  - 3.3 Strengthen and foster local businesses along the Corridor. LRT should create opportunities to maintain and enhance existing customer and client bases through increased transit and pedestrian activity.
  - 3.4 Facilitate shifts from commercial tenancy to ownership. Like area residents, local entrepreneurs and business owners have a vested interest in their community. Those who choose to stay should have the opportunity to pursue the long-term benefits of building equity and real estate appreciation.
  - 3.6 Minimize disruption to Avenue and downtown businesses during LRT construction.

- **Collaborate from Design to Operation**
  - 6.1 Educate and inform the community about all facets of LRT. The public needs a constant, easy-to-access, and reliable source of information throughout design, construction and eventual operation. Whenever possible, bring this information directly to where the community lives and works.
  - 6.2 Ensure a voice throughout the process. Opportunities to provide meaningful input are essential. Identify and widely publicize milestone presentations, meetings and decisions.
  - 6.3 Build trust and enthusiasm for LRT. Outreach campaigns should involve, and messages should be delivered by, trusted community members.
  - 6.4 Encourage early and meaningful dialogue between developers, District Councils and community groups on development proposals along the Corridor.

(City of Saint Paul, Oct 2010, p. 13-16)