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COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY

A FRAMEWORK FOR A MORE EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR ALL

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FOR THE STUDY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY**
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The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity is an interdisciplinary research institute at The Ohio State University. Its goal is to deepen our understanding of the causes of and solutions to racial and ethnic disparities and hierarchies. The Institute brings together a diverse and creative group of scholars and researchers from various disciplines to focus on the histories, present conditions, and the future prospects of racially and ethnically marginalized people. Informed by real world needs, its work strives to meaningfully impact policies and practices.

Communities of Opportunity: A Regional Perspective

A region is a collection of communities sharing not just borders, but a linked economic and social fate. People travel across city, county and state borders to go to work; businesses rely on suppliers, labor and customers that cross these same borders. These forces link us economically. Anchor institutions, such as museums, hospitals and colleges, serve and draw from a regional base, linking us socially and culturally. Air, water and pollution cross borders as well, linking us environmentally.

In today's global economy, a metropolitan region must harness the productive capacities of all of its residents, businesses and institutions in order to stay competitive, sustainable, vibrant, and healthy. The difference between regional vibrancy and regional vulnerability depends upon the success of maximizing opportunity for all of a region's neighborhoods and people. As people recognize the shared fate of city and suburb, and as regional vulnerability is highlighted by the stresses of globalization, de-industrialization, and inequality, the importance of meaningful and sustainable regional cooperation is coming to the forefront of diverse policy agendas.

Unfortunately, when we take a broad view of most metropolitan regions, we often find an artificially disconnected "tale of two cities." Some parts of the region are affluent and largely White, with well-funded school districts, new grocery stores with fresh produce, high-quality child care, state-of-the-art health care facilities, and opportunities for social networking critical to civic engagement and job advancement. The other is largely poor, plagued by high-crime environments, and confined to racially segregated areas of concentrated poverty.¹ In these neighborhoods, under-resourced schools struggle to meet the myriad needs of children in poverty; parents shop at grocery stores with overpriced and low-quality food,

and people motivated to work lack connection to meaningful, sustainable employment.

This segregation of families into places of advantage and disadvantage, or as we call them, neighborhoods of high- and low-opportunity, is neither natural nor irreversible. Half a century ago, when federal subsidies for suburban housing and transportation made it economical for middle-class families to leave the city, Whites left in numbers. Because early housing policy often prohibited integrated neighborhoods through lending restrictions and racially restrictive covenants, it was mostly Whites who left and built equity in new neighborhoods. As central cities lost significant population, jobs followed. The loss of tax revenue resulted in increased tax rates for municipal services for those who were least able to shoulder them. Funds for maintenance and repair of existing



infrastructure waned as money went to subsidizing further suburban and exurban development, cutting into farmland and forest.

Today, suburban land use policies continue to prevent fair housing opportunities by promoting single-family, large-lot development. This has been shown to depress the growth of suburban rental housing and limit in-migra-

tion by African American and Latino families.² The location of federally- and state-subsidized rental housing contributes to continuing segregation as well, by clustering affordable housing in economically disadvantaged communities of color. In addition, continued discrimination in the housing market, racial steering by realtors, and predatory or discriminatory mortgage lending all limit housing opportunities for people of color.³

Residential racial segregation in America results in segregation from other critical life-changing opportunities such as living-wage employment, high-quality education and safe, healthy neighborhoods for children. However, disinvestment and concentrated poverty doesn't remain in the central city; distressing symptoms of such abandonment, such as property vacancy and foreclosure, spread to mature inner suburbs. This on-going social, racial and economic segregation produces depressed and uneven educational and economic outcomes, which hinders the ability of the region to become a vibrant, sustainable residential and employment magnet.

The “Communities of Opportunity” framework is a model of fair housing and community development to remedy these disparities. The model is based on the premises that everyone should have fair access to the critical opportunity structures needed to succeed in life; and that affirmatively connecting people to opportunity creates positive, transformative change in communities. The Communities of Opportunity model has two goals: to bring opportunities to opportunity-deprived areas, and to connect people to existing opportunities throughout the metropolitan region. The model seeks to bring opportunities into distressed neighborhoods by improving education, stimulating investment and expanding employment opportunities. The model also advocates affirmatively connecting marginalized populations to regional opportunity structures by improving housing mobility and providing fair and effective public transportation. In addition, the model advocates for managing sprawling

growth, in order to reduce the drain of jobs and resources from existing communities. The “Communities of Opportunity” model advocates for a fair investment in all of a region's people and neighborhoods -- to improve the life outcomes of all citizens, and to improve the health of the entire region.

The Communities of Opportunity framework is inherently spatial. It recognizes that inequality has a geographic footprint, and that maps can visually track the history and presence of discriminatory and exclusionary policies that spatially segregate people. Schools, doctors, jobs and the like are unequally geographically distributed across a region, often clustered in areas of “high” and “low” opportunity neighborhoods. To address the need for equitable opportunity and improved living conditions for all residents, we need to assess the geographic differences in resources and opportunities across a region to make informed, affirmative interventions into failures and gaps in “free market” opportunities. In order to direct investment into under-resourced and struggling areas, and in order to proactively connect people to jobs, stable housing, and good schools for their children, we need to be able to quantitatively model opportunities throughout our regions. Our “Communities of Opportunity” model utilizes state-of-the-art geographic information systems (GIS) and extensive data sets to inform regional development by analyzing the distribution of opportunity in our metropolitan areas. This “opportunity mapping” has already been completed for many metropolitan areas and used by advocates to further fair housing and community development goals.

Opportunity Matters: Space, Place and Life Outcomes

Accessing opportunity to better our lives and our children's lives motivates us to move across town, across the country, or across the world for better jobs, a quality education, and safety

from violence. The quality of neighborhood conditions – and their role in accessing or denying opportunity -- affects the life chances of all families.⁴ As stated in the findings report of the Congressional bi-partisan Millennial Housing Commission:

“...neighborhood quality plays an important role in positive outcomes for families. Stable housing in an unstable neighborhood does not necessarily allow for positive employment and child education outcomes.”

Fifty years of social science research has demonstrated that racially isolated and economically poor neighborhoods restrict employment options for young people, contribute to poor health, expose children to extremely high rates of crime and violence, and house some of the



Living in high crime areas produces tremendous stress and risks for many urban residents

least-performing schools. A vast research literature documents the ways in which social opportunities, and the advantages they confer, cluster and accumulate spatially. Neighborhoods powerfully shape residents' access to

social, political, and economic opportunities and resources. A number of studies have linked segregation to an increased likelihood of perpetrating and being victimized by violence and crime.⁵ The level of stress experienced in high-poverty, isolated neighborhoods contributes substantially to this risk. When people face a high level of stress, child abuse, neglect, and family breakups are more likely.⁶

In addition, a voluminous literature has examined the “spatial mismatch” between predominantly African American, older urban neighborhoods and the employment opportunities in the suburbs and exurbs.⁷ New research is emphasizing the importance of access to a diverse social network and workforce intermediaries to overcome the social dimension of the spatial mismatch.⁸

Researchers have also found that the poverty rate of a school influences educational outcomes far more than the poverty rate of an individual; and that impoverished students do better if they live in middle-class neighborhoods and/or attend more affluent schools.⁹ Studies also show that students who receive their education in integrated environments fare better than their segregated peers. For example, a recent analysis of school desegregation in Louisville, Kentucky, found that students of color who attended more integrated schools demonstrated increased academic achievement levels and higher test scores.¹⁰ Students of color in Raleigh's economically integrated schools have experienced dramatic increases in test scores.¹¹ In the Minneapolis region, students attending low-poverty schools in the region's suburbs through “The Choice is Yours” program have shown increases in educational outcomes on par with their suburban peers.¹² Attending a desegregated school also translates into higher goals for future educational attainment and occupational choices¹³ and improved social networks.¹⁴

In the United States, each successively higher education level is associated with higher earning power, and data over the last 25 years show

that this gap is only widening.¹⁵ Furthermore, higher levels of educational attainment are associated with greater labor force participation rates and a lower probability of unemployment. The gap between the employment rates of college versus high school graduates has been widening steadily as well.¹⁶ Additionally, there is a strong positive relationship between the education level and the health status of an individual: the lower the level of educational attainment, the higher the mortality rate and prevalence of specific diseases such as cancer and heart disease.¹⁷ Residents of poor, segregated neighborhoods experience poorer health outcomes because of increased exposure to the toxic substances that are disproportionately sited in their communities, and because of greater barriers to sustaining healthy behaviors, such as limited access to adequate grocery stores.¹⁸

Perhaps most important for regional economic development, there are fewer jobs in the “new

are experiencing lower returns for their education, as the wages of low-education jobs are rapidly falling, while wages of high-education jobs are rising. Disparities in educational attainment disadvantage the region’s competitiveness in the new global skill-based economy, where educated labor is one of the primary indicators of an economically healthy region.

What happens when people are better connected to communities of opportunity? In Chicago, efforts to desegregate public housing and move people from concentrated poverty to neighborhoods of opportunity (known as the Gautreaux program) showed long-term positive results. People who moved from poor, high-crime areas of the city to opportunity-rich suburbs were significantly less likely to drop out of school, significantly more likely to be in a college track academic program, significantly more likely to attend a four-year college, significantly more likely to be employed if not in college, and significantly more likely to earn more than \$6.50 per hour and have employee benefits, than people who stayed in the city.¹⁹

The positive results showing that better neighborhoods could indeed improve social, physical, educational and economic well-being were the impetus behind HUD’s “Moving to Opportunity” (MTO) program, which began in 1994. Research from preliminary analysis of MTO sites showed that racial and economic desegregation with targeted Section 8 rental assistance was possible, and that beneficial, statistically significant changes occurred in families’ lives within two to four years.²⁰ However, the MTO program was halted halfway through, leaving long-term assessments of people’s experiences unexplored.

Qualitative studies of MTO participants found that many people who moved out of concentrated poverty described their experience as a profound, life-changing event. As one participant noted, living in her concentrated poverty neighborhood was like living in a war zone:



People in low opportunity neighborhoods are often isolated from growing job opportunities

economy” for students without a college education. Because the public education system reflects the economic and racial segregation of neighborhoods, segregated localities offer significantly different levels of educational opportunity. Students in under-performing schools



Low opportunity neighborhoods have suffered from decades of disinvestment and neglect

“It was like being in a war zone. It was really bad...A lot of drug dealings. Shoot-outs. Girls getting beat up by their boyfriends. Young girls...Everybody has such low self-esteem and no regard for each other. Nobody looked out for each other. It was horrible.”²¹

Participants described the opportunities provided by their new neighborhoods as life changing:

“I just got promoted to a higher position...Moving has done wonderful things for me and my family. It has given me an outlook on things that I’m surrounded by. Better neighborhood, better schools for my kids, a better job, great things for me.”

“It gave me a better outlook on life, that there is a life outside of that housing.”

“[It’s] totally different. It’s a totally different neighborhood because there is no drug activity, no kids hanging on the corner, not kids fighting each

other. It’s totally different from the city. It’s somewhere you can call home. You can just sit down and be comfortable and have no worries at all.”²²

As one 16 year-old participant noted, the move altered the course of his life, helping him move away from the dangers of living in his previous neighborhood:

“I came out here, I matured. This life matured me, from the city life I used to live, and it calmed my nerves. I used to have a lot of stress. It calmed me. I am able to meditate...And it’s quiet, it’s very quiet out here. That’s what I like, I’m like, I can sit outside and look at the stars. Ghetto, you can’t sit outside and look at the stars. Somebody think you dead, you know...”

[Question:] If you were still living in [your former neighborhood]...what would you be about?

[Answer:] Well, I’d be dead.”²³

Based on a long history of both quantitative and qualitative research, it is evident that the access to opportunity has profound implications for an individual's future. This phenomenon not only impacts individuals in isolated communities, but has implications for everyone in the fabric of the wider community. The cumulative impact of being isolated from opportunity results in diminished life chances for hundreds of thousands of people, harming the well-being and health of the entire metropolitan region.

Segregation from Opportunity in Our Society

Unfortunately, many citizens are isolated from opportunity by patterns of residential segregation, exclusionary land use policies, sprawl and disinvestment in urban areas. This segregation disproportionately impacts low-income people of color, but also traps many low-income Whites in opportunity-poor communities. While residential segregation has declined in recent decades, it still remains very high, and school segregation is actually growing in many metropolitan areas.

African Americans remain the most racially segregated population in the nation, measured by their segregation from Whites. Nationally, the average metropolitan region had an African American - White "dissimilarity index" of .65 in 2000. This means that 65% of the metropolitan African American population would have to relocate in order for them to become fully integrated in our metropolitan regions.²⁴

This segregation of African Americans and other people of color is segregation from opportunities critical to quality of life, financial stability and social advancement. Bruce Katz and Margery Turner synthesized the impact of this opportunity segregation in *Rethinking Affordable Housing Strategies: An Action Agenda for Local and Regional Leaders*:

Residential segregation denies families of color full and free choice about where to live, while often denying minority neighborhoods the services and resources they need to thrive and grow. As a consequence, minorities' access to quality schools, jobs, and economic opportunity is limited. The most extreme consequences of residential segregation are found in the central cities' large urban areas. Because communities of color experience higher poverty rates than whites, the concentration of minorities in inner-city neighborhoods also concentrates poverty and compounds its social costs. As jobs, wealth and economic opportunities have migrated to the suburbs, poor minority communities in the central city have become increasingly isolated and cut off from access to the mainstream of our society and economy. Thus, housing segregation helps sustain economic inequality and contributes to the persistence of urban poverty.²⁵



Segregation in our schools harms everyone

This opportunity isolation and economic sorting of people in our metropolitan areas may be growing worse. Many inner-suburban communities are experiencing the "urban problems" of opportunity isolation usually associated with central cities. The growth of distressed suburbs is prevalent in many mature Northeastern and Mid-western regions. Meanwhile, affluent ex-urban areas are becoming the "new," temporary magnets for opportunity in our metropolitan regions, attracting jobs, investment and containing the highest quality schools. The result is a continued polarization of neighborhoods between rich and poor (or low- and high-opportunity). Research by the Brookings Institute

found the number of middle-class neighborhoods declined by 30% since 1970, while low-income and high-income neighborhoods grew by 32% and 53%, respectively.²⁶

The Communities of Opportunity Framework

The Communities of Opportunity model is a new model of community development and fair housing which is suited to the 21st century dynamics of our metropolitan regions. The central idea behind the Communities of Opportunity approach is that people are situated within a complex and interconnected web of opportunity structures that significantly shapes quality of life. These opportunity structures include housing, education, health care, employment, transportation, and civic engagement. Unfortunately, improving the housing,

achievement, and social and political empowerment. We must invest in places by supporting neighborhood development initiatives, attracting jobs with living wages and advancement opportunities, and demanding high-quality local services for all neighborhoods, such as local public schools that perform. We must also encourage better links among people and places, fostering mobility through high-quality public transportation services and region-wide housing mobility programs.

■ Foundation

The Communities of Opportunity approach to community development and fair housing is growing in acceptance and is grounded in many well-established fair housing strategies. Housing policy experts have long understood the critical connection between affordable housing and opportunity-rich neighborhoods in improving the lives of low-income people.



One component of communities of opportunity is to bring opportunities back to impoverished neighborhoods

schooling, employment and health care opportunities for everyone in the region is limited by policies and processes that spatially segregate people, such as exclusionary zoning, housing discrimination, and lack of viable transportation options. The goal of the Communities of Opportunity model is to identify and remedy these discriminatory and unfair mechanisms, emphasizing that policy must affirm the truth of our interconnectedness, not work to separate us unnaturally. The model is based on a strong foundation of research and fair housing experience, and it is invested in people, places, and linkages. We need to build human capital through improved wealth-building, educational

Older regional housing models, such as “Fair Share” housing models, were designed to promote more affordable housing in suburban communities. The “Moving to Opportunity” (MTO) federal housing mobility demonstration program was informed by the nexus between opportunity and quality of life in metropolitan regions. “Workforce housing” initiatives seek to help connect more people to critical economic opportunities.

Some state Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs (also known as “LIHTC,” the largest federal low-income housing program in the nation) are adopting criteria which underscore the connection to opportunity for low-income

housing developments. Although most states' LIHTC guidelines unfortunately promote development in higher poverty areas, some states have started revising their site selection criteria to promote more units in lower poverty areas. Several states add incentive scoring "points" in the competitive scoring criteria for Low Income Housing Tax Credit developments in areas of income diversity, population growth or job opportunities.²⁷ Wisconsin recently modified its scoring criteria to prioritize zip codes with recent job growth for LIHTC investment.²⁸ Minnesota utilizes indices of population growth and job growth to prioritize LIHTC projects.²⁹ Illinois designed "live near work" criteria to promote LIHTC development in suburban areas with job growth and labor shortages.³⁰ Also, many states integrate other opportunity structures into their site selection evaluation, such as proximity to childcare, access to public transit, and access to nearby services, such as grocery stores and medical facilities.³¹

The opportunity-based housing model is a more nuanced housing model than previous fair share housing strategies. Instead of concentrating on a city vs. suburb dichotomy, the opportunity-based housing model focuses on opportunity, wherever it may be located in the region. This important distinction makes the opportunity-based housing model more adaptive in responding to the realities of the complex regional dynamics facing metropolitan regions today. Opportunity is a dynamic feature in our regions, moving spatially and temporally from place to place. These trends are most evident in the declining inner-ring suburbs and redeveloping inner-city neighborhoods found in many regions today.

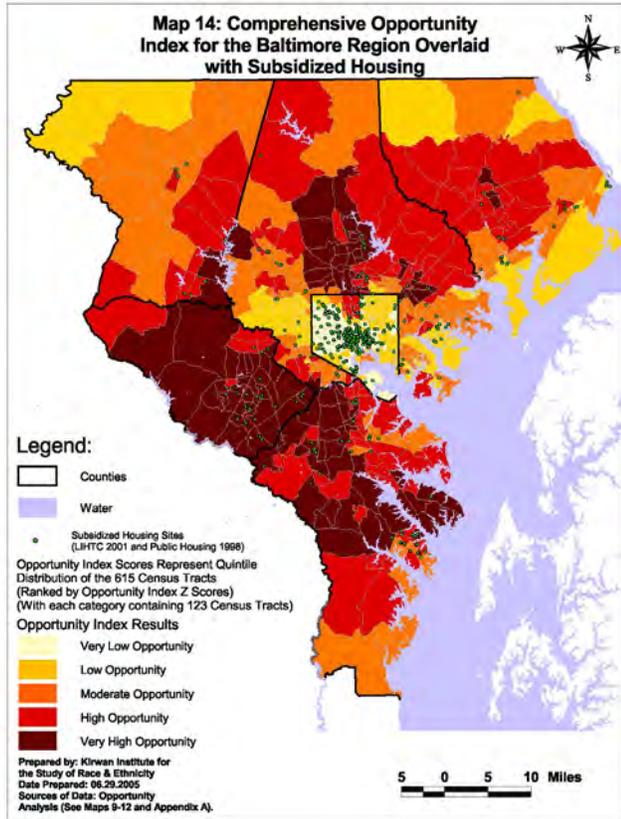
- **Bringing Opportunities Back into Neglected Neighborhoods**

Economically depressed and resource-starved inner-city neighborhoods have been deprived of opportunity for decades. Historical patterns of disinvestment, segregation, discrimination and sprawl have stripped many urban neigh-

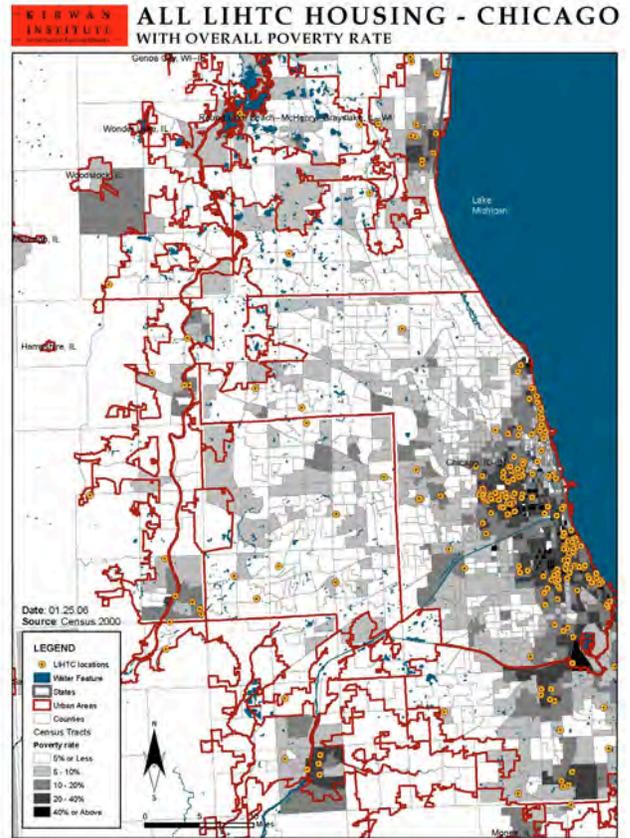
borhoods of economic and educational opportunities and destabilized entire communities. The Communities of Opportunity model advocates for targeted strategic interventions in low-opportunity areas to redevelop critical opportunity structures for urban residents. Some of the strategies to bring opportunity back to urban communities include:

- Supporting anchor institutions, such as public universities, museums and hospitals, in existing urban neighborhoods
- Supporting equitable investment in public infrastructure for urban neighborhoods
- Leveraging public investment to attract private investment to areas of low growth
- Developing high-performing magnet schools to attract a diverse urban constituency
- Aggressively targeting the redevelopment of vacant property and brownfield areas
- Supporting homeownership and mixed-income housing initiatives
- Supporting wealth creation and asset building for residents in low-opportunity areas
- Utilizing community benefits agreements to ensure that existing residents have fair access to emerging opportunities

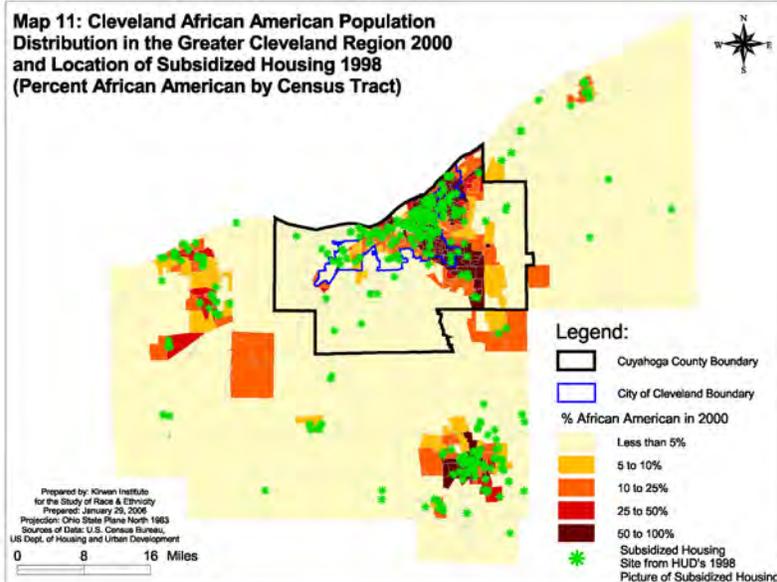
The model is adaptable to the current reshaping of our urban areas. Gentrification can threaten access to opportunity for low-income families who are displaced or excluded from new opportunities. The Communities of Opportunity model encourages the preservation of affordable housing in revitalizing areas,



Subsidized housing is spatially concentrated in low opportunity areas in Baltimore region, MD



High poverty areas in Chicago, IL display higher concentrations of LIHTC developments



Racially segregated areas correlate with concentration of subsidized housing in the Cleveland Region, OH

similar to the goal of including inclusionary housing in high-opportunity suburban communities. The model avoids locating additional subsidized housing in declining inner suburbs; it identifies these areas for targeted redevelopment as well.

- **Affirmatively Connecting People to Opportunity Through Housing Mobility**

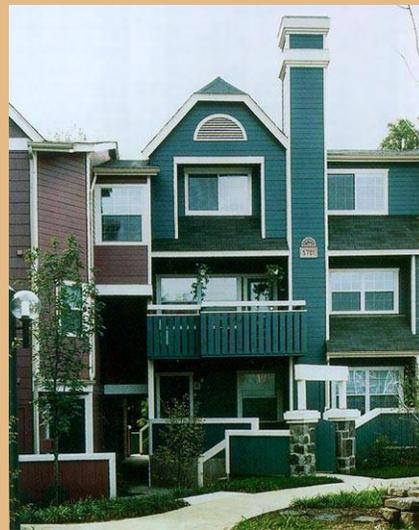
Housing, in particular its location, is the primary mechanism for accessing opportunity in our society. Where you live is more important than what you live in. Housing location determines the quality local public services, such as schools, the degree of access to employment and transportation, and the degree of public safety. Often this underlying reality is made evident in housing values, so where you live also determines how much wealth you can build through homeownership.

One of the core goals of the Communities of Opportunity model is to affirmatively connect low-income families to opportunity through housing mobility. Currently, most affordable housing in our metropolitan regions is disconnected from opportunity. Federal housing programs and exclusionary land use policies have worked to concentrate affordable housing in segregated, opportunity-poor communities. This is most evident in subsidized housing policies. Historically, subsidized housing was deliberately placed in racially segregated communities. Contemporary subsidized housing policies have continued this trend, locating the majority of new units in impoverished and segregated central city neighborhoods.

Nationally, subsidized housing units are still concentrated in opportunity poor, inner-city neighborhoods. For example, in 2000, three quarters of the nation's traditional assisted housing units were located in central cities, while only 37% of the nation's metropolitan population lived in central cities. More recently built Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) developments (the most prolific subsidized housing program in the nation) are



Neighborhood reinvestmest strategies resulted in inclusionary and infill housing in Columbus, OH



Inclusionary zoning policies in suburban Montgomery County, Maryland have produced over 11,000 affordable units since inception



Exclusionary land use policies which mandate expensive housing, block access to opportunity

clustered in central city locations; in 2000, 58% of all LIHTC units were found in central city locations.³²

This clustering of assisted housing also corresponds to a spatial segregation of assisted units from stable neighborhoods. In 2000, while the average metropolitan neighborhood had a 13% poverty rate, neighborhoods with traditional assisted housing³³ had a poverty rate of 29%. While only 4% of all metropolitan housing units were located in concentrated poverty neighborhoods, more than 11% of assisted housing units were found in concentrated poverty neighborhoods. The average neighborhood with traditional assisted housing had household incomes that were more than 40% lower and home values that were more than 20% lower than the average metropolitan neighborhood.³⁴ *(See maps on page 9 to view this spatial concentration of subsidized housing in racially segregated, higher poverty areas).*

Many equitable housing policies have been shown to effectively connect more low-income families to areas of opportunity. For example, inclusionary zoning mandates the inclusion of affordable housing in large housing developments. Hundreds of inclusionary zoning programs are in place throughout the nation, with Montgomery County, MD³⁵ as the most prominent example. These mandates counteract the unnatural barriers placed on the market for affordable housing by exclusionary housing policies such as large-lot zoning. In addition to inclusionary zoning, other housing policies can help counteract exclusion in the housing market, including: regional fair share housing policies, equitable use of housing trust fund developments, educating realtors on racial steering, enforcing fair housing laws (to stop predatory lending and realtor discrimination), and targeted use of subsidized housing resources to areas of opportunity. *(See sidebar to view photos of inclusionary housing developments in areas of opportunity).*

Opportunity Mapping: A Diagnostic Tool to Promote Communities of Opportunity

The first step in applying the Communities of Opportunity framework is a critical one, and it is to use opportunity mapping to better understand and represent the dynamics of opportunity within a region. This rigorous exercise allows communities to measure opportunity comprehensively and comparatively; to communicate who has access to opportunity-rich areas and who does not; and to understand what needs to be remedied in opportunity-poor communities. Opportunity mapping harnesses sophisticated mapping software and detailed data sets, enabling people to proactively identify where policy interventions are needed to remedy conditions of inequality.

To map opportunity in the region, we use variables that are indicative of high and low opportunity. High opportunity indicators include the availability of sustainable employment, high performing schools, a safe environment, access to high-quality health care, adequate transportation, quality child care and safe neighborhoods. These multiple indicators of opportunity are assessed at the same geographic scale, thus enabling the production of a comprehensive “opportunity map” for the region. These opportunity maps provide a valuable diagnostic tool for bringing opportunity into depressed communities and affirmatively connecting affordable housing to opportunity, effectively utilizing limited public resources for the benefit of all residents of the region. *(See sidebar for more information on opportunity mapping).*

Communities of Opportunity in Action

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity has worked with many communities

who are using the Communities of Opportunity framework to promote social justice, emphasize interconnectedness and create healthier metropolitan regions. The following are some examples of recent initiatives.

■ Thompson vs. HUD: Connecting Public Housing Residents to Opportunity

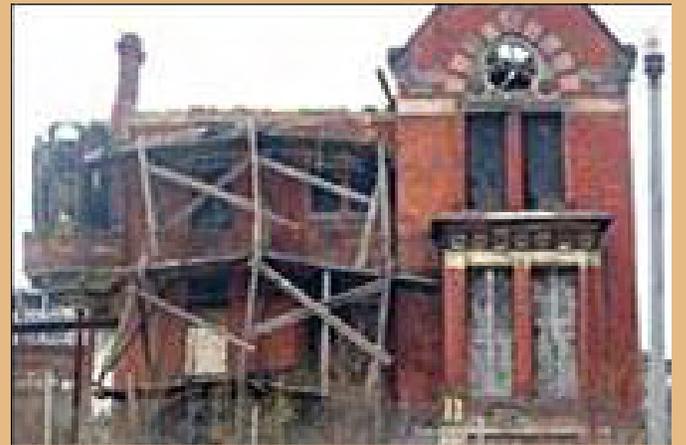
In 1995, the ACLU of Maryland filed a lawsuit on behalf of a class of approximately 14,000 former, current and prospective tenants of Baltimore City public housing. The suit alleged that HUD denied African American public housing residents opportunities to live throughout the Baltimore region, instead concentrating them in predominately minority areas within the city limits, in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

In January of 2005, the Fourth District Court found HUD liable for failure to take affirmative steps to implement an effective regional strategy for desegregating public housing in the Baltimore region. Kirwan's Executive Director, John Powell, served as an expert witness in both the liability and remedy phases of the trial. In the remedy phase, Professor Powell proposed the adoption of an opportunity-based housing model to remedy HUD's fair housing violation.

For the remedy, Baltimore's 615 census tracts were analyzed to identify areas with good schools, safe and stable neighborhoods, and economic opportunities. Director Powell recommended that desegregated housing units and targeted housing vouchers be extended to the region's high-opportunity census tracts, giving thousands of African American families in public housing the opportunity to better their lives. Judge Garbis will issue his final ruling on the remedy later this year. This approach has been embraced by the Plaintiffs in the case, as well as by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Maryland ACLU.

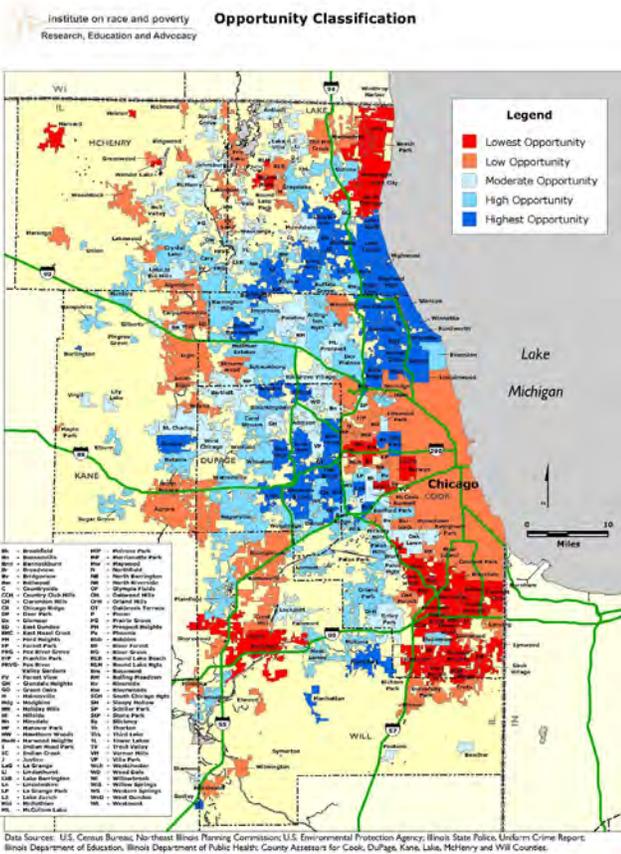
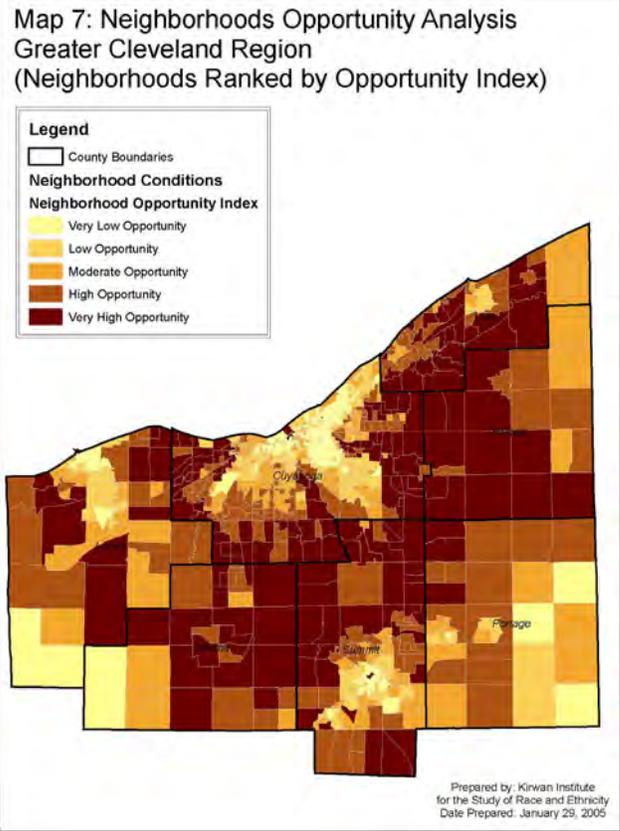
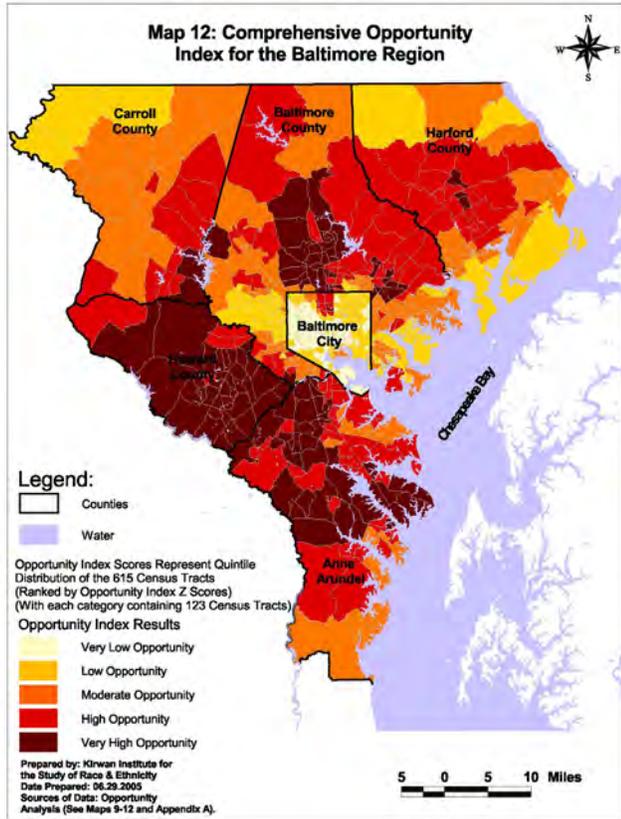
■ Vacant Property in Detroit: Bringing Opportunity Back to Detroit's Inner City

Abandoned properties and vacant land are significant impediments to opportunity for neighborhoods. Vacant properties reduce property values in surrounding areas, depress property



Kirwan Institute is working with advocates to eliminate vacant housing in Detroit, MI

tax revenues, and create significant public safety hazards. In response, a land bank can be established to expedite the reclamation and redevelopment of land. A land bank generally involves public acquisition of abandoned property; the land is then transferred to a nonprofit third party for redevelopment. Land banks attempt to unlock the potential value of abandoned properties and sites, with the goal of returning them to productive use. The Kirwan Institute has collaborated with local regional equity advocates to create a land bank for Wayne County, Michigan, the home county of the City of Detroit. The Institute also worked with a coalition to support land bank legislation for the State of Michigan, which passed in December of 2003. The coalition included M.O.S.E.S. (a faith-based social justice organization), Community Legal Resources, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the University of Michigan's Urban and Regional Planning program, and other local advocates. The establishment of the land bank authority in Wayne County will be instrumental in address-



Right
Opportunity distribution map
Cleveland region, OH

Top Left
Opportunity distribution map
Baltimore region, MD

Bottom Left
Opportunity distribution map
Chicago region, IL

ing and resolving issues related to abandoned and vacant property.

■ Erase Racism: Communities of Opportunity in Battle Creek, MI

Kirwan has been working with the National Resource Center for the Healing of Racism since 2003 on a series of presentations on structural racism and Communities of Oppor-



Downtown view, Battle Creek, MI

tunity for public outreach, advocacy and education. Beginning with a framework of analysis that examined the structural contributions to regional disparities, Kirwan staffers developed and assisted with regional convenings which focused on the need to connect all residents to communities of opportunity, in order to address housing and economic development disparities that disadvantage the entire region. The most recent collaboration took place in September 2006, for the Calhoun County Summit on the Healing of Racism. Kirwan researchers lead break-out sessions on housing, economic development, and education. Community leaders utilized the Communities of Opportunity model to frame policy reforms, and the stakeholder group formed sub-committees to implement their policy action items within the next year.

■ Opportunity Mapping and Housing Advocacy: Columbus, OH; Chicago, IL; and Austin, TX

The Kirwan Institute provided a county-wide housing report for Building Responsibility, Equity, and Dignity (B.R.E.A.D.), a faith-based organization working for justice and inclusion in Columbus, Ohio. The report

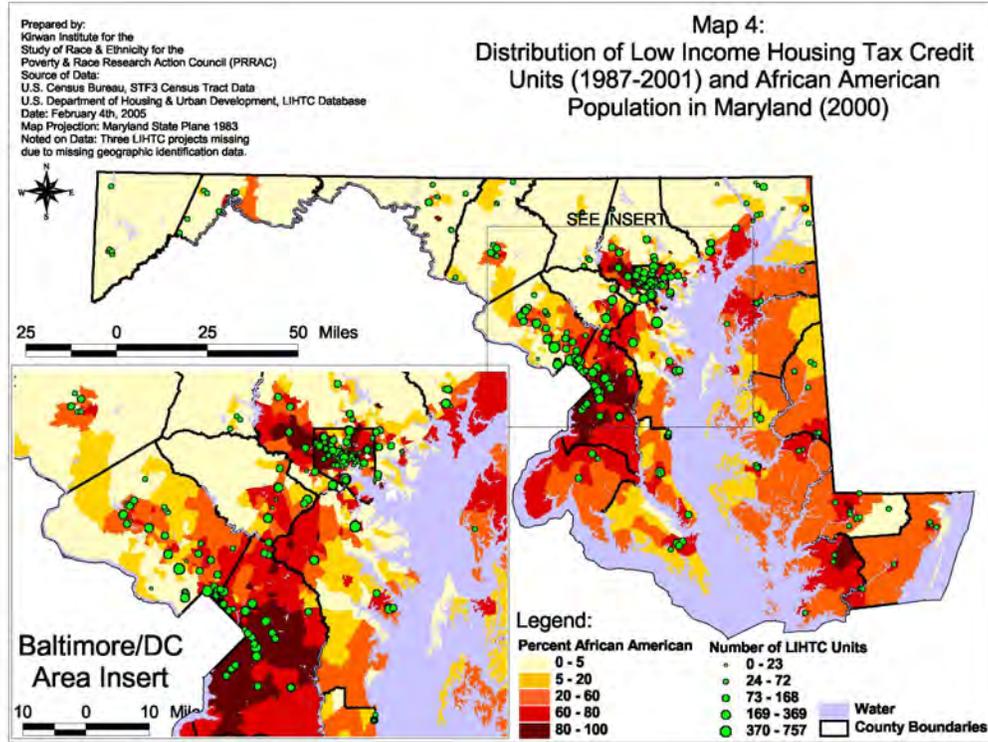
comprehensively analyzed housing need in Franklin County (the Columbus metropolitan area). Researchers found that the current housing supply did not provide adequate affordable housing for extremely low- and very low-income households. The report used the Communities of Opportunity framework in analyzing the distribution of affordable housing, demonstrating that the current distribution of affordable housing was not adequately connected to critical opportunity structures in the region, and that significant racial disparities existed with respect to cost and housing quality burdens.

By paying particular attention to critical opportunity factors and how they were distributed around the region, we were able to assist B.R.E.A.D. in its effort to better fund the regional housing trust fund. Our use of the opportunity-based housing model in the Columbus metropolitan area helped to provide additional housing for the region's poorest families, and critically examined the relationship between access and opportunity for all of the region's households.

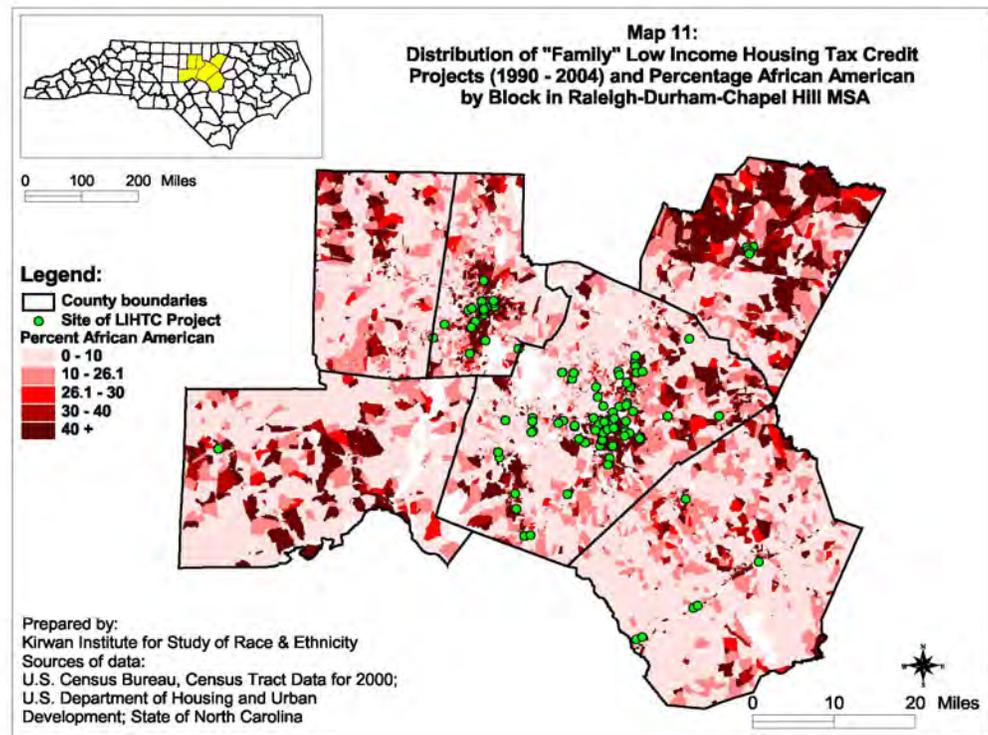
Additionally, Kirwan staffers comprehensively mapped Communities of Opportunity in the Chicago region for the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. The Council then used the maps to influence public policy and to aid housing voucher holders looking for affordable housing in high-opportunity communities. The Institute is currently involved in creating interactive opportunity maps for the Austin, Texas region, assisting a coalition of neighborhood organizations, local non-profits and advocacy organizations in better targeting their services and better influencing housing and community development policy.

■ Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program: Race, Poverty and Opportunity

The LIHTC Program, an indirect Federal subsidy, is the largest program to finance the



LIHTC units are overrepresented in African American neighborhoods in Baltimore, MD



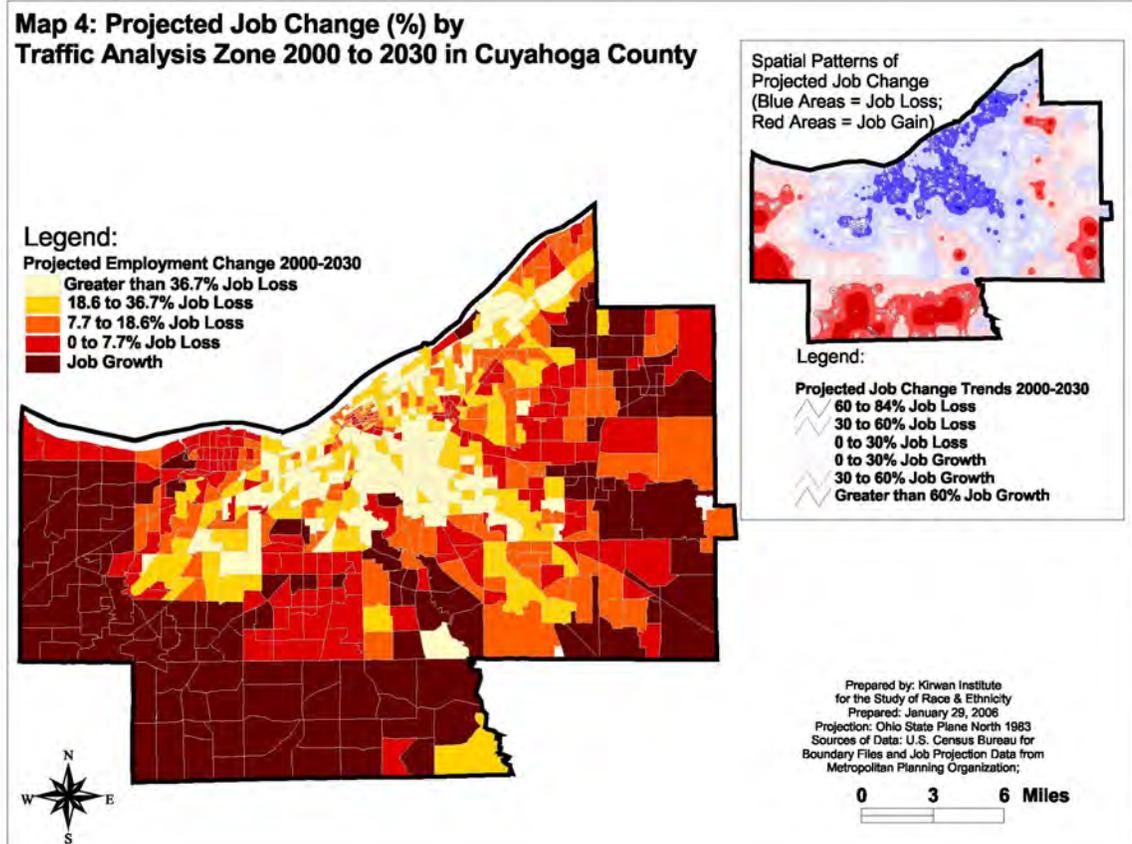
Over-concentration of LIHTC projects correlates with racially segregated neighborhoods in Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill MSA, NC

development of affordable rental housing for low-income households. Unfortunately, these housing units are generally located in economically depressed and racially segregated neighborhoods. The geographic concentration and the lack of access to suburban development and related job opportunities, provides little relief to low-income families trying to improve their financial well-being. Working in collaboration with the Poverty Race Research Action Council and the Lawyers Committee, the Institute has assisted in analyzing the impact of recent LIHTC developments on racial and economic segregation. The Institute and its partners utilize this analysis to educate local stakeholders and state housing finance agencies in order to reform LIHTC policy to promote more development in areas of high opportunity, rather than in racially and economically segregated areas of low opportunity. As an ex-

ample, the Kirwan Institute provided technical assistance and data analysis for the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) in modifying their LIHTC scoring criteria to be more inclusive of “opportunity-based housing” principles. Other LIHTC education and advocacy projects have occurred in Maryland, North Carolina and Illinois.

■ Regional Equity: Creating Greater Opportunity for All (Cleveland, OH)

The Kirwan Institute, in collaboration with representatives from the African American Forum on Race and Regionalism, recently completed a comprehensive report on regional collaboration in the Cleveland region for the Presidents’ Council of Cleveland, an advocacy organization of African American business and



Economic opportunities will continue to shift away from inner-city neighborhoods in Cleveland, OH

political leaders. While the report covered regional strategies for equitable economic development, fair housing, education, employment, and transportation opportunities, it was unique in that it was grounded in an African-American perspective, while underscoring the need to grow regional opportunities for all residents. It built upon and expanded earlier work by the Kirwan Institute in Cleveland that had identified structural impediments to minority business development in the region. “Communities of Opportunity” was a central theme throughout the report as a useful strategy for promoting greater opportunity and equity in the Cleveland region. The Presidents’ Council will use the policy recommendations from the study to advocate for a regional strategy to produce greater equity and help revitalize the region’s economy.

Conclusion: Transforming our Communities for a Better Tomorrow

The Communities of Opportunity framework provides a comprehensive strategy to confront the persistent racial and social inequalities that separate us and depress all of our futures. Inequality is a sign of an economically and socially inefficient society, where proper investments are not made in human capital, and much of the population cannot meet its creative potential. These disparities and inequities make our nation less productive and resourceful, reduce our vitality, and depress opportunities for all. The goal of the model is a transformative change, not only for marginalized residents, but for all people, by producing a more just, connected, growing and healthy community.

We all must be allowed to flourish in order to contribute to our families and communities. The Communities of Opportunity model provides a framework to join and raise our collective capacities by assuring that the region is not weakened by disparities and dying

neighborhoods. No neighborhood should be deprived of critical opportunities, and no person should have their life outcome predicted by a geographic identifier. By assuring that our residents and neighborhoods are connected to life-changing opportunity structures, we assure a better society and the promise of a better future for everyone.

Endnotes

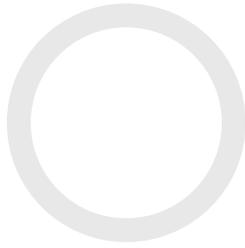
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