Nicholtown and Brutontown are adjacent neighborhoods within the Poinsett District of Greenville County, South Carolina. The Poinsett District is a historic African American community that has experienced significant changes in recent years due to neighborhood revitalization efforts. This study aims to determine whether gentrification is or will be an issue for Brutontown and Nicholtown in light of the recent revitalization projects in the area.

Introduction

Neighborhood revitalization is inherently a contentious topic as it usually is a catalyst for overall social change and has an impact on people’s residences. One of the main concerns of neighborhood revitalization is gentrification, the process by which people and property values increase in a neighborhood. This study was conducted in order to contribute to the Poinsett Project Coalition’s knowledge base on Brutontown and to gain a better understanding of the nature of the change that has taken place in both Brutontown and Nicholtown and its potential social and economic implications for Greenville. Data was collected on race, education attainment, and median household income for Nicholtown, Brutontown, and the immediate surrounding areas from the 2000 and 2010 censuses and from the American Community Survey (ACS) for 2005-2009. The purpose of this case study is to examine the extent to which gentrification has occurred; to develop a sense of place, economic development, and recreational facilities; and to identify new opportunities for the Poinsett Project Coalition. The Poinsett Project Coalition is a community-based organization that is leading the effort to revitalize the Poinsett District in Greenville, South Carolina. The Poinsett District is a historic African American community that has experienced significant changes in recent years due to neighborhood revitalization efforts. This study aims to determine whether gentrification is or will be an issue for Brutontown and Nicholtown in light of the recent revitalization projects in the area.

Methods

Neighborhood development was measured in this study by observing changes in race, education attainment, and median household income over time. Race data was obtained from the 1990 and 2000 censuses, and from the 2005-2009 ACS for 2010. Education attainment data was gathered from the decennial censuses for 1990 and 2000 and from the 2006-2009 ACS. Median household income data was obtained at the block group level using the US Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program. Median household income data was obtained from the 1990 and 2000 censuses, and from the 2005-2009 ACS for 2010. Median household income data from the 2000 census was adjusted for inflation to 2003 dollars using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for urban consumers, All Urban Item (CPHCA) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Median household income data from the 2005-2009 ACS was adjusted for inflation to 2010 dollars using the chained CPI for urban consumers, All Urban Item (CPHCA) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Results

Conclusion

This study found that both communities continue to follow their historic trends as Black neighborhoods with a distinct racial boundary between the neighborhoods and the surrounding communities. The decrease in median household income may be attributed to the economic recession that took place in the late 2000s. Though this does not appear to be occurring as of 2010 (or a still in the early stages), gentrification is especially pertinent to Brutontown and Nicholtown given their rich history and the recent formation of the Poinsett Corridor Revitalization (PCR) Coalition. Actions have been taken to revitalize both neighborhoods have only begun in the last few years and the true impacts of these revitalization projects may not be seen for another decade (Passail). As shown by the case study of Douglas Boulevard in Chicago’s South Side, community revitalization is delicate process. If preserving Nicholtown’s and Brutontown’s culture is a priority for the PCR Coalition, care must be taken to ensure that efforts to develop the area do not end up undermining this goal.

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