Welcome to the Neighborhood: How Can Regional Science Contribute to Study of Neighborhoods?

Ingrid Gould Ellen
Katherine O’Regan
Why Should a Regional Scientist Study Neighborhoods?

- Neighborhoods are mini-regions that shape outcomes of residents and businesses
- Studying neighborhoods and neighborhood change will enrich understanding of regional issues
- Studying neighborhoods raises important policy questions
Why do Neighborhoods Matter?

- Neighborhood Conditions and Local Services Shape Residents’ Quality of Life
  - Peer effects and social networks
  - Crime
  - Local public services

- Neighborhoods Provide Access to Broader Region, Which Affects Travel Behavior, having Environmental Implications

- Sorting Across Neighborhoods Affects Household Interactions and Outcomes
Three Issues Areas with Unanswered Questions

- Neighborhood Change/Gentrification
- Environmental Implications of Neighborhood Design
- Neighborhood Sorting
Neighborhood Change/Gentrification

- Significant economic change in urban neighborhoods, especially during 1990s

- Unanswered questions
  - Causes of change
    - Which public investments further change?
    - How does change in one neighborhood affect neighboring areas?
  - Consequences of change
    - How do local public services and quality of life change as neighborhoods change?
  - Can place-based neighborhood investments benefit residents?
Neighborhoods and Environmental Sustainability

- Transportation is a key component in decreasing the urban footprint

- Unanswered questions
  - Causation
    - Is the association between land use/urban form and travel behavior causal?
    - Other endogenous features, property values and wages.
  - How important, relative to what alternatives?
  - How does this vary across groups?
Segregation and Sorting

- Persistently high segregation by race/income, with increasing evidence this may be harmful
- Unanswered questions
  - Improved measures of segregation
    - Spatial, multi group
  - Causes
    - Does the spatial distribution of affordable housing matter?
  - Consequences
    - For non black minorities?
    - When segregation is not concentrated in CC?
Incentives...New Data

- **RDC data matching micro data to location**
  - Example, Bayer, Ross and Topa (2005), census data linked to block of residence and of employment

- **Administrative Data with geographic identifiers**
  - Richer neighborhood data, more timely
  - Parcel level (Property value, Crime)

- **Individual-level administrative data on students**
  - Window on community demographic change
  - More sophisticated measures of school quality