WALLTOWN

THE HISTORY OF A NEIGHBORHOOD AND A HOUSING RENOVATION PROGRAM

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART I</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISTORY OF WALLTOWN</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BEGINNINGS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE COMMUNITY</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLINE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF VACANCY</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF HELP BECOMES INVOLVED</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART II</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARRIERS TO RENOVATION AND HOW SELF-HELP HAS OVERCOME THEM</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUYING A BUNDLE OF HOMES</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COST OF RENOVATION</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMAND, FINANCING, AND MARKETING</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEIGHBORHOOD ATTRIBUTES</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRIME</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNDING THE PROJECT</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORTGAGE FINANCING ASSISTANCE</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARKETING</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WALLTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRIES</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. JAMES BAPTIST CHURCH AND THE FAMILY LIFE CENTER</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HABITAT FOR HUMANITY</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY OF DURHAM AND THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUKE UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUES OF GENTRIFICATION AND HOUSING PROGRAMS</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Walltown is a small neighborhood located in downtown Durham, North Carolina near the prestigious, Duke University. Plagued by crime and high vacancy rates for decades, in 1996 Self-Help, a financial institution focusing on increasing assets for low-income borrowers, commenced a large scale housing renovation program.

This paper presents a case study of the neighborhood. The first part of the paper is a history of the neighborhood which began as an enclave of predominately African-Americans employed at Duke and the neighboring tobacco mills, endured substantial decline and vacancy beginning in the 1970’s, and attracted the attention of a non-profit, the Center for Community Self-Help, who become involved in a housing renovation project in the neighborhood.

The second part of the paper presents the details of Self-Help’s housing renovation program, including the costs of renovation, financing, marketing, the barriers Self-Help encountered, and how they overcame them.

The intent of this paper is to aid non-profit and for-profit developers and municipalities in understanding how to successfully implement a housing renovation program in similar neighborhoods. It is also hoped that by showing the barriers to such programs steps can be taken to eradicate the barriers, making these programs more viable in the future.

The Walltown neighborhood is bounded by Clarendon Street, Guess Road, Buchanan Boulevard, and Green Street. It lies north of Duke University’s East Campus, south-west of Northgate Mall, and between the Trinity Park and Watts-Hillandale neighborhoods.
Many U.S. cities have seen a decline in population over the last decades. The decline has been attributed to a number of factors. Bank loans have favored development in the suburbs and have, in the past, red-lined residential neighborhoods in cities where homes are need of repair. The federal support of highway programs has increased the number of highways which have allowed easy movement from cities to the suburbs and destroyed many historic neighborhoods. Movement out of the city has been further exacerbated by increasing crime rates, poor schools, aging infrastructure, and a lack of green space in inner-cities. The result has been high levels of residential vacancies in cities.

Today, some cities are beginning to see a resurgence in demand for housing in downtown neighborhoods. Many are also realizing the negative effects of housing vacancies which include a lost tax base, un-used infrastructure, and poverty-stricken neighborhoods which bring with them a whole set of social ills. In an effort to combat these ills and take advantage of the renewed interested in city living, municipalities, with the help of non-profit and for-profit developers, are considering an array of programs that offer a way to revitalize these neighborhoods and attract residents back into them.

The housing renovation program realized by the Center for Community Self-Help is one such program. Self-Help, a community development lender, was invited by the neighborhood of Walltown in Durham, NC to address their vacant and distressed housing problem and partner with them to renovate thirty dilapidated houses. Since then,
Self-Help has renovated and sold almost fifty homes and are working on almost as many more.

This case study presents Self-Help’s Walltown Homeownership Project. It includes information on buying a bundle of homes, the cost of renovation, issues of environmental remediation, financing and marketing. It takes up the issue of schools, crime, proximity to amenities and jobs. It presents the work Self-Help has done, the barriers they faced and how they overcame them and it addresses the issues that housing renovation programs face.

In order to determine if the housing renovation program which took place in Walltown is applicable to other communities, it is also important to know something about the neighborhood. A neighborhood consists of its physical elements, such as buildings, streets and parks; its social connections, such as the relationships forged within the community and to organizations outside of it; and also its history, which establishes a neighborhood within the political, and prejudicial, period of our past. Thus, the case study begins with a historical account of the neighborhood.

It is hoped that this history of Walltown and the documentation of Self-Help’s Walltown Homeownership Project will aid other organizations in determining whether a project of this type could work in their community. It is also hoped that the barriers that Self-Help faced and continues to face will be legislatively and judicially addressed so as to ensure that additional programs are viable in the future.
PART I

HISTORY OF WALLTOWN

The Beginnings

“I always valued ‘Uncle George’s’ type of character for its fidelity and simple devotion to duties that were not always the pleasantest and easiest.”

Around 1892, as Trinity College moved from Randolph County to Durham, North Carolina, George Wall cleared a path to the new home he had built on a plot of wooded land. George had been born in 1856, a slave to the grandfather of a Trinity physics professor until the age of fourteen at which time Braxton Craven, the President of Trinity, secured his release. George’s plot was probably purchased from the Durham Consolidated Land and Improvement Company which had acquired 286 acres north of the university along Dye Creek in 1890 and subdivided it into fifty-six blocks of residential lots. George built his home within walking distance of the college and his

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1 Letter from John Franklin Crowell, President at Trinity in Randolph County, NC to Henry Dwive, Editor of The Alumni Register, March 13, 1930 from the Duke University Archives.
2 Professor Charles Edward
3 “George Wall’s Example of Faithfulness and Devotion”, The Alumni Register, March 1930 from the Duke University Archives.
4 Walltown Revitalization Plan, City of Durham, NC from the Duke Center for Documentary Studies.
children and friends built homes nearby establishing the community which would become known as Walltown.

George lived in Walltown until the age of seventy-four. He worked at Trinity College, through its reincarnation as Duke University, for sixty years and was heralded for his loyalty and devotion. For those sixty years of dedication he remained but a custodian and even after his retirement continued to dedicate himself to the university. A story from the Duke Alumni Register recounts: “Shortly before the New Year a member of Professor Aldridge’s family was attracted by a brushing noise on the porch of their house, situated on the campus. An investigation revealed Uncle George, stirring about early at imaginary pressing duties. ‘Why, Uncle George, what are you doing here?’ he was asked. ‘Just getting ready for Commencement,’ was the reply.”

Most surviving accounts of Mr. Wall were written by the white people and the institution for which he worked. If one reads between the lines describing his acquiescent and loyal nature, one sees an exemplary man, who did the best one could within a society that placed limits on him based on his color. We can infer through the accounts that we have and the actions of his son that he was a man of higher caliber than written documents attest to, and that it is with honor that Walltown was named after him.

His son, George Frank Wall, worked at Trinity and then at Duke, as well, first as a child following his father around as he performed his custodial duties “helping him sweep and clean and make beds for the students” and later laboring in the Trinity/Duke kitchen. His affinity and devotion was exemplified in his bequeathment of $100 to Duke in 1946 especially notable due to his personal educational attainment, which most likely

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5 The Alumni Register, 1930.
concluded in elementary school. A news article reported his Will as reading: “The reason I am giving Duke University the one hundred dollars, is that I have been employed by said school all my life...[and]...I want to impress on other colored men the fine and good relations between Christian white people and Christian Negroes. For seventy-five years I have been employed by said institution and never a cross word, but Christian harmony.” The article went on to say that George “expresses himself as being grateful for the valuable instruction, not invested in textbooks, which he has received through the constant, consistent proximity to a great institution of higher learning and its people.”

Walltown was founded as a community of uneducated African-Americans serving an institution of higher education which they could not attend. The neighborhood was primarily black, but unlike other black neighborhoods in black areas of town with a diversity of incomes and educational levels, Walltown was poor and isolated, surrounded by white neighborhoods, the university, and a trash dump. The social and physical setting of Walltown had the opposite effect on the neighborhood that one might expect. Instead of sadness, stagnation, and aggression, the neighborhood was notable for its sense of community, quickly establishing community institutions and creating a familial atmosphere.

Historical documents do not note exactly when or how the neighborhood became named after George senior, but in 1910 the neighborhood established a church which was called the Wall Street Baptist Church and a few years later a school opened called Walltown Elementary School. The establishment of the elementary school might be considered the first act which unified the neighborhood. Before then, Walltown children had to walk to Hickstown elementary to go to school. Encircled by white neighborhoods,

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the children of Walltown had to traverse them to get to school, often at their peril.

According to a resident, the children “had to walk…through west Durham and a band of belligerent whites…Before too long the small band of black students was being attacked by the larger group of white students.”

Another account added that as Walltown children passed Trinity College dormitories, the students “would fill paper bags with water – in some cases urine. They would drop these bags on the heads of these kids.”

The community united in response, declaring that they would not allow their children to continue to endure such malfeasance. The County Board of Education acquiesced and Walltown Baptist Church was used as the community’s school until Walltown Elementary was built a few years later.

In the late 1910’s and early 1920’s laborers by the thousands rushed to Durham to find employment in the tobacco industry. Row after row of frame constructed rental duplexes were built in Walltown to supply the quickly growing demand completing the build-out of the neighborhood and establishing the physical structure of the housing that still exists there today.

The Community

In the beginning and even as the years passed, Walltown had a distinct aura which held it apart from other neighborhoods. The area was blue-collar with many residents

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10 Although there is some debate regarding this issue, historical accounts and records indicate that Walltown Elementary School was a “Rosenwald school”. In the early 1900’s, Julius Rosenwald, a white philanthropist from the North, came through the South helping communities build school. He required that the community match any funds he put toward the building of a new school, thus the residents of Walltown would have had to have raised half the money for the establishment of Walltown Elementary School.
working at Trinity and Duke, neither “connected geographically, socially, or economically with its richer black neighbors to the southeast”. Consequently, Walltown neighbors looked to each other to create the family, stability, and support that denote a thriving community.

The Walltown school and the churches were central to the neighborhood. Teachers at the school held long tenures. Families were visited by the teachers at the beginning of each school year. Parents were closely involved and would often come to class and watch. School-sponsored community-attended events included Friday night dances, movies, school plays, and annual traditions such as the wrapping of the May Pole.

The community supported the school and the neighborhood. “I don’t know of any other community in Durham at that time that was like this community. [Parents] would come to you. They would want to know how they could help, what they could do. If you had a problem at school, or if you needed something, they would try to get it for you.”

Parents assisted with field trips and tutoring and there was a very active PTA (Parent Teachers Association).

In addition, Walltown had the oldest neighborhood community center in Durham. Established in 1949 by Jay Lynn Alexander, a custodian at Duke for forty-four years, the Walltown Charitable Community Center (often referred to as “Alexander’s Center”) made available a collection of books and a piano. Every week a door-to-door collection supplied the weekly activities which included preschool programs, dances, movies, and

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12 Hessling, pp. 153.
seasonal festivities. Through a relationship with the universities, students from Duke and North Carolina Central University volunteered at the Center.

The churches also played a vital role in the community, supporting the spiritual needs of the residents as well as being actively involved in their daily lives. The teachers, who typically did not live in Walltown, would visit the churches on a frequent basis. As a further testament to the dedication of the school to the churches, when St. John’s Baptist Church burned down in 1957, Walltown Elementary was closed for the day.\textsuperscript{13}

The cohesion between the residents, the schools, and the churches resulted in an effective disciplinary and safety program in the neighborhood. Teachers were able to discuss disciplinary problems with parents because “you interacted with the parents within the community…A lot of the parents walked with the children to school [so] you got to see the parents everyday.”\textsuperscript{14} If children were found misbehaving “it would not bother your parents…if someone took you in their house and gave you a spanking”\textsuperscript{15} Even teachers often went beyond the call of duty in administering to the non-academic needs of their students. In one case, a teacher visited the home of some students to learn that the children were being taken care of by their elderly and frail grandmother and did not have heat in their home. The Walltown teachers acquired coal and blankets and delivered them to the family.\textsuperscript{16} Dawn Alston, who spent her childhood summers in Walltown, remembers a close-knit community, with lots of cousins, well-kept gardens, and a community center. It was a “good, quite neighborhood”, one where if you did

\textsuperscript{13} Hessling, pp. 191
\textsuperscript{14} Hessling, pp. 152.
\textsuperscript{15} Hessling, pp. 193.
\textsuperscript{16} Hessling, pp. 152.
Walltown had its share of forces working against it and one could argue that they eventually became more than the neighborhood could endure. During World War II many men left the neighborhood to enlist or find jobs in war-time industries; they sometimes did not return until many years later. As homes began to age, repairs became more expensive, and while new families chose to move to the suburbs disinvestment set in. In 1975 the Walltown Elementary school, which at one time was a central figure in the neighborhood, closed. Gun violence and drugs, which became prevalent throughout the U.S., took their toll on this neighborhood as well. By the 1970s the neighborhood was severely deteriorated.

The City of Durham attempted to intervene, but with little success. Through the Federally Assisted Code Enforcement Program (FACE) (also known as the Neighborhood Improvement Program) the city completed some housing rehabilitation and public improvements in the Walltown neighborhood. But, 1980 statistics show that

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19 After schools became integrated, Walltown Elementary’s attendance decreased and the lack of funding and upkeep prevalent among black schools lead to the decision to close it.
Walltown was still substantially behind adjacent neighborhoods as well as Durham as a whole. The average income in Walltown was $13,554, compared to a city average of $19,885. Over twelve percent of Walltown families were female headed, compared to the adjacent neighborhoods in Northwest Central Durham (in which Walltown is located) which ranged from 2.1% in the neighborhood of West Durham to 5.2% in Trinity Park. Over four percent of the neighborhood was unemployed compared to adjacent neighborhoods which ranged from 2.5% in Watts-Hillandale to 3.5% in Trinity Park.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1990, those statistics were not looking much better. The median family income was $17,303, less than half the city-wide median income.\textsuperscript{22} Female heads of households were 12.2%, almost twice as high at the city average, unemployment was 1.5 % higher than the city average, and the high school graduation rate, at 67.8%, was ten points less than the city average.

“The Walltown of the last 10 years hasn’t been the nicest place. Gunshots crackled in the night. Drug dealers peddled their wares out of desolate, boarded-up homes. Drug users gravitated down to the park…Squatters haunted the old elementary school, where all the windows had been broken out and smashed beer bottles glittered on the ground.”\textsuperscript{23}

By 1996, Walltown had a population of 2,012 residents and 860 dwelling units. Of those units 68% (or 585 units) were in need of some form of repair. Nearly 50% were moderately deteriorated which ranged from needing minor repairs to moderate rehab work. Twenty percent (172 units) were severely deteriorated, ranging from needing

\textsuperscript{21} Northwest Central Durham Plan
\textsuperscript{23} Jennifer Chorpening, “Raising Walltown.”
substantial rehab to needing to be demolished. Eighty-five percent of the units were rental. Of those, 168 (23%) were severely deteriorated. Of the 130 owner-occupied units, 12 were severely deteriorated.\(^{24}\) In 1998, the Durham Herald-Sun reported that nearly 600 dwellings were vacant in Walltown according to a city survey.\(^{25}\)

**Negative Effects of Vacancy**

“On the street we live on, the majority of houses were abandoned, when we were growing up, we used to call it Skid Row.”\(^{26}\)

A review of current literature asserts that vacant buildings affect neighborhoods in a plethora of ways: depreciating neighboring home values, increasing illegal activity including crime and arson, and discouraging investment. High vacancy rates also have high costs to the city, whether through the loss of property taxes or the incurrence of increased police and fire services.

A study in Philadelphia showed that the presence of an abandoned house on a block reduces the value of neighboring property by $6,720.\(^{27}\) According to interviews with the planning and health departments of fifteen cities, a study found that vacant structures were fire hazards, attracted vagrants, and were used for illicit activities for the following reasons: “The structures of many [vacant buildings] have received little

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\(^{24}\) Walltown Revitalization Plan.


maintenance over the years. Faulty wiring and debris create the potential for quick ignition. In addition [they] are often the target of arson [and] located in densely populated areas, they may cause nearby occupied structures to burn as well.” As well, “abandoned structures increasingly are becoming shelters for the homeless. The buildings are easily entered…Because they offer no heat, occupants often build fires…presenting possibilities for disaster.” The use of vacant structures for illicit activities is common as well. “Vacant structures often are used as crack houses, leading to further deterioration, disinvestment, and physical threat to neighbors. Drug activities bring unwanted elements into the neighborhood, increase other types of crime [burglary, robbery, assault, and homicide], and leave residents feeling vulnerable and insecure. Our interviewees expressed particular concern for families trying to raise children in these neighborhoods and for the elderly who find it difficult to move elsewhere.”

Another study in Austin, Texas found that “forty-one percent of abandoned buildings could be entered without the use of force; of these…eighty-three percent showed evidence of illegal use by prostitutes, drug dealers, property criminals…Crime rates on blocks with open abandoned buildings were twice as high as rates on matched blocks without open buildings…securing abandoned buildings appears to be a highly cost-effective crime control tactic for distressed neighborhoods.”

Walltown had been experiencing many of these problems. According to the 1990 census, the median home value for Walltown (plus the more expensive neighborhood of Trinity Heights) was $53,200, 34% less than the city average of $80,000. Many homes

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were dilapidated from years of disinvestment and crime was high. According to a Walltown resident, “one Berkeley Street home … used to be littered with oil cans and trash and was fenced with barbed wire. It had been burglarized three times in one year, which prompted the tenant to post a cardboard sign scrawled with a threat to kill the next person who tried to break in.”

**Self Help Becomes Involved**

In 1994, the Walltown Community Association, the Durham Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Durham Department of Parks and Recreation worked together to create a revitalization plan for Walltown. Due to the predominance of renter-occupied and boarded up units, one of the goals of the plan was to renovate homes and increase homeownership in an effort to stabilize the neighborhood. The first project toward this goal was the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to renovate the homes of the elderly that were not code compliant. According to the current President of the Walltown Community Association, Audrey Mitchell, about thirty homes were renovated under this program. The next step was to consider how to increase homeownership, and that is where the Center for Community Self-Help, a community development lender, became involved.

At that time, Walltown’s principal landlord was Robert Rosenstein, a Durham optometrist and real estate investor who owned thirty properties in the community. Rosenstein’s father, also an optometrist, had the housing built as an investment in the 1930’s, personally collecting the rent until he had the properties turned over to a

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30 Fisher
management company. Foregoing needed repairs, many of the units ultimately became vacant. When the younger Rosenstein looked into selling the properties, he discovered it would take around $500,000 to return them to a state in which they could be sold.

Self-Help intervened and offered to oversee their renovation if Rosenstein sold them at a discounted price, which he did at $11,000 a piece. In partnership with the Walltown Community Association, Self-Help purchased and renovated. Self-Help then formed a Community Development Corporation to oversee the residential renovations which it called the Walltown Homeownership Project.

By the fall of 1997 the first eight homes were finished. Three years later, twenty-nine homes had been completed and sold and Self-Help had purchased nineteen additional residences for which it was securing financing for renovation. Three years after that, on October 15, 2003, Self-Help celebrated the completion of their fiftieth home: their commitment to the neighborhood and renovating housing as a means to neighborhood revitalization not subsiding.
PART II

If renovating housing were simple, inexpensive and sure to be profitable, we would not be suffering from the exorbitant number of vacant houses that exist throughout the U.S. Housing renovation programs need not be easy, inexpensive and profitable for them to be worthwhile, as housing is the building blocks of neighborhoods and provides one of the basic human amenities: shelter. On the other hand, if we wish to ensure that our older neighborhoods remain stable, that our municipal infrastructure continues to be used, and that our housing is not vacated before its time, it is important to consider the barriers to renovation programs and how they can be overcome.

By looking at the work that Self-Help has performed, we are able to take a glimpse at the complicated task of renovating for-sale housing in a minority neighborhood with depressed property values. From Self-Help’s work one can better understand the barriers to housing renovation programs, shedding light on the task that similar programs may have ahead and suggesting to municipalities how they can help make these programs more successful.
BUYING A BUNDLE OF HOMES

In order to make a housing renovation program successful one needs to have enough of an impact that housing values either stabilize or rise, but do not decline. The reasoning is quite simple. It is only in appreciating housing markets that there will be a demand for newly renovated housing. If the neighborhood is depreciating, someone might buy an old unit in hopes of renting it, but would never pay the extra costs associated with renovation.

One of the reasons that Self-Help decided this project was feasible was the clustering of a majority of the units along the 1100 block of Lancaster street. If they had not been able to purchase the thirty homes and if those homes had not been clustered, they would have been less interested in the project. In declining neighborhoods, there must be some signal to potential buyers that the neighborhood is going to improve. Sometimes the signal comes from the municipality, which decides to focus revitalization efforts, creates a neighborhood plan, supports the plan with funding, and eventually implements it. Signals can also come from private or non-profit developers, but they must be able to renovate enough homes to have a significant impact on the neighborhood.

In 1995, Habitat for Humanity acquired a few properties in Walltown, but “we were waiting until there was more interest in revitalizing the neighborhood,” said Bob Calhoun, Habitat’s director in an article in 2000, “and until there was opportunity to
really help turn the neighborhood around.” Added, Joanna Pi-Sunyer, Self-Help’s Project Coordinator at the time, “If we just rehabbed one house, who is going to come in and buy that house? If you do ten homes, it makes a difference in the neighborhood”.31

The downside to projects that lead to increasing home values is that homes in the neighborhood become more expensive to purchase, even if they are vacant. In that way, Self-Help has been a victim of their own successes. Since the purchase of the initial thirty homes, subsequent homes have been purchased at higher and higher values, most probably due to the positive impact they have had in the neighborhood.

Cost of Renovation

One of the debates regarding renovating vacant housing into habitable housing is whether it wouldn’t be cheaper just to build something new. The work performed in the Walltown neighborhood is an example of where renovation has cost less than new construction. Reviewing costs of seven homes renovated by Self-Help in 2003, construction costs averaged $58 per square foot compared to a similarly sized new construction which cost $70 per square foot32. According to Bob Chapman, a local developer and the developer of the adjacent Trinity Heights neighborhood, new construction ranges from $80-$100 per square foot. The renovation costs of Self-Help’s homes are especially low if one considers the numerous elements that could have raised construction costs on a project of this type. For example, the homes that Self-Help renovated were originally duplexes built for tobacco factory workers. In order to turn

32 Based on a Self-Help expense report for seven houses constructed in 2003.
them into viable single-family residences, Self-Help chose to gut the homes down to the frame and perform architectural alterations which converted them to single-family homes.

Other material issues made the renovation of these homes difficult. If the wood structure of the home touched the ground, it was likely to have been a conduit for termites, increasing the costs associated with termite damage. Self-Help found renovating brick homes difficult and the cinderblock in many of the homes collected moisture. Even with these issues, gut rehab of these homes costs 17% less than new construction.

Land is a factor that can increase the cost of a home, typically constituting 25% of the sale price. A vacant piece of land will cost less than a piece of land with a structure on it, thus, it is important to also consider the cost of acquisition when determining whether vacant housing renovation costs less than new construction. In the case of Walltown, five homes were evaluated. They were purchased in 2003 and not part of the original acquisition of 30 homes. They were purchased after substantial renovation had taken place in the neighborhood and housing prices had begun to increase. Yet, it was found that the initial purchase price only accounted for, on average, 22% of the sale price.

In addition to the lesser cost, renovating inner-city properties has a number of other benefits. Renovation work is more labor intensive and requires a higher level of specialization than new construction, paying higher construction wages. According to Gene Cook, former Projects Coordinator at Durham County Habitat for Humanity, Habitat prefers to build newly constructed homes, because renovation “requires a higher level skill set” which volunteers often do not possess. When renovation takes place, high
skill and high paying jobs are created. Renovation also focuses development within the existing infrastructure of cities utilizing extant public transportation, sewer, and water lines. Because the decline of one building greatly affects the next, vacancy and dereliction will depress real estate prices, decreasing an area’s tax base.

Environmental Remediation

Although environmental issues do play a part in residential renovation it is arguably less than in commercial renovation or rehabilitation (turning a commercial structure into a residential use). Whereas commercial space could have taken the form of a dry cleaner, a photo finishing store, or an auto repair station which each uses toxic chemicals and carries with it the potential of substantial amounts of contamination, residential sites are fairly limited on this front. According to David Greer, environmental consultant with Hillman Environmental, environmental issues in residential units are primarily limited to asbestos, underground oil heating tanks, and lead paint and solder (in the joints of old water pipes). Older homes may include asbestos containing products such as floor tiles and vinyl flooring, wallboard and joint compound, interior and exterior plaster, exterior wall shingles, roof shingles, or wire and pipe insulation. These products can be removed by the homeowner or, at a significantly higher cost, by a contractor, who must follow regulations regarding disposal. Oil tanks may, but needn’t, be removed. If the home is a single-family owner-occupied unit, there are no regulations regarding clean-up and no liability for previous owners. If you are buying a single-family unit to sell, one needs only disclose any environmental issues found to the new owner.
Lead paint may be the most contentious issue because most older homes contain lead paint. Prior to 1978, most paint was mixed with lead, because the lead allowed the paint to “flake off” in pieces so small the flaking was not apparent, but gave the surface a continuously fresh look. Today it is known that lead causes a range of health effects from learning disabilities, to seizures, to death; it is especially hazardous for children. Some companies have established sealants that can be used on top of lead paint protecting the inhabitants from lead contamination. Gene Cook, former Projects Coordinator, at Habitat for Humanity of Durham, who has also renovated homes in Walltown, said that Habitat does not feel that the sealant paints are reliable enough. They are especially cautious because all of their homes are occupied by children. They will wait, at least, for the sealant paints to gain approval from an environmental regulating agency. Because Self-Help gutted their homes, lead paint was no longer an issue.
DEMAND, FINANCING, AND MARKETING

One of the biggest deterrents to housing renovation programs is the fear of a lack of demand for the housing once it is renovated. Although recent trends show people moving back into urban neighborhoods in record numbers\textsuperscript{33}, they are not moving into every neighborhood, with home prices rising exorbitantly in some areas and vacancy continuing in others.

In the case of Walltown, information on the first forty-three homes sold by Self-Help, show that they were on the market on average less than five months, with sale dates ranging from before the certificate of occupancy had been issued to almost two years after the home was finished.

Neighborhood Attributes

The demand for housing is affected by the character and assets of the neighborhood as well as the neighborhood’s proximity to other attributes. Attributes of the Walltown neighborhood include historic single-family homes within proximity to Duke University, commercial areas, and surrounded by high-value adjacent neighborhoods.

Walltown lies one block north of Duke University’s historic East Campus with many Duke students desiring rental units near the campus and currently renting large homes in the Trinity Park and Old West Durham neighborhoods. Ninth Street, which lies

\textsuperscript{33} In the 1990s, central city population growth was at a three-decade high.” William Frey in “City Families and Suburban Singles: An Emerging Household Story from Census 2000”.
a few blocks west of Walltown, has become a thriving commercial district in the
traditional main street fashion, with cafes, restaurants, boutique shops, and trendy
nightclubs. A large shopping center lies to the north. On a five by one block rectangle
due south of Walltown and north of Duke is the Trinity Heights neighborhood, consisting
of forty upscale homes (15 townhomes, 22 single-family homes) built for Duke
employees, and selling for between $175,000 and $275,000. In an interview in the
Raleigh News and Observer, resident Clifton Mangum said that the Trinity Heights
development has had positive impacts in the Walltown neighborhood. His house at
Green and Berkeley doubled in value during the 2001 county-wide re-evaluation. He
also said that police and trash pick-up have improved, “Now (city services) are more
likely to come over because it’s Duke’s project.”

According to Anthony Scott, former Walltown project manager, about a quarter
of homebuyers have some prior familial or personal relationship to Walltown or are
previous residents moving back into the neighborhood. About one third work at Duke
University and Medical Center, which employs about 17,000 people. These employees
prefer to live near their job or choose to do so because of a lack of personal
transportation.

Schools

Schools are also an important issue for families moving into a new neighborhood.
The perception of the local schools may hurt or help the demand for neighborhood

housing. Depending on their age, children residing in Walltown attend either E.K.Powe or Watts Elementary schools, Brogden Middle School or Riverside High School. Unfortunately, based on interviews with local families, the perception of Durham public schools is not very good. While E.K.Powe and Watts Elementary schools are below the state average on test scores, Brogden Middle School and Riverside High School are above the state average, including the SAT for high school students. Durham also offers a “Schools of Choice” program, featuring nine magnet schools and a transfer policy, further increasing the residents’ options. Many of the new homebuyers have school-aged children.

Crime

Crime negatively affects a person’s desire to buy a home in a particular neighborhood. In Walltown, which has been stained by a reputation of high crime, such has been the case. Because of numerous reports suggesting that renovating housing would reduce the amount of illegal activity in a neighborhood, a group from UNC\(^\text{35}\), including myself, performed an analysis of crime in the Walltown neighborhood. Using crime statistics from 1996 to the present, the crime that had taken place (over 2,000 counts) was mapped. The housing renovations performed by both Self-Help and Habitat for Humanity was then mapped. The number of crimes that had taken place on the blocks on which the majority of homes had been renovated was tallied for each year. We

were hoping to show that as homes on each block were renovated, the number of crimes would decrease.

Unfortunately, our data did not support our hypothesis. In general, crime did not decrease as the homes were renovated. Neither has crime dramatically decreased in the neighborhood as a whole. We did find that during the periods when the homes were being renovated and sold, crime was at an all time low on those blocks. This could be due to construction workers being on the site and providing “eyes on the street”. We also found that in three of the four areas, recently there has been a general decrease in crime while in Walltown, as a whole, crime was up. It will be worthwhile to see if reductions in crime on renovated blocks continue.

Using GIS maps we also noticed a crime “hot spot” which accounted for thirty-six counts of larceny and one car stolen in 1996, forty-eight counts of larceny and one burglary in 1997, and twenty-six counts of larceny and one burglary in 1998. This activity took place at the Crown convenience store and gas station at 1203 West Club Boulevard (at the corner of Club and Buchanan). The crime at the station also seemed to significantly impact the neighboring lots which were experiencing crime on an annual basis. Beginning in 1999 those numbers began to decrease significantly, possibly through the efforts of the police or management. Similarly, the Knox Street Grocery, which was a renowned hangout for drug dealers, attracted high concentrations of crime. In 2000, it was renovated into the headquarters of the Walltown Neighborhood Ministries. The efforts at reducing crime at these two locations did not affect crime rates in the neighborhood as a whole, but based on discussions with residents, has lead to the perception of less crime in the neighborhood.
Generally, we found that although it was easy to obtain crime data, groups from criminologists to the police warned us of the inaccuracy of the data especially noting that annual increases in crime data are as likely to show actual increases in crime as they are to show efficiencies in crime reporting. Thus, and because our small sample size, we are unable to show a positive relationship between this housing renovation program and crime. But, what may be most important is how the neighborhood feels and whether there is a decrease in the perceived amount of crime among potential buyers. According to residents, the housing renovation program has positively affected the neighborhood and that the neighborhood is safer now. Unfortunately, the neighborhood’s history of high crime and drug use has tainted buyers’ views, some of whom say they love the remodeled homes, but are still too skeptical about the neighborhood to make an offer.

**Funding the Project**

Self-Help funded the project through a number of sources. A small amount of HOME funds was provided by the City of Durham for land acquisition. $375,000 came from a loan from Duke University given to the Self-Help Ventures Fund. It was used to acquire the first thirty homes in Walltown and then became a revolving fund used to purchase additional properties, though it is not used for that today. The Duke Endowment has subsequently provided funds for property acquisition. The North Carolina Housing Finance Agency provided a 0% construction loan until late 1999. Funding for landscaping was provided through local foundations and in-kind
contributions. City CDBG funds were used to improve various neighborhood infrastructure problems like sidewalks and surface water drainage.

**Mortgage Financing Assistance**

Self-Help’s mission is to increase the assets of individuals so as to “enable a family to send a child to college, start a business, or weather a financial crisis”.36 One of the biggest assets an individual can own is their own home and Self-Help specializes in providing homeownership opportunities to “people who have traditionally been underserved by the banks – female-headed households, minority households, rural families, and low-income households.” Consequently, purchasers of Self-Help homes in Walltown have benefited from the organization’s ability to provide loans to low-income borrowers and to assemble low-interest financial packages.

Grants to cover closing costs were made available through donations from the Triangle Community Foundation, Singing for Change, and others. Originally, the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency provided a subordinate mortgage through various pools of subsidy. Initially HOPE III funds were used and then Housing Trust Fund/HOME funds. Currently funding comes from the New Homes Loan Pool (which comes from the HOME funds). Currently, funding secured from the city of Durham’s affordable housing first-time homebuyer loan program and the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency New Homes Loan Pool Program provide up to $45,000 for each eligible buyer. Each of the mortgage subsidies is loaned at zero percent interest. The city’s loan is a $25,000 second mortgage, amortized over 30 years for a monthly payment of less

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than $70. The New Homes Loan Pool funds are provided through a loan subsidy of between $7,500 and $20,000, depending upon the needs and eligibility of the buyer. Payments on this loan are deferred for 30 years, requiring no monthly payment from the homebuyer until after the 30-year term or upon the sale of the house. Self-Help homebuyers pay a $500 down payment. Monthly mortgage payments can be as little as $585/month (including taxes and insurance, and assuming a 6% interest rate on the first mortgage) for a buyer purchasing a $105,000 home with the full subsidy of $45,000. Some additional funding had been provided through an Affordable Housing Program at the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta. Typically in the amount of $1,000-$7,000, they provided a forth position loan at 0% interest and were forgivable after five years. They increased affordability and were available primarily for buyers earning less than 50% of the area median income.

In addition, the energy company, Duke Power, has loaned money to Self-Help through a program that reduces the interest rate on Self-Help first mortgage loans for homebuyers purchasing houses built to Duke Power approved energy efficiency standards. Energy efficiency measures include insulation, HVAC ductwork, new windows, new doors and electric powered central heat and air conditioning systems. According to Bob Allen, “We are not in the banking business. With the Walltown project, our money is loaned out and Self-Help arranges the loans for us.”

Marketing

In order to increase the number of homeowners in the neighborhood and to provide homeownership opportunities to lower-income households, Self-Help focused initial marketing efforts on residents of the neighborhood who at that time were renting. Additional marketing efforts were made at Duke, which currently hosts a link to Walltown homeownership opportunities on their website and have participated in a special Open House for Duke employees organized by Self-Help. In addition to marketing the homes, and providing low-interest loans, Self-Help assisted interested parties in becoming qualified to buy a home. As an example, at the beginning of the program, Dawn Allston, who worked in food service at Duke, saw the Walltown homes advertised on the campus. “She filled out the application and Self-Help contacted her within weeks to pick one of the five renovated homes, secure a down payment and clean up looming debts.”

39 The Herald Sun, October 26, 1997.
**ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

Most impoverished neighborhoods are not solely in need of a housing rehabilitation program. Neighborhoods that have experienced a decline in housing values and a decrease in residential repairs, also suffer from other woes. The best revitalization programs will address those issues as well. Walltown has been fortunate to be the focus of a number of initiatives from institutions and organizations both within the neighborhood and outside of it. In order to determine the effects of the housing renovation program on the neighborhood, it is important to understand what additional programs and support accompanied it.

**Walltown Neighborhood Ministries**

One of the most comprehensive programs has come from five local churches,\(^4^0\) three historically black, two historically white and representing different denominations, which have joined together to form the Walltown Neighborhood Ministries. Begun as a discussion over a game of basketball in Walltown park during the annual Walltown Community Day, the church leaders decided to meet bi-weekly for prayer and to look for guidance as to how to best help the neighborhood. Two years later, and with funding from the Duke Endowment, the Walltown Neighborhood Ministries was born.

One of their first activities was to gain control of the Knox Street Grocery, which had become a hangout for drug dealers, thieves, gangs, and prostitutes in the midst of the neighborhood.

\(^{40}\) The churches are: Northside Baptist, St. James Baptist, St. John Baptist, Blacknall Presbyterian, and Watts Street Baptist,
Walltown community. The situation came to a climax when in 1999 a man was shot using a public phone in front of the grocery and nearly bled to death as he stumbled down the street. It was not an unexpected incident. The neighborhood had known for years that the phone booth was call central for drug orders and other illicit activities. The incident is but one example of the level of violence the neighborhood had grown to experience, but was no longer willing to accept.

The phone booth was removed, and later, through funding by the Duke Endowment, the Knox Grocery Store was renovated into the offices and headquarters of the Walltown Neighborhood Ministries. Subsequent discussions led to a partnership with Duke Divinity School, establishing the Walltown Families and Children Initiative in July of 1999. Since then the organization has established, among others, the following programs: Youth and young adult programs providing after-school mentoring; summer camps; college preparation and visits; banking, business education and conflict resolution; Care and Respect for the Elder (CARE) providing transportation, advocacy for the elderly; and Rebuilding our Neighborhood, a program being developed to educated the community about the history of Walltown and to build community pride.

They have programs that provide residents in need with food and funds for basic services. They have coordinated a Summer Street Reach ministry, meant to bring Walltown residents together and show young people an alternative to violence and drugs. They were held on Friday evenings, because they found that was a popular time for drugs to be sold in the street. Each week a different block was closed. The event included music, dance, and prayer and was co-sponsored by the Visions of Tomorrow Community
Development Corporation, Duke University Community Affairs, and Durham Parks and Recreation Department.

The Walltown Neighborhood Ministries conducted an extensive survey with questions regarding the attributes of the neighborhood, desired neighborhood programs, housing concerns, crime issues, schools and education, jobs, health and religious services. The results of the survey are being used to tailor future programs.

**St. James Baptist Church and the Family Life Center**

Individual churches have also been extensively involved in community building and assistance initiatives. By the end of the 1990s, the Walltown Elementary School, which had been vacated in 1976, sat at 1305 West Club, with windows broken and had become home to vagrants. The St. James Church, through the assistance of Duke University and Self-Help, purchased the old school. After a $1.5 million renovation, the school became home to the church, the St. James Family Life Center, the Carter Community Charter School, and included a computer room and community library provided by the Junior League of Durham and Orange County.

Activities at the Carter Community School and Family Life Center have included summer camps, after-school tutoring, senior excursions, and children’s story time. In addition, the center has a 13-week financial independence class on how to prepare a balanced budget, make investments, buy insurance and handle money. The church partnered with Northgate Mall and the city of Durham to renovate 1119 Lancaster Street
as a job training center where participants are taught job skills. “We’re trying to get people jobs within walking distance of the community.”

The work of local institutions has spilled over into community pride and neighborliness. After seeing the many local initiatives taking place, resident Cami Holeman decided to hold a neighborhood block party on the 900 block of Berkeley Street. The city closed off the street and festivities included limousine rides, a jump rope contest, and games. The Durham Bulls donated prizes and a grocery store chipped in free cookies, soda, and ice cream. About two hundred people stopped by.

**Habitat for Humanity**

Habitat for Humanity has also been working in the Walltown neighborhood and has built or rehabbed about twelve homes. In 1995, Habitat had acquired property in Walltown, but “we were waiting until there was more interest in revitalizing the neighborhood,” said Bob Calhoun, Habitat’s director, “and until there was opportunity to really help turn the neighborhood around.” They have since felt that the work Self-Help has performed has established that critical mass necessary for a revitalization program to be successful and hope to continue working in the area.

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City of Durham and the Department of Parks and Recreation

The City of Durham has also contributed to the positive changes taking place in Walltown. Through the leadership of Johnny Ford, director of Parks and Recreation in 2000, renovations were made to the Walltown Community Park costing $275,000 and included two new playgrounds, a renovated picnic shelter, a new walking trail, a junior basketball court and new park benches, water fountains and other park amenities and was made to be accessible to people with disabilities. The city also cleaned up alleyways, put in new sidewalks, and worked on landscaping the park.

Duke University

In 1993, Duke University’s President, Nannerl Keohane, identified constructive engagement with Durham one of her highest priorities. In addition to the $2 million loan awarded to Self-Help to begin their work in the Walltown Neighborhood, in 1996 the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership was established with the mission to work with residents in an effort to improve the quality of life in the 12 neighborhoods closest to campus and boost student achievement in the seven public schools that serve those neighborhoods. Coordinated by the Office of Community Affairs, programs include after-school and summer activities, an arts program in the public schools, mentoring and summer job opportunities, and the establishment of a health center. In an act of further dedication, in 2001, the board of trustees committed to raising an additional $10 million
in program support. duke has also initiated a program with the city of durham in which duke will invest $300,000 to provide five duke police officers to support durham city police work in the surrounding neighborhoods, including walltown. although the city council has agreed to the proposal, the program will not begin until the city and university sign the final agreement and additional officers are hired and trained.}

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43 duke university’s office of community affairs, http://community.duke.edu/
ISSUES OF GENTRIFICATION AND HOUSING PROGRAMS

To comprehensively address a neighborhood revitalization or housing renovation program, one must address gentrification, which has as many connotations as it does definitions. It is most commonly defined as the action of a group of higher income residents moving into a neighborhood of lower income residents. It often connotes whites taking over a minority neighborhood displacing current residents by driving up rents and driving out home-owners through increasing and excessive property taxes. While all these negative effects may occur, they are not the rule and it would be distressing to abandon neighborhood revitalization projects on the premise that the negative connotations of gentrification would take place. Instead, it is important to consider the array of housing programs that can be used to revitalize a downtrodden neighborhood and understand the benefits and detriments of each. One can view this as a spectrum with rates kept permanently affordable one end and rates increasing with the market on the other.

Programs that wish to provide affordable units in perpetuity usually take on the form of subsidized rentals. They can be subsidized on the supply side or on the demand side, such as through the use of Section 8 vouchers. The disadvantage of these programs is the inability of those very residents to acquire equity or take advantage of the U.S.’s generous mortgage interest tax deductions, thereby limiting resident’s ability to ever rise out of the rental market.

The middle of the spectrum is the land trust model, whereby a resident owns their own home, but splits the capital gains with the land trust (who owns the land and uses
this capital to reduce the purchase price of the home for the next buyer) when they choose to sell their home. In this model, the homeowner is able to purchase a home at less than the market rate, they benefit from the mortgage interest tax deduction, and accrue equity, though at a limited rate of return.

The other end of the spectrum is to let residents purchase a home, enjoy the full benefits of appreciation and deduct their mortgage interest from their taxes. The drawback is that homeowners may ride the wave of community revitalization and appreciating home prices just long enough to make enough money to move out of the neighborhood, leading to neighborhood instability and decreasing the supply of affordable housing.

In a housing program, for each unit of housing that is made permanently affordable, that is one unit less of housing that will be contributing to a resident’s personal equity. Because individuals in a neighborhood do not always agree on which model is best, there is typically contentiousness among neighbors, regardless of what housing program is established.

In the case of Walltown, the decision was made to renovate the neighborhood homes for sale, to sell them to first-time homebuyers with incomes less than or equal to 80% of the area median income, and to let the homeowners reap the rewards of increased equity brought about by any general neighborhood revitalization. This decision was made in part by Self-Help’s general mission of giving low-income and low-wealth individuals access to equity through homeownership, but their decision was also specific to Walltown. Because the neighborhood had become so impoverished and there were so
many vacant buildings, it was important to attract new homeowners and increase the equity of current and future home-owning residents.

In addition, long-term affordability was achieved through restrictive covenants written into the loan agreements of subordinating lenders (City of Durham and NCHFA) and deed restrictions established by Self-Help. These covenants and restrictions require owner-occupancy and restrict the sale of the houses to buyers earning incomes at or below the 80% threshold. These restrictions apply for a period of no less than 15 years and carry loan recapture and property reversion clauses should the restrictions be violated. The 80% income cap is the maximum permissible by federal and municipal governments for affordable housing programs. Thus far, the average income for Self-Help homebuyers hovers around 65% of the area median income (AMI).

Although the community, in general, has supported Self-Help’s work, there are still some who are concerned about issues of affordability, who wish that more Walltown residents could afford to purchase a home, who fear renters will be pushed out and that the new tax values will be too much for current homeowners. A 1998 article in the *Herald Sun* stated that some neighbors have “complained that the homes, which sell for about $79,000, are not affordable enough for very poor residents or elderly residents who are on fixed incomes.” Although, Sylvia Hayes, the Director of the Walltown Neighborhood Ministries, thinks the renovation program has had a very positive impact on the neighborhood “renters have not always been able to move back into the homes and that although housing values have increased, so have the taxes”. 45

45 Fisher. According to Self-Help development associate Fran Turchi, most buyers earn about $20,000 per year, and monthly mortgage payments range from the low $400s to the low $500s.
Internal versus External Decision-Making and Support

It is a common adage that people are afraid of change. When that change affects their community and their home and may evoke historical political and social prejudices, it is understandable that careful steps need to be taken. Often this means ensuring that decisions are either made by the community or, at the least, supported by them. In the case of Walltown, a few incidents have led to tensions among the parties. At the beginning of the process, the Walltown Community Association wanted to buy the old Walltown Elementary School and turn it into affordable housing for senior citizens while St. James church wanted to buy and move into it. Self-Help was considered an ally of St. James, who did eventually buy the school and move into it.

According to the current President of the Walltown Community Association, Audrey Mitchell, after initial meetings with Self-Help regarding the renovation and sale of the original thirty units, the Association felt as though they were being left out of the process and consequently declined to partner with them on future renovations.

Self-Help has explained that since 1998, the second year of housing sales, they have forged productive relationships with a wide range of neighborhood and community advocates, including the Walltown Community Association and that, perhaps, the key to relationship success has been their commitment to housing and community development over the long-term. “With no end in sight, Self-Help continues to remain true to its original intent of providing affordable housing to first-time homeowners of low-income
and low-wealth in an effort to improve the overall quality of housing in this one neighborhood for the benefit of its residents.”

In addition, with much of the funding for projects coming from Duke University or the Duke Endowment, some community members have been afraid that Duke might be taking over the neighborhood. Regarding Duke’s funding of the Walltown Neighborhood Ministries, it was conveyed that “Duke’s endowment was good for the program, but bad because it connected the program with Duke.” The Walltown Neighborhood Ministries wants to help the community, but they will tread lightly as they feel there is some “conflict in the community due to new groups moving in”.

Others are happy for Duke’s support. In an interview in 2000, resident Dawn Alston declared “she now feels safer walking in the neighborhood, partly because she stays aware of her surroundings. She’s seen the progress that money from Duke, help from outsiders and the determination of longtime residents have made. She’s heard the grumbling from some of her neighbors about fears that Duke will come in and change the community. But in her opinion, ‘I have no problem with them here, unless they tear down the property and build property that is not affordable to common, everyday people.’”

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46 Anthony Scott, Project Coordinator, Self-Help’s Walltown Homeownership Project. Email correspondence.
47 Sylvia Hayes, Director, Walltown Neighborhood Ministries. Interview.
48 Jennifer Chorpening, “Community redevelopment in Walltown.”
CONCLUSION

“Before, there were drug dealers sitting on this corner” said the Rev. Luther Brooks of St. James Baptist Church…“I’ve seen the whole attitude in the neighborhood turn around….It gives people a sense of pride in themselves.”

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I began this project interested in vacant housing and the effects that it has on neighborhoods. Shortly into my research, I was lucky enough to be given the opportunity to study Walltown and the renovation and homeownership project that Self-Help had commenced in 1996. Like all studies, some of my hypotheses were verified while others remain unsubstantiated. Still others could use additional exploration and I hope that they will receive additional study in the future.

One reason I find this study important is that Walltown represents an inner-city neighborhood like many others across the U.S. Initially safe, stable, and supportive, yet after decades of abandonment to growth in the suburbs and increasing amounts of crime and drugs, disinvestment led to dereliction and vacancy.

As could occur in many inner-city neighborhoods, it has benefited from a housing renovation program overseen by an efficient organization with an altruistic spirit. In order to understand what has made this program successful, it is important to understand the history of the neighborhood, how Self-Help became involved, where they found funding, how they marketed their program, and the goals they were not able to

accomplish as well as those they excelled at. The paper provided the details and what follows is a summary and my conclusions.

It has been debated whether housing renovation can provide affordable housing more cheaply than new construction. The housing program in Walltown is a quantitative example that renovation can be cheaper than new construction, even when the renovation includes the gutting of the original structure. On a per square foot basis, renovation was cheaper than new construction. If we add in the acquisition cost of purchasing a vacant lot versus purchasing a lot with a home on it (whatever its condition), we still do not find that purchasing and renovating a house costs more than constructing something new. Yet, we must recognize that housing renovation programs will still need subsidization for other reasons. New construction in a suburban location takes place on a clean slate. There is no history, no disinvestment, and no crime. Selling renovated housing in an existent neighborhood may be cost prohibitive because disinvestment has lead to the devaluation of properties. Additionally, if your goal is revitalization and not displacement and you intend to market your homes to low-income individuals, funding should be in place to assist existent residents and low-income borrowers in purchasing a home.

I was surprised to learn that our analysis did not prove that crime is reduced when homes are renovated. If we do accept that in the last year crime rates decreased on our renovated blocks, we must accept that the crime was displaced, because crime in the neighborhood stayed constant. For the future, it would be worthwhile to continue to track crime in Walltown to determine whether the decreases in crime that were noticed on the renovated blocks continue and if over a longer period of time, crime in the neighborhood generally decreases. Regardless, it is important to remind ourselves that safety and
perceived amounts of crime are a vital component to housing revitalization programs because houses in high crime areas are hard to market.

The Walltown renovation project is an example of the complexity of trying to satisfy the multi-faceted desires of a community. From previous work, I had already been aware of residents’ abhorrence and trepidation regarding change being forced upon from without as opposed to decided upon from within. Local ownership and support can not be underestimated, especially in a home-ownership project hoping to increase neighborhood stability. The problem of residents riding the wave of revitalization and then selling out can often be staved through the establishment of a strong sense of community. I think Self-Help’s program’s strength lies in the fact that they were invited in by the community to address a community need, that they were dedicated to goals the community felt were important, and had a history of efficiently attaining those goals. Although there were issues along the way, I do not think the divisions could have been properly repaired if this relationship had not existed at the beginning.

This program also illustrates that a housing renovation program can take place without causing mass displacement and actualizing the fears of gentrification. There are still substantial rental opportunities and lower-income individuals have not been displaced by high-income earners. According to the U.S. census, owner-occupancy rates in Walltown increased from 21% in 1990 to 24% in 2000, though this is still significantly lower than that Durham city average of 49%. Median household incomes in the Walltown neighborhood have increased from 1990 to 2000 though only from 62% to 70% of the Durham city median.
The effect that I consider the best indicator of a successful revitalization program is how it affects the residents. Everything I read and everyone I spoke to were in agreement that life in Walltown is better. According to Cami Holeman, “she has seen Walltown change in just the few years she’s lived there. At first, she’d see teens in a nearby parking lot, rolling dice and dealing drugs. She asked them to leave, to remember the neighborhood’s elderly and the children who can’t even play in their own yards. Ever since then our street has been clean. Neighbors are coming out more. They are proud of what they have. They are decorating their yards with colored rocks and pretty flowers. They are recycling more. Neighbors are watching out for each other.”

It is not the change in the housing stock, but the way that it affects the neighborhood, that will ultimately cause change in Walltown. Providentially, it appears to be doing so.

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Appendix I: Map of Durham

Map of Durham showing Walltown and its relationship to downtown Durham, Duke University’s West Campus and the Northgate Mall.

Map from http://www.mapblast.com
Appendix II: Map of Northwest Central Neighborhoods

Map of Northwest Central Neighborhoods

Appendix III: Map of Deteriorated Housing, 1992

Map of Moderately and Deteriorated Housing in Northwest Central Durham, 1992

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