Insights from Research on Fostering Diverse Neighborhoods: Three challenges and an opportunity

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Challenge #1
Challenge #2
Why is Oak Park So Nice?

- Three of the four most common responses are the same for whites, blacks, and Latinos (though given at different levels)
  - Houses
  - Community environment
  - Amenities
- Whites also like that it’s close to the city.
- African Americans also like that it’s racially diverse
- Latinos also mention that the crime is low and schools are good
Why do African Americans like Homewood/Flossmoor and why don’t Whites and Latinos?

- **African Americans’ top three reasons they like it:**
  - Community environment
  - Housing
  - Schools

- **Whites’ top three reasons they don’t like it:**
  - Isolated
  - Unfamiliar
  - Too far from jobs/schools

- **Latinos’ top three reasons they don’t like it:**
  - Unfamiliar
  - Too far from jobs/schools
  - Isolated
Challenge #3
An Opportunity
White Chicagoans’ Ideal Neighborhood Is.....

Source: 2004-2005 Chicago Area Study
African American Chicagoans’ Ideal Neighborhood Is….

Source: 2004-2005 Chicago Area Study
Latino Chicagoans’ Ideal Neighborhood Is…

Source: 2004-2005 Chicago Area Study
So what can a community do?
Acknowledge that race still matters

- Racial stereotypes still influence (especially whites’) perceptions of communities and the same neighborhood with the same amenities can be read differently simply because of the race of the residents.
- Identify strategies to break down these stereotypes.
Figure out if people know about your community

- Communities, especially racially/ethnically diverse ones, need to
  - market themselves to break down blind spots (which are especially pronounced among whites) to ensure demand from all racial/ethnic groups.
  - assure that your community remains attractive and well-known to people of all racial backgrounds.

- Segregated communities need to include programs that provide housing counseling to be sure that people of all races/ethnicities know about their communities.
Figure out what people think of your community

- Understand what reputations your communities have among those who live there—and among those who you would like to live there.

- Identify what people perceive are your community’s strengths and weaknesses—and figure out if these are the same for all racial/ethnic groups.
  
  • Specifically, is your community welcoming of people of all races/ethnicities—both in word and in deed?
One concluding thought....