

SURF 2023

For my SURF (Summer of Undergraduate Research Fund) I designed a project which delved into certain aspects of gentrification affecting Northside, Carrboro, and Chapel Hill. These aspects were identified using “The Town of Carrboro 2022-2042 Comprehensive Plan”, which previously identified aspects of gentrification harming Carrboro such as: affordable housing and racial diversity. I also pursued the change of social capital as Carrboro, North Side, and Chapel Hill are towns which value community.

- Affordable housing: “Housing that is affordable to households with low incomes, meaning that these households pay no more than 30% of their income for housing costs like rent, mortgage, and utilities” (Orange County North Carolina)
- Diversity: A major factor of Gentrification includes the removal of minorities from their original communities to create a newer, more hip, and often whiter community.
- Social Capital: “The web of social relationships that influences individual behavior and thereby affects economic growth” (Pennar)

Research Question & Narrators

Ultimate Research Question: How does UNC Chapel Hill and its students affect the affordable housing, diversity, and community of surrounding neighborhoods?

Danita Mason Hogans: A Chapel Hill native and civil rights historian.

Tai Huynh: A current member on the Chapel Hill Town Council

Vishanth Palanivel: A former student at UNC-CH and volunteer with the Jackson Center.



Photo Credit: Town of Carrboro

Findings

Originally I went into this project believing I was going to interview people who lived in the Northside and Carrboro communities. I ended up interviewing people who have been working with the communities and who are adjacent to the problem because no one in the neighborhoods wanted to talk. Longtime residents of the Northside and Carrboro community feel like they have lost their power or voice. By interviewing people who have been working with housing and the neighborhoods for an extended period of time, I learned that there are several old rules and laws that are keeping wealthy residents in the neighborhood and university worker or longtime residents out.

Unfortunately several powerful voices have a say in the current gentrification issue in the area, causing a standstill in exponential change.

References

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