

THE CHRONICLE

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Gentrification Symposium creates platform for serious conversation

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Last week dozens of community stakeholders came together to discuss the root causes and solutions to a phenomenon that is taking hold of communities across the country and has the potential to do the same here in Winston-Salem - gentrification.

Gentrification is defined as the process of renovating a house or district so that it conforms to middle to upperclass taste. It's no secret that gentrification often leads to dismantled minority neighborhoods and priced-out residents. Last year the city's Human Relations Department and the New Horizons Fair Housing Committee came together to have a serious conversation about gentrification and its impact on the community.

With the growth of downtown over the past decade, many believe it's only a matter of time before over-priced townhomes and apartments begin showing up in the surrounding communities and displace thousands of residents. When discussing the need for the symposium with The Chronicle last week, Wanda Allen-Abraha, City of Winston-Salem human relations director, said with talks of gentrification growing, they felt the need to create

a platform where residents could share their thoughts and opinions with other community stakeholders and elected officials.

"The purpose is to create a platform for the public to be able to interface with government officials, non-profit organizations, and a few people from our local colleges and universities to talk about some best practices and solutions to what many people perceive as-gentrification," Allen-Abraha said.

The symposium held at the Anderson Center on the campus of Winston-Salem State University on Wednesday, Nov. 6, featured several guest speakers and breakout sessions that covered a number of topics including a history of gentrification and public housing and innovative planning solutions to combat gentrification, just to name a few. The opening speaker was James Perry, president and CEO of the Winston-Salem Urban League (WSUL).

Before taking charge of the WSUL, Perry served for 10 years as the Chief Executive Officer of the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center. Perry led the center through Hurricane Katrina. He also serves on the National Fair Housing Alliance Board of Directions.

Perry said when discussing gentrification, it



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is important that we step back and take a look at segregation. He said the most important precursor to gentrified neighborhoods was segregation.

He said while some people believe gentrification is a result of choice, history tells us that policy change is what led to widespread gentrification.

"Many people presume that it's simply about people choosing not to live next to each other. They presume that it is a fundamental decision by property owners to buy in a particular neighborhood, but what history suggests is that that's not true," Perry continued. "This doesn't just happen all across the

one knows Winston-Salem is segregated, the data shows that between 2000-2016 there has not been any gentrification. He said, "We haven't really suffered the consequences of gentrification yet."

Perry continued to discuss the history of segregation and how the construction of the U.S. Highway System and other policies led to gentrified communities. To support his claims throughout his presentation, Perry also showed maps of several major cities where widespread segregation led to gentrification.

When looking at the map of Winston-Salem, Perry said although every-

one knows Winston-Salem is segregated, the data shows that between 2000-2016 there has not been any gentrification. He said, "We haven't really suffered the consequences of gentrification yet."

Perry said the data shows that most communities have stayed the same or become poorer. He said although the data doesn't give the community anything to be proud about, it does give us an opportunity to stop gentrification before it takes hold in Winston-Salem.

"I think we still have an opportunity to get ahead of the curve," Perry said. "I suspect if we look at this map in about five years,

because of the changes at Crystal Towers and Plaza Apartments, we'll actually see some dramatic changes."

To wrap up his presentation, Perry gave three potential solutions to combat gentrification. He said as a community, we must focus on development rather than displacement, land banking, and more opportunities for home ownership. He mentioned that having open conversations about gentrification like this symposium are a step in the right direction as well.

"Home ownership is one of the few things that

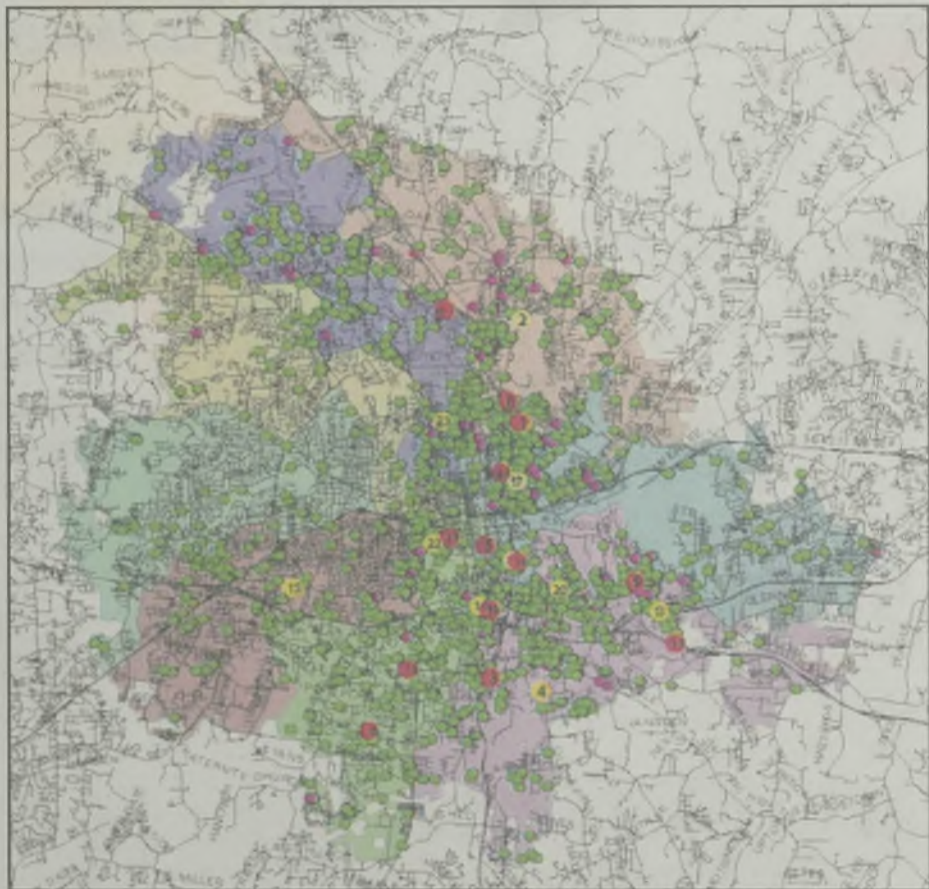
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City staff, WSPD looking for solutions to combat violent crimes

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

In response to the rise in shootings and other violent crimes in the area, the Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) and the City Council is looking to expand several initiatives that are already in place, including one that will help restore suspended drivers' licenses for qualified residents.

Violent crimes are defined as crimes in which an offender uses or threatens to use force on a victim. Some of those crimes include murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. In the past year while robberies have been on a decline, rapes and aggravated assaults have



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This map shows all the homicides and reported gunfire in Winston-Salem in 2019.

increased between 10 and 14%. When looking at the number of homicides in the city, with about six weeks left in the year, there have already been 24 murders, compared to 2017 and

2018 when there were 26 murders for the year.

While making a presentation to the Public Safety Committee on Tuesday, Nov. 12, Chief Catrina Thompson said,

"Violent crime is leading to premature deaths of our young men and women in the city and causing non-fatal injuries to other members of our community."

When discussing a map that shows where the homicides are taking place, Thompson mentioned that the homicides in 2019 haven't been concentrated to one single area or ward; she said they are happening in every part of the city. And a map, provided by the WSPD, shows gunfire is even more widespread throughout the city.

"For the most part, homicides are occurring all over our city. We have had homicides occurring in every ward with the exception of our West Ward and Northwest Ward. Every other ward in 2019 we've had a homicide," Thompson continued. "I think it's important to mention that while it's no comfort to us, this uptick has been experienced all over the country, particularly in the state of North Carolina. I've been in contact with my colleagues in Durham, Kernersville and Greensboro as well, and they've all seen an increase in homicides this year versus last year."

To combat these issues, earlier this year the WSPD formed the Violent Fire-

arm Investigation Team (VFIT). Thompson said VFIT is comprised of detectives who are specially trained in the area of ballistic evidence examination submission. Those detectives focus investigative efforts exclusively on offenders who utilize firearms in the commission of crimes.

As of Oct. 25, VFIT and the WSPD have investigated more than 1,700 incidents in which a firearm was unlawfully discharged and based on current data, the WSPD will seize more than 1,000 firearms by the end of the year.

Thompson said although she is grateful for the VFIT team, she knows that there are other violent crimes and shootings that don't get reported. Thompson said she is hopeful that with the award of a grant under the Local Law Enforcement Crime Gun Intelligence Center for the purchase of a gunfire detection system, they will have the opportunity to do more to stop these senseless crimes.

The gunfire detection

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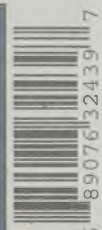


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