

Community Control, but at Whose Cost: Neighborhood Improvement Districts in Neoliberal Milwaukee

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Abstract

This study examines the spread of Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NIDs) in contemporary Milwaukee. Derived from Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and endemic to Milwaukee, NIDs assess residential property and have become a popular method for facilitating community-directed home improvement programs. By interviewing personnel involved in the organization and administration of a NID in the Harambee neighborhood, I find that community support for the program stems from experiences with past development programs and the desire to prevent a further loss of wealth, while city support results from NIDs allowing municipal government to pass on development costs to its most marginalized neighborhoods.

Introduction

Milwaukee's Garden Homes occupy a prominent place in the history of public housing in the United States. Constructed in 1922, Garden Homes is one of the first municipally funded and cooperatively owned housing developments in the country and emblematic of the vision of the three socialist mayors who governed the city in the first half of the twentieth century (McCarthy 2009, 42). Emphasizing land-use control, cooperative housing, and decentralization, this vision

was underpinned by the belief that municipal government could provide quality public services to neighborhoods throughout the city (McCarthy 2009, x).

Given this history, perhaps it is fitting that the Garden Homes district now has another designation: NID #6. NIDs, or Neighborhood Improvement Districts, are a curious offshoot of BIDs (Business Improvement Districts), quasi-governmental organizations that have the power to assess properties within a set boundary and use the resulting funds to provide public services in the prescribed area. But whereas BIDs assess and provide services to commercial property owners, NIDs assess and provide services to residential property owners (City of Milwaukee 2013, 4). In 2006, the Wisconsin state legislature passed the 2005 Wisconsin ACT 186, giving cities the power to establish NIDs, and the concept appears to be unique to the state, as well as the city of Milwaukee (Hillard, Peterangelo, and Henken 2017, 8). In fact, the extent of Milwaukee's embrace of BIDs as a whole is exceptional. With 40 BIDs listed on its directory, the city currently has the fourth largest number of active BIDs in the country, behind New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles-easily the largest number of BIDs per capita of any city (Hillard, Peterangelo, and Henken 2017, 18). This figure is more remarkable given the hurdles neighborhoods face when establishing BIDs and NIDs, as well as the well documented shortfalls of BIDs as a perpetuation of the neoliberal city, begging the question of why the vision of a neighborhood-based structure providing economic development to low-income communities using additional taxes is so appealing to this city.

Yet, to date no academic studies have been conducted on Milwaukee's NIDs. I aim to rectify this gap in the literature through a study of one of the city's NIDs located in the Northside neighborhood of Harambe. This study will address three primary research questions: what

factors lead to Harambee forming a NID, what benefits do communities feel NIDs are bringing to their community, and how has the NID changed the neighborhood's attitudes towards economic development programs. Potential answers to these questions lie in the city's socialist past, which privileged the concerns and creation of neighborhoods on the periphery of the city served by responsive municipal services over the development of Milwaukee's downtown. These policies were dissembled as the city experienced large demographic changes due to the Great Migration, leaving Milwaukee's Black communities without a voice in policy as the city retreated from those neighborhoods. BIDs, and especially NIDs, express these neighborhoods' desires for community control of economic development programs, albeit rearticulated within the contemporary neoliberal political context.

This study, as the first conducted on NIDs, has many implications for work on NIDs and BIDs both locally and nationally. BIDs have been critiqued as an encroachment of private capital on municipal authority. The same critique cannot be applied to NIDs, although there is still much to criticize. Given the unique nature of NIDs in Milwaukee, a unique theoretical framework should be developed and applied to contextualize and understand the significance of this very local phenomenon.

Literature Review

Due to the profound lack of work on Neighborhood Improvement Districts, this study draws on several bodies of literature to shape its frame of analysis. The first are urban histories of Milwaukee, which document and analyze the city's sewer socialist paradigm. John McCarthy's *Making Milwaukee Mightier* (2009) provides a thorough examination of the

development policies of the city's socialist administrations, as well as the resulting clashes with various commercial and suburban interests. Particularly useful are McCarthy's identification of the theme of decentralization versus centralization as an animating force in the city's history, something he elaborates on in his 2006 article, "Dreaming of a Decentralized Metropolis." While McCarthy primarily defines decentralization spatially (meaning the city privileging expansion on the periphery in order to clear out its central neighborhoods), the infrastructural element of this policy, in which all neighborhoods receive adequate funding and services, is the most important aspect for this proposal. His application of the idea of municipal mercantilism will also be key to understanding the inequalities perpetuated by BIDs and NIDs in the economic landscape of the city (McCarthy 2009, 168).

However, in both works, McCarthy spends little time analyzing the racial dynamics at work in the planning and implementation of socialist policies during this time period, and the discussion he does have tends to be confined to the political impact of these policies on the white working- and middle-class communities in the metropolitan region. A racial critique of this history is important for understanding Harambee, a majority black neighborhood, and Tula Connell (2017) fills in this gap by looking at this history from both a racial and labor perspective. Her analysis of Milwaukee's experience of the Great Migration points to the tension between an established middle-class firmly grounded in the racial capitalism of Booker T. Washington with the new working-class arrivals who began pushing for more confrontational community activism in the face of severe housing segregation as an animating force in the community's history (31). This tension between economic development and activism continues to animate LMI

communities, creating a spectrum along which NIDs and the community development organizations administering them must place themselves.

An analysis of the city's more recent development history and the demise of the city's decentralization policies is provided by Rast (2009). Rast's comparative study of the trajectories of Milwaukee and Chicago's respective development policies documents the former city's gradual shift from socialist-decentralizing annexation to a centralizing corporate-oriented program of downtown development mirroring the latter city by 1980. While Rast mentions the cooperation between realtors and Milwaukee's government on the city's annexation program, he focuses on the job-creating aspects of the policy (408). However, this reorientation towards downtown can also be seen as a part of a larger withdrawal of the city's government from providing municipal services to low-income neighborhoods during the 1970s.

Deanna Schmidt's 2011 article focuses on another aspect of this retreat: the creation of the city's 1977 Relative Residential Status map, which determined which of the city's neighborhoods could be "saved" (570). Schmidt compellingly argues that this process was racially motivated and perpetuated redlining in majority-minority neighborhoods. In these neighborhoods, "the city prescribed 'vacant land maintenance, assuring adequate maintenance of public improvements, and eliminating pockets of deterioration'" (589). While not explicitly stated in Schmidt's article, municipal retreat from low income and majority minority neighborhoods was part of a more fundamental national shift essential to understanding NIDs and BIDs: the advent of the neoliberal city.

Newman and Lake's foundational 2006 review of this process describes how beginning in the 1970s, changes in the global economy caused the government at every level disinvest in

the welfare state, which in turn led to community-based organizations to become “shadow-state institutions relegated to providing a rudimentary level of social welfare or directly participating in the development activities of the local urban regime” (48). BIDs originated at the beginning of the neoliberal era and represent both primary policy aims of urban regimes in this paradigm as defined by Newman and Lake: “those seeking to eliminate the neighborhood characteristics that serve as disincentives to investment and those seeking the reintegration of urban neighborhoods into circuits of capital” (50).

But seemingly contradictorily, as government retreated from the neighborhood, the concept of a neighborhood has become more important than ever for policymakers, activists, and academics alike. Deborah Martin (2001) writes that “neighborhoods have an increasingly political meaning and function in the neo-liberal era, in which governments seek solutions to social and economic problems by devolving responsibility to more local areas” (361). Martin’s insightful review of the geographic literature defining neighborhoods argues that neighborhood activism is best understood and analyzed as a means of spatial production, often enacted in response to a perceived threat to a given community (369). Using this framework, NIDs can be seen as a visible manifestation of this process.

The theoretical work of Newman and Lake, as well as that of Martin has underpinned the body of literature examining neighborhood-level development organizations in Milwaukee over the past two decades. Two scholars have written on Milwaukee’s BIDs. Kevin Ward (2007) looks at Milwaukee’s downtown and third ward BIDs, arguing that they constitute an example of the neoliberalization of the city, as well as a powerful tool for the city to embrace new urbanist design and planning (801). Ward argues his findings convincingly, but his research was

conducted before the creation of the city's first NID in 2009, and the primary actors and goals of the BIDs he looks at differ significantly from those of the city's NIDs today.

Daniel Toth's 2012 master's thesis expands on Ward's work by analyzing and comparing nine separate BIDs in the city. Unlike Ward, Toth considers the diversity of the city's BIDs, creating several typologies in order to classify his units of analysis and finding that there are large inequalities between different BIDs abilities to provide municipal services based on a district's size and property values (101). These findings echo McCarthy's writing on metropolitan mercantilism, in which property taxes of a given city are siloed off from the larger community, albeit at the scale of the neighborhood.

In addition to BID literature, this study must also consider research conducted on Milwaukee's Community Development Corporations, as many CDCs are involved in the administration of NIDs-including Harambee's. Michael Bonds and Raquel Farmer-Hinton's 2008 examination of the Milwaukee's Community Development Block Grant distribution process is crucial for understanding the immediate political climate that led to the formation of NIDs. Their analysis showed that as the city changed its process in the late 1990s ostensibly to increase the opportunity for community input, fewer CDBG funds were allocated to CBOs in low-income neighborhoods and more funds were diverted to pay for municipal services previously paid for by taxes (84). This left gaps in services and CDCs in low-income communities previously funded by CDBG which could potentially be filled by NIDs.

Anne Bonds, Judith T. Kenny, and Rebecca Nole Wolfe's 2014 paper on LISC's Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative (based on Wolfe's master's thesis) demonstrates how Harambee enacted neighborhood in order to oppose a project they saw as exclusive and

threatening to their community. This initiative was spearheaded on the ground by Habitat for Humanity, a group that operates with mostly suburban volunteers in lieu of contracting builders, and the community's apprehension to this model could be significant in the context of this proposal (1078). It is possible that Harambee's experience with this project informed the community's decision to establish a NID in order to exert more control over housing rehabilitation in the neighborhood, as well as to gain more economic benefits in the form of contracts and jobs for local businesses.

Methodology and Data Collection

This project relies primarily on a series of qualitative interviews with individuals involved in various capacities in Harambee NID #7, and I supported the data I collected from these interviews with basic historical research using publicly available government documents and news articles. My first interview was conducted with Sally Svetic, an Economic Development Specialist at the Milwaukee Department of City Development, who is responsible for administering the cities' NIDs for the Milwaukee Commercial Corridors team. Svetic, a UWM Urban Studies BA and MS alumna, helped me understand the city's role and relationship with its many NIDs, as well as the official process of incorporating a NID.

My second interview was with Clarissa Morales, the current Community Asset Development Specialist at Riverworks. Morales is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Harambee NID's primary housing stock rehabilitation program, and she also conducts a large amount of community outreach for the NID. This work has put her in the perfect position to give

me insight on the administration of the NID, as well as her experience interacting and serving Harambee residents through the program.

My final interview was with Rick Banks, who is currently the Senior Program Manager of African American Affairs at the Milwaukee County Office of Equity, and previously worked as a community organizer with the Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative and Riverworks from 2014 to 2018. In that capacity, he led the organization's push for a NID in Harambee and saw the incorporation process through from start to finish. Banks is still a Harambee resident, and his interview helped me frame and contextualize NID #7 and its immediate history in the community. I am extremely grateful to my subjects for giving me their time and sharing their experiences with this program.

The interviews I collected were coded using a mix of deductive and inductive processes. The initial themes I coded for were based on the questions that I had asked my subjects primarily relating to their day-to-day activities with NIDs, their experience with community outreach on behalf of the NID, the NID incorporation process, NID boundaries, the advantages and disadvantages of NIDs, and how they viewed NIDs in the context of their respective neighborhoods and Milwaukee as a whole. However, over the course of these interviews, another strong theme emerged: the general antipathy and suspicion held by North Milwaukee residents to city economic development programs, which all my subjects frequently encountered in their roles with NIDs. This theme led me to change the frame of this paper and generate a second theme, the relationship between NIDs and city government.

Findings

In conclusion, the passing of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 was a false hope to many Neighborhood Improvement Districts, such as Harambee's, which most commonly use assessments to fund housing stock improvement programs in their neighborhoods. For NID #7, this takes the form of a home repair grant, which so far has helped more than 35 homeowners with repairs they would otherwise not have been able to afford, mainly for roofing. The elected NID board sets the program's objectives and tasks Riverworks Development Corporation (RDC), a high-profile community development corporation located in the neighborhood, with program outreach and administration. In this sense, while the Harambee NID is technically a semi-governmental organization, most residents will experience it as a programmatic element of Riverwork's operations.

While NIDs are considered community-based organizations, the impetus for their advent came from the city of Milwaukee. According to the records of the Wisconsin State Legislature, the city spent 36 hours lobbying for Assembly Bill 366, which authorized the city of Milwaukee alone to create and oversee these bodies (Wisconsin Ethics Commission 2005). While no city officials testified in the July 2005 hearing for the bill, leadership from the Downtown BID did, and Jennifer Gonda, then the city's chief lobbyist at the time, registered in support on behalf of the city (Grothman 2005).

The value NIDs bring to Milwaukee, from the city's viewpoint, is clear. In the words of Svetic:

I think it's difficult based on budgetary constraints at the city and priorities with the city as an organization to fund distinct neighborhood specific programs. And so perhaps because of those budgetary constraints getting more and more severe each year, folks are

still looking for [programs targeting neighborhood housing stock], and they turn to NIDs to do that.

As discussed in the previous section, the city of Milwaukee has relied on an increasingly large portion of federal funds intended for community development, such as the CDBG, to pay for basic municipal services. NIDs provide a way for the city to facilitate community development efforts previously funded by the Block Grant with virtually no cost to its bottom line. The amount of money the city spends on its NIDs each year amounts to a little over one FTE: Svetic's administrative position, along with managerial oversight and IT support. All other costs incurred by the city on behalf of the NIDs are reimbursed annually by the NIDs, themselves.

These costs can be substantial, especially in the process of incorporating a NID. While this process formally starts with a petition to the city, it really begins much earlier. In the case of Harambee, Rick Banks traces the origins of NID #7 to a recommendation in a report authored by the Harambee Great Neighborhood Initiative (HGNI) in 2011, although city planning documents for the Northeast side of the city discuss the possibility of a NID for the area as far back as 2008 (City of Milwaukee 2008, 91). Banks was recruited to HGNI in 2015 to organize community support for the NID, helming the effort through 2017, when the NID was incorporated, and according to him, the earliest stage of this process consisted of traditional grassroots organizing: "I started going door to door, talking about the ideas, seeing if [residents] were interested, and then we mailed a postcard with several different dates that were, you know, during the daytime, nighttime, weekends, several days for people to attend info sessions had about 100 people." The city's role during this phase was primarily in an advisory capacity, helping Banks and a steering committee of residents supported by HGNI draft an operating plan for the future NID.

Once the formal petition is submitted, the city is mandated by the legislature to play a much larger role by holding a public hearing and sending out certified mail to every residential property owner in the proposed district informing them about the NID, its operating plan, and upcoming public hearings for the proposal. Svetic says this is the largest cost incurred by the city in the process in both time and money, amounting to upwards of \$30,000 depending on the size of the NID. She also views this as an ineffective method for community outreach, since a large percentage of the mail sent out is not delivered, and the Milwaukee Commercial Corridors team is seeking to change this requirement in the state statute as a result.

The underperformance of this step of the process is unfortunate, given that the city plan commission hearing referred to in the mailing provides residents their sole opportunity to voice their opposition to the NID in a city-sponsored forum. Furthermore, it becomes harder to stop the incorporation process after this proceeding, during which the commission votes on whether to refer the proposed NID to the Common Council for approval. A petition of property owners holding 40% of the proposed NID's valuation can terminate the incorporation process within thirty days of the hearing. After this deadline, a petition to dissolve it needs 50% of the NID's valuation to be successful.

Despite outreach efforts by both the city and CBOs, many residents find out about a proposed NID when it is too late for them to do anything about it, whether they support or oppose it. The majority of Svetic's community contacts during the creation of the Lindsay Heights NID were with residents who called the city after the commission hearing:

Unfortunately, a lot of folks didn't receive the packet and then only received the notice of the Common Council meeting... The opportunity for public hearing had passed, and so

that was a little bit difficult to explain to folks that this was happening and that their opportunity to speak about it had technically passed.

While these conversations began rather awkwardly, most callers were supportive of the NID once Svetic had explained its structure and purpose:

[Residents] had a lot of great questions and a lot of skepticism, and [after] being able to talk to folks one-on-one and explain to them what they're seeing and what this will mean, I never ended up with anyone being against the NID after really explaining it to them on the base level, not trying to convince them or anything. Folks were very supportive once they knew what it was.

Svetic's experience with these callers speaks to one of the biggest questions encountered in this study: why so many North Milwaukee communities see NIDs favorably and go through the long and intensive process of incorporation. Banks sees two primary reasons in Harambee: "there were not a lot of home repair resources out there, and [residents] wanted it to be as unrestrictive as possible while still keeping it to like just the homeowners in Harambee that being like so many programs don't offer." An expression of a form of metropolitan mercantilism, this statement shows that like many communities on the North Side, Harambee residents have a severe need for housing stock rehabilitation programs and other community services. They also have a deep distrust of a municipal government they see as neglecting or draining resources from their neighborhoods, and they have little faith in redistributive programs, preferring that their money remain in their own communities. In the words of Svetic regarding Lindsay Heights residents, "I think they very rightly have a lot of skepticism about when they see the word 'development' in a mailing." For these communities, NIDs promise something that has become

extremely valued: community control of economic development in their neighborhoods, if only a small piece of it.

This view of North Side residents as extremely wary of government was expressed by all my interview subjects. NIDs, while in theory representing an improvement from past programs in the eyes of many residents, still encountered community resistance in various capacities. Clarissa Morales, who administers the Harambee NID for Riverworks, described helping one longtime resident with roof repairs through the NID:

[The client] grew up in this home... He's like my favorite just because he was real feisty. But we were able to do his roof. Does he have more things that need to be done? Absolutely, but he doesn't have water coming in anymore. So that was a hurdle, and of course they, like a lot of people, I don't think really understand the power of this NID and these funds that they're paying [into]... The roof was about \$9,000, almost \$10,000. His [monthly] income was \$452. [He told me] "I don't have money to pay you back; I don't want you to take my house." And so [a lot of my work is] just getting them and reassuring them that this project is to help them [and] not to harm them, and making them feel comfortable enough to know that what they are signing isn't putting a lien on their home. And now, [the client] says I'm alright with him.

This reaction from community members to any program that might dispossess them of their property, even with the urgent needs such as the client described above, is completely understandable given the neighborhood's history with urban renewal and its successor redevelopment programs, which have drained community wealth more often than increased it. "The community has been taken advantage of," says Morales. This particular resident was 96

years old at the time he was served by the NID, and he undoubtedly remembers this history all too well.

While wary of city government, the majority of Harambee residents seemed to have supported the NID when it was proposed. But that was not true in all sections of the neighborhoods, and much of the opposition came from those sections who wished not to be included within its boundaries. Banks and the HGNI steering committee determined the district's boundaries early in the organizing process, and they used this opportunity to exclude potential areas of opposition:

The consensus was that South of center had very similar architectural dynamics, being that those houses were are so much bigger and that people who own them are so much more wealthy. There's less of a need to service those folks who are like, "yeah, we don't really, you know, need [home improvement programs]." Those are the folks you also have to think about like opposition to it and it's like, all right, if there's going to be an organized, strong opposition to it, they could potentially be it. So, it's alright, let's just leave them out, and then it was like, where's the need... and the need is pretty much from Center to Capital, and so that was where it was.

As a result of these decisions, the wealthier section of Harambee below Center Street is not part of the neighborhood's NID, by most standards a pragmatic and practical decision on the part of organizers.

However, there is another sect of opposition to the Harambee NID: the 5 Points Neighborhood Association from the adjoining eponymous neighborhood, which was included in the final boundaries for NID #7. Five Points has similar needs to Harambee, and according to

Banks, the reason for this group's opposition was not the proposed housing rehabilitation, but more so that they hoped to create their own NID centered in 5 Points, itself. Despite this opposition, the proposed boundaries were approved by the planning commission by a three to two vote, and while opposition has continued from this group, it has not overwhelmed the operation or neighborhood politics of the NID. Furthermore, there appears to be little recourse for the group; it is possible for NIDs to annex neighboring areas via petition, but the state statute provides no way for areas to secede.

Once a NID is created, the next major step is for the neighborhood to elect a board for the district, who will be responsible for updating the NID's operating plan annually. In the case of Harambee, the board is also responsible for interfacing with the CDC running the day-to-day operations of the program, in this case Riverworks. As with most democratic governing bodies, Banks says that there were, and are, occasional conflicts between board members about both the board procedures and the Riverworks program:

Bureaucrat heavy ideologues amongst the group who were like, "we just have to have checks and balances for things which are all important." But it also extends the process, and it makes it a little harder [to run the NID efficiently], and one of the things that was added was a quorum requirement.... It was only 40 residents to vote or to show up at an annual meeting, which sounds like it would be easy, but it's actually really hard [to get that many attendees] ... And then you know, just dealing with the politics of it all, the politics of different opinions on what we should fund and how we should fund it... Should we have an income limit, should we not?

While community control is an important goal for any development program, it also comes with the same administrative and procedural headaches of any institution trying to do this work. Banks regards this stage of the process as much more challenging than incorporation, but these problems were largely resolved successfully, and the board continues to function effectively with monthly meetings. Despite her involvement in the daily operations of the program, Morales takes no part in the governing of the NID: “I’m just here to carry out their orders.”

The chief challenge faced by the Harambee NID today continues to be community outreach and engagement. For instance, the NID has had a good year in the programmatic arena, spending all its assessed funds, but Clarissa has had problems finding enough contractors willing to work in Harambee to complete these projects on schedule.

[Our biggest challenge] is the lack of legitimate contractors that are not afraid to do work in an urban setting, because you are not treating my people the same as if you were going to Brookfield to do a roof versus doing a roof on First and Keefe. And we know shots are fired and things happen, but you don’t have to treat a resident as less than, and it’s just [about] getting people that are willing to come in and do the work with dignity for the people.

In terms of community organizing, Banks still feels that not enough residents are aware of the services provided by the NID, given the difficulty of meeting the quota of residents necessary for board meetings. This is complicated by changing populations due to gentrification in the neighborhood:

You've got residents that consistently rent. I think around a third of homes are owner-occupied. Renters are going now, but even still, having a strong engagement with that 33% of owner-occupied homes and still being engaged with those renters is a challenge.

The subtext to this statement is the growing concern in the neighborhood about changes in the population of renters from a Black working class one to a whiter creative class, as well as the replacement of homeowners and small landlords by out of state corporations. Neither of these new groups have the same political and social affinities to the NID as longtime residents, and they will be much harder to organize.

The structural issue underlying these challenges is that these organizing activities cannot be supported by assessments, and there are few other sources of funding available to the NID due to its unique status. In Banks' view, this could threaten the existence of the NID, itself:

Being a non-governmental agency is a strength and a weakness, because to basically have to assess a tax to fund what the community wants... is another way that most people can have access to [needed services]. But it's a weakness because these can't get traditional nonprofit dollars, and it could build resentment if the engagement isn't there to build consensus for [the assessment].

Riverworks can and does leverage the NID for additional funding for its other programs, but residents cannot expect the same level of oversight of this organization as what a NID is designed to provide. In spite of these challenges, Banks still believes in the organizational power and potential NIDs offer to the North Side:

I was on the board of the Milwaukee Community Land Trust for a second, and we've always been trying to figure out how we can get like Harambee properties in the Land

Trust. And I'm like the NID would be a perfect entity [for this]. Say we can raise the fee by \$25 and then purchase the vacant land in [the] neighborhood and then put that into the land trust. So, I think there are a lot of opportunities to do some creative things around community ownership and community control through the NID. It's just a matter of being able to have the capacity for it.

After a decade of successive organizing efforts across the North Side, the spread of NIDs shows no signs of slowing. Lindsay Heights will incorporate this coming year, and NIDs are currently being planned for Amani and Riverwest. It remains to be seen whether these quasi-governmental institutions can live up to their promise of community-led empowerment and revitalization, but Milwaukee will find out, one way or the other.

Analysis and Conclusion

The central research question of this study concerned how NIDs, which occupy a strange territory between a government body and a CBO, affected their communities' views and relationships with economic redevelopment. The data showed that North Side communities, while extremely skeptical of government-led development programs, have generally responded favorably to the idea of NIDs as community-lead bodies that could provide much needed services to their neighborhoods. Furthermore, North Side communities seemed to have adopted a version of metropolitan mercantilism in reaction to past development efforts. Residents are distrustful that the taxes they pay are ever returned to their neighborhoods, and a large part of NIDs' appeal is that they are designed specifically to prevent this from happening.

However, NIDs and their organizers have struggled to reach the large volume of residents required to make these organizations truly transformational. Many residents of Lindsey Heights found out that a NID was incorporated too late in the process for them to make their voices heard, and the Harambee NID struggles to achieve a quorum for board meetings. NIDs are further hampered by the fact that organizational efforts after the incorporation process cannot be funded by assessments.

That is not to say that NIDs are not successful organizations. The Harambee NID has helped close to sixty residents maintain their homes to date. But those clients tended to view the NID and Riverworks in a similar manner to previous government programs which had displaced and dispossessed many community members of their homes. This reputation could very well be changing, and Morales provided anecdotal evidence that the program was being spread by word of mouth, but most likely, attitudes towards the NID will not shift on a larger scale until outreach efforts have a much larger impact than they can presently.

There is a deeper concern regarding NIDs as well. Given their popularity and spread, it is possible that NIDs will provide the city further cover for diverting public development funds from North Milwaukee, and since NIDs can only administer a sliver of the services needed by these communities, the lost capacity would not be easily replaced. Furthermore, NIDs are replacing services funded by redistributive taxes with programs paid for in full by the city's poorest communities. Future research needs to examine the implications of this loss, as well as the reasons and extent for North Milwaukee's support for it. Morales still recognizes the need for city to play a larger role in Harambee, albeit a much less destructive one than in years past:

[The city] is here. They're here, right? [They need to] just help residents have understanding that... there's help out there, and not to be afraid to have the city in your business. But if they're going to charge you, then I'm going to be in your business, because I don't want the city taking money from residents.

The city of Milwaukee has steadily drained money from its communities of color for more than a half-century. NIDs were created to stop this, and policymakers need to ensure that in their quest for community control, they do not perpetuate this legacy.

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