OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVES ON CHICAGO’S NORTHERN SUBURBS

Based on a Focus Group Study conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement

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Executive Summary

Despite the fact that one in four persons living in Chicago’s northern suburbs is a person of color compared to one in ten thirty years ago, residents outside the North Shore continue to perceive the area to be white, affluent, and closed, according to focus groups conducted in March 2012 by the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs and the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement.

According to African American, white, and Latino homeowners and renters in these focus groups, to be more open to diversity, these communities must look at, transportation networks, youth programming, and cultural amenities to complement a commitment to openness. Providing affordable housing is essential, both rental and ownership.

Funded under a Fair Housing Initiatives Program grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Interfaith hired the Voorhees Center to determine “outsider” views of municipalities on Chicago’s North Shore. The goal of this project was to collect data on perceptions of North Shore municipalities to help determine possible reasons why people of color choose to move, or not to move, to the North Shore. This information is intended to be useful to the municipalities and Cook County as they employ more affirmative and effective strategies.

The focus group participants generally feel the entire region, with the notable exception of Evanston and Skokie, is inaccessible in terms of housing price, few transportation options, and an atmosphere of intolerance of new families or cultures. Some African American and Latino focus group participants have experienced discrimination in their search for housing in the northern suburbs, not only based on race and national origin, but familial status. Racial profiling of people of color by police was also raised as a concern by all groups.

Most participants give the northern suburbs high marks for good schools and low crime. If they could be assured that they could afford to live in the region, secure jobs and child care close to home, and feel themselves to be accepted and included by the real estate community and the broader population, they would consider a move to the northern suburbs.

Based on these findings, Interfaith recommends to municipalities that they: (1) affirmatively advertise their communities as open throughout the region; (2) promote a housing stock that is affordable to people with low and moderate incomes; (3) encourage more public transportation; (4) address concerns about comfort in new community; and (5) recruit people of color to appointed or elected positions in local government.
I. Introduction

The North Shore of Chicago historically has a reputation for being “Caucasian” and “wealthy.” In the 1960s, prior to the passage of the Fair Housing Act, the region was in fact exclusive, with blatant discriminatory practices by real estate professionals who steered African American home seekers in particular away from the region.\(^1\) Local residents, congregations, and civic organizations such as the League of Women Voters founded the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs in 1972 specifically to open these communities to all. Forty years later, Interfaith seeks to gauge the reputation as well as the reality of exclusionary housing.

In promoting diverse and inclusive communities, Interfaith decided to explore the following concerns:

- Although the agency’s fair housing audit testing has revealed instances of differential in the sale and rental of housing particularly based on race and national origin, few people come forward as complainants. Is it that members of these protected classes are simply not looking in this area, or that they are but not contacting enforcement agencies to complain about their treatment?

- Do the reputations of individual suburbs differ? How?

- Since jurisdictions must “affirmatively further fair housing” and adopt integrative strategies for their communities beyond upholding individual rights, how can outside perceptions influence their approaches?

Interfaith sought qualitative data from “outsider” groups about Chicago’s northern suburbs, especially in regard to housing options and opportunities. This includes African Americans, Latinos and other people who are under-represented based on regional demographic data. Interfaith was also interested in seeing how Caucasians from outside view these communities in terms of housing options and opportunities, to see where there may be common concerns and differences.

The goal of this project was to collect data on perceptions of North Shore municipalities to help determine possible reasons why people of color choose to move, or not to move, to the North Shore. Interfaith’s 16-community service area comprises Deerfield, Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Highwood, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles,

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See “‘Caucasian flight’ taking off in Chicago suburbs,” *Chicago Reporter*, Vol. 26, No. 8, December 1997. David James, who in 1967 became the first African American to purchase a home in the northern suburb of Winnetka, is quoted: “Real estate agents, both black and Caucasian, ‘showed us the same five houses in Evanston.’” After “two years of frustration,” the family bought a home directly from the Caucasian Winnetka homeowner. (p. 4) See also North Shore Summer Project *Summary Report*, August 29, 1965, [http://www.interfaithhousingcenter.org/images/stories/NSSP_1965Study_IHCNS.pdf](http://www.interfaithhousingcenter.org/images/stories/NSSP_1965Study_IHCNS.pdf) (“NORTH SHORE REALTORS STILL REFUSE TO SERVE NEGROES. THEY STILL REFUSE EVEN TO TAKE NONDISCRIMINATORY LISTINGS.” (p. 6))
Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, Skokie, Wilmette, and Winnetka. Information gathered will be presented to relevant municipalities and Cook County to encourage municipalities to employ more affirmative and effective diversity strategies.

II. Methodology

Focus groups were conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement. Focus groups are group interviews, usually with 8-12 people in a room who have similar characteristics, such as age. The benefit of being in a group is that the interaction helps to draw out personal experiences when discussing a topic. The insight gained from interaction is important since “the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and beliefs about a situation” (Kitzinger 1995). These data provide insights, perspectives and perceptions – right or wrong – about the topic of discussion.

Six focus groups were conducted in March 2012 with a sample of adults from the Chicago region who live outside the Interfaith service area. To recruit participants, Interfaith

- sent outreach workers to several public transportation centers to distribute flyers to commuters from other communities who work in the northern suburbs;
- sent email “blasts” to community groups, government agencies and north suburban employers;
- called to follow up on emails;
- met with groups outside the service area;
- contacted its current tester pool and also asked testers to distribute information to friends and relatives; and
- posted the focus group as a volunteer and job opportunity on Craigslist.

Potential participants then contacted the Voorhees Center and were screened for eligibility and provided the time slot and date for the group they would be in once determined eligible. All participants were reminded of the event prior to the date of their group and also on the scheduled day, to ensure good turnout.

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III. Findings

All groups perceive the northern suburbs (with the exception of Evanston and, to some extent, Skokie) to be mostly Caucasian and affluent. They generally feel the entire region is inaccessible in more ways than one: in terms of price, transportation, and attitude toward new families or
cultures. Some African American and Latino focus group participants have experienced discrimination in their search for housing in the northern suburbs, based not only on race and national origin, but also on familial status. Racial profiling of people of color by police was raised as a concern by all groups.

Nonetheless, most participants give the northern suburbs high marks for good schools and low crime. They would consider a move to the northern suburbs if they believed that they could afford to live in the region, secure jobs and child care close to home, and feel themselves to be accepted and included by the real estate community and the broader population.

- **All generally had the same perceptions about who lives in the northern suburbs, especially the further north one travels: higher-income families, mostly Caucasian.**

  "...[W]hat I’ve heard about some of these areas was that they were predominantly Caucasian and that people of color were never welcomed in these areas." (African American renter)

  "I do have the [...] impression that they’re all very affluent. Just everybody that’s up there is probably $150,000 or more per household." (African American homeowner)

  “From my experience, it was more of a higher percentage of Caucasian Americans.” (Latino renter)

  “I have a perception that perhaps they’re mostly Caucasian, not very diverse.” (Latino homeowner)

  “I think in all the communities you see a little bit of everything, but what you don’t see is many black people. I mean it seems like they’re on the South or the West Side. And I know of landlords that may advertise for an apartment and then, if a black family or a black person comes, they’ll say it’s rented.” (Caucasian renter)

  “Well I think Evanston and Skokie are the most diverse. Other places are not as diverse.” (Caucasian homeowner)

- **Unaffordable, expensive housing and property taxes came up as key reasons participants would not move to the northern suburbs, regardless of interest.** Nearly all participants interested in buying thought the prices might prevent them from doing so. Renters had different experiences. Some were able to find housing they could afford but not where they wanted to live, while others, particularly African American renters who could afford the rent, felt some level of scrutiny during the search experience that made them stop or look elsewhere.

  "Just for the record, if I could afford it, I would [live in the northern suburbs].” (African American homeowner)
“I’m just thinking if I’m making $100,000 that’s what I would put myself into [referring to the homes in the northern suburbs]. Then I would think I can maybe afford a house in any of these suburbs.” (Latino renter)

“There’s houses in Evanston that are worth half a million dollars or even more. I’ve seen huge castles.” (Latino renter)

“Evanston, Skokie, Lincolnwood, Niles, Park Ridge, Morton Grove, these are closer to Chicago... But I think the farther north you go, the more inaccessible [affordability and transportation] I think it is if you’re thinking about getting other communities in there.” (Caucasian renter)

“Well, I always had a dream that I would, maybe, move to Highland Park hearing all the wealthy that lived there and all the glamour and all those big lawns. But I knew that I couldn’t afford it.” (Caucasian renter)

“One thing that surprises me about these pictures [of north suburban housing] is how many are multi-family as opposed to single family.” (Caucasian homeowner)

- There is a similar pattern among all three groups when it comes to who can live in the suburbs: that “green” is the only color that matters and discrimination is based on economic class. Nonetheless, others believe and even provided personal experiences that suggest racism prevails. This is particularly strong among African American renters, less so among Latinos.

“...I have taken clients out to view units in the suburbs, in the north suburbs, and once they saw the color of me and the color of my client, it was straight discrimination. And a lot of people don’t know. [...] So if you know what discrimination is, ’cause it could come in all different forms. And they’ll reword it, but it means the same thing. A landlord told one of my clients, well, I don’t want to rent to nobody with teenage boys over 13.” (African American renter)

“It has a lot to do with there’s nothing to do and they not going to welcome you out there, ’cause they think you’re going to tear up their neighborhood. [...] mostly based on the color of your skin. They have an idea in their head that all blacks just tear up everywhere they go. Not all blacks tear up, although I grew up in the projects. When we stayed in the projects, my mother made sure we kept where we stayed at clean.” (African American renter)

“I don’t think it’s a race issue. I think it’s about the money”. (Latino renter)

“I would not at this point in my life choose to live in the suburbs because I feel there’s a lack of diversity.” (Latino homeowner)
“It’s nice to say all these goody goodies about some of these suburbs, but they’re not willing to put low-income housing there.” (Caucasian renter)

“Well, there are quite a few black people in Evanston, but I mean – I think if a lot of black people moved into a community, I think you’d have a problem with the residents. They wouldn’t like that. Or people would have so much money, they would just move out.” (Caucasian renter)

“I think actions speak louder than words. I think a lot of people say they want diversity, but then to echo you, they tend to want to be people that have similar values. Chicago is, as far as I know, still the most segregated city in the nation. So maybe that perception or that thinking feeds into the suburbs as well. Even there’s certain suburbs like Maywood that’s primarily African-American. They just have trouble integrating.” (Caucasian homeowner)

- There is a wide range of views about the level of openness to difference in the northern suburbs. The extent to which the northern suburbs can be a “comfort zone” for people of color came up. The majority felt that the suburbs were geared towards “legacy families” who grew up in the area. From the perspective of a minority – this included lower-income Caucasians and gays as well as African Americans and Latinos – a common concern was standing out as well as having to fit in to the dominant culture. The latter refers to expectations and accepted behaviors; barbeque and large family gatherings with music would make them stand out, but also that some residents would assume this kind of behavior because of their race, income or sexual orientation.

"I wouldn’t feel comfortable living out there for one. You already know you’re not welcome there. Because the way they look at you, the way they treat you and it’s not even really an income thing, because they are out there struggling too, believe it or not." (African American renter)

“If I had a voucher in Wilmette, I think I would feel out of place. Because I know Wilmette is more upper-class income.” (African American renter)

“I just want to add to the comfort zone. As a single woman purchasing a house with two children, I definitely was looking for where I would be more comfortable. And I believe that as a single, black woman with two children being in my community where I was more comfortable was, maybe, even at some times safer. It’s a lot of single, black women that own their homes in the Austin area. But going to another area, it’s like, hmm, would I have to be taking precautionary measures or would I have to be looking over my shoulder. It was just more of a comfort zone just as a single woman to live in my community that I’m familiar with.” (African American homeowner)

“If you were, I guess, a professional family, you could be more accepted. If you [are...] the Huxtables.” All group members verbally and nonverbally appeared to strongly agree
with this statement as “a more professional family, you could be accepted.” (African American homeowner)

“I think this area has a lot of – where the wealth is from generations. It’s not brand new like in some of the parts of the city where young people are out there getting successful, making some money and buying a big place – It’s like third, fourth generation. It’s like multi-generation.” (Latino renter)

“On the issue of welcoming, I’m not sure. I feel like sometimes in terms of educational level, if people are relatively the same, there might be a welcoming experience, but I think racially it’s not always the same. I feel like for the areas that might be affordable, they’re kind of segregated. So then you’re known as, oh, they live over there versus when you live in the city there might be an apartment building and a single family home and a condo within a relatively small area.” (Latino homeowner)

“My impression of those communities is these are people who are probably doctors or who come from wealthy families with a history of being wealthy for many generations who maybe inherited this wealth. That’s the impression I get.” (Latino homeowner)

“I’d like to say that some of these suburbs are people that are super wealthy, so how could I see myself moving into Kenilworth or Winnetka, Highland Park and Glencoe? I don’t fit in that category to be making a half a million to a million dollars and up… I would be a minority … even if it was affordable. These are super-wealthy people that live there. They’re not going to mix in with us, with me, at least.” (Caucasian renter)

“Well I agree that as younger people become two-college households, they’re open to experiences, but from my stance it’s like families of friends that live in some of the wealthier northern suburbs, I would say that they’re very unopen to outsiders, outside the race or income level.” (Caucasian homeowner)

- Many in the focus groups noted that even if they could afford the housing, they were concerned about the homogeneity of entertainment, food, recreation, and after-school programs. They want to feel accepted.

“I want to be able to be myself. I mean I don’t listen to a lot of rap, but I like my music funky. So you got to tolerate that, you know? There’s probably some other things that are symbolic of my culture that may seem a little different. […] If I’m in the city, I don’t even think about it. […] But if I come up here, I got to be cognizant about how loud my music is no matter what kind of music I’m playing. […] Or who I’m bringing in there and everybody is gonna be peeking out the curtains looking to see who is coming in.” (African American homeowner)

“They don’t have good stores up there [except for resale, consignment and thrift stores].” (African American homeowner)
“I felt like the times that I do go through these areas, I definitely feel like a tourist when I’m in that area. You just don’t feel that sense of a connection to that area.” (Latino renter)

“I noticed that they don’t have, even when I was looking up teen jobs or teen opportunities or internships, I did not notice a whole lot of opportunity out there.” (Latino renter)

“I definitely like the schools, the children’s programs, the services, like police and garbage pick-up and all of that that keeps the houses clean and then safety. But on the other hand, I feel like density for me. [....] Being able to be close to stores or different things that you might need. That’s important. I don’t think that that’s always the case in the suburbs. Diversity of aging... I’m sure there are senior communities, but maybe not as close to each other.” (Latino homeowner)

“As an openly gay man, I would find it very difficult to live an open, gay lifestyle in some of those communities. Some of those communities are politically very much Republican and I’m a lifelong Democrat. I don’t think I could live in a community where I stood out like a sore thumb.” (Caucasian renter)

“I just guess the things that I look for where I’d like to live, ethnic diversity, ease of transportation, walkability, even many of the foods. My impression, if I don’t really talk very much about say Evanston, is that these other suburbs don’t really offer those things to me.” (Caucasian renter)

- **Transportation logistics was a concern across the board even for those who drive.**

  Long distances from work, family and fun in the City came up, and if relying on public transportation, participants were concerned about convenience and reliability.

  “I would say that one of my impressions of some of the suburbs that are further north is that if you don’t have transportation, meaning like a car, then it’s not convenient for you whatsoever. And I don’t like to drive so – I like to be right next to the bus or the train.” (African American renter)

  "Well, transportation, likewise, is a major concern with me, especially, with children, because I like to have a medium where if something come up where I need to get to my children at a decent time, you never know when something may come up. I don’t want to be too far away, to be stuck in traffic too long, so I always try to consider those guidelines when I’m looking for property.” (African American homeowner)

  One participant, who worked with people with disabilities, viewed the transportation as “horrible. [...] I would have to take the Metra to get in, transfer to the Pace and then all of these isolated pockets [...] it was a nightmare. ’Cause for one, they’ve got you on lockdown with the no sidewalk situation [...] because a lot of these people were in
wheelchairs or had developmental disabilities or things like that, which made it extra hard.” (African American homeowner)

“It would be inconvenient for me to live in the suburbs because I rely on public transportation.” (Latino homeowner)

“Some of them don’t have sidewalks where you can actually ride a bike to the convenience store. So it appears just from looking at it that you would definitely need a car because otherwise, even if you walk, it’s so far away how would you bring back the groceries if you didn’t have a car.” (Latino homeowner)

“When I get to the age I stop driving...So I would definitely be looking at can I get out to a restaurant. Can I get out to get a gallon of milk. Can I go see one of four plays without having to drive a car and is there public transportation that I could use to get around. So that restricts me away from a lot of the suburbs, wonderful though they may be, and I have wonderful friends there.” (Caucasian homeowner)

- Most participants from all groups had a positive view of north suburban schools.

“With the schools, I think that there are more resources in the schools – [...] Yeah, and there’s more money and more tutoring, after-school programs, just classrooms, computers, so I think that is a reason why people would want to send their kids to the school.” (African American renter)

“I can definitely say that north suburban schools are better than city schools, except for the selected enrollment schools. [...] I would definitely choose a north suburban school over a neighborhood school.” (African American homeowner)

“My kids got scholarships to attend Highland Park Catholic School, but we couldn’t find housing so we couldn’t stay there.” (Latino renter)

“That’s exactly why we moved there. We were living in River North. And there was a great elementary school that our daughter went to. But once we started looking at junior high and high school, the alternatives weren’t really working for us. So we moved to Evanston so she could go to school.” (Caucasian renter)

“I think people move there ‘cause of schools. I see the tradeoff. Either you pay $20-30,000 a year in property taxes or you can live in the city and send your kids to private school.” (Caucasian homeowner)

There was a similarly positive comment about the public libraries: “Oh, my God. I have to go out there to the libraries. They have the best libraries. You find everything. It’s like beautiful. They have fireplaces. I went to three libraries in Chicago. We couldn’t find any material for my kids.” (Latino renter)
• All groups perceived the northern suburbs as bedroom communities, lacking jobs. The perception for some was that if you did work in the area, wages would be higher than in the City.

“These places, a lot of the jobs – a lot of people work downtown, but then a lot of people do work out in the suburbs. But in Deerfield and Highland Park, I don’t know of a lot of jobs.” (African American renter)

“I mean I’d want it to be an area where there are jobs available. Because if there isn’t, it’s gonna be kind of like where I’m living now where people are breaking in your window and stuff.” (African American homeowner)

“A lot of times, they like to hire local. They like to hire within the suburbs.” (African American homeowner)

“[If these suburbs are willing to maybe provide a job that’s going to meet the requirements of living for our quality of life and this is in general. Not just the Latino population, but people that are low income that make under that $50,000 and you’re able to provide a job for people like that, maybe I will think about it.” (Latino renter)

“When you’re talking about people actually moving into these areas, I think you’re talking about affordability and economics. If they’re going to have to travel to work, they need accessibility to work if the jobs are not in these locations. And I sense that the jobs are not here. So if I’m thinking of myself, when I was younger just starting off in terms of making money, I don’t see myself here unless I have money already or my work is here.” (Caucasian renter)

“Well they don’t have a big industrial base like some of the other suburbs or commercial. They want them geared very exclusively toward residential so therefore the taxes are high. They can’t offset it with a commercial industrial base.” The moderator asked, “So do you say that of all the suburbs? If you look at that map, is that your impression?” “No, actually Glenview has some Fortune 500 corporations, as well as Northbrook, Deerfield, when you get more toward 294, but then when you get more inward, they don’t want large businesses or industrial or light industrial. So yeah, the taxes are just outrageous.” (Caucasian homeowner)

• Latinos were less familiar with the 16 individual northern suburbs of Interfaith’s service area than African Americans and Caucasians.

Latino renters and homeowners alike only mentioned four to six suburbs by name (Evanston, Highland Park, Highwood, Northbrook for renters; and Evanston, Highland Park, Morton Grove, Park Ridge, and Winnetka for homeowners), compared to the other groups which mentioned at least 13.
• All identified Evanston as being diverse racially and ethnically, and more open when compared to other communities, although with some degree of segregation.

“I will feel comfortable living in Evanston [...] It was like the best of both worlds, because I’m right on the borderline between Rogers Park and Evanston, so the city is close by plus Evanston is like a college town, where you got Northwestern University, so you got stuff there for young people. And I was just reading something on Yahoo!, they have those little news flashes that come up, and they said Evanston is the second best place to live in America. I can agree with that too. And, plus, this has, like, been one of the only places I’ve been able to find opportunities for me, in particular. Like, the job centers down there are a whole lot better. Their entertainment, just a lot of things to do, high school, everything to do. And I would say I would feel comfortable.” (African American renter)

"Very segregated. [...] There’s the south side, south end of Evanston and the west end of Evanston. Those are the primarily black communities in Evanston. And you have speckles in other [pointing on the map to the other northern suburbs], but they don’t count, ‘cause it’s speckles. And the school is very segregated. They have multiple levels of education. And all the low level classes, primarily, all African American; all the AP classes, all Caucasian or Asian." (African American homeowner)

“I am familiar with Evanston. I’ve seen a lot of diversity and a lot of welcoming of a variety of people; race, color, religion.” (Latino homeowner)

“I don’t think I could live as open [referring to being openly gay] a life in a northern suburb. Evanston, possibly, but when I would get further north from there, I don’t think I could live the joyous life I am living currently.” (Caucasian renter)

“I think Evanston and Skokie are the most where you can go on a block and everyone’s mixed together. So I think they’re the most diverse, but I think everywhere else that it’s still more rigid.” (Caucasian homeowner)

• All assumed there was a large Jewish population in the northern suburbs.

“I don’t mean this in an anti-Semitic way, but a lot of these northern suburbs, for instance, like Glencoe, Highland Park, Deerfield, they’re predominantly Jewish.” (Caucasian renter)

While referring specifically to Northbrook, many participants perceived the following comparison as true of most of the northern suburbs, “we always laugh on the South Side, probably, on the West Side, about the storefront church and you throw a stone and you’re going to hit a church somewhere on the South Side, but it was the same way up there with synagogues. And it just kind of showed you who is in the community. It wasn’t a bad thing, but I just never seen that concentration of synagogues.” (African American homeowner)
“I’m Jewish also. I know Highland Park, Skokie, Morton Grove have large Jewish populations. I think Glencoe does, too, and I don’t know if historically Kenilworth did not like us and supposedly was closed to [Jews].” (Caucasian homeowner)

- Other perceptions of note was that Skokie is a diverse community. Park Ridge was mentioned multiple times, in divergent ways.

Several participants view Park Ridge as "a different breed of clientele. That’s a whole different breed. [...] It is higher-end, ritzy, as opposed to what’s right next to it. And, now, it’s Morton Grove, Skokie, Lincolnwood. [...] There’s nothing in Park Ridge that I’ve seen in the years I’ve been up there that I can remotely think I could afford.” (African American renter)

“My perception and this is just my perception is that in Park Ridge is basically very expensive homes ‘cause at one point I was curious to know: The housing is beautiful and everything. Wouldn’t this be a nice area to raise my kids and live here. I did the research and the homes were extremely expensive […] I remember they were over $400,000 at that point in time and I’m talking a couple of years ago. Maybe two years ago. So that would be extremely expensive for me personally to live in that area. It’s gorgeous. I think it would be great to raise kids, but me personally, I know I would not be able to afford a mortgage there.” (Latino homeowner)

“Park Ridge has changed a lot in terms of [race, ethnicity], especially, the northern part. There’s a lot of Section 8 housing in unincorporated Park Ridge. I forget, there’s a lot of languages and a lot of ethnicities up in Maine East. There’s a north and a south district. There’s Maine South. And then it’s very interesting when you get along Dempster. It gets very ethnic, a lot of South Asian, Indian, Pakistani people. Then as you go a little further east and you get up into Golf, it becomes a lot more Korean. And it’s changing.” (Caucasian renter)

“Skokie fascinates me, because it’s an incredibly diverse community.” (Caucasian renter)

- Racial profiling by police is a major concern among African Americans and Latinos.

“Every single ticket I’ve gotten driving around has been outside of Evanston in the north suburbs. [...] yeah, I might have been speeding, but I was speeding with the rest of the flow of traffic. I felt targeted.” (African American homeowner)

“Most places, probably, I’d say Highland Park. [...] Matter of fact, your police will stop you. [...] Racial profile.” (African American renter)

“ I mean profiling is something they do that allows them to feel the power that they possess. My experience of that, I’ve been stopped, like I said, in Glenview and up there,
never gotten a ticket or anything, but I was stopped and it was definitely only because I was a black man up in that area and they were curious as to what are you doing up here? And it was after work hours.” (African American homeowner)

“Skokie police, [...] they’re waiting on the opportunity, ’cause their day is boring.” (African American homeowner)

“Even the Highland Park police ... there was a scandal a couple years ago ’cause they were saying oh, sombrero night and they were targeting Mexicans. Then the Department of Justice investigated because they were targeting. It’s a very upper affluent Caucasian suburb and any Mexican that drove through or Hispanic, they were pulling them over. So yeah, I don’t think they’re very inclusive.” (Caucasian homeowner)

- The northern suburbs were perceived to be safe. Most perceived that drug use among teenagers was an issue. There were qualifications to the assessment of low crime, particularly by a few non-Caucasians who had experience living or going to school in Evanston. Many liked the idea that these communities would be relatively quiet and with people keeping to themselves.

“I think the suburbs are starting to have gang problems, because people are migrating. Just like on the news the other day, they was talking about how you have more suburban teenagers that are getting involved with heroin, that are making the commute to the city to get these drugs.” (African American renter)

“They do come off as less crime. I don’t hear about them in the news [...] For my two girls that would be the ideal place maybe for me to strive towards if I wanted to stay within Chicago.” (Latino renter)

“High school kids are dying of overdoses in these lovely North Shore suburbs. It doesn’t make the papers. There are home invasions and robbery.” (Caucasian homeowner)

IV. Recommendations

Participants were asked what they say if they could speak to elected officials. The following comments provide insight that was incorporated in the recommendations from this study.

“I will also ask what are the resources up there as far as, if I have kids, what can my kids do or can’t they do? And not so much restrictive to my children, but what can’t they do, like is there a curfew? Can they go play ball at the hoop down the street or is there a sports program that most of the kids in the neighborhood are part of? So I can kind of ingratiate myself into the community and kind of be part of that woven thread. Whereas, okay, he doesn’t really stand out, he’s just another piece of this community. So I’m not really sure what I would ask him, but I would definitely tell him who I am and tell him my story to see what he offers to me.” (African American homeowner)
“My question would be how many families like mine are you looking to add to your community? And with what purpose?” Participants adamantly did not want to be part of a “quota.” (African American homeowner)

“They can promote your – let’s say Skokie. You have your city officials from there and there’s an event going on that they wanna engage other communities or other ethnic backgrounds, the city officials have the connections throughout the city of Chicago, throughout the state of Illinois and even the country. So I think that they can promote that as well.” (Latino renter)

“What’s the safety? Safety is number one issue for us, too. Safety. What’s the culture like? What’s the diversity within the community? What groups of people do you have? How are different holidays celebrated within the community? If they have Thursday night movies for the community and what kind of movies are offered? What type of religious organizations are within the community and what kind of groups go to that? Things like that. Just finding out from people that maybe sign up for a couple of exercise classes or something and trying to find that out, the culture.” (Latino homeowner)

“I’d be interested in learning in places like Skokie and Evanston, specifically, how political participation differs between some of the more established Caucasian groups and then these immigrant groups, because I just get the feeling in local government, sometimes, that the ethnicity of leaders lags the change in the population so much – I mean even in the south suburbs, there are a lot of majority African-American communities, where everyone in city hall is Caucasian. So I’d be interested in seeing who the policy is really focused on and who’s coming to the meetings and how that affects everything.” (Caucasian renter)

“Specifically are these suburban communities that I’m looking at constantly running budget deficits and it’s the old adage tax to the max. They have no problem putting referendums and just taxing like crazy or they’re raising the multiplier, but the assessed values are going down. That’s concerning ‘cause that’s gonna hit me right in the pocketbook. That would affect the desirability for resale value for people that wanna buy.” (Caucasian homeowner)

1. Advertise broadly outside the community.

Among all groups, there is the perception that with the exception of Evanston, Skokie, and among some groups Park Ridge, the northern suburbs are not diverse. The Caucasian participants, however, noted that there is diversity with Asian, Latino, Indian, Middle Eastern, but not many African American people. There were concerns expressed by some focus group participants that they would not feel comfortable: “You already know you’re not welcome there. Because the way they look at you, the way they treat you and it’s not even really an income
thing, because they out there struggling too, believe it or not.” [Note: This statement is also on page 5.] while others felt that they would be pretty comfortable.

Perhaps this discomfort could be dispelled if people saw a diverse group of residents in the service area. Both municipalities and housing providers play a key role in marketing to a broad community. Websites, newspapers, email, and public transit are all excellent ways to reach people who are looking for housing. Participants in the Latino renter group noted that lack of knowledge about the northern suburbs is an initial barrier to even start considering living there and participants from each group said that they wanted to know more about the demographics of the area.

Focus group participants noted that they believe the northern suburbs are safe and have excellent educational opportunities for kids. Again, these are very positive perceptions of the area and can be marketed to bring diverse people to the community. People will not move to an area if they don’t know about it.

2. **Promote the diverse housing stock in the service area.**

Not having the economic means to afford the rents or housing prices in the northern suburbs was the reason most often given to not moving into the area. Many participants seem to argue that the concentration of wealth is the major reason why many cannot afford to move into these areas. One Caucasian renter in the focus group stated that sections of the northern suburbs have a “certain type of house that I haven’t really seen anywhere else, a mansion that is like a campus, basically. It’s a campus.” People who live outside the northern suburbs do not seem to understand that, while limited, a variety of housing stock does exist.

Promoting a diverse housing stock can be achieved through a variety of methods, and all methods should be utilized for the best results. First, increasing the number of units available can be achieved through new housing development with both public and private partners. New housing units can also be opened by changes in local ordinances that allow the rental of previously vacant residential space. Second, municipalities, housing providers and real estate agents need to deliver the message that there is a variety of housing stock available. This will also achieve the recommendation stated above. In fact, Latino owners participants also believed that living in a nice suburb is cheaper than living in a nice neighborhood in Chicago and therefore, preferable, at least in terms of affordability. “I would love to move to the suburbs. My reason being is that I cannot afford to live in a nicer neighborhood in Chicago. I think I would have more opportunity to live in a nicer neighborhood in the suburbs [...] I’m sure that we could find something less expensive, but living here in Chicago in a nice neighborhood is costly.”

When participants were shown pictures of apartment buildings in the service area, they did not know that such housing was available. “It looks like any other north-side community. I see some high-rises.” At least one participant skeptically questioned images of affordable, multi-family units saying they “aren’t representative” of “Winnetka, Glenview, Northbrook.” Work needs to be done to dispel the perception that all housing is single-family mansions. As with
recommendation A above, marketing by municipalities and housing providers of all types of housing will help bring greater diversity to the northern suburbs.

3. **Encourage more public transportation.**

All groups discussed the need for more public transportation, which would encourage them to move to area. As noted by one Latino renter, Chicago has great transportation with buses and trains, but unfortunately the suburban bus system is not as good. More bus and train lines should be added to make more areas of the northern suburbs accessible. New train lines have met with resistance from municipalities in the past. Perhaps now, with greater public awareness of the environmental impact of cars, more support can be gathered for these improvements.

The current bus system can also be marketed to show that public transportation to shopping areas is available. This information should be provided throughout the entire metropolitan Chicago area, not just within the service area. This will show home seekers, both renters and buyers, that public transportation, while limited, is available.

4. **Address concerns about comfort in new community.**

Once new and diverse residents are brought into the community, the next issue is helping these new residents feel they are a part of their new communities. Municipalities and not-for-profit agencies can provide services for these new residents, such as community liaisons and group events for new residents, along with distribution of already existing promotional and explanatory materials.

5. **Recruit people of color to appointed or elected positions in local government.**

When asked what they would ask, if they could, of north suburban mayors, diversification of the power structure came up frequently.

V. **Conclusion**

Each northern suburb, Cook County, and Lake County needs to address the image of the region as unwelcoming to people of color and low- and moderate-income people of all races. This image is pervasive among African American, Latino, and Caucasian renters and homeowners alike who live outside Chicago’s northern suburbs. Without affirmative marketing strategies, sound planning, greater accessibility via multiple transportation networks, affordable housing, jobs, and services for young people, most northern suburbs will remain homogeneous.

In addition, these suburbs must continue to educate the real estate community about fair housing laws and prevent violations that stem from discrimination. This also applies to police sensitivity regarding racial profiling.
Finally, each community must make an effort to diversify its political structure. Most participants across race expressed concern that local governments remain led by Caucasians, regardless of the changing makeup of their communities.

Municipal governments can do more to make these communities “comfort zones” that embrace and understand cultural differences. Simply put, all north suburban communities must affirmatively further fair housing by marketing themselves as inclusive and welcoming of diversity.
Appendix

- FOCUS GROUPS: Potential and limitations (Anita Gibbs, Oxford University)
- Research Protocol
- Outlets for Reaching Target Audience
- Participant Focus Group Guide
- U.S. Census Data, Chicago’s Northern Suburbs, 1980-201
FOCUS GROUPS: Potential and limitations

Anita Gibbs, Oxford University

Kitzinger (1994, 1995) argues that interaction is the crucial feature of focus groups because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and beliefs about a situation. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences.

Another benefit is that focus groups elicit information in a way which allows researchers to find out why an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it (Morgan 1988). As a result, the gap between what people say and what they do can be better understood (Lankshear 1993). If multiple understandings and meanings are revealed by participants, multiple explanations of their behavior and attitudes will be more readily articulated.

The benefits to participants of focus group research should not be underestimated. The opportunity to be involved in decision making processes (Race et al 1994), to be valued as experts, and to be given the chance to work collaboratively with researchers (Goss & Leinbach 1996) can be empowering for many participants. If a group works well, trust develops and the group may explore solutions to a particular problem as a unit (Kitzinger 1995), rather than as individuals. Not everyone will experience these benefits, as focus groups can also be intimidating at times, especially for inarticulate or shy members. Hence focus groups are not empowering for all participants and other methods may offer more opportunities for participants. However if participants are actively involved in something which they feel will make a difference, and focus group research is often of an applied nature, empowerment can realistically be achieved.

Another advantage of focus groups to clients, users, participants or consumers is that they can become a forum for change (Race et al 1994), both during the focus group meeting itself and afterwards. For example, in research conducted by Goss & Leinbach (1996), the participants in the research experienced a sense of emancipation through speaking in public and by developing reciprocal relationships with the researchers. In another study (Smith et al 1995), patients in hospital were invited to give their views about services and to provide ideas about improvements. In this instance change occurred at the management level as a direct result of patients’ input.

Although focus group research has many advantages, as with all research methods there are limitations. Some can be overcome by careful planning and moderating, but others are unavoidable and peculiar to this approach. The researcher, or moderator, for example, has less control over the data produced (Morgan 1988) than in either quantitative studies or one-to-one interviewing. The moderator has to allow participants to talk to each other, ask questions and express doubts and opinions, while having very little control over the interaction other than generally keeping

http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU19.html
participants focused on the topic. By its nature focus group research is open ended and cannot be entirely predetermined.

It should not be assumed that the individuals in a focus group are expressing their own definitive individual view. They are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture, and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message. This too is a potential limitation of focus groups.

On a practical note, focus groups can be difficult to assemble. It may not be easy to get a representative sample and focus groups may discourage certain people from participating, for example those who are not very articulate or confident, and those who have communication problems or special needs. The method of focus group discussion may also discourage some people from trusting others with sensitive or personal information. In such cases personal interviews or the use of workbooks alongside focus groups may be a more suitable approach. Finally, focus groups are not fully confidential or anonymous, because the material is shared with the others in the group.

References


Kitzinger J. (1994) ‘The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants’, *Sociology of Health* 16 (1): 103-21.


Research Protocol

Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs Focus Groups

Version 1

February 6, 2012
Specific Aims and Study Hypothesis

The Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement (Voorhees Center) was asked by the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs (Interfaith) to facilitate focus groups with people currently living outside their service area. The purpose of these focus groups is to learn about perceptions of the housing options and opportunities in the 17 Northern Suburbs (The Interfaith service area3) in order to help identify possible reasons why people of color choose not to move or feel they are unable to move to the Northern Suburbs of Chicago. Findings will also be shared with municipalities and Cook County officials to consider how affirmative marketing strategies might be employed to further diversify communities.

Background and Significance

The Northern Suburbs of Chicago historically have had a reputation of being “white” and “wealthy” – which it is generally based on past and current US Census data. The Interfaith Housing Center, which is a nearly 40 year old organization, advocates for fair and affordable housing with the intent to foster open communities to all people regardless of race or income level. Interfaith also works to further fair housing through research that can help it and others understand the challenges and barriers faced by people of color and lower income families that are generally under-represented in most of the Northern Suburbs Interfaith serves. To this end, Interfaith is currently conducting a multi-prong analysis of housing opportunities and barriers with funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This includes housing audits, complaint-based testing and a review of local ordinances (these activities are not part of this protocol and do not involve UIC or the Voorhees Center). To help supplement and enhance its understanding of these data, Interfaith is seeking qualitative data to help understand “outsider” views of Chicago’s Northern Suburbs with regard to housing options and opportunities. This includes people who are under-represented based on regional demographic data, specifically Latinos/Hispanics and African American/Blacks. Interfaith is also interested in seeing how Whites/Caucasians from outside view these communities in terms of housing options and opportunities, to see where there may be common concerns and differences. This data will be used to give municipalities and Cook County a more complete picture of deficiencies and any opportunities in affirmatively furthering fair housing in this Chicago sub-region.

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3 The Interfaith service area includes: Deerfield, Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Highwood, Highland Park, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, Skokie, Wilmette and Winnetka
Methods

A. Research Design

The research will collect data through focus groups with adults (18 years and older) who either rent or own housing outside the Interfaith service area. All data collected will be analyzed by the PI and other key personnel identified in Appendix P. Analysis will follow standard methods for analyzing focus groups, key themes identified will be used to produce a final report that will be submitted to the Interfaith Housing Center.

B. Eligibility Criteria for Focus Group Participants

Focus groups will be conducted with up to 72 adults that currently do not live in one of the 17 communities that make up the Interfaith service area. This will include people who currently own or rent a housing unit in the Chicago metropolitan area but not in the Interfaith service area. In order to understand perceptions of people who are from groups that are numerically the minority in these communities when compared to the region, there will be two focus groups with African Americans (1 group of renters and 1 of owners) and two focus groups with Latinos (1 group of renters and 1 of owners). Further, to understand perceptions from Caucasians not living in the area, we will have two focus groups of Caucasian (1 group of renters and 1 of owners) living outside the service area, but who may work in or nearby it.

C. Justification for Inclusion of any Special or Vulnerable Populations

In order to understand perceptions of housing options by people not living in the Interfaith service area, focus groups will be conducted with a variety of people. This includes renters who may or may not be economically disadvantaged. The primary focus of this study, however, will not be on the economic and educational disadvantages experienced by these participants – just perceptions of housing options and opportunities in the service area. We are targeting Latinos and African Americans specifically since these two groups are under-represented in the service area. We are targeting Caucasians because while this group is well-represented in the service area, we want to hear from people who are from outside the area about their perceptions of the housing options and opportunities in the service area.

D. Plans for Subject Selection and Recruitment, Documentation of Informed Consent

Subject Selection and Recruitment

Six focus groups will be conducted with a sample of adults from the Chicago region who live outside the Interfaith service area (up to 72 people total). Interfaith has asked different organizations and institutions (non-profits, schools, congregations, places of business) in the

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4The Interfaith service area includes: Deerfield, Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Highwood, Highland Park, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, Skokie, Wilmette and Winnetka
region that work on housing issues and/or with people in our target population to distribute flyers about the focus groups. Interfaith will also distribute flyers. The flyer will provide information about the purpose of the focus group, who is eligible to participate, and contact information if they are interested in participating. Anyone interested can email or call the research team to let them know s/he is interested in participating in a focus group.

Participants in all focus groups will be enrolled in the research by the PI or a member of the research team only. Interfaith staff and anyone from an organization that distributes flyers will not be directly involved in the recruitment effort, other than distributing and posting the informational flyers. The PI or a member of the research staff will determine eligibility in advance of the focus group. Each eligible participant will be provided information about the location and time of the focus group in advance, and a reminder phone call, email or letter before the date. All will be consented prior to beginning the focus group as described below.

Documentation of Informed Consent
The research team will take necessary steps to assure that participants are not coerced into the study. During the recruitment process, possible participants will be told that participation is completely voluntary, that their decision whether or not to participate will not affect their current or future relations with Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, any organization that distributed flyers or UIC, and that if they decide to participate they have the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or withdraw at any time during the study. Before a focus group takes place, prospective participants will again be informed of the purposes of the study, that participation is voluntary, etc. In every instance participants will be given the opportunity to ask questions.

The PI will train the research personnel in advance on how to seek consent and ensure that research personnel fully understand what is allowed, what constitutes coercion and what is not allowed.

Prior to conducting focus groups, the research personnel will review the project’s informed consent form with the focus group participant and secure the participant’s signature and permission. At every point of contact the researcher will confirm eligibility and explain that their participation is voluntary, that their decision to participate will not affect their relations with Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs, any organization that distributed flyers or UIC and that they may skip questions or discontinue participation at any time. As participation in this research is voluntary, the PI and research personnel will only include in a focus group participants who consent.

Focus groups will be held in a setting at UIC that ensures an appropriate level of privacy and sufficient space for the group to be facilitated. Compensation will be given after the focus group is completed. Each person will get an envelope with cash or a cash card and a copy of the consent form signed by the PI.
E. Description of Procedures

*Human Subjects*
All interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and tenants will be conducted in English. However, we do anticipate potentially having one focus group conducted in Spanish for tenants who prefer Spanish. We have a member of the research team who is a native Spanish speaker who can conduct this focus group as well as recruit and consent participants in Spanish. We will determine this in advance of the focus group to make sure all in that group are Spanish speakers. Focus group questions and the consent form have been translated by a native Spanish speaker on the research team in advance to assure consistency/equivalency to the English version. She will also be available to facilitate a group in Spanish.

Focus groups will follow the approved IRB protocol for research involving human subjects. Research subjects will be given full background on this research prior to the beginning of interviews and focus groups. Informed consent will be established, and research subjects will be reminded that their decision to participate is their own, and that they can end participation at any time without consequence. During the focus groups participants may answer the questions in any way they choose, and may request to move on to the next question and/or decline to respond to any question at any point. Focus groups will be recorded, and in order to participate, each person must be willing to be audio recorded among the additional focus group participants and research team members. This will be explained when determining eligibility and then reiterated before the focus group begins. These protocols are outlined in the consent form that participants will sign prior to the interview and/or focus group.

As discussed in the previous section, before a potential subject is enrolled in a focus group, the PI will review his/her eligibility and, if eligible, will determine how best to ensure the participant’s privacy throughout the process (recruitment, participation, analysis and publication). No subject will be recruited if it is determined that being a research subject presents more than a minimal risk to the participant.

Focus group recruitment will occur on an individual basis, which should minimize the potential for subject identification. Subjects will be informed that they will be meeting with other people like them (renters or owners; Latino, African American, Caucasian). This will be done prior to their participation in the research, so that they can determine whether or not they are willing to meet in a group setting with people who they may or may not know. We will also discuss how unlike individual interviews, participating in a focus group is part of group discussion.

The PI will maintain a database of all participants in focus groups. The PI will keep separate the names participants and any identifiers collected. The information from all who participate in a focus group or interview will be kept confidential, and will in no way be identified in the final report or transcripts.
The focus group will be audio taped. Audio recordings will be kept for the duration of this project, until they can be transcribed. At that time, audio recordings will be destroyed. Text transcriptions will be kept secure, and will then be destroyed one year after the research is completed. Only the researchers will have access to the audio recording and transcript of the focus group. The researchers will assign a unique identification code for each participant. No names or other identifiers will ever appear on the focus group transcript. All data will be stored in a secure facility at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Digital audio files and transcripts will be held on a secure, password-protected computer system that is only accessible to the researchers.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in meetings or conferences, no information will be included that would reveal any research subject’s identity. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can possibly identify a subject will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with permission of the subject or as required by law.

F. Statistical Methods (Data Analysis Plan)

N/A

G. Safety Monitoring and Assessment (if relevant, include provision for managing adverse reactions)

N/A

H. Data Management (when relevant, address measures of privacy protection, coding, storage of information)

Electronic files from recording the focus groups will be locked in a file cabinet in the PI's office, and transcriptions will be coded to secure anonymity. The electronic data files (typed transcripts) will be stored on a password protected computer in the PIs UIC office. The key used for coding the participant’s names will be locked in a different file cabinet. In the write up of the study, the researchers will use pseudonyms that will severely reduce any of the identifiers of the participants. All of these measures are intended to maintain strict confidentiality and produce no more than minimal risk for the participants.

5. For Multi-Site Protocols, an overall study management plan should be provided

N/A
Relevant Literature

Kitzinger J. (1994) ‘The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants’, Sociology of Health 16 (1): 103-21.

OUTLETs FOR REACHING TARGET AUDIENCE

1. General
   a. Interfaith’s Outreach Workers at Metra Stations (Northbrook, Deerfield)
   b. Craigslist
   c. Key Starbucks locations
   d. Employers from IHCNS homesharing outreach

2. African American Community:
   a. NAACP
   b. Chicago Urban League
   c. South Suburban Housing Center, John Petruszak
   d. Salem Baptist Church (Rev. James Meeks)
   e. Diversity Inc., Joe Martin

3. Latino Community
   a. Latino Policy Forum, Juliana Gonzalez Crussi
   b. Latin United Community Housing Association,
   c. Spanish Coalition for Housing
   d. Family Network, Nora Barquin

4. Non Profit Groups
   a. Metropolitan Tenants Organization, Rebecca McDannald
   b. Housing Choice Partners, Chris Klepper
   c. Housing Action Illinois, Bob Palmer, Giana Baker
   d. Logan Square Neighborhood Association
   e. Northside Power
   f. HIAS
   g. Cook County Alliance to End Homelessness
   h. Lawyers Committee for Better Housing John Beals
   i. Partners in Community Building, Bobbi Ball
   j. Alliance to End Homelessness, Jennifer Hill
   k. Center on Halsted, Britta Larson

5. Government
   a. Illinois Department of Human Rights, Abdi Maya
   b. Cook County Commission on Human Rights, MaryNic Foster
   c. Veteran’s Administration
   d. Cook County Housing Authority, Sheryl Seiling
PARTICIPANT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! Welcome and thank you for participating in our focus group. My name is Janet Smith and I will be moderating the discussion today. I am a researcher at the Voorhees Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago [introduce the rest of the team].

The Voorhees Center has been contracted by the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs (Interfaith) to conduct various focus groups with people who currently rent or own a home outside of their service area. This research is part of a larger project funding by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that is looking at ways to expand housing opportunities in the northern suburbs.

Some of you might not be familiar with a focus group. A focus group is simply a group meeting to share opinions about a topic. The purpose of this focus group is to: 1) Learn about perceptions of the housing options available in the northern suburbs of Chicago; 2) Help identify possible reasons why black/African American and Hispanic/Latino people are under-represented in these communities; and 3) Share findings with municipalities and Cook County officials to consider how affirmative marketing strategies might be employed to further diversify communities.

You have been asked to participate in this focus group because you have been identified as being an adult 18 years of age or older, that you currently own or rent a housing unit in the Chicago metropolitan area but not in the Interfaith service area, and identify yourself as either white/Caucasian, black/African American, or Hispanic/Latino.

You stories, insights and comments will be extremely helpful. We really want to hear your stories and your opinion. Your individual responses will be maintained anonymous. Maybe you have perceptions, experiences, suggestions or recommendations, do not be afraid of sharing those. Your relationship with Interfaith, HUD or UIC will not be affected by your responses in anyway.

That being said, we will be tape-recording the focus group. We are tape-recording because we want to capture everything you have to say. We would not identify anyone by name in our report. Your responses to the questions and your identity will remain completely anonymous.
Our discussion will last about 1.5 hours. Please help yourself to the refreshments throughout the meeting. You will be paid $50 at the end of the focus group. You will need to stay until the end of the focus group in order to receive your payment.

**Ground rules**

Before starting with the conversation we would like to set up some ground rules. Rules that will help us to make the best of our group discussion:

1. The first one is a popular one: turn off your cell phones.
2. One person speaking at a time (because of tape recording issues and out of respect to others).
3. This one is really important: there are not right or wrong answers. You can just express your opinion. There is no need for us to agree with each other.
4. Feel free to share your point of view. Every person’s experiences and opinions are important and we really want to hear a wide range of opinions.
5. What is said in this room stays in this room. Therefore, we ask you to protect the privacy of all the participants by not sharing with others the stories or comments of other participants.
6. We want you to talk to each other; not strictly to the moderators.
7. If you have a question about or want to comment on someone else’s comment, please do so. Don’t feel you have to wait for me to give you permission or ask the next question.
8. Would someone like to add something?

**QUESTIONS**

1. **Opening – Ice breaker**
   - Tell us where you live now and where you grew up
   - Where do work -- location
   - Have you have ever lived in the northern suburbs? If so, where and when? If not, have you ever considered doing so?

2. **What is your impression of these communities? (MAP, pictures)**
   - Ask about specific ones: Deerfield, Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Highwood, Highland Park, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, Skokie, Wilmette and Winnetka
   - Who lives there now?
• Why do people want to live there?
• Do you think you can afford to [rent/buy] in any of these communities?

3. If you could, would you like to live in any of these communities?
   • Why? Probe for schools, etc.
   • Why not? Probe for reasons including fair housing related concerns...is this a community that you would feel welcome in? If not, why not?
   • Also, are there particular communities they may like more or less or completely not want to live in at all?

4. Do you think these communities are open to all people who can afford to live in them?
   • Why or why not?

5. What might you tell elected officials in these communities about their communities. What would you want to know more about their communities?

6. Does anyone have any additional comments?

Conclusions and Thanks. I think that this discussion has been great. I want to thank everyone for your time and your insightful comments. Remember that all the information shared is confidential and that what we discussed stays in this room. Again, thank you so much!
Population Changes in the Northern Suburbs of Chicago, 1980 - 2010
(Source: U. S. Census)

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<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Mixed Race</th>
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<th>Percent</th>
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* Note that for the 2000 Census, a Highwood Census tract was inadvertently counted in Highland Park.