

IMPACT OF A SPORTS STADIUM ON A NEIGHBORHOOD

by

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Sports stadiums are incredibly influential structures in a city. Cities have recognized the value and status that comes with hosting a major league team and are willing to commit to the extended stadium development process. While governments and developers stress the positive economic impacts of stadiums, there is evidence that stadiums create little to no positive impact on neighborhoods. While there is a major emphasis on economic development during the construction and development process, residents of these neighborhoods experience negative social impacts. These stadiums cause major shifts in community identity and potentially catalyze gentrification in their host neighborhoods.

The potential economic success is spotlighted in the decision-making process while preparing and planning for social impacts are not prioritized. Through my quantitative and qualitative analysis of National's Park in Washington, D.C., I analyze the economic and social impact of this Major League Baseball stadium on the Navy Yard neighborhood. Through this case study, we can observe the priorities cities and governments make during the stadium development process and how these decisions can severely impact the livelihood and experience of original/longtime residents.

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Introduction / Chapter 1

Sports play an important role in the United States. In recent decades, there has been a fascination with sports stadium development in cities around the country (Siegfried & Zimbalist 2000, 95). Stadium development is thought to bring positive economic and social activity to the local and greater community and to promote the goal of becoming a “major league city” (Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2000). A “major league city” is a metropolitan area that hosts a premier league sports franchise. This could bring tourists, major sports stars, and nationwide media attention, and potentially validate the overall worth of a community (Siegfried & Zimbalist 2000, 99). We are witnessing a nationwide “boom” when it comes to sports stadium development. However, there have been many concerns about the development of these stadiums and the impacts they can have on the surrounding local communities. These concerns revolve around the little to no positive economic impact on communities, shifting neighborhood demographics (in terms of racial composition and income), and struggles with maintaining a strong community identity (van Holm 2018, 653).

Finding a balance between community “revitalization” and community “reshaping” is incredibly difficult and could even be impossible to achieve. Developers, government officials, and community members must toe the line between revitalizing and gentrifying a community, leaving it unrecognizable. Stadiums have served as catalysts for gentrification, resulting in an influx of higher-income, whiter, and more educated residents (van Holm from Smith, 1996). New development and neighborhood gentrification create a disconnect between what government officials and developers want to improve in a certain neighborhood and what community members want and need in their neighborhood (Beaver, 2001). This dispute creates conflicts within the greater community and interrupts or permanently alters social dynamics. It

reinforces power dynamics between community members and those involved in decision-making.

In order to assess these key features of communities and the impacts of sports stadium development, this paper explores the case of National's Park (Nat's Park), a Major League Baseball stadium built in 2008 in Washington, D.C. This in-depth analysis of one stadium in the United States will allow me to analyze these key concepts both quantitatively and qualitatively in a stadium project in a city undergoing dramatic changes over the last few decades. Washington D.C. is a fascinating city to analyze because of a recent dramatic shift in overall city racial breakdown, income level of residents, and education level. Nat's Park transformed a neighborhood in a city that is drastically changing.

Literature Review

Sports stadiums are a complex development process that has longstanding impacts on communities in terms of economics and demographic shifts. For the past 20 years in the United States, there has been a “boom” in sports stadium development because of promised economic benefits and the idea of becoming a “major league” city (Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2000). This construction “boom” is evident through new constructions and development. Between 1990 and 1998, 46 major league stadiums were built or renovated (Siegfried & Zimbalist 2000, 95). The impacts of a sports stadium have been measured through economic impact studies and demographic shifts.

Economics

The economic impact of a sports stadium is attractive to the community and the government. Community members and those in political power are under the impression that sports stadiums bring commercial opportunities because of the vast fan attendance and job

opportunities. There was approximately \$7 billion spent on new facilities in before 2006 and a majority of this funding came from public sources (Noll & Zimbalist, 2016). These facilities include cities such as Baltimore, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Nashville, San Francisco, St. Louis, Seattle, Tampa, and Washington, D.C., Boston, Dallas, Minneapolis, New York, Pittsburgh, Jacksonville, and Oakland (Noll & Zimbalist, 2016). The wide variety of cities in the construction, renovation, or planning phase of stadiums exemplifies the attraction of stadiums. Public sources of funding for stadiums take the form of taxes or subsidies. The subsidies will start from the federal government, “which allows state and governments to issue tax-exempt bonds to help finance sports facilities” (Noll & Zimbalist, 2016). These taxes require citizens of the host cities to pay millions of dollars per year for the stadium. For example, in Baltimore, Oriole Park costs Maryland residents around \$14 million per year (Noll & Zimbalist, 2016). It is incredibly expensive to finance a sports stadium and to even start construction or the renovation process. Along with this, sports leagues purposely have fewer teams available than cities that can afford teams to make the selection process more competitive and ultimately expensive (Noll & Zimbalist, 2016). Since a majority of sports stadiums around the United States are funded through public sources, residents are required to pay taxes to help finance developments that they may never use.

Many cities are willing to continue to spend to keep major league teams in the city. This idea of a “major league city” (Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2000) is enticing for governments and local communities because these developments create jobs and will attract tourists to the surrounding areas. The four main claims as to why these stadiums improve the local economies are 1) construction jobs, 2) expanding local employment that generates new spending in the community, 3) attracting tourists and new companies to the city, and 4) “multiplier effect” -

increased local income will lead to more spending and job creation (Noll & Zimbalist, 1997). Advocates of sports stadium development claim that once the stadium is developed, it will finance itself and the simple generation of the stadium will be the most expensive part of the process. However, the costs associated with a new sports stadium minimize the positive economic impacts of the project, even if the community/neighborhood is labeled and praised as “redeveloped” (Chapin 207, 2004). Government officials believe that shortly after, community residents will see improvements and economic benefits. However, this is not the case.

The economic benefits of publicly funded sports stadiums are overstated (a majority of sports stadiums in the United States). There is increasing evidence that stadiums have little positive impact on local economic growth and the benefits from these teams do not justify the public investment (Eckstein & Delaney 2002, 235). This is because the process of building and maintaining stadiums (like renovations) outweighs the economic benefits for local communities. Along with this, a large study done by Coates & Humphrey in 1999 found that major sports stadiums “have no significant impact on the growth rate of per capita personal income and are negatively correlated with the level of per capita personal income for a sample of all cities that had been home to at least one franchise in any of three professional sports” (Coates & Humphrey 2015, 2). There is not enough focus on local economic growth (personal and citywide) when these stadiums are built. This notion is outshined by the need to keep major league teams in these areas. This is a fascinating conflict and decision-making process that federal and local governments must rationalize the development of sports stadiums. This conflict is certainly worth studying as the well-being and preservation of local communities are potentially at stake. Therefore,

it is important to question, whether stadiums are economically beneficial and worth the investment, especially if publicly funded.

Gentrification

An interesting element of sports stadium development is its impact on racial composition and displacement in cities due to shifts in socioeconomic levels. Gentrification usually begins when “older cities are revitalized by outsiders, encouraging new residents to live in a refreshed and pricier setting, driving current residents out of their communities” (Blaeser, 2018). Within the context of the United States gentrification is “the process of neighborhood change that results in the replacement of lower-income residents with higher-income ones, has changed the character of hundreds of urban neighborhoods in America over the last 50 years” (Kennedy & Leonard 2001, 1). A prominent “trend” is cities typically inhabited by people of color are refreshed for new White residents and driving the original residents out of their communities. However, gentrification is a complex term and could refer to solely the revitalization of a neighborhood (low economic value to economic high value) or could refer to negative impacts such as displacement (van Holm from Smith 1996, 636). As mentioned, a major attraction for subsidizing sports stadiums is to boost local economies. However, an important element to remember is who comprises these local communities and the impacts of tourists and new companies.

There is a balance that governments and developers must find between the “redevelopment” or “revitalization” of neighborhoods and the displacement of original residents. In a study done by van Holm surrounding minor league baseball stadiums, they found that cities did not benefit from stadiums, only certain neighborhoods did. Along with this, the stadiums had a significant impact on income levels and racial composition in the surrounding area ten years

later (van Holm 2018, 653). This noted a change in neighborhood dynamics both economically and in terms of demographics. An interesting note is also that these were solely minor league baseball stadiums, they are not nearly as large in physical stadium size or team influence. Observing these results from minor league baseball stadiums is significant in terms of gentrification because the impact which major league stadiums could have on income levels and racial composition could be much larger.

Causation is also a complex but important element of this research. Sports stadiums cause neighborhood disruption whether it is in the way of true revitalization or gentrification/displacement. However, there is the question of whether stadiums are the true cause of this disruption. A resident of Washington, D.C. discusses his experience of living in Southeast D.C. during the construction and post-development of Nat's Park. While the author did not outwardly claim that the development of Nat's Park caused neighborhood gentrification, there were concerning statements made: "the stadium didn't clean up the community, it just cleaned many of us and our institutions out" (Jones, 2017). Along with this, three years after Nat's Park was opened, Black residents had fallen to less than 50% of the population (reached as high as 70% in the 1970s). This negatively impacts the original community in the Southeast D.C. area pre-development. This large-scale development (unlike the minor league baseball stadiums) completely transformed the surrounding neighborhood in terms of racial composition and income makeup. It is important to assess the racial composition of neighborhoods and observe shifts that occur to measure the severity of gentrification in a neighborhood. Therefore, it is essential to question the relationship between revitalization and gentrification.

Power Structure and Community

Sports stadium development has a large impact on power structures and community dynamics. This is an essential sociological element of stadium development and community relationships. When discussing urban and community power structures, there are three major assumptions: 1) economic elites are the dominant forces, 2) state-centered theory: is the central role played by government officials, and 3) a middle ground: where public and private actors cooperate to reach some desired end (Beaver 2001, 22). After conducting a case study in Pittsburgh, Beaver (2001) found that two stadiums built at similar times found that Pittsburgh's economic elites eventually led to the funding of the stadiums. This supports the idea that when economic development is a problem in communities, elites dominate the decision-making processes (Beaver, 2001). This creates unfortunate power dynamics amongst community members because they may feel as though elites are making decisions that impact all taxpayers, and all members of the community. There is no middle ground found, and it is almost as if not all voices are heard.

While observing the economic impacts that sports stadiums can have on communities, Eckstein & Delaney also observed non-economic impacts. These non-economic impacts were referred to as "community self-esteem and collective conscience" (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002). Community self-esteem is loosely grouped into two categories: 1) how people living in communities perceive their communities and 2) the city's image to outsiders (Eckstein & Delaney 2002, 237). The collective conscience is referred to as "the shared values, beliefs, and experiences that bind community members to one another" (Eckstein & Delaney 2002, 238). Team identity and loyalty are essential measurements that also fall under these categories of non-economic benefits (Heere & James, 2007). Teams need to conduct community outreach

programs to incorporate and include the city into the team's image and success. Non-economic benefits will increase team identity and loyalty from the local community.

Many developers and supporters of stadiums acknowledge the lack of economic benefits from sports stadiums by overstating the noneconomic benefits of stadiums (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002). Supporters try to rationalize the construction of these stadiums by stressing the positive impacts of community self-esteem and collective conscience. This more sophisticated argument focuses on community pride and is used because it is known that the economic benefits are slim to none. Elites are using this argument to continue the construction of stadiums, yet it is uncertain if cities and communities are receiving these non-economic benefits (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002). This is an interesting element of stadium development and community relations that are important to research further to understand the true impacts of sports stadiums on communities.

Methods

For my research, I wanted to get a diverse perspective on the development from the three most relevant parties involved in the Nat's Park development process: 1) government officials, 2) developers, and 3) community residents in order to answer my research questions. To do this, I compiled and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources.

Qualitative Data

In terms of qualitative data, I conducted two interviews and analyzed regional media articles. These interviews and secondary sources were crucial in answering my research questions. I interviewed two individuals who were directly involved in the development of Nat's Park in Washington, D.C. - former Ward 2 councilmember Jack Evans (who served from 1991-

2020) and CEO of Clark Construction, Robert Moser. Both interviews were conducted virtually, via phone call or Zoom. They took approximately 30 minutes were and recorded.

I compiled commentary from media articles such as the Washington Post, Andscape, and NPR to analyze interviews with community residents of the Navy Yard neighborhood. These sources were selected due to their reliability of reporting. When conducting interviews, I was unable to get in contact with former community residents of Navy Yard, and therefore, utilized these interviews and social commentaries for my analyses. These sources gave me a wide range of perspectives and sentiments towards Nat's Park from former or current Navy Yard residents.

Quantitative Data

In terms of quantitative data, I analyzed data and visual representations (bar graphs and charts) from spreadsheets and journals regarding demographic distribution in both Navy Yard and Ward 6 of Washington, D.C. I compiled data points from reports about development or other published sources. The D.C. Government: Office of Planning, Census 72, Greater Greater Washington, the Urban Institute, and the Washington Post provided important data points. These sources gave me the quantitative data necessary to analyze the impact of Nat's Park on the surrounding neighborhood of Navy Yard and Ward 6 overall.

Research Questions

I used qualitative and quantitative data to answer all three of my research questions. Both types of data were crucial to analyzing the impacts that Nat's Park had on Navy Yard and answering the research questions that guided my thesis process.

RQ1: What impact has the development of sports stadiums had on the social and economic qualities of neighborhoods?

RQ2: Is it possible to claim causation between stadium development and the gentrification of a neighborhood?

RQ3: How do sports stadiums impact local community identity?

Institutional Review Board

I submitted my proposal to the University of Oregon Research Compliance Services on September 28, 2022, and with alterations, it was approved on December 6, 2022. Since I was solely interviewing people about their experience with construction and development, it was labeled as an “Exempt Category 2”, and I submitted the “Exempt Determination Application”. My verbal consent script and questions guide were submitted to the Institutional Review Board and were approved. The verbal consent script read to all interviewees prior to all interviews is found in Appendix A and the questions guide is in Appendix B. Questions varied to cater toward either government officials, developers, or storefront owners/community members. I also included the email template sent to potential interviewees in Appendix C.

Chapter 2: National's Park Case Study

Introduction

In order to test and analyze the direct impact of a sports stadium on a neighborhood, This paper centers on a case study of a specific stadium. This study was motivated by my own connection to Nat's Park. As a resident of Washington, D.C., I was able to watch the development of the neighborhood surrounding Nat's Park pre- and post-stadium construction to a neighborhood that is almost unrecognizable. My experience watching the development of this neighborhood inspired me to look closely into their community's economic qualities, identity and power structure, and social components.

Background: Construction and Building

Nat's Park was in Navy Yard, a neighborhood located in Ward 6 in the Southwest quadrant of Washington, D.C. The stadium was built in just 23 months and opened on March 30, 2008, an incredibly expedited process. The park was jointly designed by architects Populous and Devroux & Purnell and constructed by the Clark Construction Group for the client: D.C. Sports and Entertainment Commission (Clark Construction Group, 2022). There was a heavy public interest in the project, as it was consistently featured in local and national media. There was even a public website with live stream footage of the construction accessible by all interested parties (Clark Construction Group, 2022).

In terms of building dimensions, Nat's Park was a pioneer in design and sustainability. Nat's Park is quite a large stadium with over 41,000 seats, and 1.1 million square feet, and features panoramic views of the Southeast Waterfront, the Washington Monument, and the United States Capitol (Nationals.com, 2022). Nat's Park focused on environmental sustainability, due to its proximity to the Anacostia River (Clark Construction Group, 2022). Nat's Park was

awarded the Leader in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED is defined by the USGBC as “certified buildings are proven to save money, improve efficiency, lower carbon emissions and create healthier places for people” (LEED Online, 2022). Nat’s Park was the first baseball stadium to receive this prestigious award.

Background: Navy Yard and Ward 6

Navy Yard is located in the Southwest quadrant of Washington, D.C., and Ward 6. Ward 6 is home to iconic D.C. neighborhoods such as Penn Quarter, parts of Downtown, Gallery Place, Chinatown, and a multitude of federal buildings (Williams, 2022). It is the only ward that includes all four quadrants (Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast) which leads to an incredibly diverse population and unique neighborhoods.

Navy Yard was established in 1799 as a U.S. Navy shore establishment (Bona, 2021). It is adjacent to the Anacostia River which has seen major clean-up and purification efforts since 2000. Developers and contractors have begun to refer to the neighborhood as “Capital Waterfront” in an attempt to brand the neighborhood in a more attractive way to investors and residents (Bona, 2021). While it is home to the Washington Nationals, Navy Yard also boasts the new Audi Field (built in 2018), home to the Major League Soccer team, D.C. United. It is home to popular restaurants and a new multi-use storefront/apartment street called “The Yards”. Transportation to the neighborhood is quite easy with their Metro station: Navy Yard - Ballpark.

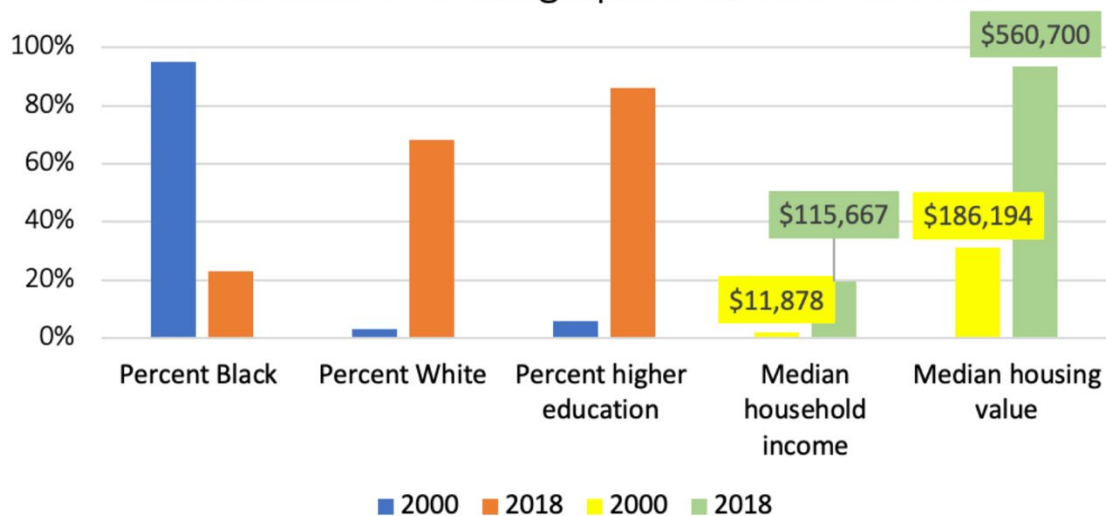
Navy Yard had an unfortunate reputation among government officials and developers before 2006 and the initial construction of Nat’s Park. When interviewing former Ward 2 councilmember Jack Evans (the longest serving councilmember in D.C. history), he described Navy Yard as “basically deserted” (Evans, 2022). He compared the neighborhood to the South

Bronx. He claimed the neighborhood “was rubble” with “three-strip joints and a cement factory” (Evans, 2022). When interviewing the CEO of Clark Construction, Robert Moser, he said Navy Yard was the “island of misfit toys... D.C. residents did not want to go there” (Moser, 2023). From his experience of visiting the neighborhood before and during development, he observed: “it was a very tough part of town, there were needles on the ground” (Moser, 2023). These accounts put the state of Navy Yard into perspective for the public and frame the neighborhood as one in distress.

The neighborhood has seen a major shift in demographics and income between 2000 and 2018 (Golash-Boza, 2021). The Black resident population has decreased dramatically from 95% in 2000 to 24% in 2018 while the White resident population has increased from 3% in 2000 to 68% in 2018. Along with this, the median household income in Navy Yard grew from \$11,878 in 2000 to \$115,667 in 2018 and the median housing value grew drastically from \$186,194 in 2000 to \$560,700 in 2018 (Golash-Boza, 2021 - Figure 1). The neighborhood has seen significant shifts in infrastructure and population over the past 20 years, making the neighborhood unrecognizable physically and demographically.

Figure 1 (Golash-Boza, 2021)

Census Tract 72 Demographics for 2000 & 2018



Note: Year 2000 dollar amounts adjusted to 2018 CPI values

Economics

Funding

Nat's Park was financed/and continually financed through public money: business taxes, resident taxes, and DC Government spending. Councilmember Jack Evans claims a stadium funded entirely with public money "will never be done again" after Nat's Park did it (Evans, 2022). While there are different values and estimates listed, building Nat's Park cost around \$701.3 million - the conservative estimate is around \$670 million (Cranor, 2013). In terms of the payment process, "DC contributed \$670.3 million, paying \$135 million upfront and borrowing another \$535 million" (Cranor, 2013). Washington, D.C. also spent federal money (around \$82.6 million) to upgrade infrastructure in the city to accommodate the stadium: Navy Yard metro station, South Capitol Street, and the Frederick Douglass Bridge (Cranor, 2013). When looking at the breakdown of how D.C. paid for the stadium, DC's budget paid \$135 million in upfront costs (without any aid from Major League Baseball) and utilized bonds to cover the other \$535 million in stadium debt (Cranor, 2013). To create revenue to cover the \$535 million in bonds the

city created four streams: 1) “a gross receipts tax on businesses that make more than \$5 million a year, 2) a share of the utility taxes paid by every non-residential taxpayer, 3) 4.25% special sales tax on stadium sales, and 4) rent paid by the Nationals” (Candor, 2013). D.C. taxpayers are still paying for the maintenance of the stadium. According to Greater Washington, “DC taxpayers have paid \$140 million to build and maintain the stadium, \$82.6 million for stadium-related transportation upgrades, and another \$24-32 million a year to pay off the debt and maintain the stadium” (Candor, 2013). The project has continued to require public funds after construction to maintain the quality of the stadium and the neighborhood around it.

Was it Beneficial?

Nat’s Park was an incredibly controversial project. The rationale for undertaking the massive project was to revitalize the city and bring economic benefits, even if it required a major financial commitment. There have been conflicting views as to the economic benefits of Nat’s Park and if it catalyzed economic development, or if the city was headed in that direction anyway. D.C. was struggling with high poverty rates up until 2008. The D.C. poverty rate in 2008 was 17.2%, while the national average was 13.2% (Comey et. al 2010, 20). Specifically in Ward 6, household incomes were the lowest in the city in 2000 at \$16,556 (Comey et. al 2010, 20). As mentioned previously, the median household income in Navy Yard was even lower than that of all of Ward 6 at \$11,878 in 2000 but grew to \$115,667 in 2018 (Golash-Boza, 2021) - an 873.792% in less than two decades. Supporters of sports stadiums have modified their argument for building stadiums from direct economic development (such as taxes or jobs), but the stadiums catalyze physical redevelopment (Chapin 194, 2004). These supporters are now focusing on more indirect impacts from the stadiums, an angle that Nat’s Park supporters have now taken. While statistics indicate economic revitalization and benefits to the Ward and the

Navy Yard neighborhood between 2000-2018, it is difficult to assert causation or that Nat's Park served as a catalyst for these increasing numbers.

There are many conflicting viewpoints within the city as to the economic development brought on by the stadium. When the stadium was first built, there were problems arising with community development. D.C. focused on the idea that the stadium would serve as a catalyst for economic development in all parts of the city, specifically Navy Yard. Developers and investors did not want to make the first move, "The community needs to draw more residents like Lewark (a small restaurant in Navy Yard) so that restaurants have customers on the 284 days of the year when the Nationals aren't playing at home. But those people want to see more restaurants and nightlife before moving in" (McCartney, 2010). It was difficult to motivate groups to start construction in Navy Yard, therefore, the area ran into challenges even after the construction of Nat's Park. This was because businesses were unsure whether to move to Navy Yard.

There is also an argument that Nat's stadium didn't serve as a catalyst; it just rode the wave of economic development already brewing after the 2008 recession (Garofolo, 2019). Many media articles did not credit Nat's Park for the boost in economic development. However, many praised the project and what it has done for the city, "with the Nationals' World Series win last month, boosters say the investment has paid off. Not only can D.C. now boast a championship team, but the area around the stadium in Southeast's Navy Yard neighborhood has exploded with development, creating a dense neighborhood where before there were mostly industrial warehouses and strip clubs" (Austermuhle, 2019). Media outlets/community members believe that Nat's Park transformed the neighborhood and brought economic prowess to Navy Yard. The causal relationship between economic development and Nat's Stadium is confirmed by some but questioned by others.

CEO of Clark Construction, Robert Moser, added insight into the developments surrounding Nat's Park, as many of the buildings around the stadium were built by Clark Construction. They are responsible for the development and construction of hotels, office buildings, and large-scale apartment buildings near the stadium. He stated that tourist city development near water is becoming increasingly popular (Moser, 2023). He added, "the residential began to transform Nat's Park regionally to a sustainable economy regardless of a Nat's Game" (Moser, 2023). Jack Evans added to this sentiment, "the district around the baseball stadium produces \$620 million a year in tax revenue... we pay for the stadium every year and all that financing goes to schools and human services" (Evans, 2022). Evans also went as far as to say that "Nat's Park was such a success, it's not included in negative economic impact reports regarding sports" (Evans, 2022). Both Evans and Moser refer to Nat's Park as this contemporary economic masterpiece that vilifies the idea that stadiums do not have a positive economic impact on the neighborhoods surrounding it (van Holm, 2018).

Gentrification

Demographic Shifts

Ward 6 has experienced major demographic shifts from 2000-2010. The neighborhood composition has changed dramatically in terms of racial makeup. In 2000 (pre-construction of Nat's Park), the White population was 21,513, representing 31.6% of the population in Ward 6. That same Census year, the Black or African American population was 42,678, representing 62.7% of the population (DC.gov: Office of Planning, 2000 - Figure 2). Black or African American residents made up a majority of Ward 6, approximately double the population of White residents.

Figure 2 (D.C. Government: Office of Planning, 2000)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1	District of Columbia Profiles of General Demographic and Housing Characteristics by Ward: 2000																		
2	Subject	District of Columbia		Ward 1		Ward 2		Ward 3		Ward 4		Ward 5		Ward 6		Ward 7		Ward 8	
3		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
87	RACE																		
88	Total Population	572,059	100	73,364	100	68,869	100	73,718	100	75,179	100	71,440	100	68,035	100	70,527	100	70,927	100
89	One race	558,613	97.6	70,056	95.5	66,968	97.2	71,826	97.4	72,908	97	70,299	98.4	66,604	97.9	69,809	99	70,143	98.9
90	White	176,101	30.8	23,276	31.7	45,036	65.4	61,647	83.6	14,031	18.7	5,877	8.2	21,513	31.6	974	1.4	3,747	5.3
91	Black or African American	343,312	60	33,554	45.7	13,723	19.9	4,259	5.8	52,550	69.9	62,703	87.8	42,678	62.7	68,301	96.8	65,544	92.4
92	American Indian and Alaska Native	1,713	0.3	378	0.5	234	0.3	140	0.2	229	0.3	223	0.3	202	0.3	155	0.2	152	0.2
93	Asian	15,189	2.7	2,588	3.5	5,269	7.7	4,231	5.7	726	1	602	0.8	1,339	2	133	0.2	301	0.4
94	Asian Indian	2,845	0.5	389	0.5	1,034	1.5	891	1.2	132	0.2	160	0.2	196	0.3	28	0	15	0
95	Chinese	3,724	0.7	274	0.4	1,607	2.3	862	1.2	181	0.2	171	0.2	590	0.9	20	0	29	0
96	Filipino	2,228	0.4	227	0.3	671	1	801	1.1	146	0.2	92	0.1	108	0.2	29	0	154	0.2
97	Japanese	1,117	0.2	86	0.1	412	0.6	449	0.6	31	0	15	0	88	0.1	14	0	22	0
98	Korean	1,095	0.2	143	0.2	371	0.5	332	0.5	56	0.1	37	0.1	114	0.2	14	0	28	0
99	Vietnamese	1,903	0.3	1,185	1.6	304	0.4	201	0.3	80	0.1	37	0.1	80	0.1	6	0	10	0
100	Other Asian [1]	2,267	0.4	284	0.4	870	1.3	695	0.9	100	0.1	90	0.1	163	0.2	22	0	43	0.1
101	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	348	0.1	47	0.1	111	0.2	39	0.1	31	0	17	0	43	0.1	16	0	44	0.1
102	Native Hawaiian	138	0	17	0	67	0.1	12	0	4	0	3	0	14	0	9	0	12	0
103	Guamanian or Chamorro	62	0	10	0	10	0	6	0	3	0	10	0	9	0	0	0	14	0
104	Samoan	51	0	8	0	18	0	2	0	3	0	1	0	7	0	3	0	9	0
105	Other Pacific Islander [2]	97	0	12	0	16	0	19	0	21	0	3	0	13	0	4	0	9	0
106	Some other race	21,950	3.8	10,213	13.9	2,595	3.8	1,510	2	5,341	7.1	877	1.2	829	1.2	230	0.3	355	0.5
107	Two or more races	13,446	2.4	3,308	4.5	1,901	2.8	1,892	2.6	2,271	3	1,141	1.6	1,431	2.1	718	1	784	1.1
108	Race alone or in combination with one or more other races [3]																		
109	White	184,309	32.2	25,322	34.5	46,456	67.5	63,241	85.8	15,233	20.3	6,366	8.9	22,339	32.8	1,233	1.7	4,119	5.8
110	Black or African American	350,455	61.3	35,042	47.8	14,355	20.8	4,764	6.5	53,983	71.8	63,615	89	43,566	64	68,947	97.8	66,183	93.3
111	American Indian and Alaska Native	4,775	0.8	840	1.1	545	0.8	400	0.5	774	1	656	0.9	620	0.9	487	0.7	453	0.6
112	Asian	17,956	3.1	3,008	4.1	5,853	8.5	4,916	6.7	1,015	1.4	798	1.1	1,652	2.4	247	0.4	467	0.7
113	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	785	0.1	125	0.2	187	0.3	92	0.1	105	0.1	57	0.1	92	0.1	40	0.1	87	0.1
114	Some other race	28,627	5	12,544	17.1	3,550	5.2	2,349	3.2	6,604	8.8	1,268	1.8	1,396	2.1	403	0.6	513	0.7

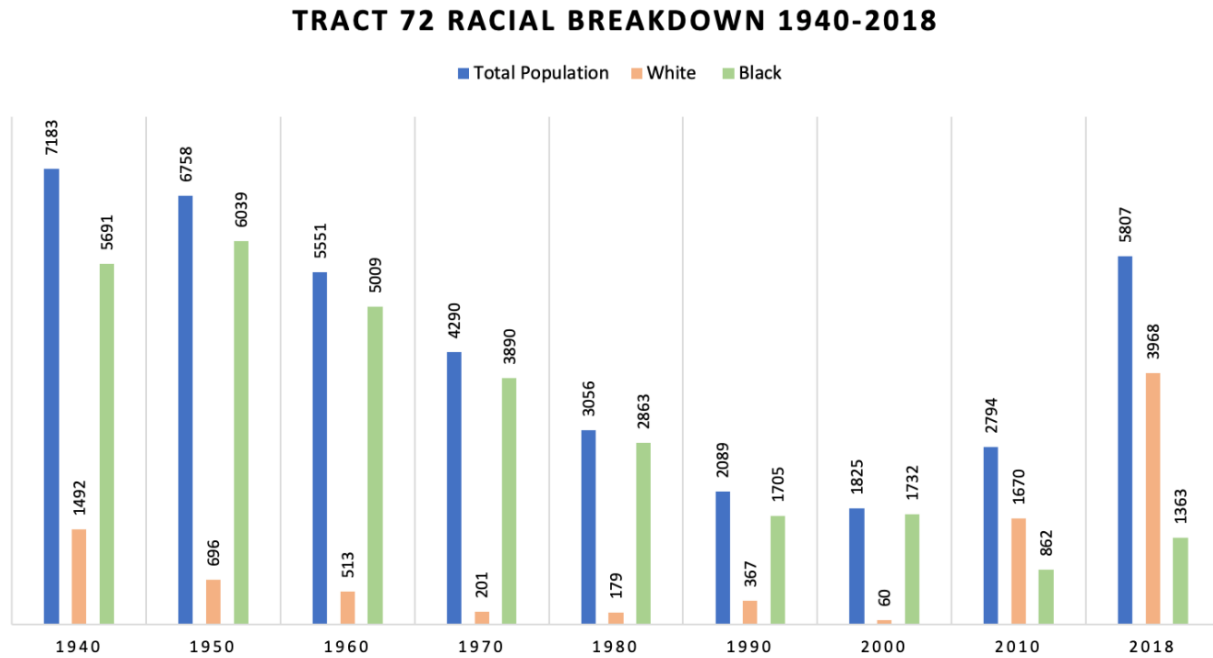
However, in 2010 (2 years post-opening) the White population grew to 38,047 residents, representing 49.7% of the Ward 6 population. The Black or African American population was 31,842, representing 41.6% of the Ward 6 population (DC.gov: Office of Planning, 2010 - Figure 3). The White population grew by 18.1% in 10 years, while the Black population decreased by 21.1%. These shifts are incredibly drastic for a 10-year period and mark new residents moving into Ward 6 and older residents leaving the neighborhood.

Figure 3 (D.C. Government: Office of Planning, 2010)

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
2	Subject	District of Columbia 2010		Ward 1		Ward 2		Ward 3		Ward 4		Ward 5		Ward 6		Ward 7		Ward 8	
3	Population	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
81	Total: All Races	601,723	100.0%	76,197	100.0%	79,915	100.0%	77,152	100.0%	75,773	100.0%	74,308	100.0%	76,598	100.0%	71,068	100.0%	70,712	100.0%
82	Population of one race:	584,407	97.1%	73,129	96.0%	77,459	96.9%	74,836	97.0%	72,816	96.1%	72,298	97.3%	74,444	97.2%	69,875	98.3%	69,550	98.4%
83	White	231,471	38.5%	36,864	48.4%	57,317	71.7%	64,447	83.5%	18,601	24.5%	12,259	16.5%	38,047	49.7%	1,291	1.8%	2,645	3.7%
84	Black or African American	305,125	50.7%	24,794	32.5%	10,079	12.6%	3,860	5.0%	44,459	58.7%	56,489	76.0%	31,842	41.6%	67,471	94.9%	66,131	93.5%
85	American Indian and Alaska Native	2,079	0.3%	393	0.5%	220	0.3%	170	0.2%	334	0.4%	285	0.4%	311	0.4%	220	0.3%	146	0.2%
86	Asian:	21,056	3.5%	3,156	4.1%	6,942	8.7%	5,146	6.7%	2,218	1.6%	1,037	1.4%	3,161	4.1%	136	0.2%	260	0.4%
87	Asian Indian	5,214	0.9%	924	1.2%	1,969	2.5%	1,217	1.6%	223	0.3%	189	0.3%	637	0.8%	15	0.0%	40	0.1%
88	Chinese	5,231	0.9%	495	0.6%	2,003	2.5%	1,086	1.4%	215	0.3%	274	0.4%	1,106	1.4%	24	0.0%	28	0.0%
89	Filipino	2,690	0.4%	319	0.4%	594	0.7%	848	1.1%	272	0.4%	240	0.3%	300	0.4%	42	0.1%	75	0.1%
90	Japanese	1,172	0.2%	105	0.1%	371	0.5%	408	0.5%	47	0.1%	46	0.1%	163	0.2%	10	0.0%	22	0.0%
91	Korean	2,290	0.4%	308	0.4%	791	1.0%	585	0.8%	89	0.1%	88	0.1%	394	0.5%	5	0.0%	30	0.0%
92	Vietnamese	1,567	0.3%	550	0.7%	216	0.3%	315	0.4%	211	0.3%	94	0.1%	158	0.2%	14	0.0%	9	0.0%
93	Other Asian	2,892	0.5%	455	0.6%	998	1.2%	687	0.9%	161	0.2%	106	0.1%	403	0.5%	26	0.0%	56	0.1%
94	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander:	302	0.1%	47	0.1%	65	0.1%	27	0.0%	59	0.1%	32	0.0%	39	0.1%	13	0.0%	20	0.0%
95	Native Hawaiian	75	0.0%	8	0.0%	11	0.0%	6	0.0%	13	0.0%	6	0.0%	20	0.0%	3	0.0%	8	0.0%
96	Guamanian or Chamorro	111	0.0%	20	0.0%	36	0.0%	6	0.0%	19	0.0%	13	0.0%	10	0.0%	5	0.0%	2	0.0%
97	Samoa	29	0.0%	5	0.0%	5	0.0%	5	0.0%	2	0.0%	9	0.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.0%
98	Other Pacific Islander	87	0.0%	14	0.0%	13	0.0%	10	0.0%	25	0.0%	4	0.0%	8	0.0%	5	0.0%	8	0.0%
99	Some Other Race	24,374	4.1%	7,875	10.3%	2,836	3.5%	1,186	1.5%	8,145	10.7%	2,196	3.0%	1,044	1.4%	744	1.0%	348	0.5%
100	Population of Two or More Races	17,316	2.9%	3,068	4.0%	2,456	3.1%	2,316	3.0%	2,957	3.9%	2,010	2.7%	2,154	2.8%	1,193	1.7%	1,162	1.6%
101	White, American Indian and Alaska Native	904	0.2%	173	0.2%	180	0.2%	139	0.2%	98	0.1%	90	0.1%	185	0.2%	17	0.0%	22	0.0%
102	White, Asian	3,736	0.6%	597	0.8%	936	1.2%	1,102	1.4%	277	0.4%	192	0.3%	569	0.7%	18	0.0%	45	0.1%
103	White, Black or African American	3,476	0.6%	514	0.7%	413	0.5%	400	0.5%	598	0.8%	473	0.6%	465	0.6%	279	0.4%	334	0.5%
104	White, Some Other Race	2,068	0.3%	719	0.9%	259	0.3%	166	0.2%	529	0.7%	173	0.2%	137	0.2%	54	0.1%	31	0.0%
105	Total Races Tallied																		
106	White alone or in combination with one or more other races	243,650	40.5%	39,164	51.4%	59,339	74.3%	66,492	86.2%	20,455	27.0%	13,466	18.1%	39,625	51.7%	1,868	2.6%	3,241	4.6%
107	Black or African American alone or in combination with one or more other races	314,352	52.2%	26,088	34.2%	10,973	13.7%	4,560	5.9%	46,114	60.9%	57,959	78.0%	32,966	43.0%	68,543	96.4%	67,149	95.0%
108	American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more other races	6,521	1.1%	1,061	1.4%	668	0.8%	504	0.7%	1,035	1.4%	972	1.3%	905	1.2%	787	1.1%	589	0.8%
109	Asian alone or in combination with one or more other races	26,857	4.5%	4,047	5.3%	8,248	10.3%	6,500	8.4%	1,771	2.3%	1,507	2.0%	3,989	5.2%	292	0.4%	503	0.7%
110	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination with one or more other races	1,320	0.2%	187	0.2%	176	0.2%	119	0.2%	427	0.6%	123	0.2%	133	0.2%	68	0.1%	87	0.1%
111	Some Other Race alone or in combination with one or more other races	28,621	4.8%	9,051	11.9%	3,258	4.1%	1,519	2.0%	9,326	12.3%	2,618	3.5%	1,382	1.8%	959	1.3%	508	0.7%

Specifically looking at Navy Yard, the Black resident population has decreased dramatically from 95% in 2000 to 24% in 2018 while the White resident population has increased from 3% in 2000 to 68% in 2018 (Golash-Boza, 2021 - Figure 4). In Navy Yard, the Black population decreased by 71%, while the White population increased by 65%.

Figure 4 Golash-Boza, 2021



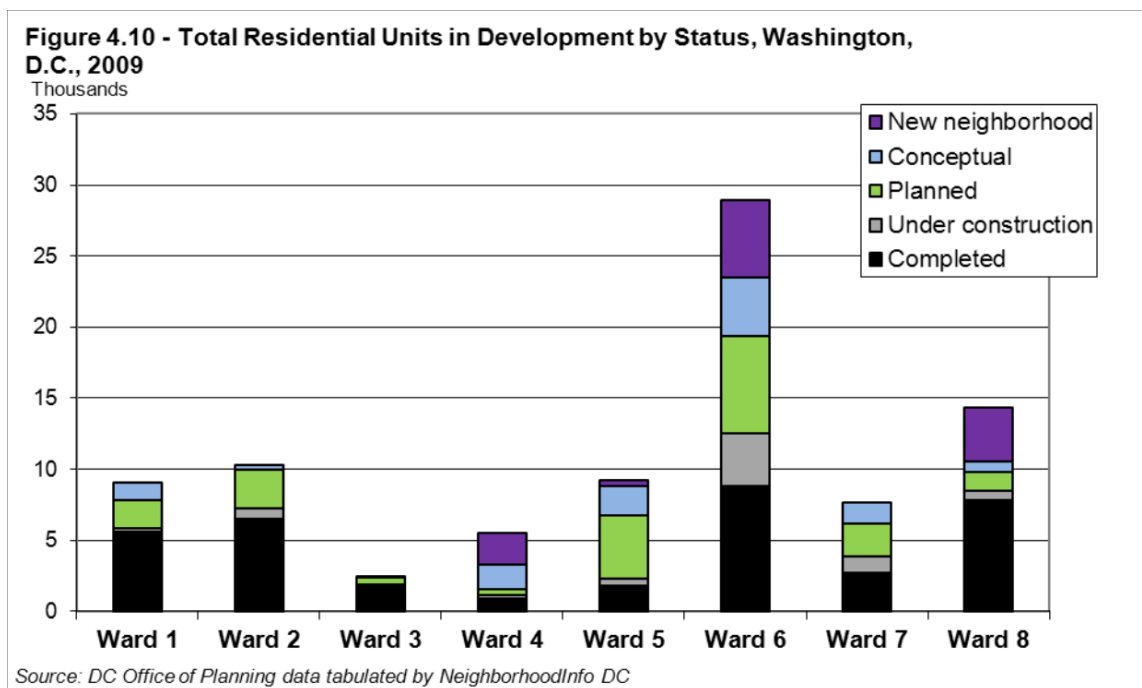
The general trends in Ward 6 were reflected in Navy Yard. It is also essential to note the differences in the percentage of residents completing a form of higher education. In 2000, the percentage of residents who had completed some form of higher education was hovering around 1~5%. However, in 2018, this number catapulted to ~70% (Golash-Boza, 2021 - Figure 4). The racial makeup indicates a major change in the neighborhood, yet the educational background provides an equally important measure. The shifts in demographics in Navy Yard were significantly more sizeable and exemplified a core concept of gentrification - new residents replacing/pushing out former residents from a neighborhood.

Income/Development Shifts

The idea of causation and gentrification is relevant to Nat's Park. It is unclear whether the stadium served as a true economic catalyst for Ward 6 or Navy Yard, however, it served as a catalyst for new development in terms of buildings and construction. The government established the intention for new development immediately. Jack Evans and Robert Moser both

alluded to the act's imminent domain that occurred to acquire buildings needed to begin construction. Jack Evans elaborated on eminent domain, “we seized property of 24 different owners with the power of the city of Washington, D.C. ... it was immediate land” (Evans, 2022). This set the tone for the development process. Immediately after the construction and opening of Nat’s Park (2009), Navy Yard/Ward 6 experienced a construction boom. Ward 6 became the most popular neighborhood to construct by a significant margin (Comey et. al 52, 2010 - Figure 5):

Figure 5 (Comey et. al 52, 2010)

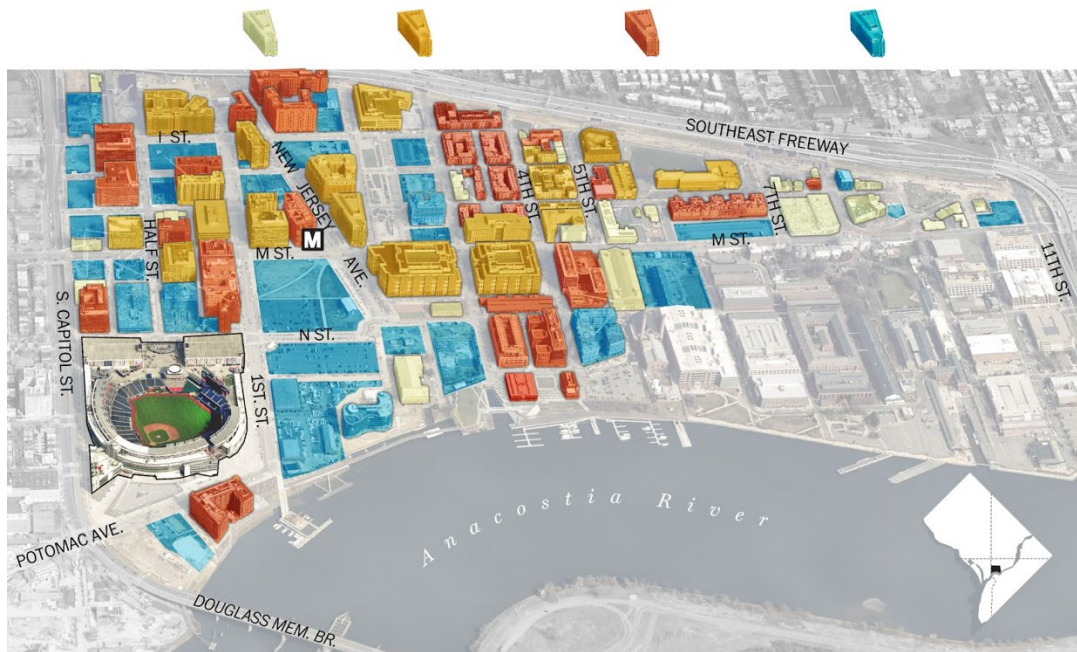


The total number of residential units in development in Ward 6 in 2009 was almost 30%. The next closest was Ward 8, which was half the amount in Ward 6 at almost 15% (Comey et. al 52, 2010). The “new neighborhood” subsection is incredibly significant because it indicates a severe change in the neighborhood in terms of optics and community. It is also important to know that every subsection in Ward 6 was larger than all subsections in any other ward (Comey et. al 52,

2010). 2009 served as a turning point for Ward 6 and was eventually translated specifically to the Ward 6 neighborhood.

A majority of construction in the Navy Yard neighborhood has occurred/been planned to post the 2008 opening of Nat's Park (Fisher, 2018). Development prior to the construction of Nat's Park was minimal, grew steadily between 2000-2010, and skyrocketed after 2010 in terms of current construction or proposed projects (Fisher, 2018). In Figure 6 (Fisher, 2010) this major construction boom in Navy Yard is exhibited (Figure 6):

Figure 6 (Fisher, 2018)

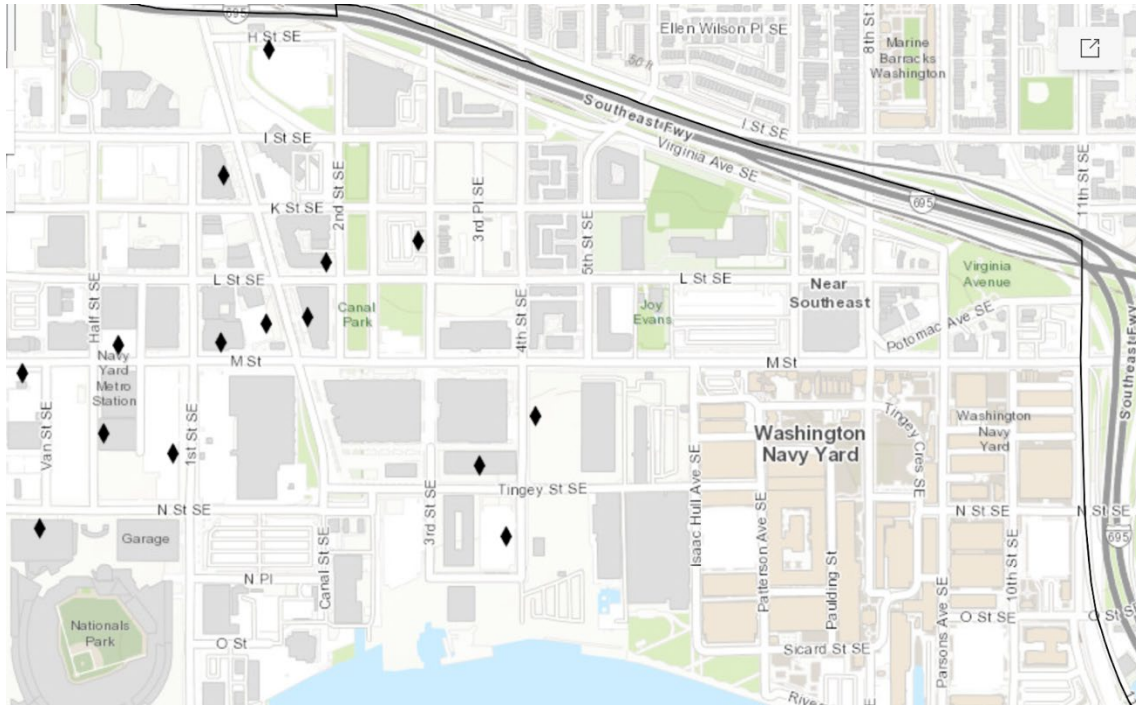


In this map, *green buildings* represent those built before 2000, *yellow buildings* were developed between 2000-2010, *red buildings* experienced development between 2010-2018, and *blue buildings* are those under construction, planned, or proposed (Fisher, 2018). This neighborhood is unrecognizable from what it was only 20 years ago.

The assortment of businesses in Navy Yard also represents the development and overall gentrification of the neighborhood. The shift in business entities represents a commercial

gentrification of Navy Yard. Business/commercial usages that align with cultural elements of gentrification are: “cafés, trendy restaurants or bars, pet stores, art galleries, organic food markets, or boutiques” (Golash-Boza, 2021). Figure 7 (Golash-Boza, 2021) displays the business/commercial usages that align with these elements:

Figure 7 (Golash-Boza, 2021)



The buildings marked with a “diamond” show the “cafés, trendy restaurants or bars, pet stores, art galleries, organic food markets, or boutiques” (Golash-Boza, 2021). These businesses are vastly different from the original establishments in Navy Yard pre-development of Nat’s Park.

These new businesses impacted the community and living experience of the original residents of Navy Yard. Arthur Jones II describes his experience as a Navy Yard resident throughout the development process of the stadium, “the stadium didn’t clean up the community, it just cleaned many of us and our institutions out” (Jones II, 2017). He continues to elaborate on the role of Nat’s Park in the overall development of the neighborhood, “the baseball stadium’s

displacement of black bodies, institutions, and culture in Southwest, much like D.C.'s state of gentrification, signifies how some corporations and the many new white folks view us" (Jones II, 2017). Commercial gentrification altered the resident's experience in the neighborhood and eventually forced these residents to move out of a neighborhood they once called home. Construction and development led to dramatic demographic shifts in Navy Yard residents.

Robert Moser elaborated on the neighborhood "transformation" of Navy Yard. As soon as construction started, Moser stated, "there was not a body of people that said 'not in my backyard'" (Moser, 2023). When discussing stadium development, Moser discusses this "new wave" of stadium development. He said, "neighborhood transformation is now the norm, developments right around the city" (Moser, 2023). He also continually mentioned this concept of "bringing life" (Moser, 2023) to the neighborhood and the overall city of Washington, D.C. From a developer perspective, this commercial gentrification "brought life" to a neighborhood in crisis and the country should expect massive neighborhood shifts/transformations like this. |

Power Structure and Community

Resident Opposition of the Stadium

As stated previously, Nat's Park was/is continually funded through public money: business taxes, resident taxes, and DC Government spending. However, not all residents supported the development of Nat's Park, yet were taxed to ensure that the construction was able to reach completion. According to the Washington Post, "when the District government was considering how to finance the Nationals' \$600 million stadium, more than two-thirds of D.C. residents opposed using public dollars" (Fisher, 2018). Councilmember Jack Evans recalled that the government "conducted a poll and the majority of people in the city supported bringing baseball back" (Evans, 2022). However, he admitted that "public money disrupted that support

of the stadium” (Evans, 2022). Two-thirds opposition is a majority of the population, and for the government to overlook this statistic and these sentiments for economic and community development is crucial.

Support from the Government

There is a disconnect between the residents and government officials in terms of the benefits that the stadium has brought. There are also varying levels of support between the two groups. The city government boasts economic benefits, but also potential non-economic benefits (Beaver, 2001). These non-economic benefits highlight the community-building the stadium could create. When discussing the stadium, the mayor at the time, Anthony Williams stated, “we thought it was a great investment for the District both for civic spirit, the economic benefits from the team, that we would be importing revenue from outside the city from bringing a fan base to D.C., all those things,” (Austermuhle, 2019). This concept of “civic spirit” in his statement (Anthony Williams) is incredibly fascinating because of the assumption that economic revenue will contribute to and increase overall civic spirit. Along with this, the statement disregards and fails to mention the initial civic/resident opposition to the stadium construction in the first place.

The Ward 2 councilmember Jack Evans took the benefits of Nat’s Park a step further. He stated, “where would we be without the arena, the convention center and hotel, the ballpark, Audi soccer stadium,’ Evans asks and answers, ‘we’d be Detroit, a city still struggling in every respect.’” (Washington City Paper, 2019). Councilmember Evans directly associates development and construction with community success. He added in our interview that “(Nat’s Park) is one of the most successful models for becoming parts of the city” (Evans, 2022). There is an interesting dichotomy surrounding the resident’s initial opposition to the construction, to government officials ensuring the public it is the best thing that could have happened for the city.

The government, in this case, dominated the decision-making process, even with genuine disinterest from residents.

The city government is also supported by developers. Along with this, developers seem to share similar sentiments with government officials regarding the stadium's success. Robert Moser concluded his thoughts on the stadium by asserting "the community needed it and the MLB needed it" (Moser, 2023). Community and sports are influential connections for all members of a community: government officials, developers, and residents. Jack Evans confirmed this concept, "sports are a unifier for a city" (Evans, 2022). Passion for sports and what it could hypothetically bring to a community persuade cities to continue to take economic risks at the expense of community members.

Reactions/media articles of Nat's Park

Many media articles were able to conduct interviews with former and current residents to portray the neighborhood shift. Perspectives from former/current residents allow the public to see the impact of the stadium development on their community. When the Washington Post interviewed Amelia Mercer (a former resident of Navy Yard) she recalled, "'this is really nice,' said Mercer, 36, 'but they just wiped out where we grew up. Now nobody can afford it here, not even the people who move in — they must get four or five friends to live with them to pay the rent.'" She continued that the neighborhood was, "'was dirty, with a lot of crime. But it was a neighborhood, she said. 'People knew your name.' Although she moved to the Northeast, she comes back so her boys can play in a safe place. 'It's not for us, but I like it here anyway.'" (Fisher, 2018). City officials claim that the stadium completely revitalized an almost "broken" neighborhood. While the neighborhood (admitted by residents) was a bit dangerous, it was a

community. The stadium changed the neighborhood so drastically that it is almost unrecognizable in every facet.

There is a stark contrast between different areas in the Navy Yard neighborhood. While there have been high investments in parts of the Navy Yard neighborhood, other areas have been forgotten. These areas are far enough from the stadium, that tourists cannot see the dichotomy within the single neighborhood. The Washington Post reports, “longtime community members said that many of the newcomers may not have an understanding of the area or its challenges because they do not often intermingle with lower-income residents or mix with those who live outside of their buildings” (Lang, 2021). While the Navy Yard neighborhood was labeled as “dangerous” by city government officials, there was a community that had been developed and tight knit for generations. However, with new residents (a major shift in demographics over the past 20 years), there is a major disconnect within the neighborhood.

There is a physical and socioeconomic boundary between the new and older residents. When interviewing residents the Washington Post recorded, “she (Rhonda Hamilton, community organizer) and other community advocates have banded together to push developers into considering the entire community — not just the affluent renters and tourists who visit the Wharf or the ballpark — when making decisions about the use of space and commercial tenants” (Lang, 2021). Many older residents chose to leave Navy Yard for a multitude of reasons, specifically economic and demographic shifts. Because of this, the community's identity was changed forever. However, for those older residents still living in Navy Yard, the community is unrecognizable, and the identity has completely shifted. There are almost two different communities in the Navy Yard neighborhood.

Chapter 3: Discussion

Historically, the roles and impacts of sports stadiums have been questioned. While those in city government and developers remain strong supporters, there is growing resistance to these stadium developments from community members and activists. The benefits of stadium development that have been promoted to neighborhoods and communities (both economic and non-economic benefits) for decades are now doubted by community members and possibly disputed (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002) The Nat's Park case study was essential in exploring my three guiding research questions regarding 1) the impact on social and economic qualities of a neighborhood, 2) the causal link between a sports stadium and gentrification, and 3) local community identity.

RQ1: The Impact on Social and Economic Qualities of Neighborhoods

The social and economic formation of a neighborhood changes drastically and is ultimately transformed with the construction and development of a sports stadium. In terms of social characteristics, the demographic shifts of Navy Yard pre- and post-development of Nat's Park (built in 2008) exhibit these dramatic social changes. This is exhibited in the racial breakdown, educational attainment, and median household income and property values. Census data and D.C. planning indicate this racial "reversal". The Black resident population decreased dramatically from 95% in 2000 to 24% in 2018 while the White resident population increased from 3% in 2000 to 68% in 2018 (Golash-Boza, 2021; see Figure 4). Second, the percentage of residents who had completed higher education had risen. In 2000, the percentage of residents in Navy Yard who had completed some form of higher education was hovering around 1~5%. However, in 2018, this number catapulted to ~70% (Golash-Boza, 2021 – Figure 1). Finally, median household income and value grew at a rapid rate post-development. The median

household income in Navy Yard grew from \$11,878 in 2000 to \$115,667 in 2018 and the median housing value grew drastically from \$186,194 in 2000 to \$560,700 in 2018 (Golash-Boza, 2021 – Figure 1). Socially, the community in Navy Yard has changed. Navy Yard is now majority White, highly educated, and wealthier than the previous residents. Along with this, the perception of the neighborhood has shifted. Socially, it is an appealing location with expensive properties and an “elite” resident community.

It is important to discuss the overall economic commitment made to Navy Yard by Washington, D.C. when analyzing the economic shifts of the neighborhood. This is because the city invested hundreds of millions of dollars into the neighborhood with an expectation of a return. Nat’s Park cost around \$701.3 million – the conservative estimate is around \$670 million (Cranor, 2013). The stadium was funded with only public funds, generated from various taxes (resident and business) and money from the D.C. government (Cranor, 2013). It is becoming extremely rare for a stadium to be funded solely through public money, and Jack Evans, former Ward 2 councilmember (served from 1991-2020), claims this “will never be done again” (Evans, 2022). The public investment into the stadium took a toll on the entire city as the D.C. Government looked to the stadium as a source of economic development to generate tourism and create businesses. Even if an individual resident or business did not have a vested interest in the stadium, they were taxed. However, from an economic perspective, the stadium and developments surrounding the stadium are seen as a success. According to Jack Evans, “the district around the baseball stadium produces \$620 million a year in tax revenue... we pay for the stadium every year and all that financing goes to schools and human services” (Evans, 2022). Moser adds to this, “the residential began to transform Nat’s Park regionally to a sustainable economy regardless of a Nat’s Game”. Washington, D.C. invested in a stadium in a

neighborhood that was considered “basically deserted” (Evans, 2022). The investment has now generated hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue every year.

The economic qualities of Navy Yard certainly changed in terms of individual resident income and overall wealth. However, the neighborhood as a whole completely transformed. Navy Yard now generates over \$600 million in revenue (Evans, 2022) and is home to many businesses as opposed to the original “three-strip joints and a cement factory” (Evans, 2022) where even “D.C. residents did not want to go” (Moser, 2023). Therefore, this challenges existing research regarding “little to no economic impact” associated with the development and construction of sports stadiums (Eckstein & Delaney 2002, 235). Could Jack Evans have been accurate when he claimed Nat’s Park was such a success, “it’s not included in negative economic impact reports regarding sports” (Evans, 2022)? Is D.C. truly an example of positive economic impact and could it be a model for the future of stadium developments? Economically, the stadium succeeded and created a source of revenue for the entire city of D.C. However, this does not mean the project was a complete success and could have done more harm than good.

RQ2: Causation Between a Sports Stadium and Gentrification

Gentrification is defined as 1) older cities revitalized by outsiders, 2) encouraging new residents to live in a refreshed and pricier setting, and 3) driving current residents out of their communities (Blaeser, 2018). While the requirements to determine “causation” are difficult to fulfill, Nat’s Park in D.C. could be considered a catalyst for the gentrification of Navy Yard. I’ll use Blaeser’s breakdown of gentrification as a framework to explore the connection between the development of Nat’s Park and the gentrification of Navy Yard.

The first part of the definition reads “older cities are revitalized by outsiders” (Blaeser, 2018). Clark Construction was hired by the D.C. government to construct and develop Nat’s

Park, but to also build mixed-use structures around the stadium to create almost a “new neighborhood”. Robert Moser elaborated on these “secondary developments” around Nat’s Park. He said, “neighborhood transformation is now the norm, developments right around the city” (Moser, 2023). He repeatedly mentioned, “bringing life” (Moser, 2023) to the neighborhood through these developments, having referred to Navy Yard as “the island of misfit toys” (Moser, 2023) pre-development. Clark Construction, as an outsider certainly revitalized an older Navy Yard neighborhood through the actual stadium and a “neighborhood transformation” with other developments surrounding the stadium.

The second part of the definition reads “encouraging new residents to live in a refreshed and pricier setting” (Blaeser, 2018). In terms of the phrase “new residents”, the social characteristics of the neighborhood changed through major demographic shifts regarding 1) racial breakdown, 2) education level, and 3) median household income. There was a major shift in demographics between 2000-2010, pre and beginning of post-development, and then in 2018, many years post-development (Golash-Boza, 2021). In terms of “a refreshed and pricier setting”, Navy Yard experienced commercial gentrification. Commercial gentrification concerns business/commercial usages that align with cultural elements of gentrification. Examples of these establishments in neighborhoods are: “cafés, trendy restaurants or bars, pet stores, art galleries, organic food markets, or boutiques” (Golash-Boza, 2021). A combination of the mixed-use buildings developed by Clark Construction and new businesses represent commercial gentrification in Navy Yard and this “refreshed and pricier setting”.

The final part of the definition reads “driving current residents out of their communities (Blaeser, 2018). The demographic shifts (median household income, education level, and racial breakdown) reflect new residents with different demographic qualities. When interviewed about

her experience as a resident in Navy Yard, Amelia Mercer said, ““but they just wiped out where we grew up. Now nobody can afford it here, not even the people who move in — they must get four or five friends to live with them to pay the rent”” (Fisher, 2018). Her statement reflects how increased rent drove the original residents of Navy Yard out of their neighborhood. Her usage of language and word choice, “they just wiped out where we grew up”, represent the severity of the neighborhood shift. Original residents of Navy Yard were pushed out of their communities due to higher rent prices. We can see these effects in the demographic shifts in the neighborhood between pre-development and post-development.

The development of Nat’s Park and its immediate impacts fulfill the definition and Blaaser’s criteria of gentrification. Therefore, Nat’s Park certainly catalyzed gentrification in Navy Yard. Along with this, many of these trends (demographic shifts) were like the entire Ward 6 community. Nat’s Park could have served as a catalyst for the gentrification of the entirety of Ward 6. This forces the question of whether the reach of Nat’s Park was even greater. As a project that required public funding from the entire city, could Nat’s Park have served as a tool to influence D.C., residents, into accepting gentrification? Residents were convinced this development was a positive thing, even though we can see how it may have harmed original/longtime residents.

RQ3: Sports Stadiums and Local Community Identity

In order to analyze the local community identity of Navy Yard, it is essential to observe the 1) power structure between the residents and the city government (Beaver, 2001) and the 2) non-economic benefits of Nat’s Park (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002). In terms of power structure, there was a disconnect between what the residents of Navy Yard and a majority of the city wanted for the area and what the government envisioned. A majority of this disconnect was

fueled by the public funding of the stadium – every D.C. resident was taxed to fund the development and construction of Nat’s Park. A publicly funded sports stadium creates immediate tension due to taxes on residents, no matter whether they want the stadium or not. Jack Evans admitted that when Washington, D.C. was interested in buying the Nationals, it was met with “anti-stadium protestors” (Evans, 2022). The government ignored complaints and opposition from residents to fulfill the dream of becoming a “major league city” (Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2000). Robert Moser went as far as to say, “the community needed it and the MLB needed it” (Moser, 2023). Jack Evans added to this sentiment, “sports are a unifier for the city” (Evans, 2022). It is almost as if the government used the power of sport to validate the public funding of the stadium – charging all D.C. residents to fulfill a fantasy that the government and developers had, not necessarily the residents.

The stark difference in sentiment between residents and the government was incredibly noticeable during interviews in different media articles. The mayor at the time, Anthony Williams, discussed the stadium from his gubernatorial perspective, “we thought it was a great investment for the District both for civic spirit, the economic benefits from the team, that we would be importing revenue from outside the city from bringing a fan base to D.C., all those things” (Austermuhle, 2019). The D.C. government dominated the decision-making process, even with genuine disinterest from residents (anti-stadium protests). However, with the power of the city residing with the D.C. government and developers, residents were forced to pay for a baseball stadium in a neighborhood where residents were not ready for economic and social change.

In terms of non-economic impacts (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002), Navy Yard has experienced changes to the community’s cohesion and identity. The dramatic demographic and

economic shifts in Navy Yard contributed to major changes in community identity. Because of these changes, there are two experiences regarding community self-esteem. There are older residents of the neighborhood that feel a sort of “isolation” and separation from the newer residents. Longtime community members claim that many of the newcomers may not have an understanding of the area or its challenges because they do not often intermingle with lower-income residents or mix with those who live outside of their buildings (Lang, 2021). These newer residents may have a positive connotation regarding the community self-esteem in Navy Yard because of the new developments and affluent residents. However, older residents may have a more negative perception regarding identity because of this lack of connection or “intermingling” between the two groups.

The dichotomous experiences of these residents and their conflicting interpretations of the community self-esteem are reflected in the older resident’s attitudes towards utilizing the space in the neighborhoods. The Washington Post wrote, “she (Rhonda Hamilton, community organizer) and other community advocates have banded together to push developers into considering the entire community — not just the affluent renters and tourists who visit the Wharf or the ballpark — when making decisions about the use of space and commercial tenants” (Lang, 2021). It is difficult for older residents to feel heard in their community because of this shift in identity. There are now affluent renters and tourists to think about when developing the neighborhood. This negatively impacts their perception of the identity and self-esteem of the community. These significant inter-community conflicts challenge the successful integration of a stadium into a city or a neighborhood and the satisfaction of all groups.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Nat's Park was an incredibly illuminating case study due to its economic success, its role as a catalyst for gentrification, and the power structure involved throughout the development and construction process that impacted the overall community identity and self-esteem. The claim that sports stadiums have little to no positive economic impact was inaccurate in the case of Nat's Park. However, economic success is not the only factor that should determine whether a sports stadium is a successful endeavor. It is also essential to measure whether a stadium was successfully incorporated into a neighborhood. In the case of Nat's Park, it is difficult for me to say that the stadium was successfully integrated into the neighborhood. I don't believe this stadium was incorporated properly into this neighborhood and this community because of the negative social impacts on original/longtime residents. Instead, the stadium served as a catalyst for gentrification. This is illustrated through sudden and dramatic shifts in demographic data. It also completely altered the community identity, to an almost unrecognizable one, and split community self-esteem into two experiences. While the stadium turned out as an incredible source of revenue for the neighborhood and the entire city of Washington, D.C., residents were an afterthought and were either pushed out of their community or felt unwelcome after their community had changed dramatically.

The Nat's Park development in Washington, D.C. is one case and cannot be generalized to every development process. Cities are taking a major risk when introducing a stadium in a neighborhood. It is a very complex process that impacts all economic and social dynamics of the neighborhoods surrounding the stadium. Throughout my research and interviews, I realized these complexities and the gubernatorial priorities to become a "major league city" (Siegfried & Zimbalist, 2000). Cities are willing to undergo risks and compromises to become major league

city. I don't think it is possible for a city to develop a stadium that truly satisfies everyone in every facet of a community. There are too many factors to take into consideration and overall, not all stakeholders - government, developers, and residents - will be satisfied.

After analyzing Nat's Park, I was able to identify the value of certain factors when integrating a sports stadium into a neighborhood as a strategy for urban "renewal". As mentioned, Jack Evans and the D.C. government considered the positive economic impact of the stadium on the Navy Yard neighborhood as the only measure of success. The stadium was considered a success, even with negative social impacts - gentrification and lack/stark change in community identity. Therefore, I urge cities to view social impacts on the same "level" as economic impacts when integrating a sports stadium into a neighborhood. Cities could implement laws and policies to protect both the original residents and structures that make neighborhoods unique.

First, I would recommend cities create policies to ensure original residents are able to stay in these neighborhoods. Nat's Park exhibited how a stadium could catalyze gentrification and push out older residents through new developments and a rise in rent prices. While it is inevitable in this age of development for sports stadiums to bring new construction, cities must protect longtime residents and their neighborhoods. City governments could enforce protective zoning laws and other housing policies to protect both the physical structures of buildings and their surrounding areas. These laws and policies would make demolition or new construction illegal in certain areas and protect the authenticity and originality of neighborhoods. This would protect certain communal assets such as homes, storefronts, and religious centers. Along with this, I would recommend that cities monitor demographic changes in a neighborhood and incorporate reduced rent policies for original residents. Nat's Park experienced major

demographic changes, one of these changes being in average median income. These policies would protect original residents from rising rent prices and ensure they are able to stay in these neighborhoods. Even if the economy of a neighborhood has improved, a city needs to ensure that individual residents are protected.

I suggest that governments focus on the social qualities of neighborhoods and create laws and policies to protect original/longtime residents. However, it is possible that with these laws and policies, longtime residents could still feel isolated from the revitalized community. Incorporating and sponsoring community engagement initiatives could help in maintaining a strong community identity and self-esteem. While economic success is important, the social qualities of neighborhoods should be considered equally as important when measuring the overall integration of a stadium in a neighborhood. This will allow neighborhoods to experience a form of revitalization, as opposed to gentrification.

As a case study focused solely on Nat's Park, this project experienced several limitations. First, I was only able to interview two key players in the development process: former Ward 2 councilmember Jack Evans and CEO of Clark Construction Robert Moser. Ideally, I would have been able to interview more people in all three parties of interest: 1) government officials, 2) developers, and 3) community residents. When attempting to reach out to more government officials, I was met with busy schedules or no response at all. For many government officials and developers of interest, I had to go through their secretaries, and my messages were never passed through. I was also unable to conduct any interviews with community residents. I was forced to utilize media articles from various sources (Washington Post, NPR, and Andscape) to supplement my lack of primary research. Second, I did not conduct my own quantitative research. I used secondary sources such as the DC Government and Census Tract 72 in order to

analyze statistics. My analysis is limited to the validity of these sources. Finally, my project is limited in scope. While some of my findings were consistent with trends discussed and analyzed in research journals, I was solely researching National's Park and its impact on Ward 6 and Navy Yard. My findings are not generalizable to every sports stadium in the country as each stadium is unique with different circumstances.

Interview Sources

Evans, Jack. 2022. Interview via Zoom. December 23.

Moser, Robert. 2023. Interview via phone call. January 19.

Appendix A – Verbal Consent Script

“Hello! My name is Olivia Viorst, and I am a student at the University of Oregon Clark Honors College. I am conducting my Senior Thesis on the impacts of building a sports stadium on surrounding neighborhoods. I have decided to conduct a case study on Nat’s Park to take a closer look at a specific case. You are being asked for an interview because you have a connection to this development, and I am interested in learning about your experience.

I want to emphasize that this is solely for research purposes. If you have any additional questions after the study, my contact information is:

Email: oliviav@uoregon.edu

Phone: 202-701-9680

Our conversation will take about 30 minutes, does this time work?

If no: When would be a good time to reschedule?

If yes: Continue with interview.

This interview is completely voluntary and only includes those who have chosen to take part. Please take your time in making your decision to continue in the interview process. If you have any questions during the interview, please stop me and can give further explanation.

Do you have any questions so far?

During our interview, we are going to cover the development process of National’s Park in Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. as it pertains to neighborhood economic and social changes in the area. This information will solely be utilized in order to write my thesis for the Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon.

Are you ready to decide whether or not to participate?

Do I have your verbal consent to continue with this interview?

If no: Thank you for your time!

If yes: Great! Let’s get started.”

Appendix B – Questions Guide

Government officials – Jack Evans

1. Can you tell me about your role in the development of the stadium?
2. Can you tell me about this process?
3. Why was Navy Yard selected? What was the development process like?
4. Has the neighborhood changed since the construction? In what ways?
5. How did the community respond?
6. Were you surprised by their response?
7. What would you have done differently?
8. Whether or not they were responding to their constituents with the decisions they made
9. Something about iteration with communities they represent

Developers – Robert Moser

1. Can you tell me about your role in the development of the stadium?
2. Can you tell me about this process?
3. Why was Navy Yard selected? What was the development process like?
4. Has the neighborhood changed since the construction? In what ways?
5. How did the community respond?
6. Were you surprised by their response?
7. What would you have done differently?

Storefront owners/community members

1. What's your understanding of why Navy Yard was selected? What was the development process like?
2. What was the construction/development like?
3. Has the neighborhood changed since the construction? In what ways?
4. How did the community respond?
5. Were you surprised by their response?
6. What would you have done differently?

Appendix C – Email Template to Potential Interviewees

Good afternoon _____,

I'm a Senior in the Honors College at the University of Oregon conducting research about sport stadium development in the United States. I am conducting interviews with those involved/impacted with the development of National's Park in Navy Yard.

I would like to interview you about your work, your experiences, and your overall assessment of the stadium. This interview would ideally take place virtually (over Zoom), and last approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

If I don't get a response from you in a week, I will send a follow up email.

Thanks so much,
Olivia Viorst

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