

Summary Report

BUILDING INCLUSIVE CITIES

Immigration
and Neighborhood
Change in Detroit

by Alan Mallach
and Steve Tobocman



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A photograph of three men in a meeting, overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent filter. The man on the right is wearing a black t-shirt with the 'GLOBAL DETROIT' logo, which features a globe icon and the text 'GLOBAL DETROIT'. The other two men are wearing light-colored shirts. They appear to be looking at something on a table or screen.

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade an increasing number of post-industrial U.S. cities are recognizing the value of immigrant inclusion as a pathway to building more equitable and prosperous communities. Many of these communities have developed programs and policies to become more welcoming to immigrants and to help immigrants connect to the tools and resources they need to thrive in their new homes. But immigrant inclusion can also be a concrete, highly effective strategy to stabilize and revitalize disinvested neighborhoods. This is a largely unexplored opportunity in “legacy cities,” and one that has tangible benefits to both new and long-term residents.

This study investigates the impacts that sustained immigration growth has had in two Detroit neighborhoods: Banglatown/ East Davison Village and Chadsey Condon. We found positive ways in which both immigrant and longtime residents view these neighborhoods. The study offers insight into why immigrants

are drawn to the Detroit region and to these neighborhoods, and details the assets, strategies and resources they have used to thrive in their new communities. We draw on feedback and insights provided by immigrant and non-immigrant residents, combined with Global Detroit’s years working in these neighborhoods.

At the same time, we also sought to understand the impacts that rapid immigration has on the long-time, largely African American residents within these neighborhoods. We believe that there are tremendous opportunities to structure housing and economic development policies and programs in ways that would provide economic opportunity not just to immigrant families, but also to longtime residents. Equally important, we outline the importance of building stronger social connections in these neighborhoods between longstanding residents and new immigrant families and communities. Our findings have

implications far beyond Detroit, and could be applied to many post-industrial cities across the U.S. I and the team at Global Detroit had the privilege of partnering with Alan Mallach, Data Driven Detroit and some 250 neighborhood residents on this research, which was generously supported by the Hudson Webber Foundation. We believe this is one of the first research studies to assess the impacts of rapid immigration on neighborhoods and their longtime residents. For more than a decade, Global Detroit has advocated for immigrant inclusion into our region's economic and community development strategies as a pathway to building a more inclusive and prosperous city and region. We are one of several dozen immigrant inclusive economic development initiatives launched over the last decade across the nation with particular concentration in America's legacy cities. Together, we have advocated for robust immigration as a means of stabilizing urban neighborhoods.

We hope and intend that policymakers, planners, community development practitioners, financial institutions, philanthropic leaders, neighborhood activists, local government officials, business leaders and all those who make important contributions to Detroit neighborhoods will find this report instructive. We also intend for this report to be useful to our many local partners,

including residents and neighborhood organizations, as well as our peer immigrant-inclusive economic development practitioners and those working to address the impacts of disinvestment and systemic racism in other cities across the nation. Working together, we can ensure institutions, policies, investments and opportunities impacting Detroit's neighborhoods—and neighborhoods across the U.S.—work for everyone.



Steve Tobocman, Executive Director
Global Detroit

WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS

This study chronicles the impact that immigration growth has had on two neighborhoods in Detroit and Hamtramck, Michigan: Banglatown/East Davison Village (referred to as Banglatown/Davison throughout this report) and Chadsey Condon. This subject has profound implications for America's "legacy cities," the former manufacturing centers located largely in the Northeast and Midwest, now suffering from the loss of their industrial base and population. The purpose of this introductory section is to place our study in context and explore its implications not just for Detroit, but for the many similar legacy cities around the country.

Despite increased public and nonprofit investment in immigrant inclusion as part of neighborhood revitalization efforts in older cities, there has been strikingly little systematic research on the neighborhood effects of immigration. And yet those effects are powerful ones. In the two working-class neighborhoods we studied, newer immigrant residents are contributing to neighborhood density and vibrancy. They are buying and improving homes, as well as opening businesses, almost entirely with private funds. This investment is occurring from the ground up, largely without institutional support, and benefits, rather than displaces, long-term residents.

We hope that by providing clear evidence of the effects of immigration on neighborhoods, and the extent and nature

of those effects, we will provide a strong impetus for local governments, major institutions and nonprofit organizations to both recognize the value of immigration and design new programs, strategies and investments to encourage and nurture immigrant inclusion and retention strategies.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that, in any neighborhood into which immigrants are moving, they join long-term residents in a community with, to varying degrees, existing organizations, practices and networks. As a result, it is critical to understand the impacts that rapid immigration has on longstanding residents within a neighborhood and to acknowledge those impacts. This is especially true in legacy cities, many of which have strong African American populations, and where thinking about immigrant integration policies through a racial equity lens is of critical importance. Any programs, strategies or investments to encourage immigration and its positive impacts on neighborhoods needs to be designed to ensure that all residents of these neighborhoods benefit and none are displaced due to growth of new immigrant populations. Moreover, we believe that a new policy agenda that leverages shared values and honors the cultural heritage of long-term residents and newer immigrants can help build a new future of shared prosperity for both.



SECTION II

NEIGHBORHOOD OVERVIEW

Banglatown/ Davison and Chadsey Condon (Figure 1) were selected because of their large immigrant populations and their rapid growth in foreign-born residents over the last 30 years. While the two neighborhoods have similarities, they have as many or more differences.



Figure II-1
 BANGLATOWN/DAVISON
 STUDY AREA
 Source: Data Driven Detroit

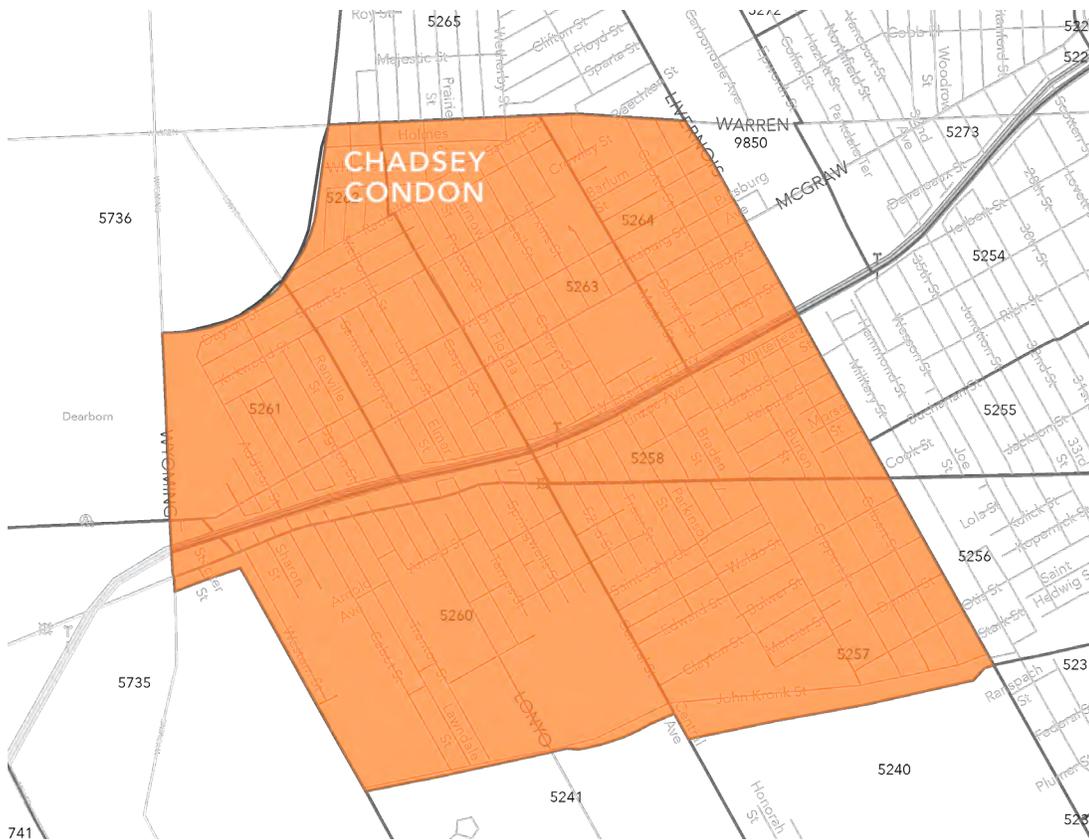


Figure II-2
 CHADSEY CONDON
 STUDY AREA
 Source: Data Driven Detroit

BANGLATOWN/EAST DAVISON VILLAGE

The Banglatown section of Banglatown/Davison is in many respects a classic immigrant enclave, where a generation of immigrants has created a distinct community with a largely self-contained network of religious institutions, community services and retail stores. Partly in the city of Detroit, and partly in Hamtramck, a small city completely surrounded by Detroit, the study area contained a 2018 population of approximately 17,500.

Bangladeshi, and to a lesser extent Yemeni, immigrants began to move into the neighborhood in the 1980s and 1990s, with their numbers increasing more rapidly after 2000. Some Bangladeshi immigrants appear to have come directly from Bangladesh and some as secondary migrants, primarily from New York. Banglatown's commercial hub is Conant Avenue, which has become a thriving shopping and service center for both Bangladeshi and Yemeni communities.

East Davison Village, a traditionally African American community in the northwestern corner of the neighborhood, has suffered severely from population loss and housing abandonment during the past two decades. The neighborhood today contains many vacant houses as well as a great deal of vacant land where abandoned buildings have been demolished by the City of Detroit. There are few commercial establishments along the part of Joseph Campau that forms the eastern edge of East Davison Village.

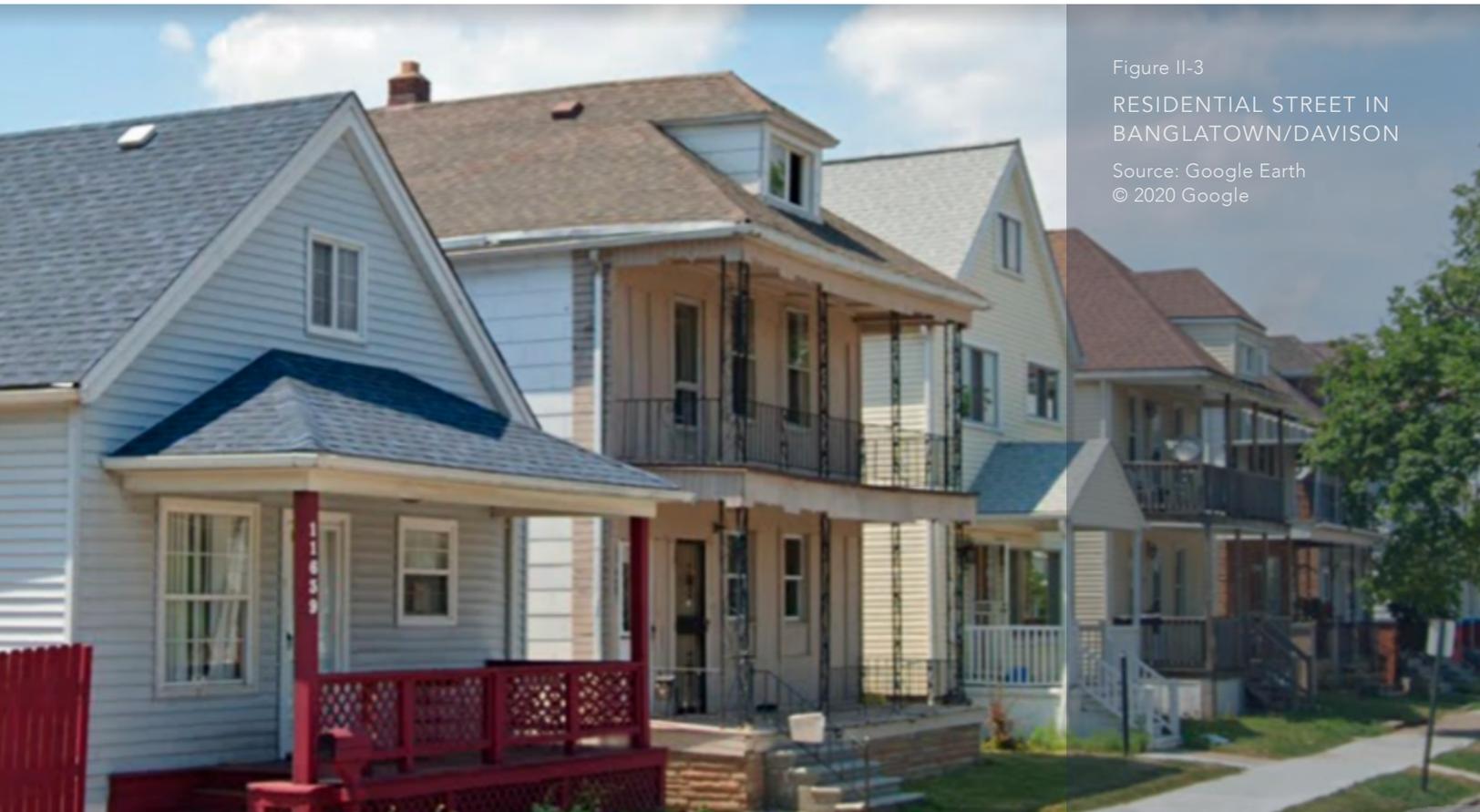


Figure II-3
RESIDENTIAL STREET IN
BANGLATOWN/DAVISON

Source: Google Earth
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CHADSEY CONDON

Chadsey Condon is located in Southwest Detroit, bordering the city of Dearborn to the west, and the Springwells Village and Mexicantown neighborhoods to the south. It, too, is a modest working-class neighborhood, but with a more varied housing stock and streetscape than in Banglatown/Davison, with some larger houses but some even more modest, as well as scattered vacant houses and lots (Figure 3). In 2018, the neighborhood's population was roughly 22,000.

Chadsey Condon is more an extension of adjacent or nearby immigrant communities than a self-contained enclave. In recent decades, immigration from Mexico and Central America has

led to expansion of predominately Mexican areas to the south, while the neighborhood's Yemeni immigrants live primarily in the western part of the neighborhood nearest to Dearborn, with its established Arab American population. While some immigrant businesses have opened in the area, Chadsey Condon lacks a strong commercial corridor like Conant Street. Chadsey Condon stands out, however, in the strength and diversity of community development organizations serving the neighborhood.

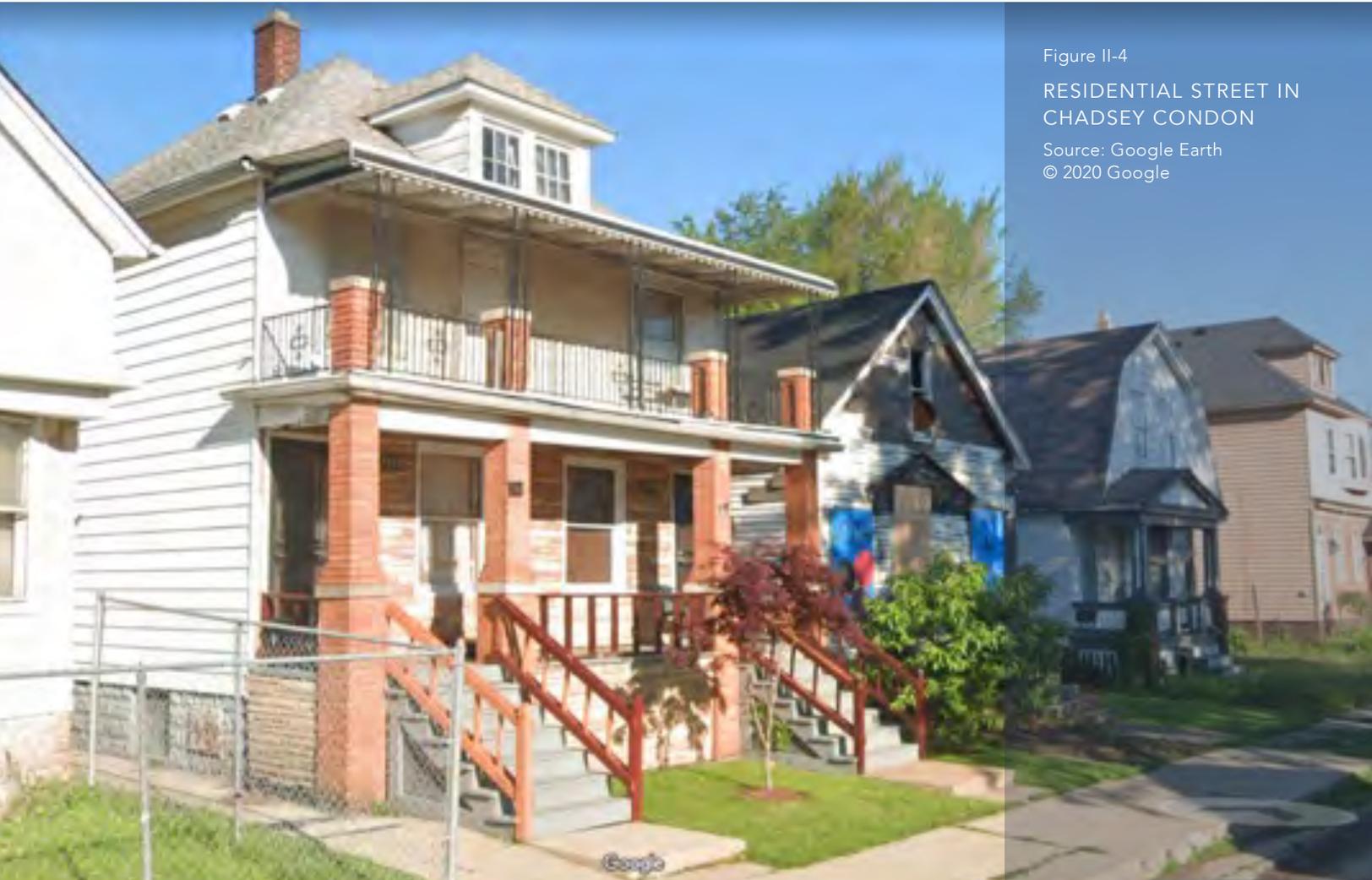


Figure II-4
RESIDENTIAL STREET IN
CHADSEY CONDON

Source: Google Earth
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SECTION III

LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

How Banglatown and Chadsey Condon Have Changed

As Banglatown/Davison and Chadsey Condon have become areas of immigrant concentration, how have they changed? More specifically, what are the current economic, social and housing market conditions in these two neighborhoods, and how have they trended in recent years, both in themselves and in relationship to the city of Detroit?

The data show a clear picture. Conditions and trends in Banglatown/Davison are strongly positive. Factors that powerfully affect quality of life, such as tax delinquency, tax foreclosure, eviction, crime and fires, are all sharply lower than citywide levels, and all trending in a positive direction. Trends and conditions in Chadsey Condon are generally positive, but they are not always

as strongly so as in Banglatown/ Davison and the gaps between neighborhood and citywide levels are less pronounced. In the end, we conclude that no factors we have been able to identify other than immigration can credibly explain the significant improvement Chadsey Condon and Banglatown/Davison have shown relative to the rest of the city of Detroit over the past decade.

This executive summary presents the highlights of our findings. Those interested in learning about these findings in greater detail are urged to look at the full report, which is available on the Global Detroit website buildinginclusivecities.org.

SECTION III-1

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS

What are these neighborhoods like, in terms of the demographic and socioeconomic status of their residents? When we compare key 2018 demographic and socioeconomic conditions in the two target areas with similar data for the city of Detroit we find both important similarities and differences:

- Median incomes of residents of the two subject areas are much the same as Detroit as a whole.
- Residents of both areas, particularly Chadsey Condon, have lower levels of educational attainment than in the city as a whole.
- Households in Banglatown/Davison and Chadsey Condon are much more likely to be married couples raising children than elsewhere in the city.
- Both neighborhoods are highly child-oriented: nearly half of all households in the two subject neighborhoods are raising children, compared to less than one-quarter across the rest of the city.
- Many more residents of both neighborhoods are under 14, and a much fewer over 65 compared to the city as a whole.
- Unemployment is significantly lower in both areas than in Detroit as a whole, although still high by national standards.

- Residents of both areas are much more likely to be homeowners than in Detroit as a whole.

Banglatown/Davison’s population trajectory paralleled that of Detroit from 1970 through 1990 but has largely stabilized since then, while the city has continued to lose population. The section of Banglatown/Davison located in Hamtramck has grown steadily since 1990, while the section located in Detroit has only shown significant growth in the last decade. Chadsey Condon has followed a more erratic population trajectory, but its long-term trend is similar to that of Banglatown/Davison. Since 1990, while the city has continued to lose population, these two neighborhoods have remained stable (Figure 4).

Since 2010, the decline of the U.S.-born population has slowed in Chadsey Condon and has ceased in Banglatown/Davison. Thus, growth of the immigrant population does not appear to be displacing U.S.-born residents or discouraging them from moving to these same neighborhoods; indeed, the opposite may be true.

Since 2010, the number of homeowners in the Detroit section of Banglatown/Davison has increased by 12 percent, and in Chadsey Condon by 15 percent. This is in sharp contrast to the city of Detroit, where the homeownership rate fell below 50 percent for the first time since before World War II.

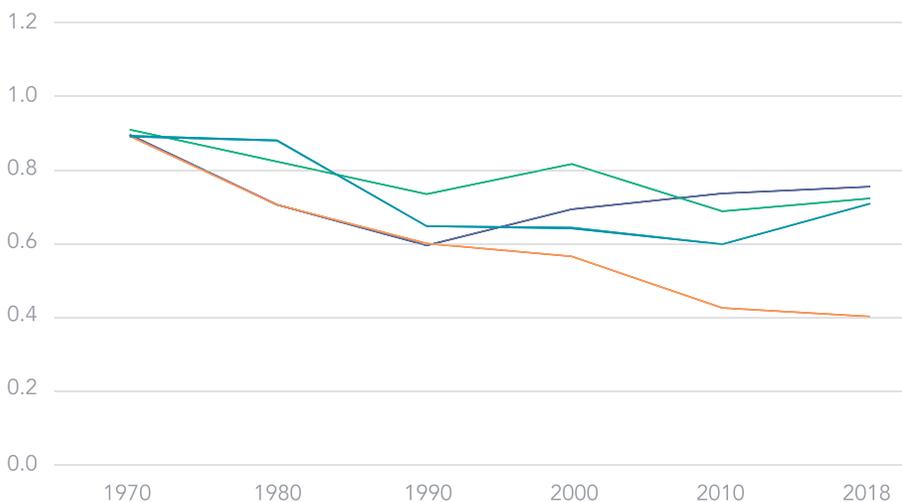


Figure III-1
POPULATION TRENDS FOR SUBJECT AREAS AND CITY OF DETROIT
1970 to 2018 (1970 = 1)

- Banglatown/Davison, Detroit
- Banglatown/Davison, Hamtramck
- Chadsey Condon
- Detroit

RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

Residential stability reflects the quality of the housing stock in the community and the extent to which households are likely to stay in their homes, important measures of neighborhood stability. Although overall stability is greater in Banglatown/Davison than in Chadsey Condon, both Banglatown/Davison and Chadsey Condon show significantly greater residential stability than Detroit as a whole.

Tax delinquency reflects the extent to which property owners fail to pay property taxes in a timely fashion. Tax delinquency is a particularly problematic issue in Detroit, since during the period from 2007 to 2014, property taxes remained high as property values collapsed, forcing owners to pay burdensome amounts in taxes or face foreclosure. Although conditions have improved to some extent recently, this continues to be a problem for many lower-income homeowners.

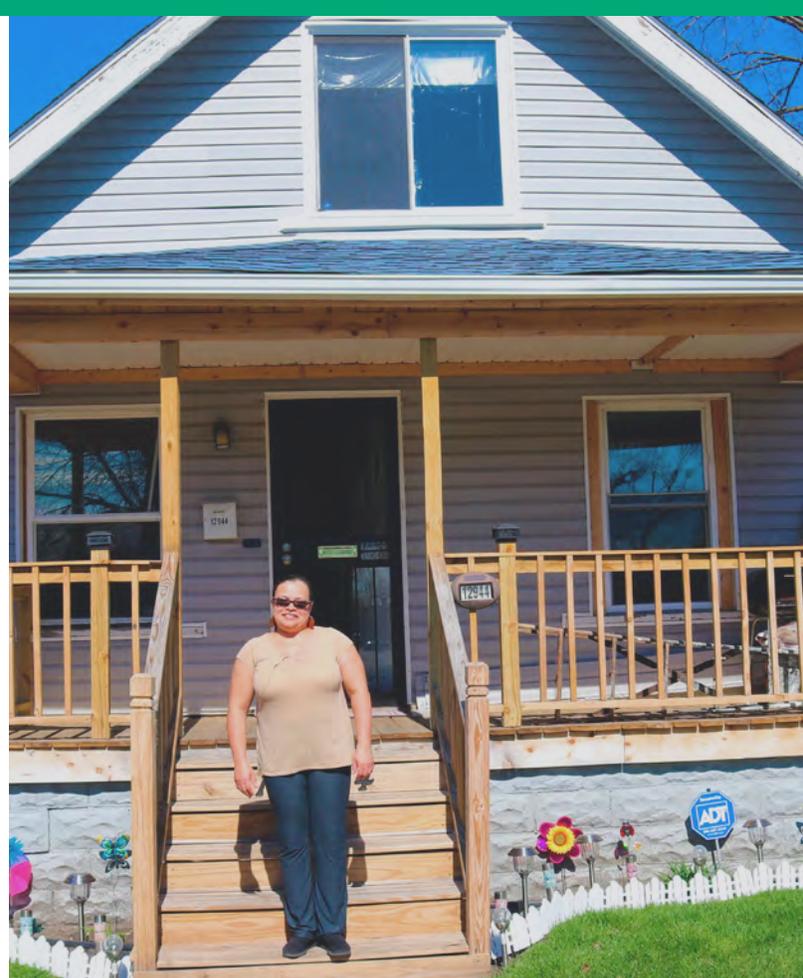
- The tax delinquency rate in Banglatown/Davison in 2019 was only 60 percent of the citywide rate.
- The 2019 tax delinquency rate in Chadsey Condon was 83 percent of the citywide rate.
- Tax delinquencies in Banglatown/Davison declined by 21 percent from 2014 to 2019, compared to eight percent in Chadsey Condon and six percent citywide.
- The dollar amount of taxes owed went down 64 percent in Banglatown/Davison, compared to 52 percent in Chadsey Condon and 43 percent citywide.

TAX FORECLOSURE

Tax foreclosure rates rose sharply in Detroit beginning in 2007–2008 with the nationwide foreclosure crisis and the Great Recession, both of which hit Detroit’s housing market especially hard. These rates remained high through 2015 but have dropped significantly since then. Tax foreclosures in the two neighborhoods were much lower than citywide, and the gap between the citywide level of tax foreclosures and those in Banglatown/Davison and Chadsey Condon has become significantly wider over the past decade.

EVICION

Eviction is the only readily available measure of involuntary displacement of tenants. Looking at data for 2014 through 2016, we found that except for one small area in Banglatown/ Davison, both eviction filing and eviction rates in both Chadsey Condon and the Detroit section of Banglatown/Davison were much lower



than the rest of Detroit, even though household incomes—a strong predictor of eviction risk—are similar to citywide levels. The median eviction filing rate in the two neighborhoods was only one-quarter of the citywide rate, and the median eviction rate is one-third of the citywide rate.

PROPERTY CONDITIONS

Our research included conducting a parcel survey of nine Census tracts in Banglatown/ Davison and Chadsey Condon. We found that building conditions have dramatically improved in Banglatown/Davison over the past decade but changed much less in Chadsey Condon. Building conditions were best in that part of Banglatown in Hamtramck, followed closely by Banglatown/ Davison in Detroit, and at a further remove by Chadsey Condon. In contrast to Banglatown/Davison, where in both Hamtramck and Detroit the great majority of buildings were in “very good” condition, in Chadsey Condon, the great majority were in “good” condition, often showing evidence of deferred maintenance and need for repair.

HOUSING MARKET ACTIVITY

The strength of the real estate or housing market, which reflects the extent to which people choose to live in one place rather than elsewhere, is a powerful indicator of neighborhood health. While it is far from the only thing that makes a neighborhood a vital, thriving community, it strongly affects neighborhood outcomes.

SALES VOLUME

Both Banglatown/Davison and Chadsey Condon show significant neighborhood market vitality, much of which does not show up in official real estate or mortgage data. This highlights the great importance of informal markets in these neighborhoods. The increase in the number of homeowners is far greater than the number of recorded real estate transactions, suggesting that much of the homebuying in both neighborhoods takes place through unrecorded transactions, including transfers between relatives or friends, cash transactions, or transactions with purchase money mortgages from sellers or non-conventional lenders.

SALES PRICES

While sales prices in Hamtramck were lower than in Detroit from 2006 through 2014, since then they have risen much more rapidly, and the median sales price in Hamtramck is now more than double that in Detroit. While prices in the Detroit part of Banglatown/Davison before 2016 were lower than the rest of the city, since 2016 they have risen much faster than citywide, tracking Hamtramck prices. Sales prices in Chadsey Condon, however, have continued to parallel Detroit citywide prices.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Crime rates, including crimes overall, and property crimes and violent crimes looked at separately, are significantly lower in both Banglatown/Davison and Chadsey Condon than in the rest of the city of Detroit. Crime rates in Banglatown/Davison are around 40 percent of citywide rates, while crime rates in Chadsey Condon are somewhat higher, between 50 and 60 percent of citywide rates. In both neighborhoods, crime rates have been declining faster over the past decade than in the city as a whole. Despite this, these neighborhoods are not low crime areas by regional or national standards.

The frequency of building fires in Banglatown/Davison is much lower, and in Chadsey Condon slightly lower, than citywide. The risk of a building fire in Banglatown/Davison today is less than one-third of that in Chadsey Condon, and one-quarter that in the rest of the city.

HOMEOWNER VS. INVESTOR BUYERS

The share of people who buy as homeowners, as opposed to those who buy as investors, is an important measure of an area's housing market. Homeowners make a personal as well as financial commitment when they buy their home. Homeowner purchases far outnumber investor purchases in both neighborhoods, in sharp contrast to the rest of the city of Detroit, where the vast majority of home purchases are by investors.

MORTGAGES

Few mortgages are being made in Chadsey Condon, but the number of mortgages has steadily increased in Banglatown/Davison. That neighborhood is one of the very few lower-income parts of Detroit that is seeing appreciable mortgage activity. Even so, mortgage activity is low compared to the growth in homeowners in both neighborhoods, reinforcing the point that many homeowners either pay cash or obtain loans through informal channels.

LONG TERM VACANCIES

Data on properties vacant more than 90 days shows dramatic reduction in long-term housing vacancies in Banglatown/Davison, and a more modest, but still significant reduction in Chadsey Condon. Both neighborhoods are among only a handful of neighborhoods in Detroit that are both lower-income and low-vacancy neighborhoods.



RESIDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

As part of the study, in the summer of 2019, we asked residents in each neighborhood questions about conditions and trends over the past five years in their neighborhoods. We selected 100 residents at random in each neighborhood and were able to compare many of their responses to identical survey questions administered citywide by the Detroit Metro Area Community Survey (DMACS). In both target neighborhoods residents consistently felt the quality of life and safety in their neighborhood was improving. The percentage of positive responses to these questions in our target neighborhoods was much higher than citywide response rates from DMACS 2018 survey.

Figure 5 shows the share of those responding to each question with a positive response, after “don’t know” or “no answer” responses have been deleted. The Banglatown/Davison responses are overwhelmingly positive and are in line with many of the positive changes that are visible in the data, such as declines in crime and the number of vacant properties.

There were significant differences, however, between the responses of African American respondents and white,

Arab/American, Latinx and Asian respondents. While the responses from African American residents of Banglatown/Davison were generally positive, particularly in terms of their assessment of global quality of life, improvement in the neighborhood and the positive impacts of new residents, they were less positive than their immigrant neighbors about safety improvements, although the majority still believed that the presence of new residents had improved safety. African American respondents were much less positive about the friendliness of new residents and the impact they have had on the growth of businesses in the area.

While resident perceptions in Chadsey Condon were generally positive, they were less positive than those in Banglatown/Davison, particularly with respect to public safety, where a plurality of respondents felt that the neighborhood was no safer than five years earlier. Generally, Chadsey Condon residents do not feel their neighborhood is changing as significantly as do Banglatown/Davison residents, although two out of three believe that it has improved in the past five years, which is almost twice the rate of Detroiters as a whole.



Figure III-2

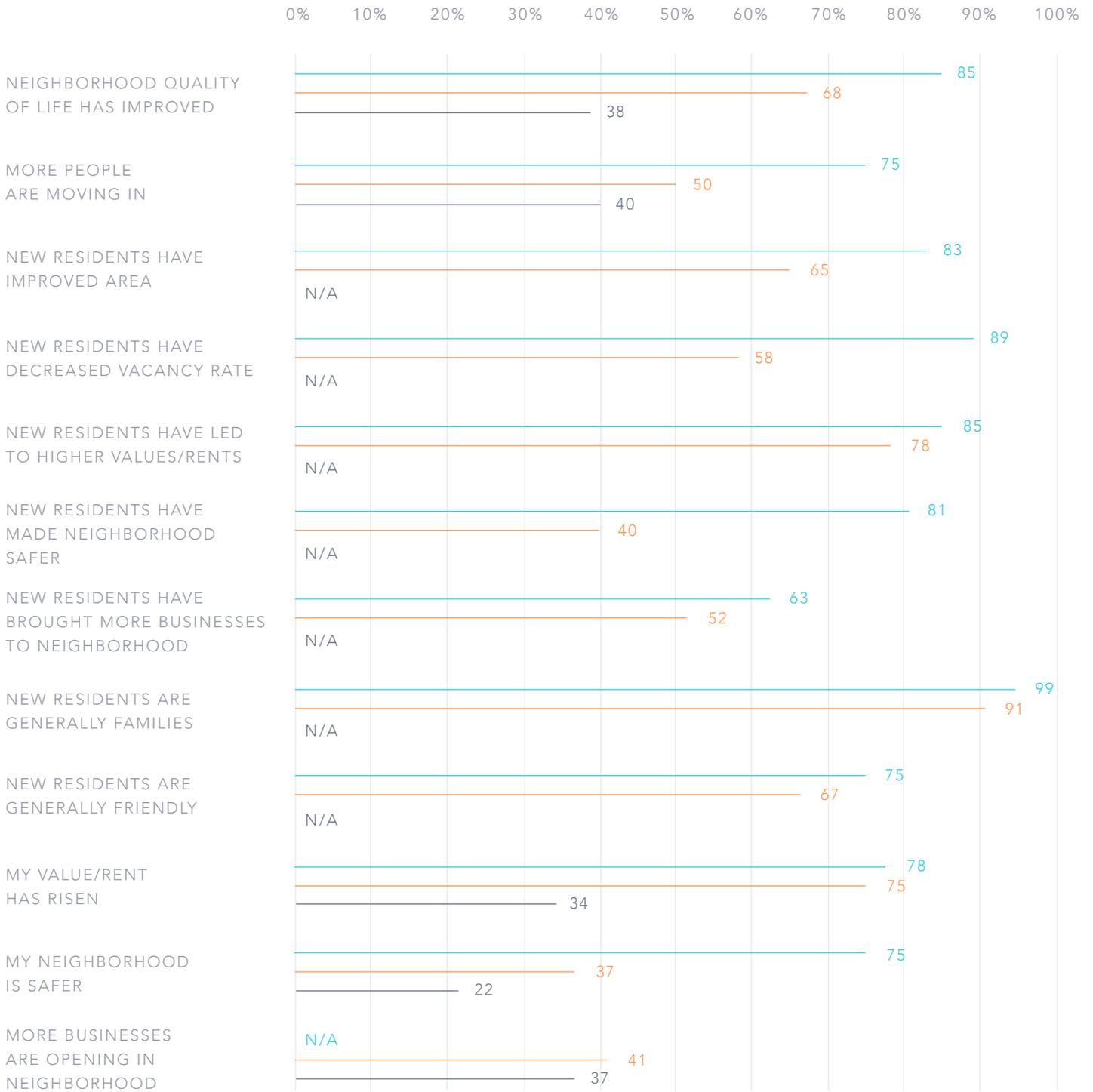
PERCENTAGE OF POSITIVE RESPONSES TO PERCEPTION SURVEY QUESTIONS

KEY

BANGLATOWN/DAVISON

CHADSEY CONDON

DMACS 2018



SUMMING UP

Conditions and trends in Banglatown/Davison are largely, and often dramatically, positive. Indicators of instability such as tax delinquency, tax foreclosure, eviction, crime and fires, are all much lower than citywide levels, all trending in a positive direction, both absolutely and in most cases relative to the rest of the city. Although its residents' incomes remain low, Banglatown/Davison is seeing steady improvement in its quality of life and stabilization of its housing stock.

Trends and conditions in Chadsey Condon are more mixed. While conditions and trends are generally positive, they are often not as strongly so as in Banglatown/Davison. Just the same, Chadsey Condon is improving relative to the city as a whole, and residents are generally positive about improvement in the quality of life in the neighborhood. The disparity between the picture in Banglatown/ Davison, however, and that in Chadsey Condon is still great.

The key question, of course, is to what extent can the change in these two neighborhoods be attributed to the rise in immigrant populations in both neighborhoods? Neither neighborhood has any of the features that have been found elsewhere in reviving neighborhoods which might account for the changes we have documented. Their houses are not distinctive or historic, and neither neighborhood has any special locational attributes, although they abut immigrant enclaves in east Dearborn and Hamtramck. Neither neighborhood has been the focus of a systematic revival effort by any institution or organization. Simply stated, there is no plausible reason for either Banglatown/Davison or Chadsey Condon to have shown the levels of improvement they have relative to the rest of the city of Detroit over the past decade except for immigration.

The question remains, however, why the improvement in conditions has been so much greater in Banglatown/Davison compared to Chadsey Condon. We would like to offer some thoughts on what may account for some of the difference.

First, the Banglatown/Davison immigrant community is more cohesive. Most are part of a single community of Bangladeshi immigrants, sharing cultural and religious practices and traditions. The majority of the remainder are Yemeni immigrants who, while culturally distinct from their Bangladeshi neighbors, share their Islamic faith. This both links them to their Bangladeshi neighbors as well as distinguishes them from the larger non-Islamic community. By contrast, the immigrant community in Chadsey Condon is much more diverse, including Mexicans, Central

Americans, Yemenis, and a small and shrinking number of Eastern Europeans, representing a variety of cultures and religions. Their sheer diversity may reduce the collective impact that can be seen in Banglatown/ Davison.

Banglatown is an enclave, an urban village in the traditional immigrant mold. Although other Bangladeshi pockets are emerging elsewhere in the Detroit metro area, Banglatown is the core of the region's Bangladeshi community, with Conant Street as its commercial and social heart. By contrast, Chadsey Condon is an extension of previously established immigrant communities: the Mexican neighborhood of Mexicantown and the Yemeni community of east Dearborn. Those links may limit their members' commitment to Chadsey Condon per se, while those adjacent areas already offer many of the culturally specific community institutions, services and shopping facilities that Banglatown's immigrants have created from scratch.

It should be stressed that conditions in both neighborhoods are far from ideal at this point, in terms of the economic and quality of life indicators we have discussed. Although these indicators largely outpace Detroit as a whole, both neighborhoods continue, in many respects, to struggle when viewed from a larger regional or national perspective. Crime may be much lower in Banglatown/ Davison than in the city as a whole, but it is still much higher than in most of Detroit's suburbs. Property tax delinquency may be much lower in both neighborhoods than in the city as a whole, but it is still high by national standards. Residents still face the numerous day-to-day challenges that all Detroit residents do, despite the city's undeniable improvement in recent years. Disproportionately high property taxes, homeowner and automobile insurance rates, troubled schools, an unreliable public transit system and many other obstacles remain issues for the residents of these neighborhoods as they do for all Detroiters.

Figure 6 summarizes our findings in a color-coded format, which shows whether the data suggests that the condition and/or trend in each neighborhood is strongly positive, positive, neutral or negative relative to conditions and trends in the city of Detroit as a whole.

Table III-1

SUMMARY OF TRENDS AND
CONDITIONS RELATIVE TO CITY
OF DETROIT BY CATEGORY

KEY

STRONGLY POSITIVE — ++

POSITIVE — +

NEUTRAL — ○

NEGATIVE — -

N/A — ○

CATEGORY	BANGLATOWN/DAVISON		CHADSEY CONDON	
	CURRENT CONDITION	TREND	CURRENT CONDITION	TREND
PROPERTY TAX DELINQUENCY	++	++	+	+
PROPERTY TAX FORECLOSURE	++	++	++	++
EVICCTIONS	++	++	++	++
SALES PRICES	+	++	○	○
SALES TURNOVER BASED ON RECORDED SALES	+	○	○	○
SALES TURNOVER BASED ON HOMEBUYER TENURE	++	++	++	++
INVESTOR BUYERS	++	+	++	+
MORTGAGE ACTIVITY	+	○	-	○
HOUSING VACANCIES	++	++	++	+
CRIME	++	+	++	+
FIRES	++	+	+	++
PROPERTY CONDITIONS	++	++	○	○
PERCEPTION OF TREND IN NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE	○	++	○	++
PERCEPTION OF TREND IN NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY	○	++	○	+



SECTION IV

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The Factors Underlying the Numbers

In addition to statistical analysis, we conducted interviews with residents and leaders in both communities, conducted four focus groups and supplemented that information with planning documents, research studies and Global Detroit's experience working in Detroit's neighborhoods, to identify the driving

forces behind the changes that we described in the previous section, and provide useful guidance for public policies that would further help these and future immigrant communities thrive in Detroit and Hamtramck.

JOBS

AS GENERATORS OF IMMIGRATION
AND AS PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Our conversations uncovered a cluster of community and social networks in which particular employers in the automotive sector in Detroit's suburbs were well known in the Bangladeshi community as firms that hired Bangladeshi workers. Many Bangladeshis already in the United States moved to the Detroit area based on word-of-mouth information about job opportunities. Within these employers, the presence of a large Bangla-speaking workforce provided a support system, while as these work destinations became established, an informal network of jitneys emerged to transport workers from Banglatown/Davison to the suburban factories. In Chadsey Condon, many Dominican and other Spanish-speaking workers were able to attain employment at Mexican Industries, a now-defunct, Latinx-owned auto supplier. The need for more workers at this and other automotive suppliers and facilities encouraged Dominican and Mexican residents to recruit relatives and friends to come to Detroit.



COMMUNITY

THE PULL OF SHARED LANGUAGE,
CULTURE AND RELIGION

Many Bangladeshis move to Banglatown/Davison to access mosques, grocery stores and other retail stores that catered to Bangladeshi culture, as well as the shared language and culture, and the rich cultural support system the neighborhood offers. The informal system of carpools and jitneys that link Banglatown/Davison to suburban employers also acts as an incentive to stay in the neighborhood. The vast majority (92 percent) of respondents to a 2016 neighborhood study conducted by Global Detroit noted that they planned to live in Banglatown/Davison "for a long time." The pull of the suburbs, however, remains present.

Another notable feature enhancing the sense of community is the presence of strong regional connections within immigrants' home countries. Most Bangladeshis in Detroit appear to come from the Sylhet District, a region in northeastern Bangladesh. Similarly, many Dominicans who had settled in Detroit originated from Los Alcarrizos, a city of roughly 200,000 adjacent to the national capital of Santo Domingo. These regional connections increase the importance of word-of-mouth and personal networks.

HOUSING

AS ATTRACTION AND A
SPRINGBOARD TO PROSPERITY

Housing plays an especially important role in immigrant communities. Three distinct features characterize the role of housing in these communities:

- Immigrants are eager to become homeowners and understand its wealth-building potential. Over and above a home of their own, many immigrants invest in buying duplexes or other properties in the neighborhood.
- Immigrants use family, social and community networks as well as savings to access capital, although utilization of conventional mortgages is growing.
- Immigrants often use sweat equity as well as family and community networks to rehabilitate and repair their homes. At the same time, immigrants report many challenges navigating the rehabilitation process.

None of these features are unique to immigrant communities, but they appear to be more pervasive than elsewhere. They have strong policy implications, both for the future of immigrant communities, as well as for other communities in the city of Detroit.

SMALL BUSINESS

AS A DRIVER OF COMMUNITY-BUILDING
AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The impact of immigrants in fostering small business activity is powerfully visible along Conant Street in Banglatown/Davison. Since 2008, over 100 businesses have opened, and the retail vacancy rate has dropped from 25 percent to a nominal three percent. Conant Street caters to nearly all the daily needs of the Bangladeshi and Yemeni communities, offering everything from medical care to spiritual sustenance, from Halal food (both groceries and sit-down restaurants) to fashions, gifts and flowers. The growth of Conant Street has created a significant source of income and wealth-building for immigrant entrepreneurs, and employment for both immigrants and non-immigrants while also strengthening the Banglatown/Davison community. It makes Banglatown/Davison more than simply a place to live, but a place where immigrants can shop, obtain the services they need, and worship; in other words, find community.

The dynamics of business growth in Chadsey Condon are very different, as that area, rather than being a self-contained immigrant enclave, is linked to existing older immigrant communities. The appearance of new stores, though, suggests that something similar is happening, albeit on a much smaller scale, in that area.



NEIGHBORHOOD STABILITY, THE PULL OF THE SUBURBS, AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Immigrants have created a strong, cohesive enclave in Banglatown/Davison, as well as a thriving, although in some respects less cohesive, community in Chadsey Condon. While we see no immediate threat to the viability of either neighborhood, the potential of longer-term destabilization is always present, as Detroit's suburbs continue to offer alternatives that will be increasingly accessible to working-class residents in the two neighborhoods.

Ironically, we see the threat of suburbanization greatest in Banglatown/Davison, if only because of its parallels with many similar immigrant enclaves throughout American history. Such enclaves are often transitional communities which decline as the immigrant population becomes more firmly established and as the more acculturated children of the immigrant generation reach adulthood and form families. Without steady replenishment from continued immigration, such enclaves gradually disappear over time. While the strong commercial and cultural node along Conant Street may slow down suburbanization, it is unlikely to be the determining factor in the long run.

As one Bangladeshi focus group participant said, "There is not one of us who doesn't think about [moving to the suburbs] all of the time." A Bangladeshi community has begun to emerge in Macomb County, principally in the city of Warren. Among the attractions of the suburbs mentioned were larger houses, more room for parking (both off- and on-street), better schools, lower property tax and insurance rates, and less crime. Crime was not high on the list, however, reflecting the perception and reality that Banglatown/Davison is a reasonably safe area.

Chadsey Condon is an extension of two existing immigrant areas rather than a self-contained enclave. While it also is likely to see a steady flow of residents to suburban Wayne County, we expect it to continue to attract new immigrant residents so long as immigration from either Arab or Latin American countries to the Detroit area continues.

Preserving the vitality of these immigrant communities should be a matter of strong public policy concern. That calls for an active role for local government to attract immigrants to the neighborhoods or the region, but, perhaps even more importantly, working explicitly to serve the needs of and retain existing immigrant communities. In our focus groups, immigrant respondents felt largely disconnected from government and had extremely low expectations of what government could accomplish for them.

That is both good and bad. On the one hand, the disconnect from government means that residents of the immigrant neighborhoods may not obtain services and public sector investments, as well as improvements to services and facilities or accommodation to their language and cultural needs, that they are legitimately entitled to. On the other, it fosters habits of self-reliance and mutual support that are often a more effective path to prosperity.



SECTION V

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In our focus groups and interviews, we asked participants what public policies and strategies would attract more immigrants to Detroit and help both long-term residents and newcomers navigate the economic challenges they face. We inquired about ways to improve the quality of life for residents and support the sustainability of their neighborhoods. Our recommendations are based on these interviews and focus groups, as well as on Global Detroit's decade of experience working in these neighborhoods

and elsewhere. We hope that the public, philanthropic, nonprofit and private sectors can benefit from our research and observations.

As we present these recommendations, it bears repeating that Detroit's immigrant neighborhoods are thriving through the actions of their residents and the networks they have formed, largely independent of public sector action or support. In

proposing greater governmental engagement, we do not want to substitute the often heavy-handed role of government for those actions and networks. Those networks and actions are at the heart of the ways in which immigration has contributed to improving conditions and resident quality of life in these neighborhoods.

The working-class immigrants who have settled in neighborhoods like Banglatown/Davison and Chadsey Condon represent a powerful force for neighborhood stabilization and quality of life improvement without pricing out existing residents or changing the economic character of the neighborhood. They can be a stabilizing force even in the absence of sustained engagement by a strong community development corporation or significant investment by either the public sector or the philanthropic community.

Our recommendations are intended to help Detroit and similar cities attract and retain immigrant residents; facilitate access to economic opportunity and quality of life improvements for immigrant families and communities; and ensure that these benefits and opportunities accrue as well to long-term neighbors, especially predominantly African American longtime residents. Growing immigrant-inclusive neighborhoods can be a strategy that uplifts all.

Some of our recommendations focus more directly on immigrant inclusion, and others more on neighborhood revitalization. The two, however, are closely related, in that by making Detroit a more immigrant-friendly place we hope to lead to more immigrants not only coming to, but staying in, and contributing to the advancement of Detroit and its neighborhoods. At the same time, neighborhood revitalization strategies must serve both immigrant and long-term residents. Their futures are closely interwoven.

While we argue that it is important for policymakers and others using our research to provide additional services and resources to immigrants and their communities, we consider it essential that (1) those resources not be provided exclusively to immigrant communities, but to all underserved people and communities; and (2) to the extent possible, they be provided in ways that bring people together, rather than perpetuate existing divisions. For Detroit and other legacy cities to fully benefit from the contributions that immigrants make to neighborhoods and the impacts that can accrue to long-term residents, decisionmakers need to be intentional about creating social cohesion among and between the different racial and ethnic groups that make up the city.

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

EXPAND IMMIGRANT HOMEOWNERSHIP

Detroit's immigrant families and communities value homeownership and work hard to become homeowners. But there was little alignment between available public programs and either the needs or the capabilities of Detroit's immigrant communities. Several policies, programs and practices can enhance housing opportunities for immigrant families, as well as for long-term residents, in ways that are responsive to the immigrant experiences we observed and to their assets and capacities. It is critical, however, to avoid undermining existing informal systems by encumbering them with bureaucratic obstacles and delays, even with the best intentions.

Expand Opportunities for Vacant Home Acquisition and Rehabilitation

Vacant property rehab programs should be structured to create lower-cost alternatives that leverage the assets, capacities and experience we observed. These assets are not limited to immigrant communities. Developing such programs would serve long-term African American and other residents and their neighborhoods equally well. Specific elements of a vacant

home acquisition and rehab strategy for families could include:

- Connect potential rehabbers and developers in target neighborhoods with vacant homes and vacant lots

The biggest barrier to expanding the number of homes that Detroit residents are able to purchase and rehab is the difficulty those residents, both would-be homeowners and small investors, have in acquiring vacant homes. This is partly an information problem, and it also stems from the limited vacant property supply in immigrant neighborhoods. Lack of responsive systems and procedures in public agencies to the needs, aspirations and capacities of immigrants is an especially significant barrier.

A useful first step would be to develop informational materials and provide assistance for residents to identify the ownership of vacant properties and use existing systems to acquire them. We recommend that the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) prioritize residents, resident investors, and small contractors to obtain vacant homes for rehabilitation and occupancy in tandem with the implementation of the city's recently enacted Proposition N.

The spatial mismatch between supply of vacant homes and areas of high immigrant concentration presents challenges, but also opportunities. Partnerships between the Bangladeshi community and the African American community in East Davison Village could build, stabilize and expand both populations, while offering significant benefits to both groups.

- Build a support system for individual property owners rehabilitating and upgrading their properties.

Actions that could be taken to support and assist individual property owners in their efforts to rehabilitate and upgrade their properties include:

Small grant or loan funds for rehabilitation

Clear information and technical support to individuals acquiring and rehabilitating properties, including:

Lists of pre-approved or vetted contractors.

Informational materials in Spanish, Bangla and Arabic on housing rehabilitation, permitting, DLBA acquisition, and using contractors.

Community training activities on permitting and contracting to educate vacant home purchasers and would-be purchasers.

Peer groups of individuals rehabilitating properties for mutual support and education.

Two activities that would require somewhat more financial support include:

Developing, translating and disseminating an educational curriculum for individual homeowners, including training programs, videos and written materials.

Retaining a licensed contractor who would be available to assist individuals to assess buildings' rehabilitation requirements prior to acquisition, as well as provide guidance during the rehabilitation process.

Expand support for homebuying in immigrant communities

We recommend creating a Homeownership Support Center in Banglatown/Davison, which could provide the services described above, as well as other services that may be found to be necessary or desirable. Such a center should be explicitly designed to be accessible to non-immigrant residents of the area as well. In Chadsey Condon, while Bridging Communities provides services to the Spanish-speaking immigrants in that area, the needs of Arabic-speaking immigrants are not being as systematically addressed. Either a new center should be established, or funds made available to expand the services of existing organizations to meet their needs

IMPROVE ACCESS TO JOBS, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Foster inclusive hiring practices among Detroit employers

Local workforce and economic development organizations should mount a concerted effort to better link employers in Detroit with the immigrant workforce, including inspiring and assisting local employers to adopt more inclusive hiring practices. Public sector outreach and hiring practices should also be improved.

Develop immigrant inclusive workforce development, education, training and career development services, systems and programs

Workforce development, education, training and career development services, systems and programs are all critical to creating economic opportunities and access to more rewarding careers. Local workforce development, education, training, and career development services, systems and programs should be more inclusive, linguistically accessible, culturally competent and designed to address immigrant needs.

SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF IMMIGRANT SMALL BUSINESSES

Efforts to encourage immigration should include strong support for immigrant small business owners. While few cities rival Detroit in building immigrant inclusion into an ecosystem of entrepreneurship and small business support, there is still more work to be done. The COVID pandemic has highlighted and, in some cases, made the gaps even more pronounced.

Expand Access to Capital

Additional grants designed specifically for underserved entrepreneurs and lenders willing to take on more risk and provide linguistically accessible and culturally competent support in immigrant communities would help build and sustain more immigrant-owned small businesses.

Invest in Trusted Connectors

Low levels of participation by immigrant businesspeople in Detroit's formal entrepreneurship ecosystem stems not just from a lack of knowledge or difficulty navigating processes but, at times, from distrust. "Trusted connectors" are essential in bridging this divide. Funders need to promote the importance of trusted connectors, invest in the range of organizations that serve in this role, and support the development of a trusted connector network.

Support Coordination and Assess Gaps

Despite the strong ecosystem, duplication of efforts continues while many immigrant small businesses still fall through the gaps. Increased support for coordination and collaboration is needed. Beyond these efforts, programs and policies designed to

ensure Detroit's COVID small business recovery should be inclusive and highly intentional about immigrant inclusion. This calls for culturally competent outreach, language access and programming informed by immigrant business owners and communities

BUILD IMMIGRANT INCLUSION INTO ASSET-BUILDING PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND SERVICES

Immigrant families, like the vast majority of Detroit residents, are mostly lower income, working class families. Addressing their economic needs through asset-building strategies, such as individual development accounts, financial literacy programs, home repair programs, etc., is important to sustaining Detroit's immigrant communities. Providers of these services need to build inclusion into their systems, strategies, policies, practices and programs from the outset.

SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADDRESS POTENTIAL SOCIAL BARRIERS AND CONFLICTS THAT CAN ARISE FROM RAPID IMMIGRATION GROWTH.

Build stronger links and networks among immigrant communities, and between immigrant communities and their African American neighbors

Immigration, particularly if rapid and large-scale, can create stresses and strains on neighborhoods as well as benefits. It is important not only that all Detroiters benefit from immigration, but that non-immigrant Detroiters do not see or experience the arrival of new and different neighbors as a zero-sum proposition with respect to their own conditions. African American residents we surveyed perceive the quality of life and general direction of their neighborhood more positively than the average Detroiters. Yet we also found that African American residents in the target communities do not always share positive associations about new immigrants, and while recognizing positive developments, are less likely to attribute them to new immigrants.

Investment is needed to encourage ongoing, sustained interaction across different racial and ethnic groups, in ways that build cross-cultural relationships. The philanthropic, public and private sectors should invest in cross-cultural efforts to tackle shared goals such as community planning and public safety initiatives, to foster experiences that build a sense of shared community. In Banglatown/Davison, the East Davison Village Community Group can become a vehicle for fostering these efforts. It will be important to support the development and



success of this group and to build common efforts with those in the adjacent Banglatown community in the years to come. The complex intergroup dynamics in Chadsey Condon need to be further explored, but we believe that a similar investment in cross-cultural understanding and intentionality about inclusive program design and implementation is important.

Address needs of immigrant women through targeted Initiatives and Opportunities

Issues specific to women loom large in both communities. The recommendations from Global Detroit's 2016 Banglatown/Davison Vision and Action Plan are still relevant and worth reiterating:

- Develop a support network for women to call one another, meet, and have safe spaces for conversations in order to build relationships with each other.
- Identify a secure and stable venue for women's only events. Program this space with both children's activities (art classes, indoor games, story time, etc.) and women's activities (sewing circles, small business training, financial literacy classes, ESL classes, etc.).
- Connect women to existing women-only spaces and groups.
- Create women-only tracks where possible in asset building programs (homeownership, small business development, workforce training, cottage food tutorials, ESL, citizenship, etc.).

SUPPORT EMERGING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES AND CONDUCT OUTREACH TO EMERGING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Developing a strong network of community organizations within immigrant communities can help build the system of trusted connectors needed to expand asset-building opportunities and build a sense of community for immigrant families that may retain more of those residents in Detroit. In order to retain new immigrant residents and to attract others, immigrants must feel that the city is a welcoming place to settle, not just a short-term waystation.

Detroit should develop a Mayor's Academy modeled on Nashville's MyCity Academy to foster a sense of connection between immigrant participants and municipal government, provide participants with the knowledge, confidence, and relationships they need to view government as a resource and partner, and encourage participants to share what they learn with their communities.

Newly formed organizations need assistance and training, including on how to advocate effectively at the local level and on the skills needed to be effective. There are many ways government, established nonprofit organizations, foundations and other institutions can embrace and support emerging community organizations and leaders in immigrant communities. These institutions also need to actively advocate for greater support of and connection to immigrant residents and business owners,

urging senior officials in schools, police, planning and other agencies and organizations to take affirmative steps to build relationships and trust with immigrant communities.

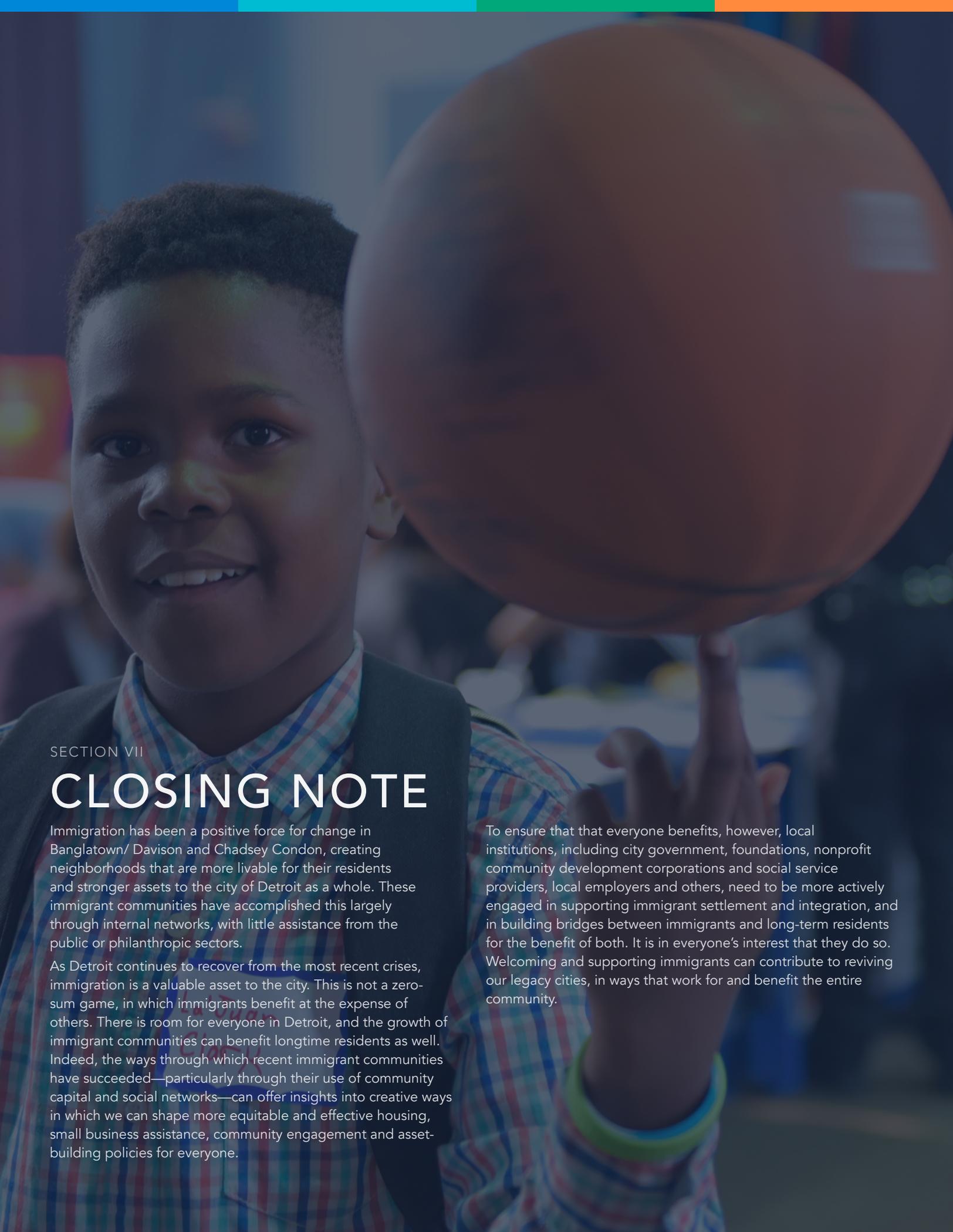
INCREASE IMMIGRANT HIRING IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR ARENAS

Public sector hiring sends an important signal of welcoming to emerging ethnic communities, as well as provides language access for residents. While not every agency can have bilingual staff, they can train their staff on how to work with and be sensitive to the needs and concerns of residents with limited English proficiency.

Immigrants often do not apply for municipal jobs because they distrust local government, have a limited understanding of public service careers, and/or are unaware of hiring procedures and career opportunities. Moreover, local hiring practices and processes may exclude qualified immigrant applicants through standardized examinations, unrealistic qualification requirements, or implicit bias in hiring.

Local governments need to treat inclusive hiring and retention as a priority, build relationships with local immigrant communities, market job openings and career opportunities to the community while communicating them effectively, assist residents to access job opportunities, and develop more inclusive hiring practices that value immigrants' unique linguistic and cultural fluency, while recognizing and addressing the implicit biases present in current practices.





SECTION VII

CLOSING NOTE

Immigration has been a positive force for change in Banglatown/ Davison and Chadsey Condon, creating neighborhoods that are more livable for their residents and stronger assets to the city of Detroit as a whole. These immigrant communities have accomplished this largely through internal networks, with little assistance from the public or philanthropic sectors.

As Detroit continues to recover from the most recent crises, immigration is a valuable asset to the city. This is not a zero-sum game, in which immigrants benefit at the expense of others. There is room for everyone in Detroit, and the growth of immigrant communities can benefit longtime residents as well. Indeed, the ways through which recent immigrant communities have succeeded—particularly through their use of community capital and social networks—can offer insights into creative ways in which we can shape more equitable and effective housing, small business assistance, community engagement and asset-building policies for everyone.

To ensure that that everyone benefits, however, local institutions, including city government, foundations, nonprofit community development corporations and social service providers, local employers and others, need to be more actively engaged in supporting immigrant settlement and integration, and in building bridges between immigrants and long-term residents for the benefit of both. It is in everyone's interest that they do so. Welcoming and supporting immigrants can contribute to reviving our legacy cities, in ways that work for and benefit the entire community.