

The District Divided:  
Race, Class, and Inequality in Washington, D.C.

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## Introduction

For many Americans, hearing the name Washington, D.C. conjures images of iconic monuments, stately offices of government, the majestic Capitol and White House, prestigious museums, and the National Mall. These symbols of democracy and nationalism encapsulate Washington as an emblem of American power and the locus of the country's affluence, yet this perception of the city conceals the persistent poverty that plagues many of the disenfranchised residents that call the District home. While the American national imagination affectionately depicts Washington as "our Nation's Capital," it presents the stereotype of D.C. as an unanchored place, and it ignores the diverse neighborhoods and communities that comprise the city. As anthropologist Brett Williams argues in *Upscaling Downtown*, "the clichés that treat Washington as a symbolic, political, isolated, floating metropolis obscure its place in a regional, national, and world economy" (1988:9).

Although Washington is considered one of the most powerful cities in the world, its residents boast the lowest life expectancy rate and the highest rate of AIDS in the country. Yet, despite these figures and the national economic recession, D.C. is undergoing a dramatic revitalization. Its economy is stronger today than it was a decade ago as evidenced by the recent housing market boom, a resurgence in the city's population, and increased investment in local development. These benefits have brought advantages to some D.C. residents, but they have also created increased disparities throughout the metropolitan region, resulting in pockets of affluence and poverty. While residents in many parts of the western half of the region have reaped the benefits of Washington's economic revitalization, residents living in communities in the eastern half carry the burden of poverty and social inequity. This capstone examines and analyzes how classism, racism, and systemic policies of inequality affect the unequal distribution of and access

to resources, such as jobs, housing, education, health, and social services, among residents of the city's diverse communities and the metropolitan region as a whole.

### **Washington, D.C.'s Decline and Recovery**

Since its inception by Congress in 1790, Washington, D.C. has undergone numerous transformations. The city's population, which peaked at 802,178 in 1950, had dropped to 572,000 by 2000 (The Urban Institute 2008). This nearly 30 percent decline in population was largely driven by migration to the suburbs due to the availability of housing and affordable loans offered to GI's following World War II. White residents moved out in the greatest numbers, resulting in the African American share of total population in the city to climb from 35 to 60 percent over the period. Due to the relocation of socioeconomically-mobile residents to the suburbs, housing values within the city declined as the available tax base shrunk. This simultaneous increase of black residents in the city and decrease in home values due to the exodus of upper and middle class families created an unfounded fear in the city's white residents that having black neighbors would cause the value of their properties to depreciate. This spurred an even greater increase of "white flight" to the suburbs.

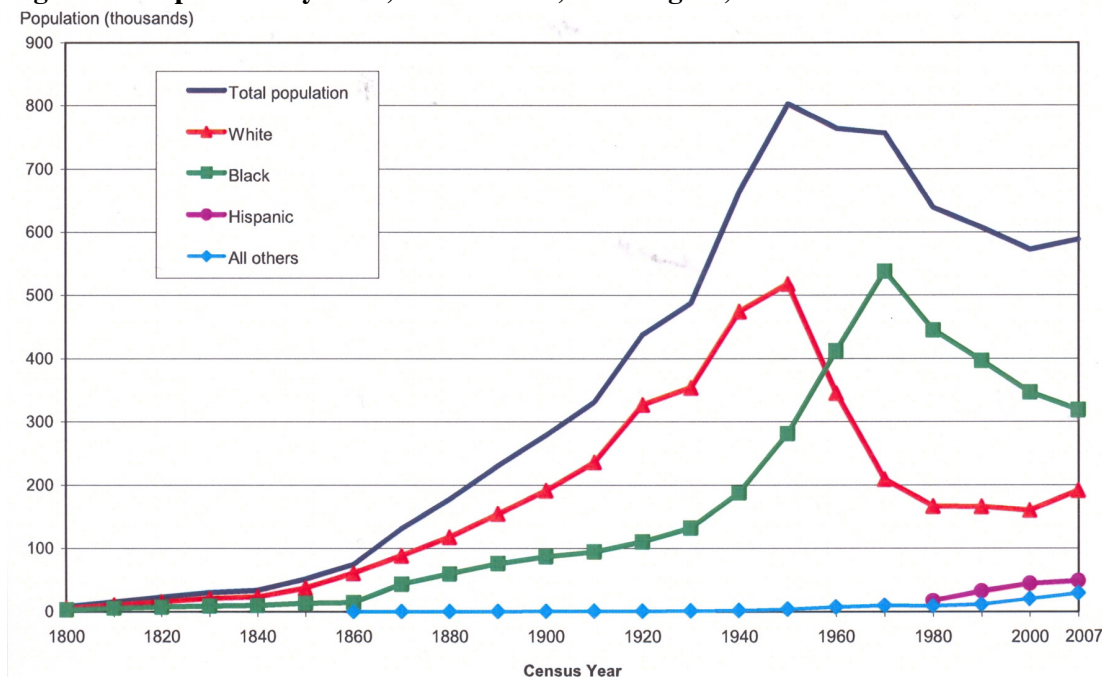
During this time, the construction of new housing in the District reached an all-time low, and abandonment was rampant. Vacant residences were converted to rental properties, intensifying the density and overcrowding of poorer neighborhoods. Racial tensions further exacerbated the distress and decline of the District. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, riots erupted throughout Washington, causing severe damage to many of the majority black neighborhoods, such as Shaw and Columbia Heights. Hundreds of buildings were damaged or destroyed by fire and looting. Following the riots, crime rates rose, businesses shut

down permanently, and the city bulldozed many of the abandoned storefronts. Some of the areas of the city affected by the Martin Luther King riots are still in the process of recovery today.

During the 1970s, large numbers of black residents began leaving the city. From 1980 to 2000, the District's total population decreased by almost 70,000 residents, continuing the trend of population loss that began fifty years prior (Sawyer & Tatian 2003). Between 1950 and 1980, the city's population of white residents decreased by a significant 67 percent. During this time, business disinvestment in the District caused the number and quality of jobs available in the city to decrease. Widespread joblessness caused the city-wide poverty rate to peak at 24 percent in 1996 (The Urban Institute 2008). In some of the city's neighborhoods, poverty rates reached as high as 50 percent, fueling distress, crime, and violence. It was not until the mid-1990s that the Washington, D.C. region began to experience economic recovery. While this growth was consistent with national trends during the decade, D.C.'s resurgence surpassed that of many metropolitan areas. A report published by the Urban Institute in 2003 attributes much of the District's recovery to the increase in "federal government contracting with private firms in the region. These new private-sector jobs did not just replace the direct government jobs that had been lost earlier but shifted toward high-value private services, particularly in information technology." While this economic growth linked Washington to regional, national, and international networks, resulting in the retention and attraction of highly-skilled professionals, it also increased the demand for employees with higher levels of education. Although the majority of the high-tech production occurred in the suburbs, the number of employed D.C. residents also grew. When employment figures began to decline nationally at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they continued to grow in the D.C. region. In addition, the city's population began to increase for the

first time in half a century. Growing numbers of Hispanic and Asian residents helped to fuel this boom (*Figure 1*).

**Figure 1 – Population by Race, 1800 to 2007, Washington, D.C.**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau data compiled by NeighborhoodInfo D.C.

However, this economic revitalization and population growth have not been experienced universally throughout the city. Income inequality in the District is greater than in nearly every major U.S. city, and the number of residents living in poverty is at the highest level in nearly a decade. These simultaneous patterns of growth and social distress can partly be attributed to processes of gentrification happening in the region. Gentrification occurs when the influx of affluent residents in a neighborhood causes the displacement of prior, lower-income residents.

## Methodology

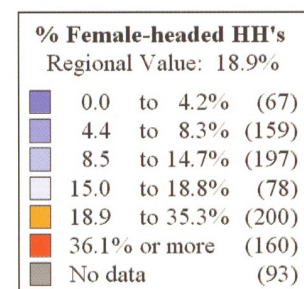
This paper compiles and analyzes data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, NeighborhoodInfo D.C., and various District government agencies in order to demonstrate the unequal state of growth in the Washington, D.C. region and the growing disparities it creates. In

order to capture the most accurate snapshot of change within the region, the statistical data provided examines trends by ward (Appendix A), neighborhood cluster (Appendix B), and city jurisdictions. The ward boundaries used throughout this paper are those established in 2002, reflecting the city's redistricting following the 2000 census. The neighborhood cluster boundaries are those determined by the D.C. Office of Planning for budgeting, planning, service delivery, and analysis purposes. In addition to quantitative analysis, historical documents, photographs, and interviews were utilized to portray the growing inequality experienced in D.C. in recent decades. This divide is demonstrated through analysis of income levels, job availability and unemployment rates, housing availability, education, and access to other social services such as healthcare and nutrition.

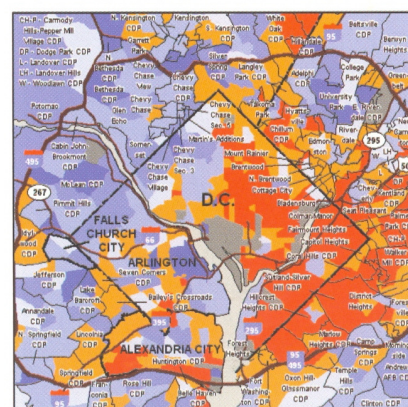
### The Income Divide

While job availability in D.C. appeared to stabilize in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to an increase in private sector enterprise, these city-wide figures conceal the job loss that took place in many parts of the District – particularly poorer, minority neighborhoods. According to a report released by the Brookings Institution in 1999, “between 1985 and 1995, the total number of jobs per capita in the Washington region remained relatively stable (decreasing by only 0.6 percent). However, during this period the eastern part of the region lost jobs per capita while the western part increased. Some areas – particularly in the far western and southwestern reaches – more than doubled their jobs per capita” (Orfield 1999:40). In 1996, the District had the

**Figure 2**  
**Female-headed**  
**Households with Children**  
**as a Percentage of Total**  
**Households with Children**  
**by Census Tract, 1990**



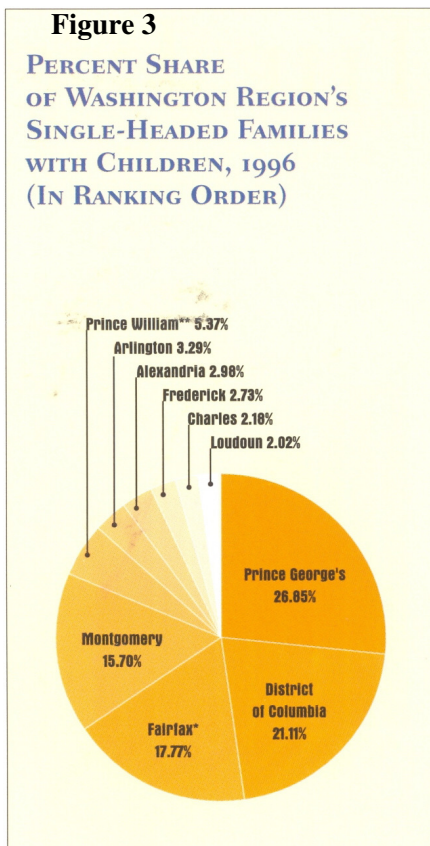
Data Source: 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape File 3A



**Source: *A Region Divided*.  
The Brookings Institution,  
1999.**

lowest percentage of households (30.1 percent) earning more than \$50,000 in the metropolitan region and was the only jurisdiction to lose middle and upper class families between 1990 and 1996 (Brookings Institution center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy 1999:16). Many of these families relocated to the adjoining western suburbs of Fairfax, Montgomery, and Loudoun Counties due to increased social mobility and the availability of technical jobs. During this same time, the majority of households earning less than the area median income were concentrated in the eastern quadrants of D.C. and the inner part of Prince George's County. These areas also saw the highest levels of poverty and single-parent households. "By 1996, the District and Prince

**Figure 3**  
**PERCENT SHARE**  
**OF WASHINGTON REGION'S**  
**SINGLE-HEADED FAMILIES**  
**WITH CHILDREN, 1996**  
**(IN RANKING ORDER)**



Source: *A Region Divided*.  
 The Brookings  
 Institution, 1999.

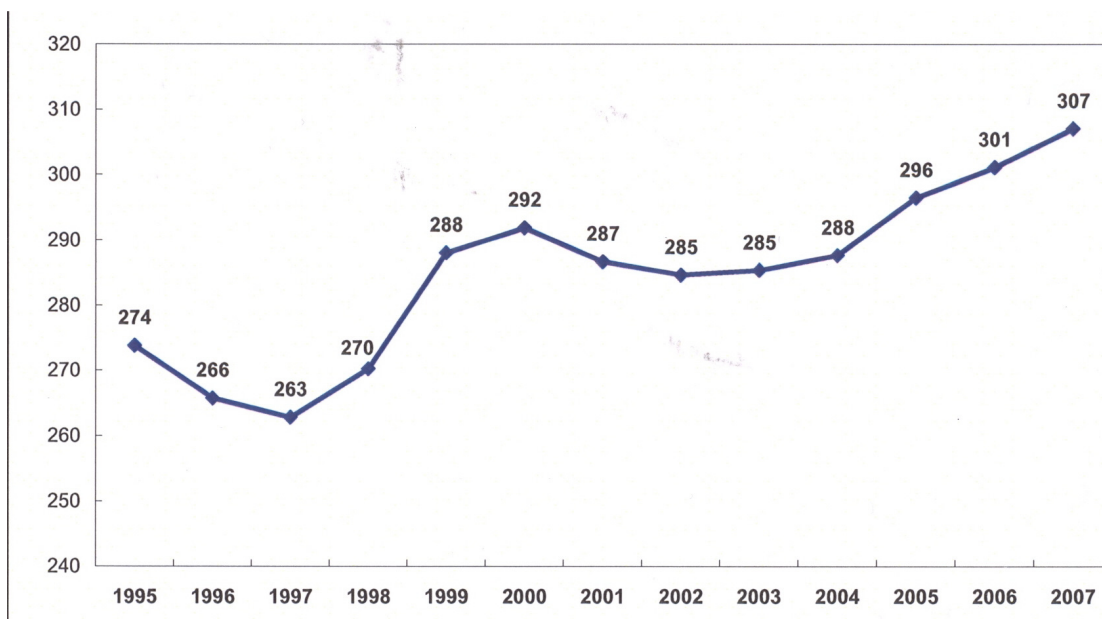
George's County continued to have the highest percentage of single-headed households with children in the region" (Brookings 1999:14). While single-parent households are not necessarily indicators of families living in poverty, these households do face more challenges than two-parent households with children. According to U.S. Census data, in 1997, the median household income for a married couple with children was \$51,681, for a single father \$36,634, and for a single mother \$23,040.

In the past decade, the number of employed residents living in the District has risen annually from 292,000 in 2000 to 307,000 in 2007 (*Figure 4*). Although the city's economy was booming during this time, the unemployment rate also rose steadily between 2000 and 2004. The most recent breakdown of unemployment rates



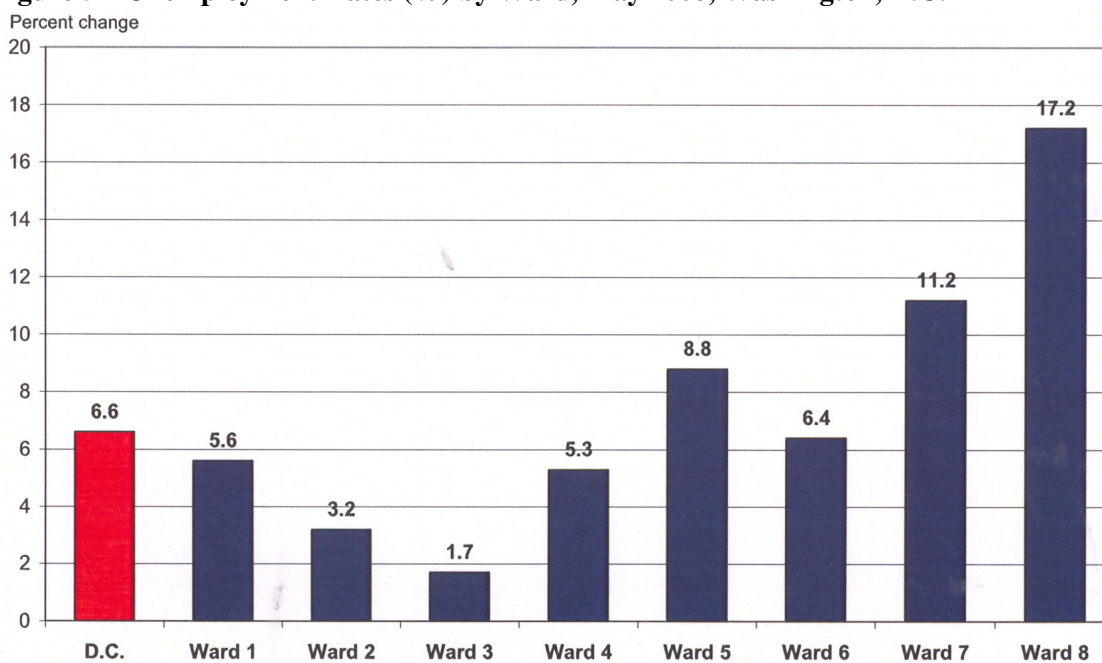
by ward (*Figure 5*), released by the D.C. Department of Employment services in 2008, shows the unequal distribution of rates of unemployment throughout the city.

**Figure 4 – Number of Unemployed Residents (1,000s), 1995 – 2007, Washington, D.C.**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS

**Figure 5 – Unemployment Rates (%) by Ward, May 2008, Washington, D.C.**



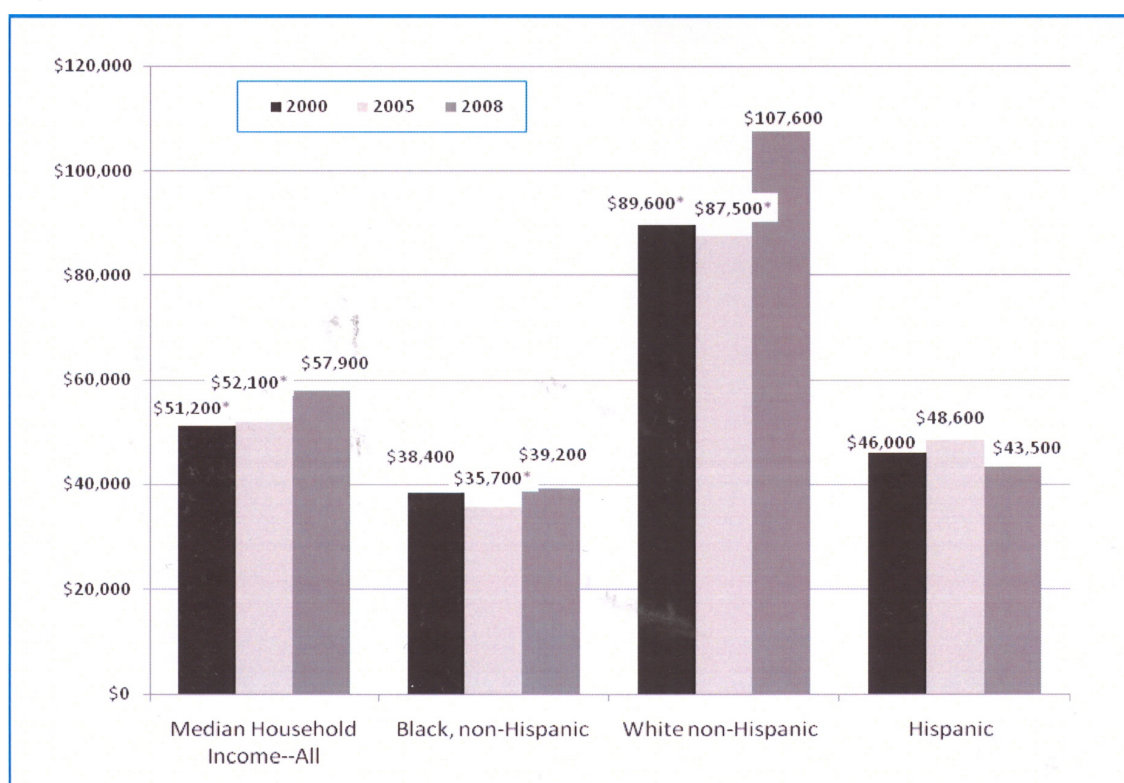
Source: D.C. Dept. of Employment Services, Office of Labor Market Research and Information



While residents living in the western part of the District in Wards 1, 2, 3, and 4 have rates of unemployment below the city's average, residents from the eastern part of the city living in Wards 5, 7, and 8 boast the highest levels of unemployment. Furthermore, these figures do not reflect the most serious effects of the recent economic downturn, which became most severe in 2009. The disparities in median household income and unemployment rates in the Washington region predate the national economic recession.

The growing gaps in income levels become more apparent when data is adjusted based on race. According to a report released by the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute in September 2009, “white residents are the only group that has seen a statistically significant increase [in median household income] since 2000.” Between 2000 and 2008, the median household income for white, non-Hispanic households rose 20 percent while the median household income for black, non-Hispanic households only increased by 2 percent. Median household income for Hispanic residents fell 5 percent during the same time period (*Figure 5*).

**Figure 6 – D.C. Median Household Income, By Race/Ethnicity**



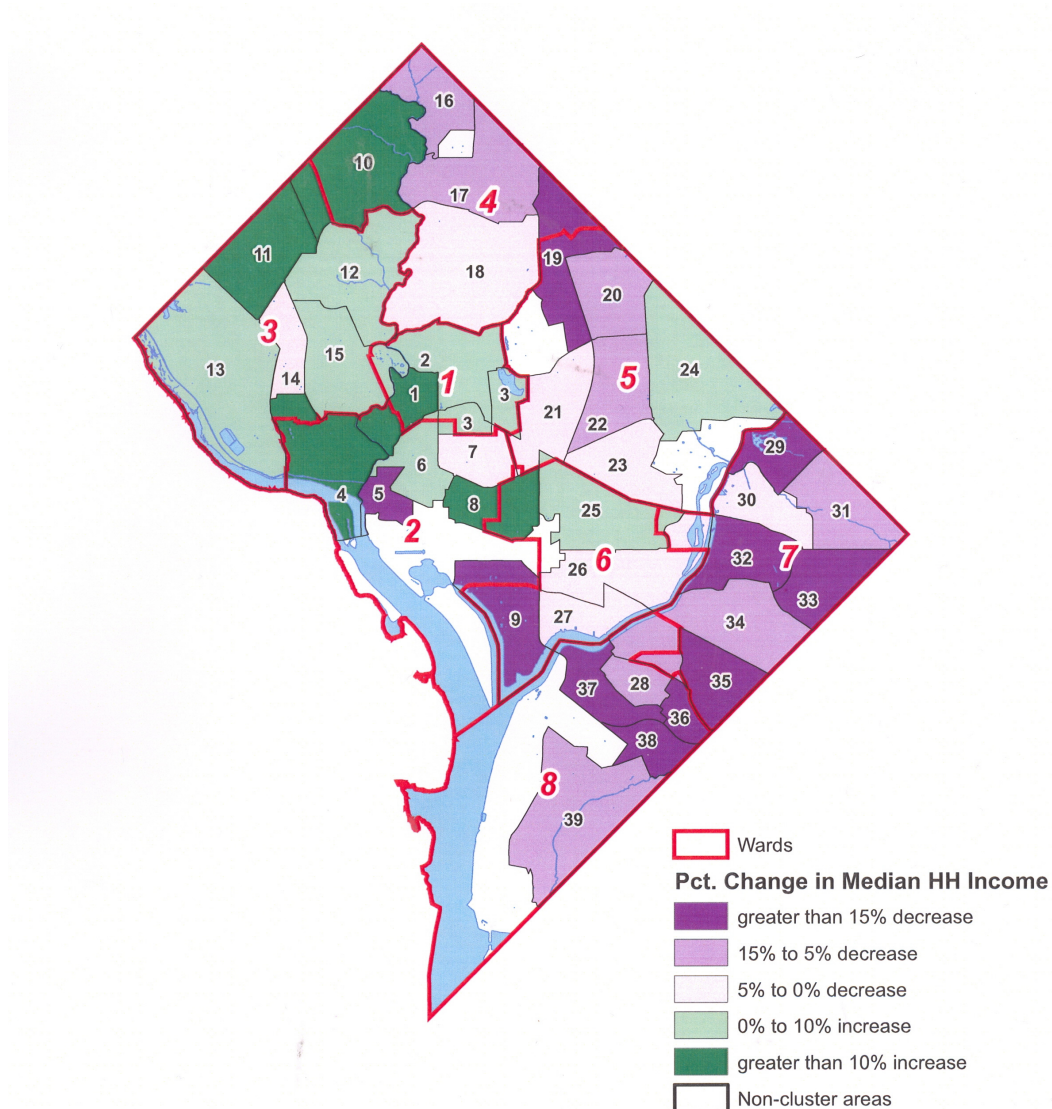
Source: D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute Analysis of the 2008 American Community Survey.

Based on 2008 U.S. Census data, Ward 3 had the highest level of average household income in the city at \$128,000, the highest percentage of white, non-Hispanic residents, and the lowest percentage of black, non-Hispanic residents. In contrast, Wards 5, 7, and 8 had the lowest average household incomes, the highest percentage of black, non-Hispanic residents, and the lowest percentage of white, non-Hispanic residents (Social Compact). These figures demonstrate that, despite the city's ethnic diversity, the District is largely segregated by race. As Myron Orfield points out in "Washington Metropolitcs," "raising public awareness about regional socioeconomic polarization also means renewing the discussion of race and segregation" (1999:14). As demonstrated by Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton in *American Apartheid*, increases in socioeconomic status for many black families have had little to no effect on their level of segregation. Black segregation in the 1980s was almost as high for upper and middle class individuals as it was for lower class residents and was higher than for any other racial group, regardless of income (1998).

While the disparities in income levels between the western and eastern parts of the District are evident, the neighborhoods within these wards do not experience this inequality universally. For example, Ward 6 includes the neighborhoods with the largest increases and sharpest drops in median household incomes between 1900 and 2000 (*Figure 7*). Cluster 8, which includes Downtown and North Capitol Street, experienced a 38 percent increase in median household income while Cluster 9, which includes the Southwest Waterfront, saw a 37 percent decrease. Similarly, in Ward 2, Cluster 4, which includes Georgetown, experienced the second largest increase in median household income at 25 percent while nearby Cluster 5, which includes Foggy Bottom, experienced the second greatest decrease overall at 27 percent. Although the neighborhood clusters are within the same ward in both scenarios, physical barriers separate

them. Greenspace and the Potomac River disconnect the neighborhood clusters which comprise Georgetown and Burlieth and West End and Foggy Bottom while the National Mall and the monuments serve as a barrier between Downtown and the Southwest Waterfront.

**Figure 7 – Percent Change in Median Head of Household Income 1990 – 2000 by Neighborhood Cluster**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000) tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo D.C.

Despite these idiosyncrasies in changes in income levels within wards, the western communities of the region saw the greatest concentration of increases in median household income between

1990 and 2000 while communities in the eastern half of the District experienced the greatest decreases. An analysis of poverty rates in the District demonstrates similar trends. From 1990 to 2000, most D.C. neighborhoods experienced an increase in poverty levels. There were only six communities that saw an improvement (Clusters 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11) – all of which are located in the western half of Washington, D.C. Friendship Heights and American University Park in Ward 3 had the smallest rate of poverty (3.5 percent) according to 2000 U.S. Census data. In contrast, nearly half of the residents living in neighborhoods in Ward 8, such as Woodland, Shipley Terrace, Barry Farm, and Sheridan, were living in poverty in 2000.

This “concentrated poverty multiplies the severity of problems faced by both communities and poor individuals. As neighborhoods become dominated by joblessness, racial segregation, and single-parentage, they become isolated from middle-class society and the private economy” (Orfield 1999:9). Family poverty is tied to poor health, low school performance, violence, and teen parenthood. Furthermore, “the adverse effects of family poverty are compounded when poor individuals and families live in neighborhoods with high-poverty rates. Just as the socioeconomic status of a family matters for their well-being, the economic and social environments of neighborhoods have significant influence on the life course and outcomes of individual residents, even after taking account of their personal and family characteristics” (Rolland 2006:1). Research shows that children at all income levels tend to have lower test scores when they attend schools in low-income neighborhoods than when they attend schools in a more affluent area. Moreover, children who live in poor households do better when they attend schools in low-poverty neighborhoods. Under a 1976 court order in the case of *Hill v. Gautreaux*, thousands of single-parent black families living in Chicago public housing were provided housing opportunities in predominantly white middle-class suburbs. By random

assignment, more than half of these households moved to affluent suburbs that were more than 96 percent white while the other participants moved to neighborhoods that were poor and more than 90 percent black. Research about these families, conducted by a team of social scientists led by James Rosenbaum from Northwestern University, established that the low-income women who moved to the suburbs “clearly experienced improved employment and earnings even though the program provided no job training or placement services” (Rosenbaum & Popkin 1991:348).

While living below the poverty line can negatively affect an individual’s nutrition, job stability, and housing security, living in an impoverished neighborhood affects the quality of social institutions upon which the residents depend. “On every measure, D.C.’s poorest neighborhoods face the worst conditions, high-income neighborhoods enjoy the best conditions, and the conditions in moderate-income areas fall between the two. The findings confirm that the concentration of poor families in certain neighborhoods is a major contributing factor to many of D.C.’s largest problems” (Rolland 2006:2). A key factor that causes these concentrations of poverty is the lack of affordable housing in many parts of the region.

### **The Housing Divide**

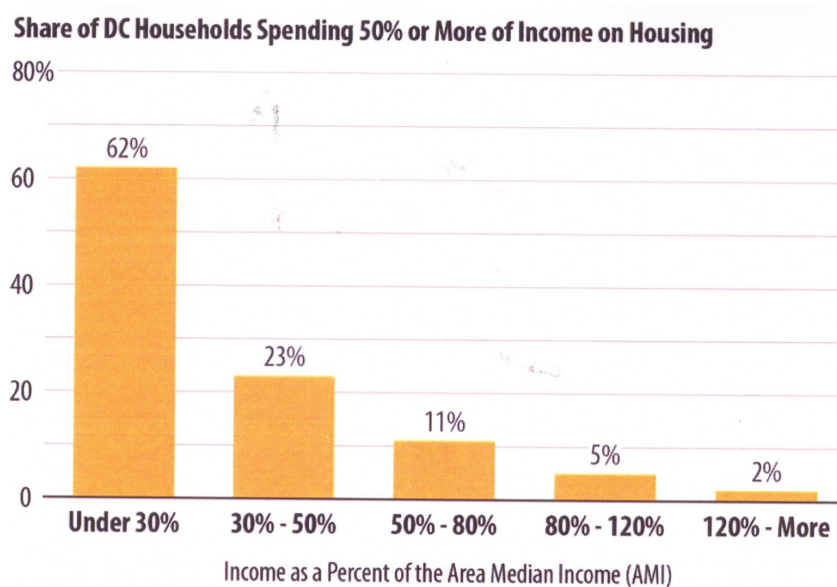
The economic growth experienced in the region in the past couple of decades drove an unprecedented period of growth in the area’s housing market. “Home prices in the city experienced double-digit appreciation, rental vacancy rates fell, and construction of new housing recommenced at a rapid pace” (The Urban Institute 2008:25). Although the housing market has begun to slow down in the past few years, as triggered by the national decline and tightening of mortgage credit, D.C. remains less affected than most metropolitan areas in the country. The recent resurgence in the District’s population caused an increase demand for housing in the city, which resulted in the development and subsequent sales of condominium housing. According to

data from the U.S. Office of Tax and Revenue, the 2005 sales volume for condominiums in the District was 123 percent above the level in 2000. Cluster 8 (Downtown) experienced this change most predominately since single-family homes are almost non-existent within the neighborhood cluster. While only 29 condominium units were sold in the area in 2000, 895 were sold in 2005, an increase of over 2,900 percent (The Urban Institute 2008:26). Other clusters with notable increases in condominium sales are the gentrifying areas of Shaw/Logan Circle and Columbia Heights/Mount Pleasant. These neighborhood clusters were areas of the city hit hardest by the riots following King's assassination. The high vacancy rates and number of abandoned lots in these areas drove property prices down, making them ideal for potential developers. According to "The State of Washington, D.C.'s Neighborhoods" report, "the median price of a single-family home in Washington, D.C., in 2000 was \$193,000 (in constant 2007 dollars). The median price grew to \$463,000 in 2006, dropping only slightly in the first half of 2007 to \$460,000. Even with the slight decline, inflation-adjusted home prices rose an average of 13.2 percent per year between 2000 and 2007" (2008:28).

This sharp increase in home values in the city since 2000 has resulted in a rapidly growing number of D.C. households experiencing unmanageable housing costs. Low-cost rental stock and affordable home ownership options have shrunk in D.C. in the past decade. Based on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development standards, housing is considered unaffordable if it consumes more than 30 percent of a household's income. The threshold for a "severe" housing cost burden is 50 percent of a household's income. According to report released by the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute in 2010, more than 40 percent of D.C. households have housing affordability problems while nearly 20 percent have a severe housing cost burden (*Figure 8*). Moreover, two-thirds of D.C. households with unaffordable housing costs are low-

income, and 85 percent of the households with severe housing cost problems have incomes below 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the Washington region.

**Figure 8**



**Source: D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute analysis of American Community Survey data**

In the past decade, the city has experienced a notable decline in low-income households and an increase in the number of higher-income households. Between 2000 and 2007, the number of D.C. households with incomes below 80 percent AMI decreased by 15 percent as the number of households with incomes above 120 percent AMI nearly doubled. Although this change could be attributed to an increase in income levels of formerly low and moderate-income households, it most likely reflects their displacement due to patterns of gentrification. The number of rental units has also fallen in the last decade while the number of owner-occupied units has risen. This is likely due to the conversion of rental units into condominiums. However, “the increase in D.C.’s owner-occupied units was greater than the decline in rental housing stock, which suggests that a substantial amount of new owner-occupied housing also was developed during this period”



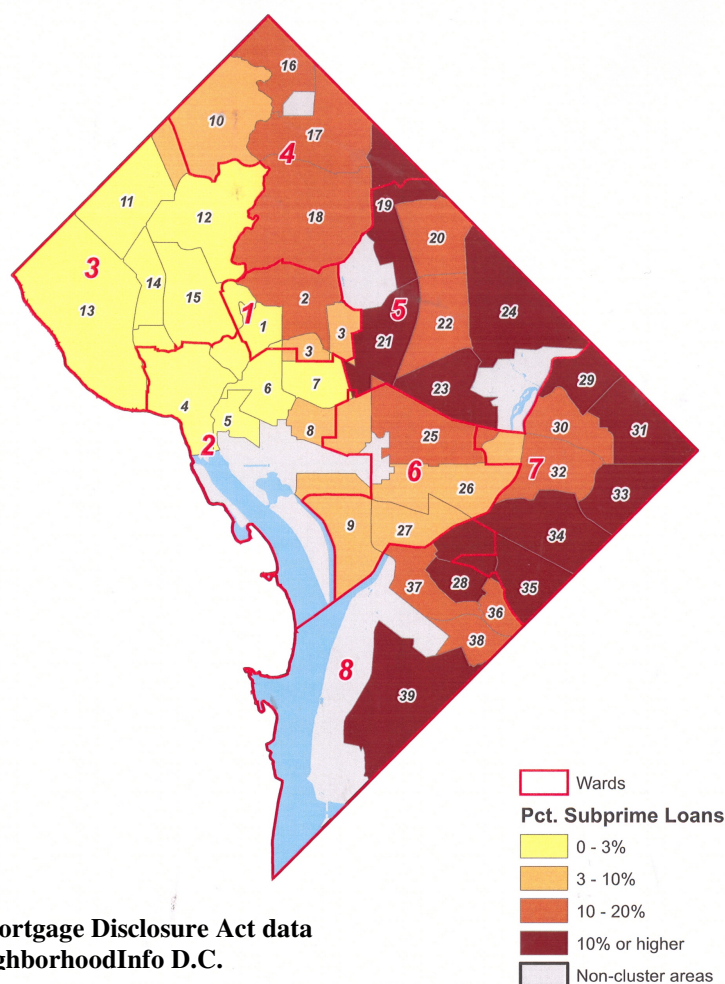
(D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute 2010:10). This is further evidence indicating gentrification occurred in the city, and more affluent newcomers displaced low-income individuals. Ed Lazere, Executive Director of the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, was quoted in an article in the *Washington Post* following the release of the center's report saying, "Every D.C. resident can point to numerous neighborhoods that look vastly different than they did ten years ago, and while those improvements have brought many good things – more retail and better housing stock – it also means that the availability of low-cost housing had to go down" (Wiggins 2010:B01).

Federal housing assistance aid is the largest source of affordable housing in the District. Between 2000 and 2008, local funding for affordable housing programs rose significantly, from \$7 million to \$123 million. This resulted in the introduction of a \$5,000 federal tax credit for first-time homebuyers in the city and an increase in the Housing Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP) price limits. In addition, 6,700 affordable homes were constructed or rehabilitated, and 2,200 rental subsidies were created for the District's lowest-income residents. While these programs and initiatives helped to increase affordable housing options in the city, D.C.'s affordable housing crisis intensified during this time period despite the increased funding. Furthermore, the budget for core housing programs in fiscal year 2010 is nearly 50 percent less than the budget in 2008 and the lowest level since 2004. Even though there is increased need for low-cost housing options in the region, there is decreased support and funding to satisfy these demands.

Another phenomenon that accompanied the housing market boom was the increase in the use of subprime mortgage products. Subprime loans are loans with higher interest rates than prime-rate loans and are intended for persons with imperfect credit. From 2000 to 2005, subprime loans in D.C. increased steadily from 3.1 percent to 10 percent of all loans – a trend

consistent with the national pattern. Unfortunately, this reliance on subprime loans has resulted in an increase of home foreclosures and mortgage defaults. While only one in ten home purchase mortgages in D.C. in 2005 was a subprime loan, certain wards and neighborhood clusters experienced a much higher share (*Figure 9*). In Wards 5, 7, and 8 in the eastern part of the city, one fifth to one quarter of home purchase loans were made by subprime lenders. The neighborhoods in these wards have also experienced the highest rates of home foreclosure with Cluster 28 (Historic Anacostia) and Cluster 38 (Douglas/Shipleigh Terrace), both in Ward 8, seeing the highest foreclosure rates in the city in 2007, 34 and 34.4 per 1,000 units respectively (The Urban Institute 2008:39).

**Figure 9 – Percentage of Subprime Home Purchase Mortgage Loans by Neighborhood Cluster, 2005**



John Kain, an economist at Harvard, argued for the existence of a “spatial mismatch” between affordable housing and available jobs. His theory posits that American cities are undergoing transformations from centers of goods and productions to centers of information processing. While the number of white-collar jobs available in the city increase, the blue-collar jobs that once made up the economic backbone of cities have either been outsourced, mechanized, or moved to the developing suburbs. The spatial mismatch theory states that it is not a lack of jobs per se that is the problem since population growth has been consistent with job growth in the central city. The problem is that the percentage of central city jobs with high educational requirements is increasing while the average education level of city residents is dropping. Low-skilled job growth occurs almost entirely in the suburbs causing a disproportionate, negative effect on low-income city residents, particularly minorities, who often face more limited housing options in job growth areas and a lack of transit services from the urban core to those places (Kain 1968).

### **The Education Divide**

Schools are a powerful indicator of a community’s current health and future progression. When area schools reach certain levels of poverty, middle class families of all races and ethnic identities move out of the community causing a decline in housing demand and property values. In the last decade, Washington, D.C.’s public school system has undergone dramatic change. Enrollment in D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) has been rapidly declining while enrollment in public charter schools, which were first authorized in 1997, has been rapidly increasing. Moreover, the number of public students (DCPS and public charter combined) that live in the District are not evenly dispersed throughout the city. The greatest number of public school students enrolled in elementary school during the 2006-2007 school year lived in Wards 7 and 8 while Wards 2 and 3

had the lowest number of elementary school students. There was also wide variation at the neighborhood cluster level. There were more elementary public school students in 2006-2007 in Cluster 39 (Congress Heights) than students from all grade levels in 35 other clusters (The Urban Institute 2008:46). However, despite their larger numbers of school-aged children, Wards 7 and 8 have only one elementary school each.

Not only are schools a powerful indicator of a community's health, but information about students eligible for free and reduced-cost lunches gives a more accurate snapshot of the socioeconomic health of different neighborhoods within large jurisdictions than do many other indicators. As *A Region Divided* argues, "there is a strong correlation between high percentages of low-income students in a school and poor performance in standardized tests" (Brookings Institution 1999:20). In 1999, the *Washington Post* published test scores for all elementary schools in the Washington region. This report showed that in the District, the ten public elementary schools with the largest percentage of students scoring "below basic" levels on math and reading levels of standardized tests (for the 1997-1998 school year) had between 80 and 99.5 percent of their students qualifying for free or reduced-cost lunches. All but one of these schools were in Northeast and Southeast D.C. In contrast, the ten public schools with the highest levels of standardized test performance had between 1.4 and 44 percent of their students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches. All of these schools were in the northwest quadrant of the city (Brookings Institution 1999:21).

An examination of more recent (2007) test scores demonstrates a significant variation across the wards and neighborhood clusters. For example, 75 percent of students in Ward 3 schools tested at proficient or advanced levels in reading, and 72 percent tested at proficient or advanced levels in math. In contrast, Ward 8 had the lowest average share of students testing at

required levels – only 23 percent in reading and 15 percent in math (The Urban Institute 2008). This same disparity is evidenced in the variation in students' performance between schools in affluent clusters in upper Northwest and schools East of the Anacostia River. Cluster 10 (Hawthorne/Barnaby Woods) and Cluster 13 (Spring Valley/Palisades) boasted the highest share of students proficient in math while Cluster 35 (Fairfax Village/Naylor Gardens) had the lowest share. Furthermore, the lowest scoring neighborhood cluster in upper Northwest had higher test scores than any cluster in the rest of the city (D.C. Agenda 2004). Despite the fact that the majority of the city's school-aged children live in the eastern part of the city, the majority of the District's high-performing public schools are located in the western region, where there are fewer school-aged children.

### **The Health & Nutrition Divide**

In addition to the unequal distribution of jobs and schools throughout the region, D.C. has a significant grocery gap, leaving many neighborhoods without adequate access to full-service grocers. The resulting "food deserts" drastically contribute to poor nutrition and rising rates of obesity and diet-related illnesses. According to a report released by D.C. Hunger Solutions and Social Compact, one in eight households in D.C. struggles against hunger. The report defines a full-service grocery store as "a business establishment with a minimum of 5,000 square feet primarily engaged in retailing food for home consumption and preparation, which regularly provides products in each of the following categories: fresh fruits (eight types or more), fresh vegetables (eight types or more), fresh meat (five types or more), dairy and bread" (D.C. Hunger Solutions 2010:1). The ratio of full-service grocery stores to residents varies widely among the District's wards. For instance, Ward 3 has five times as many full-service grocers per resident as Ward 4. Washington, D.C. has approximately one full-service grocery store for every 14,000

residents. In Wards 4, 5, 7, and 8, the store-to-resident ratio is lower than the city average. These areas also have higher rates of overweight or obese residents and residents with diabetes (*Figure 10*).

**Figure 10**

**District of Columbia Overview: Demographics, Access to Grocery Stores, and Health<sup>5</sup>**

Ward	Population	Avg. Household Income	# of Full-Service Grocery Stores	% Over-weight or Obese	% with Diabetes	% African-American	% Hispanic	% non-Hispanic Caucasian
Ward 1	79,290	\$63,000	6	57.5	6.0	43.2	23.4	35.2
Ward 2	83,827	\$98,000	8	47.9	8.2	30.4	8.6	56.2
Ward 3	80,775	\$128,000	11	42.2	3.5	6.3	6.5	83.6
Ward 4	76,880	\$78,000	2	61.2	8.1	77.9	12.8	10.3
Ward 5	73,634	\$49,000	3	67.8	12.5	88.2	2.5	7.9
Ward 6	65,928	\$69,000	6	49.2	6.3	68.7	2.4	27.2
Ward 7	73,856	\$39,000	4	72.9	13.8	96.9	0.9	1.4
Ward 8	69,047	\$29,000	3	71.5	18.3	91.8	1.5	5.8
D.C.	603,238	\$74,000	43 (avg. 5.4 per ward)	55.0	8.0	60.0	7.9	30.8

*Table notes:* The shaded rows indicate Wards that have fewer full-service grocers than the District's average.

**Source:** Social Compact, District of Columbia Department of Health, U.S. Census Bureau. Data compiled by D.C. Hunger Solutions, 2010.

Moreover, while nearly almost all full-service grocers in the city accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, only 48 percent participate in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program. These programs are critical nutrition and income supports for low-income District residents. They help boost the individuals' purchasing power, support the local economy, and promote healthy eating, yet these benefits depend on the programs' acceptance by eligible retailers. The SNAP (Food Stamps) program provides low-income households with monthly benefits that can be used to by food. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than 110,000 District residents participated in the SNAP program in September 2009. Every ward in the city has hundreds (and in many cases, tens of thousands) of residents receiving food stamps, and all but one of the full-service grocery stores in D.C. accepts

SNAP benefits. The WIC program serves pregnant or breast-feeding mothers and children under the age of five. Families participating in the program receive monthly vouchers to purchase nutritional food at eligible stores. However, less than half of the full-service grocers in the city accept WIC. Wards 8 and 7 have the highest rates of infant mortality as well as the first and third lowest percentages of full-service grocers accepting WIC. While only 18 percent of the full service grocery stores in Ward 3 accept WIC, the area has the second lowest number of participants enrolled in the program (721). In contrast, 50 percent of the full-service grocery stores in Ward 7 accept WIC, yet the ratio of store to WIC participant is 1:1,629. Because many of the neighborhoods in the lower-income sections of D.C. experience a scarcity in grocery stores, their residents are forced to travel outside of the city to satisfy their needs. This causes the District to lose “more than \$112 million in annual grocery revenues to neighboring jurisdictions” (D.C. Hunger Solutions 2010:14). Grocery stores also provide a number of low-skilled, entry-level jobs with opportunities for advancement. Increasing the number of full-service grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods would not only increase residents’ access to healthy foods, but also generate an increase in job availability and the amount of dollars invested in the local community as well as the city as a whole.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

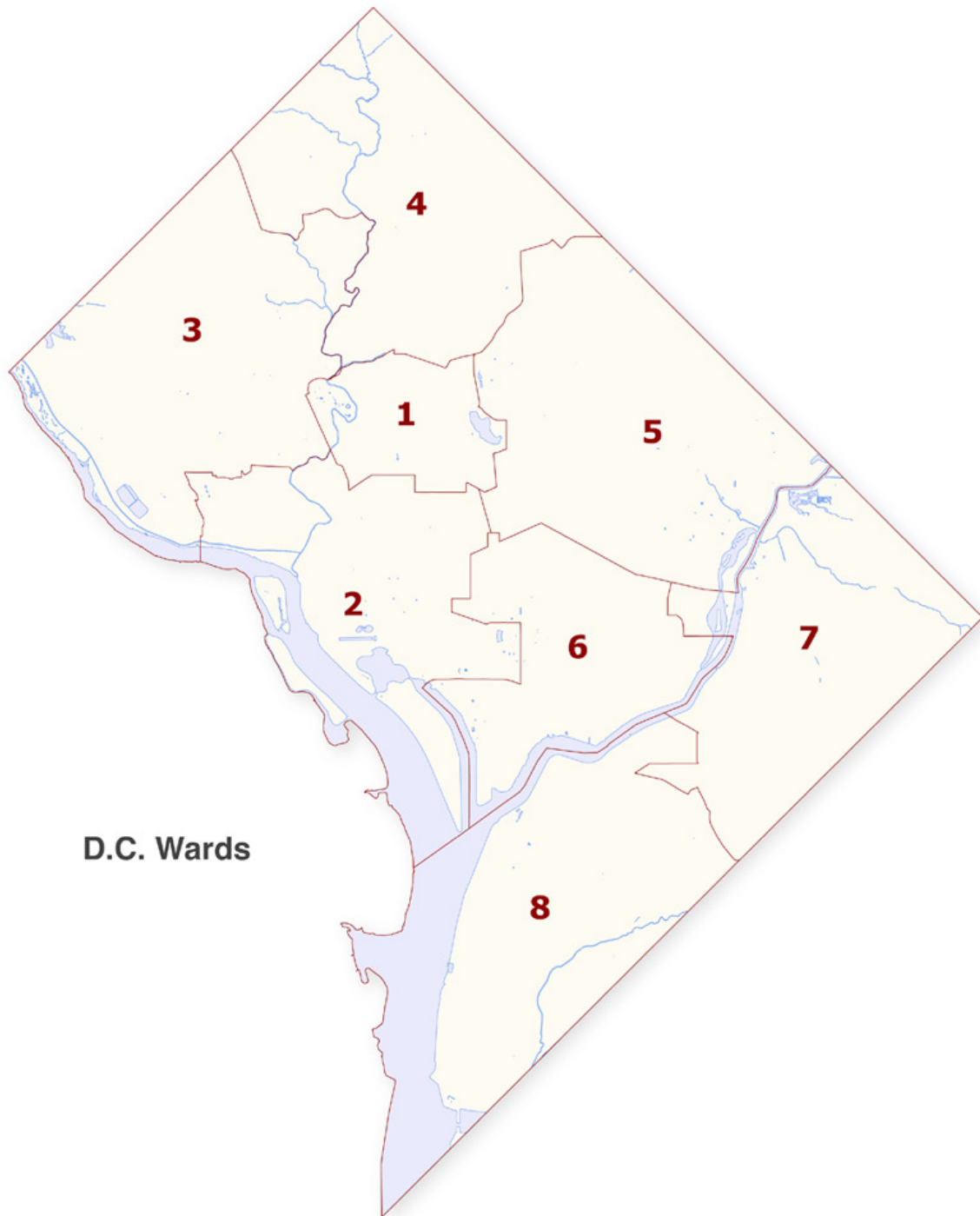
This paper outlines and examines the social, economic, and demographic trends affecting the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. By comparing data on a regional level as well as providing a breakdown of statistics by quadrant, ward, and neighborhood cluster, my capstone attempts to uncover idiosyncratic trends concealed by the behavior of larger jurisdictions and present an integrated approach to these issues. The challenges facing D.C. residents are complex and interrelated. While the city’s economic revitalization in the past couple of decades has



generated significant wealth and development in the region, this prosperity has not been shared amongst all residents. Increases in the availability of high-paying, specialized jobs coupled with rising home values have made D.C. a more desirable place to live for many young professionals. Yet this influx of socially-mobile individuals has forced many of the city's older residents into poorer neighborhoods further away from the urban core. Even when these long-time D.C. residents are not directly displaced by affluent newcomers, the far-reaching processes of gentrification, which result in the decreased availability of affordable housing, higher property taxes, and fewer jobs, force them to relocate in order to stay within their means. In order to prevent greater social distress and increases in economic disparities in the District, policy makers must recognize the interconnectedness of the region. Rapid growth and development in the western side of the region has triggered the economic isolation of communities in the eastern half of the area, setting in motion a far-reaching ripple effect. Declining population rates in already stressed neighborhoods cause a depreciation of home values, which in turn engender increased rates of poverty within the area. Schools decline while social services are relocated to wealthier communities, where they can be better sustained. While many neighborhood clusters in Wards 7 and 8 are experiencing home growth for the first time in years, they are still plagued by a multitude of social problems such as high rates of unemployment and poverty, large shares of single-parent households, and previously high rates of subprime lending. Providing incentives for companies that invest in these distressed neighborhoods or increasing the availability of social support services for their residents could help keep these communities on a positive trajectory and lessen the threat of foreclosure rates that could derail their progress. Tracking social indicators, such as employment and school performance, also plays a critical role in

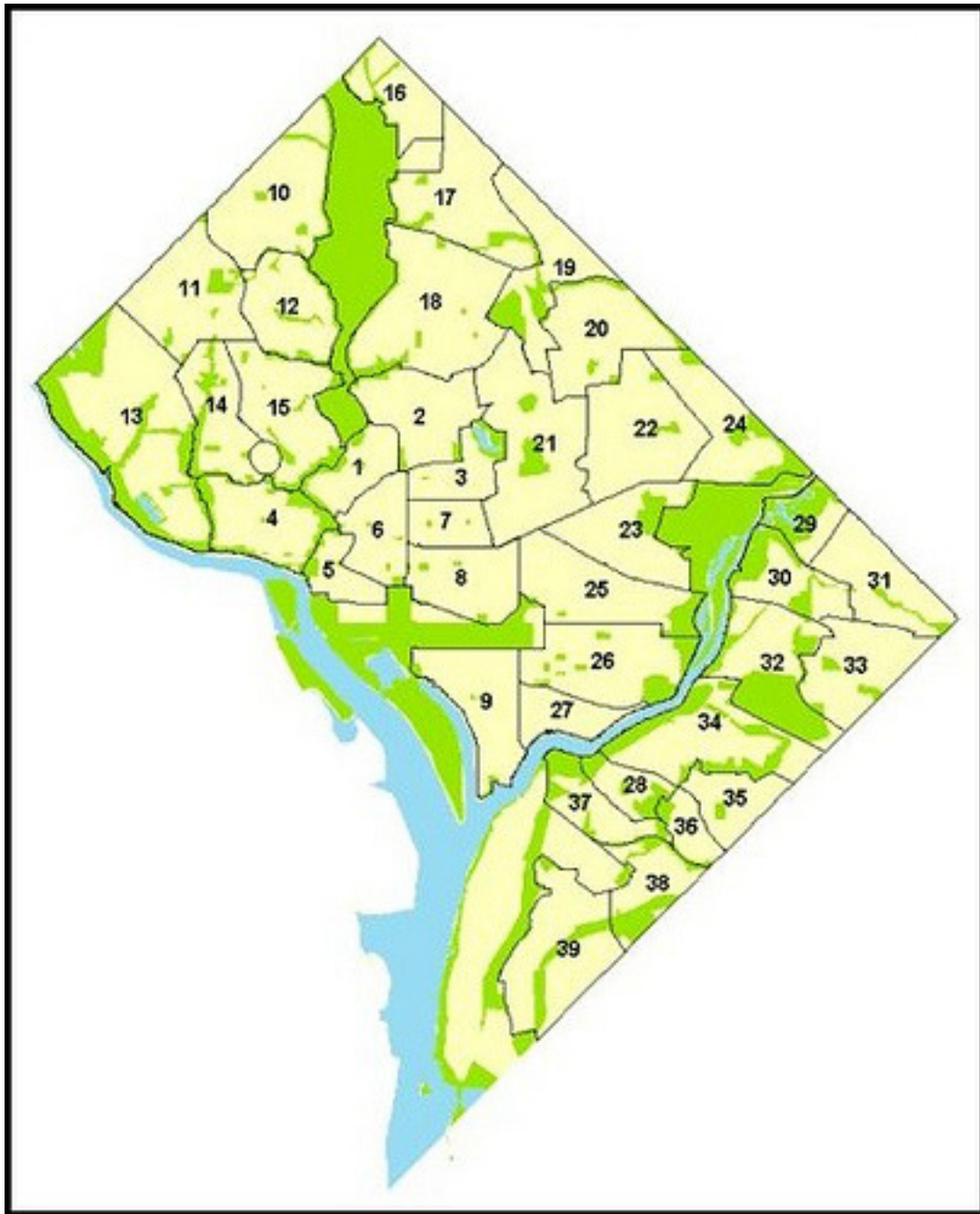
assessing who benefits from the growth and development of D.C. neighborhoods and who bears the burden of decreased resources and higher costs.

## Appendix A – Map of D.C. Wards



Source: Mapkist

## Appendix B – Map of D.C. Neighborhood Clusters



Source: NeighborhoodInfo D.C.

**Neighborhood Clusters (full names)**

- 1 Kalorama Heights, Adams Morgan, Lanier Heights
- 2 Columbia Heights, Mt. Pleasant, Pleasant Plains, Park View
- 3 Howard University, LeDroit Park, Cardozo/Shaw
- 4 Georgetown, Burleith/Hillandale
- 5 West End, Foggy Bottom, GWU
- 6 Dupont Circle, Connecticut Avenue/K Street
- 7 Shaw, Logan Circle
- 8 Downtown, Chinatown, Penn Quarters, Mount Vernon Square, North Capitol Street
- 9 Southwest Employment Area, Southwest/Waterfront, Fort McNair, Buzzard Point
- 10 Hawthorne, Barnaby Woods, Chevy Chase
- 11 Friendship Heights, American University Park, Tenleytown
- 12 North Cleveland Park, Forest Hills, Van Ness
- 13 Spring Valley, Palisades, Wesley Heights, Foxhall Crescent, Foxhall Village, Georgetown Reservoir
- 14 Cathedral Heights, McLean Gardens, Glover Park
- 15 Cleveland Park, Woodley Park, Massachusetts Avenue Heights, Woodland-Normanstone Terrace
- 16 Colonial Village, Shepherd Park, North Portal Estates
- 17 Takoma, Brightwood, Manor Park
- 18 Brightwood Park, Crestwood, Petworth
- 19 Lamond Riggs, Queens Chapel, Fort Totten, Pleasant Hill
- 20 North Michigan Park, Michigan Park, University Heights
- 21 Edgewood, Bloomingdale, Truxton Circle, Eckington
- 22 Brookland, Brentwood, Langdon
- 23 Ivy City, Arboretum, Trinidad, Carver Langston
- 24 Woodridge, Fort Lincoln, Gateway
- 25 NoMa, Union Station, Stanton Park, Kingman Park
- 26 Capitol Hill, Lincoln Park
- 27 Near Southeast, Navy Yard
- 28 Historic Anacostia
- 29 Eastland Gardens, Kenilworth
- 30 Mayfair, Hillbrook, Mahaning Heights
- 31 Deanwood, Burrville, Grant Park, Lincoln Heights, Fairmont Heights
- 32 River Terrace, Benning, Greenway, Dupont Park
- 33 Capitol View, Marshall Heights, Benning Heights
- 34 Twining, Fairlawn, Randle Highlands, Penn Branch, Fort Davis Park, Fort Dupont
- 35 Fairfax Village, Naylor Gardens, Hillcrest, Summit Park
- 36 Woodland/Fort Stanton, Garfield Heights, Knox Hill
- 37 Sheridan, Barry Farm, Buena Vista
- 38 Douglas, Shipley Terrace
- 39 Congress Heights, Bellevue, Washington Highlands

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