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# Immigrant Social-Economic Landscape Changes and Ethno-Racial Border Formation in Columbus, Ohio

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# Immigrant Social-Economic Landscape Changes and Ethno-Racial Border Formation in Columbus, Ohio

## **Abstract**

In this study we analyze new immigrant gateways in the U.S. and the role African and Latino immigrants play in reinventing urban spaces while culturally and economically regenerating neighborhoods juxtaposed to orthodox city planning practices. Through this research we aim to further understand how urban space is produced at divergent scales in the era of heightened globalization. Through this understanding we analyze how the contestation over how urban space is used and consumed leads to distinctive forms in the production of urban space and the subsequent unintended formation of newly perceived cultural borders, often based upon race and ethnicity. Through our analysis we theorize who defines what the city means, and who is allowed to make decisions about how social economic space is produced and consumed in the city along the lines of border construction.

## **Keywords**

Immigrantification, city beautification, borders, Columbus OH.

# **Immigrant Social-Economic Landscape Changes and Ethno-Racial Border Formation in Columbus, Ohio**

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## **Abstract:**

This paper details parallel forms of landscape changes, urban socio-spatial economic transformation, and the unintentional creation of borders in a Midwestern city. We studied the strategies by which African and Latino immigrants instigated the economic and cultural revival of the Morse Road business corridor of Northland Neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio (See Figure 1) in a process that the investigators termed *immigrantification*. We also examined how the city government attempted to hasten revitalization in the neighborhood by creating and implementing a \$29 million city beautification and business stimulation plan along Morse Road, part of which resulted in the formation of notable cultural and ethnic borders in the landscapes of Northland and Columbus at large.

**Keywords:** Immigrantification, city beautification, borders, Columbus, OH

## **1. Introduction:**

This research analyzed how urban space is produced at divergent scales at this particular locale. It also analyzed how conflicts over the use and consumption of urban space led to distinctive forms in the production of urban space. Subsequently, unintended and newly perceived cultural borders based upon race and ethnicity developed. The investigation also sought information regarding who defines what the city means, and who is allowed to make decisions as to how socio-economic space is produced and consumed in the city along the lines of border construction.

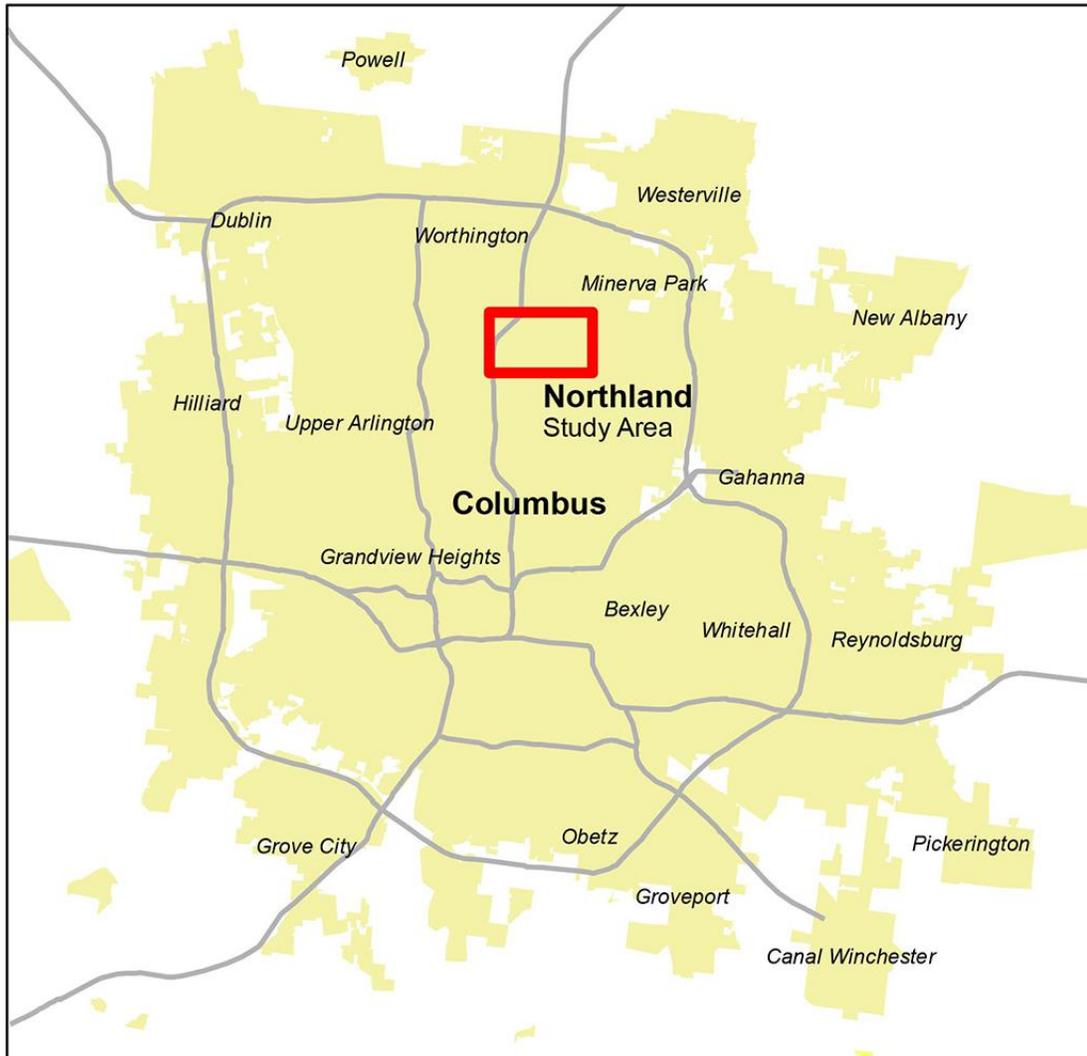


Figure 1: Columbus, Ohio with Northland designated within Box (Map courtesy of John Krygier)

## 2. Other studies:

### 2.1. Immigrant Construction of U.S. Cities:

Distinct waves of immigrants populated this country. The U.S. is a country comprised of immigrants that has historically discriminated against the newly arrived migrant—and continues to do so in the present. Discrimination occurs against each wave of newly arrived immigrants despite the fact that, historically, immigrants improve and even recover

the local economies and cultures and lower the crime-rates where they settle. Researchers argue that immigration enriches the cultural urban fabric of the U.S., while simultaneously advancing the local economies of cities and the nation (Singer, Hardwick, & Brettel. 2008).

Hence historical ethnic communities abound in cities across the country (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008). The Little Italy neighborhoods, German villages and Chinatowns found in New York, San Francisco, Vancouver, Columbus, Ohio and Milwaukee, among others, attract tourism and gentrification processes (Ford & Fusch, 1978). Ethnically themed neighborhoods are seen as a boon to the image and economic base in the cities where they are found. These historical, ethnic neighborhoods are remnants of the wave of immigration that flooded the U.S. from the 1880s until the Immigration Act of 1924 (Ford, Klevisser, & Carli, 2008). Aside from the conscious establishment of Chinatowns—which resulted from the work of city urban planners who socially produced, kitsch-consumer landscapes that facilitated the containment of Chinese immigrants in specific locales and the creation of ethnic and racial boundaries in cities (Anderson, 1987)—the ethnic neighborhoods dated from the period of intense European immigration—and were therefore white. Even the Italian, Polish, and Jewish neighborhoods of those who had once been discriminated against by the “early-comers” or the WASP power structure eventually became positively incorporated into the American national imagination.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 ushered in a migrant different from previous eras of immigration. From 1965 to the present Africans, Latin Americans, and Asians are much more likely to come to the U.S.—both with documents and clandestinely—than Europeans. In the 1980s and 1990s Latinos comprised the largest immigrant population in the U.S. Over the last decade Asians and Africans eclipsed Latinos as the largest immigrant groups entering the U.S. (Helmreich, 2013).

The polarization of wealth, ethnic disputes, civil war, human rights violations, the depletion of natural resources, and the continuation of the transfer of wealth from the Global South to the Global North have stimulated the push factors involved in international immigration. Several other factors occur in tandem with push factors from the global south: The demand for cheap labor that exists in the information economies in Global North nations combined with advances in communication and transportation technologies—which allow migrants to communicate more easily and visit with friends and family in the sending countries. The opportunity for political and economic refugee status in many Global North nations helps shelter migrants who are suffering economic hardships or are at personal risk if they remain in their sending countries.

Many of the push and pull factors affecting migration patterns can be traced from Latin America, the African Continent, and Asia to the U.S.—the contemporary nation with the most generous migration policies in the world (Helmreich, 2013). Immigration to the U.S. has accelerated during the era of 21<sup>st</sup> century heightened globalization processes. According to the U.S. Census, in 2010 the foreign born population as a percent of total population in the U.S. reached 12.9%, or roughly 40 million people. This may seem high, but still does not reach the 14.8% foreign born population that peaked in 1890. What has changed from 120 years ago are the sending countries and the places to which people immigrate. The majority of immigrants are no longer eastern and southern European. Immigrants predominantly arrive from the Global South. Major coastal cities are no longer the main ports of entry. Immigration entry ports occur across the country, including the Midwest and the South (Winders, 2012).

The immigration practices of the last 50 years—and especially over the last decade—have reconfigured the demography of the U.S. The ethnic socio-economic spaces currently under production in U.S. cities reflect the face of the contemporary immigrant. The contemporary emerging ethnic neighborhoods and the cities found across the U.S differ greatly from the historical German Village, Little Italy or Chinatown established last century. Contemporary ethnic neighborhoods consist of Latino, African, and Asian migrants. The gateways for immigrants over the last 25 years have broadened from historical points of entry such as New York or L.A. to cities across the country. Minneapolis-St. Paul, Atlanta, Nashville, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Columbus, Ohio have become 21<sup>st</sup> century immigrant entry-ports. As immigration patterns continue to shift, the demography of heartland-U.S. cities becomes more Latino, African, and Asian.

## **2.2. What Immigrants Bring and where they Settle:**

Current immigration contributes to cultural and economic stimulation in the cities where immigrants live and work. Studies show how immigrants bring an entrepreneurial spirit to U.S. cities (Kaplan & Li, 2006). Newly landed immigrants will often open their own businesses that serve their ethnic communities. This occurs as the established white-owned businesses often do not provide the goods and services that contemporary immigrant groups seek. Language barriers may also prevent immigrants from shopping at mainstream businesses. And unfortunately, because of the prejudice and racism that still exist in the U.S., many newly arrived immigrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America do not feel

comfortable in either predominantly white spaces or, for that matter, amongst the African-American community. This is resulting in the growth across U.S. cities of vibrant immigrant cultural and economic meeting places and business centers.

For the majority of immigrants, blighted commercial zones and dilapidated, suburban residential neighborhoods found in cities across the country offer the only affordable locations and opportunities to start a business and rent or buy a home. This condition has led to the emergence of what some scholars have labeled ethnic economic enclaves (Kaplan & Li, 2006). These enclaves spur the formation of networks that help recently arrived immigrants negotiate their new cultural, economic, and social environment. As immigrants begin to open businesses, contribute sales taxes, occupy vacant stores in abandoned strip malls, and employ workers to labor in the shops and stores, the creation of these ethnic economic enclaves frequently leads to the revitalization of deteriorated commercial zones and residential neighborhoods. Examples of how immigrants have restored blighted urban areas exist across the country—Persians and South Koreans in Los Angeles; Southeast Asians in the Tenderloin of San Francisco; Africans and Caribbeans in suburban Virginia; Mexicans and Central Americans in Southeast Los Angeles; and Latino and African neighborhoods in various cities in the Midwest and the Southeast (“Rethinking Southern communities,” 2006). The term “immigrantification” will describe this dynamic.

The immigrantification of blighted commercial zones and residential neighborhoods unintentionally produces cultural and ethnic borders found in the landscapes of many U.S. cities. The newly arrived immigrants produce economic and cultural landscapes, which may not always appeal to white and African American long-term U.S. residents, and create perceived fissures in the urban landscape (Jones, 2008). The fissured and alienated landscapes found between immigrant economic enclaves and long-term resident-centered neighborhoods produce identifiable, albeit not officially labeled, borders that materialize across many U.S. cities.

### **2.3. Immigrantification:**

Immigrantification often leads to the unintended construction of boundaries and borders in U.S. cities. Immigrant-driven neighborhood revitalization grows from investments in small businesses and the re-creation of vibrant urban landscapes. Immigrant revitalized urban landscapes occur more and more in first tier older suburbs of post-industrial cities. First-tier automobile dependent neighborhoods, strip malls, and shopping centers found in the suburbs developed in the 1960s

were abandoned in the 1970s through the late 1980s by white middle class consumers (Kustler, 1993). Whites fled first-tier suburbs due to desegregation policies that allowed African Americans and Latino and African immigrants to shop and live in these communities. The advent of white flight from first-tier suburbs and the growth of second- and third-tier, or outer-ring, suburbs occurred (Suarez, 1999). A “leapfrog effect” has emerged in many cities where new suburbs are built further from the lower classes and desegregated older suburbs and ‘inner-city’ neighborhoods of U.S. cities (Parker, 2006).

#### **2.4. Immigrantification: Priced out of City Centers and No Access to Affluent Suburbs:**

Bo-bo (bourgeoisie-bohemian) gentrifiers and empty nesters have reclaimed the residential and commercial spaces of the older trolley neighborhoods surrounding the Central Business District of U.S. cities (Lees, Slater, & Wylie, 2007). The cultural amenities, older housing stock, and closeness to employment of the trolley neighborhoods have beckoned the mostly white gentrifiers. This trend has increased housing values and retail space, thus preventing the immigrantification of these sites. Disinvestment in the built environment, the shuttering of businesses, and white flight from first-tier automobile suburbs have resulted in the emergence of a rent gap (Smith, 1987) in the abandoned and dilapidated automobile oriented strip malls in first-tier suburbs. Immigrants cannot afford to invest in the trendy downtown gentrified neighborhoods or the upscale suburbs. Dilapidated first tier suburbs, where the property values have declined, provide affordable venues for immigrantification to occur. Just such a phenomenon is currently underfoot in Columbus, Ohio.

### **3. Method:**

#### **3.1. Context of the Study: Northland: Columbus Ohio’s first automobile suburb:**

The neighborhood of Northland emerged as Columbus's first automobile suburb in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Construction of Northland Mall began in 1962. As the city's most popular mall, it economically and culturally anchored the community. The original GI bill<sup>1</sup> of 1944 that lasted through 1965 combined with the Housing Act of 1949 and the establishment of the post WWII mortgage system provided

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<sup>1</sup> The GI bill was passed by congress as The Serviceman’s Readjustment Act.

mortgages, business loans, and funded education and training programs almost exclusively to white males (Holloway, 1998). The GI bill and the racialized mortgage system allowed for the construction of homes and businesses in neighborhoods like Northland (Macionis & Parrilo, 2010). The GI bill, coupled with the Federal Highway Act of 1956 (funding the interstate highway system), provided the economic tools and the essential transportation infrastructure required to allow for the growth of Northland. Without the interstates and roadway systems built with federal money, automobile neighborhoods like Northland could not have grown so quickly (Dear, 2001). Indeed, State Route 161, 71, State Route 3 and the wide boulevards of Morse Road, Dublin-161 Road, and Karl Road attest to the federal and state investments in automobile infrastructure (see Figure 2). The homes, strip malls, and the main Northland Mall grew in correlation with and around the federally funded automobile infrastructure.

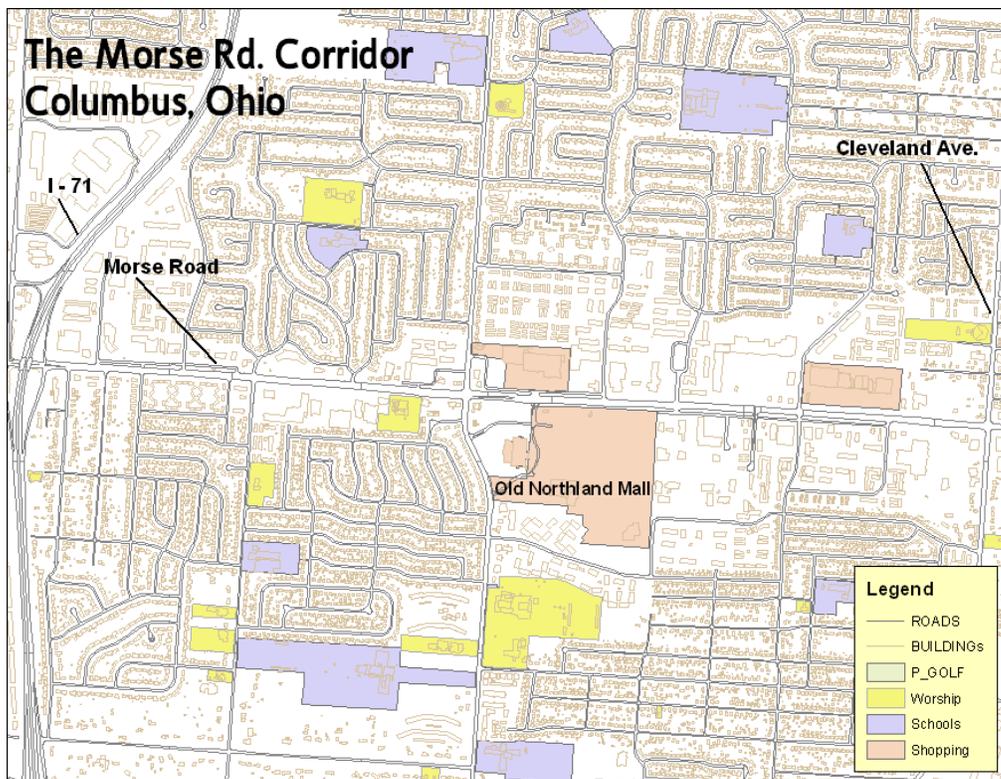


Figure 2: Map created by authors Walker and Schemenauer)

From 1962 through 1980 Northland prospered. The Columbus economy grew annually, and the neighborhood followed the pattern. Northland Mall attracted important retailers such as the Lazarus Department Store, Sears and JC Penny. The strip malls along Morse Road housed many stores including three large automobile dealerships and a key local electronics chain called Sun Television and Appliances. The auto dealerships and Sun T.V. prospered during the 1960s and 1970s, providing the cars and electro-domestics that filled the suburban homes. The commodities purchased from businesses along Morse Road by Northland residents represented the comfortable, modern, middle to upper middle class homogenous lives that people aspired to. Many Protestant and non-denominational churches emerged in Northland. The Lutheran Church, Methodist Church, and the Northland Church of Christ represented the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant parishioners who lived in Northland.

### **3.2. How and why Northland Changed:**

From 1980 through 2002 Northland began to experience an economic and cultural shift, and after 2005 the neighborhood was reconfigured by immigrantification. Several key factors played a role in the changes to the socio-cultural and economic features of Northland. The construction of other large malls in Columbus redirected shopping away from the Northland Mall. Sales at the mall and surrounding businesses subsequently declined. Perhaps more importantly, changes to Columbus's school district boundaries and mortgage lending practices, the closing of high schools on the north side of Columbus, eventual white flight from the Northland suburb, and subsequent immigrantification fueled socio-economic landscape changes and ethnic-cultural border formation in Northland. These processes coincided with the closing of Northland mall in 2002.

Columbus City Schools did not desegregate until the 1980. Nor did the advent of forced busing—a controversial program of assigning and transporting students to schools to overcome the effects of residential segregation on local school demographics—begin until that year. The 1954 *Brown versus the board of education* court ruling made segregation in public schools illegal. Nevertheless, by 1977 Columbus schools were still segregated by the neighborhoods they served (Jacobs, 1998). Federal District Judge Robert M. Duncan ruled in *Penisk v. Columbus Board of Education* that schools in Columbus were segregated and that the Columbus Board of Education knowingly kept white and African American students apart from each other by creating school boundaries that sent African American students to predominantly African American schools

and white students to predominantly white schools. The ruling resulted in forced busing to desegregate all schools in the Columbus Public School district (Jacobs, 1998). Busing met with outright protests in many cities (Macionis & Parrilo, 1998). In Columbus many white residents, to avoid sending their children to school with African Americans, moved to suburbs outside of the Columbus School district.

Unlike most large, northern cities, the city of Columbus is not surrounded by a ring of suburbs. Beginning in the mid-late 1970s the City of Columbus began to grow rapidly. This meant that land surrounding the city in the 1970s was poised for development. The City of Columbus occupies much of Franklin County, and, in the late 1970s, unlike Cleveland and Cincinnati (and most northeastern American cities), Columbus was not hemmed in by a ring of already developed suburbs or incorporated municipalities that would not curtail its aerial expansion.

Consequently, Columbus was able to use its state mandated control of freshwater supplies throughout the Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and its ability to control sewage treatment in much of the MSA to aggressively annex developable open space (primarily farmland) in Franklin County. Furthermore, because it could control potable water supplies to many incorporated towns in Franklin County and surrounding counties, it could control their annexation actions as well. That was because those areas could not annex open, developable land without agreement from Columbus to extend potable water infrastructure to the newly annexed land. This easy control of annexation, particularly in Franklin County, also enabled Columbus's control of suburban development (Fusch, 2009). In addition and importantly, to encourage further development on open land, Columbus lobbied the State Board of Education. Rather than requiring the newly annexed land to be incorporated into the Columbus School District, which would normally be the policy (Fusch, 2009), Columbus gained permission for newly annexed land to retain the structure of the rural or small town school districts in which they already existed.

These annexations, the water and sewerage infrastructure, and school board policies fundamentally allowed the City of Columbus to “get around Brown” (a reference to the famous Supreme Court, *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision), as Jacobs noted in 1998. The policies have led to massive suburban growth, white flight from central Columbus, and public school segregation, from the late 1970s to the present day. Currently the city of Columbus encloses more than nine separate school districts, the residents of which enjoy Columbus water and sewerage infrastructure and Columbus fire and police protection, but in nine of them the residents pay property taxes in support of these separate school

districts, not the Columbus School District. As a result the public school systems of the Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) remain highly segregated—de facto segregation and the maintenance of ethnic and racial border remains the norm in Columbus.

White flight from the suburb of Northland to newly developing suburbs in annexed fringes of Columbus correlated with a depopulation of schools in Northland. Before the *Penisk v. Columbus Board of Education* decision, the district had a peak of 110,725 students enrolled in 1971 and operated 20 high schools. As many parents moved their children out of the Columbus district to the suburbs to avoid desegregation, enrollment fell. Declining enrollment in the Columbus School District forced two high school closings on the north side in 1982. In the post *Penisk v. Columbus Board of Education* period, a correlation emerged between depopulation, school closures, and white flight.

### **3.3. Columbus as destination city:**

While other cities across Central Ohio and the Midwest hemorrhaged jobs in the face of factory closings during the post-industrial era, Columbus managed to achieve a minimal-to-healthy level of growth. A diversified economic sector that has never been exclusively reliant on industrial manufacturing, steel, or mining has allowed Columbus' continued growth in the post-industrial era and through the great recession of 2007. The city's economy is based upon finance, insurance, the medical industry, higher education, government, some start-ups, distribution warehouses and centers, and construction.

Columbus has a highly educated workforce. Large national corporations such as Nationwide Insurance Company, American Electric Power, Wendy's, White Castle, The Limited, Abercrombie & Fitch, among others, have their headquarters in the city. Columbus's location, fiber optic infrastructure, and inexpensive yet high standard of living have attracted JP Morgan Chase to relocate 20,000 jobs to the city. Because Columbus is located within a 650 mile drive from 2/3 of the U.S. population the city had witnessed the development of a large A.H. industrial brewery, the country's largest grocery distribution center (Kroger), and dozens of other distribution and warehouse facilities. The advent of jobs in construction and the service sector has correlated with the creation of employment in finance and distribution.

### 3.4. Latinos and Africans in Columbus:

In the Mid 1990s African and Latino immigrants began to arrive to Columbus. The concurrent African and Latino migration had much to do with the pull factors (mentioned above) that attract labor to the city. The push factors differ greatly between African and Latinos who chose to come to the city. Currently, migrant patterns to Columbus have been well established. Africans—primarily from Somalia, but also from Central and West Africa—and Latinos, largely from Mexico, with communities also from Central America and the Caribbean, and South America contribute greatly to the cultural diversity and economic wellbeing of Columbus (New Americans in Ohio, 2013).

According to the Immigration Policy Center and the Somali Community Association of Ohio, Somali immigrants first began to arrive to Columbus in 1994. The Somali Diaspora began after the dissolution of the Somali State in 1991. The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement reports that mass Somali refugee settlement to the U.S. began in 1992. Somalis did not initially come as political refugees to Columbus. According to Refugee Resettlement Watch, Somalis first began to immigrate to the United States from Somalia (or more predominantly the refugee camps of Kenya) to Virginia and Minnesota.

Beginning in 1994, Somali refugees living in the greater Washington D.C. metropolitan area in the suburbs of Virginia began to look for new settlement sites that provided better paying menial jobs and more affordable housing. Several Somalis moved from Virginia to Columbus, where they found warehouse and factory jobs and housing within their means. The initial Somali settlers in Columbus established the migration pattern. Columbus has since proven to be a popular destination for Somali migrants and refugees. Today Ohio has the second largest Somali population in the U.S. with an estimated 38,000 Somali immigrants and refugees living in the Columbus metropolitan area. In addition, 200 immigrants can be expected to locate to Columbus monthly within the next four years (*Guide Toolkits*, 2014).

In contrast, the story of Latino immigration to Columbus is difficult to document. Many Mexican and other Latino immigrants came to Central Ohio as clandestine migrants, without the documentation of their Somali counterparts. Historically Mexicans came to Ohio to harvest beets and onions and to work on the railroads, and Puerto Ricans migrated to Cleveland and Toledo searching for factory work (Barry, 2010). The Mexican itinerant farm workers did not form permanent settlements in central Ohio. We have found scant official documentation describing how and when Latinos, especially Mexicans, began to migrate to Columbus.

Information gathered from personal interviews and anecdotal comments from business owners and migrants suggests the Mexican and Latino population grew quickly in the first half of the 1990s.

Mexican and Latino migrants found construction work in the building boom of the 1990s. As previously described, Columbus aggressively annexed what became suburban tracts through the 1980s and early 1990s. The newly annexed land provided the space to grow new malls and the fringe suburbs that housed Columbus' growing population as well as the white-flight-residents fleeing the first tier automobile suburbs. A construction boom occurred.

Initially, Mexicans and other Latin Americans did not migrate directly to Columbus from their country of origin. Mexicans migrated from Chicago to work in the construction boom. Chicago has the second largest Mexican-American community in the U.S. Chicago still attracts migrants. According to personal interviews, Mexicans traveling from the well-established community of Chicago to work the tobacco harvests in Kentucky and North Carolina stumbled upon employment opportunities at construction sites while traveling through Columbus. The construction boom in Columbus provided jobs for the migrants. The first initial laborers established the migration patterns. Mexicans began to migrate not just from Chicago but also from southern California. Eventually migrants began to emigrate directly from their homes in Mexico. As the population swelled, stores opened to provide goods and services to Latinos.

As Latino immigrantification took hold and business owners began to wield economic power, Non-Government Organization emerged to help the burgeoning community. In 2000, LEON—Latino Empowerment Outreach Network—opened its offices to help Latino residents and business owners. The Latino community also counts on the Hispanic Chamber of commerce whose goals are to serve as a resource to connect Hispanic businesses and professionals with the Central Ohio Business Community.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latino population in Ohio grew from 1.3% in 1990 to 3.2% or 364,018 in 2011. This figure represents only those who responded to the census. One can infer from previous studies that undocumented migrants often avoid census forms. The overall Latino population in Columbus is difficult to estimate. The city estimates that approximately 40,000 Latinos reside in Central Ohio. Jorge Avena, director of the local Spanish language radio station La Mega 103.1, claims the population of Latinos residing in central Ohio is 70,000— both documented and undocumented Spanish speaking Latinos. Liborio Alcuter, who owns 18 Mega-Michoacana grocery stores in Central Ohio, puts the figure at 50,000 (personal interview).

According to a study titled *New Americans in Ohio: The political and economic power of immigrants* (2013), Latinos and Africans have a positive economic impact on Columbus, Ohio. According to the Immigration Policy Center, the 2012 purchasing power of Columbus' Latinos totaled \$1 billion—an increase of 432% since 1990. Somalis own 400 businesses in Central Ohio. The overall purchasing power of immigrants in Columbus is \$9 billion. Businesses owned by Africans and Latinos employ more than 15,000 people. Undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy through sales taxes, gas taxes, rents and undeclared taxes paid to the city, county, and state. If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Ohio, the state would lose \$4.0 billion in economic activity, \$1.8 billion in gross state product, and approximately 25,019 jobs, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time.

### **3.5. Where Africans and Latinos Live: White-flight and Immigrantification:**

Census data from 2000 to 2010 illustrate that Franklin County and Columbus are becoming racially and ethnically diverse showing a disproportionate growth of minority population over this ten-year time period. According to the U.S. Census, Franklin County's population grew by 8.8% from 2000 to 2010, and Columbus grew by 10.7%. "Racial Minorities"—consisting of Latinos, Africans and Asians—fueled the majority of the growth as there was significant growth among racial and ethnic groups in Franklin County between 2000 and 2010. In 2010, 9.6% of Franklin County residents (111,686 persons) were born outside the United States. This figure represents a 73.2% increase in foreign-born residents since 2000 (64,487 persons). The overall Latino population in Franklin County increased 130.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and American Community Survey 2010). Amazingly, the Latino population more than doubled over this ten-year period. During the same period the white population declined 1.6% across the county.

As previously described, over the last several decades, the city has significantly expanded its boundaries through annexation. Unlike many other metropolitan areas, where the major city is landlocked by suburban jurisdictions, annexation has allowed the City of Columbus to expand to areas that are more suburban in nature. This has essentially created two cities within Columbus: One an urban central city that has experienced population decline since the 1950s and another that has experienced growth more akin to that in the suburbs. The first tier automobile suburbs, or urban central city, primarily found inside the I-270 outer belt (Figure 3) witnessed a decline of whites and an increase in minorities, especially

Latinos, but the white population increased in the newer suburban areas of the city. There is a spatial correlation between the areas where the white population decreases and the Latino and African population increases in Columbus and Franklin County.

Figure 3 shows the areas of white flight, or decreases in white population contrasted with suburban white growth. According to the U.S. Census, the white population decreased 3.1% in the older urban core between 2000 and 2010, but the minority population increased 16.1% (Columbus Urban League, 2012). Important to this study is to note that the majority of white flight occurred in Northland (but also in Linden and the East side). The areas of study, Northland and the Morse Road Corridor, witnessed white population decreases at above 20%.

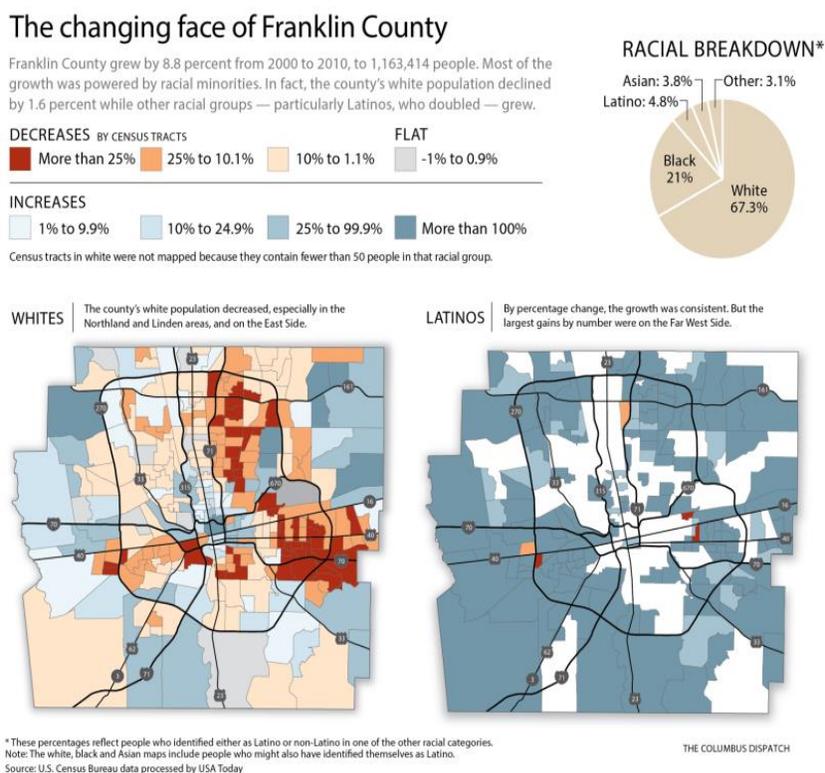


Figure 3: White and Latino spatial demographic changes (Map courtesy of the *Columbus Dispatch*; permission granted for reproduction in this article)

The second part of Figure 3 illustrates Latino population by percentage change. Note the correlation between white flight in Northland and the increase in Latino population. The Latino population increased by

Foreign born population in Franklin County by neighborhood or municipality, 2007–2011

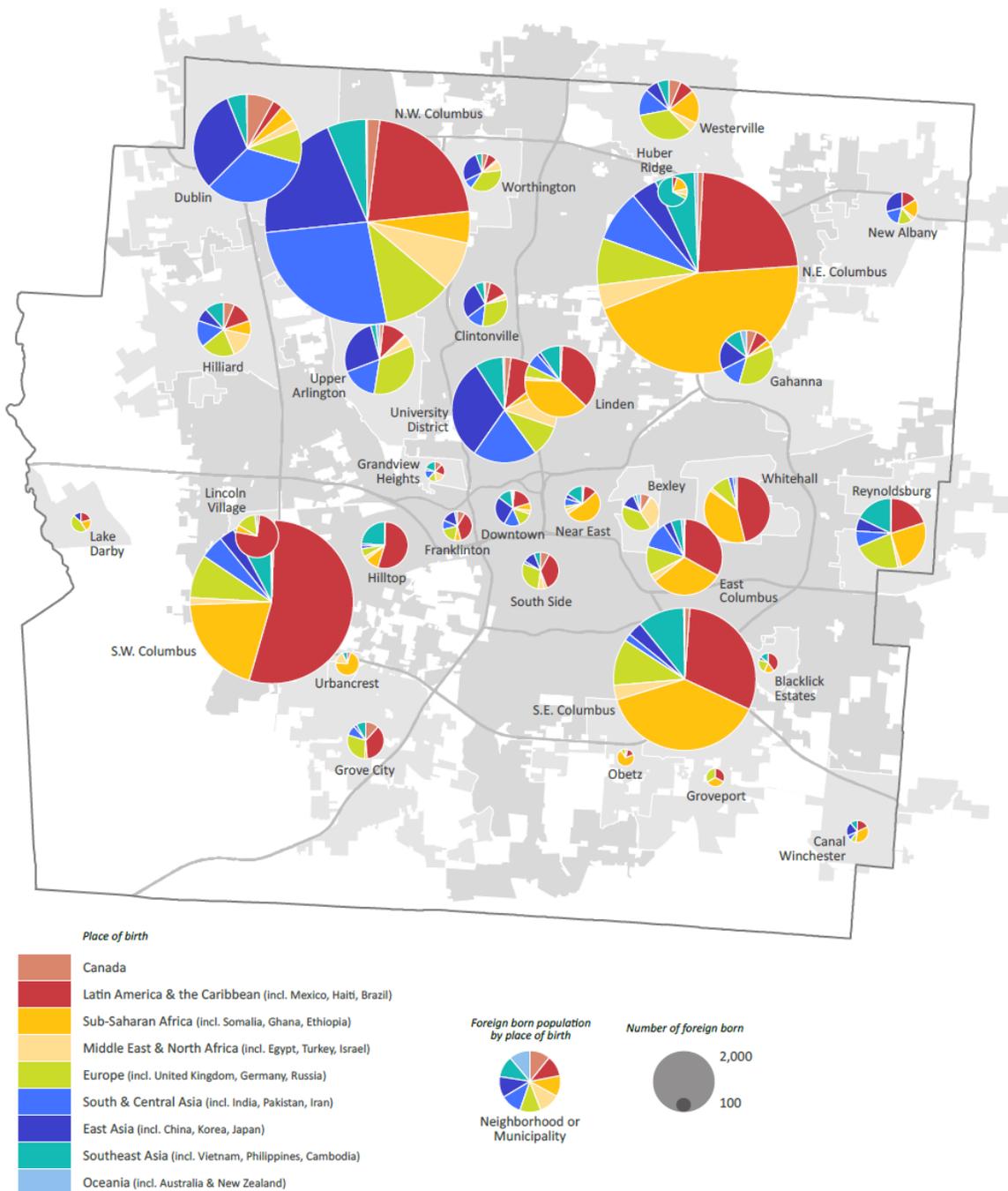


Figure 4: Map courtesy of Columbus Partners (Permission granted for reproduction in this article)

more than 100% in Northland and along the Morse Road corridor, the site of immigrantification as witnessed by African and Latino owned businesses and a vibrant cultural milieu in the area. The Northland white population, however, decreased by more than 20%.

A spatial correlation can be implied regarding white flight and the growth of the Somali community in Columbus. U.S. Census data does not single out specifically the Somali population, which is categorized under African Immigrants. Community Research Partners, a Columbus Based non-governmental organization (NGO), used local administrative data such as birth certificates and student records to spatially determine the location of Franklin County's foreign born population, including Sub Saharan Africans and Somalis. The study aimed to learn more about this important segment of Columbus's population.

Figure 4 depicts where the Community Research Partners determined where the foreign born population lives. The map shows where Sub-Saharan Africans and Somalis reside and neighborhoods where Somali businesses are found. Again, there is a spatial correlation between white flight and a cluster of Somali population and businesses in Northland.

These maps show that whites moved to the outer fringe suburbs, but first tier suburbs are becoming more demographically diverse. The maps also provide an illustration of borders. The ethnic-racial areas of Latinos and Somalis in the urban core areas juxtaposed with the heavily white populated suburban city demarcate the racially and ethnically cultured borders found in the urban landscape of Columbus.

### **3.6. Landscape Changes on Morse Road: Before and After**

As described above Northland Neighborhood began to decline by the 1990s. In 2002, Northland Mall closed. The mall was mostly demolished in 2004. The only parts that remain are the former anchor stores of Lazarus, and JC Penney, which were converted to offices for the Ohio Department of Taxation and a local theater group (Figures 5-10).



Figure 5: Northland Mall in the late 1990s. (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Richard Fusch)

The once fashionable mall could no longer compete with trendier malls built in and around the newly emerging second- and third-tier suburbs. The socio-economic and demographically changed population of Northland could no longer support the mall's existence. During interviews with long-term white Northland residents spoke of how they began to perceive the mall as unsafe. The demographic diversity of Northland was changing. Teenagers from this diverse sector began to shop and hang out at the mall. To whites these changes gave the mall an insecure aura. Many long-term residents either moved out of Northland or drove to shop at newer more demographically homogenous, white malls. The mall had functioned as a major economic and social anchor for the Northland Neighborhood. White flight and the closing of the Northland Mall resulted in the decline of the surrounding neighborhood associated businesses.

With the mall gone and strip mall store fronts closing, the Morse Road Corridor witnessed increases in vacancies. Property values, sales, and employee tax revenues from the Morse Road area plummeted.



Figure 6: The Lazarus Department Store at the Northland Mall, late 1990s (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Richard Fusch)

With the tax base diminished, Morse Road's infrastructure began to suffer. With the final razing of the mall, which had once been "the place to shop and socialize in Northland and greater Columbus" (personal interview), Northland no longer provided employment possibilities, revenue to the city, or sites for cultural enjoyment.

The site of the mall shifted, from a landscape of Middle American consumerism and homogeneity, to a visual example of the results of irresponsible suburbanization, rapid mall construction, and white flight. The 1960s indoor mall, the wide boulevard style lanes with no medians, no sidewalks, or no green spaces did not promote walkability. By the late 1990s early 2000s, the early automobile suburb was in economic decay. Whites had fled. What had served as the most important business corridor on the north side of Columbus for 40 years now needed rehabilitation. The city concerned itself with the annexation of new territories and the construction of new malls. Many long term residents expressed "how sad it is to see what has happened here" (personal interview). What would become of Northland and Morse Road?



Figure 7: Inside Northland Mall just days before destruction. (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Richard Fusch)



Figure 8: Northland shuttered (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Richard Fusch)



Figure 9: The razing of Northland (Photograph Courtesy of Dr. Richard Fusch)



Figure 10: The social and cultural anchor of Northland is gone (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Richard Fusch)

### 3.7. Immigrantification of Morse Road:

By as early as 2005, changes in storefronts, the people walking across Morse Road's wide lanes and shopping in newly opened business became apparent. Immigrant entrepreneurs opened stores and restaurants in vacant buildings and strip malls, which culturally and economically spurred urban revitalization-and-immigrantification. Since 2002, the Franklin County auditor's office has issued about 180 new vendor permits in the mile-long stretch of Morse between the abandoned and demolished mall site at Karl Road and Cleveland Avenue (see Figure 2). The list of permits is heavily dominated by African and Latino names. Also important—and a fact the city took notice of early on—was the 75% tax base increase on Morse Road during the same period. Empty storefronts and strip malls that had once housed Sun T.V. Electronics, automobile dealerships, and Dairy Queens became Mexican stores and restaurants, Halal Butcher Shops, and an African themed Global Mall. The payment for business licenses and property, employment, and sales taxes increased quickly in this economically dilapidated part of town as immigrant economic activity accelerated. A reporter who became interested in the area's revitalization wrote in the *Columbus Dispatch*:

Travel no farther than Morse Road to witness the melting pot Columbus is becoming. Once one of the city's premier commercial corridors that featured national retail chain stores, Morse Road is beginning to more closely resemble the immigrant populations that have moved into the area in the past decade. Somali, West African and Latino restaurants and stores have opened in buildings that businesses left vacant after Northland Mall closed in 2002.

Landscape changes in the built environment are very apparent at the former site of Sun Television. The Ohio-based Sun T.V and Appliances functioned as a department retailer of consumer electronics, home appliances, and office equipment. Many long term residents warmly remember shopping at Sun T.V. for gifts and household appliance and were sad to see the store closed in 1998 during the decline of retail activity on Morse Road (personal interview).

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Figure 11a: Before and after photos. Above, previous home of Sun T.V., late 1990s (Photograph courtesy of Dr. Richard Fusch)

The photo above shows a shuttered Sun T.V. Appliance store. The locale remained vacant from 1998 until the opening of the Mega-Michoacana in 2005 (Figure 11b). Liborio Alcuter put into place his entrepreneurial immigrant spirit opening a business at this locale to create a vibrant economic and cultural hub. The store has bakery, butcher, deli, produce, and housewares departments, along with money wire service and a restaurant. He greatly refurbished the building in order to install the infrastructure for the elaborate services he offers. He employs 60 full time workers at the store on Morse Road. Since 2005 he has opened eight other La Michoacana stores across central Ohio. The store on Morse Road contributes to property tax funds, employee and sales tax funds, plus the city's over-all economy. In addition, the store has become an anchor retail location of the area Latino population; and, it offers goods and services to the African (largely Somali) community as well.



Figure 11b: Before and after photos. The photo above shows Mega-Michoacana that now functions at the former same site of the Sun TV. (Photograph by Jack Schemenauer)

The Mega-Michoacana store functions as a site of interconnectivity that crosses international borders—borders found across the city, and borders that cross the psyche and individual body. Food and nourishment are key to creating connections with people and places. At the Mega-Michoacana, a migrant from Mexico, for example, can find products from her home country, ask for them in Spanish, see people who look like her and talk similarly, find newspapers and magazines from her homeland, purchase phone cards to call home, and send much needed remittances to friends and family. In today's world of hyper-consumerism many products



Figure 12: Interior of Mega-Michoacana. (Photograph by David Walker)

from Latin America are also available from a U.S. supermarket, but the spatial layout, combinations of colors, and piped-in music, smells, and sounds create an ambience that provides respite from a Midwestern, Anglo built environment (see image above, Figure 12). If she happens to be

undocumented, the Mega-Michoacana provides further services. The announcement board adjacent to the entrance publicizes housing, entertainment, car repair, child-care services, legal advice, spiritual help, healthcare, and job opportunities. These services can be daunting to obtain when credit checks and social security cards are required and linguistic and cultural borders prevent understanding and communication. The Mega-Michoacana is a 'buffer-border' within the cultural Anglo milieu of a Midwestern city. At this site she can cross international borders, sensory borders and negotiate the ethnic racial borders of the city.

Somalis and other Africans have reclaimed multiple retail spaces. From Karl Road to Cleveland Avenue the landscape has been transformed by immigrantification. Bustling Halal Butcher shops, clothing stores, coffee houses, and restaurants have converted the strip into a vibrant economic and cultural hub, not just for immigrants, but for all Columbus residents.



Figure 13: Global mall (Photograph by Jack Schemenauer)

When large box stores shut-down, often times they will remain empty until being razed (Brunn, 2007). The massive size of large box stores prevents

smaller retailers from taking over the space. Ahmed Mohamed, a Somali entrepreneur, found a way around this size dilemma. He converted a former T.J. Maxx site and partitioned the large retail space into thirty separate stores and renamed the location Global Mall. He rents each retail space to a vendor (Figures 13-14).



Figure 14: Inside the Global Mall. (Photograph by Jack Schemenauer)

The Global Mall now houses multiple retailers including a café specializing in Somali sweet teas, coffee and pastry; a jewelry that store sells specialized Somali 21 and 22 karat gold; a Somali arts store/museum; an adult literacy and education center that offers classes in English; a small mosque; a butcher shop; and a Somali community financial center that sends money overseas and organizes interest free loans through a Somali system called Ayuta (Figure 15).

When the mall first opened, the Somali businessman's vision was questioned. "The place was a ghost town," he said. "People were asking me, 'Ahmed, are you sure it's going to work?'" (personal interview). The stalls are full, and now there is a waiting list of retailers.

Ahmed is convinced that the success of the Global Mall has attracted other business (personal interview). County permits show that a clothing and auto parts stores, a Chinese buffet, and an Aldi store opened



Figure 15: Somali Community Financial Center located in the Global Mall. (Photograph by Jack Schemenauer)

after it. Ahmed’s conviction has held true. Indeed, according to Michael Hurwitz, vice president of St. Louis-based Walpert Properties Inc., companies like Aldi, Inc. look at demographic changes and the establishment of business when deciding to open new stores. Walpert manages more than 30 strip malls in Columbus, including the one where Global Mall is located. Hurwitz claims that ethnic businesses created a ricochet effect, prompting other immigrants to open businesses in the area such as a pharmacy, a luggage store, and a clothing store.

### **3.8. City beautification and development plan:**

The Northland Area Businesses Association and the department of neighborhood planning of the city of Columbus began to take notice of immigrantification (see Figures 16 and 17).

The president of the Northland Area Business Association—with a “Shop Northland First motto”—has been the general manager of a Yogi’s

Hoagies on Morse Road near Karl Road since 1977. That enterprise is one of the few businesses that endured during Morse Road's decline. He said



Figure 16: Northland Area Business Association banner on Morse Road (Photograph by David Walker)

that the association is trying to reshape Morse Road's image as a destination and not just a neighborhood convenience district. "The immigrant community is going to play a big part of that...They generate a new type of customer" (personal interview). Immigrants are being noticed as contributing to the improvement of the business corridor.

The city had been apprehensive over the decline of the area and the rapid demographic changes that occurred from the late 1990s through the early 2000s. The city began to examine policy actions to revitalize the declining business corridor, but it took nearly a decade to begin renovation of Morse Road.

According to president of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, by 2010 "There were concerns about the future economic vitality of that area of Columbus because it wasn't just any mall, but one that defined the entire business district and that neighborhood" (personal interview). Thus, from 2008, roughly three years after the immigrantification processes began, through 2012, the city spent \$29 million constructing sidewalks, updating the sewage and drainage systems, removing graffiti, relocating a

inserting flags and other signs to help rebrand the business corridor. It is important to note that city investment correlated with police precinct headquarters to Morse Road, building medians, creating green spaces, and



Figure 17: Northland Streetscape Rehabilitation, 2013. (Photograph by David Walker)

Inserting flags and signs to help rebrand the business corridor. It is important to note that city investment correlated with immigrantification but was not necessarily spurred by it. Nevertheless, the two processes are closely intertwined, albeit immigrantification noticeably began in earnest a full six years prior to the implementation of the city beautification and redevelopment plan.

### **3.9. Participants:**

A total of 320 informants participated. The breakdown of the groups by gender and ethnicity is as follows: 80 white long term residents (40 females and 40 males), 80 African American long term residents (40 females, 40 males), 80 Latino/a-Mexicano/a Immigrants (40 females, 40 males), and 80 Sub Saharan African-Somali Immigrants (40 females, 40 males). All participants sorted 19 images of Morse Road (Figure 18) according to their preference of what they wanted to see in their

community: a) socio-economically immigrant transformed spaces or, b) images of sites that had been transformed through the city's \$29 million dollar beautification and business improvement program.



Figure 18: Example images that participants sorted (Photos by David Walker and Jack Schemenauer)

For example, participant could look at an image of Northland Business Improvement Flags in the beautified, landscaped medium and strongly disagree with the flags' being in the Northland Community. A participant could rank an image of a Halal Butcher Shop as something that they would strongly agree with being in the Northland Community. After sorting the 19 images, participants were asked to explain why they ranked the pictures



the Northland Community. Each image-photo-card has a number on the opposite side of the card (see Figure 20). Once a participant finished the sorting process, we filled in the number of each image onto a sheet of paper with a replica of sorting chart to document how each participant had sorted. Results of the picture sorts were then analyzed using Q Method software to learn about the preferences across race, ethnicity and gender.

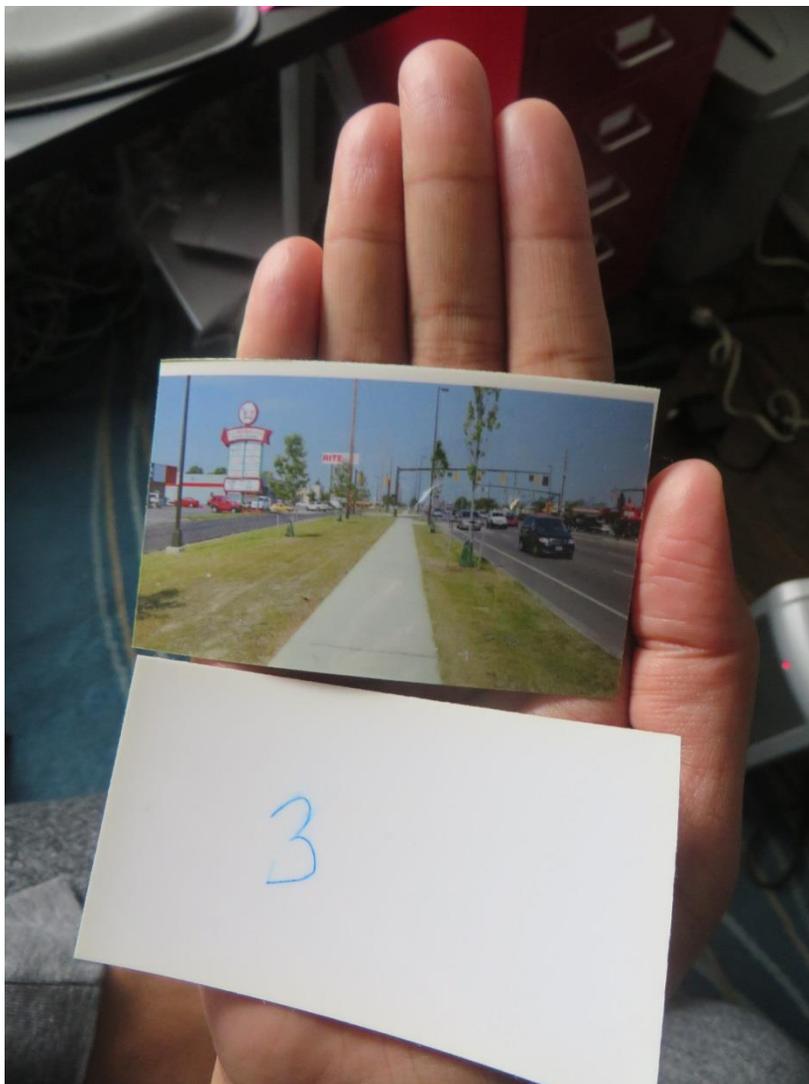


Figure 20: An image sorted by participants with number on reverse side for documenting and cataloguing how participants had sorted (Photograph by David Walker )

We conducted our research from June, 2012 through August, 2014. We recruited participants and administered the sorting process at multiple locales along Morse Road and in the Northland Community including, the North Community Lutheran Church; the Mega Michoacana Market; the Mega-Michoacana Restaurant; the Global Mall; the Columbus Public Library's Northland Branch (see Figure 21); and the Northland YMCA. We also requested pedestrians walking along Morse Road to sort images. Participants were chosen at random. Upon arriving at one of the aforementioned locales we placed the sorting chart out on a table, chair, or bench and simply asked participants to sort the images.

The sorting poster (see Figure 21) takes up half a table space. Once we had established ourselves in a locale, participants often came to question us about what we were doing, initially thinking the sorting poster was perhaps a bingo game or some form of lottery. The amount of time spent sorting the images varied from participant to participant. Usually the participants sort the images in less than ten minutes. The more verbose or concerned participants spent up to 30 to 45 minutes. The participants were not remunerated for sorting images. Many refused to sort. All of those who did made comments while sorting and answered our question as to why they sorted the way they had, effectively participating in a non-structured interview.

For the structured interviews we chose agents who had actively participated in the decision about landscape changes along the Morse Road Corridor in order to learn about the active production of urban space in Northland. We conducted 17 structured interviews. We recorded and transcribed each interview. We interviewed 12 immigrant business owners; Mark Dravilas from the Columbus City Planning Department; the community liaison from The North Community Lutheran Church; Roseann Hick President of the Northland Business Association; the public relations officer from the Morse Road Columbus Police Precinct; and Dennis Frits from Krieger Ford on Morse Road. Each interview occurred at the informants' place of business, work, or worship and lasted approximately one hour.

### **3.10. Materials and Procedure:**

The research design is a mixed methods (qualitative/quantitative) case study to investigate the socio-spatial changes and border formation occurring in the Northland Neighborhood and how these changes have evolved and been resisted. The mixed method approach facilitated identification of who defines what the city means for multiple and

disparate groups, and who is allowed to make decisions about how social economic space is produced and consumed in the city along the lines of border construction.

Qualitative methods included participant research/observation, structured interviews, and open-ended interviews, and archival research on the history of Northland, Columbus City Schools, and U.S. Census data. These produced information from Latino and African immigrants, immigrant business owners, city officials, church pastors, policemen, neighborhood associations, consumers, and homeowners. The quantitative method is the Q method— a form of



Figure 21: Co-author Schemenauer working with participants sorting images at the public library (Photograph by David Walker)

factor analysis that seeks to identify commonalities of opinion from diverse, subjectively sorted text pictures (Robins, 2004).

We triangulated the data from the formal interviews with business owners, the city official, church representative, the car dealership owner, the police public relations officer and the director of the Northland Business improvement center with the Q method results and information gathered from the informal interviews and conversations with the sorters. This information allowed us to assemble how immigrantification occurred

juxtaposed to the city's beautification and infrastructure program, what the landscape changes and socio-economic transformations signify to and for multiple and disparate groups, and who is allowed to make decisions about how social economic space is produced and consumed in the city along the lines of border construction

For the Q-method task, members of the study groups sorted images of Morse Road (Figures 23 and 24). The group members sorted images according to preference of socio-economically immigrant-transformed spaces coupled with images of sites that had been transformed through the city's \$29 million beautification and business improvement program. This method helps to analyze individual subjectivity and assess multiple realities. Q method is exploratory and is designed to study the subjectivity (multiple realities) of groups (Hawthorne, Krygier, & Kwan, 2008). Long-term white or African-American Northland residents, African immigrants, and Latino immigrants have different as well as overlapping realities—and therefore ways of producing, consuming, and perceiving urban space. Each Q method result identified differences and commonalities, which strengthened existing spatial data on immigrantification and perceptions of urban space in the Northland Neighborhood. The Q method enabled comparison of patterns of opinion within the entire tested group and extraction of significant factors or commonalities among the participants. There are no predetermined groups: The method seeks to identify groups. The Q method functions well in identifying the amorphous quantitative perceptions of the residents in Northland regarding immigrantification, the Columbus Beautification Program along Morse Road, the creation of the Morse Road Special Improvement District, and the subsequent production of borders across urban space.

During the sorting activity, the researchers had asked informants to sort according to what they wanted to see in their community. Q method methodology and interpretations of results were guided by the conversations (informal interviews) with the informants. As informants sorted landscape images, the researchers asked participants to discuss what they saw in each image and to explain why they ranked the images the way they did. This methodology provided a reason to be in the field. The means—asking people to sort and thus participating in activates in the cultural and economic landscapes of Morse Road—were equally if not more important than the final results.

Importantly, the act of sorting images provided the researchers an entrée to the diverse actors found in the community. Asking the informants to sort images gave the researchers (two white males) access to a multiplicity of different informants temporarily negotiating language, gender, racial and ethnic boundaries. The method enabled identification of

the interstitial spaces in which it was appropriate to inquire and learn among the informants. In asking people to sort images employing The Q Method we recognized and attempted to come to terms with issues concerning, power, multiple voices, and positionality in regards to socio-economic status, geographical positioning, ethnicity, and gender. That is, the sorting of images permitted a temporary suspension of our positionality—our social position in relation to the people from whom we were gathering information. The interactions with participants and the stories they told us provided invaluable material for the case study (Robins, 2004).

## **5. Results and Discussion:**

Interviews with immigrant business owners indicated that they understand the benefit of street improvements and beautification, for which they are taxed to maintain. The businessmen who owned property approved the infrastructure investments and the creation of a special improvement district along Morse Road. However, many wanted to have more control over how the money was spent. Renters tended not to approve of the money spent on beautification. The multiple actors in Northland have distinct ways of producing and perceiving the economic and cultural landscape changes on Morse Road. The sorting of images helped the researchers learn these distinctions through the results of sorts and the stories people told.

The researchers analyzed 320 sorts based on the statement, “I would like to see this in Northland.” The results of analysis indicate that the participants’ sorts were diverse and complex with no consistent pattern to indicate what each participating group wanted to see in Northland. Yet, rather unexpected patterns emerged with divergent groups sharing similar views, albeit for distinct reasons. Three major trends emerged.

The most representative and defining factor shows that across the divergent groups the city beautification and police presence (represented by the new police precinct headquarters on Morse Road) presence are appreciated over immigrant landscape changes. The conversations with sorters from each group revealed safety concerns felt across all groups. Although the rate of violent crime is down across U.S. cities, crime is a major concern among city dwellers. This holds true for Northland residents. Curious to this particular factor were the overlapping preferences found among Latina and African female immigrants and white males for police and beautification landscapes. Latinas and Africans who used public transportation and walked to and from work, to shop, and for

child care and school purposes, spoke highly of the city's investment in sidewalks, bus stops, and green spaces. They even liked the banners the city raised with the goal of rebranding the neighborhood. They also approved of police presence. They stated that they trusted police in the community as they believed in accountability in the U.S. (a very different sentiment than expressed by young whites and African Americans of all ages). The police presence made them feel safe. The white men approved of the orderly spaces created by city beautification and viewed the police presence as a way to monitor and discipline the minority/majority demographic (i.e., Latinos and Africans) who now so predominantly utilized the private and public spaces of Morse Road.

Immigrant entrepreneurs Liborio Alcuter and Ahmed Mohamed expressed concern that the city beautification did not promote ethnic businesses. The city had not consulted local business owners on how to promote more traffic or encourage more commerce on Morse Road, or include Latino or Somali signs on the banners strewn along Morse Road to promote the re-branding of the special improvement district. The high cost (\$400,000) to remove graffiti from a railroad overpass at State Route 71 and Morse Road (see Figure 22)—which effectively functions as a gateway to the immigrant business sector—proved to be particularly contentious among immigrants.



Figure 22: Site of graffiti removal (Photograph by David Walker)

Across other communities in Columbus the city has dealt with graffiti problems by encouraging community crafted murals depicting the commerce and social activity of the neighborhood. Community organizers (including the Northland Business Association) proposed the concept of a mural on the railroad crossing depicting Latino and African social and cultural life along Morse Road. That did not come to fruition.<sup>2</sup> To the immigrant entrepreneurs, the final price tag of city beautification (\$29 million) concerned them greatly—so much investment in the built environment without their input?

The second factor was appreciation of the presence of immigrant businesses in the landscape. Across groups the sorters valued the businesses found on Morse. (Overall, the groups do not dislike them, but they do not feel as strongly about them as they do about city beautification and green spaces). For the Latinos and Africans these businesses provide nodal points of connectivity with their homeland cultures (see above). One would have expected to see their support of immigrantification landscape changes. However, the long-term resident groups approved of immigrant entrepreneurialism. White sorters spoke highly of individual Latinos's/Mexicans's strong work ethic and family and religious values. This deviates from how main-stream Ohio voters negatively view Latino immigrants at an aggregate level—as witnessed by the passing in 2009 of a vehicle registration law that requires proof of United States residency. Immigrant groups argue that the vehicle registration requirements are designed for covert enforcement of immigration laws.<sup>3</sup>

Related to the trend of immigrant businesses, the theme of culinary exoticism frequently emerged as a positive component of immigrant landscape changes. The long term white and African American groups enjoyed the restaurants. Indeed, a business has emerged, called Columbus Food Adventures, that shuttles consumers to the immigrant owned restaurants in Northland. For \$60 an explorer can participate in an Alternative Food Adventure, climb into a van, and be transported from restaurant to restaurant sampling the forbidden and mysterious fare. Nevertheless, people who relish in the opportunity to enjoy the immigrant prepared food may simultaneously have negative opinions about the demographic changes in the area.

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<sup>2</sup> The overpass is property of the railroad company. The city claims that the only option was to paint it black, but that strategy created a perfect slate for new graffiti artists.

<sup>3</sup> That same year, a Latino group sued the state over the unconstitutionality of the law, thus demonstrating Latino political clout in Ohio.

The third factor shows the concern of sorters from each group regarding the presence of pedestrians in the landscape. The qualitative aspects of our research (conversations/interviews) reveal divergent concerns over pedestrians in the landscape, ranging from fear over their safety (pedestrian death is a concern among immigrant groups) to disapproval of having immigrants in the landscape (see Figure 23). African Americans were especially verbal regarding their dislike of immigrant pedestrians in the landscape, which infers the construction of a physiological border between the African-American and immigrant communities.



Figure 23: Pedestrian in Morse Road (Photograph by David Walker)

The built environment in Northland was not conducive to walking. Indeed, when city planners and developers planned the automobile suburb they did not include sidewalks, bus stations, medians, or green areas. Long-term residents are not accustomed to see people filling the public spaces of Northland and effectively reconfiguring the landscape with the act of walking across streets, walking on sidewalks and waiting for buses. The concept of the utilization of public space in Latino and some African cultures is distinctive from that in the U.S. Questions of loitering, street vending, and literally walking through urban spaces seem at odds with the immigrant and long-term residents' understanding of the utilization of public space.

Long-term resident groups employed a coded language to discuss distinct features found in the landscape. For example, an elderly white couple who returned to Northland to enjoy an ethnic food tour

participated in sorting images. While sorting the images the wife described how

[W]e could no longer stay. I mean, I went to Northland High. I grew up in Linden. When it started getting bad there [Linden]...we moved to Northland. Now, when it got bad here we had to move to Sunbury. (Personal interview)

Her first move from Linden to Northland only required a five-mile relocation. When she decided to abandon Northland, she moved 25 miles north to the outer suburbs of Columbus in Sunbury. These voluntary comments about Morse Road—which were repeated in various forms by long-term residents—employ a coded language to describe the ethnic and cultural changes of the neighborhood. The elderly couple described growing up in Linden, a 1930s trolley car neighborhood. The neighborhood originally housed many Appalachian migrants and WWII GIs. By the 1950s, Linden’s demographics shifted. Today it is primarily African American and Somali. Northland’s demographics began to shift towards more African American in the 1980s and 1990s. When the elderly couple described “when things started getting bad,” this can be read as a racially coded language: “when (the neighborhoods) started getting more Black” (Alexander, 2012). What is difficult to understand is that the couple enjoys coming to the neighborhood to eat exotic ethnic cuisine, but then can also describe how forlorn they have become over the demographic changes.

The sorting trends show that the groups collectively appreciate city beautification and police presence followed by immigrant businesses and favor immigrant pedestrian presence the least, for varied reasons.

## **6. Conclusions:**

By 2011, the Morse Road corridor had become more culturally diverse and vibrant. Economically the business corridor was experiencing rejuvenation. Immigrantification, replete with over 100 new businesses, with charter schools and community centers, coupled with city investments, had aesthetically, culturally and economically transformed Morse Road. Except for the Ohio Department of Taxation offices and a local theater group, the site of the former Northland Mall still lay barren. Ideas were circulated to create a park and build more green spaces at the abandoned mall site. These innovative designs did not come to fruition.

Instead, in 2011 The Columbus City Council demonstrated how it intends to support the redevelopment of Morse Road and the former mall site by providing a 75%/10 year tax abatement on real property

improvements. The store expected to create 80 new full-time permanent positions. Menards has since constructed a large box store. Previous studies show box store retail spaces have a 6-10 year life span. Once the tax incentives end, the company allows for the deterioration of the property and eventually relocates to a site where new tax incentives are given to reinvest (Brunn, 2007). Immigrant entrepreneurs with businesses on Morse Road were confused regarding why the city provided tax incentives to an out-of-state chain store instead of providing investment incentives to immigrant businesses. Indeed, Librio Alcuter reacted by stating, "Everything I did, I did on my own," while Ahmed Mohamed stated, "Everything we've done, the financing came from us [Somali investors]" (personal interview). Alcuter had a difficult time securing small business loans from banks. When he did get one, the interest rates were very restrictive (he has since refinanced). Mohamed and investors relied on Somali community finance networking to raise money.

Studies have shown that aggregately small businesses are the largest source of employment in the U.S. (Moscarini & Postel-Vinay, 2007). A decade from now Morse Road immigrant entrepreneur businesses will not abandon their businesses when the tax incentives expire. They are emotionally as well as financially invested in their businesses and communities. Aggregately small businesses on Morse Road employ more workers than Menards while not receiving city induced economic incentives. Why did the city choose to provide tax incentives to a large chain store rather than provide fiscal enticements to small business owners, be they immigrants or not? The reasons are manifold,<sup>4</sup> but it is possible to theorize that the city intends to produce a smooth space along the Morse Road business corridor. The up-scale west side suburb of Worthington is connected to Easton, one of Columbus's premier shopping and entertainment centers located east of Cleveland Avenue off Morse Road (see Figure 1 and 4). It seems likely that the city's language and actions about concern over the business corridor was to link the sites together and thus reproduce and maintain a user-friendly space for white, Mid-Western consumers. Immigrantification is fine. Perhaps rebranding the area "Little Africa" for tourism and convention attendees, shuttled to Morse Road to enjoy the cuisine and get a henna tattoo, would help market Columbus and would be encouraged (*Columbus Underground*,

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<sup>4</sup> City planners and developers have learned from programs and institutions that to follow a neoliberal business model promotes race-to-the-bottom policies that they reproduce in the landscapes of cities. (<http://www.columbusunderground.com/re-brand-morse-and-cleveland-into-little-africa> last accessed 08/25/2014)

2014). However, when it comes to spending money and providing tax incentives, the city has opted for policies that implement beautification of the built environment and corporate welfare to chain stores.

The socio-economic processes that inform the rise and fall and more recent immigrantification and city beautification of Northland, replete with racial and ethnic border formation, reveal how cities are constantly in the process of becoming. They are not static. They are continuously being reproduced, reimagined, and reinvented. Distinct actors have imagined and produced divergent spaces along Morse Road that can be read in the landscape. The production of landscapes provides the venues where multi-ethnic and cultural societies perform their identities. The production of divergent landscapes may mesh or create conflicts over who produces and consumes urban space and how the production and consumption are carried out. These same entwining struggles over the production and consumption of urban space often lead to exciting cultural and economic landscapes. Morse Road provides an example of diverse landscape production.

The arrival of immigrants to Columbus and how they interact with long-term residents and other U.S. migrants is reconfiguring the role Mid-Western cities play in the global urban arena. Theories describing the hierarchical categorization of Global Cities (Sassen, 2005) need to be reconfigured in the current era of heightened globalization processes and accelerated immigration flows. Sites of cultural and economic interconnectivity found on Morse Road impact millions of people's lives in Columbus and across the world. The processes occurring in Columbus require theorists to rethink what it means for a city to "be global" in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Examine any global process and discover multiple localities embedded therewithin (Herod & Wright, 2002). This case study of parallel forms of landscape changes, urban socio-spatial economic transformation, and the unintentional creation of borders in Columbus speaks to how immigrants, long-term residents, internal migrants, and the city government will play a role in the encounters, conflicts, and resolutions that occur at the fringes of ethnic and racial borders, and how they actively produce global urban spaces.

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