

Choice Neighborhoods Protocol: Neighborhoods

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am <NAME>, a researcher at <ORGANIZATION>, and this is <NAME> from <ORGANIZATION>. Before we begin, I want to tell you a few things about this study and your participation in it. Please feel free to ask me any questions you might have as I move through the introduction.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contracted the Urban Institute and researchers at Case Western Reserve University to evaluate the Choice Neighborhoods program (Choice). Choice provides resources for local communities to help distressed neighborhoods develop affordable housing, provide access to a range of services for residents, and increase opportunities and safety. The study aims to understand the strategies and outcomes associated with Choice implementation for housing, residents, and neighborhoods in nine communities. We are collecting information and data from several sources, including a resident survey, neighborhood observations, program documents, and interviews.

We are conducting interviews with people such as yourself to understand the process and experience of those who were involved in or affected by Choice in this community. The interviews will provide valuable perspectives on what has been achieved through Choice and what the challenges have been with implementation. Your insights are important for this study. We are not evaluating your [agency/organization] but are focused on implementation and outcomes of Choice activities.

Your participation in this interview is **voluntary** and you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The questions in the interview have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated at up to 90 minutes, including preparation and follow-up. The OMB control number is XXXX-XXXX, expiring XX-XX-XXXX. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

The interview will last approximately one hour. You may choose to skip any questions you don't want to answer, and you may stop participating at any time. We will not release your name or any other identifying information beyond the research team and will not include your name or identifying information in our report and documentation. If you are in a position that makes it so you are the only person or one of few people who would know certain information, it is possible someone reading the report might infer the source - you should be aware of the possibility. Note that researchers are required to take steps, including reporting to authorities, to address a situation where they believe someone they speak to may harm themselves or others. *[If conducting the interview via a videoconference platform: We also recognize that video meetings can be hacked, and though we have taken steps to prevent this from happening, it is a possibility.]*

With your permission, we will audio record the interview, which we will have transcribed to ensure we have an accurate account of what is said. [NAME] also will be taking notes. Only members of the research team will be allowed to review the recording, transcript, and notes, and all members of our team have signed a confidentiality agreement. We will destroy the recording, transcript, and notes at the conclusion of the project.

Do you have any questions about the study or today's interview?
Do you consent to participate in the interview?
Do you consent to be recorded?

Introduction

I'll start with a few questions about your position and engagement with the Choice Neighborhood efforts in [NEIGHBORHOOD].

- 1) What is your current title and role?**
- 2) What was your title and role during the Choice implementation?**
- 3) When was your last involvement with Choice at [NAME OF SITE]? [or] What is your current involvement?]**
- 4) Please give an overview of the vision for the neighborhood.**
 - a. What was implemented with the Choice grant and other resources?

The next questions focus on the involvement of city agencies and partners in implementation of Choice neighborhood efforts.

Involvement of City Agencies (for respondents who worked directly on Choice implementation)

- 5) Which city agencies were involved in CN-supported neighborhood efforts?**

Probe based on site-specific list:

 - Mayor's Office;
 - City planning agency - land use, permitting, zoning;
 - Housing Department - non-replacement housing development and investments;
 - Community and Economic Development department/s
 - Police Department - public safety, crime prevention, youth engagement;
 - Social Services agency - supportive services, workforce development, etc.;
 - Transportation department - transit improvements; etc.
 - Other
- 6) Which collaborations were most important to implementation of neighborhood efforts?**
 - a. Can you give an example of effective collaboration during implementation?

Partnerships (for neighborhood lead)

7) Aside from city agencies, we understand the following partners engaged in implementation of the neighborhood component: [PARTNERS]. Were there other partners active during the grant period related to neighborhoods?

a. Which partnerships were most important for Choice neighborhood efforts?

8) Were any of these partnerships established during [FOR 2013 GRANTEES: the Choice planning period]? During preparation of the implementation grant application? During implementation (i.e., did the grant lead to new partnerships)?

Probe: private developers; planning firms; local nonprofits; local advocacy or citizen's groups; banks and financial institutions; etc. not involved from the beginning

9) Did any of these partnerships become more important or strengthen during implementation? In what way? Why do you think that happened?

10) Did any of the partnerships last beyond the period of the grant? Which ones?

a. Why do you think these partnerships lasted?

Probe: partner had preexisting relationships with respondent or neighborhood; partner was integral to an ongoing program; partner had funding; etc.

b. Are any partners still active in the Choice neighborhood as far as you know?

i. In what ways are they engaged?

11) Overall, would you say the partnerships affected grant outcomes related to the neighborhood (i.e., housing market outcomes, economic conditions, or public safety)?

a. *If yes:* How did they affect outcomes? Can you give an example?

12) What made some partnerships more effective than others?

a. *Prompt:* level of engagement, individual staff members, history of work in the neighborhood, connections with a variety of resources, preexisting plan or strategy, etc.]

Changes in Housing Market Conditions, General Economic Conditions, and Public Safety

The Choice Neighborhoods grant provided support for the development of mixed-income housing and critical community improvements, and other efforts to improve neighborhood conditions.

13) What changes have occurred in the local housing market (in the defined Choice neighborhood and surrounding area) since implementation through early 2020 [pre-COVID]?

a. Has there been new market-rate construction? In what areas?

i. New subsidized construction? In what areas?

b. Has there been rehab of private homeowner or rental housing?

- c. Has there been a change in the concentration of subsidized housing properties?
 - d. Has there been an increase or decrease in foreclosures (before the pandemic)?
 - e. Have the demographics and income mix of residents changed? If yes, in what ways?
- 14) In what ways did the Choice Neighborhoods effort (the grant, leveraged funds, partnerships, plans) contribute to the changes you identified?**
- a. What other factors contributed to the changes?
- 15) In what ways did the redevelopment of [TARGET DEVELOPMENT] affect the local residential real estate market?**
Prompt: induced additional investments, affected housing demand in the area, etc.
- 16) What factors would you say were most important for the housing market change / lack of change?**
Probe: Choice grant and related investments, city commitment, citywide or regional housing market conditions, economy, etc.
- 17) Have you seen changes in the neighborhood since Choice began (2010/11 / 2013) in the number of empty lots, vacant or abandoned buildings? [IF RESPONDENT CAN'T REMEMBER, ASK ABOUT CHANGES IN THE LAST 5 YEARS]**
- a. Please describe the change.
Prompt: new construction on vacant lots; demolition or renovation of vacant or abandoned buildings; etc.
- 18) What factors would you say were most important for the changes to vacant and abandoned properties?**
Prompt: Choice-related activities, other funding or investments that came about because of Choice activities, city commitment, neighborhood engagement, etc.
- 19) Data from several sources indicate that the economic conditions in the neighborhood (i.e., job availability, employment rate) had changed in the following ways [INFO FROM NHOOD DATA] / had not changed since the Choice grant as of 2019.**
- a. Does that description seem accurate?
 - i. *If not:* How would you describe the local economic conditions for residents and businesses?
 - b. What factors would you say were most important for the change / lack of change in local economic conditions:
Prompt: Choice grant and related investments, city commitment, citywide or regional economic conditions, the broader economy, etc.

Public Safety

- 20) Public safety and high rates of violence were a concern at application and in the early years of the grant. How has safety and violence changed in**

the neighborhood since then? *Probe:* changes in level of violence, types of violence, gang activity; new or different public safety concerns, etc.

- a. What led to the changes?

21) We understand that public safety activities were to include the following [LIST OF ACTIVITIES]. Did any of these activities not happen?

- a. Were any activities added during implementation?
- b. Which of the activities were the main public safety efforts?

22) Who were the main entities involved in addressing public safety issues?

Probe: city agencies, partner entities

- a. What actions did they take as part of Choice?
- b. Was there collaboration among city agencies in the implementation of public safety activities?
 - i. *If yes:* how important was this collaboration for implementation efforts?
 - ii. *If no:* did a lack of collaboration affect implementation efforts?

23) What involvement, if any, did local police have with the Choice program in [NEIGHBORHOOD]? [*Note:* ask the following questions only if respondent notes that police were involved with Choice]

- a. Was the police department a formal collaborator?
- b. What actions did they undertake as part of Choice?
- c. Which organizations and agencies did the police work with most? [IF POSSIBLE, USE AGENCY/ORGANIZATION NAMES]
 - i. The Housing lead?
 - ii. The People lead or other important service providers?
 - iii. The Lead grantee?
 - iv. The Education lead?

24) What factors would you say were most important for the change / lack of change in public safety and violence?

Probe: Choice-related public safety efforts, , broader city efforts, overall crime trends, other neighborhood factors, etc.

- a. *If changes from Choice efforts:* which ones do you think were most important?

25) Which public safety-related activities had the most success?

- a. In what ways were they successful? Can you provide an example?
Probe: successfully implemented, number of people affected, led to successful outcomes, etc.

26) Which activities were less successful?

- a. What made them less successful?

Critical Community Improvements

Choice Neighborhoods included the provision for grantees to spend up to 15 percent of their funding to leverage other funding sources for Critical Community Improvements that could be categorized as community or economic development.

- 27) **Based on our review of the Choice plans and other documents, we understand that the CCI were to include [LIST PROJECTS]. Does this sound right to you?** [If no, ask them to correct]
- a. **What objectives were you and others trying to achieve with these projects?**
 - b. **Were all of them implemented?**
 - i. **If not: Why was that the case?**
- 28) **[FOR EACH CCI, ASK THE FOLLOWING SET OF QUESTIONS]:**
- a. What have been the results or outcomes from [CRITICAL COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT]?
 - b. What factors do you think most helped achieve these outcomes?
 - c. Were there any intended outcomes that were not realized? Please describe.
 - a. Why do you think these outcomes were not realized?
 - d. Were there any results or outcomes unexpected?
- 29) **Do you think the CCI activities have led to changes in:**
- a. **perceptions about the neighborhood? Please describe.**
 - b. **commercial activity? Please describe.**
 - c. **safety and how safe residents feel? Please describe.**
- 30) **Have any of the CCI investments led to additional funding for neighborhood improvement or economic development efforts?**
- a. What were the sources for the additional investments?
 - b. What were the funds used for?

Local and state government investment

[PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW, DEVELOP LIST OF LOCAL AND STATE-FUNDED INVESTMENTS IN THE CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD.]

- 31) **We understand that the [LOCAL / STATE] government targeted resources to the neighborhood during Choice implementation. What were the major investments?**
Prompt: infrastructure, housing, commercial development, transit, community amenities (parks/playgrounds, WIFI/connectivity, etc.)
- 32) **[IF infrastructure or transit investments were made, ask:] What is the nature of the investments?**
- a. Were certain locations prioritized for these investments? Where?
Probe: near the target housing redevelopment?

Public and private investment in housing

- 33) **Aside from the official Choice target housing redevelopment, did public financing (city, state, federal) support housing development or rehabilitation during the Choice intervention in the neighborhood surrounding the Choice redevelopment? In what ways?**

- a. Has there been any additional public financing for housing since roughly [2016] [2018], or after the implementation grant ended?
- b. What is the nature of these developments?
Probe: rehab, new developments, condos, rentals, targeting high-income, low-income, LIHTC, other government financed

34) Aside from the official Choice target housing redevelopment, was there any private investment in housing development or rehabilitation during the intervention in the neighborhood surrounding the Choice redevelopment s? Please describe these investments?

- a. Has there been additional private investments in housing since roughly [2016] [2018], or after the implementation grant ended?
- b. What is the nature of the investments?
Probe: rehab, new developments, condos, rentals, targeting high-income, moderate-income, etc.

35) What types of housing were invested in?

Probe: new or rehab properties; condominiums, single-family houses, unrestricted/market rate rental units; LIHTC units, other affordable housing units

36) Did any investments support improvements to owner-occupied houses? Please describe.

37) Would you attribute changes in housing investments to the Choice Neighborhoods intervention? Why?

Public and private investment in commercial and community amenities

38) Has there been any new non-housing investments in the neighborhood (renovation or new construction of or improvements to commercial or community amenities) made by the public or private sector, or private actors such as anchor institutions or philanthropies, in the last year? In the last 5? 10?

- a. Who is making those investments – public sources (city, state, or federal), private companies, nonprofits, or philanthropic organizations?

39) How would you characterize the new investments?

Probe: new shops, offices, or other commercial businesses (ask what types), improvements to existing businesses; new community amenities, such as placemaking or beautification features, farmers markets, neighborhood wi-fi, parks, community centers, etc.; improvements to existing community amenities

40) What factors made it easier or more difficult for private investment to occur in the Choice Neighborhood?

41) In the last few years, have you seen more businesses move into the area?

- a. What types of businesses?

- b. What do you think drew them to the area?
- 42) **Thinking back on the neighborhood since receipt of the Choice implementation grant, have you noticed a difference in the types of businesses opening? Describe.**
 - a. *If yes: Why do you think this change is happening?*
- 43) **Are there any new organizations of business owners in the area (Business improvement districts (BID), Neighborhood or Civic Associations)?**
 - a. Have there been any changes in existing business-related organizations?
 - b. What activities do these organization(s) undertake? Have these activities changed with the Choice intervention?
- 44) **Would you attribute changes in investments in commercial and community amenities to the Choice Neighborhoods intervention? Why?**

Wrap Up

- 45) **Thinking about Choice Neighborhoods and the [INSERT NAME] neighborhood, would you say Choice has been a success?** [*Probe: in terms of housing, residents, neighborhood*]
- 46) **What difference do you think the neighborhood efforts have made for this area?**
 - a. For the residents of the target development(s)?
- 47) **Overall, what recommendations would you offer other Choice grantees or HUD about the Choice Neighborhoods program and efforts to improve housing, resident outcomes, and neighborhoods?**
- 48) **Is there anything we haven't discussed about the Choice Neighborhoods program and the Neighborhood component that is important for us to understand?**