

# **Broken Glass: A Community Impact Study of the Chihuly Exhibit in Garfield Park, Chicago<sup>i</sup>**

## **Initial Report from Phase I**

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**February 2003**

*Glass has long been an indicator of life in East Garfield Park, a neighborhood pockmarked by broken bottles and boarded-up windows on the city's West Side. Now, a wildly popular art glass exhibit is reflecting changes just starting to take hold in the neighborhood, a mostly black, low-income area with struggling schools and high rates of crime and unemployment.*

*-- Bennie M. Currie, Associated Press, June 6, 2002*

### **Introduction**

In November 2001 the Chicago Park District and the Boeing Corporation partnered to bring the work of Seattle-based, glass artist Dale Chihuly to the Garfield Park Conservatory located in the Garfield Park neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. The exhibit "Chihuly in the Park: A Garden of Glass" became an unexpected blockbuster. Fueled by outstanding word-of-mouth reviews and extensive media coverage, the Chihuly exhibit drew enormous crowds to the beautiful conservatory located in the heart of an

economically devastated, predominately African American community. Dale Chihuly, a critically acclaimed, glass artist created a breathtaking exhibition that mingled his artistic glasswork with the conservatory's collection of plants. It was an exhibit that showcased both the artist's creations and the natural environment of the conservatory. The Chicago Park District and the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance expected that the exhibit would attract additional visitors, but were unprepared for the explosive popularity of the exhibit. The "Chihuly in the Park" show drew an average of 40,000 visitors a month, a staggering increase over the 11,000 monthly visitors the conservatory averaged in the previous year. The exhibit was featured on national television programs, such as NBC's *Today Show*, it became a favorite of Mayor Daley who hosted a number of official city events there, and the exhibit was extended twice, ultimately running for a little over a year. The Chihuly exhibit created a citywide and national "buzz," attracted visitors from all over the world, and reminded many Chicagoans of a previously neglected landmark in the city.

For academic researchers and policy makers interested in the economic, social, and political impact of the arts, the Garden of Glass experience offered an opportunity to study the ways that cultural events like this one impact the attitudes of city residents, the lives of community citizens, and the strategies for economic redevelopment already in place. Garden of Glass was unquestionably an artistic success, but did it influence the neighborhood that hosted it? Using a variety of methodologies, we have set out to assess the economic and social impact of the Garden of Glass exhibit on the Garfield Park neighborhood. This study is animated by a number of questions--most centrally, how did the Garden of Glass exhibit contribute to the economic and social redevelopment of the Garfield Park neighborhood? What was the impact of this show on the neighborhood and its residents and on the mostly middle-class audiences visiting it for probably the first time? And what lessons can this show provide city and arts planners looking to integrate arts and cultural projects into community development? We do not yet have all the answers, but this report offers findings from the first stage of the study.

This report will begin by sketching the historical and contemporary contours of the Garfield Park neighborhood and conservatory. In this section we will assess the current state of the neighborhood, the conservatory's relationship to the neighborhood, and the community redevelopment initiatives that were in place before the start of the Chihuly exhibit in November 2001. We then present an analysis of the extensive Chicago media

coverage about the neighborhood and exhibit. We investigate the patterns in this coverage and link them to the expectations for the exhibit's impact on the neighborhood. Then we present findings from a public opinion survey conducted at the Garfield Park Conservatory during the run of the Chihuly exhibit. We present the general patterns in attitudes of conservatory visitors toward the exhibit, the conservatory, and the community. Next, we go behind the general findings of the survey and use focus group data to uncover the complex attitudes that Chicago residents have about the Conservatory and the exhibit. We then offer some initial discussion about the conservatory as an actor in the economic development of the neighborhood. Finally, we outline the second stage of the study.

### **Garfield Park: The Neighborhood and The Conservatory**

Garfield Park is really two neighborhoods: East Garfield and West Garfield on the city's near West Side. These two communities surround the breathtaking 187-acre Garfield Park. The park, originally known as Central Park<sup>ii</sup>, was constructed during the late 1860s and was designed by famous landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted. The park is not only the home to the conservatory, but to two magnificent man-made lakes, a striking "Golden Dome Building" designed and constructed in 1928, miles of walking trails, and acres of outdoor gardens. Historic features of Garfield Park include flower gardens, bridges, lagoons, the Golden Dome fieldhouse, the bandshell, the golf shelter building, and a number of sculptures and statues within the park. The contemporary park offers baseball and soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts, a swimming pool, playgrounds and an ice skating rink. The Golden Dome houses an Olympic-sized gymnasium, gymnastic and fitness centers, boxing ring, and theater. The park is only a few miles west of Chicago's busy downtown and was designed as a natural refuge from urban living.

Instead of being carefully preserved, this historic park suffered from decades of municipal neglect as the community that surrounded it changed complexion. Once an ethnic enclave of workers in major urban industries, Garfield Park is now predominately African American and poor. The Chicago Historical Society describes Garfield Park of the early twentieth century as a port of entry for immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. As the Great Migration of the interwar years brought African Americans to Chicago from the American South, the demographics of the neighborhood changed dramatically. By the 1930s African Americans constituted a sixth of the population and by 1940, black represented 15 percent of Garfield Park residents.<sup>iii</sup> By the 1960s African Americans were more than two

thirds of the population and today they represent better than 95 percent of residents. Between 1970 and 1980 the total population in Garfield Park decreased by 15,000 and the unemployment rate rose from 8 percent to 21 percent. Between 1990 and 2000 the population declined by another 13 percent in East Garfield Park and 4 percent in West Garfield Park.<sup>iv</sup> Today, statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate more than half of neighborhood residents live below the poverty line and more than a third are unemployed. In many ways the neighborhood never fully recovered from the urban rioting and arson in the wake of assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. Today, property crime and gang activity are common and urban decay is visible in the blocks surrounding the park and conservatory. Tables 1 and 2 report vital statistics for both East and West Garfield Park for the decades 1960 through 2000. The population decline, rising black concentration, and increasing poverty levels are clear. While there is a slight improvement in poverty levels for East Garfield Park in 2000, it is still true that more than a third of families in this community lived below the poverty line. Median family income may appear to rise over the four decades, but when adjusted for inflation the median family income in this neighborhood has actually declined since 1960. Total available housing units have also declined precipitously over these years.

Table 1: Vital Statistics for East Garfield Park

East Garfield Park					
	Population	Percent Black	Poverty Level	Total Housing Units	Median Family Income
1960	66,871	61.5		20,353	
1970	51,918	97.8	41.4	16,065	\$8,457
1980	31,580	98.3	40.3	10,933	\$9,682
1990	24,030	98.0	46.0	8,531	\$14,301
2000	20,0881	96.8	35.2	7,673	\$24,216

Table 2: Vital Statistics for West Garfield Park

West Garfield Park					
	Population	Percent Black	Poverty Level	Total Housing Units	Median Family Income
1960	45,611	15.8		14,590	
1970	48,420	97.0	24.5	13,171	\$7,532
1980	33,865	98.0	37.2	9,582	\$10,922
1990	24,095	99.0	36.0	7,934	\$17,170
2000	23,019	98.4	35.9	7,909	\$23,121

Garfield Park constitutes a significant portion of police District 11, which historically reports one of the highest murder rates in the city. Table 3 reports the ranking of District 11 for both homicide and total criminal counts. From 1965 to 2000 District 11 is consistently in the top three for homicide and in the top 10 for criminal counts.

Table 3: Crime Statistics for Garfield Park

Chicago Police District 11 Statistics for City of Chicago		
	Homicide Rating	Total Criminal Count Rating
1965	3	1
1975	3	8
1985	2	2
1995	3	5
2000	1	11

Source: Chicago Police Department Annual Reports  
There are 25 districts in the city.

While it is plagued with racial segregation, poverty, and urban decay, there are also visible signs of neighborhood redevelopment in Garfield Park. In 1999 Illinois FIRST (Fund for Infrastructure, Roads, Schools, and Transit) granted the neighborhood approximately \$80,000 to eliminate drugs, create a more stable community, and develop vacant lots in Garfield Park.<sup>v</sup> Average sales prices for homes in East Garfield Park have increased 14 percent and in West Garfield Park they have increased 57 percent since 1994.<sup>vi</sup> Community organizations such as Bethel New Life, the Concerned Citizens for East Garfield Park, and the Providence St. Mel School have invested in housing and human capital in the neighborhood.

The Garfield Park Conservatory is a touchstone of the neighborhood, providing a focal point for many redevelopment efforts. But, the conservatory itself has only recently been rescued from decay and neglect. Deteriorating conditions in the conservatory and the surrounding area prompted Chicago Park District officials to consider closing the conservatory in 1990. In response, a task force of community, education, and environmental leaders, naming themselves the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance developed a plan to revitalize the conservatory through new programming, visitor services, marketing, and fundraising. The Chicago Park District, federal Empowerment Zone funds, and private donors have contributed millions of dollars to the conservatory's revitalization.

The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance (GPCA) has proven to be self-conscious about their role in the struggling West Side community. Over the past five years they have commissioned several consumer studies aimed at gauging community opinion and gaining community input on the conservatory's programming.<sup>vii</sup> In 1999 Loyola University researcher Laura Oswald wrote:

The Garfield Park area is currently experiencing a revival, both culturally and economically -which is visible in new building construction, new business development and ambitious plans for the Garfield Park Conservatory. The Conservatory Alliance hopes to ensure that the claims and interests of the local community will not be neglected in this process. Even as the Conservatory grows and develops in stature for the greater Chicago metropolis, it can only benefit from maintaining lively and responsible ties to the West Side Community.<sup>viii</sup>

Oswald's study set out four important obstacles facing the GPCA in its attempts to create community connections with the conservatory. First, focus groups revealed that neighborhood residents were largely indifferent toward or alienated from the conservatory. Second, many visitors felt that the conservatory was inadequately advertised and were concerned that it did not provide adequate amenities such as gift shops or restaurants. Third, many potential visitors complained about inadequate transportation. Finally, potential visitors from outside the neighborhood were concerned about safety issues associated with visiting the conservatory.

By the time that Dale Chihuly's exquisite glass sculptures took up temporary residence at the conservatory, the GPCA had worked hard to address many of these issues. To help visitors "make a day" of their visit, the conservatory opened a small, but fairly sophisticated snack cart where visitors could purchase sodas, sandwiches, ice cream, and other snacks. A gift shop was opened in the outer foyer so that visitors could stop by after touring the conservatory. In September 1999, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) announced the relocation of the Homan station on the city's Green Line. The CTA decided to move the station two blocks west to serve visitors to the conservatory. The Conservatory-Central Park Drive station opened June 30, 2001. The stop is at the doorstep of the conservatory and was moved to generate increased tourist activity to the conservatory and park by allowing visitors to avoid the need to walk through the neighborhood. The parking lot, adjacent to the main entrance, featured new signage for the Chihuly event.<sup>ix</sup> To further

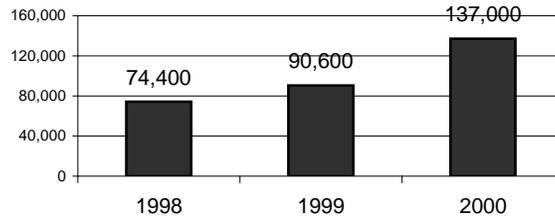
improve the perception of safety the conservatory, security guards were posted visibly outside the main entrance and inside the exhibit.

To improve the connection with and relevance to the community, the conservatory added two interactive gardens with educational programming. The Elizabeth Morse Genius Children's Garden features a giant slide, colorful plants with kid-friendly descriptions, a seven-foot seed display, and a hands-on station to look at soil and seeds. Children's programming includes scavenger hunts, free activity hours, and storytelling. The outdoor Demonstration Garden was built in 2002. This teaching and learning space for urban gardeners provides a model for community gardening and is a favorite of regular neighborhood volunteers.<sup>x</sup>

Increased programming is also a community attraction. School outreach and teachers' workshops engage and educate students. Many high school students fulfill mandatory community service requirements through docent training. Parents and friends come to Horticulture Hall for African drumming and dance recitals while community health agencies occasionally set up information tables near the entrance.<sup>xi</sup> The annual Chocolate Festival, started in 2000, was a big draw for visitors throughout the city. Other conservatory sponsored events like the County Fair and Honey Harvest feature food, educational workshops, and family entertainment. Since the formation of the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, the conservatory has successfully partnered with other organizations. The conservatory provides space for the Illinois Master Gardeners Program as well as small environmental lectures and workshops. The Green and Growing Fair, sponsored by Green-Net, and the city's World Music Festival annually bring crowds to the conservatory.

These efforts to improve programming, transportation, safety, and amenities succeeded in attracting many more annual visitors to the Conservatory. Between 1998 and 2000 annual attendance increased by more than a third. (Figure 1) However, the Garfield Park Conservatory still lagged considerably behind other Chicago venues that receive a minimum of 400,000 annual visitors and behind other botanicals in major metropolitan areas that average closer to 700,000 annual visitors.

**Figure 1: Annual Number of Visitors to Garfield Park Conservatory**



Source: Garfield Park Conservatory records as reported in Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC) Garfield Park Conservatory: Neighborhood Strategic Planning Initiative, November 2001.

It is in this context that Chihuly came to the Garfield Park Conservatory. Dale Chihuly visited the Garfield Park Conservatory as part of the City of Chicago's Millennium Celebration. He reportedly described the conservatory as "a wonderful glass treasure in the heart of the city's West Side."<sup>xii</sup> Inspired by the structure, Chihuly proposed to create an exhibit that would "highlight both the important plant collections inside as well as the glass structure in which they are housed...to tie the artwork and plants together as one, as each enhances the best qualities of the other."<sup>xiii</sup> Funding by the Chicago Park District and the Boeing Corporation brought Chihuly's vision into reality in November 2001. The show was an instant success and the crowds swelled beyond expectation as word of mouth and favorable news coverage spread the story of the fanciful exhibit. Some estimates suggest that visitorship more than quadrupled during the Garden of Glass show. Lay observers and journalists generally perceive this as an unmitigated success story. We believe that the story is more complicated and that for those who are interested in the social, political, and economic impact of the arts, the Garden of Glass show is a case study in the potential and problems of art as a development strategy.

### **Results from Media Coverage**

The Garden of Glass Exhibit was a media phenomenon. Both local and national media outlets provided extensive coverage of the exhibit, its success, and its surprising location in a predominately black and poor urban neighborhood. One of the first goals of our research was to get a handle on how coverage of the Chihuly exhibit fit into a broader context of media portrayals of the Garfield Park neighborhood. In particular we are interested in exploring the tone and content of newspaper articles about the exhibit, the conservatory, and the neighborhood. We examined media coverage of Garfield Park for the

past two years (January 2000 to December 2002) in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. We found 328 articles that included the phrase Garfield Park; of these, 95 were from the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and 233 were from the *Chicago Tribune*. Several trends are clear. Garfield Park received more press coverage due to the Chihuly Exhibit, but reporters often emphasized distinctions between the exhibit and the neighborhood. Further, journalists had nothing but praise for the Chihuly Exhibit. Coverage of the neighborhood itself is mixed. When writing about the neighborhood, journalists write positive stories about programs in the neighborhood and the accomplishments of residents, but they also emphasize problems like crime and poverty. Furthermore, many writers contrasted the success of the conservatory with the failures of the neighborhood.

We are interested in how much media coverage was given to the conservatory relative to coverage of Garfield Park as a neighborhood. There were slightly more stories written about the conservatory (170) than about the neighborhood (158) during this time period. Of the 170 stories about the conservatory, 120 of them appear during 2002. Further, the Chihuly exhibit shifted the balance of news coverage toward stories about the conservatory. In 2000 and 2001 approximately 40 percent of the stories are about events and happenings at the conservatory. The pattern shifts in 2002, when approximately 60 percent of news stories are about the conservatory. This shift is driven entirely by Chihuly coverage.<sup>xiv</sup>

We are also interested in whether the media coverage about the neighborhood and the conservatory was positive or negative. We coded these articles for their tone, either positive or negative. Overall, the articles were mainly positive (70% positive vs. 30% negative). However, when tone is compared across article topic, it is clear that the positive reporting on Garfield Park is concentrated on the conservatory. Table 4 shows press coverage of the conservatory was overwhelmingly positive, however, coverage of the community is mixed, with slightly more negative articles.

**Table 4: Tone of Media Coverage by Topic**

	Positive	Negative
Community	42%	58%
Conservatory	93%	7%

\*Source: Author compiled dataset of Chicago Tribune and Sun-Times Articles 2000-2002

A typical story about the Garfield Park neighborhood is a brief report on a criminal act in the neighborhood, “Youree Dotson, 78, was found [strangled] lying on the floor of his apartment in the Garfield Park Senior Home” (*Chicago Tribune* August 23, 2002) or community crime statistics such as the June 26, 2001 *Chicago Sun-Times* piece written by Jim Ritter that asks “Where are kids in most danger?” The article reports “West Garfield Park had both the highest death and hospitalization rates. The West Side community's hospitalization rate, 732 per 100,000 youths, was more than twice as high as the city average and more than nine times as high as the safest community, Armour Square. West Garfield Park's death rate from preventable injuries was about four times higher than the city average. Gun violence was a major reason for the high rates.” In a typical conservatory coverage story just a few days later (July 2, 2001) Mark Brown reported in the *Chicago Sun-Times* that “Yes, you can get to the Big Jungle.”<sup>xv</sup> Reporting on the opening of the Green Line L stop, Brown argues that greater public access to the conservatory will uncover a city treasure. “The Garfield Park Conservatory is one of Chicago's great treasures -- and possibly its least appreciated. Isolated in the heart of the West Side, the conservatory hasn't been a popular destination for local day-trippers or out-of-town visitors for decades, at least not as popular as it should be. But there's no excuse for ignoring it any longer after Saturday's opening of the new L station, at which trains stop just steps from the conservatory's front door. No longer the city's most remote cultural institution, the conservatory suddenly becomes one of its most accessible.”

We also examined coverage of the Chihuly exhibit. Fifty-four articles mentioned the Chihuly exhibit. Nearly all touted the exhibit as an artistic masterpiece and argued that the conservatory was an exceptional venue for its full appreciation. Major newspapers from across the nation picked up on the story and reported on the “thousands descending on Garfield Park to exclaim over Mr. Chihuly's glass show.” (*Wall Street Journal* February 15, 2002) The AP wire sizzled with stories about “the largest indoor garden house in the country that inspired an exhibition that would be unique to this historic conservatory and to the city of Chicago.” (*United Press International* March 12, 2002) The *New York Times* reported on how Thursday night viewings of the exhibit were part of a national, urban trend toward dating in artistic venues. (*New York Times* April 24, 2002) The Chihuly exhibit was a darling of the press.

In fact only a few negative stories ever appeared in Chicago papers in conjunction with the Garden of Glass exhibit. These few stories resulted from an incident August 16, 2002, when a piece of the Chihuly exhibit was broken during a private party given at the conservatory. That Monday morning the *Sun-Times* reported that the piece was located in the Palm House and was valued between \$60,000 and \$80,000. Security guards discovered it was broken and reported it to the Chicago Police just before midnight that Friday evening. A few days later Cindy Richards reported, “It strikes me that this broken Chihuly is yet another example of how we have all forgotten the lessons that we should have learned in kindergarten...lucky for the rest of us, Dale Chihuly isn’t going to hold this person’s stupidity against us. And he isn’t planning to take his artwork and go home.”(*Chicago Sun-Times*, April 21, 2002) Coverage of the broken Chihuly piece was the only negative coverage to emerge in connection with the Garden of Glass exhibit. By far most of the journalists wrote only positive articles about the Chihuly exhibit, emphasizing the beauty of the exhibit and its surprising success.

In addition to being overwhelmingly positive, journalistic accounts of the Garden of Glass exhibit regularly theorized about the potential significance of the exhibit’s success to the Garfield Park neighborhood. For the most part journalists assumed, and city officials and park district representatives assured, that the Chihuly exhibit was part of a larger project of urban revitalization centered in Garfield Park and the city’s west side. Perhaps the most visible example of this was Mayor Daley’s appearance on the *Today Show*. Matt Lauer, the *Today Show* host, “asked Daley if buzz over the exhibit had helped bring about a community rebirth in a neighborhood that has had tough times, especially after the riots in 1968. Daley responded, ‘This is an anchor. It’s an opportunity to showcase the wonderful people out here’ in the neighborhood. ‘The show illustrates his plan for the city in general,’ said mayoral press secretary Jacquelyn Heard. When you anchor some things in neighborhoods that have been neglected, ‘you start to put them on the map again.’” (Moffett, *Chicago Sun-Times* March 21, 2002) Other journalists reported, “Garfield Park on Chicago’s West Side is a troubled urban neighborhood in need of good news, and that’s just what Seattle’s top glass artist Dale Chihuly is providing.” (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer* March 28, 2002) “The exhibit has been a boon for the Conservatory, where attendance has more than doubled since the display opened in November.”(*Wisconsin State Journal* March 31, 2002) “The effort is aimed at stimulating economic activity in East Garfield Park and reversing a lengthy period of decline that began

in the '60s...'By the '80s, the area was a black hole<sup>xvi</sup> that people didn't want to be around said Drew Becher, chief of staff for the Chicago Park District. Now it is an anchor for economic development." (*Associated Press* June 6, 2002) "The Mayor legitimately sees architectural design, attractive urban space, as a catalyst in neighborhood development, said Lee Bey, Mayor Richard Daley's deputy chief of staff." (Fountain, *New York Times*, April 7, 2002) These reports proliferated the expectation that the Garden of Glass exhibit should positively influence the redevelopment efforts of the Garfield Park community.

Analysis of Chihuly media coverage suggests three conclusions. First, the Garden of Glass exhibit increased both overall and positive reporting on Garfield Park. Second, while the exhibit and the conservatory are reported about with an entirely positive spin, the neighborhood is subject to a much more critical journalistic eye. Local Chicago papers continue to present Garfield Park as a poor, crime ridden neighborhood where the one bright spot is the conservatory and its programming. Finally, the expectations for the Chihuly exhibit, as they were reported in local and national press, extended beyond the normal reach of an art exhibit at other city venues. Observers and planners alike touted an important role for the Garden of Glass exhibit in efforts of community revitalization. The larger purpose of our study is to uncover the extent to which these expectations are fulfilled. We begin this task by carefully tracing public opinion using surveys and community focus groups.

### **Results from On-Site Surveys with Conservatory Visitors**

To assess the impact of the Garden of Glass exhibit, we investigated the attitudes of those who visited the conservatory during the show. We conducted a series of on-site surveys with individuals visiting the conservatory during the run of the exhibit. A team of student researchers administered brief surveys to visitors at the Garfield Park Conservatory Garden of Glass exhibit. Visitors were approached and asked if they would like to complete a brief survey. Each survey took approximately ten minutes to complete and all were administered on-site at the conservatory. Data were gathered on three separate occasions in late August and early September 2002: a Saturday afternoon at the Chihuly exhibit; a weekday night viewing of the Chihuly exhibit; and a Saturday afternoon during the Garfield Park Conservatory's Annual County Fair. Our first task is to assess what this survey can tell us about how the Garden of Glass exhibit fits into the Conservatory's progress on addressing the issues raised by the 1999 Oswald study. That study indicated that the

conservatory had four critical obstacles to address: (1) relevance of its programming to the community, (2) transportation, (3) amenities for visitors, and (4) perceptions of the neighborhood, including safety issues. Although the 1999 report does not as explicitly address the connection between the conservatory and redevelopment of the neighborhood, we believe that there are important connections between these four issues as they impact the conservatory and as they influence the Garfield Park neighborhood.

### *Programming and the Community*

The quantitative results of the survey only give us suggestive evidence about the relevance of the Garden of Glass exhibit to the community. The survey yielded a total of 463 respondents. Most respondents (65%) are women and the great majority (78%) are white. African Americans constitute about 15 percent of survey respondents and 5 percent of respondents are Latino. Approximately half of the respondents are residents of the city of Chicago, the other half live in outlying suburbs, in other Illinois towns, or in other states. Only 7 percent of respondents are residents of the Garfield Park neighborhood. These residential patterns confirm two pieces of common wisdom regarding visitors to the Garden of Glass exhibit. First, the exhibit was an enormous draw to individuals from all across the city and the country. This exhibit put Garfield Park Conservatory on the list of things that visitors to the city should not miss. On the other hand, residents of the Garfield Park neighborhood were significantly underrepresented among conservatory visitors during the run of this show. In a neighborhood that is predominately black and poor, the majority of exhibit visitors were white and middle-income.<sup>xvii</sup>

While Garfield Park residents are a small fraction of the respondents, those who do visit the conservatory and live in the neighborhood are more likely to be regular users of the facility. Nearly 70 percent of the survey respondents reported that this was their first visit to the Garfield Park Conservatory, but 57 percent of respondents who are residents of the Garfield Park neighborhood visit the conservatory three or more times a year, with 43 percent reporting almost monthly visits to the conservatory. Further, while the Chihuly exhibit was a major draw for visitors, the conservatory's more established, community-centered programming also drew visitors for different reasons. Overall, 88 percent reported that their main reason for visiting the conservatory was the Chihuly exhibit. But, of those respondents who were surveyed on the day of the Garfield Park County Fair, 77 percent

reported that their main reason for visiting the conservatory was to get away somewhere relaxing and to have an outing with family and friends.

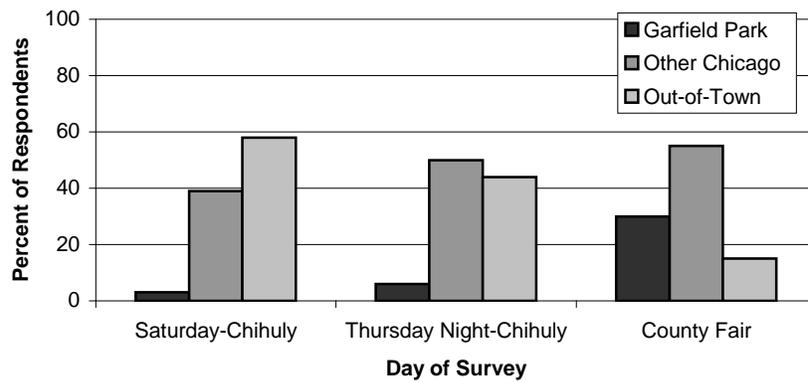
In addition to telling us something about who visited the Conservatory during the Chihuly exhibit, this survey allows us to gauge the way that visitors felt about the exhibit, the conservatory and the neighborhood. The vast majority of respondents were thrilled with their experience at the conservatory and the exhibit. Ninety-eight percent rated the conservatory as good or excellent compared to other Chicago venues. Ninety-nine percent rated the Chihuly exhibit itself as good or excellent. Respondents were nearly unanimous in their praise of the conservatory as a place that is fun (95%), beautiful (99%), safe (97%), welcoming (99%), educational (99%), a community resource (99%), a getaway (96%), and a historic landmark (93%). Despite the large number of out-of-town visitors, a majority of respondents indicated that they would continue to visit the conservatory after the Chihuly exhibit closed (85%).

Everyone loved the Garden of Glass exhibit. Residents of the neighborhood and those who live far away, young and old, male and female, wealthy and working class visitors all found the Garden of Glass and the conservatory to be a worthwhile and enjoyable destination. As researchers we observed people playing “hunt the Chihuly” as they entered each hall of the conservatory looking for more of the whimsical pieces. We watched children marvel at the enormous glass balls and laugh out loud at the floating glass sculptures in the pond. We listened as survey respondents sang the praises of the conservatory at the end of their visit. However, we also observed very distinct differences in the crowds who visited for the Garden of Glass exhibit and those who visited for the Annual County Fair and only saw the Chihuly exhibit as part of their larger experience of the conservatory. The County Fair crowd was a far more racially and ethnically diverse crowd. The County Fair was held outside on a bright, warm, beautiful autumn day. Families with small children, young couples, and seniors all mingled as they listened to live music, purchased crafts by local artists, took pictures as they pet small farm animals, learned about the eating habits of an enormous hog, and enjoyed many varieties of food. While Saturday afternoon at the Garden of Glass exhibit was bustling with activity, it lacked the sense of community rootedness that was readily apparent at the County Fair.

African Americans moved to Chicago from the deep South by the tens of thousands during the interwar years and the decades that followed. Many black families have

maintained their Southern connections through annual trips to family farms and homesteads in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The County Fair was reminiscent of those summer trips “down South.” Unlike the admittedly exquisite art of a Seattle-based artist, the County Fair was pitched with a particular sensitivity to the cultural underpinnings of the Garfield Park neighborhood. The racial composition of the crowd reflected the difference in this programming emphasis.<sup>xviii</sup>

**Figure 2: Residency of Respondents for Conservatory Events**



Source: Garden of Glass On-Site Survey

Figure 2 shows that the proportion of survey respondents who live in the neighborhood is much higher on the County Fair day than at either of the dates where the Garden of Glass exhibit was the main draw. On the Saturday afternoon Chihuly exhibit only 3 percent of respondents were from Garfield Park, while at the County Fair 30 percent of respondents were from the neighborhood. The Garden of Glass exhibit is an unmitigated success in drawing outside visitors to the neighborhood. It is less of a success when measured against the conservatory’s goal to create community relevant programming.

*Transportation*

To assess the value of public transportation to conservatory visitors, the survey asked respondents what method of transportation they used to get the conservatory. Most visitors drove, but a full 12 percent of Chicagoans from outside the neighborhood and 14 percent of out-of-town visitors did use public transportation, most riding the Green Line. Although most Garfield Park residents drove, more than a third walked to the Conservatory. By way of anecdote, several respondents reported to student researchers who administered

the survey, “If I realized the L stop was so close I would have taken the Green Line. When I come back, I will be sure to take it.”

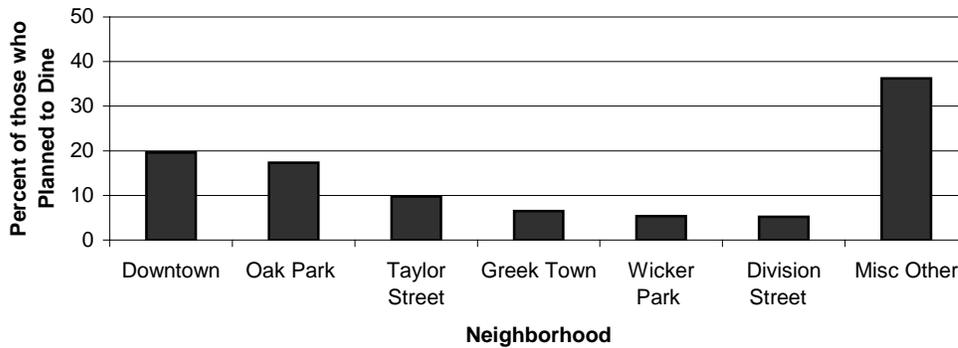
Clearly, the proximity of the new Green Line stop has already had an important impact on the way that visitors travel to the conservatory and is likely to have more of an impact in the future. It is also true that parking at the conservatory is much easier and cheaper than at comparable venues in the city. There is an adjacent lot that does not charge for parking. This lot provides ample spaces during the week. Free on-street parking is also plentiful within one block of the conservatory. The availability and affordability of parking means that a majority of visitors likely will always drive, but the Green Line is an attractive option for many visitors. However, the green line stop is more controversial among neighborhood residents.<sup>xix</sup> We will explore this issue in more depth in the focus group analysis later in the report.

#### *Visitor Amenities*

Our observations of visitors during our on-site research confirm that the snack cart was an important amenity.<sup>xx</sup> It opened as a small coffee and muffin cart in the main entrance. For the Chihuly exhibit it was expanded and relocated to Horticulture Hall where customers could eat their food at tables. Many visitors purchased at least a soda. A large percentage purchased more substantial meals. However, after the Chihuly exhibit was over the snack bar could no longer afford to operate and was closed. The loss of the snack cart is our first indication that Chihuly did not provide sustainable economic benefits even to the conservatory itself. Given that availability of dining is a recurring theme for development in conservatory studies since 1999, the inability to operate a modest snack cart post-Chihuly is troubling.

Garden of Glass visitors who were afforded the opportunity to eat at the snack bar still wanted to take advantage of dining opportunities after completing their tour of the exhibit. A solid majority of visitors (55%) reported that they planned to eat at a restaurant after their visit. However, all planned to leave the neighborhood to do so. Of those who answered that they planned to eat after their visit, 16 percent planned to eat in Oak Park, 5 percent downtown, 6 percent in Greek Town, and 5 percent in the loop. Many respondents asked the researchers if there were local restaurants nearby and expressed a willingness to explore a few blocks around the conservatory to find a place to dine with their friends and family.

**Figure 3: Neighborhood of Respondents' Dining Plans**



Source: 2002 Garden of Glass On-Site Survey

These results are only suggestive, but they point to several key issues with respect to the Garden of Glass' impact on the Garfield Park neighborhood. First, many surrounding neighborhoods and communities that are more well known to the predominately white, middle class crowds probably experienced revenue increases at local restaurants as a result of the Chihuly exhibit's explosive popularity. Second, the Garfield Park neighborhood itself probably did not receive any of these additional dining dollars because visitors were unaware of any local establishments. Third, the Chicago Park District missed an enormous opportunity to serve as an agent of community economic development by failing to provide neighborhood merchant information to Chihuly visitors. Would all visitors have chosen Garfield Park over Oak Park as a place to dine? Certainly not, but even a small portion of the hundreds of thousands of visitors could have made a substantial impact on the revenues of neighborhood restaurants.

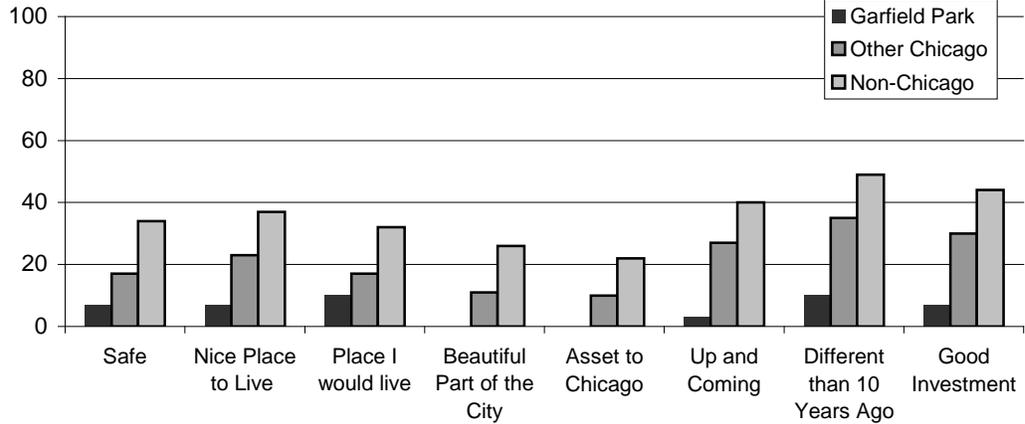
An identical pattern emerged in responses to queries about shopping after the visit. Far fewer planned to shop. Approximately 25 percent of the respondents indicated that they would end their visit with shopping. However, none planned to spend their dollars in the neighborhood. Approximately 44 percent planned to shop downtown on State Street or the Magnificent Mile. The one exception is the 14 percent who mentioned a visit to the conservatory's gift shop. Again, the 1999 recommendation to add more visitor amenities, such as a snack cart and gift shop had been implemented with good results. Visitors enjoyed and frequented each. However, without information about local dining or shopping

opportunities, residual dollars left the neighborhood and benefited surrounding communities rather than Garfield Park. Despite public assurances of the centrality of the exhibit to economic revitalization plans, these survey responses appear to point to a missed opportunity on the part of the conservatory and the Chicago Park District.

### *Perceptions of Neighborhood*

We address the issue of perceptions of the neighborhood through two different kinds of analysis of our survey data: patterns of non-response and patterns of response. Each sheds light on the complex feelings that conservatory visitors have toward the Garfield Park neighborhood. Visitors who took the survey were happy to rate the exhibit and the conservatory. More than 99 percent of the respondents provided answers to all questions about the exhibit and the site. The same respondents were more hesitant to share their attitudes about the neighborhood. The survey asked a battery of questions about both positive and negative aspects of the Garfield Park neighborhood. In the positive attributes battery the survey asked respondents to agree or disagree that the Garfield Park neighborhood is: safe; a nice place to live; the kind of place where I would like to live, a beautiful part of the city; an asset to the city; and up and coming neighborhood; different than it was ten years ago; and if buying a home in the neighborhood is a good investment. Nearly a quarter of respondents consistently failed to offer any opinion about the neighborhood's positive attributes. The unwillingness to rate the neighborhood is not evenly distributed among all respondents. Out-of-town conservatory visitors averaged a 35 percent non-response rate, Chicago residents who were not from Garfield Park averaged a 21 percent non-response rate, but on average only 5 percent of Garfield Park residents were reluctant to assess the neighborhood. (Figure 4)

**Figure 4: Percent Non-Response to Positive Attribute Measures**

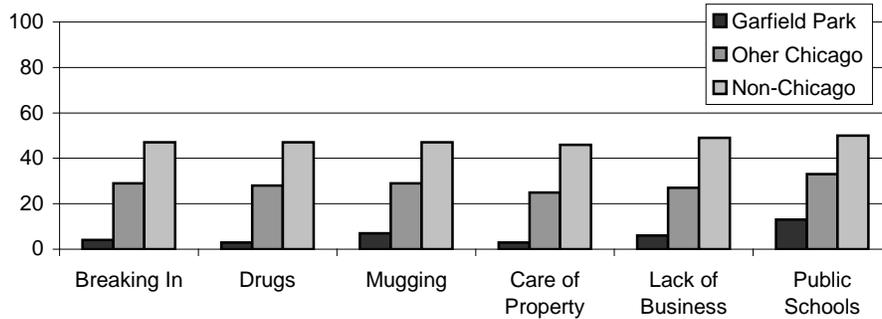


Source: 2002 Garden of Glass On-Site Survey

On the positive attribute questions the strong correlation between residency and response rate suggests that many individuals may have been unable to answer the questions because of lack of information. However, it is important to note that even among the out-of-town visitors, a substantial majority do provide some assessment of the neighborhood’s positive attributes. This suggests to us that non-response is a meaningful category. In other words, the unwillingness to rate the neighborhood may have substantive significance beyond lack of information. Perhaps the predominately white, middle-income crowd was uncomfortable with providing an assessment of a poor, minority neighborhood. Perhaps some respondents did not want to face any unpleasant emotions or reactions after having had a positive experience visiting the exhibit.

There are at least two sources of evidence supporting these hypotheses. First, while student researchers were administering the surveys, many respondents expressed discomfort with or unwillingness to respond to the neighborhood assessment questions. This came in the form of asking if they could skip those questions, professing a lack of sufficient information, or more aggressively demanding to know the relevance of these questions to an assessment of an artistic exhibit. Further, the data show a significant increase in non-response when subjects are asked about negative attributes of the neighborhood. (Figure 5)

**Figure 5: Percent Non-Response to Negative Attribute Measures**

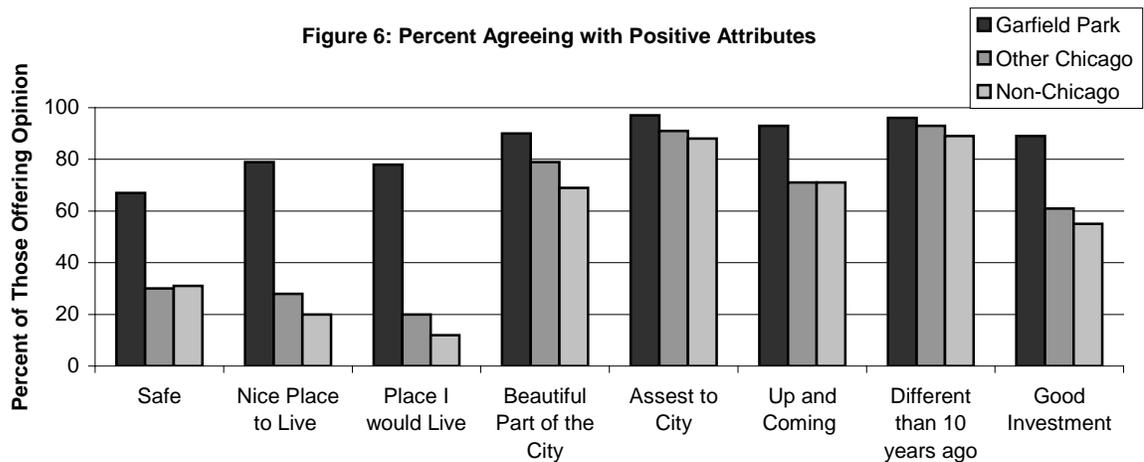


Source: 2002 Garden of Glass On-Site Survey

Only 15 percent of respondents refused to answer all eight positive assessment measures. That is, 85 percent were willing to rate the neighborhood on at least one positive attribute. However, a full 35 percent refused to answer any of the six negative attribute questions. Out-of-towners were most reluctant to assess negative aspects of the neighborhood. The average non-response on this battery was 48 percent. Among Chicagoans, 28 percent refused to answer the negative questions, while only 6 percent of Garfield Park residents showed the same reluctance. These patterns demonstrate that respondents are significantly more reluctant to assess the neighborhood on negative attributes than on positive ones.<sup>xxi</sup> If non-response were a result of lack of information, then non-response would be equal across positive and negative attribute measures. The greater non-response on negative measures indicates that respondents are more unwilling to make negative assessments of the neighborhood.

Not only are Garfield Park residents far more willing to rate their community on both positive and negative attributes, they also have a generally more positive perception of their neighborhood than visitors from inside or outside the city. There is nearly universal agreement among respondents that Garfield Park is both beautiful and an asset to the city, but Garfield Park residents are significantly more likely to report that Garfield Park is a safe neighborhood, a nice place to live, and a place where they would like to live. Importantly a majority of respondents, even those from other parts of the city or country, perceive Garfield Park as an up and coming neighborhood and one that is different than it was a decade ago. These attitudes reflect a public awareness of the investment activity and revitalization efforts underway in the neighborhood. Garfield Park residents are far more

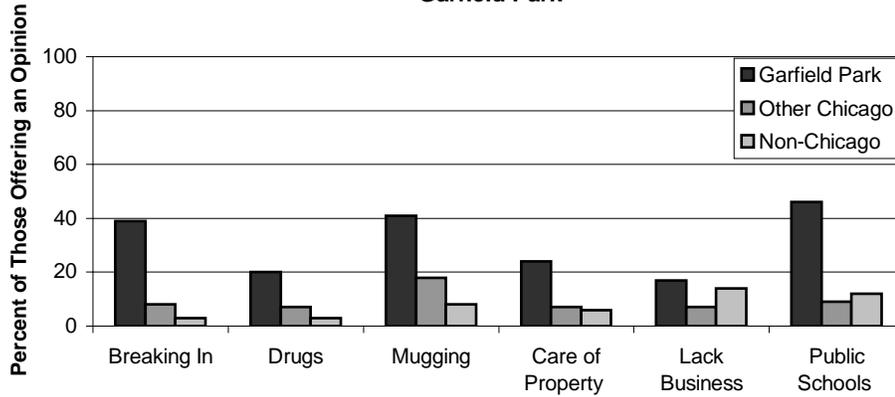
likely to perceive real estate ownership in the neighborhood as a good investment, but a solid majority (62%) of Chicagoans agreed in the investment potential of the neighborhood's real estate. Only out-of-towners were more skeptical (45%). The pattern of these results reflect a clear disparity between a general perception of the neighborhood as improving and an individual willingness to endure the safety concerns that are still prevalent for outsiders. These results reflect a high level of community pride among those who live in the neighborhood.



Source: 2002 Garden of Glass On-Site Survey

The disparate assessment of the neighborhood from Garfield Park residents and their counterparts in Chicago and from out-of-town is also apparent in the responses to negative attribute measures. Visitors were asked to rate whether a number of issues were no problem, some problem, or a big problem in Garfield Park. Residents of the neighborhood were significantly more likely to say that Garfield Park had no problem with home break-ins, with drugs, with personal crime such as mugging, with landlords and residents who fail to care for property, and with lack of business. The most striking result is that nearly half of Garfield Park residents (40%) asserted that there is no problem with the quality of education provided by the local public schools. While only a minority assessed no problems in these categories, it is still a larger percentage for Garfield Park residents than for those who visit the Conservatory from outside the neighborhood. (Figure 6)

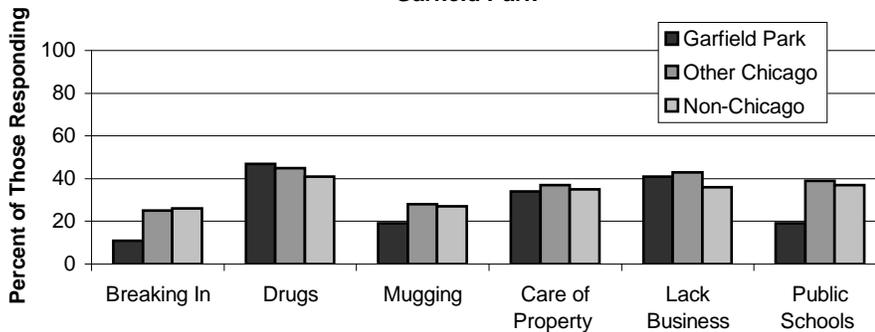
**Figure 6: Assessment that there is No Problem with this Issue in Garfield Park**



Source: 2002 Garden of Glass On-Site Survey

Although the differences are not as large, Garfield Park residents are also less likely to believe that any of these issues are a big problem in their neighborhood. With the exception of drugs, individuals from the neighborhood were consistently less likely to assess these issues as a big problem than those from outside the community. (Figure 7) Garfield Park residents were less likely than outsiders to see their neighborhood as plagued with home break-ins, muggings, lack of business opportunities, poor care for property and poor public schools. This pattern is reversed only on the issue of drugs. Neighborhood residents are more likely than others to perceive drugs as a big problem in their neighborhood. Thus Garfield Park residents have a generally more positive outlook on their community and its safety than those who visit the neighborhood primarily to visit the conservatory.

**Figure 7: Assessment that there is a Big Problem with this Issue in Garfield Park**



Source: 2002 Garden of Glass On-Site Survey

It is important to note that more than 80 percent of visitors from other parts of Chicago or from outside the city perceive all of these issues as being at least a moderate

problem for this neighborhood. Not only do these visitors have personal safety concerns reflected in their belief that this is a neighborhood plagued by crime and drugs, these outside visitors also have largely negative assessments of issues that impact individual financial decisions. They perceive this as a neighborhood with poor property upkeep, lack of businesses and services, and poor public schools. There have been important efforts at community revitalization in Garfield Park over the past decade. These efforts have clearly been successful in bolstering and maintaining the sense of neighborhood pride that community residents express. These efforts appear to have been less successful in influencing the perception of other Chicagoans. Further, while the Garden of Glass exhibit has enlarged the constituency of the conservatory, it has had less impact on opinion about the neighborhood and community. Feeling good about Chihuly and about the conservatory does not necessarily translate into feeling good about the neighborhood.

#### **Summary of Initial Conclusions from the Survey Data**

- Garden of Glass was a tremendous draw for visitors from all over Chicago and from out of town. It was less successful than the conservatory's community-based programming in attracting Garfield Park residents.
- The ample, free parking and the CTA green line stop are important to making the conservatory an easy and attractive destination, especially for those who are not from the neighborhood.
- The gift shop and snack cart are important visitor amenities. However, without information about local shops and restaurants conservatory visitors did not spend money in local businesses. Dining and shopping revenues were mostly taken out of the neighborhood, mostly benefiting downtown and Oak Park establishments.
- Conservatory visitors who do not live in Garfield Park are reluctant to assess the neighborhood and are particularly unlikely to offer opinions about negative aspects of the community. Garfield Park residents are far more willing to provide an opinion about both the positive and negative aspects of their community.
- Of those who did provide a neighborhood rating, it is clear that Garfield Park residents have a far more positive assessment of their community.

Those from other parts of Chicago and from out of town express serious concerns about both safety and community infrastructure.

These survey results provide a first look at public opinion around the Garden of Glass exhibit. But it does not tell us about the mechanisms that are driving this opinion. In order to more fully assess these mechanisms we engaged in a series of carefully conducted focus groups.

### **Results from Focus Group**

The focus groups allowed systematic investigation into the complex range of attitudes and emotions provoked by the Chihuly exhibit phenomenon. Focus groups bring together a small group of citizens to discuss an issue at length, allowing respondents to participate in setting the agenda for discussion and offering them the opportunity to provide complex responses to questions posed by researchers. Focus groups do have their limitations. The participants are chosen scientifically but, as a group of 10 or 12 people, the findings cannot be projected onto the entire population. Further, the results are dependent upon the interaction between the respondents and the moderator. Despite these concerns, focus groups are invaluable for this study because they encourage individuals to offer narratives of their experience with the Chihuly exhibit in a format that is sufficiently structured to provide systematic evidence for the questions under investigation. Lisa McDonald of Research Explorers conducted three focus groups in October and November 2002. Each group lasted approximately two hours and consisted of 8 to 12 participants. Sixty percent of respondents were women and 40 percent men. They range in age from 19 to 60. Some are single but many are partnered or married and the majority have children. Precious Issues Research recruited visitors from lists based on previous surveys conducted and the conservatory. Non-visitors were recruited from the community. Lisa McDonald moderated all the groups.

**Table 5: Focus Group Characteristics**

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Conservatory Visitors Garfield Park Residents	Non-Visitors Garfield Park Residents	Conservatory Visitors Chicago Residents
Date	10-17-02	11-09-02	10-21-02
Number of Participants	12	8	10
Visited Chihuly Exhibit	Yes	No	Yes
Residence	East and West Garfield Park	East and West Garfield Park	City of Chicago, excluding East and West Garfield Park

We analyze the focus groups with the same structure as our analysis of the survey data. We want to assess the role of the Chihuly exhibit in the on-going initiatives of the conservatory set out in the 1999 report and determine how the conservatory, Chihuly, and other programming fit into an urban redevelopment strategy for the neighborhood. Again the four categories of interest are (1) community relevant programming, (2) transportation, (3) visitor amenities, and (4) concerns about the community.

#### *Community Relevant Programming*

Groups one and two are entirely composed of men and women from Garfield Park, and group three respondents live in Beverly, Lombard, Austin, West Rogers Park, Lakeview, and Oak Park. All but two of the respondents from outside the neighborhood had only visited the conservatory during the Chihuly exhibit, whereas conservatory visitors from Garfield Park averaged 3 to 6 visits a year. This reflects the patterns in the survey data. More non-residents visit the conservatory, but residents who are conservatory users visit far more frequently. This suggests to us that the biggest challenge is getting community residents through the door. Once they have discovered the conservatory they are likely to be regular visitors. The focus groups offer insight into several factors leading to under-use of the conservatory by neighborhood residents:

- individual differences between visitors and non-visitors;
- advertising and information dissemination; and
- perceived relevance of conservatory programming.

Residents who visit the conservatory are different from nonvisitors in some important ways. Resident visitors tend to be highly involved in arts and cultural venues throughout the city. Most respondents in this groups reported frequent visits to the Shedd Aquarium, the Field Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry and the DuSable

Museum. Also, these individuals were usually tapped into these cultural networks as a result of parenting young children. Either they are currently the parents or grandparents of young children whom they take to events all around the city or they have grown children and cemented their ties with these venues when the children were young. Children operate as an information dissemination tool for parents and caregivers. Parents are either individually motivated to seek out enrichment activities for their children or school activities inform parents of the opportunities available in the city. One mother living in Garfield Park reports:

I go to the Field Museum, I go to the Museum of Science and Industry, the Art Institute, Brookfield Zoo, Lincoln Park Zoo, anything. And I go to the Chicago Public Library, you can get the free passes and I take the passes and go to the Children's Museum, Navy Pier. Every weekend I try to take my daughter and my son. I am trying to introduce them to Chicago and the different cultures in Chicago. And we also come here to the Garfield Park Conservatory.

Explaining why she was a regular visitor to the conservatory another neighborhood resident told the group:

I have a grandson. He's seven. He's really like my child because he's always in my house. I've always sort of been involved in what children do. I have four sisters, four brothers and I have a lot of nieces and nephews and because I live in the same building with my mom everybody's always there so I become the person where the children are the most. And I do a lot of kid things probably.

The non-visitors were much less likely to report spending time at other arts and culture venues in the city. When asked how they liked to spend their free time, these neighborhood residents responded: "I like to spend my time at the mall." "We go down to Navy Pier, the kids love Navy Pier." "I like movies." "I sell lingerie part-time." and "I love to watch football." Some of these residents are very involved in community activities. For example, one woman reported, "I am on my church board and also on the Marshall School Association." Another woman stated, "I work at Marshall High School, I am a coach there." But while these respondents have active family and community lives, they are not connected to Chicago's art and cultural venues. None mentioned other city museums or cultural activities as part of their regular leisure activities. Although many of these residents were also parents, they were somewhat less likely to have school-aged children living at home. Certainly some element of community non-use is related to these individual preferences for

how to spend one's leisure time. Residents cited lack of awareness of the conservatory's programming and a lack of interest as the most important barriers to visitation. Some suggested that they simply took the conservatory for granted because of its proximity while others suggested that when they had free time they wanted to get out of the neighborhood. These barriers are reflected in the attitudes of neighborhood residents who do not visit:

Just getting a job, getting bills paid has a priority and when we have recreational time, we just rest.

To be honest with you other than that meeting (for Marshall High School) I have completely forgot about the Conservatory.

I don't go. I guess because living in this neighborhood, its environment, when you get ready to go somewhere you want to get out of this negative, and go somewhere that you know you won't hear the riffraff and so I never do anything in the neighborhood. I don't even go to the grocery store in the neighborhood.

Yes, we pass by and we keep going. I don't know. It doesn't have the attraction. It's not a must thing to do. It's there, it's been there, its' going to be there. There's not an attraction that jumps out at you and says come see this.

If you go through, you've done it, you've seen it. So if you go back again it's the same thing. So why am I going back here again and again and again to see the same thing?

Despite these individual differences, residents still believed that there were important ways that the conservatory could make itself more attractive to the community. Foremost among their suggestions were advertising strategies such as community newsletters, distribution of fliers at area churches, grocery stores and schools, and signage and banners along well traveled routes. They also suggested the creation of a community board that would provide opportunities for community input through formal means. Foremost among their programming ideas were youth jams, community garden shows, gospel programs, food vendors in the summer, career day and volunteer opportunities for students, senior citizen

days and child related gardening. These residents also specifically requested that the conservatory have more exhibits that relate to black people.

These responses may appear to be little more than an outline for a marketing plan for the conservatory. But the concern that residents (both visitors and non-visitors) expressed in relation to the conservatory programming reflects their tensions and anxieties regarding development strategies in the neighborhood. Residents who visited the Chihuly exhibit rated it as beautiful, fun, interesting and enjoyable. But they also felt that it did not connect the conservatory to the community. One resident remarked, “when we got here it was beautiful and everything but still, to be honest, I still could not relate with the whole thing. I mean I couldn’t relate with why all the people were here to see it because I thought it was nice and everything but that was about it.” Echoing these sentiments another resident asserted, “they did nothing to entice the community to bring them in here. You may have come here as a child on a regular basis because your parents brought you here all the time. Maybe after Sunday School if you grew up on the West Side. But as a teenager in the early 80’s and stuff, there was nothing they actually did to entice you. Like the Chocolate Fair and different things, but they’re mostly for TV.” Both of these respondents believe that the Garden of Glass exhibit reflects an interest in attracting outsiders, but not to serving the interests of community residents.

Respondents linked this sense of neglect and irrelevance to historical resentments about the conservatory’s failure to bolster the neighborhood in its time of greatest need.

But post-riots, post-Martin Luther King the conservatory did not do anything. It was here all the time and it survived without doing anything, to promote anything to make this community more positive as far as the images. The Chihuly is wonderful. There are people in the community who love the arts and who still live here. But, as far as the city is concerned and the conservatory is concerned, in between the Chihuly and Martin Luther King and the riots, they really did not do much to promote. So they need to open up lines of communication and invite people in.

I still don’t think they’re doing enough to draw in the masses... You have to remember how many years of non-involvement that there was. They’re doing a lot of the things that now they should have been doing for years.

Importantly these residents expressed angst over the clear racial disparity apparent between Chihuly visitors and neighborhood residents. One young woman told this story: It was Saturday morning and I noticed it was a lot of white people on the train. I mean it was packed. It was really, really packed. It was a lot of white people and I'm thinking they're going to Oak Park. And I get off right here at Central Park and it was like the whole train got off too. So, I said what is going on!

This is not just a story about the success of the Green Line in bringing tourists to the conservatory, it is a story about feeling that one's neighborhood is being swarmed by outsiders. Some residents asked, "why do these white people know more about what is happening in my neighborhood than I do?" There is anxiety connected with the crowds that came for the Garden of Glass exhibit and similar tensions are likely to arise in any redevelopment efforts that seek to improve the neighborhood by making it whiter.

#### *Transportation*

There is no place where these tensions are more readily apparent than around the issue of transportation, particularly the CTA Green Line and the downtown shuttle for conservatory visitors. Conservatory visitors who are not residents of Garfield Park perceive the green line L stop as entirely positive. One conservatory visitor from Beverly reported, "And I just looked around and I saw the L. I thought God, look what they did. It's absolutely beautiful around here, absolutely." Non-residents further believed that the Green Line stop makes the Garfield Park Conservatory particularly attractive relative to other city venues that have more difficult traffic and parking situations. A resident of Oak Park explained, "It is much easier to park here. Parking at Lincoln Park Conservatory is the pits! And you have transportation. The L gets right off here and you're right here." A Conservatory visitor from Lombard also remarked, "That L station right here is just gorgeous." For those Chicagoans who came to visit the Conservatory from outside the neighborhood the L stop is convenient and beautiful, and parking is generous and accessible.

For residents of Garfield Park the L stop is much more controversial. Residents believe that the location of the Green Line stop represents the city's willingness to ignore the needs of neighborhood residents in order to increase tourist traffic to the conservatory. Like those from outside the neighborhood, Garfield Park residents acknowledge the convenience of the L stop for those who are visiting the conservatory. One Garfield Park resident who frequents the conservatory took pride in the public transportation and parking.

My problem with Lincoln Park Conservatory is parking. So at least over here our parking is not as limited as it is at Lincoln Park. And you also have direct transportation. You've got a major advantage of that L stop being there if you don't want to drive.

While they recognize the ease and conveniences of the Green Line location they also perceive it as a way of allowing visitors to enjoy the conservatory while avoiding the neighborhood, "They put the L conveniently so they could come to the Conservatory and see what they want to see and leave our neighborhood immediately." Another resident expressed her belief that the L stop is meant to disguise more negative aspects of the neighborhood, "You can go two blocks east and it looks like Cabrini Green or something. Then you go two blocks west and you see different people. You see one thing about them, when they come out of here they go straight to the L station. They either came by special transportation via the little trolley or their cars or the L, which directly took them there and directly took them back out."

Transportation is an extremely sensitive issue that touched off significant conversation in the resident focus groups. The following exchanges are indicative of the overt concerns expressed by Garfield Park residents:

Respondent 1: They've eliminated some bus routes that were convenient, mainly for senior citizens because these Ls are really not convenient for most of the senior citizens.

Respondent 2: Lake Street is gone, Washington is gone. The schedule of the Harrison and the Homan buses have changed. It used to be that we had buses every four blocks. And they're taking down the time.

Respondent 3: People that work the third shift have a difficult time going to work around here.

In another group residents expressed very similar views:

Respondent 1: They've cut down bus lines.

Respondent 2: And that's not positive, that's negative.

Respondent 1: We have been blessed with public transportation. Then they cut down some and that makes it hard for certain areas.

Respondent 3: They cut down the Lake Street L. They took off the Homewood stop and they created a new one for Garfield Park, for the people coming to the conservatory, not usually us!

Echoing these sentiments one resident argued that transportation needs in the community are entirely focused on conservatory visitors. “They shut down the Holman line. They slowed down on the buses. The fact that they had a shuttle bus to go downtown and bring people straight here when there is people in the community that had to walk blocks and blocks to get to their home, has got us pissed off.”

These sentiments can alienate residents from the conservatory because they perceive it as complicit in these transportation decisions. But perhaps more troubling, these issues develop a general sense of hostility towards processes of economic redevelopment if that development is seen as occurring at the expense of community interests. These results suggest to us that if city and private investors pursue economic strategies that ignore or disfranchise local residents, they will meet with considerable resistance from the existing community.

#### *Visitor Amenities*

Focus group participants, like the survey respondents, expressed an interest in and frustration with trying to make their visit to the Garfield Park Conservatory a more all-inclusive outing. All the non-residents went out to eat in conjunction with their visit, but none ate in Garfield Park. They chose restaurants in Oak Park, Greek Town, Hillside, Rogers Park and the near North Side. Several visited other cultural institutions in the city or went shopping downtown. These participants complained that there was no information at the Garfield Park Conservatory about area attractions. Several saw little of interest in the neighborhood other than the Conservatory or the Golden Dome. None were aware of the neighborhood soul food restaurant, *Edna's*, which won several awards at the Taste of Chicago.

Chicagoans from outside Garfield Park claimed that they would find visiting the conservatory more enjoyable if existing venues were promoted and restaurants and stores were developed. They compared their experiences with going to the Art Institute where one can eat inside at the cafes or across the street at the *Corner Bakery* or at *Bennigans*. These visitors suggested tables outside in the park area, complained about the very limited

bathroom facilities, and commented that it was not a place where they felt they could just hang out for the day.

I think the biggest thing is dining. If there was like some good restaurants, we would come here maybe like on a Thursday evening...But it's not really conducive. Unless there's a specific purpose, there's nothing around here else to do."

I think the main thing is just developing the neighborhood and having some shops, maybe arts and crafts.

There's very little to eat inside, other than maybe on weekends and there's very little to eat around. I would think once something like that is able to be built in the area or put in the area you're going to get more of a draw.

For these Conservatory visitors the neighborhood is not an amenity. These men and women frequent other artistic and cultural venues in the city. While they found the Garden of Glass exhibit and the conservatory well worth visiting, they were disappointed that the conservatory and surrounding community did not offer them the same kind of visitor experience that they have at comparable locations. They offered several possible ways to address this shortcoming including: (1) distributing a neighborhood tip sheet that includes local restaurants and area attractions like the Gold Dome, Peace Museum, and Edna's (2) promoting black culture in the neighborhood by emphasizing soul food restaurants and other locations that emphasize the uniqueness of black West Side life, and (3) a trolley architectural tour emphasizing the evolution of West Side.

The issue of visitor amenities is somewhat different for Garfield Park residents. Community members expressed a general lack of awareness about conservatory programming. They were surprised to learn about the children and family programming, the neighborhood festivals, and recurring events like the County Fair and the Chocolate Fest. By far the most important visitor amenity for local residents is increased marketing of the conservatory's programming. Again this has importance beyond simply increasing usage of the conservatory. Some neighborhood residents feel that the conservatory is a place for outsiders and that only those who do not live in the community are welcomed and informed about conservatory events. "A lot of them people know more what's going on in our neighborhood at the conservatory than we do because they advertise it to them but they

don't advertise it to the people in the neighborhood. When you go to events there you see more white people than the folks from the neighborhood because we don't know what's going on!" These perceptions are potentially important in any attempts to use the conservatory as a touchstone for development activities. Neighborhood residents want to feel that it is a place as interested in them as in other Chicagoans.

### *Perceptions of the Neighborhood*

Among the most important insights we gained from the focus groups were in-depth perceptions of the neighborhood from both Garfield Park residents and other Chicagoans. The perceptions are striking and mixed. They offer important insights into the kinds of barriers that government and private developers will face in reviving the neighborhood.

### *Chicagoans from Outside Garfield Park*

Several clear trends emerge in the attitudes of city residents from other neighborhoods in Chicago. First, most reported that before visiting the Garden of Glass exhibit they held a number of negative and apprehensive views about Garfield Park. For example, one young woman reported that her fiancé "was not happy about me coming here by myself. I think that that's the stigma that people have about this neighborhood that this is a bad neighborhood and you can't go there by yourself." Second, most of these Chicagoans would have felt no reason to visit Garfield Park except to see the acclaimed exhibit. "I had never been here before so [the Chihuly exhibit] was my first visit." Third, the more they talked about the neighborhood and the conservatory, the more they became convinced that Garfield Park is an up and coming neighborhood. "I've noticed positive changes. I just think the neighborhood is slowly redeveloping. You can see it. You can just feel it. There's an energy starting to happen. Things are coming back up again."

These focus group participants were asked to write an article about why they would or would not live in Garfield Park. As they shared their written articles these Chicagoans expressed deep ambivalence about the Garfield Park community. Concerned about crime; poverty; absence of businesses, retail outlets, restaurants and cultural venues, most would not consider living in Garfield Park.

I would not consider living in Garfield Park and I said *yet*. Like I said the whole thing, my fiancé didn't want me to come down here by myself.

At my age I'm looking for a different lifestyle. The neighborhood still has a stigma of crime.

That's what you hear about the west side. You hear bad things about the west side.

If it were more racially and economically diverse I would consider it. Supermarkets and restaurants, which are two things that are important to me, are not readily accessible. I think I would be afraid to live here because crime rate is too high.

One thing that is important to me is the impression that people would have of where you live. Perhaps your friends wouldn't want to come visit you. They might say, "I wouldn't want to live there or aren't you scared living there." I'd want to live somewhere that was synonymous with being safe. I think that makes an impression on how people reflect on you and whether people would want to come over and visit you or not.

I would not consider living in Garfield Park. It still has a ways to go to match up with some of the more established communities. I feel that there is not much to do.

I am not aware of much to do in the area. When you drive down a main street you don't get a homey, I-would-like-to-go-in-that-store feeling. I get a lock-your-doors; pray-you-don't- breakdown feeling.

These remarkably honest expressions of anxiety and concern reflect some of the major barriers to residential revitalization through immigration to the neighborhood. Lack of retail infrastructure and fear of personal and property crime are central issues in the minds of Chicagoans. Importantly these issues also top the concerns of Garfield Park residents. Finding innovative and effective means of addressing these issues is beneficial both to established residents and to potential community members. Neighborhood reputation also emerged as a key issue. For some "Garfield Park" denotes a negative and unsafe community. Neighborhood reputation is undoubtedly, but only slowly, improved as Garfield Park is more frequently linked to the conservatory, recreation, and the arts rather than to crime, drugs, and urban decay.

A discernable and important shift occurred over the course of the two-hour focus group with Chicagoans from other parts of the city. While, they remained staunchly unwilling to live in Garfield Park themselves, they grew increasingly convinced that Garfield Park is a good area in which to invest. This shift occurred even though there was no neighborhood advocate purposely attempting to affect opinions. Rather as they talked about their enjoyment of the Garden of Glass exhibit, their appreciation of the conservatory, and their sense that ‘things are changing,’ these men and women expressed increasingly positive assessments of the neighborhood’s future. This is different from the surveys. Enjoying the exhibit or conservatory itself does not seem to bring on attitudinal changes. Rather it was the opportunity to talk about these experiences with others and to engage in collective persuasion that led to an increased sense of the neighborhood as an important area for investment.

The area is a work in progress. Residences are being taken care of better. The transportation is excellent. Schools are improving. Just the general atmosphere is becoming energized. Overall improvements are continuing...with continued interest, monies- this area will be considered as Lake front property in a twenty-year cycle.

Positives of this neighborhood include inexpensive housing, close to downtown, close to transportation and interstate.

Real estate would be my venture in this area. I see the neighborhood on an upswing.

I think the neighborhood is improving. If the reputation improved and the household income increases I would be more willing to live here.

Crime is still here. But there seems to be an ebb in both drug and gang activity bringing renewed interest and even curiosity to the long neglected treasure. Buildings are being renewed and refreshed. The city is trying to assist in its commitment to the public transportation and public access.

Although it hasn't caught on like other urban neighborhoods, its time is coming. Schools, stores, small businesses still need to plant roots and grow strong to draw families and a resurgence of a true community neighborhood.

I think that it is changing and the neighborhood is getting better. I think that it's evolving just like Rogers Park and Lakeview did ten years ago. All the neighborhoods near downtown are starting to become revitalized and becoming better places to live. Businesses move in then and more people move in.

These opinions make it clear that perceptions of Garfield Park as a crime-ridden, poor community are pervasive, but there is also a suggestion here that these opinions are not necessarily enduring. There is room in public opinion for revision of attitudes toward the community. When encouraged to focus on their own positive experiences in the conservatory, these outsiders imagine a positive, revitalized future for this community. These attitudes are not underlaid by a willingness to take the personal "risk" of becoming a community resident, but these positive attitudes are a potentially important way of understanding how perceptions of communities are formed and updated as a result of positive artistic and cultural experiences with the neighborhood.

*Garfield Park Neighborhood Residents*

Garfield Park residents frequently used words like change, revitalization, and renovation when discussing the neighborhood; however, they also frequently used words like drugs, dealers, and gangs. The perception of an evolving community and the belief that their community is still beset by criminal activity coexist in the minds of neighborhood residents.

In the area of housing, residents expressed concern over the (1) loss of affordable housing as buildings are converted to condos or higher rent apartments; (2) high property taxes, (3) destruction of, rather than rehabilitation of, existing units; (4) land only being sold to major developers, (5) seniors unable to maintain residences, and (6) too much vacant land. One Garfield Park resident expressed her concern over the changing housing stock by reporting, "I think we've lost a lot of housing and I don't know what to attribute it to except that maybe we don't have the funding to keep our properties up or to maintain our properties and to hold on to them. They're creeping in on us. They're going to come in and take the land. But somehow we need to be able to maintain what we have and keep it in

good shape.” Another woman expressed her concern that senior citizens who were long-time homeowners in the neighborhood risk losing their houses. “A lot of the homeowners are seniors that have been here a long time and they don’t have the funds for upkeep.” Another man agreed, “So many of the seniors leave their houses because they can’t afford the taxes.” Other residents expressed their own anxiety at being displaced, “another thing they’re doing is the rehabs. They’re making condos out of them on the West Side. People who stay on the west side neighborhood can’t afford those prices, especially when you got two or three kids. It’s making it harder instead of easier.” These housing discussions revealed tremendous anxiety on the part of neighborhood residents, who often spoke in animated tones with one another, agreed whole-heartedly, and had to be prodded into moving off the topic. Unquestionably, the vast majority of Garfield Parkers perceive changes in neighborhood housing stock as coming at their expense.

Neighborhood residents had a mixed reaction to the schools in their community. Some consider Chicago Public Schools in their neighborhood to be stable while others see the quality declining. Many were concerned that there is little accountability in the schools, no accommodation of gifted students, and a poor balance of students in neighborhood schools as a result of magnet schools. Several residents cited the Calhoun Grammar School as an improving school and praised the before and after school programs of Marshall High School. One important complaint is that teachers are no longer neighborhood residents as they were more than a decade ago. Some residents perceive this as meaning that teachers have less stake in the children they are teaching. One resident firmly stated, “I think the schools in this area are terrible. They just had a report and all the scores were below average. You do have to go out of the area to get a decent education.” Perception of school quality is an important component in both quality of life measures and in predictions about a community’s ability to revitalize. The largely negative assessment of public schools by neighborhood residents suggests that improved school quality will be a key element in any attempts to fundamentally alter quality of life in Garfield Park.

In addition to their concern about educational quality, residents were deeply concerned about the utter lack of job opportunities and the declining availability of quality retail outlets in their neighborhood. Most believe that job opportunities are bleak except for the expansion of the Community Bank of Lawndale. They are angry that most of the large factories moved to the suburbs. “There used to be a large industrial complex over here and

they've all moved out to where the taxes are much lower outside the city.” Another resident argued, “they put that mini-mall right there at Kedzie but how many jobs can that actually cover? It's not enough. OK, Community Bank branched out. Not enough. There is just not a lot of opportunity and my understanding is that some of these places that they've recently opened up are closing. We have the ability, we have the resources, but they're not giving us the chance.” Residents perceive the enormity of structural barriers to more remote job opportunities and link the lack of employment chances with the problem of drug and gang violence. “You have to go way outside your neighborhood. You have to go way out in the suburbs in order to get a job. And it's like if you don't have a car and the bus is not running as much as it used to and you only get \$7.50 an hour, that's defeating the purpose. It's a job but it's just too far to travel. And then there are just certain times the buses are running in that area. For all that trouble, the younger kids, figure why should they work a job? They figure I can stand out here and make money right here.” Another resident echoed this sentiment saying, “I wish there was some programs we could get those young people in because they're really doing this because they've got nothing else to do but hang out and try to earn money the best way they can and it's a negative way. It's hurting themselves and the community.” These opinions express an awareness of the interconnection of economic opportunity, transportation infrastructure, and neighborhood crime. Garfield Park residents will likely respond well only to a redevelopment strategy that is similarly comprehensive in its approach.

Community residents expressed distress with the nature of retail. Residents are angry about replacing Tom McCann, Three Sisters, Sears and Goldblatt's with cheap dollar and athletic shoe stores. They mentioned that larger grocery stores such as Dominick's are coming into the community, but decry the store's practice of charging more than in other neighborhoods like Oak Park. “The problem I see with retail stores in this area, if you think about some of the big stores like Goldblatt's and Rich's in the surrounding area, they have either eliminated them or they have moved them far out, and that's not convenient for the people in this area... But what I don't like about the retail outlets that they're bringing in is that they're cheap stores. I mean stuff just to get our money.”

Perhaps the most important, continuing concern for Garfield Park residents is the issue of public safety. Although one resident reports feeling that there is less gang activity, most others feel that gang violence has escalated. “I think the gangs are becoming more and

more territorial. In some sense more vicious. Now instead of just shooting each other, it has escalated to daytime shooting where innocent people are around. Before it used to be very late in the evening and at night when most everybody except for them and their customers were out. Everybody else would be in the house but now it's escalating to anybody. It could happen any time."

This feeling of vulnerability was rooted not only in the prevalence of drug related gang violence but also in severe critiques of police action. The two most cited criticisms of the police were (1) their failure to respond to citizen complaints and (2) the failure to create consistent neighborhood policing. One woman argued, "I won't say the police don't patrol it, but I don't think they patrol it as well as it could be. I think they could stop turning their head when they see things happen, instead of going the other way." Another woman charged, "I've called the police. I always call the police. They never show up. One day I got so furious that I called back and I talked with someone. She told me I needed to call the crack hotline to report this. So I did see the police after I called the crack hotline. I did see them for like a week or two and now it's back to the same thing." Another woman was angry that a police officer had blamed unresponsiveness on her own inattentiveness to beat meetings. "I know one told me that I should make the beat meetings. I told him, 'I called you. Instead of you coming and see about the place where the activity is you come to my house. You tell me about a beat meeting.' Beat meetings are good, but for some of us who work, we can't always make a beat meeting and that shouldn't be a factor. If I call and I tell you where the activity is, you can cruise up there. You don't even have to come in a blue and white, you can come in plain clothes and check it out." Residents perceive the indifference of the police as related to the failure of community policing, "There is no continuity. One time they had beat officers over there and as soon as the beat officers get in good with the kids they take him off and send him somewhere else! I even became friends with one of the police officers that used to patrol the area and he told me he really thinks it's political because every time they get to the point that they need to be at then they take them out of the area and put somebody else in."

This perception of law enforcement's inattention to community safety issues heightens feelings of resentment toward the well-patrolled conservatory. The regular police presence at the conservatory during the Garden of Glass exhibit functioned in part to erect a barrier between community residents and the conservatory. This tension emerged many

times in the course of the focus groups. Some residents talked of parking their cars at the conservatory because it was the one place they felt their vehicles would be safe. “I have parked my car over here because I knew if I parked my car here it was going to be safe because the police were here.” Another resident claimed that the police presence had deterred her going to the Chihuly exhibit because she did not realize it was open to the public. “I thought it was private... not that it’s open to everyone. You can just about tell it’s a private party because there are a lot of police in the area. They secure that area.” Community residents all commented on the fact that the conservatory is well-lit and well patrolled. “I noticed this too every time I ride past there, there’s a lot of security as far as police. It be like always two or three squad cars across the street and standing out there.” But when asked, “Does that extend to your neighborhood?” The response was universally “no.” For residents, the visibility of police at the conservatory was further indication of the city’s commitment to tourist concerns over community needs.

Residents are pleased with the recreational opportunities afforded by the park and conservatory. They discussed the Park District’s after school programs, the new YMCA and its programming, the park’s athletic opportunities such as softball, basketball, ice-skating, and tennis. They appreciate the beauty of the park and conservatory, but they feel alienated from the processes of change occurring around them. They feel shut out of the benefits of greater security afforded the conservatory and are anxious about the changes occurring in housing and concerned about the stagnation of educational and employment opportunities.

#### *Perceived Effects of Garden of Glass Exhibit*

Finally we asked both residents and non-residents to share with us their perceptions about the effects of the Chihuly Exhibit on the Garfield Park neighborhood. No one can deny that the Garden of Glass exhibit brought in a tremendous number of visitors to the conservatory, but there is considerably less consensus on the long-term effects of this visitorship on the neighborhood.

Neighborhood residents generally agree that with the close of the Garden of Glass exhibit most visitors will cease to patronize the conservatory and will once again forget about the neighborhood. One woman noted, “Chihuly is a real attraction. You had people coming in their limousines and their fur coats and then the other people in the community with their vans or whatever. There was a wide mixture of people. I don’t know if the conservatory itself will have the ability to draw that large numbers of people because these

are people who came to see this exhibit.” Another resident argued that, “I think it will be a decrease in visitors once the exhibit leaves because that was one of the main things and it was hyped up within the media. A lot of people just came to see what it was about.”

Another woman reminded the group, “We also have the Lincoln Park Conservatory and I think more people, they’re probably going to go over there before they come here.”

While they are convinced that with Chihuly’s exit there will be considerably less interest in the conservatory, neighborhood residents are aware that the Garden of Glass exhibit created a broader awareness of their neighborhood. “I think that this has exposed the neighborhood. I saw other people talking about the buildings and what might be available.” Another resident pointed out “it brought notoriety into the community. That is something that people can talk about in this area as time goes on. They can talk about the impact it had, how many people it brought into the community.”

While pleased with the attention their community received, Garfield Park residents also believe that the Garden of Glass visitors left little to benefit the community in their wake. Some perceived the increased traffic by other Chicagoans as an alienating experience. One resident remarked, “when I came for the exhibit it was the people that shocked me. The other races. They made me feel like I was outside of my element. I stay down the street, but when I came here I was the minority. I felt like this place was somewhere else. I felt like I was somewhere downtown or somewhere in the suburban area or something. I felt out of my element.” Another resident argued, “Then the community is not being built up. The Park District is just drawing outside influences into the black neighborhood.”

These residents further believed that city officials were unconcerned with assuring that their community would benefit from the success of the show. “I think as far as the mayor and everybody’s concerned, there should have been something set in place for us to be able to profit from the Chihuly being here.” They decried that, “I think it was self-maintained. They came directly to the event and then they went directly out. If there was money left they left it right there in the conservatory. It didn’t spill out into the community, nor did the people venture out into the community. They either came by special transportation via the little trolley or their cars or the L, which directly took them there and directly took them back out. And I think it was planned like that.” Echoing this sentiment another man argued, “No, I don’t think it impacted the community. I think they came and they saw and they left.” Further, while these residents believe that the conservatory may have

benefited, that there were few positive externalities for the neighborhood, “I think it benefited the conservatory and the conservatory is in our neighborhood but as far as the surrounding area, I don’t think it did anything for it.” Reinforcing this sentiment a man suggested, “they probably did a little for us just the fact that they wanted to make sure when these people came here they’d look right across the street. They tried to fix that up a little bit, right there. You look real quick you can see a little improvement but other than that no, not on the long term. They probably washed the windows, fixed up the Golden Dome in case somebody looked up there. Other than that, no.” Neighborhood residents could discern no tangible benefits to the community as a result of the explosive popularity of the exhibit. More importantly, many felt the experience to be alienating and anxiety producing as the exhibit brought in outsiders.

Other Chicagoans were also skeptical of any significant economic impact of the exhibit on the neighborhood. Although some believed that nearby gas stations may have experienced an increase in revenues, most believed that they had been unable to penetrate and explore the community during their visit. “I don’t think it did because this seemed to be more of an in and out for many reasons. But if you look around there were very few things we could have stopped and spent our money on.” These Chicagoans agreed with the Garfield Park residents that the crowds were vastly predominately white and that this suggested the community had little involvement with the exhibit, “to tell you the truth, when I was here I didn’t see too many black people. I didn’t see people in the neighborhood.” Another woman commented, “I agree with him. I think I saw like three black people the day I was here and I stayed for two and a half hours.” Another woman reported, “I think that some of the people in the neighborhood, the African-American people, could care less. It’s here, it’s here. It’s gone, it’s gone. I think people here are basically trying to survive day by day. The exhibit is here, that’s good. It’s gone, Ok, that’s good. So they have other agendas; survival.”

While agreeing that there was little direct economic or positive social impact on the neighborhood, these Chicagoans argued for a much larger and more important role of the exhibit in impacting perceptions of the neighborhood. “I don’t think it had an effect on the neighborhood but I think it’s had an effect on the perception of the neighborhood with everybody in this room and probably everybody who came to the thing. Widening their scope, getting people to bring their kids, feeling safe enough to, eventually that will help the

neighborhood.” Others reported that the experience of visiting the neighborhood influenced their own feeling about it, “I think it changed my mind a little bit just about it. I see that it is an up and coming neighborhood. You see the beautiful brownstones and that the bones are there and once people start renovating and making things better then the businesses will come in.” Echoing that sentiment a woman suggested, “I think the people may say hmm, I don’t want to come here now but in five years I want to come back to this neighborhood to live. So they brought awareness to the neighborhood.” One man suggested that Chihuly exhibit was beneficial in bringing an unlikely group of people to the neighborhood, “I think people maybe were brainstorming how to get white people into this neighborhood. And if you were to have said well, I’ve got a plan that’s going to bring them in by the thousands they would have said, “humph.” But that’s exactly what the Chihuly exhibit did.”

While they felt that neighborhood visibility was positive for its own sake, these Chicago residents also leveled critiques against the exhibit planners for failing to capitalize on the opportunity that the Garden of Glass exhibit provided. “I think the problem was nobody capitalized off of it. You had this great exhibit here but the neighborhood didn’t react to it. People came in and people left. I don’t think it improved very much right now because I think nobody capitalized on that. It didn’t improve the neighborhood because nobody else did anything. No restaurants opened or anything like that to say hey, you’re coming to Garfield Park, why don’t you do this while you’re here. Basically come to the Conservatory and then go wherever else you want to go.” Another woman echoed this sentiment saying, “I think it was really poor planning to have this great exhibit and they really didn’t capitalize on it. If they’d thought it through, like they were saying the shopping center that was put together at Roosevelt, that kind of thing could have been done. We could have capitalized on it so that when the Chihuly leaves there is still something in the community that’s new.” These respondents further suggested that conservatory admission itself could be used as a direct reinvestment strategy for the community, “Why don’t they charge more and give some of that money back to the community to help to improve the community? I mean if they really want to impact Garfield Park, why not charge ten or \$15 or if you’re a resident of Garfield Park, I’m not really sure of the demographics but if you’re a resident here and you like have a driver’s license Garfield Park then maybe you’ll get a

discount since you actually live in the community. But why not charge more and give that money back to the community to improve the community?"

Garfield Park residents discern no economic or social benefits from the Garden of Glass exhibit. Other Chicagoans report on the exhibit's important influence on public perception, but feel that the exhibit was a missed opportunity for more a substantive economic impact. It is clear from these sentiments that the public perceives that the promises so prevalent in the media have not been fulfilled. Chihuly was an artistic success and a blockbuster media event, but no one is convinced that it operated as a cornerstone for redevelopment activity. It is important to note that these citizens recognize the potential for this kind of artistic event to have a substantive effect on the community, but they believe that by design or by omission that potential was never realized.

This is in stark contrast to many media and elite opinions about the exhibit. On June 15, 2002 Mayor Daley was awarded a 2002 City Livability Award largely as a result of the Garden of Glass exhibit success. Chicago received first place in cities greater than 100,000 in population. In July the U.S. Conference of Mayors reported:

Chicago's "Chihuly in the Park: A Garden of Glass" exhibition was conceived by Mayor Richard M. Daley as a fine arts exhibition shown at the 100- year old Garfield Park Conservatory on Chicago's Westside... On the surface, the exhibition is about art, plants, beauty and reflection. The underlying motivation of the project, however, is economic development of a long-troubled neighborhood and the reclaiming of the conservatory as a city treasure....The challenge of overcoming the perception of violence in the Garfield Park community, and stimulating visitorship to the Conservatory required a bold and innovative approach...Within months, the community image began to change, and interest in the economic revival of the area from the business, educational and foundation communities emerged. It is now apparent that the program has created the public momentum that is fueling the turnaround story of a neighborhood...Now it has served to improve the quality of life for this neighborhood's residents."

Results from the focus groups suggest that community residents and even some Chicagoans from other parts of the city would tell a very different story.

### *Important lessons from the focus groups*

- Information dissemination and community relevant programming are the keys to greater participation of neighborhood residents in the conservatory. Most residents perceive the Chihuly exhibit as a failure on both points.
- Transportation via the CTA Green Line is universally perceived as a “good” by those who don’t live in the neighborhood, but is more negatively viewed by community residents. The L stop is perceived as another example of the city ranking tourist comfort ahead of community needs.
- Chicagoans from outside Garfield Park claimed that they would find visiting the conservatory more enjoyable if existing venues were promoted and restaurants and stores were developed.
- Garfield Park residents have significant anxiety that redevelopment efforts, especially in the area of housing, will displace them. They feel that their personal and public safety concerns are less important to the city than protection and patrol of the conservatory.
- Chicagoans from outside Garfield Park continue to maintain negative stereotypes of the community, but can be convinced that it is a revitalizing community with investment potential.
- Residents of the neighborhood and other parts of the city believe that exhibit planners missed the opportunity to harness the Garden of Glass for the good of the community.

### **Planning Future Revitalization Efforts from the Conservatory**

We believe that our study of public opinion demonstrates that there are important tensions and perceptions of failure readily apparent in the attitudes of both neighborhood residents and other Chicagoans. However, we do not believe this means that the Garden of Glass exhibit was itself a failure. Community and city residents are but one set of stakeholders and decision makers in the larger process of community revitalization. Before Chihuly came to the West Side, the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, other neighborhood-based organizations, private lending institutions and housing developers, and city-wide and national organizations had put into place a number of important initiatives meant to transform the neighborhood. We believe that the expansive popularity and media

coverage of the Chihuly exhibit further invigorated these key decision makers to redouble their efforts in the neighborhood. It is indisputable that the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance sees itself as a central player in the revitalization of the Garfield Park community and that they are interested in harnessing whatever power, prestige, and public awareness that surrounds the conservatory to do work for the neighborhood. On February 1, 2003 the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance held a community forum titled “Planning For Change,” and promoted the event as “a community visioning charrette for the economic development of the Garfield Park community.” The event was well attended, and the group was diverse in age, race, and gender.

Eunita Rushing, executive director of the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, opened the program by emphasizing that this is a critical moment for redevelopment. She compared the present to the successful effort to save the conservatory. The message was clear: the community saved their conservatory and the community could save their neighborhood. This theme was echoed by many of the speakers. Participants heard from their local Alderman, Walter Burnett, Jr., a representative from the Chicago Board of Education, and speakers on “Green” Commercial Development, Open Space Planning, and Green Technology. Key themes were the need for community involvement in redevelopment, and the distinctiveness of Garfield Park as a green city.

Lisa Roberts, from the Chicago Park District, and Rushing closed the panel presentations by describing changes going on at the conservatory. The Palm House roof will be replaced with glass, the outdoor gardens will be expanded and the front of the Gold Dome is being renovated. One building is being transformed into an education center, and the Park District is improving the lighting at the Conservatory. Roberts announced that the stables area would be converted into a public market, which was met with audible approval from the audience. Both speakers emphasized that these changes are coming about because of community initiative. Rushing also suggested that the Conservatory would prioritize community relevant programming. Importantly, our researcher who attended the meeting never heard the word “Chihuly” mentioned.

The conservatory is a touchstone and a partner in several redevelopment efforts in the community. We have only begun this portion of research, but in our admittedly limited assessment of the current state of these efforts there are two that we perceive to most important:

- Bethel New Life

Using the “assets” of a transit stop, a major park and adjacent industrial area, Bethel New Life seeks to expand and enhance the area. Its sustainable community efforts are coordinated around the principles of: (1) the green principle of a walkable community, by developing housing within walking distance of public transportation, (2) developing and building energy efficient homes and developing an “energy park” with alternative energy sources, (3) participatory planning that involves residents in all aspects of the planning and priority setting, (4) greening and safe play spaces as a part of a focused housing development, and (5) advocacy and fair growth to ensure that neighborhood residents benefit from revitalization efforts

- Artist Housing

The Switching Station Artists Lofts will bring 24 units of affordable loft housing specifically for artists to the East Garfield Park neighborhood. It is being built by Artspace Projects, Inc a national leader in the development of affordable space for artists to live and work. Artspace is a Minneapolis, Minnesota based organization created in 1979 to serve as an advocate for the space needs of working artists who were being forced out of Minneapolis' historic Warehouse District by rising rents. Today they are involved in the rehabilitation of a 1906 building at 15 South Homan Street that originally served as a telephone switching station and later became a middle school, and has been vacant for more than two decades. This new housing project will provide 24 units of large open loft-style apartments for artists and their families. Artspace maintains that it is “committed to attracting creative individuals and their families from diverse artistic and cultural backgrounds.” And that they are “especially interested in applicants from the East Garfield Park Neighborhood and those who are committed to building community and are willing to give their time and energy to this goal.”

We believe that the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Bethel New Life, and Artspace are all committed to sustainable development in the community built around the comparative advantage of this neighborhood’s green space. We firmly believe, however, that the success of their programming will lie in making a better connection between residents and visitors than was forged during the Garden of Glass exhibit.

## **Phase II: The Continuing Study of the Garden of Glass**

We do not have all the answers. This is not because the answers are not out there, nor is it because we don't have the skills or enthusiasm to uncover them. It is because we don't have the money. We have developed a Phase II plan for this project in the hopes of securing adequate funding.

- Chicago City Follow-up Survey

The on-site surveys and focus groups are not only valuable sources of data in their own right, they also serve as a guide to develop instruments for a large scale phone survey of Chicago residents. Fielding a survey in the months following the close of the exhibit allows an assessment of the longer term impact of Chihuly on the constituency of the conservatory and on attitudes toward the Garfield Park neighborhood. In 1999 the Pew Trust funded a significant study of the social impact of the arts. As part of this study investigators fielded a national survey of attitudes toward and use of arts venues in major cities, including Chicago. The public opinion surveys emerging from the Garfield Park research will fit within the concerns of this national study, but will also serve to expand the scope of that study by investigating the influence of a popular art exhibit in an unexpected venue on the attitudes of both community residents and outsiders.

- Leadership Interviews

A number of community, business, and city government officials were key in creating and supporting the exhibit. To assess the success or failure of the exhibit it is important to understand the motivations, plans, and subsequent assessments of key stakeholders. We propose a series of interviews with leadership of the Conservatory, Boeing, the Chicago Park District, and the city of Chicago. These interviews will contribute to an understanding of the genesis of the Chihuly exhibit and how the exhibit fit into or diverged from the earlier goals set by these decisions makers for the conservatory and community. These interviews further provide a framework for those interested in replicating similar arts initiatives by offering an inside assessment of decision-making, funding, publicity, and implementation. The purpose of the leadership interviews is to gather information from key stakeholders on what they had initially expected of the Chihuly Exhibit; their role in preparing the Conservatory for the show and presenting it to the neighborhood and the general public; what positive and/or negative attitudes among different groups they believe were shaped by the presentation as well as the reasons for the high rates of attendance; what

surprised them about the show, things they wish had been done differently and how they would advise preparing for and implementing the next presentation. These respondents represent a cross section of decision makers who are likely to have different perspectives on the value and impact of the exhibit. They are likely to have a number of important ideas about how to sustain the momentum of the show with respect to the conservatory and the community.

- Sustainability Assessment

Phase I of our research focused on public opinion around the Garden of Glass exhibit because we believe that community opinion is critical to generating sustainable development in a community. But there are other important elements to this equation as well. We have identified the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Bethel New Life, and Artspace as potential partners in a more comprehensive approach to recreating Chicago's West Side. We have not yet engaged in the more complete analysis necessary to fully evaluate these projects. In the second phase of our research we will identify the key advantages and barriers to the arts and cultural based redevelopment initiatives in the community. As part of this work we plan to "track the money." We are interested in discerning just who benefited from the \$2 donations of the 500,000 visitors to the Garden of Glass exhibit. How did it directly impact the operating budget of the conservatory? How were funds redistributed through the vehicle of the Chicago Park District? We are confident that few, if any, residual funds stayed in the neighborhood. What happened to the directly collected monies?

- Comparative Case Study

To understand the impact of the Chihuly exhibit and the potential influence of similar programs it is important to place it in context. Ultimately, it is important to identify other, comparable uses of artistic/cultural programming and community redevelopment and to ask if these same tensions and concerns arise in other national examples of artistic and cultural programs in similar venues anchoring neighborhoods for the purpose of economic recovery? A careful analysis of one or more of these comparable situations allows a more realistic assessment of the Chihuly exhibit's impact. We see the most likely candidate for this comparison to be the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum (MFACM) in the Pilsen/Little Village neighborhood of Chicago.

Like the conservatory, the MFACM sits in an ethnically distinct neighborhood, the largest Mexican community in the Midwest. Founded by Carlos Tortolero the Museum cites its purpose as stimulating and preserving the knowledge and appreciation of the Mexican culture as it manifests itself in and outside of Mexico. Currently it is hosting the “Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexican Art: the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection.” The exhibit is gaining significant media attention and has already become the museum’s most attend show to date. It is not clear yet if this has the potential to become another Chihuly in terms of press attention, but it is an important comparison that can provide a framework for understanding the Garden of Glass exhibit.

The similarities are obvious. Like the conservatory this museum is in an area infrequently visited by Chicagoans outside the immediate neighborhoods. Like the conservatory the MFACM lacks certain visitor amenities that are prevalent in other city venues. But the differences are also glaring. This exhibit is about the people of the community in important ways the Chihuly exhibit was not. It both has blockbuster potential and maintains a sense of community relevant programming. Pilsen is renowned for its public murals. Art is everywhere in this neighborhood: on the 18th Street L stop, over stores, near churches. Diego Rivera was renowned for murals addressing social and political conditions. In many ways showing his work at the Fine Arts Center validates the public art, which is so pervasive in the community.<sup>xxii</sup>

Like the Conservatory, Pilsen is near the loop and has a convenient Blue Line Stop. Unlike Garfield Park, Mexican restaurants and shops are one of the first things seen from the train. The area near the Center has casual and classy dining options. Pilsen also won a battle with the city to allow licensed street vendors as an important part of their cultural heritage. A search of *Chicago Tribune* articles in the last three months (40 articles) showed a more diversified array of art, dining, local interest, and policy articles than Garfield Park Coverage. For the same period Garfield Park had 41 articles, mostly about the conservatory. Garfield Park does not have articles on dining - in fact - only one article of 333 we analyzed for this study even mentioned a Garfield Park restaurant that was not associated with an armed felony. A search on “Pilsen” and “Garfield Park” in Metromix.com, a frequently used search tool for day trippers and tourists alike, showed 26 listings for places in Pilsen (restaurants, theater, tours, even the 'L stop for the murals.) In contrast, Garfield Park had only 4 place listings: the conservatory, the park, a tour, and a blues lounge. Most distressing

was the Metromix note: “Despite the surrounding beauty of Garfield Park, it's a tough neighborhood; be respectful and careful coming and going.”

Like Garfield Park, Pilsen is confronting the tensions of gentrification. Already new housing has increased the cost of living and rent in the neighborhood is rising. Pilsen is the site of a day labor project and the home of many recent immigrants, and the issue of housing gentrification threatens to create a rift in the community.<sup>xxiii</sup> Like Garfield Park, Pilsen is still facing issues of street gangs and drug violence. In a comparative study we will comprehensively assess these connections and disjuncture between these West Side neighborhoods. Will Pilsen residents react to outside visitors the same way? Will the community discern an immediate economic impact from increased visitorship to the museum? Is this a better model or just a different one? These are the questions we propose to ask in a comparative study during the second phase of our project

## **Conclusion**

Phase I of our study offers important insights into the Garden of Glass exhibit that are not available from the prevailing, and media induced “wisdom” that this exhibit was an unmitigated success in spurring revitalization of the Garfield Park neighborhood. We believe that a systematic and unflinching assessment of public opinion is one critical element of all urban redevelopment initiatives. We do not believe that it provides an exhaustive examination of the complex policy issues involved. Therefore, it is our sincere wish that we will secure additional resources to pursue the further study of this phenomenon.

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<sup>i</sup> Funding for the first stage of this study was generously provided by the Packard Foundation and the Office of the Vice President of Community Affairs at the University of Chicago. We wish to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago, especially Christopher Perrius, Carrol Joynes and Lawrence Rothfield. This study emerged as a result of their request for proposals. They have been instrumental in coordinating various elements of the project and in seeking funding for the project. We would like to thank Professor William Harris of Jackson State University for his assistance in developing the study proposal. We wish to acknowledge Lisa McDonald who conducted the focus groups. We also want to thank Norrell Giacanna and Marlin Estrada for their assistance with the on-site surveys. We wish to acknowledge Eunita Rushing and the staff of the Garfield Park Conservatory for their personal, professional, and technical assistance with many aspects of this study.

<sup>ii</sup> Renamed after President Garfield's assassination in 1881.

<sup>iii</sup> Source: Chicago Historical Society

<sup>iv</sup> Source: US Census Bureau

<sup>v</sup> <http://illinoisgis.ito.state.us/ilfirst/creport.asp>

<sup>vi</sup> Source: Multiple Listing Service of Northern Illinois as reported in *Chicago Magazine*, October 2002.

<sup>vii</sup> The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance produced a written report in November 1997 outlining programming initiatives to bring the Conservatory to the local community and to bring the community to the Conservatory. In 1999 Loyola University Researcher Laura Oswald produced a Consumer Study of Current

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and Potential Users of the Garfield Park Conservatory for the GPCA. In 2001 the Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC) generated a report interrogating the Conservatory's relationship to the community and the success of its programming efforts.

<sup>viii</sup> Oswald, Laura. 1999. *Consumer Study of Current and Potential Users of the Garfield Park Conservatory*. Loyola University Center for Urban Research and Learning.

<sup>ix</sup> "To our Neighbors: The Chihuly Show Limits Parking to VISITORS ONLY".

<sup>x</sup> Fifty percent of all volunteers are community members. Source: Interview with Director Eunita Rushing, April 24, 2002

<sup>xi</sup> Source: Researcher fieldnotes May 30, 2002

<sup>xii</sup> Dale Chihuly quoted by Mary Cameron Frey in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Friday March 1, 2002. "Conservatory Glass Exhibit is Sparkling."

<sup>xiii</sup> A Garden of Glass: Chihuly in the Park publicity brochure.

<sup>xiv</sup> When we analyze the data removing coverage of the Chihuly exhibit the percentages re closer to the previous years with 40 percent of stories about the conservatory, with 60 percent about the neighborhood.

<sup>xv</sup> The reference here is presumably to the conservatory, but it is certainly not unproblematic to refer to the predominately black neighborhood as "the big jungle."

<sup>xvi</sup> The black hole reference here strikes us as being troublesome for its racial overtones.

<sup>xvii</sup> Respondents reported an average household income of \$60,000 annually.

<sup>xviii</sup> African Americans were 23 percent of the respondents and Latinos/Hispanics were 7 percent of the respondents during the Saturday afternoon Garden of Glass exhibit. These percentages plummeted to 7 percent and 1 percent during the Thursday evening showing. On the Saturday afternoon of the County Fair African Americans made up 66 percent of the sample and Latinos/Hispanics 7 percent.

<sup>xix</sup> See June 3, 1998 Sun Times story: *W. Siders protest plan to rebuild CTA station* by Fran Spielman.

<http://www.chicago-l.org/articles/homan-times.html>

<sup>xx</sup> The researchers themselves were frequent visitors of the snack cart!

<sup>xxi</sup> This effect cannot be attributed to question ordering effects. Half of all surveys asked the positive battery first, the other half asked the negative battery first. Respondents were randomly assigned to either version 1 or version 2 of the survey.

<sup>xxii</sup> The connection has been noted in the "Portraits of Pilsen: Mural tour and more paint a picture of a place Frida would have loved." *Chicago Tribune* January 24, 2003.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See January 19, 2003 *Chicago Tribune*, "Day Laborers feel spurned by new Pilsen: They feel spurned as community's economy develops."