

Introduction

The Northgate neighborhood of Seattle is renowned for its abundance of shopping centers and restaurants that are readily accessible through the newly installed Link Light Rail. Just on the other side of the Interstate 5 Highway lies the infamous Aurora Avenue which is known for its high crime rate and limited transportation methods. These two regions of the Northgate neighborhood highlight the prominence of a business-oriented community. The most successful of these business-based initiatives has been the establishment of the Northgate Mall which not only brought economic growth within Seattle, but also initiated the whole concept of a “shopping mall.” This northern area also has a deep history rooted in Indigenous community much like the rest of the Seattle area, and struggles to balance the Indigenous presence alongside a market-centric neighborhood.

As mentioned, the Northgate neighborhood experiences public service leadership through market-based organizations. Community members and government organizations still have a strong involvement in community development projects, but programs are primarily available through the businesses sector. Market-based communities are typically associated with having strong economies and convenient access to an array of resources. On the other hand, an overly-dominant business community can exacerbate inequalities and prioritize developments over community well-being. The similarities and differences between the center of Northgate and Aurora Avenue corridor display the strengths and shortcomings of market-based public service leadership.

Quadruple Bottom Line Analysis

Social Bottom Line

While Indigenous peoples have occupied the space of Northgate since time immemorial, the demographics of the region have shifted quite dramatically. Currently, the majority of residents (67%) identify as White with the next largest population of 16% identifying as Asian. These factors have contributed to the advantages and challenges within housing access and affordability within the Northgate neighborhood, the most prominent social bottom line component. Recent efforts made by governmental offices, specifically Sound Transit, are currently supporting projects that increase affordable housing. On the other hand, the dependency on private entities to develop these projects for resources undermines the values and accessibility of these programs aimed at alleviating inequities.

Thornton Place and the Northgate Apartment are the most well-known apartment complexes that incorporate mixed-use buildings alongside a mixed-income housing community.

Thornton Place, while at a market rate cost, includes a mixture of restaurants, entertainment, and other social services at the ground-level which is available to residents and outside community members. Additionally, this square houses a handful of elderly residents (65+) which supports a multigenerational community. This structure of mixed-use buildings is something that the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) anticipates for the Northgate Apartments in the not-so-far future. While no official projects have been announced, the SHA is striving to offer some affordable housing despite the current private ownership of the housing complex. Through the social bottom lens, access to economic activity (like the Thornton Place businesses) and affordable housing (as anticipated later on for the Northgate Apartments) are strengths within the market-based community models. This offers residents the ability to engage in economic development and social services within close proximity. Similarly, the installation of the Northgate Link Station has also brought about plans for affordable housing developments as Sound Transit begins to use surplus lands. The transformation of the parking lot into buildings for housing and services (like childcare) is a great example of social bottom line values through governmental projects and private support.

This cross-sector collaboration within housing developments has brought great job opportunities and accessibility amongst the residents of the hub of Northgate. However, private-sector forms of leadership can pose a challenge because of the nature of these organizations. Private organizations are not required to be transparent for community members because of the independent nature of the business. This can be a prominent issue if the private-entity acts in ways that defy community values which leads to a disconnect in transparency and accountability. For example, the Mandatory Housing Affordability Act requires private owners to set aside a minimum of 5% of units in housing developments for affordable housing. However, private ownership often opt in to pay a fee for violating this act since it is still cheaper than actually providing affordable housing units. Similarly, when attempting to purchase a neighborhood of low-income mobile homes, some private-owners decided to withdraw from this transaction when considering the cost of environmental clean up needed for this community. These are both examples of how community values can be misaligned with the goals of private businesses especially as private organizations have no obligation to center community values. Furthermore, the financial resources that private businesses have can sometimes be necessary to support community projects. While the SHA is redeveloping spaces for affordable housing, a portion of those same units are being sold to private entities in order to generate revenue for the space which further highlights how private interests may be prioritized over community needs.

The social bottom line sees its biggest tensions within housing access because the trade-offs lie within public (government-based) and private (market-based) forms of public service leadership. As private ownership of these services can create exclusivity, intensify inequities, and limit forms of accountability, it is also an opportunity to promote economic growth and access to an array of services. Cost of living continues to influence which communities are able to take up available space which can somewhat be reflected in the

demographics of the Northgate area as well as historically-racially restrictive covenants. The presence of elderly residents is also important to note because it highlights how the multigenerational community engages with the private-sector as well as emphasizing the need for accessible social services. Overall, the social bottom line showcases the tensions between private and public ownership of housing developments.

Financial Bottom Line

Northgate has always been a place of big business opportunities. When the Northgate Mall was first opened in 1950, it not only brought great economic growth but also initiated the “shopping mall” structure. The shopping mall model emphasizes a car-centric environment but also centers economic activity within one singular, dense area. This proved to be a popular model up until recent major changes in the retail industry. While the mall is a very important part of the financial bottom line in Northgate, other sources of economic growth come from the mixed-use developments (like Urban Villages) and job opportunities from a few sources (transportation investments and the nearby community college, North Seattle). However, areas of strong economic activity are typically associated with having rapid rates of gentrification which can be seen within this neighborhood. Tensions in the financial bottom line lie within the rate of urban development that can sustain a community without pushing out residents who are most vulnerable.

Northgate has successfully implemented the ideas of an Urban Village which are communities that have accessible housing, opportunities for economic growth, multiple transportation options, environmentally sustainable resources, and the ability to engage in civic events. The Thornton Creek is a great example of the Urban Villages in action alongside the Northgate Commons that neighbor the Northgate Mall. These are clear examples of opportunities for economic growth because of the close proximity to businesses and job availability. Similarly, the presence of the North Seattle Community College also provides resources for job training and economic development through educational opportunities. Further, the newly installed Light Rail also offers direct access to these economic activities for community members and others outside of Northgate. These spaces have remained successful in parts of the Northgate region because of the business space for people to engage in. The Urban Village models have been successful in Northgate which is partly responsible for a strong community economy.

The decline in traditional shopping malls has challenged Northgate’s strongest asset, the Northgate Mall. As the landscape of shopping has shifted since the 1950s, the Northgate Mall has experienced a decline in sales and overall foot traffic. Though there are less people shopping in malls, rent prices continue to increase which has forced stores to close down because of these high costs and low sales. However, private developers are brainstorming how to transform the Northgate Mall to be another center of economic activity as it once was. Through adaptive reuse and retrofit, private investors are seeking to reconstruct the layout of the mall to strip away from the car-centric model and to incorporate spaces of social interaction. The re-developments of the Northgate Mall can also be an example of concentration services that lead to rapid gentrification since greater economic growth leads to an increase in cost of living. While exact measures of

displacement are not available for the Northgate community, there are a handful of examples that reveal how private organizations may prioritize this economic growth over providing affordable services.

The financial bottom line within the Northgate neighborhood is characterized by multiple opportunities to engage in economic activities through shopping centers, restaurants, social services, transportation availability, and educational advancement. These resources provided by private businesses and other non-private entities display the success of Urban Villages. However, intense developments can lead to gentrification and displace those most vulnerable. The ever-so changing nature of the economy requires all sectors of public leadership to consider how investments in economic development create both beneficial and harmful interactions with various services.

Environmental Bottom Line

Despite the booming business scene, there are growing efforts to promote environmental sustainability alongside urban development. The installation of I5 and the Northgate Mall have led to significant damages and complete destruction of environmental resources like the Licton Springs which completely altered the landscape of the Northgate neighborhood from the beginning of its existence. Recent efforts from various locations have led to new developments in environmental sustainability especially in the areas near the Light Rail station but not necessarily across all of Northgate. Furthermore, spaces that have been previously used for harmful environmental practices are now hoping to be transformed into new green spaces. The environmental bottom line in Northgate identifies if recent sustainability efforts can offset previous harmful destruction of the land.

Most recently, the development of public transportation across Seattle has created suitable forms of greentravel across prominent neighborhoods including Northgate. The Northgate station is important in green travel especially because of the construction of the John Lewis Pedestrian Bridge. The bridge not only offers a pedestrian friendly way of traveling but also bridges the gap between the separated Northgate regions. Similarly, new housing developments are designed to meet environmental sustainability standards and ensure levels of green resources in these new buildings. While new developments are being designed to meet sustainability goals, Northgate organizations are also finding ways to restore previously devastated green spaces. The Thornton Creek water channel restoration project is a successful development that reduces pollutants through channel redirection and biofiltration. This collaboration between community groups and non-profit organizations recognized the need to use natural resources as a form of environmental sustainability within the urban landscape. Repurposing natural resources is a fairly new process that different sectors are investing in sustainability efforts in Northgate. The restoration of the Haller Lake landfill and Hubbard Homestead Park into community green spaces are other examples of repurposing spaces that were once environmentally damaged.

The environmental bottom lens aims to identify the trade-offs and tensions within urban development and environmental restoration. While there are efforts to offset the environmental destruction that came along with the construction of the highway, mall, and overall neighborhood of Northgate, the spaces are still designated as Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) because of underlying pollutants. Community gardens, access to public green spaces, and sustainability designs within new developments are strengths within the Northgate neighborhood. However, the entire landscape of the region has changed, requiring community members and organizations to collaborate over environmental restoration projects within the urban scene.

Cultural Bottom Line

While business-oriented public service leadership is prominent in Northgate, residents are fairly active in community affairs and are invested in rebuilding community spaces through business endeavors. There are a handful of community centers that allow residents to engage in community-wide activities and create a space for dialogue. Through these designated spaces, involved community members are able to construct the Northgate cultural identity. However, considering that the Northgate neighborhood is not as diverse compared to other parts of Seattle, it is important to recognize the ways in which BIPOC residents and communities may have limited presence in this building of a community identity.

The Maple Leaf Community Garden, Northgate Community Center, Northgate Library, and Kraken Community Iceplex are all prominent community spaces in the Northgate neighborhood. These spaces not only offer resources to connect with communities and engage multi-generational residents, but they are spaces of empowerment for varying identities. The Kraken Community Iceplex in particular is an example of how the business-based sector uses franchising programs to create an open community space. Through art installations and programs specifically made for underrepresented identities, the Kraken integrates sports as an important aspect of Northgate identity. Investment in community spaces leads to an active community with shared identities and values. In Northgate, the involvement in community affairs is quite high when considering that there are four formal committees that aim to address limited green spaces, racial inequities, transportation challenges, crime prevention, and much more. Community members have not only been active through these formal councils but also within their own respective spaces. For example, the Idriss Mosque is active in addressing Islamophobia and continues to host community events. Community members were leading members in the restoration of the Thornton Creek water channel as well. These experiences reflect how the Northgate cultural identity is one that is actively engaged in the community through formal and non-formal avenues.

However, when considering the strong community, it is important to recognize the communities that have historically been excluded both legally and socially. The result of racially-restrictive covenants and displacement of Indigenous peoples has led to a predominantly White Northgate neighborhood. While new forms of recognition through art and housing styles

are beginning to appear, a majority of culturally significant environmental spaces for Indigenous communities have otherwise been destroyed. The Duwamish people of the Coast Salish people are still fighting for Indigenous Sovereignty as to center the perspective and values of a community that has been forcibly displaced. As the cultural bottom line analyzes what cultural traditions create a unified identity (typically through art, public spaces, and community events) it is imperative to understand how marginalized communities are limited in this co-creation because of displacement and erasure. This framework recognizes the need to continue building community with current residents and to find ways to include communities that have been historically excluded.

Tensions and Trade-Offs

Tensions within the Northgate community are primarily focused on the trade-offs that come along with market-based forms of public service leadership. Private organizations tend to have greater ability to operate autonomously and with little forms of accountability. However, this trade-off is primarily visible through the social and financial bottom lens. The environmental and cultural frameworks experience public service leadership through cross-sector collaborations where the trade-offs are balancing development and adaptability. Below are the strengths and weaknesses within each bottom line that were mentioned in this analysis.

Bottom Line Values	Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>Social</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix-use buildings that promote access to economic activity and social services • Mixed-income housing to promote affordable housing initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Multi-generational community • Accessible public transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transparency and accountability amongst private developers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Can prioritize private-interest goals over community well-being • Private investment in social resources can lead to exclusivity and exacerbate inequalities
<i>Financial</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful Urban Villages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hub of economic growth, access to social, cultural, and environmental resources • Nearby community college as part of job development • Adaptive reuse and retrofit of the Northgate Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline in densely-centered, car-centric shopping centers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Low economic activity cannot compensate for raising rent prices • Rapid Gentrification

<i>Environmental</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greentravel through public transportation and pedestrian-friendly developments • Sustainability design in new projects • Restoration of damaged green spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Water channel, landfill park, homestead park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of important environmental sites (ex. Springs, creeks, etc). • Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) in popular spaces due to underlying pollutants
<i>Cultural</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Community garden, library, iceplex • Active community members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Through councils and through non-profit organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of historical displacement efforts and racially-restrictive covenants • Struggle for Indigenous Sovereignty and recognition

Throughout this analysis, it is evident that residents in Northgate have fairly strong access to social services, economic activity, environmental restoration efforts, and community spaces. The tensions lie within restoring equitable and sustainable projects within each framework due to harmful historical exclusionary practices that have created a somewhat exclusive neighborhood. While a market-based organization in public service leadership can offer spaces of innovation and resource allocation, it also places private interests above community values which can contribute to an exclusionary community. The most successful projects, like the Thornton Creek Water Channel, have been led by cross-sector collaborations which can support the Northgate community in balancing urban development and community adaptability.

Personal Reflection

Northgate is a place that holds a lot of significance to me since it is the neighborhood that I moved into when I began my first years at the University of Washington. Just a few blocks away from the newly installed Light Rail, I remember when the Northgate Station opened within the first week of the fall quarter. I have a lot of memories from the restaurants, movie theaters, and stores all around Thornton's Place and the Northgate Mall. While I did not think about how this area was a business-based community, it provided me the ability to engage in these services not only economically, but also just within proximity. These close resources meant that I could easily access food services that other undergraduate students may have been limited to. However, I immediately noticed that the community within my apartment complex, and that of Northgate, was vastly different from my own identities.

Since I was living with my older cousins, we were able to secure a two-bedroom unit with a handful of amenities in apartment buildings that usually did not house young-adults. The community I noticed within Northgate were primarily white, elderly residents which made me (a young Latina) feel just a little out of place. The disconnect from my own cultural communities and being apart from peers in their first years of university, made Northgate feel like my own

little town. While conducting my analysis of this neighborhood, some resources and spaces felt incredibly familiar, but it was still important to recognize the historical practices which have led to the demographics of the community.

The area between the Light Rail Station, Northgate Mall, and Thornton's Place is what people think of when imagining the Northgate neighborhood. Just on the other side of the highway lies a community college that sits near the infamous Aurora Avenue. As I wrote this memo, I thought about how this analysis is mainly based entirely on those few blocks without much emphasis on those other spaces. I think it would be interesting to conduct a QBL framework analysis on areas near Aurora Avenue given that it is a place that also has a business-oriented community but with greater issues and concerns within each bottom line framework. My perspective of the Northgate neighborhood has been influenced by my own living experiences in the area, but this reflection allowed me to recognize how a marker-based resource can be beneficial to those who can afford it. I also think about how it is possible for cross-sector collaborations when it comes to environmental restorations compared to other areas in Seattle, like Rainier Valley. Overall, Northgate is a space that offers spaces of community well-being and services through mixed-sector entities which influenced the social, financial, environmental, and cultural landscape of Seattle's Northern Neighborhood.