

GENTRIFICATION THROUGH THE EYES (AND LENSES) OF KANSAS CITY RESIDENTS

Amy Thompson

Dr. Soren Larsen, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Gentrification is a process where the middle class migrates to decaying or predominately poor areas of a city and changes the landscape. Since the phenomenon was first recognized in the 1960s in London, it has spread to cities of all sizes across the globe, and has morphed into unique versions of the original process. Kansas City's downtown has recently experienced gentrification, especially new-build gentrification in the past decade. Few studies presented in the gentrification literature utilize a qualitative, bottom-up method to understand the process. This thesis uses the photo novella method, which involves use of photographs and interviews, to do understand residents' perceptions of gentrification in downtown Kansas City. The results show that gentrifiers have an idealized perception of how downtown should look and operate, which includes an aesthetically pleasing, functional, and authentic landscape that is accessible, historic, and diverse. Homeless residents feel unwelcome in the gentrifying landscape.