

JOHNS HOPKINS
MEDICINE

Research study participants needed.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/ideas/bal-id.moore02jul02,0,4542925.column>*From the Baltimore Sun*

Neighborhood 'abandoned' but not ignored

Public Editor: Paul Moore

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Last Sunday, The Sun devoted much of its front page and three full inside pages to a detailed examination of life in an East Baltimore neighborhood devastated by the social and economic ills that haunt areas of the city, despite encouraging evidence of regeneration along the [Inner Harbor](#) and other neighborhoods. On Monday, a second substantial Page 1 piece - with three additional pages inside - assessed efforts at recovery.



The energy and resources involved in producing the series, "A Neighborhood Abandoned," led by reporter Eric Siegel and photographer Karl Merton Ferron, shows why newspapers are not like other businesses. The subject was challenging and far removed from the lives and daily interests of many Sun readers.

The series was not produced to boost the newspaper's circulation. It did not resonate with the younger "demographics" that newspapers are so desperately seeking to reach. It was not embraced by those with a limited amount of reading time.

Pandering it was not.

The Sun's decision to devote significant resources to this project was based on the belief that the fate of these city neighborhoods is relevant to everyone who lives in the Baltimore region. For the editors and reporters at the newspaper and its Web site, baltimoresun.com, the challenge was to make these stories, photos and graphics as accessible and compelling as possible.

A paragraph in the first article notes that the neighborhood blocks "provide compelling evidence that the revitalization so apparent in some sections of the city has left many other parts untouched - a reminder of the continuing gulf between prosperous and poor Baltimore."

While some readers may feel disconnected from life in a 20-square-block area surrounding the abandoned American Brewery building, what happens there affects everyone in the region in subtle ways. (The massive and majestic American Brewery factory has been empty since it closed in 1973.) Transforming such areas into places where people want to live again would create jobs, reduce crime, limit suburban sprawl and make the city less dependent on state aid.

Siegel said his most difficult challenge was capturing and conveying the underlying complexity of such an outwardly depressed area. "On the two-block stretch of North Bradford Street that I looked at, there was rampant drug dealing, a double murder and three dozen vacant houses. But there were also working people and longtime homeowners."

The results of Siegel and Ferron's efforts were applauded by many readers.

"I think your article is powerful, well-written, beautifully photographed and truly heartbreaking in a non-manipulative journalistic way," said reader Elizabeth Gething. "Safe, protected, deluded North Baltimore residents like myself need to have their eyes pried open more frequently."

From Art LaVeck: "One can only hope that when outstanding journalism ... intersects with community interest, that there remains a chance for a positive result."

Mary Smith said: "I thank you for these articles. It surely explains why we cannot reclaim all of Baltimore's neighborhoods. Perhaps if Warren Buffett would toss a couple of billion our way, we could do this."

Baltimore native LaKeisha L. Davis wrote from Iowa City, Iowa: "This really gives others an opportunity to see what life is really like in Baltimore. I am happy to see that more attention is being paid to the less fortunate."

Davis was among a number of readers who experienced the stories and photographs online. An interactive gallery of 30 of Ferron's photographs included an audio narration based on voices from the neighborhood or audio captions written by Ferron. This provided an extra dimension for many readers and is a good example of how Internet and print journalism can complement each other.

Still, a few readers questioned the resources used to produce this series. One called the series way too much attention for "an area where no sense of community pride is evident anywhere." O.R. Jordan said: "You could build a penthouse at the American Brewery site and in a year it would look like the rest of the area does now."

Siegel visited the neighborhood last Sunday and brought copies of The Sun with him. A number of residents were shocked and amazed at the coverage. "I find it hard to believe that The Sun did this," one resident told Siegel. "I didn't think anybody really cared about what has happened to this neighborhood."

Paul Moore's column appears Sundays.

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