Putting the 'Home' in 'Home and Community Based Services'

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to investigate if there are housing and community characteristics which seem to support community transitions and quality of life, including:

• We anticipated that Money Follows the Person (MFP) participants would have a greater likelihood of moving to places with lower housing costs and greater availability of rental housing.
• Since housing costs are associated with socio-demographic factors, we also predicted an association with certain factors.
• In addition, we specifically examined associations of residency and satisfaction with proximity to low income housing tax credit developments, which Georgia was marketing to MFP participants.
• Finally, we examined whether housing and community characteristics of interest appeared to have any connection to MFP participants’ choice over where they lived or their satisfaction with living there.

METHODS

The MFP Quality of Life survey is a 42-item instrument developed by the program’s national evaluator, Mathematica Policy Research. The survey is currently used in all MFP demonstration states. Participants were Medicaid beneficiaries who were living in nursing homes for 90 days or more at baseline survey who met eligibility criteria and were transitioned to the community under MFP program between 2008 and 2015.

Variables selected from the survey included:

A. Do you like where you live?
B. Did you help pick (this/that) place to live?
C. Do you feel safe living (here/there)?
D. Taking everything into consideration, over the past week would you say that you have been happy or unhappy with the way you live your life?

Each interview recorded the individual’s address at the time it was administered. For the purposes of this analysis, their address at T1 was geocoded in ESRI ArcMap 10.3 on a secure server, using a local version of ESRI StreetMap. Housing, socioeconomic, and demographic data by Census tract were downloaded from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (ACS). These data are based on a sample of the general population.

Correlation between number of participants in the Census tract was calculated against the selected housing, socioeconomic, and demographic factors. Significance was tested using Spearman’s ρ due to nonparametric qualities of participant distribution.

RESULTS

The number of MFP QOL evaluation participants matched baseline to T1 (the sample) was 783. Of the sample participants, there were 326 tracts with 1 participant, 120 with 2, 40 with 3, 5 with 4, 3 with 5, 8 with 6, 2 with 7 participants residing there. Figure 1 depicts the geographic distribution of participants around the state, by number of participants per Census tract. Table 1 displays correlations between number of participants in the Census tract and selected characteristics.

Table 1: Correlation between number of participants and community variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tract Data</th>
<th>Correlation (ρ)</th>
<th>p Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of housing units that are multifamily (2+)</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% that are single family</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% that are mobile homes</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of households in poverty</td>
<td>-0.89</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of households earning under $15K</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of homes that are rented</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of homes that are vacant</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of LIHTC units</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of LIHTC units</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

The availability and cost of rental housing seems to factor into transition housing options. This is important, because most jurisdictions restrict the construction of apartments and attached housing. Like the rest of the U.S., Georgia is experiencing an affordable housing challenge which is especially severe for renters and affects both rural and urban areas. Restrictions on housing development and other assets can exacerbate the geographic variation in overall investment across different areas, which can cause some areas to become disinvested – which seemed to be associated with lower satisfaction with participants home and quality of life.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY OR PRACTICE

Changes to zoning, subdivision, and building code policy could facilitate the opportunity for many more institutionalized individuals to return to a community setting. State support for accessible housing that is affordable housing options. This is important, because most jurisdictions restrict the construction of apartments and attached housing. Like the rest of the U.S., Georgia is experiencing an affordable housing challenge which is especially severe for renters and affects both rural and urban areas. Restrictions on housing development and other assets can exacerbate the geographic variation in overall investment across different areas, which can cause some areas to become disinvested – which seemed to be associated with lower satisfaction with participants home and quality of life.