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 purpose of this analysis, their address at T1 was geocoded in ESRI ArcMap 10.3 on a secure sever, 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 909 Census tracts in Georgia. 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.

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 disadvantaged— 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 more low-income individuals to return to a community setting. State support for accessible housing that is available and affordable to transitioning residents may be important, especially where it creates a wider choice of housing options for higher-income areas and areas that currently lack such choice. This includes housing tax credits, other housing finance programs, and housing vouchers.

Table 2: Correlation between QoL responses and community variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Housing/Community Factor</th>
<th>Correlation (ρ)</th>
<th>p Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who lived where they were</td>
<td>Median rent</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who felt safe living there</td>
<td>% of households that are vacant</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who had picked that place to live</td>
<td>% of homes that are renters</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who were happy with their life</td>
<td>% of homes that are renters</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of households earning under $10k</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of homes that are single family</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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