

The Boyle Heights Landscape:

The Pressures of Gentrification and the Need for Grassroots
Community Action and Accountable Development



**Lydia Avila-Hernandez
Occidental College
Urban Environmental Policy**

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Introduction

Many new changes are about to happen in Boyle Heights; changes that historically have been interpreted as revitalization. But this interpretation does not mean that our community will be revitalized. Changing the fabric of our community to make us more marketable will inevitably chip away at our personality. In Boyle Heights, *somos cabrones*, we come together and persevere. We protect our barrio because we own it. We have fun loving our dramatic community. I came out tough because the people around me were tough. I don't mean the *cholos*; I mean the moms and the dads. Mr. Gibbs, my high school teacher always used to tell us "If it doesn't kill ya', it'll make you stronger". *Asi es* Boyle Heights. The moments that maybe you may not have been conscious of, inspire and shape you. Memories like sitting on the *porche* doing homework, unaware I was listening to my neighbor Lydia Muro whistle to *rancheras*. Now, almost 4 years after we all got evicted, I remember and I miss it.

I had lived on Rivera Street since I was three years old and then, after dreading the moment since high school, during my second semester at Occidental, the landlord gave 5 families, including ours, a 30 day eviction notice. The landlord had told us his intention to evict more than 3 months earlier, but nobody could find a place to live. Almost everyone had bad credit and the only rentals we could find were \$900 and above. After the 30 days were up, everyone was still there. We all looked sad and talked to each other about how the house hunt was going, but no one had secured a home. That's when we were given a 3-day notice. The landlord told us he was evicting us because he would be conducting significant repairs because some men were interested in buying the lots to build apartments and said there would be no sale if tenants were still there. Our situation was getting desperate

because my older sister was scheduled to give birth soon and we had nowhere to go. I had called multiple organizations trying to find some help for all five families but no one could help us. I called the family shelter to get information, hoping we would not need that option. The landlord was not giving anyone relocation money because the reason we were getting evicted was that no one was paying their rent in full. Our rent at that time was \$425 for a 2 1/2 bedroom duplex. We had very little money to pay, but my mom just could not cut enough hair to make enough for the month's rent, food and all the back rent. Ever since my dad left us, my mom had never really been able to meet the entire rent payment and after years of inconsistent rent payments, the landlord had no other choice.

I think we were the first ones to leave. 2 weeks after the 3-day notice that we were given, one of my mom's haircut customers saw my mom crying and told her his mother had a 2 bedroom house for rent. Ultimately, during the fall of my junior year at Occidental, 8 of us would be living in this 4 room, 2 bedroom house paying \$900 rent a month. But at that time of the eviction, we felt we were set. It was 3 doors away from my brother's house and only 3 blocks from Rivera. We felt it would be reasonably safe and close to the places we knew. I cried when we left because 135 was where I had lived my entire life. I always knew that when you needed *ruda*, you could go to Ana Estrada. If what you needed was *hierba buena*, Lydia Muro was the one to go to; and if you needed a haircut, my mom was the one for the job. Everyone also knew that if you got a flat or your car broke down you could call the Muro's to pick you up and help get the car back to the block even if it meant pushing the broken down car all the way back. Many of the men in the neighborhood served as handymen with each one having a specialty whether it be electric, plumbing or appliance related. All the women sat for each other's children through the years and provided a

tomato or an onion when the others ran out. My mom, you could say, even ran a make-shift food bank, collecting and distributing food from various churches and organizations to neighbors and other people from around the neighborhood. Oh and don't forget about the free security! You couldn't even hold hands with somebody within a 10 mile radius without somebody making sure your mother found out. Also, when people were sick, many times, moms in other families would take some soup to their house just to show their support. The whole neighborhood also took care of our older neighbors, our *viejitos*, by making sure they were well by visiting with them. We all knew when Don Chuy would fall ill and would offer his wife Angelita some support with hospital visits. But now, this is all gone.

We have moved 2 times since Rivera Street and now, only have our own family for support. We moved into a neighborhood where people fight over parking spaces and where we are viewed as outsiders. The homes we were evicted from remained empty almost exactly 4 years. There were never any apartments or any major changes other than our eviction. It was only a couple of months ago when I nostalgically drove by that I saw a sheet hanging in the window serving as a curtain with two kids playing in my favorite spot.

Although our landlord on Rivera Street did not evict us as a result of gentrification, our eviction hurt us all. I cannot even imagine how infuriating it would be to get evicted in order to be replaced by higher income people when you have not done anything wrong. When people refer to the consequences of gentrification and that displacement destroys community, this is what they mean. We lose more than just our homes and “social networks”, we lose the secret ingredients that gives flavor to our communities; love and respect.

Chapter 1: History of Mexican Displacement and Boyle Heights

In order to fully understand the impact of current development in Boyle Heights, we must first look at the history of Mexicans in Los Angeles. Historically, Mexicans have been forced out of their homes in various neighborhoods in order to “revitalize” the community by bringing in Anglos. The treatment of Mexicanos/as and Latinos/as in L.A. today is a product of their past. According to Raul Villa in *Latino Urban Cultures*,

For Mexicans in particular...their contradictory social location-being simultaneously in the geographic center and the economic margins of the city-has meant that they are constantly having to react to the disparate impacts of metropolitan restructuring in defense of their urban needs (8).

Since the beginning of Los Angeles’ history, Mexicanos/as and Latinos/as have been pushed aside in the name of progress, with its racist implications.

The Plaza

The Mexican community in Los Angeles originated in the city-center. In the 1820s, while still part of Mexico, construction of the Plaza began as a result of the increase in population and economic activity in the city (Romo 21). It was not until 1835 that Los Angeles was officially declared a Mexican city after having been a Spanish pueblo and a Gabrielino village (Romo 20). During and after the U.S. Invasion of Mexico, Los Angeles began to be taken over by Anglos, including occupation by the American Military from 1846-1850 (Romo 21). In 1848, California became part of the United States with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty promised citizenship and equal rights to all Mexicans but it turned out to be merely the beginning of our second class citizenship. In *A Community Under Seige*, Rodolfo Acuña describes that “After 1848, Mexicans lived in the area just south of First Street. However, as the poor increased in number, they spread to the plaza area. By the 1860’s this area was a slum, occupied mainly

by Mexicans and Chinese” (6). The Mexicanos/as and Chinese occupied this area because they provided the labor force for industry and the railroads as well as the brickyards.

Although Mexicanos/as began their history living in the city center, it wasn't long before Anglo emigrants from the east coast and the Midwest began to buy homes and land in the city-center, forcing the Mexicanos/as to move just outside the city center. The first step in revamping the city center for the Anglos was to demolish the Mexican adobe homes and replace them with brick buildings that were considered a symbol for progress. An observer describes, “the roomy old houses are fast being pulled down to make way for more profitable brick tenements,’...Businesses wanted to be near the railroads for supply and distribution, and their acquisition of land drove Mexicans out and prices even higher in Sonoratown” (Monroy 18). The coming of the railroads in the 1880's furthered the process of evicting Mexicanos/as from the Plaza area. As Mexicanos/as found it more and more difficult to live in the city-center, they began to move to the communities of Boyle Heights, Chavez Ravine and Lincoln Heights. (Acuña 10). At this point, Boyle Heights was not yet the desirable suburb that would become home to the Jewish and Molokan community before World War II. It was simply an area located near the industrial zone west of the Los Angeles River that allowed people to live close to their jobs (Boyle Heights Community Plan I-1).

Boyle Heights and the New Barrios

Mexicans came into the multicultural community of Boyle Heights for many reasons. According to Rodolfo Acuña,

In 1868, George Hansen and William Moore surveyed Paredon Blanco, which became Boyle Heights in the 1870's. It was renamed after Andrew Boyle, the first Anglo-American to reside on the Eastside...In 1876, 35 acres were subdivided. By

the 1880s, the area was a suburb of Los Angeles, with 300-400 businessmen and their families living there (6).

It is important to note that “businessmen” were not in fact the only inhabitants of Boyle Heights at that time. Many Mexicanos/as had for several years lived along the Los Angeles River, which currently serves as a border between Boyle Heights and Downtown. In *Whitewashed Adobe*, William Deverell observes, “The riverbed itself, for at least much of the year, had also been claimed as Mexican space, home to poor communities or *colonias* forged from scrap wood or abandoned rail boxcars” (130). Deverell’s observation contrasts with the assumption that Boyle Heights was settled by Anglo frontiersmen, since in fact Mexicanos/as had already settled in or near the area.

Mexicanos/as moved in to Boyle Heights as a result of racist policies and high rents in the city-center. Mexicanos/as moved to the new barrios because “Restrictive racial covenants typically excluded the Spanish-speaking from desirable suburbs. The new barrios were established in sections of town that other, more affluent groups refused to inhabit” (Bustamante and Castillo 127). Mexicanos/as were then and have continued to be segregated into particular neighborhoods like Boyle Heights due to the dominant Anglo policies and practices that reinforce segregation patterns.

Boyle Heights Before the Blight

The number of employers in Boyle Heights has diminished significantly. Before the 1950’s and 60’s, Boyle Heights was an active industrial zone. Industrialization in Los Angeles and more specifically in Boyle Heights began with the arrival of the railroads in the 1880’s. Most of the industry that located in Boyle Heights was connected to the railroads and also included light manufacturing and the brickyards. The working class, composed of multi-ethnic immigrants and residents, began to establish their homes east of the immediate

industrial area which was east of downtown and west of the river. Mexican labor was intensely recruited by businesses as well as the railroads. This caused the dramatic increase of the Mexican population in Boyle Heights. (BH Community Plan I-1).

Between 1900 and World War II, Boyle Heights was inhabited by Mexicans, Japanese, Jews, Russian Molokans and Blacks. The section where most Black community members lived was a “neighborhood bounded on the north by Brooklyn Avenue, on the east by the Evergreen Cemetery, on the south by Michigan Avenue, and on the west by Mott Street (Romo 62). The Jewish community lived near Brooklyn Avenue. Ricardo Romo notes that “Boyle Heights, which had counted 3 Jewish families in 1908, grew to an estimated 1,842 Jewish households in 1920 and nearly 10,000 by 1930” (65). During this time, Boyle Heights businesses and residents were mostly Jewish. Russian Molokans arrived in Boyle Heights around 1905 fleeing the war in Russia (Romo 66). They settled in the flats of Boyle Heights, the area closest to the central Plaza district and very close to Downtown (Romo 66). Most of the Molokans were employed near Downtown in the lumberyards and later the shipbuilding industry (Romo 66). Molokans had a very high homeownership rate, 26 out of 50 families owned a home, and rented extra rooms in their homes to Mexicans (Romo 67). As the neighborhood became more industrialized, the Russians began to move out of Boyle Heights. Boyle Heights also had a large Japanese population prior to World War II and the relocation policies that were established during the war. The demographic changes are described by Rodolfo Acuna, “In the mid 1940’s, the Jewish exodus from Boyle Heights to the Fairfax area accelerated. Blacks moved in to public housing in the flats and the once large Japanese population was now small, having been removed during World War II” (Acuña 14). After WWII, people and industry began to

leave Boyle Heights. It was during the 1950's that Boyle Heights started to become blighted and populated mostly by Mexicans.

The Mexican population in Boyle Heights and Los Angeles had steadily been increasing. Acuña notes, "During the 1910's, large numbers of Mexicans arrived in Los Angeles, escaping the bitter fighting and violence of the Mexican Revolution"(9). The Mexican population in Los Angeles went from 5% in 1900 to 20% in 1930 (Romo 11). The population changes from 1910 to 1930 had an effect on the urban landscape. According to Raul Villa in "Aqui Estamos y No Nos Vamos: Place Struggle in Latino Los Angeles", the expansion of "single-family resident home ownership in areas such as Maravilla and Belvedere during the 1920s and 1930s marked the birth of the East L.A. superbarrio to come" (Leclerc, Villa and Dear 10). Besides the construction of new housing in the Eastside, during the 1920's when the land in Boyle Heights had been almost totally subdivided, some of Los Angeles' first public institutions and public buildings were built along with many private schools, sanitariums, religious facilities and other institutions (BH Community Plan I-1).

Chavez Ravine and the Freeways

"Two of the most spectacular instances of spatial violation against Mexicans and other poor people in the central city were the displacement of barrios in Chavez Ravine to the north for the construction of Dodger Stadium and the vivisection of Boyle Heights and the greater Eastside barrios to make way for the East L.A. freeway interchange and the several highways that radiated out from it"

-Rodolfo Acuña

Chavez Ravine

Mexicans had already been displaced from the Plaza Area when the City once again decided it needed to expand the city center. Chavez Ravine, now home to Dodger Stadium, symbolizes how Mexicanos/as and their barrios have become dispensable in the eyes of

dominant elites in Los Angeles. Chavez Ravine is an excellent example of the City's broken promises to the poor. Through the "Battle of Chavez Ravine" we see the importance to the city of economic interests over the support and sustainability of communities of color.

Chavez Ravine was located on a "315-acre parcel of hilly, wooded, and picturesquely 'rural' land very near the center of downtown Los Angeles" (Hines 123). Chavez Ravine was home to mostly Mexicanos/as but also African Americans, Chinese and White men (Leclerc, Villa and Dear 14). . It was surrounded by the hills of Elysian Park, the Pasadena Freeway and the Hollywood Freeway. The community had a Catholic church and an elementary school (Hines130). After World War II, plans were developed to demolish existing homes in Chavez Ravine for the development of public housing. When the National Housing Act was passed in 1949, Chavez Ravine was identified by the city as one of the 11 areas where 10,000 units of public housing were going to be built at a cost of \$110 million dollars (Hines 130). The federal government purchased the land around Chavez Ravine from the City of Los Angeles for \$5.3 million (Hines 140).

Public housing was never built in Chavez Ravine because the new Mayor, Norris Poulson labeled housing for the poor as a subversive communist project (Villa 14). This proposed public housing project was never realized because "the United States was entering the McCarthy era, a period of bitter anticommunism when anything that could be viewed as social criticism was seen as un patriotic and dangerous" (Leclerc, Villa and Dear 21). Public housing was therefore viewed as social criticism. After canceling the project, the federal government sold Chavez Ravine back to the City for less money than it had bought it, amounting to a \$4 million loss (Hines 140). Once having taken ownership of the land, the Mayor felt the best capitalist use for the land would be to bring in an all American baseball

team, the Brooklyn Dodgers. By labeling the public housing project as communist, the Mayor was eventually able to give 315-acre Chavez Ravine to Walter O'Malley, the owner of the Dodgers, for an old 9 acre stadium (Hines 140-41). There was resistance to the sale, but ultimately the community was demolished in May of 1959 along with the social networks that had been established in the area (Acuña 75). Similar to what developed in Boyle Heights, residents of Chavez Ravine helped each other with child care, job leads, herbal medicines, money loans and other community which helped compensate for the lack of capital among the residents (Villa 14). By first abandoning the public housing program, which at least offered the potential of maintaining an intact community, Chavez Ravine became an example of how redevelopment became embedded in economic favoritism and racist outcomes.

The 5,10,101 and the 60

In the 1950's and 60's the City of Los Angeles began its approach to urban renewal projects. Urban Renewal consisted of the demolition of certain "bad" neighborhoods for the construction of a more modern city infrastructure. Rodolfo Acuña observes that in the Eastside,

the most significant factor to alter the environment) [was when] the construction of four major freeways took place. Two freeways were built in the 1940's and two more in the early 1960's. As a result, Boyle Heights was segmented into four smaller areas and one large area. This segmentation has resulted in inadequate services to some of the neighborhoods in Boyle Heights (13).

Acuña attributes the construction of the freeways to a shift from public transit systems such as the electric interurbans to an auto-dominated transportation system, which some analysts have attributed to the manipulation of the transportation system by companies like General Motors. He also argues that this capitalist endeavor "had grave consequences on land use

east of the Los Angeles River. Freeways ultimately displaced ten percent of the area's inhabitants" (Acuña 12).

A lesson we can learn from the development of the freeway system is the intimate connection between elected officials and private corporate interests. Elected officials are willing to subsidize corporations but are not providing essential services to their residents. At the time the freeways were being built through Boyle Heights, many people lived in substandard housing and were unemployed, yet the city ignored their needs. Construction that destroys inner-city neighborhoods can be prevented by looking at that history and developing alternative scenarios.

Chapter 2: Boyle Heights Community Profile

The demographic information in this report is primarily derived from East L.A. Community Corporation's (ELACC) study "Boyle Heights, A Community Profile: Emphasizing the Housing Needs and Conditions" by Mónica Gomez. The ELACC study used twenty-four census tracts to define Boyle Heights, including two tracts that were counted to the block level to correctly identify the community living within the Boyle Heights boundaries (Gomez 4). Sources for the data include the United States Census Bureau, the Planning Department of the City of Los Angeles, FedStats, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and UCLA's NKLA and NKCA Research Centers.

Demographics

Boyle Heights Residents

The Boyle Heights barrio is located approximately 1 mile east of downtown Los Angeles and encompasses approximately 6 square miles. Its boundaries are the Los Angeles River to the West and Indiana Street on the East as well as Washington Boulevard to the South and Marengo to the North (Community Plan I-1). Approximately, 86, 770 residents live in Boyle Heights. Of these residents, 98% are people of color and 95% are Latino/a. 50% of the resident population is female and 50% of the population is male (Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Census 2000 Profile 2). Immigrants make up 53% of the population, while 60% are U.S. citizens. Population statistics for the undocumented population in Boyle Heights are unknown. Furthermore, 38% of households in Boyle Heights are monolingual, mostly in Spanish but also other languages like Japanese and Korean. 82% of the households in Boyle Heights are families. Additionally, the average family size is significantly larger than the average family size for the City of Los Angeles.

In Boyle Heights the average household size is 4.01 compared to the city average of 2.98 with 37% of families in Boyle Heights consisting of 5 or more persons.

Housing

Boyle Heights is a community primarily of renters. 75% of residents in Boyle Heights rent compared to the City of Los Angeles where 61% of residents are renters (City of L.A. General Plan). On average, 51% of occupied housing units are overcrowded, with 55% of renter-occupied units overcrowded and 40% of renter-occupied units severely overcrowded. 40% of owner-occupied units are severely overcrowded. Overcrowded is defined as 1 person per room and severely overcrowded is more than 1.5 people per room (Weingart Center). 94% of the housing units available in Boyle Heights are occupied. This rate is lower than the occupancy rate for the City of Los Angeles which is 96% (Census Bureau). In contrast, Boyle Heights is considered a very high density neighborhood, with 13,008 people per square mile while the population density for City of Los Angeles is 7,350 people per square mile.

The amount of housing in Boyle Heights in the 2000 Census appeared to be relatively stable with an annual growth rate of -0.02% and a population annual growth rate between -0.76% and 0.17% (Los Angeles Department of City Planning, "Population and Housing Estimates 1-2). However, this is a misleading figure if we look at development related housing units destroyed in Boyle Heights over the last 10-14 years. According to ELACC's data obtained from the developments' project managers, 1,362-1,399 units of housing were destroyed, of which only 887 units have been replaced. Development has generated a total housing loss of approximately 386-512 units. The tragedy of this loss not only lies in the destruction of housing and social networks but in the fact that a large part of the housing destroyed was reasonably affordable and cannot be so easily replaced. This is

best evidenced in the 380 public housing units demolished at the Pico Gardens, Pico-Aliso (Aliso Extension) and Aliso Village that have been replaced with some market rate housing. According to HUD, there are currently 12-20 affordable housing developments and 30 single-family homes for low-income families in Boyle Heights and unincorporated EAST LA in addition to Aliso Pico, Estrada Courts and Maravilla public Housing. This is also exemplified by a family interviewed for this study who was displaced by both the MTA Goldline Eastside Lightrail Extension and the Hollenbeck Police Division Expansion. In their now demolished home, the family paid \$900 a month rent for a four bedroom, two bath home. They are now currently paying \$1,150 dollars a month for a two bedroom apartment with less square footage by the room. Finding comparable housing to replaced demolished units is extremely difficult.

The low homeownership rate in Boyle Heights is a result of many factors. The most obvious factor is that people simply cannot afford to buy a home. According to Peter Dreier and Kelly Candaele in *Housing: An L.A. Story* “Rents are so high that a family needs to earn almost \$20 an hour to afford the typical apartment...[Furthermore] an estimated 40,000 live in garages” (1). There is a difference between the renter community and the homeowner community in regards to income. In Boyle Heights, the median income of a renter occupied household was \$22,652. The median income of an owner occupied household was almost double at \$41,004. The median income for all of Boyle Heights was \$24,281. The quality of housing available also influences the low homeownership rate. The majority of housing available in Boyle Heights is more than 50 years old, lowering the property values and discouraging people to buy homes in Boyle Heights assuming they can find one. The national homeownership rate is 66%. The homeownership rate for the City of Los Angeles

is 46% while the homeownership rate in Boyle Heights is a mere 25%. This also shows that much of the housing in Boyle Heights is owned by people who live outside of the community.

Boyle Heights has a 33% poverty rate, which is double the rate for the City of Los Angeles (United Way). Of those living in poverty, just a little under half are under 17 years of age. In addition, Boyle Heights is designated a High Density Unemployment Area (HDUA) (Community Plan I-2). The unemployment rate in Boyle Heights is 13.6% compared to the city rate of 5%. (City of Los Angeles)

Education

Education is the biggest problem facing Boyle Heights today because it is still failing our youth. The educational system is designed to prepare children for their adult life. The problems that are continuously identified in the community usually stem from the lack of a quality education. In Boyle Heights, 69.3% of the population does not have a high school diploma compared to 30% of the population in Los Angeles County while only 4.4% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher. Furthermore, only 15% of the population has a high school diploma. 11 percent of the population has some college but no degree, indicating interest in higher education but difficulty in completing studies.

Boyle Heights Businesses

There are many great community specific businesses in Boyle Heights, from the world renowned Candelas Guitars on Avenida Cesar Chavez. to the larger *Mercadito*, or El Mercado de Los Angeles, on the corner of 1st and Lorena. There are also great eateries like King Taco, La Mascota Bakery, Liliana's Tamales and El Tepeyac, not including the numerous taco trucks, tamal vendors and fruit vendors conveniently located throughout the community.

There are many places to shop in Boyle Heights offering many unique products and *antojitos*. Most of the retail establishments are small mom and pop businesses owned by families as well as auto-repair businesses with one grocery store (Community Plan I-6). The majority of retail is located along Avenida Cesar Chavez between St. Louis Street and Fickett Street. All the businesses along this corridor are small mom and pop businesses. The *Boyle Heights Community Plan* developed in 1998 by the Department of Planning of the City of Los Angeles, recommends “that pedestrian oriented uses be encouraged along this segment and auto oriented uses such as auto repair or drive-through establishments should be discouraged in order to preserve the continuity of the streetscape” (Community Plan I-5). There are currently no regional shopping centers in Boyle Heights, but this will soon change as a result of the Community Plan which is calling for the development of two regional shopping centers on Olympic and Soto as well as on Cesar Chavez and Soto. Currently, the largest retail establishment in Boyle Heights is Sears, located on Olympic Boulevard and Soto Street. A small mini-mall is also being developed on the corner of Soto Street and Whittier Boulevard as a result of a study conducted with funds from the Adelante Eastside Redevelopment grant.

The Boyle Heights retail environment suffers because of the community’s isolation from other nearby communities. The *Community Plan* points out, “Boyle Heights is physically separated from communities to the north by a freeway and hilly terrain and from those on the west and south by railroad lines and large industrial sectors. Local residents are the primary customers of most businesses” (Community Plan III-3). Boyle Height’s physical isolation is an example of both the connectedness of the community but also of the segregation faced by the barrio. The *Community Plan* shows that the communities and

people that Boyle Heights are most closely connected to are those also on the eastside like unincorporated East L.A., Commerce, Monterrey Park and Montebello. Commerce, Monterrey Park and Montebello have a much greater presence of shopping centers, chain retail and large chain supermarkets, which, because of their proximity, could be driving Boyle Heights dollars into those communities.

Largest Employers

The number of employers in Boyle Heights has diminished significantly. Before the 1950's and 60's, as stated in the previous chapter, Boyle Heights was a productive industrial zone providing significant employment opportunities to its different residents. After the “white flight” patterns emerged, industry activity diminished and only some light manufacturing remained. In 2001, a group of East/Northeast community stakeholders was assembled by the City of Los Angeles and Economics Research Associates under subcontract to Barrio Planners, Inc. where they were asked to identify the largest employers in their community. The largest employers identified by the group were:

- Hoffy-Hoffman Bros. Packaging
- Sears
- Mobil Oil Company
- Livingston Graham
- Ellis Paint Co.
- Import/export industry
- Felbro
- Acorn Paper Products
- Continental Mills
- Verizon
- White Memorial Medical Center
- USC/LACMC and University Hospital
- Dependable Highway Express
- Dial Industries
- Doheny Eye Clinic
- Cecil Saydah Company
- Exide Technology (City of Los Angeles. “CED Strategy Notes: Employment Trends, Needs and Opportunities”)

Other large employers in the area are the Los Angeles Unified School District, the U.S. Postal Service, the City of Los Angeles, other Los Angeles county employers in the areas of health, Department of Social Services and Children and Family Services. Large chain supermarkets like Food 4 Less owned by Kroger Company and smaller chain supermarkets like Super A and Superior are also major employers as well as banks like Bank of America and Washington Mutual (City of Los Angeles “Largest Employers in the East/Northeast CED Strategy Area” 1). Most of the industry located in Boyle Heights is in the manufacture of fabricated metal products, machinery, furniture and fixtures, as well as printing and publishing (Community Plan III-5).

The Boyle Heights Community Plan identifies certain issues and opportunities in regards to housing and retail. According to the plan, the community identified issues such as the need to rehabilitate the existing low-density housing stock. (Low Density meaning two detached single family structures, or duplexes, on one lot), the need for affordable housing and the lack of open space in multi-family developments (I-4). Benefits in Boyle Heights according to community members that participated in this study was the proximity to downtown and to the industrial base as well as the potential for new housing along proposed Metro Rail station stops (I-4). Opportunities were also identified to improve the retail environment. The plan defines Avenida Cesar Chavez as the best area for retail and Sears as the largest retail establishment in Boyle Heights (I-5). They identify the potential for the development of various shopping centers, one of which is currently being developed on the corner of Whittier Boulevard and Soto Street.

What Boyle Heights Looks Like to Me:

To me, Boyle Heights is made up of poor immigrants and first generation Xicanas/os and many other Latinos. There are paisas, roqueras, punkers, cholos y cholas, *un monton de chamaquero*, *lesbianas*, babies, *las doñas*, *las sra's*, *los senores*, Christians, Catholics, Budhhists. Mexicas, taggers, hip hoppers, *viejitos*, artists, singers, mariachis, *danzantes*, athletes, nerds, druggies, dancers, writers, actors, students, activists, Goths, and even some *profesionales*. But above all, the largest group of people in Boyle Heights are the *trabajadores*, workers whose biggest worry is paying the rent and providing food for their family just like everyone else. Workers that want their children to go to college regardless if they are a gay cholo or a mowhawked ponketa.

Boyle Heights is the place where you can go and eat some peeled *granadas* (pomegranate seeds) with lemon, salt and chili powder at the *mercadito* for a couple of bucks. It is where you can always buy tamales by the dozen at La Mascota or Liliana's to enjoy on a Sunday morning. Or if it's late at night, you can go eat some King Taco on our most famous corner Cesar Chavez and Soto. Wait, if you need your mom to make you a special dress, you can walk a little past the King Taco to *Las Tres Ninas* and buy some material. Boyle Heights is made up of different people with different personalities painting different experiences with the common goal of making it through life. Our bonds are more than expressions of love, they are a form of survival.

Chapter 3: Downtown Development and its Eastside Revitalization Efforts

Downtown

In the early 1990's amidst a blighted downtown, the City of Los Angeles created the *Downtown Strategic Plan*. The goal of the plan was to invigorate the Downtown area by creating housing for 100,000 people through the renovation of historic areas (Schoenberg, Karl "Bringing Life Back to City's Heart" 2). The downtown revitalization plan, promoted by key economic and political elites, gave L.A. its new Central Library, numerous lofts, the Staples Center, the Disney Music Hall and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. Note that the Disney Music Hall did not receive the anticipated public subsidies and instead set up a \$250 million fundraising drive (Hayden 1). Furthermore, there are many "huge public works projects-such as the \$1.8 billion Alameda Corridor to the ports and the \$137 billion Metro Rail/Metrolink public transit system-[that may help the plan by drawing] hordes of workers and consumers Downtown" (Schoenberg 5). The revitalization of downtown will ultimately impact Boyle Heights because of the low value of homes and its location. City officials hoped to increase the tax base of the city by manufacturing a consumerist downtown culture.

Many people doubted that anyone would want to come live in abandoned Downtown. But according to the Downtown Center Business Improvement District, the plan seems to be working. In 2003, the Center reported "19 new market-rate residential developments under construction downtown and 30 more in various stages of receiving building permits or being reviewed by city officials-big numbers, big money and big expectations to match" (Johnson, Reed 2). One would agree that changes are visible in Downtown simply by walking around. There are fresh coats of brown paint, trash cans,

street cleaners, Downtown security officers and most noticeably, new residents are visible, walking their dogs. The amount of homeless people in the historic district has decreased somewhat and the retail sector is beginning to change. One of my favorite places to grab lunch while working on 7th and Spring was *Doreen's*, now replaced by a more upscale café and “juice bar”. But who was this development created for? We have a right to know because after all, the downtown urban lifestyle is a promotional package that requires a significant amount of public money.

Historically, the City of Los Angeles' definition of revitalization has been to destroy in order to create. Developers and the city planned to accomplish the revitalization of the Downtown Business District by bringing back the same professionals that were induced to move to the suburbs in the 1950's and 60's. City officials seem to believe profit equals progress. Traditional revitalization tries to bring life back to a community by tapping into a new market, through the promotion of a lifestyle that revolves around exclusivity, consumption and the culture of the white urban professional. Cities across the nation attributed blight to “white flight” from the city-center. Politicians, planners and developers identify progress with the White, professional, middle and upper-class locating in particular neighborhoods. Revitalization is an example of the perceived dependency of progress on the middle class.

This is still the main goal of revitalization in Los Angeles, to bring the people with the money back into the city's central area, which includes Boyle Heights. Boyle Heights is even more attractive for “revitalization” and as a tool to bring in people from outside of the community because it is an established community that provides many opportunities for homeownership for people that can afford to buy relatively inexpensive homes. Also,

Boyle Heights borders downtown and will soon have the Metro Gold Line running through it.

It is important to maintain a critical perspective regarding the changes occurring in the city-center and remember that the new aesthetic improvements do not equal long-term change. The homeless are very slowly disappearing from the revitalized areas, but not because they found homes. Downtown revitalization efforts have merely shifted the “dead” part of downtown; the drugs, crime and homeless, a couple of blocks away. Even if all the homeless had been ticketed and arrested to the point that they disappeared, it does not mean that the city succeeded in eliminating homelessness. If the city wanted to eliminate homelessness, it would fund programs and non-profit organizations that have succeeded in providing job training and placement assistance, mental health care, shelters, substance-abuse rehabilitation and counseling. The true elimination of slum conditions means providing affordable housing, equal access to education and quality jobs that pay a living wage and for employers to respect the dignity of their workers.

One lesson we can learn from Downtown is that people will not be considered a priority unless we demand it. The City reinforced the vicious cycle of poverty by permitting Developers to profit from its prevalence. The continuing process of giving welfare to the rich, because they quickly produce the aesthetic image of blight alleviation, undermines community and human needs while simultaneously converting politicians into city champions. A *Downtown Strategic Plan* committed to community revitalization would analyze the major social and economic problems and develop strategies that would produce long term solutions.

It is especially important for people in Boyle Heights to learn from the revitalization that occurred in Downtown because it will have a direct effect on the future of our community. In an LA Times article by Reed Johnson, Adolfo Sauya, one of the owners of a planned hotel, asian-theme restaurant, bar and nightclub observed, “We can’t go west anymore because we have the ocean...We can’t go in the middle [of L.A.] because you can’t buy a piece of dirt for less than \$3 million. The only place we can go is east” (Reed, Johnson. “Downtown Like Never Before” Oct 16, 2003).

The Dollars Trickle Down: Boyle Heights and Redevelopment Funds

There is a visible connection between downtown revitalization dollars and the shift in revitalization funds towards Boyle Heights. According to the authors of *Latino Metropolis*, in 1993 “the courts halted the Community Redevelopment Agency from diverting any further property taxes to downtown projects” (122). The CRA had used “more than \$1.6 billion of property tax money-or more than twice the amount stipulated in the 1977 court ruling [that prevented no more than \$750 million tax dollars from being invested in the Central Business District]” (122). The authors note that this ruling prevented the CRA from subsidizing their favorite downtown developers which ultimately made the CRA a poorer and weaker agency. We can interpret the shift in dollars towards the Boyle Heights community as a direct effect of this ruling. Regardless of whether the shift in dollars to the inner-city neighborhoods occurred intentionally or unintentionally, the city, politicians and private developers will continue to be the biggest beneficiaries from revitalization projects.

The relocation of revitalization funds to inner-city communities could be interpreted in two ways. The most obvious explanation for the inner-city revitalization

efforts is that, neighborhoods had organized and fought for many years to get the city to invest in their communities. Until recently, they had not been successful because the City and the CRA's main priority had been the revitalization of Downtown. After the CRA was banned from investing any more money in the Central Business District, the communities who did not agree with the trickle down theory of revitalization were finally able to steer dollars their way. Another interpretation of the shift in dollars to these communities could be that in order to keep their created "Live/Work" Downtown plan flowing smoothly, the "blue bloods", as they are referred to in *Latino Metropolis*, needed to find way to keep control and subsidies flowing to their partners and their customers while not breaking the law. The "blue bloods" could have strategically planned to funnel funds into areas bordering Downtown because they could simultaneously keep receiving public subsidies from the CRA, the state, and federal government while silencing the critics of their top-down revitalization. The CRA, amidst a wave of criticism, also wanted to keep subsidizing their favorite developers, but could no longer legally invest in downtown projects. The best solution would be to create project areas like Adelante Eastside that would complement the downtown projects while also expanding the service area of the downtown developers and the "work/live" community. The infrastructure to support the Downtown "work/live" community like grocery stores is currently substandard in Downtown. By revitalizing Boyle Heights, developers are providing the grocery stores and shopping centers that are currently missing in Downtown. This long overdue influx of money to Boyle Heights could be an important benefit for the community. Boyle Heights has been hoping for increased funding since the birth of the barrio. Yet, due to how these plans have been developed, the millions of dollars in public funds instead could

well generate community residents' suspicion about the intent of these funds. Boyle Heights' residents need to be engaged in monitoring and ultimately influencing the city's publicized revitalization goals and sort out both hidden and not so hidden agendas. The community has to especially monitor and analyze the role of Latino politicians and conservative community groups that claim to represent the needs of all Latinos in Boyle Heights but who have become part of the process in pursuing the type of development associated with these agendas.

Chapter 4: Redevelopment in Boyle Heights

The Boyle Heights community is currently undergoing a facelift. Our skin is being sliced, pulled and tightened in various directions in order to make our community aesthetically pleasing for others. The ultimate goal of the redevelopment process in Boyle Heights is to make our community accessible to businesses and other residents in the larger city of Los Angeles. In this chapter I will discuss five major development projects that are being proposed or are under construction in Boyle Heights to analyze the implications of these redevelopment projects in an inner-city community of low-income Latinos.

The Gold Line

Construction is currently proceeding for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Gold Line Eastside Light Rail Extension. The contractor for the project is Washington Group International. The light rail will have a six mile long route with a total of eight stations, mostly at street level, from Union Station in Downtown L.A. to Pomona and Atlantic Boulevard in Unincorporated East L.A. 1.8 miles of the Light Rail will run underground through twin tunnels in Boyle Heights. The metro will be underground from 1st and Gless Street to 1st and Lorena and above ground from there to Pomona and Atlantic. 4 of the 8 metro stations will be located in Boyle Heights. They will be located on 1st and Utah, 1st and Boyle (Mariachi Plaza), 1st and Soto, and 3rd and Indiana. The budget for this project is \$898.8 million. The rail line is expected to be in operation in the year 2009 (MTA).

The MTA has been planning for the Gold Line since 1991 but was not able to start construction until 2004. One of the biggest obstacles to the construction start was an objection by Congressman Ernest J. Isotook, a Republican from Oakland, to the allocation

of federal funds. Finally in May of 2004, the Congressman approved the \$490 million grant agreement (Chong, Jia-Riu L.A. Times May 27,2004 B4). Another obstacle faced by the MTA was community opposition. The Bus Riders Union opposed the project because they felt it was neglecting bus riders across the county. Manuel Criollo, a Bus Riders Union spokesman, believed that the MTA was failing to improve bus service like they had promised in a 1996 consent decree stemming from a Title VI court suit, as well as shortchanging about 1.5 to 2 million bus riders county wide (Chong B3). In Boyle Heights there were some people opposed to the project because it meant the demolition of at least 17 housing units (not including the ones purchased during the initial round of plans and local businesses). The community also criticized the long term construction process that they felt would disrupt business and the community and create traffic congestion. The housing units have not yet been replaced but there are plans to develop the current staging areas.

The Gold Line was supported by Latino elected officials in the eastside and by organizations like Mothers of East L.A. and Barrio Planners. It is seen as an important investment in transportation infrastructure for the eastside. It would be sad 30 years from now, for the West, North and South to have had basic access to fast, effective and environmentally friendly light rail travel while the Eastsiders sat at the bus stop, waiting. In reference to the building demolition caused by the Gold Line, the MTA should have been required to not only offer relocation assistance, but to monitor the new living conditions of the displaced residents. Businesses should also be offered relocation assistance and subsidized retail space. Some of the families have not been able to find comparably priced housing. The MTA should have also been required to replace the lost

housing and commercial space within five years. A safety campaign should be initiated prior to the completion of the Gold Line so that East L.A. residents, especially children, become familiar with the safety precautions that are necessary near the Gold Line whether it is underground or above. A possible ripple effect of the Gold Line will be to increase the value of land and homes in the Eastside, making the land more desirable for outsiders and ultimately raising rents around the area. The secondary effects of the Gold Line should be carefully monitored so that mechanisms are employed that will help maintain, not exploit, the culture of the community and its residents.

Hollenbeck Police Station Expansion

In Boyle Heights the best solution to crime, according to the majority of residents and politicians, is more police. In an effort to combat crime, the City of Los Angeles is expanding the headquarters of the Hollenbeck Police Station Division. The expansion is being funded with money from Proposition Q that was approved in 2002 for physical improvements of public safety facilities (Daniel Hernandez, “Evictions Questioned in Boyle Heights” Mar 12, 2005). The project site consists of thirteen (13) rectangular parcels of land located on 1st Street, between St. Louis Street and Chicago Street (CEQA Initial Study May 20, 2004 1). The Project involves the demolition of the existing Hollenbeck Police Station and residential structures to the north for the construction of a new police station, with an additional 20,000 square feet of space. The new building will include a 2-story office building; have holding cells, a car wash, a parking structure, underground fueling tanks, a communication tower as well as a maintenance facility for police vehicles (CEQA 2). Construction is estimated to last about 2 years and will include the demolition of 57 residential housing units. The residential units that will be eliminated

include 12 single-family homes and 5 apartment buildings. A church and its parking lot will also be demolished. As of now, only one family resides in the homes now owned by the City. They have not left, because they have not been able to find a comparably priced home. The church, Templo Ebenezer Asambleas De Dios, qualifies as a Historic-Cultural Monument of the City of Los Angeles for its historic significance (CEQA 5). Because the project involves the demolition of this historic building, it was required that the City perform an Environmental Impact Report possibly before the project could be approved.

The required process, however, was circumvented during the acquisition of the properties according to community residents, since the City bought the homes for the police station before conducting the Environmental Impact Report. At an emergency community meeting called to address this issue, resident Miguel Flores said, “It seems here, this law is just a formality” (Hernandez B3). The community meeting was not called because the community wanted to stop the project, but because they felt somebody had to stand up and demand that the community be given their place in the development process. The issue raised by the residents was not whether there is a need for a police station; the issue was the role of the community in defining the principles and the process that would guide the development.

Olympic and Soto

The Developer

The East Los Angeles community of Boyle Heights will soon be the home of the second largest development in the City’s history, the Sears Town Center. The developer is Los Angeles born and raised Mark J. Weinstein of MJW Investments. MJW Investments was formed in 1983 by Mark Weinstein and is based in Santa Monica (ULI). MJW is also

the developer for Santee Court in Downtown, the largest adaptive reuse project in the City of Los Angeles (ULI). MJW has a staff of 70 and currently owns and manages 4,800,000 square feet of commercial and industrial space with one thousand apartment units valued at \$400 million (MJW 3). The firm offers asset management, development, property management, and construction services. They specialize in the development of luxury condos and apartments.

Sears

The Sears building was one of nine mail-order fulfillment centers that Sears built in 1910. It was closed in 1992 although the retail store on the first floor is still in operation (Vincent). After the catalog center closed in 1992, the 23.5-acre property was sold to Uninvest Investments of Arizona. After some proposals that did not get pursued, Uninvest sold the property to MJW. The 14 story building is located between Olympic Boulevard, Soto Street, and the Los Angeles River and is 1.8 million-square-feet. The Sears Town Center redevelopment proposal includes “772 residential units, 650,000 square feet of retail space and 85,000 square feet of office space and 3,700 parking spaces” on the 22 acre site (MJW Letter Mar. 2005). The residential units will be for-sale condominiums and apartments. In a meeting with Dominique Mendez and Maria Cabildo of the non-profit affordable housing developer East L.A. Community Corporation, Tim Weier, the Project Manager, stated that 20%, [approximately 155] of the housing units in the development will be workforce affordable. The developer has not yet specified the level of affordability that defines “workforce affordable”. Up to this date, the project proposal has not been submitted to the city but according to a letter sent to community stakeholders there will be a year long process of public comment and review.

Another promise made to the community by MJW was a Project Labor Agreement (PLA). A PLA is a contract between the developer and a union which guarantees union labor for the construction of a project. In contrast, a Local Hire Agreement is an agreement made by the developer to hire a certain percentage of workers or have a certain percentage of hours worked by residents from a selected area surrounding the development. A Project Labor Agreement is an important tool that can inadvertently create a loophole for developer accountability. When a PLA goes hand in hand with a local-hire agreement, developers and unions can toss responsibility back and forth with respect to the responsible party for the local hire. A union may not have enough members from a certain area and may fail to meet the percentage of workers or hours worked established in a Local Hire Agreement. When this is this case and the union is questioned why they are not up to standards, they may argue it was the developer's job to find the workforce. The developer may in turn answer that the Project Labor Agreement designates the union as the responsible party for the local hire quotas. In order to minimize this confusion, specific clauses should be implemented into Project Labor Agreements so that if local hire is required, the developer and the union will work together to develop apprenticeship programs that will increase the potential pool for the necessary local workforce.

A core criticism of the Sears project is that the people of Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles will once again be underserved by development. According to a study conducted by ULI Advisory Services;

Despite a strong population base, 322,000 within a three-mile radius, 1.1 million within a five-mile radius, and 3.6 million within a 10-mile radius - the East Los Angeles community has been long underserved by commercial, retail, and housing development and community services (2).

MJW will be receiving approximately 50 million dollars in public funds that are marked for community redevelopment in Boyle Heights. The tax breaks are given for building in that specific zone as an incentive for developers who are willing to take the chance and build in disinvested communities. However, MJW staff have indicated that the condos planned for Olympic and Soto are also designed to attract people on the waiting lists for developments in downtown. On a television interview for the PBS program *Life and Times*, Weinstein pointed out, “The building over here, 315 A Street, is being built as condos right now. The demo is underway. There are sixty-four for sale condos. The waiting list is 720 people, so that's why we're building more condos”. Another member of the MJW team argued that they are now “giving back” to the community by elevating the importance of the total number of units that are planned. Based on the proportion of condos in the development, it is reasonable to assume that the Sears Town Center is catered for middle income residents who would like to live in downtown but are priced-out of the downtown market instead of Boyle Heights residents.

Meeting the Need?

Mr. Weinstein and his firm are investing money in a development that is essentially designed to service the retail needs, but not significantly the housing needs in the Boyle Heights community. The argument that the development will bring hundreds of housing units to Boyle Heights is misleading, given the kind of housing to be provided. As we saw in the community profile, the average Boyle Heights resident is a renter with a family of four earning \$24,281 dollars who can afford to pay approximately \$600 rent a month. It is not anticipated that Mr. Weinstein will be offering any 3 bedroom luxury condos with impressive views of downtown at a monthly rent, much less mortgage of \$600. The

developer should explicitly inform residents that of the 772 housing units only 40 of the units are being designed to meet the need in the community. In essence, Boyle Heights is donating 50 million dollars to a for-profit real estate firm for 155 “workforce affordable” condominiums and only 40 completely affordably priced apartments. Depending on the firm’s definition of workforce affordable, the only units proposed by the project that really address the need in the community are the 40 affordable apartments. Despite this minimal offer, MJW is promoting the project as the thing that the Latinos in Boyle Heights have been waiting for. The people of Boyle Heights have not been waiting for luxury condos. The issue of the 40 affordable apartments also leads us to examine the motives for making about 5% of the units affordable. Is 5% the lowest possible percentage of affordable housing he has to provide in order to gain access to the corporate welfare rolls? Mark Weinstein is coming to Boyle Heights and is willing to invest money out of his own pocket because the only other project bigger than his in the City is the Staples Center and he is assured potentially hundreds of millions of dollars throughout the life of the project. Although incomes are low in Boyle Heights, there is a large customer base caused by the high population density that Mr. Weinstein is counting on (*Life and Times*). Given the proximity to downtown and the focus of the development, it could well serve as a beach head for gentrification.

Forces for Redevelopment

Councilmember Villaraigosa: “The Political Godfather”

In the post-proposition 13 context, Councilmember Villaraigosa cannot be counted on to defend residents’ rights to housing because there is hardly any other way for the city to generate tax revenues. In the study conducted by ULI Advisory Services, they

recommend that MJW designate a “political godfather” for the project that will help garner public support. Councilmember Villaraigosa appears to be the ideal candidate for this role because any projects that occur in or are planned for the 14th district will benefit his 2nd Mayoral attempt and possibly Villaraigosa’s dream of being Governor of California. In addition to this, he is, for the most part, a very well respected political leader in the Eastside, the City and among other Latino elected officials.

Is Villaraigosa Selling Us Out?

Antonio Villaraigosa inspired hope in the community. With a progressive past, people voted for him thinking that it could not possibly be worse than Councilman Nick Pacheco brief term. People in Los Angeles speculated that Antonio Villaraigosa was running for council district 14 because it would increase his chances to become the Mayor of Los Angeles. Now that Antonio Villaraigosa is in office, we were able to see that regardless of a person’s ethnicity or grassroots past, all elected officials must be held accountable.

The new investment in Boyle Heights brings many complications of Los Angeles Latino politics to the forefront. In “Class and Culture Wars in the New Latino Politics” Victor M. Valle and Rodolfo Torres point out, “Increased Latino political representation will mean greater access to the levers of government and, as a result, a larger niche in the state’s ecology of representation” (169). The new increased political representation does not mean that we, as Latinos, can sit back and relax knowing that we have “our people” representing us. Throughout their essay, Valle and Torres explore the difficulty in achieving Latino political representation when trying to represent working and middle class Latinos. Latino politicians “replicated mainstream political thinking, making a

religion of narrow political pragmatism. As in the major parties, raising money, winning elections, and holding on to political office were their method, objective, and reward ” (170). Currently, Boyle Heights is represented by Councilmember Antonio Villaraigosa with maximum service in July 2006, County Supervisor Gloria Molina with maximum service in 2015, State Senator Gilbert Cedillo, termed out in 2008, Assemblymember Fabian Nunez termed out 2008, and Congressmember Lucille Roybal-Allard with 2 year terms and no limits on the amount of terms she can serve in office. In Boyle Heights we are currently represented by progressive politicians as well as conservatives. Having political representation is important and a monumental achievement but Latino/a politicians are still politicians that will sell us out given the realities of running for office and dealing with powerful interests once elected.

Last year, MJW went to Councilmember Villaraigosa to look for support for his project and to identify community stakeholders to meet with during the community input process. At the meetings, Villaraigosa promised to push for local hire, a living wage and to help find money for the project. He did not however, advocate for affordable housing. Through this process, Antonio Villaraigosa has positioned himself as an active supporter of MJW’s Sears Town Center. Yet, his position thus far does not mean that he cannot be swayed to demand more benefits for the community. Because he can potentially become the Mayor and has higher political aspirations, Anotonio Villaraigosa should be viewed as a politician over who organized community groups can have a lot of leverage.

Framing the Project

Mark Weinstein knows that there will be significant delays in his plans if he does not secure community approval. For this, he has hired Victor Griego of Diverse Strategies

for Organizing for public outreach consulting services for the Sears Town Center. Victor Griego, who has run for City Council in Boyle Heights in the past, is working with Antonio Villaraigosa to hold meetings with key stakeholders in the community (*DSO News* Fall 2004). The list of 20-30 stakeholders includes Homeboy Industries, Mothers of East Los Angeles-Resurrection Chapter, Jovenes Inc., Breed St. Family Shelter, Inquilinos Unidos, the Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council, Boyle Heights Chamber of Commerce, Boyle Heights Neighbors Organization, Boyle Heights Homeowners Association, the Adelante Eastside Project Advisory Committee, Youth Opportunity Movement as well as local business owners. Most of the above mentioned organizations provide community services or are associations that represent the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) perspective regarding opposition to affordable housing and are anti-youth and anti-immigrant and most importantly pro-business.

Boyle Heights was a multi-cultural community that is now completely segregated and disenfranchised. One argument in favor of revitalization that promotes non-Boyle Heights residents from coming in to the community is that it will help alleviate the concentration of poverty and help integrate segregated inner-city neighborhoods. These are arguments that have been made in favor of the Sears Town Center. Some believe that this mixed-use development will help bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots. I disagree with this argument because specific recommendations have already been made for the project that recommend placing all the affordable apartments as well as the local business incubator along Soto Street, once again segregating the poor. Additionally, an insufficient amount of affordable units are being planned. Integration in Boyle Heights is not going to come through the creation of a Target where people of all colors come and

shop. Boyle Heights could become multicultural without excluding the existing community. A more effective and long-term strategy to make Boyle Heights a mixed-income community would be to give youth equal access to a college education so that they will become the middle-class residents of Boyle Heights.

During a Sears community meeting that occurred on April 19, 2004, one of the first things that was noted by the more conservative resident panel was that they did not want family housing because of the negative impact it would have on schools. Instead, the community wanted the new housing to be catered to professionals and the elderly. At the end of the meeting, some residents raised a concern about no youth being present and the lack of publicity about the meetings (Community Meeting Notes-Isela Gracian). A housing development designed for Boyle Heights demands larger family housing units, not lofts and 1 bedrooms. Additionally, the developer would need to create more rental units than ownership units because 75% of Boyle Heights residents are renters. The comments made by groups at the Sears community meeting do not match the needs indicated by the demographics and social and economic conditions in Boyle Heights.

Three very important organizations were excluded from the community input process at the Sears Community Meeting. East L.A. Community Corporation (ELACC), Union de Vecinos and InnerCity Stuggle. ELACC could have been excluded on two grounds; either because MJW, as advised by the ULI study, identified them as the potential non-profit partner to build the affordable apartments or because the Councilmember did not see them as representative of the community. InnerCity Struggle and Union de Vecinos are progressive organizations that focus on grassroots community organizing. Union de Vecinos organizes throughout Boyle Heights, especially around Pico-Aliso, and

InnerCity Struggle organizes youth at Roosevelt High School. Union de Vecinos and InnerCity Struggle could be identified as being some of the few progressive organizations in the community, with ELACC recently reestablishing itself in that direction. Union de Vecinos, ELACC and InnerCity Struggle could have been excluded from the community meetings because they are the organizations that have the greatest potential to organize opposition to the project. Additionally, if ELACC, Union de Vecinos and InnerCity Struggle would have been at this meeting, their members would have demanded family housing which was not in MJW's best interest. In *North From Mexico*, Carey McWilliams observed, "If a quick glance is taken of the list of [Spanish sur]names appearing on the civic committees devoted to housing, juvenile delinquency, racial, and welfare problems, these same names constantly reappear" (46). McWilliams observed this phenomenon during the late 19th century but sadly it still applies today. When politicians and developers ask for community input they typically go to the people that they know will give them the approval they need. The exclusion of these three organizations could serve as an example of McWilliams' observation, but also as an impetus for a progressive Eastside Coalition.

Redevelopment as Racist

When I first heard about the Sears project it made me angry. I felt there was a potentially important opportunity for community development and affordable housing that had turned into approximately 770 high end lofts in the heart of a low-income community, just a few blocks from a large public housing complex. I was not initially able to articulate that this was racist or identify specific reasons why I felt the project was wrong until I read about the influence of white privilege on development. In a study by Laura Pulido,

“Environmental Racism and Urban Development” the author explores the connection between whiteness and environmental racism. She explains,

Because most white people do not see themselves as having malicious intentions and because they associate racism with malicious intent, whites exonerate themselves of racist tendencies, all the while ignoring their investment in white privilege. It is this inability to sever intent from outcome that allows whites to acknowledge that racism exists yet seldom identify themselves as racists”. (73)

In the study, Pulido establishes a set of criteria by which to determine the racist implications of a development. Laura Pulido’s study emphasizes developments that have negative environmental effects like pollution. However, I will use the criteria to analyze the Sears mixed-use development. A development is racist, according to Pulido, if it “(1) is made possible by the existence of (1) a racial hierarchy, (2) reproduces racial inequality, and (3) undermines the well-being of that community” (Pulido 73). I will analyze the racist implication of the Sears development based on the aforementioned criteria.

Based on these criteria, the Sears Town Center is a racist project because its development is being made possible through the existence of a racial hierarchy. Boyle Heights is currently being revitalized because the city has historically and consciously chosen not to invest in communities of color and has invested instead in amenities for white business elites and in urban infrastructure projects that facilitated the flight of white middle class professionals to the suburbs, ultimately propagating segregation in Boyle Heights and similar communities. Kenneth Jackson observes in *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, “Historically speaking, suburbanization can be seen as a form of white privilege, as it has allowed whites to live in inexpensive and clean residential environments (Pulido 74 qtd. In Jackson 1980). One of the goals of the Sears project and Downtown redevelopment is to get people from across the city and from the

suburbs to move into the city center. Gearing the benefits of a project toward people outside of the community reinforces racism against Mexicans because suburbanization “has been a privilege denied to most people of color, but one for which they have also borne the cost, both in terms of the erosion of central-city quality of life and in their direct subsidization of white suburbia through their tax dollars (Pulido 74 qtd. In Guhathakurta and Wichert 1998)”(73). Some would argue that wanting professionals to come into Boyle Heights is not necessarily racist because professionals come in all colors. This language hides the fact that most professionals are white. As much as we may like to say that there are just as many Latino college graduates as there are white college graduates, we cannot. From 1997 to 2002 the disappearance rate at Roosevelt High School was 65%. (California Department of Education). The disappearance rate is the drop out rate plus the rate for students that no one has any further information for. The rate does not include people that have transferred to other schools, nor does it include people that have transferred to community college, but the rate of those that have simply disappeared. So I ask, who are the professionals they are marketing to?

The Sears project will reproduce racial inequality and undermine the well being of the community because it will spearhead the displacement of people of color through gentrification. Rents are rising and people are already beginning to get evicted by landlords so that they can avoid rent control and raise rents. Although the development is not displacing residents directly in the construction process, it may cause people to be uprooted, destroying our culture. Because many people in the community associate white people with progress, the Sears building will reproduce racial inequality. People will

associate the redevelopment with the presence of white professionals even if Latino professionals are also present.

There is general consensus that Boyle Heights is a community that needs some revitalizing. People are saying that Boyle Heights needs to be revitalized because it's full of poverty, students are not graduating high school, and very few people go on to college. People have complained for years that there is too much crime and that the city does not "fix" the neighborhood. Yet, no one is explicitly recognizing that the social and economic conditions that exist and have existed in Boyle Heights have been caused by racism against Mexicanos and Latinos. In Boyle Heights there are too few employers and a lack of diversity, yet the lack of jobs and a multi-ethnic community is not because there have not been homes in Boyle Heights for people of all colors to live in, nor is it because there was no workforce for the industry. Simply put, the blight in Boyle Heights was caused by racism. People did not want to be near Mexicans. In a television interview on the PBS show *Life and Times*, Mark Weinstein comments, "[Boyle Heights residents] believe they deserve what the other areas of Los Angeles have gotten. You know, they've been long neglected and left out and they want their piece of the pie" (Television Interview, Sept. 2004). Boyle Heights has been neglected for many years but the neglect was a product of the city's preoccupation with creating the suburbs for middle-class professionals. Some suburbs are now starting to decay which provides a great marketing opportunity for Downtown. Many people organized to get money to the eastside and now the government is dishing it out in large amounts only to try to bring those same middle class families back to the inner-city/central city area so that once again, barrio residents will bear the cost.

MTA Properties

In February 2004 the MTA developed a set of guidelines for the future development of all MTA owned property in Boyle Heights. The specific areas are; First and Boyle, First and Lorena and Cesar Chavez and Soto. These guidelines were developed based on community input from Mothers of East Los Angeles, Abuelitos de Boyle Heights, Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative, Boyle Heights Chamber of Commerce and East Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. A very important thing to observe is that one of the developers of the approved proposals for the Cesar Chavez and Soto properties is Frank Villalobos of Barrio Planners, a member of all of the above referenced community groups.

Cesar Chavez and Soto

Based on the fact that the MTA Gold Line project received public subsidies, the development guidelines require the development of affordable housing. The plans for this area recommend a mixed-use project. The guidelines recommend the development of multi-family and senior housing. The community members involved in the community input process expressed a great need for a major grocery store, drug store, major cinema theatres, restaurants, housing and retail. They agreed the housing component should incorporate condominiums to increase the area's homeownership rate.

The Cesar Chavez/Soto area is the heart of Boyle Heights. It is the commercial center as well as a historic cultural center. The multitude of establishments housed in this area, include a fabric store, a clinic, tattoo shop, pharmacy, general retail, botanicas, jewelers, optometrist, salons and barbershops, restaurants and a pet shop. There is a lot of

pedestrian activity in the area as a result of all these different services. Additionally, there are various murals that empower the community and have been depicted in multiple films.

In December the MTA Board gave authorization to enter into a negotiation agreement with Cesar Chavez/Soto LLC for the development of the properties at Cesar Chavez and Soto. The Cesar Chavez/Soto LLC team members are JSM Construction, Polis Builders, Prudential Real Estate Investors, Key Bank National Association and Barrio Planners Incorporated. The heads of these firms are Craig Jones (JSM), Nick Patsaouras (Polis), Michael J. Tyre (Prudential), Sandra Rahimi (KeyBank) and Frank Villalobos (Barrio Planners). Their proposal includes the development of 139 housing units, 74,000 square feet of ground floor retail space and a movie theatre /complex. The 3.3 acres extend from Cesar Chavez and Soto to Matthews and Fickett.

The following is background information on the team members. One of the team members, JSM Construction is the City's biggest housing developer and is currently building a development in North Hollywood, which is also for the MTA and is very similar to the proposal for Cesar Chavez and Soto. It is a mixed-use development that includes a theatre complex. Craig Jones is currently being sued by the investors of four apartment complexes he built in downtown Santa Monica for misappropriation of funds in regards to the development of replacement affordable housing units that were built off-site (ARTICLE). Nick Patsaouras, another team members with a possible conflict of interest in the project, is an ex-MTA board member and is honored with a bust at the MTA Patsaouras Transit Plaza. Although he is no longer employed by the MTA, he still offers has connections to the board.

Frank Villalobos: An Institution in and of Himself

Eastside native Frank Villalobos, President of Barrio Planners, was one of the MTA Gold Line Eastside Extension's biggest advocates. He was quoted in the media various times demanding that the Gold Line be approved. Villalobos was a key player in getting the Adelante Eastside Redevelopment funds to Boyle Heights. Additionally, his firm was contracted for the *Adelante Eastside Feasibility Study* in 1995, as well as the *East/Northeast Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*. Since the 1970's he has been a member of many of the organizations usually contacted by the government and private investors during the community input process. Even though he is not a mother, he is considered one of the founders of the conservative Mothers of East Los Angeles.

Architect and Urban Planner Frank Villalobos has a stake in all major projects occurring in the Eastside. His firm, Barrio Planners Inc., began as a non-profit group and is now a for-profit entity. If people rely on Mr. Villalobos' firm and community groups to shape the revitalization process in Boyle Heights we will not revitalize but instead gentrify. In an L.A. Weekly article, Mr. Villalobos was asked what he thought about gentrification, his answer was "What do I think about gentrification? [Villalobos replied.] I think it's great...Is there a reason Eastside property owners shouldn't get the same return on their investment as Westside property owners?" (Ohland). Mr. Villalobos defends gentrification because the people he represents in the community are the homeowners. When they ask him what the community needs, he is thinking about his friends, the ones that possibly went to college and own homes. Mr. Villalobos' comment is also disturbing because he makes it seem as though people in Boyle Heights do not like the neighborhood. He assumes that buying a home is simply a business investment. In the same article by Gloria Ohland, Villalobos notes that, "He's tried to jump-start economic development in East

L.A., if for no other reason than "I'd go broke trying to work here as an architect and planner. There's no money here. So we have to make it, and then recycle it in the community" (Ohland). As we can see by his bid to the MTA for the Cesar Chavez and Soto land, he does not just talk the talk, he walks the walk. He is not a community decision maker; he is a businessman who gets involved in economic development issues to make sure he has business. Villalobos doesn't care that renters will have nowhere to go when they are evicted from the last affordable housing in Boyle Heights. Mr. Villalobos exonerates gentrification in the L.A. Weekly because there was no money on the line, yet to the City, MTA and possibly other funding sources he says he is committed to bringing community-identified services for residents that will revitalize the Eastside. Mr. Villalobos' involvement in the community is motivated by money. The community input process is being exploited by Mr. Villalobos to secure public funds for his firm. It seems that the community input process is a formality that does not significantly alter the negative effects of a project.

Conclusion

I focused on these specific developments because these projects have been made possible through public funds. I did not investigate the *Buena Vista Lofts* that are planned for the abandoned Linda Vista Community Hospital because there is not yet much information available besides the sign. I did not look at the process of "flipping" which is buying real estate to resell it and immediately receive a return which is a key component of the gentrification process. Already in Boyle Heights and other low-income communities throughout Los Angeles there is an aggressive campaign to "Buy Your Home in 7 Days CASH!". There are signs posted everywhere, letters are being mailed to specific

homeowners as well as glossy pamphlets that guarantee money no matter what condition your home is in. In light of all the construction and renovation, the community has to come up with a movement that will make sure that developments are designed to meet the need in the community. Boyle Heights is tired of breadcrumbs and the new developments provide an opportunity for residents to organize to create progressive long-term sustainable change.

Chapter 5: Gentrification

Gentrification is defined as “the process by which higher income households displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, often, but not always, gentrification has a very clear racial component replacing lower income minority residents with higher income white residents and households” (L.A. CAN Flyer). According to Kalima Rose in *Beyond Gentrification: Tools for Equitable Development*, gentrification occurs in three stages.

Stage 1: The first stage of gentrification involves some significant public or non-profit redevelopment investment and/or private newcomers buying and rehabbing vacant units. At first, this causes little displacement or resentment. This process may occur over several years, and initially may cause little change in the appearance of long-disinvested communities.

Stage 2: In the second stage, knowledge of the neighborhood, its low housing costs and its other amenities spreads. Now displacement begins, as housing costs rise and landlords begin to evict long-time residents in order to garner greater revenues by renting or selling to the more affluent.

Stage 3: In the third stage, as rehabilitation becomes more apparent, prices escalate and displacement occurs in force. New residents have lower tolerance for social service facilities, industrial and other uses they view as undesirable. Original residents are displaced along with their industries, commercial enterprises, faith institutions and cultural traditions.

In “A Class Analysis of Gentrification” by Neil Smith and Michele LeFaivre, gentrification is defined as “the rehabilitation of working-class inner-city neighborhoods for upper-middle class consumption” (Smith and LeFaivre 44). Both definitions are applicable in terms of this study. Kalima Rose’s definitions describe the gentrification process while Smith and LeFaivre’s explain it. In Boyle Heights we are currently at Stage 1 of the gentrification process. The creation of affordable housing by non-profits,

including the aforementioned East L.A. Community Corporation, has started to improve the neighborhood, but not enough that the neighborhood has changed. Additionally,

the MTA will spend nearly \$1 billion on the light-rail line and its nine stations, which should attract further public and private investment; \$650 million is being spent on the new L.A. County/USC Medical Center; there's the \$150 million expansion of White Memorial Hospital; and two planned high schools, likely to cost another \$100 million. And now there are conversations about a gigantic \$350 million venture to convert the abandoned Sears distribution ...into an "open town center" that's been likened to Westwood (Ohland).

Development is occurring at a very fast pace in Boyle Heights. It is during the first stage of gentrification that residents of a community can shape potential negative impacts of a development, into positive ones. Gentrification often happens fast because developers are encouraged to build through tax breaks. The entire community is designated as a revitalization area through the Adelante Eastside Redevelopment Area, an Empowerment Zone and an Enterprise Zone. Boyle Heights also qualifies as a Difficult to Develop Area (DDA), has numerous Qualified Census Tracts, is eligible for a High Density Bonus and some buildings qualify for Historical Tax Credits. As of now, it seems a developer can receive public funds or tax breaks simply by locating their project in the community and paying lip service to the community's needs. This is a problem because developers that have no concern for the residents around their project are receiving public funds that are specifically earmarked for Boyle Heights' needs.

The gentrification process is made possible by a period of disinvestment in a low-income community. Smith and LeFaivre call this the devalorization cycle:

The [devalorization cycle] is the 'rational' outcome of the logic of the land and housing markets but should in no way be viewed as 'natural'. It is in fact, the product of myriad decisions by those most able to control the real estate market-financial institutions, developers, landlords, real estate agents" (Smith and LeFaivre 49).

The capitalist class facilitates gentrification when certain capitalist groups within the class discover they can make substantial profits by destroying working-class communities and moving in middle class homeowners (Smith and LeFaivre 46). Smith and LeFaivre describe several steps in the gentrification process. One of the steps is landlord control. According to them, “Under landlord control, the neighborhood’s housing stock is used for a completely different purpose. No longer is it owned for direct use as a domicile; rather, it is owned simply as a means of producing a certain percentage of profit” (Smith and LeFaivre 49). This is seen in Boyle Heights by the proliferation of “flipping”, a process where individuals and real estate agencies buy homes with the sole purpose of selling them to make a profit. This process is sped up in neighborhoods with rent control with a provision for vacancy decontrol.

Displacement begins to occur in communities as homeowners evict tenants to sell homes. This leads us to analyze what happens with the displaced. Smith and LeFaivre note that “a fairly common sequence seems to involve families being displaced once or twice within the same neighborhood, before moving out to a neighboring area. There too they may be displaced as gentrification proceeds, and it is at this stage that a move to the suburbs seems most likely” (Smith and LeFaivre 57). The continuous displacement could be caused by the high number of redevelopment projects concentrated in the area. In *Ecology of Fear*, Mike Davis notes that

‘in addition to the dramatic hemorrhage of jobs and capital over the last decade, aging suburbia also suffers from premature physical obsolescence. Much of what was built in the postwar period (and continues to be built today) is throwaway architecture, with a functional life span of 30 years or less...At best, this stucco junk was designed to be promptly recycled in perennially dynamic housing market, but such markets have stagnated or died in much of the old suburban fringe’ (176-177).

The increased suburbanization of people of color is occasionally seen as a sign that people of color are “moving up” by moving to the suburbs, but the reality is that the suburbs that people of color would be moving to are also beginning to deteriorate (Smith and LeFaivre 58). Some supporters of gentrification argue that gentrification benefits the poor because it frees up better homes in the suburbs. Mike Davis’ observation disproves the argument that the working class benefits from gentrification by moving to the suburbs. In order to counter the effects of gentrification, grassroots action must be taken. The financial and political institutions that benefit from the subjugation of the working class will not create policies on their own that help prevent destruction of communities.

Race and Gentrification

It is difficult to explain the effects of gentrification to people in the Boyle Heights community because of institutionalized social hierarchies that define white as good. In the Boyle Heights community, the perception that white people are coming may not signal any concern in the hearts of the Mexicanos and Chicanos because they associate white people with progress. The aesthetic improvements in Boyle Heights, like luxury condos, will cause the in-migration of whites which will further spread the misperception that the neighborhood will get better as the number of white people increase. Despite evidence in various inner-city neighborhoods throughout the country that the in-migration of whites causes displacement, residents don’t feel they will be affected personally. Some renters may assume that they will be able to enjoy all the new services and establishments when in reality, the new services and quality neighborhood the city foresees is based on their displacement. When the white people that the developers are building for start coming in to the community, rents will start to rise. As a result of this, some residents will no longer

be able to afford rents or may be evicted by landlords to avoid rent control. Gentrification is a process that hurts renters but benefits homeowners. It disproportionately affects seniors and people with disabilities. Displacement may increase as some homeowners begin to sell their homes to the new residents who can afford to buy them. Boyle Heights has many beautiful Victorian and Craftsman homes that some homeowners cannot afford to rehabilitate which could be marketed as fixer-uppers to the young urban professionals who can afford to buy the relatively lower priced homes in Boyle Heights. Such a process, ultimately increases the value of the land and causes displacement.

In Boyle Heights, rents are at an all time high as a result of increasing home sale prices. The rise in the cost of housing also increases overcrowding. People may be unable to move anywhere else and may begin to start stacking up, one on top of the other permanently or while looking for a home. Below you will find a chart on average home sale prices in the area. Although the increase in home sale prices parallels the increase in home sale prices for the greater Los Angeles area, this rate negatively impacts the Boyle Heights community more because it is a low income community.

Average Home Sale Prices in Boyle Heights by Zip Code

	90033	90063	90023
2005	\$ 385,250	\$ 332,000	\$ 413,500
2001	\$ 194,538	\$ 168,846	\$ 208,923
Price Peak*	\$ 581,000	\$ 379,000	\$ 658,000
	*March 2003	*October 2004	*May 2004
	Average of 21 homes sold	Average of 26 homes sold	Average of 16 homes sold

Source: <https://www.melissadata.com/ssl/HomeSales.asp>

Already gentrification has showed its face in Boyle Heights with the displacement of mariachis who used to live in the historic Boyle Hotel located in front of the Mariachi Plaza, a future Metro Gold Line station. Their displacement was a result of landlord harassment, intimidation and an intense building restoration process that will ultimately lead to evictions (Hernandez). The absentee landlord knew he could make a lot of profit by selling the substandard proper so he remodeled and sold the property. Ironically enough, many of the building's new tenants happened to be the people displaced by the Hollenbeck Police Station Expansion. Because of rent control, the only recourse for landlords who do not have a strong connection to the community, like absentee landlords, is to sell deteriorating properties that have tenants, some with very long-term residencies to avoid rent control. Displacement will increase because Boyle Heights has many absentee homeowners

Boyle Heights and Harlem

Boyle Heights and Harlem are similar communities in that they offer their residents a hybrid community. These ethnic enclaves are contradictory spaces that were created through exclusion which ultimately protected and invigorated the values of the culture. Harlem and Boyle Heights are places where although particular battles are fought, people struggle until victory is achieved. These two communities have served as the womb of Black and Xicano/a culture. As the number of professionals coming from these communities' increases, a new gentrification process is forming which is based more on class.

As the need increases to bring middle-class people back into low-income communities, more and more of the responsibility falls on the backs of the Black and

Xicano/a middle-class. Because much of the communities' opposition to gentrification has been framed around whites, little attention has been paid to gentrification by middle and upper-class members of the neighborhood's predominant ethnicity. Gentrification will still bring whites into the neighborhood, but in Boyle Heights, like in Harlem, the process will also include middle-class members of the predominant ethnicity. Revitalization efforts in Harlem have concentrated on getting upper-income Blacks back into the community. These efforts have been successful in Harlem because Harlem is a symbol of Black culture for the entire Black community in the U.S. In *Harlem: Between Heaven and Hell*, Monique M. Taylor interviews a member of the Black gentry as to why he feels Black professionals are coming in to Harlem. He says,

‘They ran away from their culture. Well they’re going to be running back. There’s guilt that comes from the re-awareness of people saying, ‘Hey, I ran off and did all of these things, but I’m still the last hired and first fired...’ (73). In this comment, Carver argues that the tenuous position of the black middle class, coupled with the lingering racism they experience, fuels this longing for a ‘return’ to something of deeper significance (Taylor 73).

According to this statement, Harlem offers a social safety-net for the black middle-class that could not be acquired outside of the community even after having completed the necessary acculturation rituals. Racism leaves a bitter taste in the mouths of professional Blacks and Xicanas/os which make “coming home”, even if they never lived here before, a soothing experience. This type of marketing is also the case with the Sears Town Center in Boyle Heights. The developer is looking to build for Latino professionals. This rhetoric is used to minimize the perception of ensuing gentrification. In terms of White gentrification, “Many blacks in Harlem see an inherent racism in hearing their community viewed as a place to be ‘discovered’ by white pioneers” (50). This view could encourage members of the Black and Xicano/a middle-class to move into Harlem and Boyle Heights

in order to serve as buffers for the destruction/transformation of the community. This, in turn, can prevent middle-class people of color from seeing their class-associated privilege. Only looking at gentrification by whites, masks the possibility that gentrification by people of the same ethnic background could also be taking place. In Boyle Heights, gentrification by the Xicano/a middle-class will restore class divisions and may trigger conflicts in the development of plans for the future. As with White gentrification, gentrification by the Xicano/a bourgeoisie will increase displacement and eliminate services needed by the community, like clinics and local business. Gentrification is not an issue that is only affecting Blacks and Latinos, it is an issue that applies to everyone because it is a process that singles out certain groups like people of color and the working class in order to maximize profit.

The Xicano/a bourgeoisie is seen as living outside of the Boyle Heights community. In the article *Renaissance in the Barrio* by Gloria Ohland, Frank Villalobos observes that “our kids grow up and leave East L.A. They move to the East or the West, following economic growth”. (Ohland). Mr. Villalobos’ observation that middle-class Latinos move out of Boyle Heights misrepresents the actual amount of professional Latinos that come out of Boyle Heights. Mr. Villalobos makes it seem as if there is a large number of Latino professionals fleeing Boyle Heights which is not the case. His comment could be interpreted as propaganda for the approval of Latino-middle class marketed amenities in Boyle Heights. Every year at Roosevelt High School, hundreds of students drop out, entering society as members of the working class. Boyle Heights does not currently have the mixed-income community people are currently designing because youth do not have equal access to a quality education. If youth had access to a quality education

there would be more members of the Latino middle-class. In the same article by Gloria Ohland, Rosalie Gurrola a member of the Boyle Heights Homeowners Association states, “We'd love people from across the bridge, from downtown and other parts of this city to come, you know, in and we all mix it up and have that opportunity. But people come in when there is something to come in to”. Ms. Gurrola’s statement is not only self-hating and infuriating but also an example of the challenges we will face trying to organize a movement. Ms. Gurrola views Boyle Heights as a place with nothing to offer middle-class residents like herself and people from outside of the community. I feel Ms. Gurrola is mistaken. Boyle Heights, like Harlem, has been a Mecca for Mexicano/a, Xicano/a and Latino/a culture in the United States and has given its residents an array of services and experiences. Boyle Heights has offered its residents retail establishments, restaurants and everything else a community has to offer. Inequality has caused the social and economic infrastructure that Ms. Gurrola identifies as missing. It seems that what Ms. Gurrola means when she says there is nothing to come into, is that there is no Starbucks, no Chillis, no Wal-Mart for people to come and shop in. Boyle Heights does not have any big-box retail shopping centers like the ones located throughout Southern California suburbs because there had not been free money offered to those willing to build here like there had been in the suburbs. In addition to this, there is another major obstacle that we will face in Boyle Heights which is cultural hegemony. Many people in the community across class lines equate successful revitalization with the whitening of Boyle Heights. When talking to one of my friends in Boyle Heights about the changes, he said he thought it was good that White people are going to start coming into the neighborhood because that means

things are going to get better. This replicates the current institutionalized social hierarchies as well as the veneration of a consumerist culture by low-income people.

Politicians think they have us figured out. They act as if we really believe the solution to crime is more police. Having luxury condominiums and a trendy chain restaurant is not going to end homelessness and poverty in Boyle Heights, it is just going to make us look more like the White middle class communities everyone assumes we wished we lived in. The issue at hand is not necessarily about whether it is good or bad to have a Starbucks or a Target in the community but about the hegemonic acceptance of a Starbucks or a Target as revitalization. The real issue is that the community is entitled to revitalize their neighborhood through quality jobs that allow working people to live out of poverty, quality housing that is affordable, a college education, a clean neighborhood as well as access to medical care. These are things the community can demand that will modify the new developments, like a supermarket and new housing, to assure they will bring long-term benefits that address these established needs. The current revitalization efforts occurring in Boyle Heights are based on the trickle-down theory that says if you subsidize the rich it will eventually benefit the poor. This is an unjust assumption which will only change when the people affected by it work together and devise long-term solutions. Because most landlords in Boyle Heights are absentee, the renter community is the one that is going to have to organize to preserve the community and its culture. Gentrification is great for the few homeowners that there are, but catastrophic for renters. The community fought for redevelopment, not for displacement. The revitalization efforts are supposed to service the people that demanded the changes, not a new more affluent constituency.

No one is defending us as of now. Meetings are being conducted that are not widely publicized and the groups most negatively impacted by the developments are being excluded from the process. Already we can see that the types of developments being built in Boyle Heights foreshadow a calculated imposed change. The Gold Line demanded new ridership from people who would need to travel downtown on a daily basis who are most likely professionals because many of the residents that work downtown may still have to take the buses that take them to their jobs in the industrial and garment districts . In turn, those new riders need housing which is more up-scale, resulting in the Sears Town Center luxury condos. Now the residents of the luxury condos will demand increased safety resulting in more police, thus the Hollenbeck Police Station Expansion. The infrastructure is being built for the “new” Boyle Heights that provides a market to its residents as well as to those living Downtown. And these changes are not happening in ten years, they are happening now.

The Briseño Family

The Briseños, Salvadoran immigrants, were evicted from their home because of the construction of the Gold Line. They were angry, but used their relocation money to find another home. Some time passed and soon they received another eviction notice, this time for the Hollenbeck Police Station Expansion. Currently the Briseños live in a 2 bedroom apartment for which they pay \$1,150 a month rent. They were promised they would be relocated to comparable housing but have now been at their home a little over a year. At their old home, they were paying \$900 a month rent for a 4 bedroom single-family home with 2 bathrooms. They have much of their belongings stored in their garage. On a personal visit to their home, there was a clear lack of space and you could sense the

resentment towards their living conditions. Mrs. Briseño walked in and out of the room where Mr. Briseño, another organizer and I were talking about community organizing. She had a neck brace on that I would later learn was a direct result of the displacement. After much hesitation, Mrs. Briseño eventually joined in the conversation. She was angry. She explained everything that had happened with the evictions. She told us about her 4 meetings with Councilmember Villaraigosa that never went anywhere. She explained how the desperation of feeling helpless became so unbearable it took a toll on her body. The stress made her sick. She was going to have surgery on her spinal cord 5 days after our meeting. She said she had been healthy up until the second eviction. She was always out and about and now she was too depressed to go anywhere. You could see the bitterness in her face.

We left the Brisenos' trying to figure out a way to find out who was responsible for the relocation. As we were driving off, we saw 2 white males, casually walking their chihuahua. They were dressed in the hip vintage rocker look and looked no older than 25. No, I wasn't in Hollywood. I was in Boyle Heights on 4th and St. Louis at around 6:00 p.m. in the evening. The juxtaposition of Mrs. Briseño's story and these two happy go lucky guys filled me with anger. I was so shocked by their presence that I yelled out the car window, "Hey, where do you live?". To my surprise the blonde one answered, "Up there", pointing up St. Louis. I figured these two guys were definitely new to the area since they told me, a stranger, where they lived and also since they were walking their Chihuahua in the dark at Hollenbeck Park, a dangerous place people from the neighborhood would know not to do. The Juxtaposition of the Briseño's experience and the two White males put a face on the gentrification taking place right in front of my eyes.

Chapter 6: National Models

Gentrification has occurred in many cities across the world and in the United States. As a result of this, many communities have organized in order to combat displacement. Below you will find examples of battles that have been fought across the United States against gentrification and displacement. Although not all the strategies have been able to eliminate displacement completely, the tools they have developed can serve as models for slowing down or reorienting the gentrification process. The list is mostly derived from Policy Link's Equitable Development Toolkit, with examples from throughout the nation.

1. Community Organizing

Community organizing involves organizing large groups of disenfranchised people to win social, economic and political equity through political education and action. Effective organizing challenges entrenched power structures by creating policies that are inclusive of the most marginalized, are participatory, and work towards the ultimate goal of progressive social change.

The Balanced Development Campaign was formed by a coalition of 15 community organizations in Chicago to ensure that low-income families had good affordable homes to live in and to prevent gentrification. The main goal of the campaign was the passage of an inclusionary zoning ordinance that would require a minimum of 25% of all housing units built in new developments to be affordable. The coalition was city-wide and only worked on this issue. The coalition also used direct action to encourage involvement, visibility and turnout. They held rallies, marches, street theatre and even had a float in a parade. By organizing around a winnable issue with well-defined targets and goals, the Balanced Development Campaign is likely to get inclusionary zoning passed in their city. They will

be able to win this battle because they have empowered people to get involved in the planning process who will not stop fighting until they see more affordable housing being built across the city and an end to gentrification. (Center for Community Change).

2. Community Benefit Agreement

A Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) are legal agreements between a developer and a community organization to secure certain benefits from a development for the local community. CBA's have been used in Los Angeles for the Staples Center and a mixed-use project on Hollywood and Vine. A CBA is created through negotiation with the promise of a developer to provide benefits to the local affected community in exchange for support of the project and its request for approvals and subsidies. According to a CBA manual published by Good Jobs First, CBA's should be enforced by the government agency providing the subsidy and should be executed prior to the construction of the project but currently can only be enforced by the people signing the contract. Some of the demands that can be made in a CBAs are local-hire programs, affordable housing, a living wage for jobs created by the development, union labor, child care center, subsidized retail space, parks and recreational facilities and community input in tenant selection. (Community Benefits Agreements: Making Development Projects Accountable, Julian Gross, *Published by Good Jobs First*). CBA's should have clauses for each benefit that outline the enforcement entity and consequences. CBA's can be good because they secure benefits for a community and encourage development but they can create concerns because an organization forfeits their right to oppose the project and enforcement of the CBA is sometimes difficult. The key to a CBA is understanding of both what is possible and what is crucial for such an agreement without giving up the right to demand accountability.

3. Housing Trust Fund

In Los Angeles in 2002, Housing L.A., a coalition of community organizations, labor and housing groups helped established an annual \$100 million Housing Trust Fund. By forming a broad coalition, the Housing Trust Fund proponents were able to link several interests, like those of business and labor, to support the policy making it a priority in the eyes of elected officials. In order to gain support, members of the coalition engaged in actions ranging from tours of housing conditions of the poor to civil disobedience. Additionally, the coalition weaved the Housing Trust Fund into the 2001 mayoral campaign, forcing candidates like current mayor James Hahn to take a stand before getting elected. (Dreier and Candaele).

4. Inclusionary Zoning

In 1992, the city of San Diego passed an inclusionary zoning ordinance requiring all developers to set aside 10% of new housing units as affordable. The inclusionary zoning ordinance was passed as a result of organizing by the San Diego Organizing Project (SDOP), a faith based organization that represents 40,000 families. SDOP formed a coalition with labor groups and other housing organizations. The inclusionary zoning coalition had to conduct all the research necessary to prove that a housing crisis existed, that there was a need for inclusionary zoning, and that there was support for such an ordinance from residents and the City. Opponents of the measure were some city councilmembers and developers who actively lobbied against the ordinance. Ultimately the organizing campaign was successful and San Diego now has an inclusionary zoning ordinance.

In Los Angeles, the battle is currently underway for the passage of an inclusionary zoning ordinance. After the establishment of the Los Angeles Housing Trust Fund, 65 organizations came together to form a coalition to go beyond the trust fund to require developers to set aside a certain percentage of new housing units as affordable. Because of direct action by community organizations, studies have been conducted by the City to demonstrate that inclusionary zoning ordinances that have been implemented throughout other California cities work and that one is viable in Los Angeles. Many speculate that if Antonio Villaraigosa was to win the campaign for mayor this May, an inclusionary zoning ordinance is more likely to pass. (Center for Community Change. *Housing Organizing: Inclusionary Zoning and Community Organizing*. Spring 2004)

5. Affordable Housing Development

Affordable housing development is housing targeted for families, seniors or individuals earning a certain percentage of the area median income. Affordable housing could be created by private developers, non-profits and public entities. The goal of affordable housing development is to preserve the affordability of existing housing and to create new housing that is affordable. This component is crucial in light of gentrification and the lack of new housing development in Los Angeles.

6. Displacement Free Zone

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE) of the Los Angeles area was able to define a 10 block area in South Los Angeles as a Displacement Free Zone. Through the Displacement Free Zone, SAJE has been able to prevent evictions, repairs in slum buildings and 10 tenant unions. They have weekly tenants rights workshops, provide legal assistance for tenants and above all, organize. The Displacement Free Zone has been

crucial in slowing down the gentrification process caused by the University of Southern California and their students (SAJE. *Displacement Free Zone*).

7. Eviction Free Zone

An Eviction Free Zone is very similar to a Displacement Free Zone but it places a moratorium on all evictions within a certain area. When rent control was terminated in Cambridge, Massachusetts, organizing began to implement the Cambridge Eviction-Free Zone and prevent the eviction of 2,000 families.

8. Community Land Trust

A Community Land Trust is a tool designed to specifically combat gentrification. The goals of a Community Land Trust are to help people in the community own their own homes and land, as well as the preservation of affordable housing. Community Land Trusts are not only controlled by the owners of the land and housing but by the community as a whole. Owners and other neighbors all participate in decisions regarding the Community Land Trust. By having direct ownership of land and housing in the community, residents will ultimately gain control over planning and redevelopment.

9. Eminent Domain

Dudley Street was a neighborhood that for years had been redlined by banks, government mortgage programs and insurance companies. Like Boyle Heights, the neighborhood became blighted as Whites and capital fled the central city for the suburbs. In the early 1980's, the community realized that the government was not going to help their neighborhood unless people demanded it.

As a result of this, DSNI organized to win the power of eminent domain. The group was able to get the city of Roxbury, Massachusetts to donate all vacant city land in

the Dudley Street neighborhood for redevelopment as well as granting DSNI the power of eminent domain over all privately owned vacant land (Luther Kildegaard Snow 188). Once the community gained control of their land, community members started to plan and participate in the redevelopment process. The community plan did not just address land-use, it focused on changing the process of land development, calling for local ownership structures and anti-displacement programs as well as integrating human services and economic development components to directly address the community's needs and values, including the racial and ethnic dynamics (Nyden and Wiedel 187). Through DSNI, neighbors were able to redefine the redevelopment process, improving the lives of the current residents.

10. Asset Mapping

Asset mapping is a tool that is developed specifically for current residents. It is a process where community resources are mapped, with or without GIS, that identifies assets already in the community. This is an important tool because it can show specific businesses that can be revitalized rather than simply bringing in new businesses that provide the same products and services. Asset mapping is also important because it can help document the effects of gentrification, as well as the opportunities to redirect it.

11. Local-Hire Programs

Local-Hire programs work with developers to assure that the jobs being generated by development target the community affected by the development. Typically, they can be implemented into a Community Benefits Agreement. Local-hire programs can also be implemented through a city or county ordinance. These agreements usually require developers that receive public funds to hire a certain percentage of laborers or have a

certain percentage of hours worked by local community residents. Local-hire agreements can work hand in hand with a Project Labor Agreement that secures union labor. Both agreements should clearly state the enforcement mechanisms, consequences and designation of job training programs and who will be providing them.

12. Community Impact Report

A Community Impact Report is a study of the impact of a development on the local community. It especially focuses on the impact of large developments on small businesses and housing. Community Impact Reports, unlike Environmental Impact Reports, are not currently a requirement of any developments.

13. Rent Control

Rent control prevents landlords from unjustly increasing rents in certain cities or neighborhoods and is enforced by cities and housing authorities. In Los Angeles, the rent stabilization ordinance, or rent control with vacancy decontrol, places a cap of 3% on annual rent increases and is only applicable for units that were built before 1978. Additionally, the ordinance established certain criteria for a justified eviction. Rent control can mandate the payment of relocation money to tenants that are evicted under some of the legal reasons for eviction. In Los Angeles there are only 12 reasons for a legal eviction. Rent control protects tenants and neighborhoods but in some cases can unintentionally exacerbate gentrification and evictions. Although current state legislation provides for vacancy control, this tool is not implemented in Los Angeles. Because landlords cannot significantly raise rents, through rent control with vacancy decontrol, landlords can find legal and illegal ways to evict families in order to be able to increase the rent of rent controlled apartments. Other ordinances should be passed that work in conjunction with

rent control to protect the rights of tenants including vacancy control (Los Angeles Housing Department).

14. Cooperatives

Cooperatives are businesses or housing where ownership is shared by community members. Cooperatives are designed for maintaining long term self-sufficiency and autonomy. Similar to a community land trust, a cooperative is guided by a whole community, not just a single investor. Cooperatives are participatory and promote the common good of a community.

15. Tenant Unions/Neighborhood Unions

Tenant Unions are organizations created for action and education. They primarily educate residents about their rights as tenants and the rights of owners. They also organize local residents to improve housing conditions in their area. They are powerful because they provide the space for dialogue among residents of a certain area and help establish bonds between neighbors that ultimately manifest themselves through campaigns for a better community.

16. Business Unions

Business unions entail organizing small businesses into groups like tenant unions where small business owners can voice their concerns and work to find solutions. Unlike a Chamber of Commerce, small business unions can be organized to educate small business owners about the community they serve and their role in that community. Small businesses can be key players in the redevelopment process and must be organized in order to prevent destructive development. Business unions are especially important in low income communities because they depend on local residents. Small businesses face many

of the same issues that are experienced by renters and should work in conjunction with residents to shape the redevelopment process and prevent gentrification.

17. Coalition of Non-Profits

In areas where non-profit community based organizations lack clout, coalitions can be created in order to generate power. They are very useful when an issue arises and there is no single organization that has the power or the resources to win on a specific issue. It is also useful when the issue affects the focus of several different organizations. In Boyle Heights, a coalition is necessary to counter the informal coalition that is currently shaping the redevelopment process in Boyle Heights. A coalition can help bring different organizations together to develop a more strategic campaign with more demands.

18. Anti-Gentrification Trust Fund

In areas where there is the potential for gentrification, an Anti-Gentrification Trust Fund could be established to provide benefits for the local community with money from the local community and outside investors, including absentee landlords. In Boyle Heights, money from an Anti-Gentrification Trust Fund could be used for improvements in local schools and businesses as well as for start-up costs for community land trusts, cooperatives and other organizations that focus on self-sufficiency models.

19. Historical Documentation

In order to implement programs and guidelines that prevent gentrification and promote autonomy, communities must document their historical and current context. Historical documentation can include the documentation of evictions, community assets, organizations and issues faced in the community. It can be done by community scholars and can even be integrated through local schools. Oral interviews and archives can be

created to document the changes in the community which can be used as an organizing tool and as a way to assure that the people that live in a community are acknowledged and respected.

Chapter 7: Strategies for Community Driven Accountable Development

“Power concedes nothing without demand”-Frederick Douglas

In Boyle Heights there is a group of a few well organized individuals who are usually called upon during the community input process for major projects in the Eastside. They have an incredible amount of power in the project approval process. These groups claim to represent the community, yet the community interests they really represent are those of business and homeowners. They are, for the most part, conservative and make very few demands that benefit poor people directly. They are NIMBY’s when it comes to schools and affordable housing, but advocates for luxury lofts, condos and big chain retail. These groups have been able to gain power and recognition because of the lack of an organized voice that represents renters and that will demand accountability from anyone before the community. This never before seen investment boom in Boyle Heights has the potential to bring low-income residents, businesses, parents, students, artists and homeowners together to demand progressive policy changes that will not just alleviate the symptoms of the ills in Boyle Heights but will work to provide a cure.

A Call to Action!

Historically, grassroots organizing has been the most effective strategy for long-term social change. The Center for Community Change (CCC) has created a list of the attributes of successful community organizing.

1. “Community organizing emphasizes large numbers of people, confronting power and altering the dynamics of power.”
2. “Community organizing is about relationships. Not only altering the relationship of power between community members and unaccountable individuals and institutions, as described above, but also building relationships one-on-one, between the organizing group and the community and within the community itself.”

3. “Community organizing builds community-based leadership. At its best, organizing seeks to give to those who participate in the process the confidence and capacities needed to change their communities.”

4. “Community organizing acknowledges self-interest.”

(Center for Community Change. *Housing Organizing: Inclusionary Zoning and Community Organizing*. Issue 2. Spring 2004).

What we need in the community is to stop believing in reform and actually attempt to change the process that excludes the marginalized even when they represent the majority. As residents, we can not approve plans and developments that keep this system intact. Not approving a plan means that you don't just not show support for it, it means that you act against it. In Boyle Heights we still have time to create alternative policies instead of reacting to policies that we disapprove.

Organizing will only help improve the social and economic conditions in Boyle Heights. It will help marginalized people in the community understand that they have a right to demand change that makes life better for them. They should know they have a right to oppose a project that does not benefit the community equally and that they have the right to support a project that will benefit the community at large. It is no longer business as usual in Boyle Heights. People will begin to organize, and participation in what used to be exclusive negotiations will grow. People in Boyle Heights should understand that they can challenge and question each other as well as their elected officials. Boyle Heights' residents, whether they are have documents or not, have the right to demand development that provides decent affordable housing, quality jobs, and a community without fear of police, politicians or immigration raids. Residents have the right to ask where their money is going and decide what they want it spent on. Politicians

will know that they have an obligation to defend the community or they have no place here. An organized progressive voice demanding equity and change that represents the needs of low income residents is needed in Boyle Heights.

In order to achieve this voice a coalition is necessary. Although the majority of residents in Boyle Heights are renters, there is not currently a large, long-established organization that fights for the rights of low-income tenants. There are few organizations that focus specifically on grassroots organizing in Boyle Heights. One important example is InnerCity Struggle, an organization that works with youth and parents on education issues. They have had many successful campaigns that promote social change but because of their education focus, they cannot provide the critical mass necessary to lead a campaign against gentrification. There are several other non-profits in Boyle Heights and the Greater East Los Angeles area but they mostly provide services. If organizations, like Homeboy Industries, that advocate and provide services to residents form a part of an Eastside Coalition the base of organized, informed and “politicized” people will grow. This will in turn prevent anyone from coming in to Boyle Heights with the sole purpose of reinforcing the trends towards gentrification. In the next section you will find a sample Strategy Chart based on the Kim Bobo model, for a campaign against gentrification and displacement.

Strategy Map

Goals

Long-Term:

1. Implement progressive revitalization guidelines that address the needs of low-income renters in Boyle Heights.

2. Provide adequate funding for schools, community organizations and services necessary to keep Boyle Heights as a cultural center.

Intermediate Goals:

1. Designate Boyle Heights as a displacement free zone, which includes an anti-predatory displacement clause.
2. Enter into an agreement with MJW and Cesar Chavez/Soto LLC that would apply community identified guidelines for redevelopment or face complete opposition.
3. Win support from community organizations and state and local leaders outside of Boyle Heights.
4. Win support from elected officials in Boyle Heights.

Short Term

1. Organize tenants
2. Form an Eastside Coalition of progressive Boyle Heights non-profit organizations and residents.
3. Create autonomy in the community by drafting guidelines for redevelopment that address their needs directly.
4. Begin a community dialogue series where information can be disseminated to and collected from residents.

Eastside Coalition

A progressive Eastside Coalition is needed in Boyle Heights to represent the needs of renters. According to the Authors of *Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the 1990s*, “A coalition is defined as an organization of organizations working together for a common goal” (Bobo, Kendal and Max 70). The authors warn that the only

time a coalition should be formed is when there is a need to amass the power necessary to do something one organization cannot accomplish (70). Based on this criterion, a coalition is essential in Boyle Heights because there is currently not one single organization dedicated to grassroots organizing that has the power to work on such a big campaign, much less one with the goal of social change. Furthermore, a coalition is necessary because the campaign issue affects all the work that organizations are currently undertaking. Building a coalition can be difficult because of the different needs of each organization. It is also difficult to maintain a coalition because of the extra work required of staff. Ultimately, the benefits of a coalition in the Eastside will outweigh the negatives because it will establish a link between the few progressive organizations and give residents a new source of power.

Constituents, Allies, and Opponents

The constituents for this campaign are Boyle Heights tenants, student and small businesses. The following is a list of possible allies and opponents in Boyle Heights:

Potential Allies

- Homeboy Industries
- Jovenes Inc.
- Inquilinos Unidos
- Union de Vecinos
- East L.A. Community Corporation
- Dolores Mission, Proyecto Pastoral
- InnerCity Struggle
- Estrada Courts Resident Advisory Committee
- Centro CSO
- Latino Urban Forum
- Centro de Ayuda
- Wynerwood Tenant Association

Potential Opponents

- Barrio Planners
- BH Chamber of Commerce
- BH Homeowners Association
- BH Neighborhood Council
- BH Neighbors Organization
- DSO-Diverse Strategies for Organizing
- Hollenbeck Police Dept.
- Mothers of East L.A.
- Adelante Project Advisory Committee

Targets:

Primary Targets: Mark J. Weinstein of MJW Investments and Frank Villalobos, Craig Jones, and Nick Patsaouras of Cesar Chavez/Soto LLC.

Secondary Targets: Councilman Villaraigosa

Strategy and Tactics

Community Dialogue Series

The most important tactic in this campaign will be the community dialogue series. “The measure of successful education is that it leads to action” (Bobo, Kendall and Max 38). By educating people about their rights, developments and their potential effects we will build power.

Anti-Predatory Displacement Project

This project could be its own campaign or it could be one of the strategies that aim to slow down the gentrification process. Boyle Heights and other low-income communities are being targeted by real estate companies. This could be defined as predatory displacement because realtors are explicitly targeting low-income communities of color to increase profit. A campaign could be launched, similar to the anti-predatory lending campaigns, where particular real estate companies could be confronted in order to change their discriminatory practices. Initial plans for this campaign should include identifying the criteria that real estate companies use to get people in certain areas to sell their home. One tactic that could be used would be a community protection day where community members go out and remove the “Buy your home CASH” signs around their neighborhood to assert their ownership of the community. This would also help identify the realtors that are engaging in these practices and document the gentrification process.

Who Should Make up this Coalition

A Coalition of Eastside non-profits should be made up of all progressive organizations in the eastside. Because there are so few, it is crucial that they all come together to protect the neighborhood. I recommend that these organizations be the leaders in the coalition.

Boyle Heights OrganizationsHomeboy Industries

Homeboy industries is one of the Eastside's best established community based organization. Their work revolves around gang and at-risk youth employment and counseling services. Their dedication to improving the social and economic condition in Boyle Heights and eastside youth has been recognized since 1988. Homeboy Industries is dedicated to creating proactive solutions to gangs. They have an enormous amount of potential to implement programs that extend their philosophy of "Nothing stops a bullet like a job". The current development boom is a great opportunity for Homeboy Industries to incorporate a community organizing component into their organization which will help steer the organization into creating more long-term change. Historically, ex-gangmembers and recovering gang members have not been a constituency for social movements, organizing can be a tool that taps into their power, intelligence and knowledge of the community and community needs. Homeboy Industries needs to step up and meet the challenge. Father Boyle has helped bring a lot of attention to the struggles faced by many in the community. His worked has also helped give other organizations in Boyle Heights credibility.

Homeboy Industries can begin to incorporate community organizing into the organization by hiring an organizer or training a member already on staff. They could also form part of a progressive Eastside Coalition in order to familiarize themselves with organizing.

East L.A. Community Corporation (ELACC)

ELACC is a non-profit community development corporation (CDC) that develops affordable housing, conducts first-time homebuyer counseling, credit counseling, job training and community organizing. ELACC does not have a great track record when it comes to community organizing but has recently implemented the infrastructure needed to support a strong community organizing department. This is crucial since organizing was not a major focus of the more traditional community development corporation. One of ELACC's strengths and weaknesses is its involvement as a CDC in the housing market. Having an effective organizing department as part of their organization can benefit ELACC by reinforcing its role in the community and their commitment to building communities, not just housing. ELACC would also benefit greatly by dedicating itself to organizing because organizing will help create a name for the organization in Boyle Heights as well as in the greater Los Angeles area. This will ultimately give ELACC greater leverage when trying to change or implement policies that benefit low-income renters or by building housing. In contrast, because ELACC is a developer, ELACC could be seen as trying to manipulate the community to favor their developments. An organizing department will present a challenge at ELACC because it will force the organization to be more responsive to community needs in their developments and because could potentially create divisions within the organization. As

a developer and as a community organization, ELACC will have to be the trendsetter for accountable development practices. They are going to have to create developments that are more innovative and provide significantly more benefits for the community than traditional developments by private developers, possibly at the cost of a smaller profit margin.

Union de Vecinos

Union de Vecinos is a tenant-based organization dedicated to the empowerment of renters in Boyle Heights. They currently focus their organizing efforts in the area most visibly affected by displacement, the Pico-Aliso neighborhood, which is also the area where they have their largest tenant base. Union de Vecino's story gives the organization a lot of its strength. They formed in 1996 in response to the demolition of the Pico-Aliso public housing complex. One of ELACC's founders, Leonardo Vilchis, is the executive director and organizer. Because Union de Vecinos is a relatively small organization, they would benefit greatly by joining the coalition because they will be able to grow along with the movement. One obstacle that could be faced by Union de Vecinos is that because they joined the coalition, their already overworked staff could be forced to take on more work.

InnerCity Struggle

InnerCity Struggle was founded in 1994 and is another Eastside organization that is becoming very well respected within and outside of the community. They are a group dedicated to organizing youth in the East Los Angeles area on issues of education equity. They worked on the campaign to get a two new high schools in East L.A. as well as several reforms within the schools They should also form part of the Eastside coalition

against gentrification in order to help secure more autonomy in Boyle Heights. Each organization needs to invest time within the Eastside coalition because it will be a vehicle for defining the true needs of Boyle Heights residents.

The coalition will be a great way for the few progressive organizations in the Eastside to show their strength to the rest of Los Angeles and the organized conservatives in Boyle Heights. There are several organization in Los Angeles that Boyle Heights non-profits could work with on an accountable development campaign but it is important to note that a campaign against gentrification must be led by a broad coalition of Eastside non-profits to develop principles that reflect the most urgent needs in the community, including education. Forming a coalition will expose political and private corporate interests that undermine the well being of Boyle Heights residents and show that residents will no longer be subject to the destruction of our community. A coalition is important because in Boyle Heights we never have been or will be represented politically. The only way to improve our substandard living conditions is demanding our human rights to housing and education. We have the right to live with dignity; without fear of the police or secretly planned evictions. We do not want solutions dictated to us from the so-called experts. We have all the experts we need in this community. No one is going to know what the community needs best than those that are most marginalized. We can have the most sophisticated plans to bring money back into the community but who are the plans going to benefit? Having a mall is not going to make Boyle Heights a better, safer place to live. Having police parade their authority on the street is not going to get rid of crime or improve the lives of our youth. Politicians are not going to design long term solutions we need because their re-election is determined by short term community

clean ups and franchise businesses that can start up within a week. Politicians do not create long-term solutions to social problems because they cannot brag about the results of programs and projects that have a longer-life span than 4 or 6 year terms.

Conclusion:

In Boyle Heights, as in any other poor community, changes are not going to benefit the most marginalized members of the community unless it is demanded. Although there are processes that have been created by the city, state and federal government that are designed to get the “community’s input”, these processes are a failure. Community input and environmental impact periods are mandatory steps in development but very few individuals in the community know about the meetings or are able to participate at the many different hours that these meetings are held. Furthermore, people are discouraged from participating in the general community input process because when they ask how the development is going to benefit their life and their neighborhood, residents are given ambiguous answers that attempt to disengage people from participating in formal politics. In addition, the community input process can be used by developers and politicians as a defense mechanism when their development is criticized by people who were not involved in these exclusive community meetings. There is a reason that youth and renters were excluded from the Sears community meeting. Grassroots organizing should be the first step in redefining redevelopment principles because it tries to be inclusive and participatory. Once people analyze developments, including why and by whom they were created, people will be able to set a minimum standard for true neighborhood revitalization. Legal avenues must be incorporated in the organizing process but the focus should be on implementing new and alternative solutions. Representative politics create and maintain the gentrification process. Changing this process would therefore include the participation of more residents in community input sessions with developers who will demand respect for the

community and its people, and will say no when a development will negatively impact the community. People in Boyle Heights understand that these changes are not for them.

As we saw in the National Models section, institutions and their practices have to be challenged and presented with alternatives in order for the needs in the community to be integrated into redevelopment and community processes. Although many other communities may have failed in preventing displacement and gentrification, these communities found a voice through participatory community planning and decision making. Boyle Heights should be seen as a museum. Places like the Mariachi Plaza, should be preserved as if it was a museum, no one would try to improve a museum by throwing all the art pieces away to make room for commercial art pieces. That is the value that I place on Boyle Heights. We have been able to live happy lives amidst the murders, blight and crime because we have close relationships with our neighbors and our families. We want redevelopment in Boyle Heights but we want residents to direct it, directly benefit from it while affirming why we want to live there.

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