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Further Implications of Freeway Siting in California: Freeway Development and Communities of Color in Colton, Fresno, and San Diego

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16. Abstract

This study examines the consequences of freeway construction on neighborhoods of color across California, with a focus on socioeconomic changes, route selection, community reactions and resistance, and the disruptions to residents, businesses, and other assets. Expanding on three prior case studies conducted by the research team, this study incorporates three additional case studies: South Colton, West Fresno, and City Heights in San Diego. The construction of freeways was a contributing mechanism to the perpetuation of racial inequality, weakening social institutions, disrupting local economies, and physically dividing neighborhoods. However, the outcomes varied across locations. In South Colton, a freeway was ultimately not built through its community of color, though largely for reasons of construction costs. City Heights, initially a predominantly non-Hispanic white neighborhood, underwent a demographic transformation driven by white flight during a decades-long pause in freeway construction. West Fresno did face consequences from freeway development but was also unique in its diversity of residents pre-freeway, including people of color and non-Hispanic white immigrant communities. Freeway development contributed to transforming West Fresno into an overwhelming community of color. Across these cases, freeways fragmented communities, displaced residents, and reinforced pre-existing racial divides. These racialized impacts stemmed from systemic socioeconomic marginalization and exclusion of people of color in the planning process. Today, public investments aimed at reconnecting communities offer an opportunity to address the enduring harms caused by freeways. However, achieving meaningful progress will require the integration of restorative justice principles into the planning and decision-making processes.

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The UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies supports and advances cutting-edge research, the highest-quality education, and meaningful and influential civic engagement on the many pressing transportation issues facing our cities, state, nation and world today. The institute is part of the University of California Institute of Transportation Studies, a four-campus consortium that includes UC Berkeley, UC Davis and UC Irvine. UCLA ITS is also a proud partner of the Pacific Southwest Region 9 University of Transportation Center, a federally funded research network with seven other universities.

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The UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge conducts basic and applied research on the socioeconomic formation and internal dynamics of neighborhoods and how these collective spatial units are positioned and embedded within regions. The Center for Neighborhood Knowledge works with a broad set of data and employs a range of analytical skills to examine neighborhood phenomena across time and space.

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Disclaimer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Introduction

This study examines the consequences of freeway construction on neighborhoods of color across California. We explore socioeconomic changes; route selection; community reactions and resistance; disruptions to residents, businesses, and other assets; and other effects. Expanding on three prior case studies conducted by the research team (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023), this study incorporates three additional case studies—South Colton, West Fresno, and City Heights in San Diego—which not only complement the prior findings but also add new nuances.

Superimpositions of freeways on disadvantaged communities were not isolated occurrences but rather part of a larger system of racism. Housing, educational, and labor discrimination depressed land values, hindered homeownership, and made neighborhoods of color more vulnerable to being selected for a freeway route. Unequal political power in the decision-making process also placed people of color at a distinct disadvantage, especially as they were often formally or informally excluded from public participatory planning processes. On top

Table E-1. UCLA Freeway History Case Study Sites: Locations and Characteristics

City	Neighborhood	City Size	Built Environment	Region of California	Primary Population(s) of Color on the Eve of Freeway Construction	Report
Pasadena	Northwest Pasadena	medium	satellite city	Greater Los Angeles	Black	Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a)
Los Angeles	Pacoima	large	suburban	Greater Los Angeles	Black, Latino/a	
Stockton	downtown Stockton	medium	urban core	Central Valley	Asian	Ong et al. (2023)
Fresno	West Fresno	medium	urban core	Central Valley	highly diverse; mixture of racial/ethnic groups	herein
San Diego	City Heights	large	urban	Greater San Diego	initially non-Hispanic white; subsequently diverse	
Colton	South Colton	small	outer suburban/ exurban	Inland Empire	Latino/a	

Additional data sources: Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023

of this, white Americans had more ability to choose their places of residence, avoid displacement, and relocate to outlying suburbs, with rapid suburbanization facilitated by publicly funded freeways.

The construction of freeways was a contributing mechanism to the perpetuation of racial inequality. Neighborhoods of color were often specifically targeted and suffered harmful consequences. Freeways weakened social institutions, damaged the local economy, disrupted the social fiber, and physically fragmented

Figure E-1. UCLA Freeway History Case Study Sites

Data sources: Caltrans, 2023b and Hudson, 2022

neighborhoods. These changes lowered the quality of life in already marginalized places. Nevertheless, it is important to note that racial outcomes in the postwar era were not uniform, and experiences varied among different neighborhoods of color. In one of our case study sites, South Colton, a freeway was ultimately not built through its community of color. Another site, City Heights in San Diego, initially a predominantly non-Hispanic white neighborhood, underwent a demographic transformation driven by white flight during a decades-long pause in freeway construction. The third site, West Fresno, did face consequences from freeway development but was also unique in its diversity of residents pre-freeway, including all major racial and ethnic groups, including non-Hispanic white immigrant communities. Freeway development contributed to transforming West Fresno into an

Table E-2. UCLA Freeway History Case Study Sites: Development and Impacts

City	Neighborhood	Freeway	Decades of Development	Alternative Routes	Impact	Report
Pasadena	Northwest Pasadena	I-210	1960s-1970s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color	Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a)
Los Angeles	Pacoima	SR-118	1960s-1970s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color	
Stockton	downtown Stockton	SR-4	1960s-1970s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color	Ong et al. (2023)
Fresno	West Fresno	SR-99	1950s-1960s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color, “white flight”	herein
San Diego	City Heights	SR-15	1950s-2000s	no	clearance and displacement, followed by “white flight”	
Colton	South Colton	I-10	1940s-1950s	multiple routes considered, but path through community of color not chosen	reinforcement of barrier isolating neighborhood of color	

Additional data sources: Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023

overwhelming community of color. All three case studies, both individually and together, provide additional and more nuanced insights into the intersection of racism and freeway development.

Table E-1 compares these three case studies to each other and those in Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a) and Ong et al. (2023). **Figure E-1** maps the six study sites across California, highlighting the diversity of regions represented by these sites. **Table E-2** further outlines the freeways studied, the decades of their development, whether alternative freeway routes were seriously considered and documented, and the specific impacts observed.

Colton

This case study explores the planning and construction of Interstate 10, the San Bernardino Freeway, through the City of Colton, planned and built in the 1940s and 1950s, and its legacy thereafter.

Colton, a small city and railroad hub on the eastern outskirts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area in the Inland Empire region, was long polarized between non-Hispanic white residents living north of the railroad tracks (then operated by Southern Pacific) and Latino/a residents south of them. Businesses, schools, parks, theaters, and pools were segregated. Well into the 20th century, most people in South Colton did not enjoy municipal services like sewage, with many roads left unpaved and housing conditions often dilapidated. Limited mobility across the tracks enforced the isolation of the town's Latinos/as and solidified a stark color line across the city, with the main level road crossing of the tracks clogging and stopping for hours each day (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024 and U.S. Census Bureau, 2024); Ornelas, 2013; Ayala and Ayala, 2013; Vásquez and Oliva, 2013; Acosta, 2023; Beltrán, 2013; Colton Chamber of Commerce, 1946; Cathey, 1952; Cunningham, 1953; and California Highway Commission, 1953).

Despite facing ongoing discrimination, Latinos/as established their own institutions for education, healthcare, and economic assistance. South Colton became known as a thriving Mexican neighborhood with a bustling commercial scene (though the Mexican population declined after the Great Depression's deportation campaigns). Along with building internal institutions, South Colton residents also engaged in sociopolitical action to challenge racism, including unionization and strikes, school integration, efforts to buy property in North Colton, and electoral campaigns (Gamboa, 1989; Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980; Vasquez and Acosta, 2023; Beltrán, 2013; Ornelas, 2013; Ngan, 2006; Mendoza, 2006; E. Garcia, 2013; Hernandez Ramos, 2014; Salazar, 2015; Ocegueda, 2017; Sheffield, 2004, 2010; Rivera, 2014; and Ayala and Ayala, 2013).

Planning for the I-10 segment through Colton began in the mid-1940s; the segment opened in 1956. The California Highway Commission proposed a route along J Street, which ran parallel to the Southern Pacific tracks. In March 1946, local interest groups proposed an alternative route, running south of the railroad tracks through Latino/a South Colton along O Street. Another possible route was added in 1947, which ran along C Street in North Colton, north of the main Anglo business district (See **Figure E-2**) (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1944; *Colton Courier*, 1946a, 1947a; and Olson, 1989).

Residential listings in city directories from the era underline the racial implications of the choice of the freeway path. C Street consisted entirely of non-Hispanic white residents. J Street had a bit more diversity, with 15 percent of residents being people of color, primarily Latinos/as. In South Colton, the vast majority (94%) of O Street residents were Latinos/as (San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949).

Figure E-2. Alternative Routes Proposed for I-10 in Colton

Data sources: Colton Courier*, 1946b, 1947a; San Bernardino County, 2024; and Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; base map: Google, 2024b*

Opponents of the state's proposed J Street route argued that a freeway would divide the city, discouraging major business investments in the area. The Colton City Council sided with its city's Anglo business interests and initially opposed the J Street route as well. Backed by the City Council, members of the Chamber of Commerce proposed an alternative route, which would pass well south of the railway tracks, through South Colton along O Street (See **Figure E-2**) (*Colton Courier*, 1946b, 1947c, 1947d, 1947e, 1947g; Alexander, 1947; Colton Chamber of Commerce and Gray, 1946a; and McKersie and Davis, 1946).

Despite Latino/as being politically disadvantaged, the potential for a freeway to disrupt their community became a focal point for Latino/a activism. South Colton residents lobbied elected officials and staff and organized their own business and neighborhood groups. One of these, the Latin American Civic Club aptly pointed out that the city was already deeply divided by the railroad along the same corridor and that a freeway through South Colton would actually divide it along an entirely new axis (Padilla and Duran, 1946).

The third option, along C Street (See **Figure E-2**), was deemed not feasible: engineers and the state's Highway Commission were concerned about dividing the town once again, especially if the freeway had to be routed through the Anglo residential area in North Colton (McCoy, 1946). Even with little documented mobilization by white Colton residents, the structure of racial privilege was adequate to help preserve this particular geographic section of the city.

While local protests and organizing showcased South Colton's determination to fight against injustices, the final route selection, a slightly modified version of the central J Street route (See **Figure E-2**), was driven more by cost-efficiency and economic considerations than public participation. Building the freeway through the area would have come at a relatively high cost, compared to the chosen route along existing rail tracks. Moreover, a route near and accessible to downtown fit with the city's mainstream commercial interests' strategy to improve the area's economic viability (McCoy, 1946 and *Colton Courier*, 1947a, 1947b, 1950a).

In contrast to other study sites, where communities of color suffered directly from the construction of freeways running through their neighborhood, South Colton was ultimately spared from the freeway's path. This is not to downplay the significance of the actions taken by the Latinos/as Colton. Their efforts demonstrate a remarkable political mobilization, consistent with the broader emergence of Latino/a activism in the 1940s. The O Street proposal was ultimately dismissed on financial grounds, but the Latino/a response revealed a remarkable ability to mobilize and fight against racial injustice.

The final route of the freeway may have aggravated racial segregation, but Colton's communities had already been starkly separated by the railroad for decades. Ironically, then, the pre-existing racial segregation defined by the railroad tracks prevented South Colton from being directly impacted by the freeway. Whereas freeways in other areas were used to bisect and demolish neighborhoods of color, Colton's freeway reinforced a color line in concrete and asphalt.

Hewing close to the existing railroad tracks, the freeway's ultimate path displaced only a small number of residents—an estimated 28 individuals. However, a number of significant stores and businesses closed or relocated. Beyond the immediate loss of residential and commercial buildings, the freeway caused broader economic and societal consequences. The decision to choose the J Street alternative was part of a larger decline in Colton's commercial sector. The I-10/San Bernardino Freeway created yet another physical barrier that exacerbated racial divisions within the city. Local planning authorities invested in trying to revive Colton's business district in the north and retrofitting the city for the automobile but did little to remediate or soften the impact of the freeway on South Colton. Ironically, the freeway's placement did not maintain racial segregation, as increasing numbers of Latino/a residents moved into North Colton in the 1960s, nor did it lead to the revitalization of the old downtown area. Instead, South Colton's proximity to the freeway fostered an industrial landscape, with automobile-centric businesses replacing locally serving ones, that continues to pose a series of social, environmental, and cultural challenges to the area and its residents up to today (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950b); *Colton Courier*, 1950a; *San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1950b, 1953a; *Sun-Telegram*, 1953a; Olson, 1989; Sheffield, 2004; Wenzlick and Company, 1963; Colton Redevelopment Agency, 1963, 1965; and Mitchell, 1957).

Fresno

This case study explores the construction of State Route 99 (then signed as U.S. Route 99) through West Fresno in the 1950s and its legacy to the present. The City of Fresno, located in California's Central Valley, today ranks as the fifth-largest in California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

Before the freeway arrived, the West Fresno community was racially and ethnically diverse, though experiencing white flight. The choice of the freeway's route was not random but the result of pre-Second World War and contemporaneous factors that stacked the odds against communities of color.

Three economic forces shaped Fresno's early development: the region's agricultural economic base, railroads that exported produce and moved people, and the downtown business class that emerged to service the region's needs. Their influence was particularly important in the decision-making process of freeway siting.

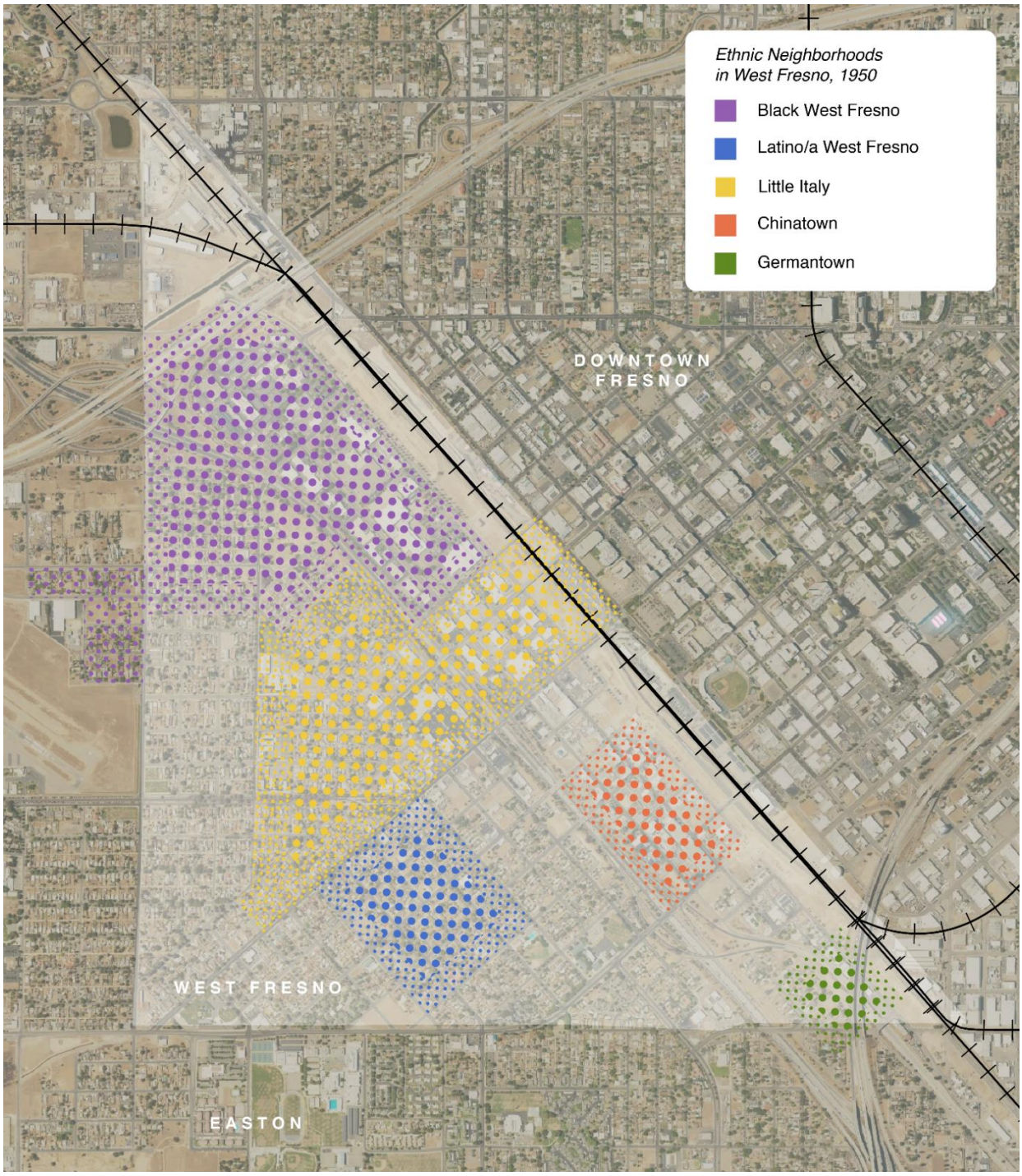
Underlying all of these was the racism that structured the city, which created a socioeconomic hierarchy and racialized spaces for over a century prior to freeway construction. West Fresno was the material product of this stratified system, a highly segregated, marginalized, and redlined place housing people of color and low-status immigrant groups. The presence of these underprivileged groups augmented the risk that West Fresno would bear the burden of freeway development.

While the major division was along color lines, the city and West Fresno also attracted a substantial number of immigrants from various parts of Europe and Asia (See **Figure E-3**). However, there were notable disparities among these fragmented foreign-born groups. Although disadvantaged white immigrants (such as Italian, German, and Russian immigrants), held a similar societal position as West Fresno's Asian, Black, and Latino/a residents in some ways, over time, these European immigrants and their descendants were able to assimilate economically and culturally into the mainstream (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024); Hattersley-Drayton et al., 2015; Gordon, 1961, 1964; Alba and Nee, 2014; Guzmán, 2012; Jimenez, 2017; Vandor, 1919; Thebault, 2018; Architectural Resources Group, 2006b, 2006a; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; Fresno County Historical Society, n.d.-a; DiBuduo and Giovannetti, 2024; and 21st District Agricultural Association, 2024).

In 1926, US-99 was first designated and signed as part of the U.S.' pre-Interstate system of routes, running almost 1,500 miles from the Canadian to the Mexican border. In Fresno, US-99 generally ran along Broadway through Fresno's downtown. City, county, and state planners and elected officials saw a need for the transformation of US-99 from a highway into a limited-access, multi-lane freeway and studied two major alternatives in West Fresno: at first along G Street (through the commercial strip at the edge of West Fresno, closer to the tracks and downtown) and later along D Street (through much of the residential areas of West Fresno) (See **Figure E-4**). While community leaders and even a federal representative proposed bypass routes to the west of the town instead, these never received serious consideration (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020a, 2020b; Challenger Tom, 2017; *Fresno Bee*, 1949m, 1949n; and Polk and Company, 1952).

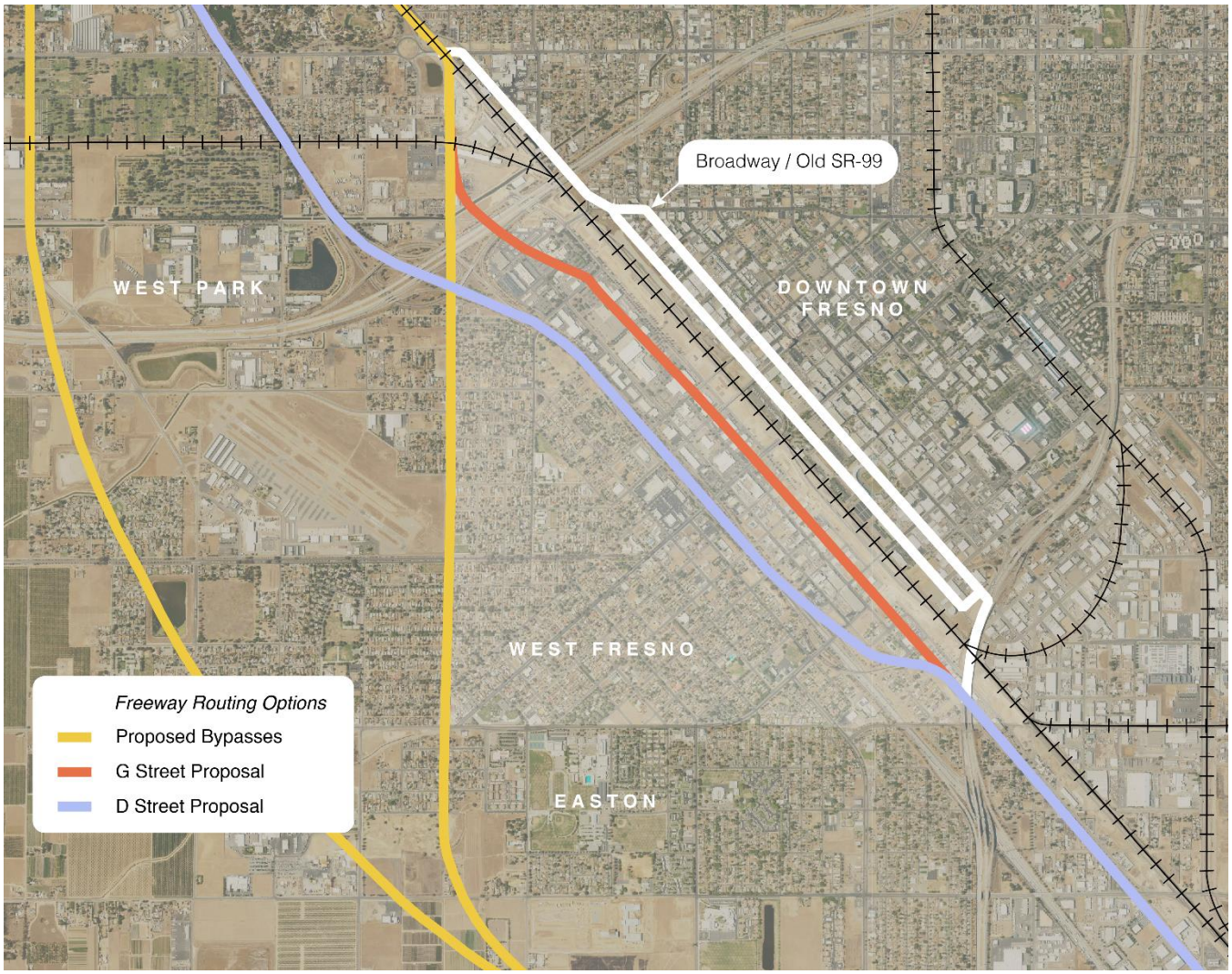
Despite their different land uses, both D and G Streets had a similar racial/ethnic composition, with people of color accounting for approximately three quarters of households. The old route along Broadway, though, located downtown east of the tracks, was home to mostly white residents. The G Street route would have displaced less than half the number of households as the one ultimately chosen, the D Street route (141 versus 304) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)).

Figure E-3. Racial/Ethnic Composition of West Fresno, 1950



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024); Scott, 1948; Architectural Resources Group, 2006b, 2006a; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; and Caltrans, 2024a; base map: Google, 2024b

Figure E-4. Fresno Alternate Freeway Routes



Data sources: Fresno Bee*, 1949n; Challenger Tom, 2017; and Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; base map: Google, 2024b*

While the planning process in the early years had its disputes and disagreements, it exploded into controversy in 1949, when the state announced that the freeway would be relocated from the G Street route to the middle of West Fresno, along D Street (See **Figure E-4**). State engineers gave a few reasons for the change: much cheaper land acquisition costs along D Street; the difficulties of building the freeway so close to the train tracks along G Street; and the potential for business development in West Fresno that they believed the freeway could bring (*Fresno Bee*, 1949l and Shelton, 1949b, 1949c).

West Fresno's businesses, community organizations, and residents did not take the potentially destructive path of the new proposed route passively. The area had already had a history of activism against being unfairly targeted for polluting land uses such as a meat-packing plant (Zuk, 2013). Community members, including Boy Scout troops, religious leaders, and small business owners, vehemently protested against the D Street plan. They expressed their opposition through committee meetings, public hearings, petitions, and letters to the editor.

During the debate, the business sector became divided between those supporting and those opposing the D Street option. The growing criticism did force the state to at least review alternate routings (Zuk, 2013; *Fresno Bee*, 1949b, 1949f, 1949g, 1949j, 1949k; Disgusted Taxpayer, 1949; and Easley, 1949c).

The final route along D Street was selected in 1949 and was completed in 1957. Using the actual, constructed footprint of the freeway, including interchanges and ramps, we estimate that the freeway construction led to the demolition of over four hundred homes and displaced one thousand people. We could find no evidence that the many renters displaced were offered relocation assistance (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951); United Press, 1949; *California Highways and Public Works*, 1957; and Bunker, 1948).

The degradation of the area caused by the freeway has resulted in the bifurcation of West Fresno. It initiated a long-term decline and population decrease of West Fresno, accelerated white flight, and ironically fostered a decline of downtown. For instance, there is very little left of Chinatown, with a historical marker on China Alley today and the core blocks now completely vacant (Architectural Resources Group, 2006a; City of Fresno, 2016; Letson, 2023; and Google, 2024b).

West Fresno residents could not prevent the freeway's construction, despite considerable resistance. Structural conditions, along with privileged economic and political actors working with the state, ensured that no alternatives outside the West Fresno community were considered. Within West Fresno, the chosen route protected its commercial corridor but at the expense of the residential area—a Pyrrhic victory embedded in a larger societal process that reproduced racial disparities. But the resistance in West Fresno was part of a broader movement for racial justice, which originated from earlier protests against environmental injustices and eventually evolved into a fight for civil rights.

Today, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has begun taking steps to address the freeways' negative legacy. A few miles from West Fresno, for example, Caltrans is planting trees and constructing the McKinley Community Garden next to a freeway interchange across from a high school. District staff are also modifying their project creation and evaluation processes, including conducting community walk assessments and having community stakeholders inform project development (Caltrans, 2024b and Monson, 2024).

San Diego: City Heights

This case study explores the prolonged, interrupted construction of State Route 15 through City Heights, an urban neighborhood surrounded by a system of hillsides and canyons, located about five miles east of downtown San Diego (See **Figure E-5**) (City of San Diego, 1998, 2024b).

Unlike the other case studies, City Heights was neither a community of color nor home to a demographic mix of populations when State Route 15 was first planned and when construction commenced. Instead, City Heights was overwhelmingly non-Hispanic white—but subsequently underwent a demographic transformation to become predominantly home to people of color.

This community was also unique because the freeway took nearly a half century to complete, constructed in two distinct stages separated by a protracted hiatus. The southern section was built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, while the northern section was built in the 1990s (See **Figure E-5**). Many residents blamed this disjointed process for an economic decline after the opening of the first section, because the initial segment directed into the neighborhood unwanted and highly disruptive traffic that degraded the quality of life (U.S. Federal Highway

Administration and Caltrans, 1973; AARoads, 2012; Caltrans and U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 1985; Fairley, 1985; McDonnell, 1991; and Caltrans District 11, 2016).

Figure E-5. City Heights and Surroundings Geography and Transportation, 1974

Data sources: City of San Diego, 1998, 2024b; background imagery: UC Santa Barbara Library, 2012

Urban scholars have conceptualized and studied why some places flipped racially, while others remained largely white, during the period of white flight. Neighborhoods reached “tipping points” when the relative number of people of color reached a level that caused an increasing number of white residents to fear that the neighborhood was on the verge of changing racially, thus precipitating an exodus (Card, Mas, and Rothstein, 2008 and Easterly, 2009). This process was self-sustaining, leading to a racial reconfiguration.

Neighborhood flipping was not random; it mostly occurred through a contiguous expansion of places that were home to people of color. This process mostly explains how San Diego accommodated its then-rapidly growing population of color. And yet, the origin of City Heights’ racial transformation does not fit this pattern, because it was not adjacent to the major section of San Diego of residents of color. Instead, traffic and other issues created by the “Spur” (the stub of SR-15 left unfinished for decades) helped lead City Heights to become home to a growing number of people of color seeking affordable housing (Morrill, 1965; Crowder, 2000; and Deskins, 1981).

By the mid- or late-1980s, City Heights became majority-minority, well over a decade sooner than the city and a quarter-century sooner than the county. During the period of rapid change from 1970 to 2000, the study area’s Latino/a population especially but also Black population and other populations of color increased in absolute numbers, while the white population decreased. City Heights’ foreign-born population reached about 45 percent by 2000, 19 percentage points higher than the city’s. The demographic transformation started in the southern tract and progressed northward (calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c; and Ruggles et al., 2024)).

This process coincided with the protracted construction of SR-15. Initially, state and local planners saw SR-15, the Wabash Canyon Freeway, as an integral component of the region’s emerging freeway network. The area’s canyons served as conduits guiding the route (See **Figure E-5**), likely precluding other alternative routings. But growing fiscal constraints facing the state’s freeway program and new process requirements led to a pause in construction. This left the 2.2-mile Spur, completed in 1973, to direct traffic onto surface streets for the rest of the trek through City Heights (See **Figure E-5**). The initial response in southern City Heights was to develop more housing based on the perception that the Spur offered a net benefit, seeding an emerging satellite neighborhood of color. But negative externalities became apparent once the Spur was completed, and heavy traffic came to City Heights. The neighborhood transformed, as cars raced at highway speeds down its residential blocks and as crash rates reached statewide highs. Meanwhile, houses purchased by the state for the eventual completion of SR-15 sat vacant and ill-maintained for decades (calculated by authors from 1950 and 1960 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950a, 1952a, 1960, 1961); *San Diego Union*, 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1952; Wilkens, 1988; Torres Van-Vleck, 2022; Caltrans District 11, 2016; U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans, 1973; Google, 2024a; Caltrans and U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 1985; Fairley, 1985; McDonnell, 1991; Bliesner, 2024; and Cortez, 2024).

While it is likely that negative depictions in the media and interviews of the changes brought by the freeway had material foundation, the scale of reported decay is not consistent with the growth in the area’s housing stock. While the disamenities motivated an exodus of pre-existing residents, they were readily replaced by households seeking affordable housing (calculated by authors from 1980 and 1990 U.S. Censuses (Manson et al., 2022)). City Heights experienced two offsetting dynamics: a decline associated with white flight but also growth to partially meet the city’s housing demand during a period of racial transition—with the latter outweighing the former in population and housing data. The reported and perceived decline experienced by City Heights is linked with the fact that City Heights became home to those with limited resources. It was, at the same time, a growing community, and it became one of the most diverse places in San Diego.

The City Heights case study spans two disparate freeway-development regimes. The first stage occurred when freeway planning, designing, and siting was technocratic, with planners and engineers seeking to maximize traffic flow and speed and minimize cost per mile and with community input from people of color largely ignored or absent. But increasing opposition to freeway development led governments at all levels to adopt new policies and procedures that provided for more meaningful opportunities for disadvantaged communities to engage in planning, relocation assistance, analyses of environmental impacts, and mitigation strategies (Oglesby, Bishop, and Willeke, 1970; Goodwin, 1974; Brown, Morris, and Taylor, 2009a, 2009b; DiMento and Ellis, 2012; Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a; Ong et al., 2023; DeSoto et al., 1976; and Goldstein, 1970). In City Heights, this took the form of negotiating over placing freeway "caps"—elevated parks or platforms—over below-grade sections.

The idea of a freeway cap park over part of the northern section of SR-15 emerged as officials scrambled to identify mitigation strategies that could lessen dissent and appease growing opposition to freeway construction. The push for a cap came primarily from community activists, who carried out extensive design, policy advocacy, and fiscal analysis. The cover was only a part of the transportation improvements proposed by this Visions Project: sound walls, a bike path and bus lanes, and new and improved transit hubs. We compared two potential cap sites considered at the time, and found that, while a cap at Park de la Cruz (ultimately not constructed) would have proportionally served more people of color, the constructed Teralta Park served a larger overall population (calculated by authors from 1980 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022); Bliesner, 2013, 2024; Torres Van-Vleck, 2022; City Heights CDC, 1991b; McDonnell, 1991; and HNTB, 1988).

The final freeway was completed in 2000, over half a century after planning had begun. While the City did not adopt the community-developed Visions Project and its plan to cover over eight blocks of the freeway, the scaled-down Teralta Park did become the first freeway cap park in California. The freeway also includes median bus lanes and bus rapid transit stations (AARoads, 2012; Torres Van-Vleck, 2022; Barrow et al., 2019; Caltrans District 11, 2016; Associated Press, 1992; Bliesner, 2013; Rollinger, 1992; and Burks, 2013). All told, by the time of designing the last segment of SR-15 in City Heights, it was no longer possible to just ignore the unequal distribution of costs and benefits.

Today, work continues to redress some of the harms done to communities in San Diego that were split or became isolated because of the freeways. For example, south of City Heights in southeast San Diego and National City, Caltrans and its government and community partners won a Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards grant to develop visioning plans, programming, and infrastructure near SR-15 and I-805. Caltrans also hosted sustainability events and closed SR-15 for a fair, art, and another open streets event in March 2024 (Bowen, 2024; City of San Diego, 2024c; Garrick, 2024; Deaderick, 2024; M. Garcia, 2024; City News Service, 2024; Monson, 2024; Alvarenga, 2023a, 2023b; and Caltrans, 2024b, 2024e).

Conclusion

The diversity in case studies covered in this report and our research team's prior work (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023) enables us to understand the common ways that communities of color were structurally disadvantaged through the multiple stages of freeway development. Despite the commonality in societal structures, outcomes differed, influenced by local conditions. Some neighborhoods were nearly erased (e.g., the Asian enclaves in Stockton (Ong et al., 2023)), and others escaped a freeway running through their backyards (e.g., the Latino/a community in South Colton). Following freeway construction, some populations of color shrank (e.g., Black residents of Pacoima (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a)), and others grew (e.g., people of color in City Heights) in the affected neighborhoods. In most cases, the freeways fragmented the community,

creating internal barriers that divided once-more-coherent neighborhoods or nearly fully erased or displaced them. In one case, in Colton, the freeway reinforced pre-existing racial boundaries. There was also considerable variation in how much residents organized to fight against freeway plans, although the differences may be due to the relative availability and accessibility of information rather than objective differences in action (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023). Nonetheless, there is much evidence that the freeways were not welcomed by communities of color. Many observed commonalities stem from the larger societal structures and dynamics that were present at all sites.

Racialized outcomes were the product of fundamental factors and forces. Marginalization of people of color predated freeway development, which placed them in a precarious position. Low-economic status and lower land values made their homes much more vulnerable because of narrow cost-effectiveness criteria in siting roadways. Weak political power limited their influence in decision-making. Because neighborhoods of color were considered blighted, their destruction was perceived as desirable for the greater good (e.g., Ong et al., 2023). Pre-existing conditions placed people of color at high risk of suffering a disproportionately high share of negative impacts when massive infrastructures were planned and built. In other words, pre-freeway history matters to understanding freeway history.

What is intriguing is that these structured disparities were not absolutely deterministic—that is, being marginalized did not automatically mean that a community of color would be victimized. Instead, racism during the freeway-building era operated by greatly increasing the probability of a non-white community being negatively impacted by the freeways.

We also find that spatial patterns both reflect and support racial stratification. Freeways enhanced regional mobility, often reinforcing the multicentricity of many U.S. metropolitan areas. The development of new roadways built for speed and growing automobile ownership also made extensive suburbanization possible. Freeways enabled many to purchase affordable homes designed to fulfill the American dream of a spacious single-family home on a parcel large enough for a front and back yard. This pursuit led to a massive population growth outside the urban core. But this spatial reconfiguration was not advantageous for all, and many communities hurt were disproportionately nonwhite. Early freeway building occurred simultaneously with a rising racial tension, as people of color and their allies fought for civil rights. But full integration proved evasive, with segregation declining only modestly. As our case studies find, freeways contributed to the re-intensification of racial segregation, facilitating white flight, while continued discrimination trapped people of color in the urban core—a phenomenon repeated throughout the country (Ong and González, 2019; Giuliano and Hanson, 2017; Weber, 2012; W. Clark, 2008; Beauregard, 2006; Hayden, 2009; Archer, 2005; Morris, 1984; Sørensen, Taeuber, and Hollingsworth, 1975; and Kuswa, 2002). For this reason, freeways were complicit in minimizing civil-rights gains.

Freeways not only harmed those at the time when they were built but also left a legacy of harm stretching from their opening to today. **Table E-3** compares key indicators that measure this in the three study areas with their respective cities.

The attenuation of these problems by transportation agencies became an accepted practice starting in the 1970s, albeit a practice that was largely forced on the profession from the outside. Mitigation, however, was often partial and did little to redress past impacts. More recently, we have seen a movement to remedy the past, including efforts at restorative justice. There are nascent initiatives by the federal government and California to allocate new transportation investments so that a meaningful portion of the benefits flows to disadvantaged communities, particularly those affected by freeway building in previous decades. Both the federal government and California have initiatives that fall under the rubric of “reconnecting communities,” which aims to remedy past and ongoing

Table E-3. Case Study Area's Environmental and Access Statistics in Comparison

Case Study	Area	CalEnviroScreen Composite Score (Socioeconomic and Environmental Burden)	Share with Poor Opportunity Access	Diesel Particulate Matter Score	Households with No Vehicles
Colton	South Colton	67	100%	77	12%
	City of Colton	45	85%	37	4%
Fresno	West Fresno	78	100%	96	22%
	City of Fresno	43	44%	25	11%
San Diego	City Heights	41	100%	53	14%
	City of San Diego	21	18%	27	7%

Data sources: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023; CTCAC, 2024; UCLA CNK, 2022; and U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a

injustice through new infrastructure (Brown, Morris, and Taylor, 2009a, 2009b; Goldstein, 1970; White House, 2023; Rebuilding California, 2024; Monserrat, 2024; USDOT, n.d.; Caltrans, 2024c, 2024f; and California State Assembly Select Committee on Reconnecting Communities, 2024).

When applied to freeway development, a restorative-justice approach requires transportation agencies to acknowledge and remedy their historical role in harming communities of color. Remedies can take many forms, ranging from improving access between parts of neighborhoods fragmented by a freeway to removing a freeway to enable developments that benefit those who had been previously impacted. Restorative justice also opens a door to implement meaningful stakeholder engagement, which would rectify prior biased participatory practices.

The success of any restorative-justice initiative within transportation agencies relies on both avoiding repeating past mistakes and addressing negative legacies. To address such issues, Caltrans has developed the Transportation Equity Index, a spatial screening tool to identify areas burdened by or benefiting from the existing transportation network. This tool, informed by prior work conducted by this research team, will aid Caltrans in integrating equity into planning, modeling, and evaluation processes. The extent to which restorative justice principles and equity tools are embedded in decision-making will determine how effectively the state mitigates past harms and addresses current needs. Moving forward likewise requires anticipating macro-level changes that will likely restructure travel patterns, the transportation system, and the urban landscape (Caltrans, 2024d; Raval and Elbadawy, 2024; Bender, 2024; Ong et al., 2021; and Ong, 2024).

To adapt Faulkner (1953, p. 85), freeway construction past is never dead—it's not even past. Current freeways continue to have profound health, employment, educational, and social consequences, years after their initial

construction, and new freeways are being built across the state today. Uncovering the history of freeways is vital to addressing one of the state's most significant spatial inequities.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1. Study Purpose

This study examines the consequences of freeway construction on neighborhoods of color across California. The work focuses on three in-depth case studies of select communities of color that have been impacted by freeway construction. We explore socioeconomic changes; route selection; community reactions and resistance; disruptions to residents, businesses, and other assets; and other effects.

To adapt Faulkner (1953, p. 85), freeway construction past is never dead—it's not even past. Our primarily historical findings do uplift understudied and illustrative stories from decades ago, but they also remain relevant today. Current freeways continue to have profound health, employment, educational, and social consequences, years after their initial construction, and new freeways are being built across the state today. Uncovering the history of freeways is vital to addressing one of the state's most significant spatial inequities.

This report is the third in a series produced by the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies and UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge (the first also with the UC Davis Institute of Transportation Studies). In *The Implications of Freeway Siting in California: Four Case Studies on the Effects of Freeways on Neighborhoods of Color*, our UCLA team examined freeways routed through Black and Latino/a areas of Pasadena and Pacoima in Greater Los Angeles (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a). In *Stockton's Crosstown Freeway, Urban Renewal, and Asian Americans: Systemic Causes and Impacts*, we turned north to Stockton, where a freeway project uprooted Asian enclaves (Ong et al., 2023). In the present report, we add three additional case studies—South Colton, West Fresno, and City Heights in San Diego—which not only complement the prior findings but also add new nuances, discussed below.

This introductory part contextualizes the study within an era of changing race relations and reports the major findings for each of the three sites.

1.2. Context

A Shift in Race Relations

Superimpositions of freeways on disadvantaged communities were not isolated occurrences but rather part of a larger system of racism. Indeed, the development of California's freeways occurred during a pivotal time period for race relations, when America was moving away from many pre-Second-World-War racist practices. Despite these changes, however, racial disparities persisted and in some cases deepened.

Prior to the Second World War, racism was openly practiced, and society's racial structure was both rigid and visible. The government at all levels sanctioned and sometimes actively enforced private racist practices (Delaney, 1998). This *de jure* discrimination took many forms, with Jim Crow laws in the South being the most infamous example (Woodward, 2001 and Rabinowitz, 1988), but this injustice was not limited to the South. For example, redlining maps, in which the federal government graded neighborhoods in highly racialized terms, covered almost every major city in the country (Nelson et al., 2023). Neighborhoods of color, as well as low-income areas, were thereby designated as hazardous for mortgages, making it very difficult for their residents to

become homeowners. The State of California was no exception, as it allowed racially restrictive covenants in deeds, which constricted the right to own and buy property for certain racial groups, and created separate and unequal public schools (Zeimer, 2020). What made California unique was its particularly prevalent, xenophobic racism against Asians, which led to the enactment of selective labor laws, prohibitions from owning property, and land-use regulations that specifically targeted Asians (Peng, 2022; McGovney, 1994; and Ong, 1981a). California was also instrumental in pressuring the nation to enact a series of racially-motivated immigration restrictions (Kurashige, 2016).

The postwar period witnessed a vigorous challenge to racism by people of color and their allies in multiple arenas—the courts, legislative bodies, and administrative agencies (Morris, 1984). Equally crucial were the grassroot actions, from nonviolent mass protests to violent race riots, both organized and spontaneous expressions of collective anger against the daily oppressive conditions experienced (Nimtz, 2016; National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968; and Ogbar, 2006). This historic struggle eventually led to court rulings against school segregation, housing and employment discrimination, and anti-miscegenation laws (Tushnet, 1994 and J. Williams, 2013). The culmination of these efforts came in the 1960s, with the civil rights laws that put an end to explicit racial discrimination in areas such as employment, housing, education, voting, and immigration (Ong, 1999). California was very much a part of the struggle against racism but also had a unique role because of its greater racial diversity (Brilliant, 2010).

Despite the gains for people of color, racism persisted but in different forms. Discrimination moved from *de jure* (legally enforced) to *de facto* (arising from everyday practices), resulting in measurable racially disparate impacts. While white Americans were less inclined to openly express racist values and motivations, they still acted on their underlying prejudices and biases. Covert biased actions replaced overt ones (R. Williams, 1965 and Bonilla-Silva, 1999). Unconscious implicit prejudices continue to generate racially biased outcomes, despite a waning of conscious explicit prejudices, as do facially neutral policies that nonetheless build upon or fail to remedy past discrimination (Kang and Lane, 2010). These new forms of racism were not limited to individual interactions. They became deeply entrenched within societal systems and institutions, giving rise to what is known as structural or systemic racism.

Structural or systemic racism is a societal phenomenon characterized by widespread and durable racial inequality and stratification (Tilly, 1998 and Massey, 2007). This type of racism is influenced by historical and current factors and implicit and explicit discrimination and prejudices. It is manifested through individual and institutional behaviors and through private and public actions. These factors are often referred to as “color-blind” because they do not explicitly target people of color. This form of racism permeates multiple arenas and interacts with and reinforces itself in complex ways, resulting in the reproduction of older forms of inequality and the emergence of new ones. In these societal processes, people of color face three distinct disadvantages. Firstly, they are handicapped by pre-existing limitations due to past discrimination. For instance, school segregation and inequality during a prior era left children with lower educational attainment and subsequently disadvantaged them with less human capital when they entered the labor market. Secondly, people of color have limited influence on decision-making, especially when they are a numerical minority. As a result, they often lack the ability to elect politicians who represent their interests in most jurisdictions, leading to their concerns being overlooked in favor of those of the majority white voters. Lastly, people of color are less likely to benefit from positive outcomes and struggle to adapt to negative ones. A contemporary example of this is observed in how significant public transit investments in a neighborhood can also contribute to gentrification (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019).

In the era of race relations after the Second World War, discrimination became less categorical and more probabilistic, as indirect mechanisms were employed and often met with resistance.

Racism and Freeway Development

Structural racism and freeway development intersected in three crucial ways.

The first factor was a historical legacy that made neighborhoods of color more vulnerable to being selected for a freeway route. Housing discrimination segregated non-white residents into the least desirable locations, leading to concentrated low-income areas. In 1950, workers of color earned about a third less than non-Hispanic white workers (Manson et al., 2022).[1] This disparity was partially due to lower educational attainment, the result of California's segregated schools, and the importation of menial labor, particularly in agriculture (Wollenberg, 1978; Jahng, 2022; García, Yosso, and Barajas, 2012; and McWilliams and Sackman, 2000). For instance, only one tenth of Californians of color had some college education in 1950, compared to one fifth of non-Hispanic white Californians, and this difference in human capital contributed to lower earnings (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952c, 1954).[2] Even after taking into account factors such as schooling, nativity, age, and gender, workers of color still earned about a fifth less, due, in part, to employment discrimination (Manson et al., 2022).[3] The resulting low household income meant that a disproportionate number of people of color were renters, with 63 percent of households of color not owning a home, compared to 44 percent of non-Hispanic white households (U.S. Census Bureau, 1953a, 1954). These limited financial resources led to living in substandard units with lower rents. Additionally, redlining harmed those who purchased homes, forcing many to finance them with high-interest mortgages and resulting in lower home values (Housing and Home Finance Agency, 1952). As a consequence, neighborhoods of color developed with low property values, making the areas economically attractive places for freeway development (Hill, 1967 and Brown, Morris, and Taylor, 2009b).[4] These perceptions were further reinforced by the notion among decision-makers that neighborhoods of color were slums that needed to be bulldozed for urban redevelopment, a belief shared by those who planned the freeway system (Hyra, 2012; W. Collins and Shester, 2013; and M. Miller, 2018).

The second factor was unequal political power in the decision-making process. Freeway planning required government transportation agencies to consult with local jurisdictions and the public (Fielding, 1972; Bishop, Oglesby, and Willeke, 1970; and Lash, 1965). Elected officials played a crucial role because a project could not proceed without cooperation from cities and counties. Elected by and accountable to their constituents, politicians aimed to safeguard their neighborhoods from the negative impacts of freeway developments, while maximizing their benefits. These elected officials also catered to powerful businesses and business groups, which sought to use public infrastructure projects to advance their narrow economic interests. While there were conflicts among different business interests, such as those in the central business district versus those in the suburbs, the siting of freeways was seen as instrumental in supporting economic activities (Baerwald, 1978; Lash, 1965; and Payne-Maxie Consultants and Blayney-Dyett, Urban and Regional Planners, 1980). During the era of freeway development, this political process placed people of color at a distinct disadvantage because they were often a numerical minority (overall or on the voter rolls) and could not elect representatives of their choice.[5]

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1. Annual earnings estimated using a 1% sample of the 1950 decennial U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022)

2. The earnings gap was experienced by Black (35%), Asian (31%) and Hispanic (32%) Americans (Manson et al., 2022).

3. Augmented human-capital models are used to estimate earnings disparities. The results indicate that the gap was largest for Black Americans (24%) and smallest for Hispanics (13%), with Asians in between (21%) (Manson et al., 2022).

4. Keeping the cost of acquiring properties low was one of the primary factors in selecting freeway routes (Hill, 1967 and Brown, Morris, and Taylor, 2009a, 2009b).

5. The rise of elected officials of color occurred in the following decades (Perry, 1975; Takash, 1993; and Lai et al., 2001).

Consequently, local politicians were usually more responsive to their white constituents and the more dominant white businesses.

People of color especially faced disadvantages when it came to citizen participation in the freeway planning and decision-making processes. To varying degrees over the decades, California provided opportunities for public engagement for freeway planners to gather opinions on alternative routes (Fielding, 1972). In theory, these efforts at public engagement could provide a critical avenue for citizens to participate in democratizing governance and influence decisions (Glass, 1979). Unfortunately, not all communities and racial groups were equally able to participate due to systematic disparities (Arnstein, 1969). People of color were less aware and familiar with the participatory process, had less technical expertise, and lacked the resources and time to engage. Meetings and opportunities to comment were rarely advertised to these communities via their media sources and organizations (e.g., Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a; Ong et al., 2023).[6] Even when people of color did engage, they were often not taken seriously.[7] Overall, the disparities in public participation favored more powerful social groups and privileged white neighborhoods over ones of color.

The third factor contributing to disparities was the differential ability between white Americans and Americans of color to choose their places of residence and avoid displacement. After the Second World War, a restructuring and decentralization of the urban landscape created new suburban residential areas, relocated economic opportunities, and reconfigured neighborhoods. But suburbanization was primarily an option for white households. Rapid suburbanization was facilitated by freeways funded by public investment, which, as we will see, disproportionately harmed non-white households in their construction.

Between 1950 and 1970, California's population nearly doubled, from 10.6 million to 20.0 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b), with much of the growth concentrated in previously sparsely settled areas (Ong, Yoon, and Pech, 2023).[8] For example, the population of the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles, heralded as a prototypical suburban development, more than tripled during this time (Cox Consultancy, n.d. and Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a). Economic growth during this period enabled many to purchase new homes, with real per-capita income increasing by over half after adjusting for inflation (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Federal Reserve Bank of Saint Louis, 2024 and Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2024). The outward migration from urban centers allowed many to achieve the American dream of owning a single-family home with a backyard, away from the dense and decaying urban core. To support this sprawl, the State of California developed an extensive network of modern freeways using federal, state, and local funds (Taylor, Morris, and Brown, 2023). Concurrently, car registration in California increased by 150 percent, with the number of vehicle miles traveled growing at an even faster rate (U.S. Federal Highway Administration, n.d. and U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, 2018). This was made possible by both rising income and declining costs of private automobile travel. This automobile-centric restructuring provided residents with greater mobility, at the cost of no longer locating regular destinations close together, especially for those without vehicle access.

Not everyone benefited from freeway development. Suburbanization was caused not only by the economic factors discussed above but also by social factors (Mieszkowski and Mills, 1993). One of the latter was tied to a desire to maintain exclusionary racial spaces and places. White residents (including those displaced by freeways) were more likely to move to the burgeoning suburbs (Logan et al., 2023). This selective intra-regional movement

6. The problems with engagement of people of color are not limited to freeway development (Moynihan, 1969).

7. For a cynical view of this, see Wolfe (2010).

8. For discussion on differential growth within the region, see Ong, Yoon, and Pech (2023).

contributed to “white flight” and the reproduction of racial segregation within the spatially transformed region. People of color (including those displaced by freeways) were left trapped in the central city due to informal and institutional housing discrimination that bypassed banned practices. The dispersal of job opportunities to the suburbs created a new barrier as well, a phenomenon called “spatial mismatch” (Kain, 1992 and Gobillon, Selod, and Zenou, 2007). Additionally, lack of access to private transportation to overcome that mismatch further hindered communities of color. Urban residents of color faced challenges in purchasing and owning vehicles due to low incomes and discrimination in both the automobile and car insurance markets (Taylor and Ong, 1995 and Ong and Miller, 2005). In 1960, 26 percent of households of color did not have a car, compared to 17 percent of non-Hispanic white households (Manson et al., 2022).[9] This disparity in transportation resources persisted even after accounting for differences in family income. Underdeveloped public transportation was a poor substitute, because of longer travel time, lower reliability, and small geographic coverage (Sanchez, 2008). Consequently, limited job accessibility and transportation options led to higher rates of under-employment and unemployment among non-white households.

The effects of freeway development were not limited to individual residents but resulted in the destruction of entire communities. Freeways weakened social institutions, damaged the local economy, disrupted the social fiber, and physically fragmented neighborhoods. These changes lowered the quality of life in already marginalized places. In other words, the impacts cannot be measured in just monetary terms.

The construction of freeways was a contributing mechanism to the perpetuation of racial inequality, as evident in numerous examples in the existing literature (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a). Neighborhoods of color were often specifically targeted and suffered harmful consequences. Nevertheless, it is important to note that racial outcomes in the postwar era were not uniform, and experiences varied among different neighborhoods of color. In one of our case study sites, South Colton, a freeway was ultimately not built through its community of color. Another site, City Heights in San Diego, initially a predominantly non-Hispanic white neighborhood, underwent a demographic transformation driven by white flight during a decades-long pause in freeway construction. The third site, West Fresno, did face consequences from freeway development but was also unique in its diversity of residents pre-freeway, including all major racial and ethnic groups, including non-Hispanic white immigrant communities. Freeway development contributed to transforming West Fresno into an overwhelming community of color. All three case studies, both individually and together, provide additional and more nuanced insights into the intersection of racism and freeway development.

1.3. Case Studies of Freeway Development

Overview and Comparisons to Prior Studies

The three case studies in this report provide insights on how freeways affected communities of color. **Table 1-1** compares them to our prior case studies in Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a) and Ong et al. (2023), with a description of the locations and populations of the sites. This report adds two sites located outside the state’s two largest metropolitan areas (Greater Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area), and a third site (Colton) that is a smaller jurisdiction in the exurbs of Los Angeles (in the Inland Empire region east of Los Angeles) (Pfeiffer, 2012; J. Clark and Araiza, 2021; and Kotkin, Cox, and Schill, 2016).

9. Automobile ownership rates estimated using a 1% sample of the 1960 decennial U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022)

Table 1-1. UCLA Freeway History Case Study Sites: Locations and Characteristics

City	Neighborhood	City Size	Built Environment	Region of California	Primary Population(s) of Color on the Eve of Freeway Construction	Report
Pasadena	Northwest Pasadena	medium	satellite city	Greater Los Angeles	Black	Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a)
Los Angeles	Pacoima	large	suburban	Greater Los Angeles	Black, Latino/a	
Stockton	downtown Stockton	medium	urban core	Central Valley	Asian	Ong et al. (2023)
Fresno	West Fresno	medium	urban core	Central Valley	highly diverse; mixture of racial/ethnic groups	herein
San Diego	City Heights	large	urban	Greater San Diego	initially non-Hispanic white; subsequently diverse	
Colton	South Colton	small	outer suburban/ exurban	Inland Empire	Latino/a	

Additional data sources: Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023

Another key additional difference between the prior and current examined cases is the demographic populations covered. The previous three case studies focused on a Black neighborhood in Northwest Pasadena, adjacent Black and Latino/a areas in Pacoima, and overlapping Asian enclaves in Stockton. The current study includes different racial/ethnic groups. Prior to freeway construction, West Fresno had a highly racially diverse population that included low-income white immigrant households; South Colton was a relatively homogenous Latino/a area. City Heights in San Diego originally had an overwhelming non-Hispanic white population but has since transformed into a racially diverse community, in part due to the freeway.

Figure 1-1 maps the six study sites across California and the freeways near which they are located. This map highlights the diversity of regions represented by these sites, spanning various parts of the state connected by major freeways. Two cities, Stockton and Fresno, are situated in the Central Valley region, adjacent to State Route 4 and State Route 99, respectively. Moving southward, Pacoima is a neighborhood in the City of Los Angeles bisected by State Route 118, and Pasadena is an independent city through which runs Interstate 210 in Southern California. Colton in San Bernardino County is split by Interstate 10. Finally, State Route 15 runs through City Heights in San Diego in the southernmost part of the state; it becomes Interstate 15 north of the neighborhood.

Figure 1-1. UCLA Freeway History Case Study Sites

Data sources: Caltrans, 2023b and Hudson, 2022

Table 1-2 further outlines the freeways studied, the decades of their development, whether alternative freeway routes were seriously considered and documented, and the specific impacts observed.

Table 1-2. UCLA Freeway History Case Study Sites: Development and Impacts

City	Neighborhood	Freeway	Decades of Development	Alternative Routes	Impact	Report
Pasadena	Northwest Pasadena	I-210	1960s-1970s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color	Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a)
Los Angeles	Pacoima	SR-118	1960s-1970s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color	
Stockton	downtown Stockton	SR-4	1960s-1970s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color	Ong et al. (2023)
Fresno	West Fresno	SR-99	1950s-1960s	multiple routes considered; path through community of color chosen	clearance and displacement through neighborhood of color, “white flight”	herein
San Diego	City Heights	SR-15	1950s-2000s	no	clearance and displacement, followed by “white flight”	
Colton	South Colton	I-10	1940s-1950s	multiple routes considered, but path through community of color not chosen	reinforcement of barrier isolating neighborhood of color	

Additional data sources: Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023

Synthesis of Case Study Findings

People of color in both West Fresno and South Colton fought against the placement of a freeway through their neighborhoods, but West Fresno was unsuccessful, while South Colton was successful. The key difference, as discussed in detail later, was that other powerful actors took different positions. Fresno’s downtown commercial interests supported routing the freeway through its disadvantaged community west of the railroad tracks, to enable residents to commute to the central business district. Colton downtown interests also believed that the freeway was vital, but past segregation practices made it fiscally infeasible for the state to select a path through predominantly Latino/a South Colton. More specifically—and ironically—a part of this cost-prohibitive physical

barrier was the product of historical isolation of people of color, as manifested by a lack of adequate crossing of the railroad tracks. As a result, Colton and the state had to choose a route north of the tracks.

The West Fresno case study, along with the previous studies of Pacoima and Stockton (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023), vividly exemplifies the restructuring of the urban and regional landscape that occurred in the decades following the Second World War. This transformation was primarily driven by the expansion of freeways and the spread of urban sprawl. Fresno, similar to Stockton, provides a clear example of how this transformation affected the central city, while Pacoima and Pasadena demonstrate how it manifested in a developing suburb or satellite-city-turned-suburb, respectively.

On the other hand, Colton is a small town located on the outskirts of a major urban and suburban region. Exurban development occurred later, when the town evolved into an extension of Los Angeles' economic sphere. Colton began to offer affordable housing options for many workers who commuted to regional job centers, enabled by the access freeways provided. Colton is a city that grew around transport links—first railroads and then freeways—and as a "hub city," it especially received both the benefits and costs of such infrastructure.

The City Heights case study complements our previous studies on the racial impacts of freeway development. While West Fresno experienced white flight, City Heights experienced this phenomenon to an extreme degree. Freeway development accelerated this process, revealing another aspect of the racial effects of the infrastructure project.

The City Heights case study offers insights into the interaction between freeway construction, socioeconomic decline, and racial transformation at the neighborhood level. City Heights is an older, non-core, and working-class neighborhood in San Diego. Racial transition is a common urban phenomenon, where neighborhoods that were once predominantly non-Hispanic white become predominantly populated by people of color, accompanied by a significant decline in socioeconomic status and housing market. The demographic transition of City Heights was driven by larger structural changes and spatial reconfiguration of the region, including the development of the freeway system as a major contributing factor. Prior to the construction of the freeway, the area was predominantly white, even more so than the rest of the city. The prolonged development of State Route 15, spanning half a century, played a major role in transforming the area into a predominantly people-of-color and low-income neighborhood. This process highlights the significant impact of freeway development on the racial composition of cities.

City Heights exemplifies how cities accommodate an influx of people of color. It was not possible for existing disadvantaged places to house this postwar growth; consequently, the process required transforming some neighborhoods to house non-white low-income people. The placement and then languishing of the unfinished SR-15 "Spur" in the southern part of City Heights during the 1950s initiated a demographic transformation. Work on the freeway was halted for about two decades, in large part due to a lack of funding and a related lack of an Interstate designation for the route. The protracted break in freeway construction, with traffic running along the unfinished section on city streets, led to the decline of other parts of City Heights. By the time work resumed, City Heights had a "majority-minority" population. The completion of the last segment reveals the changing politics and processes of freeway development, manifested in efforts to extract community benefits to ameliorate some of the freeway's impacts.

1.4. Methodology and Data

We adopt a mixed-methods approach, employing similar research methods and analytical tools as in our prior work in Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a) and Ong et al. (2023), We first empirically test if there were racial disparities in selecting freeway routing, helping to reveal systemic racism in freeway planning. We then quantify housing units directly displaced from freeway construction and identify the racial/ethnic characteristics of their households, relying on our own analysis rather than often inconsistent historical records from media reports or transportation agencies at the time. While much attention has been given to those directly displaced, freeways generate spillover effects that have long-term economic, health, and quality-of-life impacts. We complement this quantitative analysis with stories from former residents and archival resources on planning and routing decisions, displacement, destruction, and resistance.

For this study, we digitized socioeconomic and spatial data from historical documents and conducted geospatial analysis on them (See Appendix A). We also reviewed a wide range of sources, including newspaper articles, planning documents and studies, correspondence, and maps, from a number of physical and online archives. When possible, we interviewed civic leaders and community members who witnessed freeway construction firsthand; however, this proved limited in some cases, as much of the freeway development in these new case studies started over a half-century ago (See Appendix C).

For the three new case studies, we were able to access and utilize more data sources than for the previous three. Specifically, we made greater use of historical U.S. Census records from 1940 and 1950 at the individual level, public-use micro-samples from the 1950 and 1960 U.S. Censuses, right-of-way records and maps, and address and telephone directories. Extracting and digitizing this information, developing new data and analytical tools, and analyzing the data required a significant amount of time and resources but revealed valuable findings (Details can be found in Appendix A.).

This report also quantifies the legacy of freeway development by reporting key transportation, demographic, socioeconomic and environmental indicators (See **Table 5-1**). We consulted numerous data sources to gain an understanding of current conditions: pollution from traffic using CalEnviroScreen 4.0 (California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023); racial/ethnic segregation and poverty status using the American Community Survey (ACS) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a); neighborhood economic characteristics using the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019); transportation resources using the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge (CNK)/California Air Resources Board (CARB) Transportation Disparities dataset (UCLA CNK, 2022); and access to opportunities using the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (CTCAC) and state Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department Opportunity Area Maps (CTCAC, 2024). Given the sizable amount of data, we report on the most salient (Details can be found in Appendix B.).

1.5. Organization of the Report

The rest of this report details the history and context behind freeway building in the case studies. Part 2 covers West Fresno, Part 3 covers Colton, and Part 4 covers City Heights in San Diego. Within each part, the first two sections provide an introduction and a historical, geographic, and economic overview of the city or region containing the case study area. The next section or sections discuss race relations in the city or region, including information on racial diversity, information about the minority community or communities, and segregation. Thereafter, sections cover the development and planning timeline, with an analysis of the alternative freeway

routes under consideration, examine the decision-making process, with particular attention to racial dynamics, and quantify the impacts of the selected freeway path by examining whether its choice produced racial disparities. Part 5 examines the legacy of freeway development in these communities of color and includes concluding remarks on lessons learned and a normative discussion of the need for restorative justice. The report also includes appendices that describe the qualitative and quantitative data and methods. The report does not include an explicit literature review; for that, refer to Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a).

As in Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a) and Ong et al. (2023), we use “I-” to abbreviate Interstates, “US-” to abbreviate U.S. Routes, and “SR-” to abbreviate California State Routes. U.S. Routes (the pre-Interstate system of federal highways) and State Routes were usually first designed for lower capacities than postwar Interstates, but many ended up redesigned or rerouted to higher-capacity highway standards during the Interstate construction era. Many freeways in California also bear honorific or geographic names (such as the “San Bernardino Freeway”). Lastly, we use the terms “freeway” and “highway” interchangeably herein.

2. Colton

2.1. Introduction

Colton is a small city of 16 square miles and approximately 54,000 residents, located on the eastern outskirts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area in the Inland Empire region (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). It was established in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a major railroad hub, with strong ties to agriculture. In addition to one of the nation's busiest railway crossings, Colton is also traversed by two Interstate highways. After the Second World War, Colton underwent significant transformation to accommodate the San Bernardino and Riverside Freeways, now known as Interstate 10 and Interstate 215, respectively. The former is the primary focus of this part of the report. **Figure 2-1** provides an overview of the geography of Colton in the era of freeway construction, overlaid with current freeway routes.

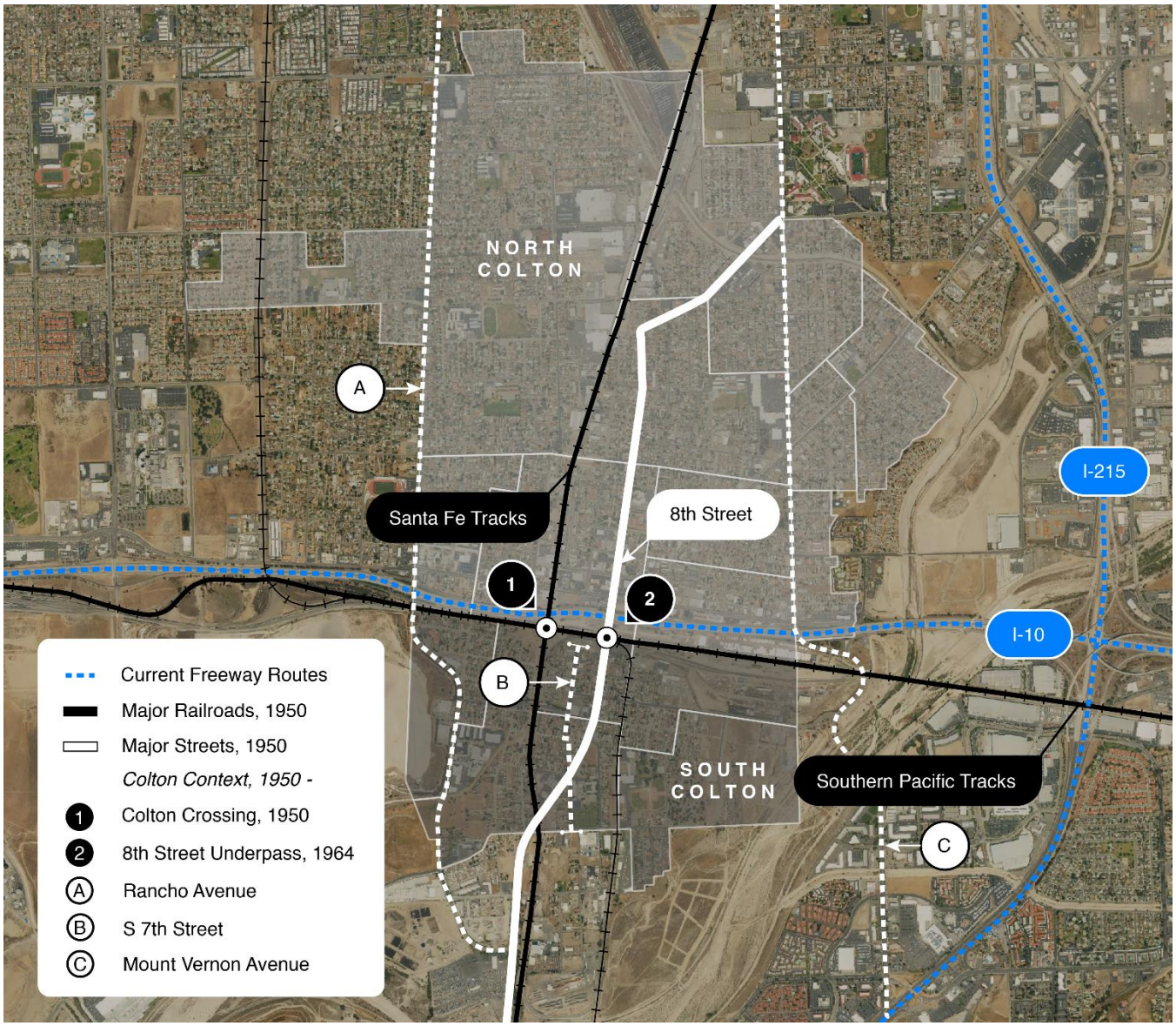
Since its inception, Colton has been marked by racial division and segregation. As we demonstrate in this case study, the city has been polarized residentially, physically, and socioeconomically between non-Hispanic white and Latino/a residents. Despite being segregated to the south side of the railroad tracks, Latino/as in South Colton challenged racial discrimination and segregation during the decades following the war. In subsequent decades and to the present day, they strengthened their political agency, winning seats on the City Council; advocated for integration in schools and public institutions; and successfully acquired property north of the tracks and began moving to North Colton. Their efforts made Colton a significant battleground for civil rights.

The intersection of freeway development and race in Colton proved complex. In contrast to other study sites, where communities of color suffered directly from the construction of freeways running through their neighborhood, South Colton was ultimately spared from the freeway's path. Like in other case study sites, activists in Latino/a South Colton voiced their political opposition to the routing of the San Bernardino Freeway through their community. Ultimately, the chosen path did not pass through their neighborhood. Unlike in other cases studied by our research team, such as Pasadena, Pacoima, and Stockton (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023), the Colton route was chosen at least a decade earlier and was less destructive and less racially disproportionate in its impacts than the most seriously considered alternative.

While the protest showcased South Colton's determination to fight against injustices, the final route selection was driven more by cost-efficiency and economic considerations than public participation. Building the freeway through the area would have come at a relatively high cost, compared to the chosen route along existing rail tracks. Moreover, a route near and accessible to downtown fit with the city's mainstream commercial interests' strategy to improve the area's economic viability (McCoy, 1946 and *Colton Courier*, 1947a, 1947b, 1950a). Though the color line between North and South Colton may not have played a decisive role in the routing of the freeway, the planning of the San Bernardino Freeway brought many of those racial tensions to light, as both groups opposed routes that would have run through their neighborhoods.

South Colton did not fully escape the freeway's negative effects. The I-10/San Bernardino Freeway, which ended up running parallel to the railroad tracks to the north, created yet another physical barrier that exacerbated racial divisions within the city. Local planning authorities invested in trying to revive Colton's business district in the north and retrofitting the city for the automobile but did little to remediate or soften the impact of the freeway on South Colton (Wenzlick and Company, 1963 and Colton Redevelopment Agency, 1963, 1965). But ironically, the

Figure 2-1. Colton Geography and Transportation



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024); San Bernardino County, 2024; and Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; background imagery: Google, 2024b

freeway's placement did not maintain racial segregation, as increasing numbers of Latino/a residents moved into North Colton in the 1960s, nor did it lead to the revitalization of the old downtown area. Instead, South Colton's proximity to the freeway fostered an industrial landscape, with automobile-centric businesses replacing locally serving ones, that continues to pose a series of social, environmental, and cultural challenges to the area and its residents up to today. However, the protests by the Latino/a community against the freeway coincided with a rise in political agency, activism, and empowerment.

The rest of this part of the report is divided into six further sections. The next offers a historical, geographic, and economic overview of Colton. Then, we discuss the city's racial divide and its impact on housing. The following section provides specific information about the Latino/a community in South Colton. We next cover the development and planning timeline of the freeway and then the decision-making process. The final section discusses the lasting impacts of freeway development and its relation to other programs such as urban renewal.

2.2. Background

Colton is a small city located approximately 62 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. **Figure 2-2** shows the city's borders around the time of the Second World War (outlined in blue) and today (outlined in black). Since its establishment in the late 19th century, Colton grew from a town with a population of 1,315 residents in 1890 to a small city of 53,909 residents in 2020 (See **Figure 2-3**). Over the years, both Colton and San Bernardino County have experienced consistent population increases, reflecting the larger trends of urbanization and economic expansion in Southern California (California Department of Finance, 2024).

Prior to colonial settlement, the Inland Empire was inhabited by the Gua-chama, Seranno, and San Gorgonio American Indians. Thereafter, the region gained fame as the gateway into Southern California, becoming renowned for the agricultural landscapes of the "Citrus Belt," and later as a global nexus of mobility networks (Ocegueda, 2017 and Carpio, 2013). Industrialized agriculture in the Citrus Belt relied on a growing infrastructure to transport goods across the country, as well as a workforce that could work the fields and the railways. It was under these circumstances that Colton was founded by the Southern Pacific Railroad[10] in 1875, named after the company's president, David Douty Colton (Cataldo, 2022 and City of Colton, n.d.-c).

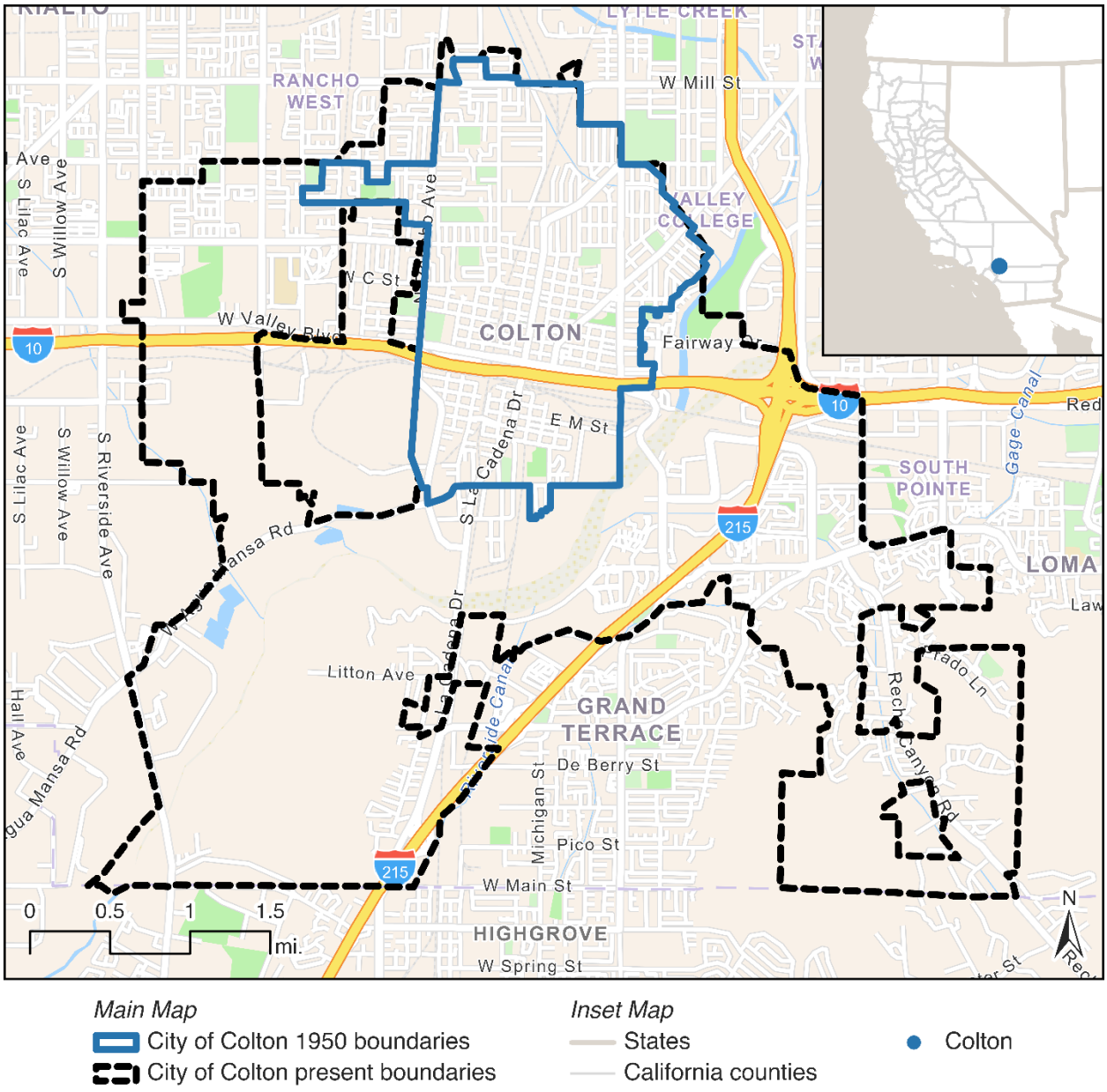
From its inception, Colton was shaped not just by transportation infrastructure but also by decisions made in response to controversy around it. The Southern Pacific's east/west transcontinental line to Los Angeles bypassed the now-larger City of San Bernardino and instead ran through what would become Colton, to its south. A few years later, a subsidiary of the rival the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe ("Santa Fe") railroad[11] attempted to build a north/south line, which would cross the Southern Pacific tracks at Colton and connect to San Bernardino. As with later freeway construction, in these early years, developing transportation infrastructure was not only an engineering exercise but also a political one. Employing Old West lawman Virgil Earp, the Southern Pacific and its allies in Colton attempted to stop the Santa Fe and its allies in San Bernardino from installing their junction. This conflict—referred to as the "frog war" because a "frog" is the part of a rail that allows two tracks to cross at-grade—was ultimately resolved through a court order, allowing the connection of the two railways with transcontinental routes in Colton (HistoryNet, 2006; *San Bernardino Sun*, 2010; Feller, 2021; City of Colton, n.d.-c; and Cataldo, 2022).

This junction, known as Colton Crossing, earned Colton the nickname "Hub City" and positioned it as a center for processing and shipping industries in the San Bernardino Valley. This attracted complementary companies, such

10. Part of Union Pacific today, though we refer to the east/west tracks as "Southern Pacific" throughout this part (California Railroad Commission, 1920 and Union Pacific, 2024)

11. Part of Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) today, though we refer to the north/south tracks as "Santa Fe" throughout this part (California Railroad Commission, 1920 and BNSF, n.d.)

Figure 2-2. Colton City Boundaries

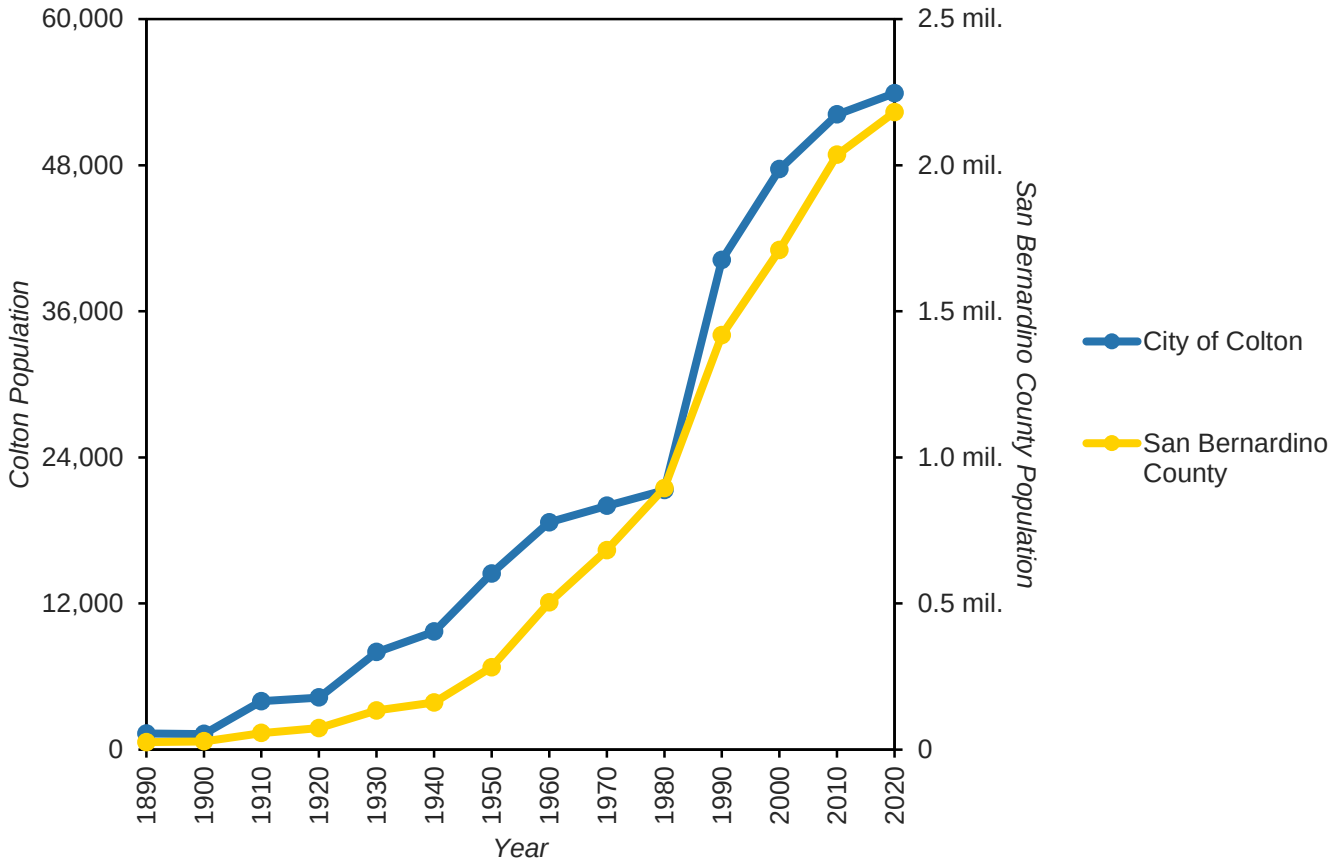


Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1948, 2018a; Hudson, 2022; and California Open Data, 2019; base map: Esri, 2024b

as the Portland Cement Company and the Pacific Fruit Express, which established their plants in the area and contributed to the expansion of Colton's economic foundation (Union Pacific, n.d. and Sheffield, 2004).

The economic importance of transportation can be seen in **Tables 2-1** and **2-2**. Railroad employment formed the economic backbone of Colton, encompassing 15 percent of the workforce by 1950 (See **Table 2-1**). Workers in

Figure 2-3. Population Trends, Colton and San Bernardino County



Data source: California Department of Finance, 2024

Table 2-1. Railroad Sector Employment, 1950

Statistic	Colton	California	U.S.
Employed residents	4,423	3,902,278	56,225,340
Number of employed residents in railroads and railway express service	663	75,069	1,386,961
Share of employed residents in railroads and railway express service	15%	2%	2%

Data source: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952c, 1953b)

Colton were significantly more likely to be employed in the railroad industry than national and state averages (6.1 and 7.8 times, respectively) (See **Table 2-2**) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952c, 1953b)). As an economic base industry, each railroad job indirectly supported an additional two to three

jobs through a multiplier effect—by supporting upstream industries providing supplies and services to the railroad sector and through the downstream spending of workers on goods and services. In total, the railroad sector contributed directly and indirectly to nearly half of the city's economy (Bivens, 2019).

Table 2-2. Railroad Sector Employment Compared, 1950

Statistic	Colton versus California	Colton versus U.S.
Location quotient[12]	7.8	6.1

Data source: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952c, 1953b)

Colton grew further as a transportation hub in the subsequent decades, as the Inland Empire witnessed the rise of a new economy of logistics, with a significant decline of its agricultural economy and dramatic rise in international trade. Global dynamics in trade and the new logistics economy required a new infrastructure. Distribution centers in the region served as critical waypoints in goods' routes from around the Pacific Rim to Southern California's major seaports to the rest of the country. After the advent of containerization in the 1950s, the railways acquired new value for freight transportation. By the 1970s, the Inland Empire witnessed a warehouse boom that relied on its logistics network, with the most concentration along I-10 and State Route 60. As a result, industrial developments and business parks were strategically built along the freeways, railways, and airports. The City of Ontario, located around 20 miles west of Colton and home to a major freight airport, became a crucial link in these networks, especially when it became part of the Long Beach Foreign Trade Zone in the 1980s (Carpio, 2013). Presently, around 40 percent of container imports to the U.S. pass through the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach combined. In turn, a significant share of that volume is transported through or near Colton—by rail through Colton Crossing, by truck on I-10, and/or temporarily stored in an Inland Empire warehouse (Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, 2024).

Contemporaneously, Colton saw a significant surge in population in the 1980s due to exurban development, as people sought affordable housing options within San Bernardino County and across the Inland Empire (See **Figure 2-3**) (California Department of Finance, 2024 and Trombley, 1985). A 1985 *Los Angeles Times* article compared the rapid growth in the Inland Empire to earlier booms in areas like the San Fernando Valley in the 1950s and Orange County in the 1960s and early 1970s (Trombley, 1985).

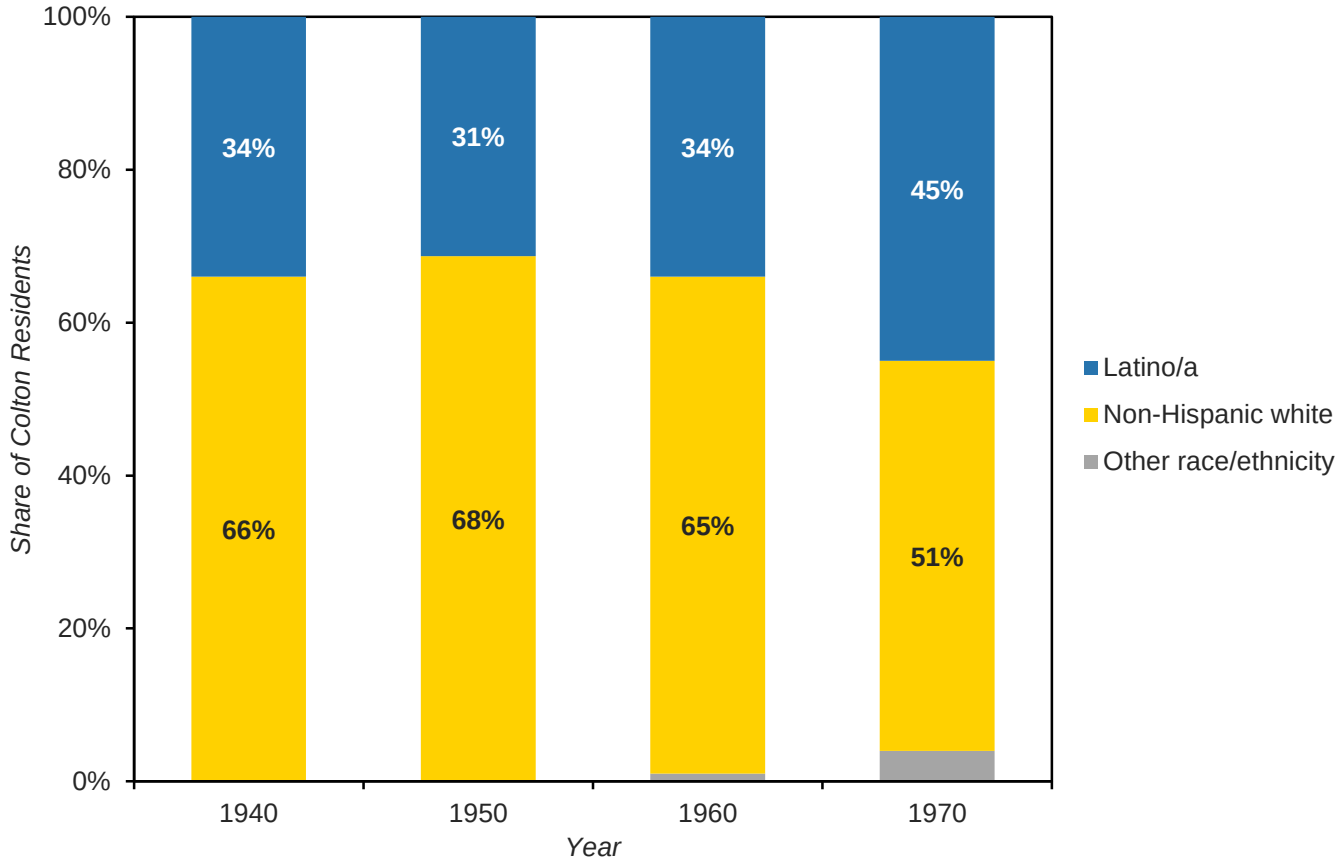
Colton's rapid growth from 1980 to 1990 was a part of a regional phenomenon that saw the Inland Empire become more integrated with Los Angeles County. San Bernardino County provided affordable housing to an increasing number of workers commuting from the exurbs to the job-rich urban core. San Bernardino County's population surged from 895,016 in 1980 to 1,418,300 in 1990. During this time, Colton's population increased from 21,310 to 40,213 (See **Figure 2-3**). In fact, the city's growth was proportionally much greater than the county's, with an increase of 88% compared to the county's 58% increase (California Department of Finance, 2024).

12. The location quotient is a statistical measure used to determine the relative concentration of a particular industry or occupation in a specific geographic area compared to a larger reference area. A location quotient greater than 1 indicates that the industry or occupation is overrepresented in the area, while a quotient less than 1 indicates underrepresentation.

2.3. Racialized Colton

Throughout its history, Colton's racial divisions shaped its development. **Figure 2-4** illustrates the racial and ethnic composition of Colton from 1940 to 1970. Throughout this period, Colton remained a predominantly biracial/biethnic city, with approximately one third of its population Hispanic and two thirds non-Hispanic white. In 1950, the proportion of Latino/as in Colton (31%) was about two and a half times higher than in the rest of San Bernardino County (13%) (calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1943, 1952c, 1954, 1962b, 1963a; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972b; Ruggles et al., 2024; and Manson et al., 2022)).

Figure 2-4. Demographics of Colton, 1940-1970



Data source: calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1943, 1952c, 1954, 1962b, 1963a; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972b; Ruggles et al., 2024; and Manson et al., 2022)

Indeed, Colton experienced significant racialization[13] since its early history. For example, two notable waves of workers of color faced mistreatment. Chinese workers who arrived to work on the railroads in the later half of the 19th century established a small Chinatown in Colton. However, tolerance for their presence did not last. The city

13. Racialization is the process of structuring society by constructing groups with different positions, privileges and power. This can take on many forms, including a racial division of labor market and housing segregation.

became caught up in California's anti-Chinese movement, which was led by white labor organizations throughout the 1880s. The animus manifested in various ways, including vigilante mobs and law enforcement violently expelling Chinese Americans from cities across the state (Saxton, 1975 and Pfaelzer, 2008). In 1887, Colton's first mayor ran an advertisement for a "White Labor Boot and Shoe Store," aligning himself with the anti-immigrant, supremacist Knights of Labor (Sheffield, n.d.). As a result, the Chinese community in Colton nearly disappeared (Pfaelzer, 2008 and Sheffield, n.d.).

Employers primarily filled labor shortages caused by the Chinese exodus with Mexican immigrants. This was not unique to Colton. By the 1930s, Mexican workers comprised two-thirds of the railway workforce in the Southwest and Midwest. While executives, boosters, and growers in the San Bernardino Valley prospered, farm and industry workers endured harsh labor conditions throughout the Great Depression and long after the Second World War. In Colton, citrus farms, railways, and other industries relied on and exploited manual labor from working class Latino/as, primarily Mexican Americans. These industries developed a racialized, non-white labor force that took on various roles such as citrus pickers, packinghouse workers, and railroad yard and shop maintenance workers. Mexican workers in Colton were particularly drawn to stable employment opportunities at the railroad, the Portland Cement Company, and the Pacific Fruit Express. Latinos/as also found other forms of employment. For instance, Gregoria Sosa, the wife of a Colton railroad worker supported her family by sewing, doing laundry, and even wet-nursing infant children. Businesses and industry officials exploited the immigrant workers by offering only low wages and subjecting them to dangerous tasks (Garcilazo, 2012; Ocegueda, 2017; Ruiz, 2008; Mercado Robles, 2014; E. Garcia, 2013; and Martinez, Martinez, and Martinez-Garcia, 2016). In 1940, Latino/a workers earned a median annual income of approximately $600 in dollars at the time, compared to $1,100 for non-Hispanic white workers—a gap of 45 percent (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)).

Latinos/as were tolerated as long as their labor was essential, but this changed during the Great Depression. The federal government deported and repatriated many Mexicans from the San Bernardino Valley. In the 1930s, Mexicans were sent to Colton's Southern Pacific station and then transported on "special trains" to the border (Ocegueda, 2017 and Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980).

Racial tensions escalated into the 1940s, leading to the Zoot Suit Riots that broke out in Los Angeles in June 1943 and spread to San Bernardino and Colton in 1944. In these attacks, Americans of Mexican descent were targeted as unpatriotic supposedly because their outfits used too much fabric in a time when it was needed for the war effort (Briscoe, 2021).

Colton's racialization also played out spatially. Many Mexicans were relegated to live in dilapidated housing conditions (Ocegueda, 2017) within "citrus colonies", which were highly controlled and segregated (Alamillo, 2006). As the Mexican population in the San Bernardino Valley grew, white homeowners became increasingly uncomfortable and determined to maintain racial separation. In San Bernardino County, the Mexican population increased by 300 percent between 1920 and 1930. Concerns about declining property values led to the formation of committees that enforced racial zoning ordinances. Formal and informal housing discrimination resulted in racial segregation. In the mid-1950s, years before becoming mayor of Colton, Abe Beltrán and his wife were denied housing in North Colton because they were Mexican. Sal and Francis Ayala also attempted to purchase a home in North Colton, but white homeowners feared that selling to Mexicans would decrease property values and provoke objections from other white neighbors (Ocegueda, 2017; Beltrán, 2013; and Ayala and Ayala, 2013).

What emerged were isolated Mexican *colonias*, such as the Mexican business district along Route 66 in the City of San Bernardino and the Latino/a community of South Colton (Ocegueda, 2017). Local government played an

active role in regulating where Latinos/as lived and worked. Colton City Council records reveal that ethnic populations and their places of residence, along with their occupations, were carefully monitored (Colton City Council, n.d.). Segregation enabled the City to deny public services, infrastructure improvements, and recreational opportunities to neighborhoods of color.

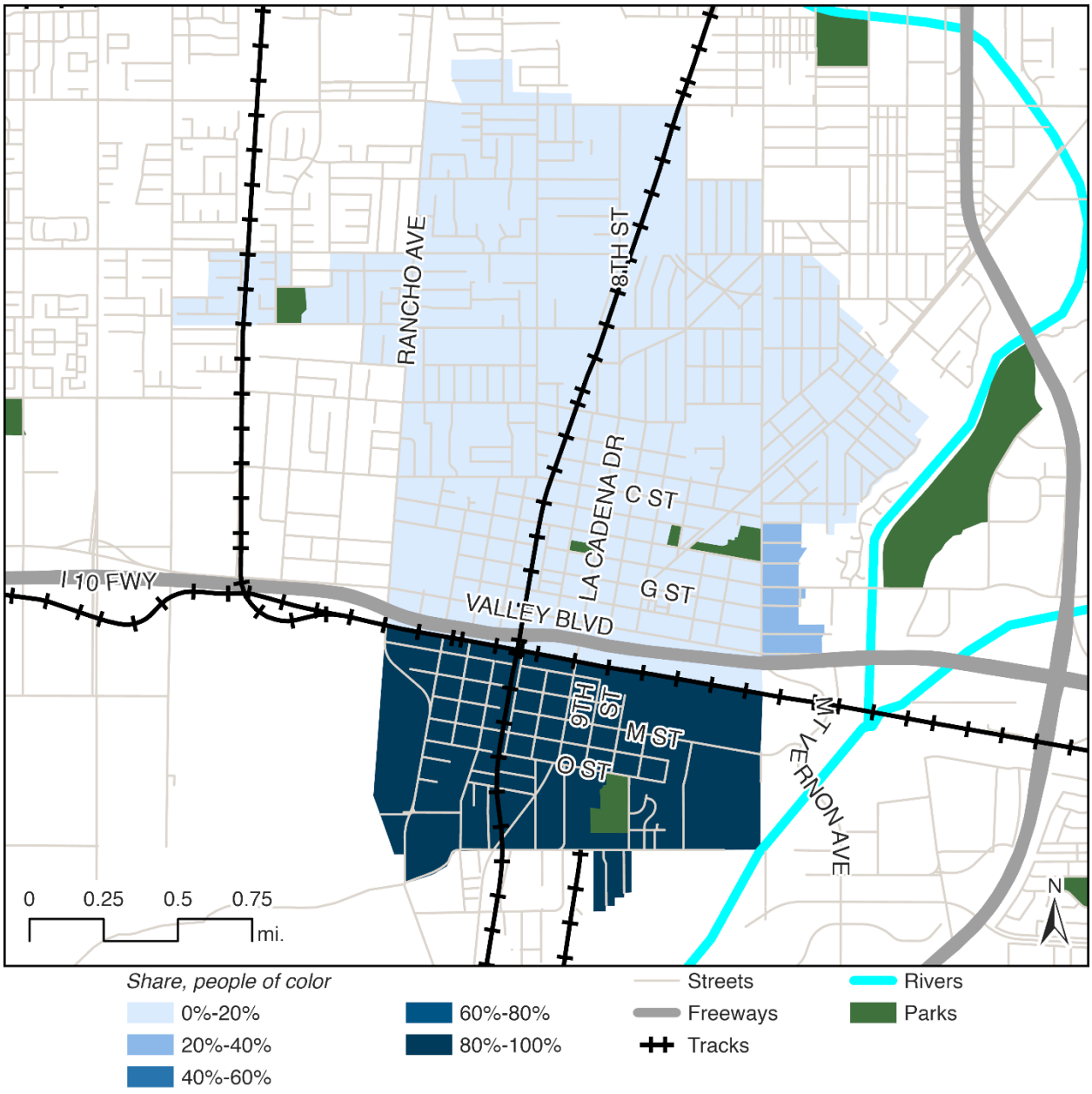
The extreme level of racial segregation in Colton can be seen in **Figure 2-5**, which displays the population of color in 1950 by U.S. Census enumeration districts (defined in Appendix A, Section A.4). South Colton, located south of the Southern Pacific railroad tracks, was predominantly (96%) Hispanic.[14] On the other hand, the areas north of the Southern Pacific tracks were predominantly white (again 96%) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024 and U.S. Census Bureau, 2024)). In the 1950s, Colton reached a level that social scientists refer to as a "hyper" level of segregation (Massey and Denton, 1989), as quantified through a commonly used metric called the dissimilarity index. The dissimilarity index, the share of a group that would need to relocate to eliminate segregation, ranges from zero (indicating full integration) to one (indicating full segregation). In 1950, the white-people of color dissimilarity index was 0.89, up from 0.84 in 1940. A value of 0.89 implies that approximately nine out of ten residents of color would have needed to relocate to white neighborhoods in order to end segregation (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)). This level of segregation is comparable to what Black Americans commonly experienced in major urban cities of the time (Sørensen, Taeuber, and Hollingsworth, 1975). South Colton had the distinction of being one of the most segregated neighborhoods in the county. In 1960, 89 percent of South Colton's population was Hispanic, while the neighborhood with the next highest percentage was in the City of San Bernardino, with 72 percent (calculated by authors from 1960 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960)).[15]

Limited mobility across the railroad tracks further enforced the isolation of the town's Latinos/as and solidified a stark color line across the city. As early as 1891, reports indicate that the people of Colton, especially those from South Colton, faced significant inconvenience because of the railroad, as the presence of tracks made north/south transportation increasingly difficult. In the early 1940s, local organizations in Colton, the City of San Bernardino, and the surrounding areas met with the California Highway Commission to request the construction of a grade-separated structure that would allow for crossing the tracks by foot and car (Crawford, 1965). What probably united these diverse stakeholders was overlapping economic interests: to facilitate the interregional movement of goods and products and the commuting of workers and consumers. The main road connecting South Colton to the rest of the city was 8th Street (now La Cadena Drive), which ran through the middle section of town in a north/south direction. This road crossed the Southern Pacific tracks at grade. Continuous rail traffic blocked 8th Street for up to eight hours a day, causing long lines of traffic at the crossing. A study conducted in 1946 found that the traffic across the railway was only flowing for approximately 17 out of every 80 minutes. The report described this situation as an intolerable inconvenience for the public (Colton Chamber of Commerce, 1946). According to Frank Gonzales, former mayor of Colton, the construction of an underpass connecting North

14. The population of South Colton included a small number of people of color other than Latino/a residents. However, in Colton in 1950, Latinos/as constituted an overwhelming 99% of the population of color (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024 and U.S. Census Bureau, 2024)).

15. This information is based on 1960 census tract statistics for "White, Spanish Surname," which serves as a proxy for Hispanics or Latinos/as (See Appendix A, Section A.6). In South Colton, the specific tract is #0069, while the tract in the City of San Bernardino with the next highest Latino/a population is Tract #0048 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960).

Figure 2-5. Residential Segregation in Colton, 1950



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024); San Bernardino County, 2024; Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, 2024; Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; and Esri, 2024a

and South Colton was transformative (Gonzales, 2023). Without it, people would have had to travel all the way to Mount Vernon Avenue in the eastern part of town to cross to the other side, as Rancho Avenue on the western edge of town did not provide a crossing at the time (Gonzales, 2023).

The Chamber of Commerce had been requesting assistance from the California Highway Commission for years to address congestion at the 8th Street rail crossing (Colton Chamber of Commerce and Gray, 1946a, 1946b, 1946c; Colton Chamber of Commerce, 1946; and Gray, 1946). However, despite their efforts, traffic between North and South Colton only became worse. In 1944, the City of Colton formed an Underpass Committee, demanding a grade separation across the train tracks. Yet, progress on the grade separation project was dependent on the selection of a route for the coming San Bernardino Freeway, which was then still being studied by the California Highway Commission. By the early 1950s, approximately 20,000 motor vehicles were crossing the tracks on 8th Street (California Highway Commission, 1952; *Colton Courier*, 1947g; and *Sun-Telegram*, 1953b). The uncertainty surrounding the freeway route made it nearly impossible to alleviate the congestion (*Sun-Telegram*, 1953b). Stakeholders and residents expressed their frustration, urging planners and politicians to find a solution and incorporate the underpass into the freeway plans (Cathey, 1952; Cunningham, 1953; and California Highway Commission, 1953). “An ambulance waited for ten minutes for a train to cross, and the patient lay in the street, struck by an auto a block away,” a resident south of the tracks pleaded to the governor. “People are injured, killed, and held up for hours a day by these trains. For heaven’s sake, put in an under- or overpass when you put in the freeway” (Cathey, 1952, p. 2, emphasis original). Without a resolution, daily movement between South Colton and North Colton remained restricted (Cathey, 1952; Cunningham, 1953; and California Highway Commission, 1953), contributing to the disconnect between the two parts of town and to the geographic isolation of Latinos/as.

Daily racial segregation was also enforced through other means, many of which mirrored the racist practices towards Black Americans in the South during the early part of the 20th century. Latinos/as in Colton were ridiculed because of their language, food, and their residence on the wrong side of the tracks. Esther Hernandez Ramos, who grew up in South Colton, experienced this segregation firsthand. Her grandparents owned several businesses, including a successful *tortilleria* on 7th Street. However, even as a young girl, she understood that her community was segregated and marginalized. When she crossed the tracks, she would hear “Anglos” saying things like, “Hi, little Mexican girl from across the tracks....You go back to your side—you can’t be on this side” (Hernandez Ramos, 2014). This behavior was not just private acts of bigotry. At times, white residents would call the police to escort Mexican residents back to South Colton (Hernandez Ramos, 2014).

Moreover, a police station at 9th and I Streets displayed a sign stating that no Mexicans or dogs were allowed in the restroom. Beltrán (2013) was one of the first residents from South Colton to hold political office. He served on Colton’s City Council and worked towards improving South Colton . He recalls that in his youth, whenever he and his friends tried to venture into North Colton, a police officer would prohibit them, saying “No! You’re not going to go north; you Mexicans [go] back south where you belong” (Beltrán, 2013). Such attitudes and acts of governmental officials demonstrate that the state (the official political institution) was explicitly instrumental in maintaining racial order in the city.

Some businesses in North Colton also displayed signs indicating that Mexicans were not welcome. These establishments often had a separate door or window for Mexicans to conduct transactions without entering the main entrance, according to interviews conducted by the South Colton Oral History Project (Ornelas, 2013; Ayala and Ayala, 2013; Vásquez and Oliva, 2013; and Acosta, 2023). Unequal treatment also extended to the public sector. As early as 1907, a news clip reported that “cholos” (a derogatory term for Mexicans) were given a window in the rear of the post office, which was considered “better than having them fill the lobby” (Tetwiler, 1907c).

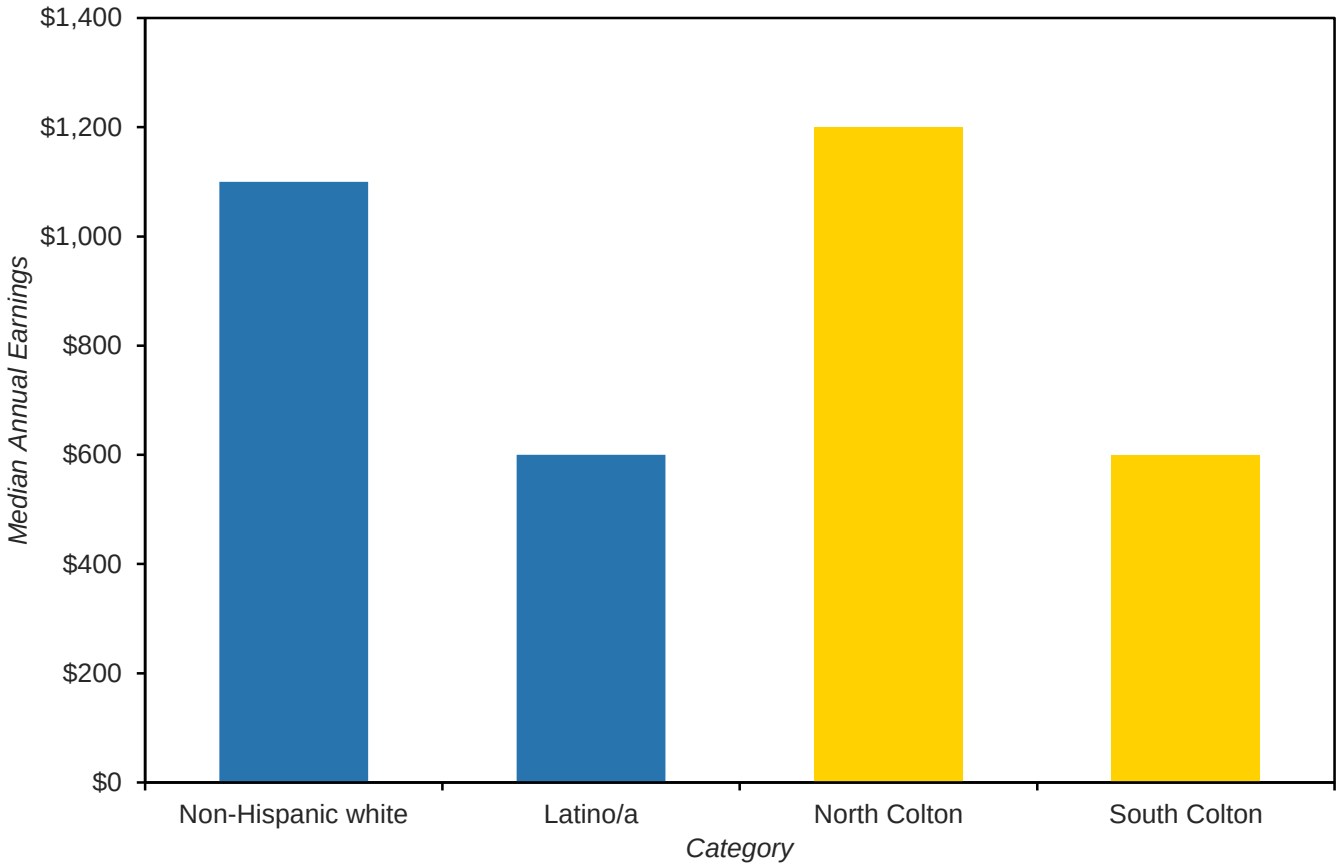
Schools, recreational facilities like movie theaters, and public swimming pools were also segregated. At the New Colton Theatre and Hub City Theatre, Latinos/as would sit on one side of the theater, while white “Anglos” would

sit on the other side (Beltrán, 2013). Beltrán recalled one incident at Hunters Drug Store in North Colton with his wife:

> *"We sat there, and we sat there...and I finally called the lady over [who was] the waitress. I said, 'May we have some service please?' [She responded,] 'What do you mean "service"? We don't serve Mexicans here.' [So] they would not give us anything to eat. Ray Hunter (of Hunters Drug Store) was the post office manager/postmaster at that time, and he had great segregated feelings about people"* (Beltrán, 2013).

Similarly, other South Colton residents remembered that access to certain places was restricted. According to Rudy Oliva, "The park in North Colton was off limits to us because it was all white, and no Mexicans were allowed" (Vásquez and Oliva, 2013). They were only allowed to use the plunge pool on the day before it was emptied out; "they cleaned all the grease out after the Mexicans went swimming" (Beltrán, 2013). It was not until the landmark 1944 court case *Lopez v. Seccombe* that city parks and recreational facilities like plunge pools were formally desegregated. The case challenged discrimination practices faced by Mexican Americans in the nearby City of San Bernardino, who were denied access to the municipal pool (Ocegueda, 2010).

Figure 2-6. Earnings Disparities in Colton, 1940



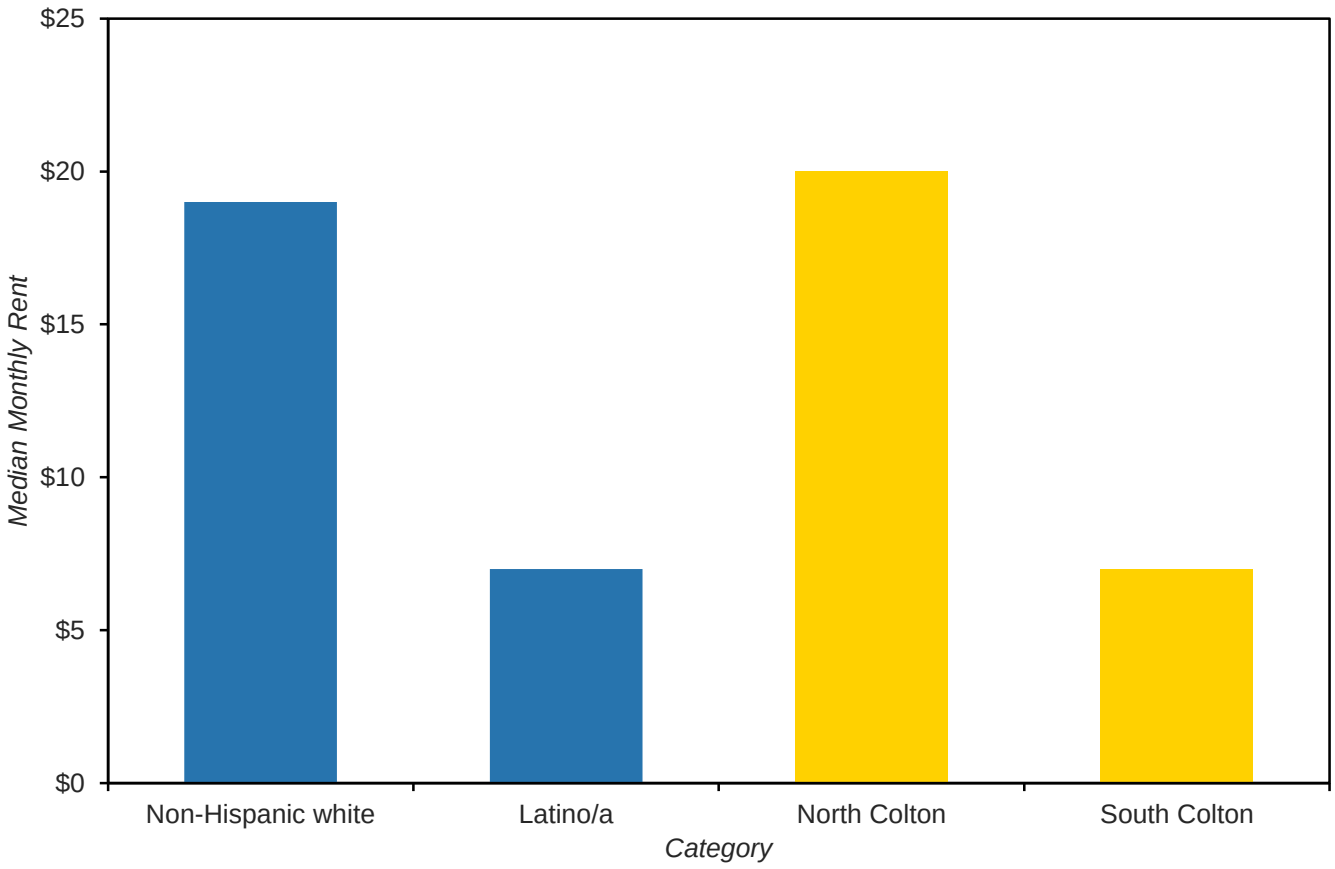
Data source: calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)

Much of the racism in the area revolved around property values. Alarmed that "cholos" would "...increase their property holding in one of the fairest portions of the city" and that "...a second schoolhouse [would] fall to their

use," articles encouraged readers to attend a mass meeting at City Hall to "...[stem] the tide at the source" (Tetwiler, 1907d) and to "induce these 'undesirable citizens' to [shimmy] on their own side of the city" (Tetwiler, 1907a). The same publication later reported that the meeting was well-attended and that a committee was appointed to address the issue of "undesirable citizens building shacks next to the schoolhouse on 9th Street...and to formulate a cure for this blotch on one of the fairest corners of the city" (Tetwiler, 1907b). The South Colton Improvement Club was formed to "[make] Cholos...understand without any threats that they might enjoy life better elsewhere" and with the hope that they would "gradually [withdraw] to another part of town where neighbors would not object to their presence" (Tetwiler, 1907e).

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, South Colton received fewer municipal funds for educational and recreational facilities (Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980). Well into the 20th century, most people in South Colton did not enjoy municipal services like sewage (Mercado Robles, 2014 and Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980). Streets remained unpaved, and residents remained excluded from Colton services and institutions (Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980). As a result of severe labor-market discrimination and hyper residential segregation, South Colton developed as an impoverished community. **Figure 2-6** shows annual earnings disparities in 1940 and illustrates

Figure 2-7. Rent Disparities in Colton, 1940



Data source: calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)

the relationships between race, income, and space (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)). In fact, the earnings gap was slightly wider geographically than strictly by race. This was due in part to the fact that the few non-Hispanic white residents of South Colton were among the poorest white residents of Colton overall. The disparities in earnings by race and geography are a testimony to the power of housing and labor-market discrimination in the production of a societal stratification.

Because of low wages, many Latinos/as and residents of South Colton lived in dilapidated housing conditions, with some homes made from discarded wood and metal (Ocegueda, 2017 and Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980). Resident Rose Mercado Robles recalled small and cramped housing conditions, with an outhouse long the only bathroom (Mercado Robles, 2014). In 1940, the median monthly rent for Latinos/as was between a third and a half of the median rent for white residents, and a similar disparity existed between residents of South Colton and North Colton (See **Figure 2-7**). While home-ownership rates were similar regardless of race or place (over half), median home values for Latinos/as and South Colton residents were only one fifth of the median home values for white and North Colton residents (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)).

In 1950, rents continued to be divided along racial and spatial lines: median contract rent for Latinos/as was less than half that of white residents, a larger gap than in the previous decade. Latinos/as did, however, narrow—but not close—the gap in terms of median home value from the previous decade, reaching 55 percent of the median home value for white homeowners in 1950 (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1953a)).[16]

2.4. South Colton

Despite facing ongoing discrimination, Latinos/as established their own institutions for education, healthcare, and economic assistance, which helped them maintain their identity and cultural unity well into the postwar years. As early as 1916, a lumber business located on M Street distributed discarded wood that was repurposed for building many houses in the community. In 1910, South Colton established a Spanish language academy. By 1913, residents had organized a mutual aid society to assist families in need, a women's Blue Cross society that provided aid to the sick, and a Comité de Fiestas Patrioticas that organized celebrations during Mexican national holidays (Gamboa, 1989 and Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980). *Fiestas Patrias* celebrated Mexican culture and fostered the belief that residents would eventually return to Mexico (Vasquez and Acosta, 2023). The community also had mutual aid organizations, like the Sociedad Progresista Mexicana, which was established in 1929 to support burial expenses, educational scholarships, and cultural promotion (Gamboa, 1989; Mercado Robles, 2014; Beltrán, 2013; and Ornelas, 2013).

South Colton became known as a thriving Mexican neighborhood with a bustling commercial scene. In 1926, Latino/a merchants organized the South Colton Chamber of Commerce to meet the needs of a population that was denied access to commerce in Colton proper (Ngan, 2006 and Mendoza, 2006). Some residents believed that the fact that their community was isolated from the other side of Colton promoted South Colton's self-

16. The 1950 estimates for rent and home value only disaggregate between Hispanic and non-Hispanic households, not by race. Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, there is no readily available data specific to Colton that breaks down rent and home value by race, which would have allowed us to estimate values for non-Hispanic white households. However, data is available for Hispanic households (i.e., "White, Spanish Surname") (See Appendix A, Section A.6). Among non-Hispanic households in Colton, 99% were white in 1950 (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1953a)). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the reported estimates of non-Hispanic households predominantly reflect non-Hispanic white households.

sufficiency (Hernandez Ramos, 2014 and E. Garcia, 2013): “Having our own grocery stores, our own churches, our own restaurants, and our own schools...created a sense of security, in terms of being in the same area where we were all protected” (E. Garcia, 2013). Chicano/a-owned businesses included bakeries, groceries, restaurants, pool halls, taverns, clothing, and butcher shops. These businesses adopted and reinforced the cultural values of Colton’s working-class Mexican community. Nueva Reforma grocery store operated on N Street but closed in the late 1940s. Juan Enciso founded La Esperanza Market in Colton in 1929. Other popular stores included Martinez Bakery and Caldera’s Carniceria (E. Garcia, 2013; Hernandez Ramos, 2014; Ornelas, 2013; Salazar, 2015; and Ocegueda, 2017).

South 7th Street was known as the “Broadway of South Colton.” Adam Orneales, whose father owned a barber shop in South Colton, remembered markets, dry goods stores, and restaurants interspersed among family homes in Colton. He recalled that the stretch between J and K Streets was one of the liveliest areas in South Colton (Ornelas, 2013).[17] Latinos/as also built their own recreational spaces, as they were not welcome to access those in North Colton. They opened theaters that showed Spanish-language films and a recreational complex that offered South Colton youth a place to play and swim. Juan Caldera owned a bakery in South Colton and utilized his wealth to provide recreational spaces for Mexicans in Colton and San Bernardino. Mexican American sports teams that were popular in the 1930s relied on these facilities to train and compete across the San Bernardino Valley (Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980; Ocegueda, 2017; Aranda Genemara, 2014; Ornelas, 2013; and E. Garcia, 2013).

When the Mexican population of South Colton declined during the Great Depression and after deportation campaigns, many stores closed. Though some eventually returned, many had lost their properties and assets that they never recovered (Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980).

Along with building internal institutions, South Colton residents also engaged in sociopolitical action to challenge racism. Mexican communities relied on their expanding institutions and social networks to resist discrimination and create spaces of citizenship. As early as 1917, residents of South Colton established a union called Trabajadores Unidos. When the Portland Cement Company reduced wages for Mexicans without cutting Anglo wages, the union successfully organized a strike, compelling Colton’s largest employer to reverse the decision. Additionally, Trabajadores Unidos sponsored community-based services in South Colton, including La Union, a cooperative grocery store (Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980).

Civil rights activism gained momentum and political influence in the 1940s and 1950s, as second- and third-generation Latinos/as came of age. While white residents viewed Mexicans as immigrants, sojourners, and temporary workers who would eventually return to their native country, many of them remained, establishing roots and forming families (Alamillo, 2006 and Ocegueda, 2017). In 1940, almost three out of four Latinos/as in Colton were born in the United States; in 1950, roughly four out of five were (Ruggles et al., 2024 and U.S. Census Bureau, 1954). As Latinos/as became more rooted, they became less willing to accept their oppression. Many young Chicanos/as, who had left South Colton for the war, eventually returned and began organizing politically, demanding representation, municipal services, and desegregation. According to the American Council of Race Relations, Mexican merchants and workers in the San Bernardino area began organizing in the mid-1940s, as racial tensions worsened throughout that decade (Ocegueda, 2017).

17. Although J Street was north of the railroad tracks, Mexican businesses and residents were able to operate and reside along the south side of J Street; conversely, mostly Anglo businesses occupied the north side (Gonzales, 2023).

In 1942, the mayor of Colton publicly insisted that Mexicans should stay on their side of the tracks and use their own facilities. As racial tensions grew, members of the South Colton community publicly denounced discrimination in letters to the mayor (Ocegueda, 2017).

One notable achievement was the integration of schools, after the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed school segregation. Schools in Colton were integrated, with Wilson Junior High School, serving Latinos/as in South Colton, and Roosevelt Junior High School, serving Anglos in North Colton, being combined into a new facility built in North Colton, called Colton Junior High School. However, even then, students were disciplined for speaking Spanish at school (Sheffield, 2004; E. Garcia, 2013; and Rivera, 2014). Moreover, Latinos/as may have not received the same quality of education as white residents. Forced school integration was often accompanied by internal racial stratification, where people of color were tracked into classes that were vocational or less rigorous (Oakes, 1995).

During the postwar period, housing discrimination began to erode. The Ayalas, previously mentioned for their experience with overt prejudice while searching for a home, were nonetheless determined to move to North Colton. They firmly believed they had the right to live wherever they pleased, especially considering Sal Ayala's service during the war. Eventually, they secured a loan from the state and purchased a house on Valencia Drive in North Colton, becoming the first Latino/a family on the block (Ayala and Ayala, 2013). The Ayalas were not alone in their struggle. By 1960, Latinos/a accounted for one fifth of the population in North Colton. A decade later, they constituted nearly half of the population there (calculated by authors from 1960 and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960, 1970)). Unfortunately, this transformation was partly attributed to white flight, as white residents relocated from the old city to neighborhoods with newer homes and fewer people of color.

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Latino/a citizens of South Colton requested to join the Colton Chamber of Commerce and form a special division. In addition to being spokespeople for South Colton, they aimed to expand the role of Hispanics in the city's affairs. In the years following the war, Latinos/as and Anglo business and community leaders gathered at a dinner sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. This marked an important milestone in Colton's ethnic history, as it demonstrates the beginning of efforts between some elements in the two communities to unify the city and some amount of bridge-building among white leadership. Another example was the willingness of a few home developers to defy racial restrictions by offering inclusive and affordable housing to non-white households. Residential building programs like Lewis Homes created both housing and work for locals as well. Eponymous developer Ralph Lewis fought 1964's Proposition 14, an ultimately passed but court-invalidated initiative which would have repealed California's Fair Housing Act (the Rumford Act) (Sheffield, 2004; Carpio, 2013, 2019; Reft, 2017; and Wolfinger and Greenstein, 1968).[18]

Finally, Colton's Latino/as made significant advancements in electoral politics. In 1948, John Martinez Perez made history by becoming the first Latino elected to the city council, representing South Colton. As time passed, the number of Latino/a members on the City Council continued to rise, eventually surpassing the number of Anglo representatives in 2010[19] (Sheffield, 2004, 2010).

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18. Although the proposition was passed by nearly two to one, with the majority of voters being white, the California Supreme Court and U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Proposition 14 because it violated equal protection constitutional provisions (*Ballotpedia*, n.d.; Reft, 2017; and Wolfinger and Greenstein, 1968).

19. As of writing, the mayor and two of the four city councilmembers in Colton appear to be Latino/a (City of Colton, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

2.5. Freeway Timeline and Alternative Routes

The development of the San Bernardino Freeway, also known as the Ramona Freeway and later designated as I-10, spanned over a decade. Planning began in the mid-1940s: the California Highway Commission made public the first studies for an east/west freeway from Los Angeles to Palm Springs at a conference in 1944. The commission proposed a route along J Street in Colton, which ran parallel to the Southern Pacific tracks (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1944). In March 1946, local interest groups proposed an alternative route, running south of the railroad tracks through South Colton along O Street (*Colton Courier*, 1946a). Another possible route was added in 1947, which ran along C Street in North Colton, north of the main Anglo business district (*Colton Courier*, 1947a). In the next section, we discuss the reasoning behind each of these routes and the fight over them.

A final decision was made in early 1950 for a modified J Street route, described below. Right-of-way purchases began soon after the decision, starting from the western edge and progressing eastward. **Figure 2-8** shows the timing of these purchases, as well as earlier purchases west of Colton in the late 1930s, which were made to increase the capacity of the old, pre-Interstate highway on the corridor. Construction of the freeway commenced in 1951. It officially opened on October 18, 1956, although additional purchases and construction continued to improve access and egress (Olson, 1989 and Bright, 2023).

The protracted decision-making process for the route was filled with conflict and controversy between and among stakeholders, interest groups, and the state. Before delving into the dynamics behind the struggles in choosing a route, we provide context by comparing the chosen route to the other two alternatives. This comparison sheds light on the groups that would have been affected. The alternatives themselves posed inherent threats that motivated the competing interest groups to take action, with one exception discussed in the next section. **Figure 2-9** presents the three alternatives.

To estimate the potential destruction and displacement caused by the hypothetical routes, we rely on information from the 1949 Colton City Directory, which has listings organized by addresses[20] (See Appendix A, Section A.2 for a description of the city directory). **Figure 2-10** illustrates the number of listings in three main land-use categories, with I Street (now Valley Boulevard) also included as a reference point. Both C Street and O Street were primarily residential; O Street had a couple of commercial listings, suggesting the presence of small businesses catering to the local community. J Street had a mix of uses, with 19 commercial listings and 45 residential listings. I Street had the highest overall number of listings, encompassing both commercial and

20. We utilize this source because it is not feasible to conduct a detailed assessment of the potential impacts of alternative routes, as in other case study areas, due to a lack of published block-level data for the 1950 U.S. Census. Although the individual 1950 U.S. census records are available, extracting and spatially assigning the information to individual blocks is extremely challenging and time-consuming. We did so for the direct impact analysis under and near the eventual chosen freeway construction area (discussed below), but it is impractical to assemble such data for the unselected paths given the project's limited resources.

Figure 2-8. Median Purchase Date of Right-of-way Properties in Colton

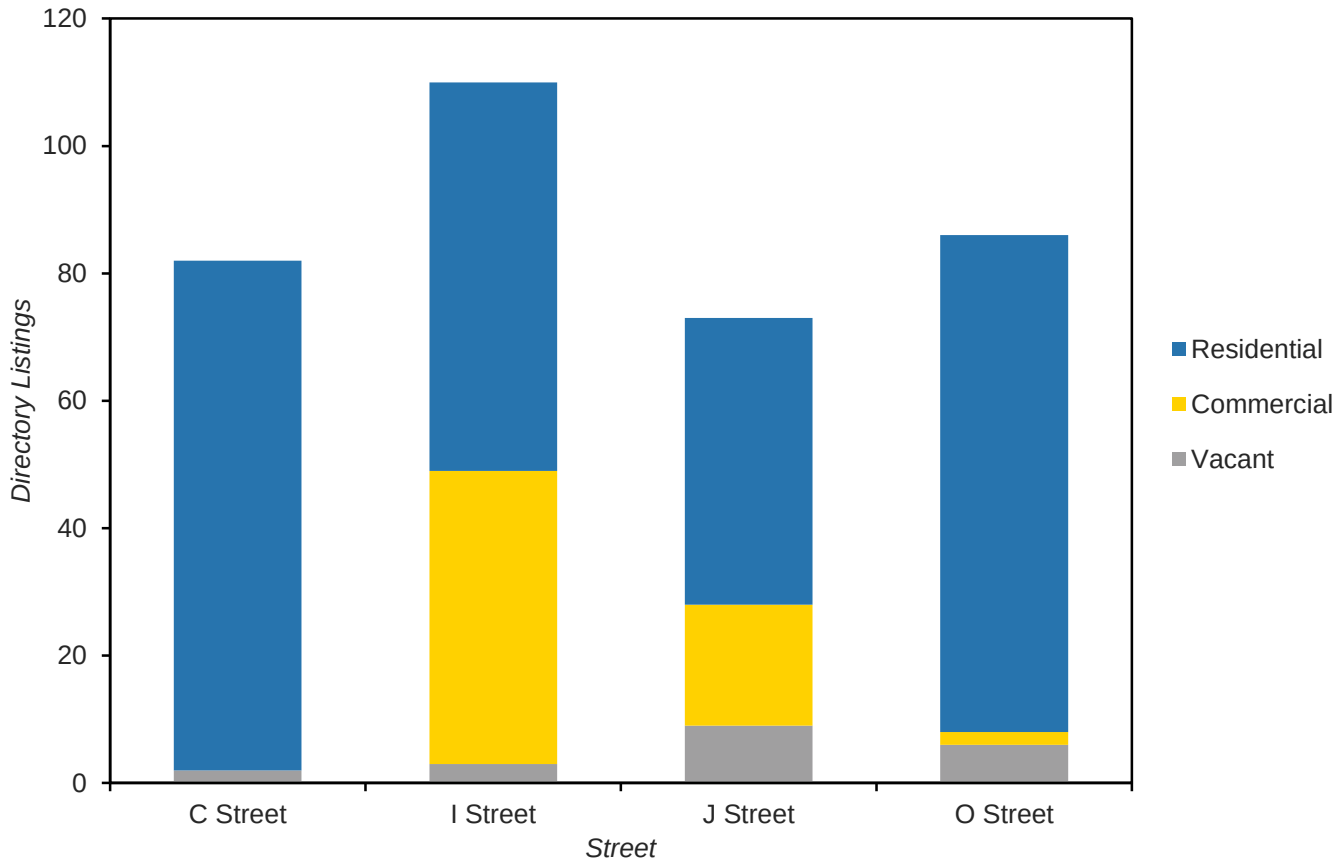
Data sources: Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; Bright, 2023; Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, 2024; San Bernardino County, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

Figure 2-9. Alternative Routes Proposed for I-10 in Colton

Data sources: Colton Courier, *1946b, 1947a; San Bernardino County, 2024; and Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; background imagery: Google, 2024b*

residential occupants. Many residents along these two commercial corridors lived in hotels and boarding houses. The higher density of I Street suggests that it served as Colton's primary business corridor. Furthermore, vacancy data indicate that I Street (3% vacancies) experienced greater demand than J Street (12% vacancies), the city's other business corridor (San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949).

Figure 2-10. Land Use along Colton Streets with Alternate Freeway Routes, 1949

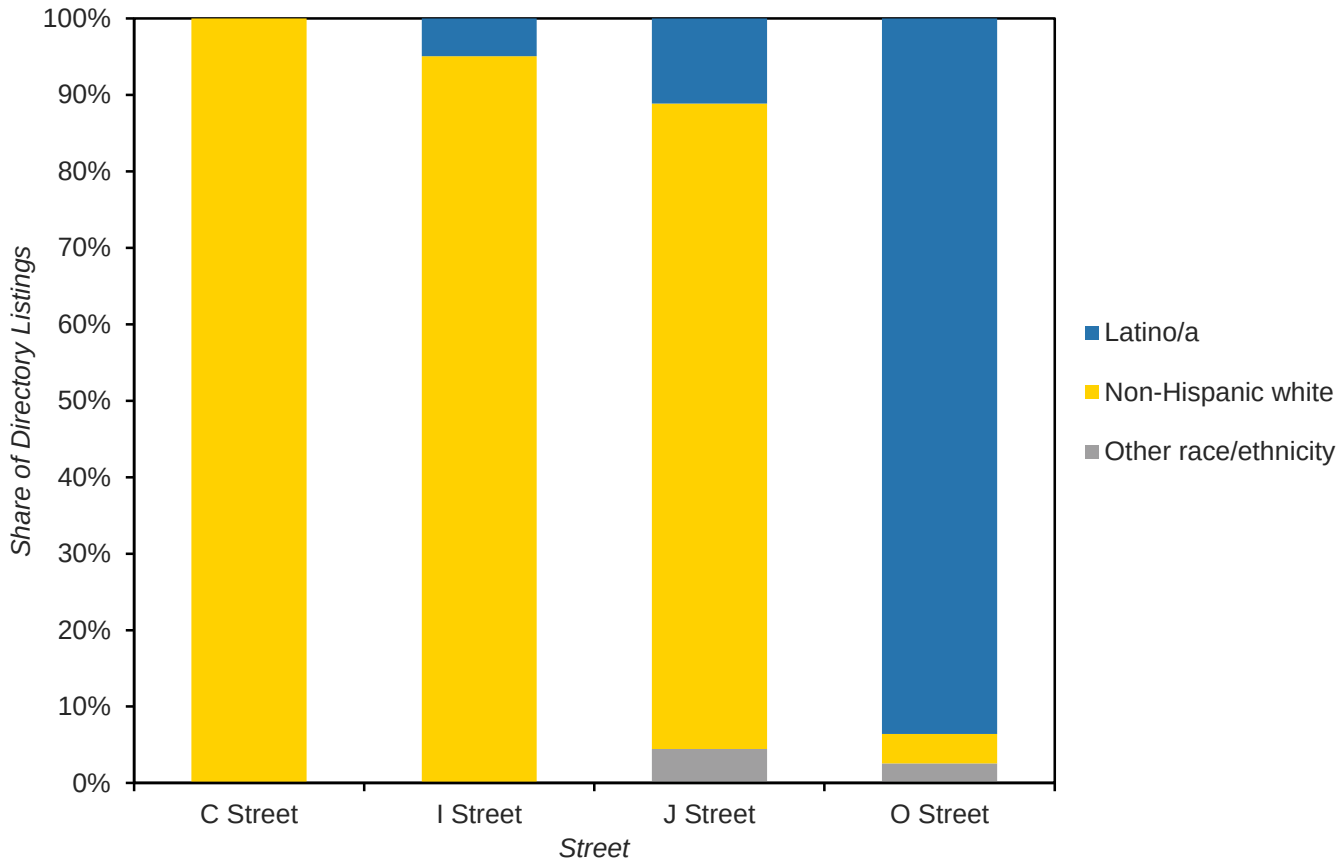


Data source: San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949

The residential listings in Colton clearly showed the presence of racial segregation[21] (See **Figure 2-11**). C Street consisted entirely of non-Hispanic white residents, which was common in North Colton. On I Street, non-Hispanic white residents made up 95 percent of the population. However, J Street, located just north of the Southern Pacific railroad divide, had a bit more diversity, with 15 percent of residents being people of color, primarily Latinos/as. In South Colton, the vast majority (94%) of O Street residents were Latinos/as (San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949). These numbers confirm what was already apparent: the choice of the freeway path would have had racial implications.

21. Race and ethnicity were determined by analyzing surnames and incorporating supplementary information from the 1950 U.S. Census records (See Appendix A, Section A.6) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, 2024).

Figure 2-11. Directory Listings by Race/Ethnicity, 1949



Data source: San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949

2.6. A Racialized Decision-making Process

Efforts to determine the route of the San Bernardino Freeway began in the mid-1940s. Regardless of local sentiment and opposition to particular routes described below, the construction of the freeway was treated by the state as a given. No longer an “engineer’s dream or a planner’s vision of the future”, a newspaper editor proclaimed that “everyone in Colton should recognize the fact that the freeways are to be built, regardless of local sentiment” (Alexander, 1947, p. 4). The only question was which path it would take through Colton. However, reaching a decision proved to be extremely challenging, as various interest groups fought to have their agendas prioritized.

The California Highway Commission initially submitted a preferred option just north of J Street to the City of Colton in 1944 (See **Figure 2-9**). This path would run parallel to and between the old highway (U.S. Route 66) and the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. The proposal was met with local opposition on the grounds that the acquisition of downtown property would be too expensive. The Southern Pacific railroad company was also reportedly opposed to the route, as it would encroach upon their property. The route would require acquiring a 200 feet strip along J Street, which would disrupt and displace businesses. In response, the Colton Chamber of

Commerce and City Council unanimously opposed the J Street route (McCoy, 1949; Durkee, 1949; *Colton Courier*, 1946b; and Alexander, 1947).

The City Council's disapproval of the J Street route and efforts to preserve Colton's historic Anglo business district were widely reported in newspapers. Numerous Anglo civic groups opposing the J Street route had their letters of endorsement published. Opponents argued that a freeway would divide the city, discouraging major business investments in the area and destroying what they said was the city's best block of retail (though see **Figure 2-10** for evidence somewhat deflating this assertion). They claimed that acquiring the right-of-way would be costly, citing commercial property values (*Colton Courier*, 1946b, 1947e and Alexander, 1947). In a letter to the California Highway Commission, the president of the Chamber of Commerce demanded that the J Street route should not be built "against the wishes of the citizens of Colton" (Colton Chamber of Commerce and Gray, 1946a). The city's Junior Chamber of Commerce also expressed their opposition, stating that the route would cut through the heart of the city (*Colton Courier*, 1947d). Johnny Doyal, its president, argued that "a freeway is not good for a town" and that it should be located at the edge of the community (*Colton Courier*, 1947d, p. 3). The Colton City Council sided with its city's Anglo business interests, in large part because it wanted to maintain the economic viability of its commercial center. The Council ended up voting against the J Street route three times in a row (*Colton Courier*, 1947c).

The opposition began searching for alternatives. In 1946, the mayor wrote a letter to the state's Highway Commission on behalf of the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce, requesting a new survey of potential sites. Afterwards, members of the Chamber of Commerce proposed an alternative route. This route would instead pass well south of the railway tracks, through South Colton along O Street (See **Figure 2-9**). There were two plausible reasons for targeting that area. One, property values were lower, a product of historical racism discussed above. Two, Latinos/as and their South Colton neighborhood had disproportionately less political clout, despite the emerging civil-rights movement. Regardless of the rationale, the Colton City Council endorsed the Chamber of Commerce's resolution in favor of the southern route (McKersie and Davis, 1946 and *Colton Courier*, 1947c, 1947g).

Despite Latino/as being politically disadvantaged, the potential for a freeway to disrupt their community became a focal point for Latino/a activism. The O Street proposal faced strong opposition from Latino/a residents in South Colton. Despite the mayor's reassurances that the concerns of the Latino/a community would be considered, South Colton residents had little faith that this would happen. In a letter to the planning commission, the Latin American Civic Club presented several arguments against the proposal. They claimed that a southern route would disproportionately harm South Colton. The freeway would further isolate South Colton residents from the city's main business area and from important services, like schools. While Anglo business leaders opposed routing the freeway through J Street because it would divide the city, the Latin American Civic Club aptly pointed out that the city was already deeply divided by the railroad along the same corridor and that a freeway through South Colton would actually divide it along an entirely new axis (Padilla and Duran, 1946):

> *"To get to the business section of town, the South Colton residents always have to go through 8th Street....There is no other way to get to town unless we walk, at our own risk, across the S[outhern] P[acific] tracks....Our city is already divided, and the proposed freeway through J St. would...actually divide our city into three separate communities"* (Padilla and Duran, 1946, p. 2).

The Latin American Civic Club criticized the City for favoring the interests of white business owners and penalizing hundreds of Latino/a property owners. The City's endorsement of the southern route for the freeway posed a threat to emerging, predominantly self-supported development and property enhancements in South

Colton (Padilla and Duran, 1946). Their argument revolved around the fact that a freeway passing through South Colton would not leave any space for the displaced residents to relocate within the neighborhood. Implicit in this argument was the reality that Latinos/as would face extreme difficulty in finding housing in North Colton due to pervasive racial discrimination.

South Colton residents expressed their concerns about the potential increase in traffic and pollution from the freeway. They were already familiar with the negative impacts of the railroad tracks, as numerous trains passed through the city, and some were left idling near the *barrio*.[22] Furthermore, they argued that the southern route would undoubtedly be more expensive.[23] Instead, the Latin American Civic Club voiced their support for the original J Street route. In their endorsement, they emphasized the need for a viaduct over the railroad tracks to connect North and South Colton (Gonzales, 2023; *Colton Courier*, 1947f; and Padilla and Duran, 1946). This would address the long-standing issue of physical barriers that hindered movement between the two segregated sections of Colton, discussed above.

The O Street proposal was ultimately dismissed but not solely because of the protest. This is not to downplay the significance of the actions taken by the Latinos/as Colton. Their efforts demonstrate a remarkable political mobilization, consistent with the broader emergence of Latino/a activism in the 1940s. The level of engagement from Latinos/a prompted city planners to express appreciation to the representatives from the Latin American Civic Club for their suggestions—because the group were the only ones to submit a fully developed, written plan to the Highway Commission, among all local organizations (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1947). While the O Street proposal was ultimately dismissed on financial grounds, the Latino/a response revealed a remarkable ability to mobilize and fight against racial injustice.

One of the strongest objections to the O Street route came from highway engineers, who disagreed with the City and Chamber of Commerce's suggestion to have the highway cross the railroad and traverse South Colton (McCoy, 1946). They argued it was not an adequate solution:

> *"because of the important interstate connections from the north and because of the large volume of traffic which proceeds northeasterly from Colton to San Bernardino and into the San Bernardino [M]ountains. If the main [s]tate highway were built south of the railroad, it would require that traffic be separated once in crossing the railroad to the south and again for a large volume to cross back to the north side; and in addition, it would require a new crossing of the Santa Ana River"* (McCoy, 1946, p. 4).

Such a circuitous routing could impede traffic flow, as opposed to a freeway running straight through Colton. The state's District Highway Engineer's office also expressed concern about the financial implications of this plan, stating that it would be too expensive. Along with land and demolition costs, state highway engineers rejected the idea of a southern route because it would require the freeway to cross the South Pacific tracks twice (McCoy, 1946 and *Colton Courier*, 1947a, 1947b).

Although less popular, the Highway Committee of the Chamber of Commerce discussed a third east/west route for the San Bernardino Freeway. A version of this proposed route, dubbed the "corkscrew freeway," would,

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22. South Colton residents often refer to their neighborhood as "*el barrio*." In many urban contexts across the country, "*barrios*" also refer to impoverished Hispanic enclaves (Rodriguez, 2012).

23. Despite home values being cheaper in South Colton, the O Street route would have involved costly crossings of the Southern Pacific track and, according to directory listings (See **Figure 2-10**), more total property takings than on J Street (San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949). State engineers confirmed that the southern O Street route would have been more expensive (*Colton Courier*, 1947b).

coming from Los Angeles, suddenly turn north up to C Street as it approached Colton, pass through Colton north of the main business district, and then veer south again in a series of steps as it headed east out of town (See **Figure 2-9**). The idea behind this northern route was to divert a significant amount of traffic to San Bernardino, thereby sparing Colton's business district (*Colton Courier*, 1947f, 1947g).

There were multiple reasons why the C Street option was deemed not feasible. Engineers and the state's Highway Commission were concerned about dividing the town once again, especially if the freeway had to be routed through the Anglo residential area in North Colton. Therefore, they concluded that a routing parallel and adjacent to the Southern Pacific railroad would cause the least damage, considering that the city had already been divided by the railroad. Operating trucks adjacent to the railroad would also result in less discomfort and congestion (McCoy, 1946).

Routing the freeway up to C Street would also have severely disrupted the traffic flow. The segments of the freeway to the west and east of Colton were lined up with J Street. Therefore, taking the C Street path would have required the freeway to first turn north for approximately half a mile before crossing the city and then turn south for another half-mile. This added complexity and the curves would have slowed down the movement of traffic. Moreover, it is unlikely that the city's elected officials would have supported this alternative, as it would have upset the voting majority of white residents.

What was intriguing is the absence of documentation regarding significant mobilization by white Colton residents about the C Street route. One plausible explanation is that the structure of racial privilege was adequate to help preserve this particular geographic section of Colton. It appears that none of the other interest groups were willing to upset or challenge this specific aspect of the racial status quo by advocating for the C Street option. South Colton was focused on protecting their neighborhood without picking a needless fight with North Colton residents, and their actions were steps in creating a counterforce to existing racism. City and mainstream businesses' interests were more than willing to place the burden on Latinos/as, a step that would have reinforced the racial order. But failing to accomplish this, the local government and commercial interests would eventually compromise with the state.

A solution to the impasse started to emerge in 1947. In June of that year, highway engineers proposed a revised location for the preferred freeway route. The proposal was close to the J Street plan, but the new route would run closer to the Southern Pacific tracks, south of J Street instead of north. This adjustment would spare the block between I Street and J Street, preserving commercial property and parking development on the north side of J Street. This shift, however, came at the expense of railway property and industrial sites along the south edge of J Street. The freeway route would cut through the United Citrus Growers building and the Chamber of Commerce building, adding insult to injury for these latter supporters of the southern route instead (*Colton Courier*, 1947a).

In early 1950, after years of debate and consideration, the City of Colton unanimously agreed to this modified J Street path for the freeway. As planned at the time, the route would be sunken about 20 feet below ground level. This plan would require the demolition of all buildings on J Street and many on 8th Street. The agreement stipulated that 3rd, 4th, 8th, and 9th Streets would remain open at ground level, with the freeway passing underneath, although that promise was never completely fulfilled.[24] The plan also indicated that sections of J Street would remain open to provide access to properties along the freeway, as well as widening the alley

24. These plans were later modified. Currently, only 8th Street has an underpass allowing it to cross under both the I-10 freeway and the Southern Pacific tracks.

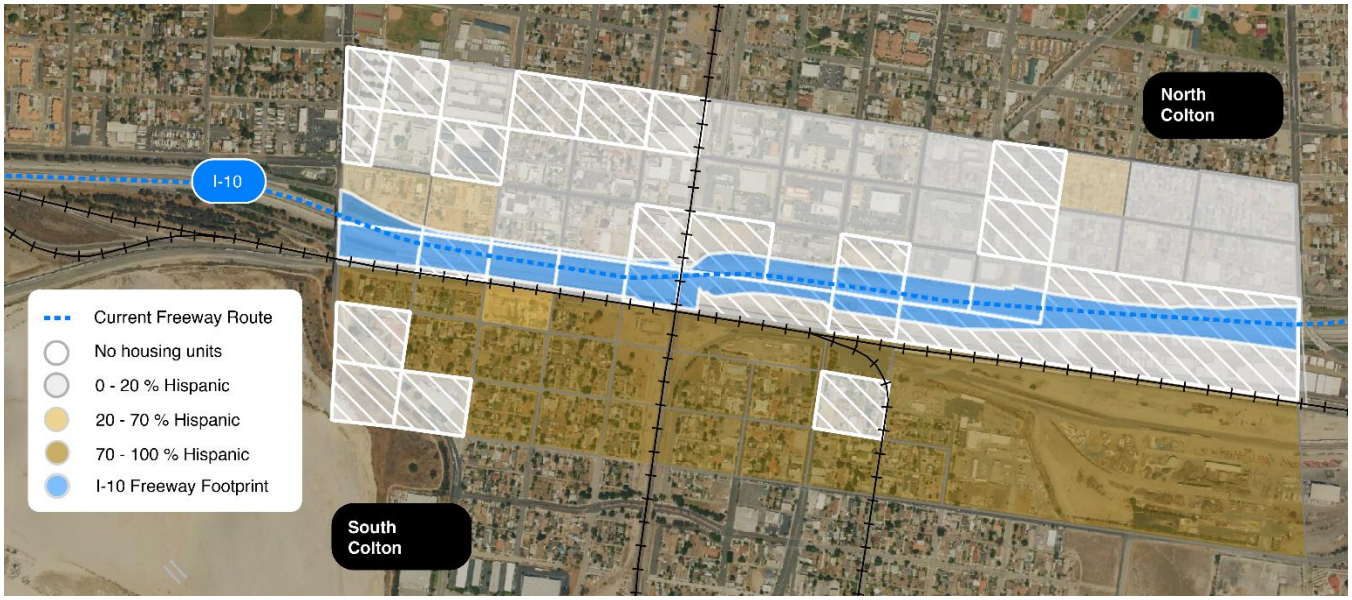
between I and J streets for the same purpose (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1950a, 1950b and *Colton Courier*, 1950a, 1950b).

2.7. Impacts and Broader Consequences

Displacement

The revised J Street route had an impact on both residents and businesses. From the individual records in the 1950 U.S. Census we assessed, **Figures 2-12** and **2-13** display the freeway's footprint and the blocks affected (See Appendix A). Hewing close to the existing railroad tracks, the freeway apparently displaced only a small number of residents—an estimated 28 individuals (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950b)).[25] This number is significantly lower than the 45 residential listings found in the 1949 telephone directory. There are likely two reasons for this discrepancy. Firstly, the census may not have included individuals living in what it considered temporary accommodations, such as hotels and seasonal housing. Secondly, **Figure 2-10**, which used the telephone directory, examined listings on both sides of J Street. whereas our calculations

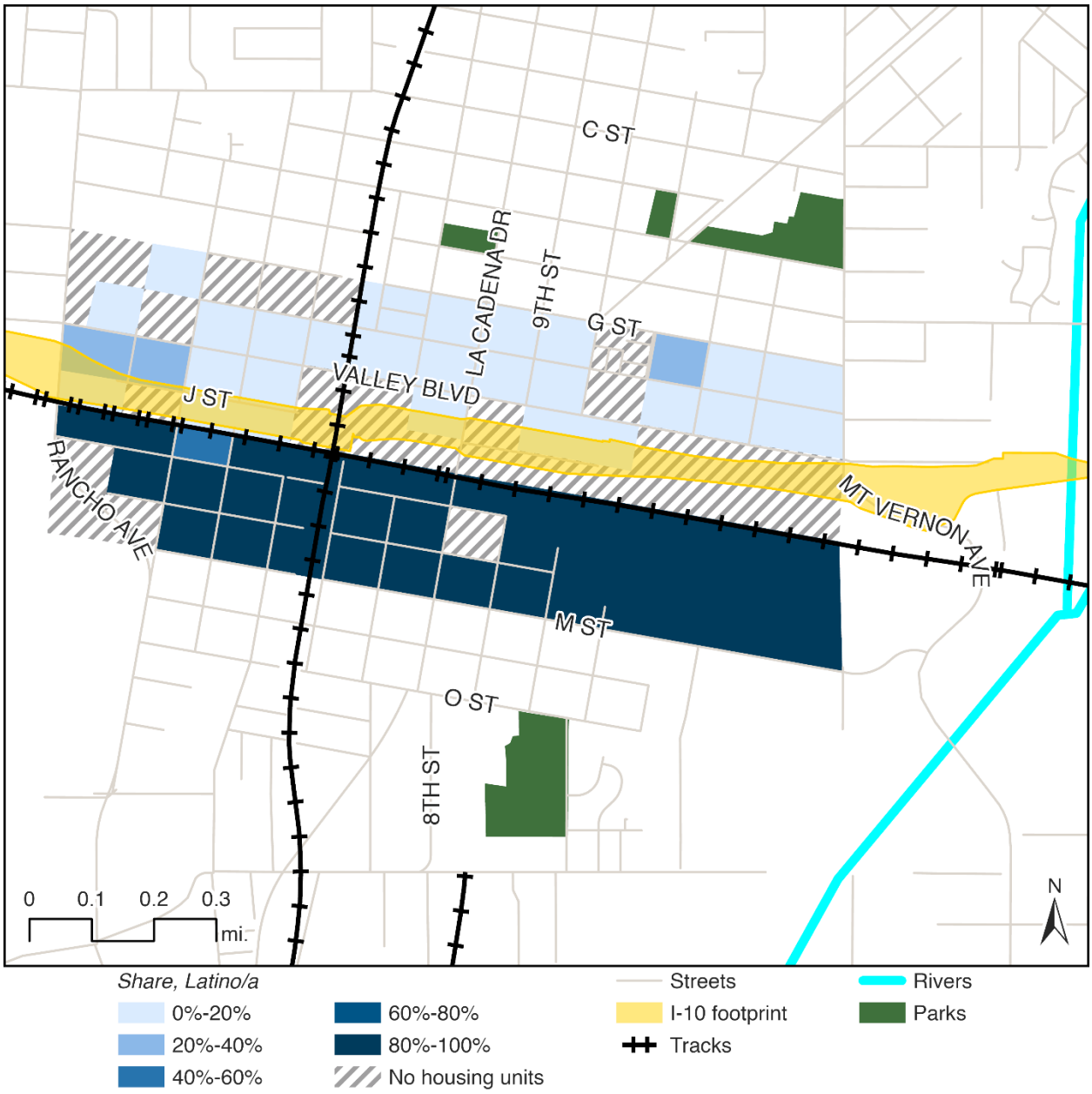
Figure 2-12. Demographics near the Colton Freeway Path, 1950



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950b); U.S. Census Bureau, 1948; Bright, 2023; and Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; background imagery: Google, 2024b

25 This estimate is based on a proportion of those counted in the U.S. Census enumeration (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950b) through spatial allocation.

Figure 2-13. Demographics near the Colton Freeway Path, 1950, in Context



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950b); U.S. Census Bureau, 1948; Bright, 2023; Caltrans, 2024a; Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, 2024; San Bernardino County, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

from the census disaggregate either side of the street. Moreover, there is a difference in the estimated racial composition. Eleven percent of the directory listings were Hispanic (See **Figure 2-11**), whereas the census records indicated that only five percent were Hispanic (San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949 and calculated

by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950b)). However, both estimates align with the fact that Colton was highly segregated, with few people of color residing north of the railroad tracks.

The effects extended beyond the loss of residences. Pre-construction newspaper articles lamented the forthcoming destruction on the commercial side. These articles listed about a dozen commercial establishments. Among the notable losses were the J.C. Penney building, the Chamber of Commerce, United Citrus, the Colton Hardware Store, Willets department store, and Helman's Department Store (the last occupying one of the oldest buildings in the city, originally designed in the late 1800s for the First National Bank of Colton). One Mr. O.P. Rushaugh ran the oldest establishment on J Street, a barbershop, for over 40 years, before he closed to make way for the freeway. Additionally, public amenities were lost. The Southern Pacific had built Railroad Park near its train depot, but it was demolished in 1954 (*Colton Courier*, 1950a; *San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1950b, 1953a; Olson, 1989; and Sheffield, 2004).

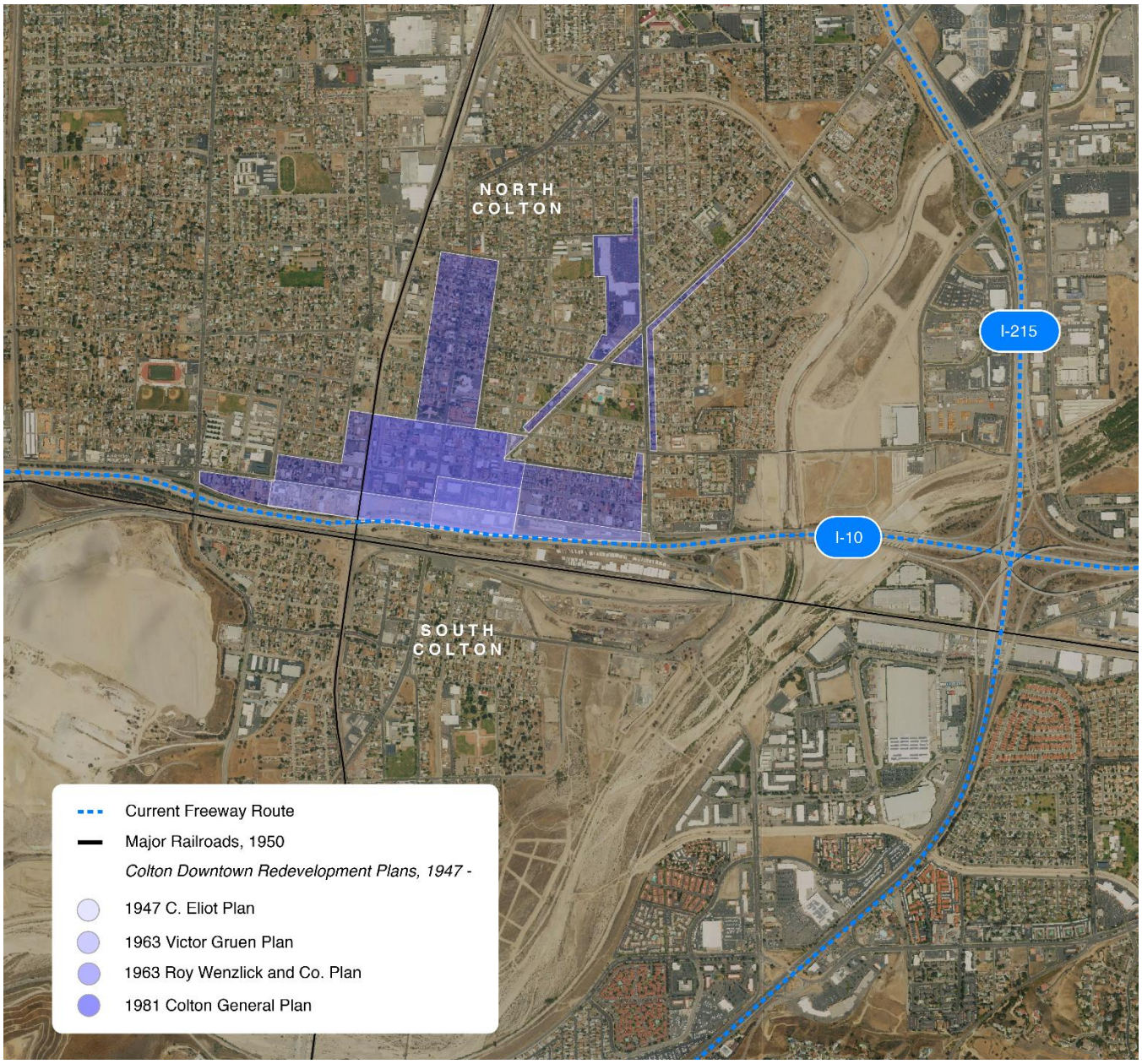
Beyond the immediate loss of residential and commercial buildings, the freeway caused broader economic and societal consequences. The decision to choose the J Street alternative was part of a larger decline in Colton's commercial sector. Some businesses relocated. Willets and Helman's, for example, moved to new and more modern locations further north on 8th Street. The Chamber of Commerce also found a new home up the street. The remaining businesses in the area near the freeway suffered, even if not directly displaced. Retailers on the south side of I Street lost prominence due to their proximity to the newly constructed freeway. Businesses like McMahan Furniture Store and the adjacent Stater Supermarket eventually closed down and their buildings were demolished. Remaining properties along the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railways were rezoned for further industrial purposes (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1950b; *Sun-Telegram*, 1953a; Sheffield, 2004; and Wenzlick and Company, 1963).

To the Present Day

Despite subsequent efforts through urban renewal, the city's dream of revitalizing its downtown failed. In 1952, the firm of planner Gordon Whitnall produced a master plan for Colton, which was informed by a survey of 1,000 families (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1952). In their analysis, Whitnall and Associates described Colton's downtown north of the planned freeway in a "state of decay and stagnation," as the *San Bernardino Daily Sun* (1952, p. 22) paraphrased, and called for new investments and parking in a new/expanded business district roughly between E and J Streets. The City followed suit, with approximately 174,000 square feet of modern retail space produced thereafter. Throughout the 1960s, Colton's Redevelopment Agency prioritized over thirty acres in North Colton for redevelopment (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1952; Wenzlick and Company, 1963; and Urban Futures, 2010). Redevelopment plans for the area were produced in 1947, 1963, and 1981 (See **Figure 2-14** and **2-15**), including one contributed to by mall pioneer Victor Gruen (Eliot, 1947a; Colton Redevelopment Agency, 1963; Wenzlick and Company, 1963; and City of Colton, 1981). But despite planners' assurances that the freeway and redevelopment efforts would revive downtown Colton, business owners found the opposite (Mitchell, 1957). One merchant noted that the freeway "knocked out business," especially on weekends (Mitchell, 1957, p. 1). Another claimed business was down by two thirds, which prompted him to lay off employees (Mitchell, 1957).

In contrast, South Colton received little public investment: resident Henry Vasquez remembered some streets, like the one his home was on, remained unpaved until the 1970s (Vasquez and Acosta, 2023 and Pitti, Castaneda, and Cortes, 1980). Its economy was deemed "fractured and struggling for survival" in the City's 1981 general plan (City of Colton, 1981, p. 53), with a run-down main commercial corridor, few employment opportunities, multiple

Figure 2-14. Colton Redevelopment Plans

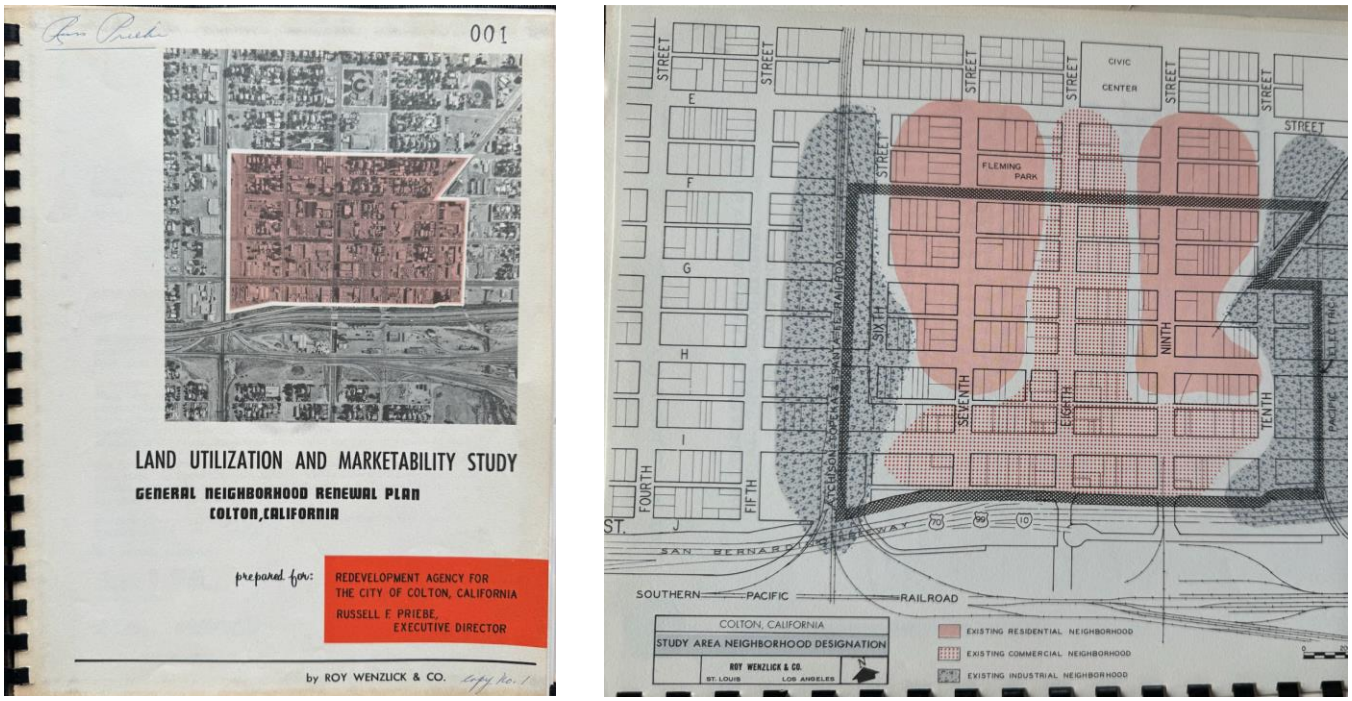


Data sources: Eliot, 1947a; Colton Redevelopment Agency, 1963; Wenzlick and Company, 1963; City of Colton, 1981; and Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; background imagery: Google, 2024b

vacant or underutilized parcels, and heavy industrial traffic (City of Colton, 1981). Today, it is among the most pollution-burdened areas of the state (California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023).

Meanwhile, the City did finally complete the long-sought underpass connecting North and South Colton. In August 1953, the City signed off on a new freeway agreement. In the revised design, the freeway would rise above

Figure 2-15. Studied Urban Renewal Area for Colton's Business District, 1963



Source: Wenzlick and Company, 1963

ground, to accommodate the underpass. Construction on the underpass started early in 1955, after almost 14 years of advocacy by local groups (*San Bernardino Daily Sun*, 1953b and Crawford, 1965).

As the San Bernardino Freeway was constructed, state staff also had to decide upon the route for the north/south Riverside Freeway (now I-215). While initial alternate routes ran I-215 either through Colton or skirting Colton to the west, the final route did end up bypassing the town (instead to the east) (Eliot, 1947a, 1947b and Whitnall and Associates, 1952).

Still, even though the division between North and South Colton had existed along the railroad tracks for decades, the now-elevated I-10 freeway transformed the boundary into an almost impenetrable barrier. Local residents note that the freeway is a massive obstacle that not just physically but also psychologically separates the two parts of Colton to this day. Because of its height, the freeway presents a visual barrier (much like a wall) and creates dead ends on surface streets (Vasquez and Acosta, 2023).

Colton continues to be one of the busiest railway hubs in the country. In 2008, over 110 trains passed Colton every day. Railroad operations created intense conflicts among trains and between trains and automobile traffic, which led to severe delays, congestion, poor air quality and noise. Colton Crossing—then still an at-grade crossing of two major lines—was a nexus of these issues. From 2011 to 2013, a public-private partnership constructed a flyover at Colton Crossing, moving the east/west Southern Pacific (now Union Pacific) tracks onto a bridge above the north/south Santa Fe (now BNSF) tracks. The project eliminated a major source of train delay

and conflict.[26] However, the rail flyover effectively reproduced the elevated structure of the I-10 freeway, creating a second physical barrier—this one even taller and more looming than the first—between North and South Colton (Jin, 2013; Weikel, 2013; and HDR, 2024).

Conclusions

The Colton case study provides insights into the complexity of freeway development and its connection to race. It is evident that racism played a significant role in the economic, social, and geographical organization of the city. During this era, Colton was hyper-segregated, and South Colton had one of the highest concentrations of Latinos/as in the Inland Empire. Latinos/as in South Colton faced political disadvantages, similar to people of color throughout California, and therefore had limited influence on decisions. The civil rights movement after the Second World War was still in its nascency. Freeways then disproportionately ran through communities of color because their residents were relatively less powerful to influence the outcomes.

Despite the commonality of being disadvantaged like other marginalized neighborhoods, Latinos/as in Colton were the exception among our case studies because the chosen route did not end up passing through their *barrio*. While Latinos/as opposed the alternative route on O Street, factors other than race primarily influenced the freeway siting decision. This southern path would have required the construction of extra expensive bridges, over the river and over the railroad tracks. The final route of the freeway may have aggravated racial segregation, but Colton's communities had already been starkly separated by the railroad for decades. Ironically, then, the pre-existing racial segregation defined by the railroad tracks prevented South Colton from being directly impacted by the freeway.

While the plan to locate the freeway through South Colton failed to materialize, it was not because authorities sided with South Colton residents and their desire to preserve their neighborhood. Instead, records indicate that the route was abandoned because of the exorbitant cost it carried, compared to the relative ease of constructing the freeway parallel to the existing Southern Pacific railroad tracks.

Nevertheless, the freeway did create an additional physical barrier, isolating Latinos/as further. And indeed, the route selection still had racial implications. The state and local government did not support the C Street alternative in the white residential area of North Colton, which was also politically and socially unrealistic because it would have disrupted too many homes of white households. This decision helped maintain the geographic integrity of that part of the city. However, as discussed earlier, other forces tied to the fight for fair housing and integration would eventually challenge the racial order, even if the freeway itself did not.

While urban renewal programs in the late 1950s and early 1960s attempted to improve North Colton, South Colton was persistently neglected. Again, this differs from areas like Stockton and Pasadena. There, decision-makers paired racially biased freeway routing with large-scale redevelopment projects, each justifying and complementing the other in displacing and rending apart communities (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023). While South Colton residents avoided most formal redevelopment efforts, they suffered from institutional disinvestment arguably no less malign. Whereas freeways in those other areas were used to bisect and demolish neighborhoods of color, Colton's freeway reinforced in concrete and asphalt a color line. The freeway exacerbated the existing damage and division of the railroad, acting as a further cordon and physical

26. The project also rerouted branch tracks that previously ran down the middle of 9th Street in South Colton (Jin, 2013).

barrier supporting extreme racial/ethnic segregation. In this way, the freeway exposes the nature of structural racism and its perpetuation.

The freeway's ultimate local economic impact in Colton is not what planners had forecast. Even the downtown areas that received considerable planning and redevelopment resources continue to be dominated by the freeway, its negative externalities, and industrial and automobile-oriented land uses instead of local-serving ones. Despite efforts to relocate and renovate business facilities, downtown never truly recovered and instead declined gradually. In South Colton, where none of the effects of the freeway were mitigated, the impact was more acute and accelerated. Today's land use near the freeway compares to what the president of Colton's Junior Chamber of Commerce predicted in 1947, as paraphrased in a newspaper article:

> *"A trans-city freeway built along those lines would leave nothing in the [C]ity of Colton but some gasoline and diesel fumes, while motorists took a quick glimpse of some high banks along the roadway without even knowing they were speeding through Colton"* (*Colton Courier*, 1947d, p. 1).

South Colton escaped the wrecking ball and bulldozer of the freeway, urban renewal, and some of their direct impacts. However, the indirect impacts from the freeway, along with broader socioeconomic forces, have continued to affect South Colton. Even though the neighborhood was ostensibly spared, much of its past business scene, culture, and population have disappeared.

3. Fresno

3.1. Introduction

This case study explores the construction of State Route 99 (then signed as U.S. Route 99)[27] through West Fresno in the 1950s through the lens of structural racism (as defined in Section 1.2). **Figure 3-1** depicts the study area and major roads and railroads.

Figure 3-1. Central and West Fresno Geography and Transportation

Data sources: City of Fresno Planning and Development Department, 2021; Challenger Tom, 2017; Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; and Fresno County, 2024; background imagery: Google, 2024b

27. The U.S. Route 99 designation was decommissioned in the mid-1960s. Most of its route in California became signed as State Route 99, as it is today (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020b).

Before the freeway arrived, the community was racially and ethnically diverse, though experiencing white flight. The choice of the freeway's route was not random but the result of pre-Second World War and contemporaneous factors that stacked the odds against communities of color.

Three economic forces shaped Fresno's early development: the region's agricultural economic base, railroads that exported produce and moved people, and the downtown business class that emerged to service the region's needs. Their influence was particularly important in the decision-making process of freeway siting.

Underlying all of these was the racism that structured the city, which created a socioeconomic hierarchy and racialized spaces for over a century prior to freeway construction. While the major division was along color lines, Fresno's non-Hispanic white population was also fragmented, with some immigrants occupying a lower status rank. West Fresno was the material product of this stratified system, a highly segregated and marginalized place housing people of color and low-status immigrant groups. The presence of these underprivileged groups augmented the risk that West Fresno would bear the burden of freeway development (as discussed in detail later in this part).

West Fresno residents could not prevent the freeway's construction, despite considerable resistance. Structural conditions, along with privileged economic and political actors working with the state, ensured that no alternatives outside the West Fresno community were considered. Within West Fresno, the chosen route protected its commercial corridor but at the expense of the residential area—a Pyrrhic victory embedded in a larger societal process that reproduced racial disparities.

The freeway had both direct and indirect impacts. It displaced over a thousand residents, a large majority being people of color. The freeway also had broader consequences: initiating a long-term decline of West Fresno, accelerating white flight, and ironically fostering a decline of downtown.

The rest of this part of the report is divided into five sections. The next discusses how the city's transformation and political economy influenced and was influenced by the development of the US-99 freeway. Then, we discuss the city's overall racial structure and specific information about the communities in West Fresno. We next cover the development and planning timeline of the freeway. The penultimate section describes the decision-making process and quantifies the impacts. The final section discusses how the findings help us refine the concept of structural racism.

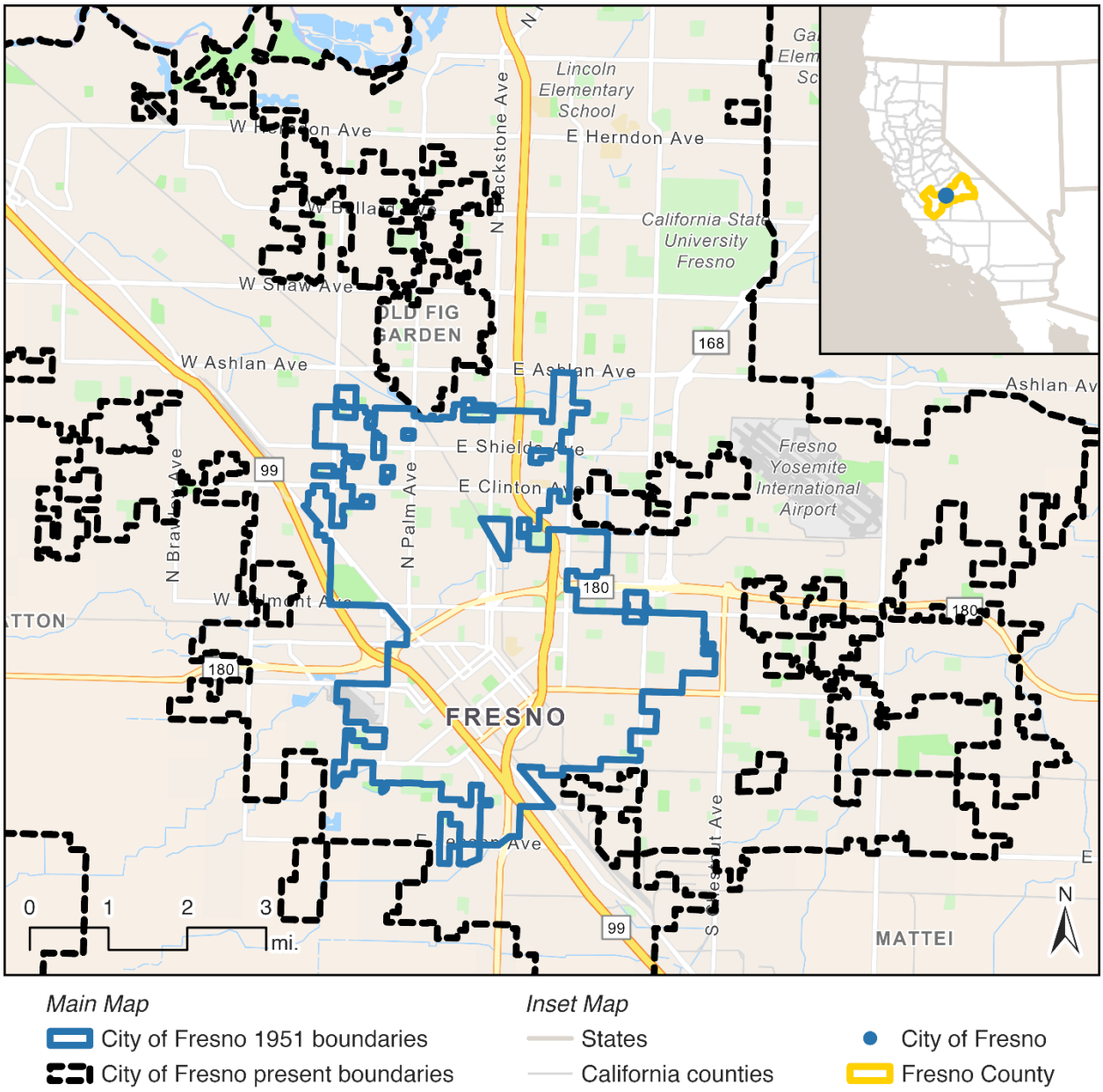
3.2. Background

City of Fresno

The City of Fresno is located in California's Central Valley, approximately 200 miles north of Los Angeles and 160 miles southwest of San Francisco (See **Figure 3-2**). With a population of over half a million residents, it is now considered a medium-sized city and ranks as the fifth-largest in California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). Due to its central location in the region known as the "food basket of the world" (*California.com*, 2024), Fresno serves as a regional urban center, where the surrounding county serves as the economic base and the city provides essential exporting and domestic services.

Fresno was founded in 1872 around a railway depot, became the county seat in 1874, and was incorporated in 1885 (City of Fresno, 2024 and *Historicfresno.org*, 2010). Previously, the area had been inhabited by native

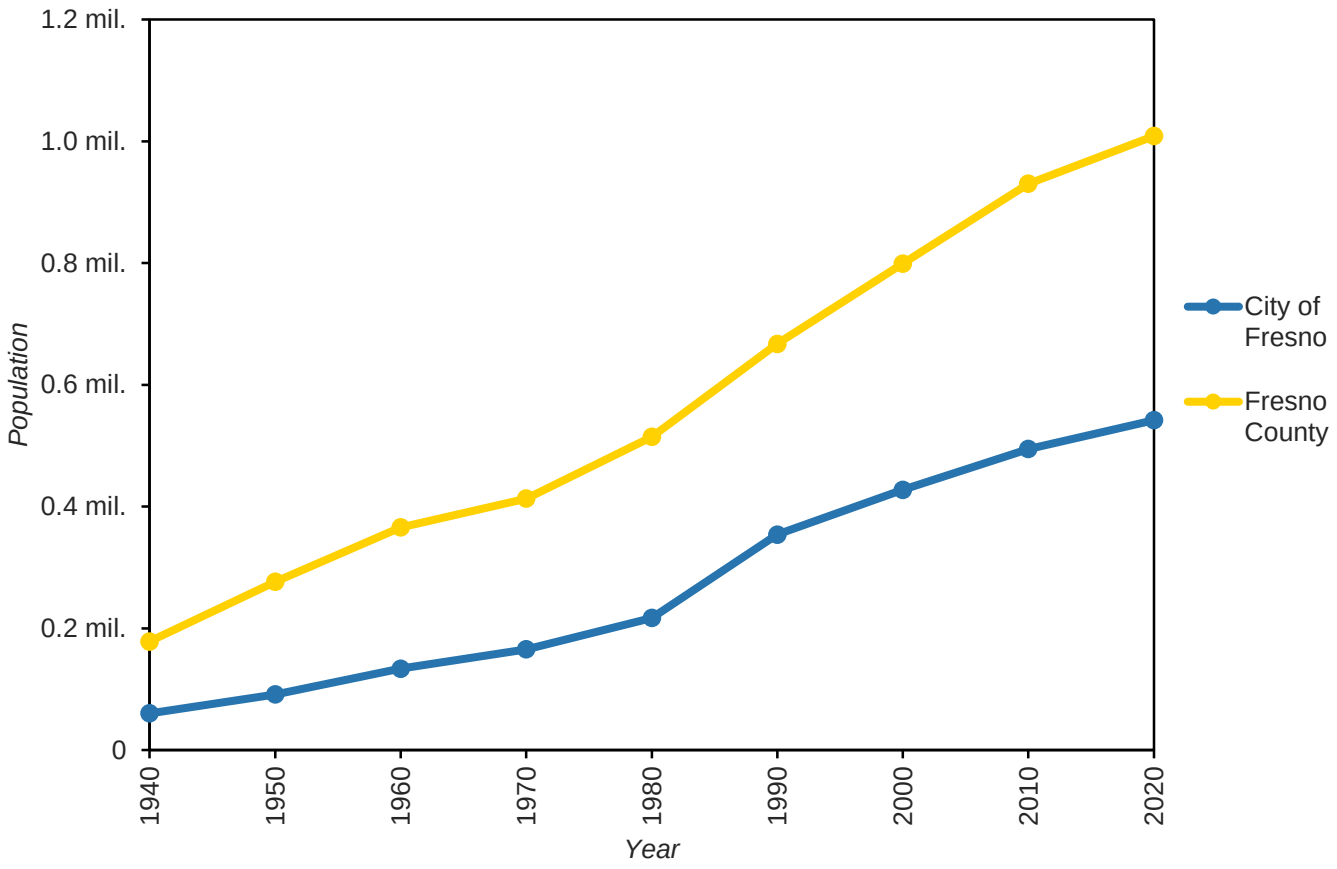
Figure 3-2. Fresno City Boundaries



Data sources: City of Fresno Planning and Development Department, 2021; Fresno County, 2024; Hudson, 2022; and California Open Data, 2019; base map: Esri, 2024b

tribes; however, their populations dwindled after years of enslavement and violence[28] (Guzmán, 2012; Johnston-Dodds and Supahan, 2022; Madley, 2021; and Meeks, 2021). After the Gold Rush swept through the West, hundreds of thousands of people came to California. As the century passed, Chinese, Mexican, and indigenous miners (who faced discrimination and burdensome taxes) were replaced with farm workers, as agriculture transformed a region once characterized as barren by white settlers (Guzmán, 2012). Fresno had a population of over 10,000 by 1890, with robust rail connections (City of Fresno, 2024 and *Historicfresno.org*, 2010). By 1940, the population had surpassed 60,000 and continued to increase secularly over the following decades. (See **Figure 3-3**) The construction of US-99 further contributed to this growth, with Fresno's population increasing at a similar rate to the rest of the state. During the 1940s and 1950s, the city experienced significant growth, with decennial growth rates of 51 percent and 46 percent, respectively. By 1960, the population of Fresno had reached approximately 134,000. During the 1950s, the city's share of the county's population increased from 33 percent to

Figure 3-3. Population Trends, Fresno City and County

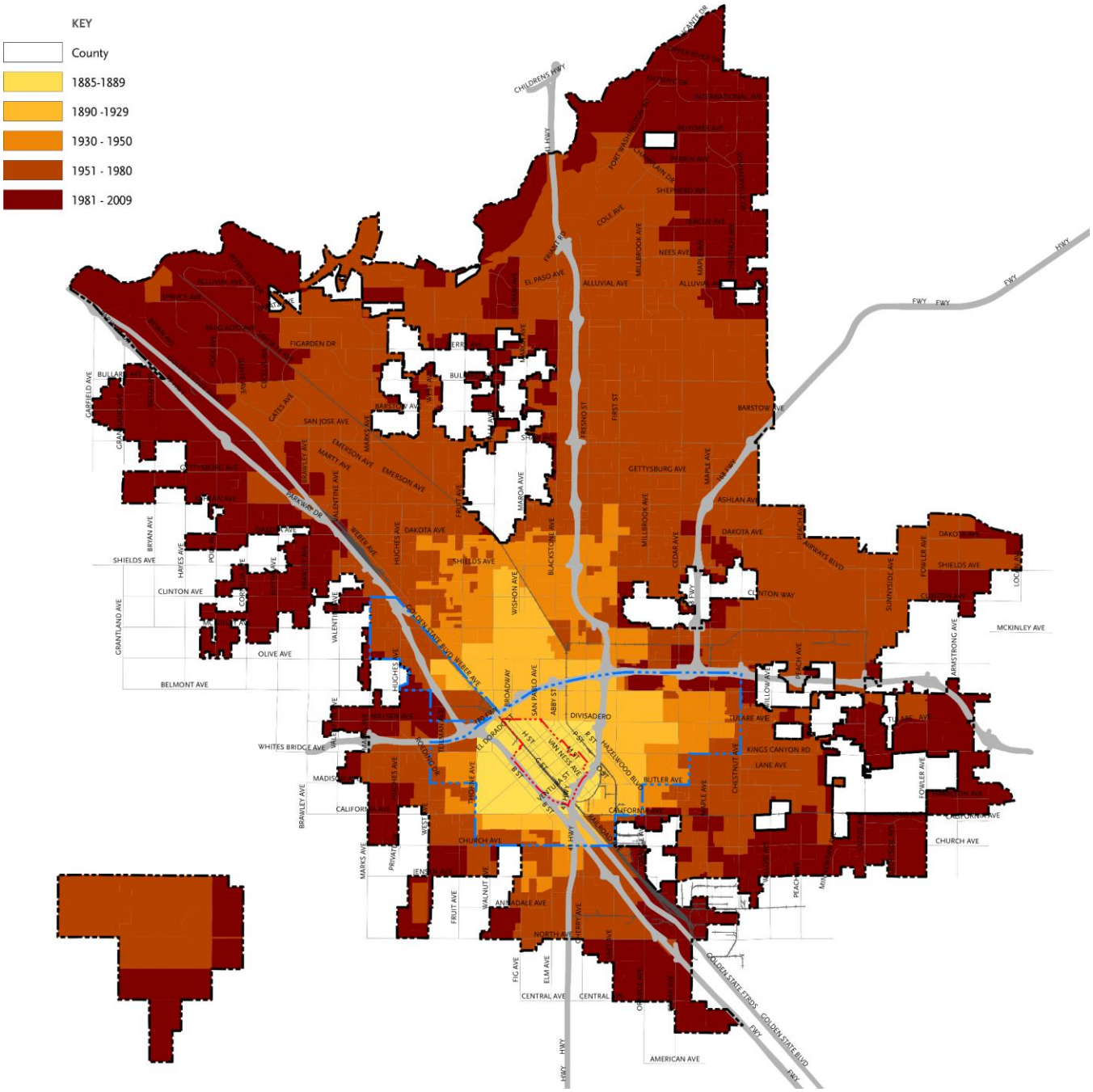


Data source: California Department of Finance, 2024

28. Spanish explorers first came to California in the mid-1500s and practiced formal and informal forced labor across their American possessions. In California, Spanish settlers forced native people to construct missions in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Forced native labor continued in California even as a U.S. state, until after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 (Johnston-Dodds and Supahan, 2022; Madley, 2021; and Meeks, 2021).

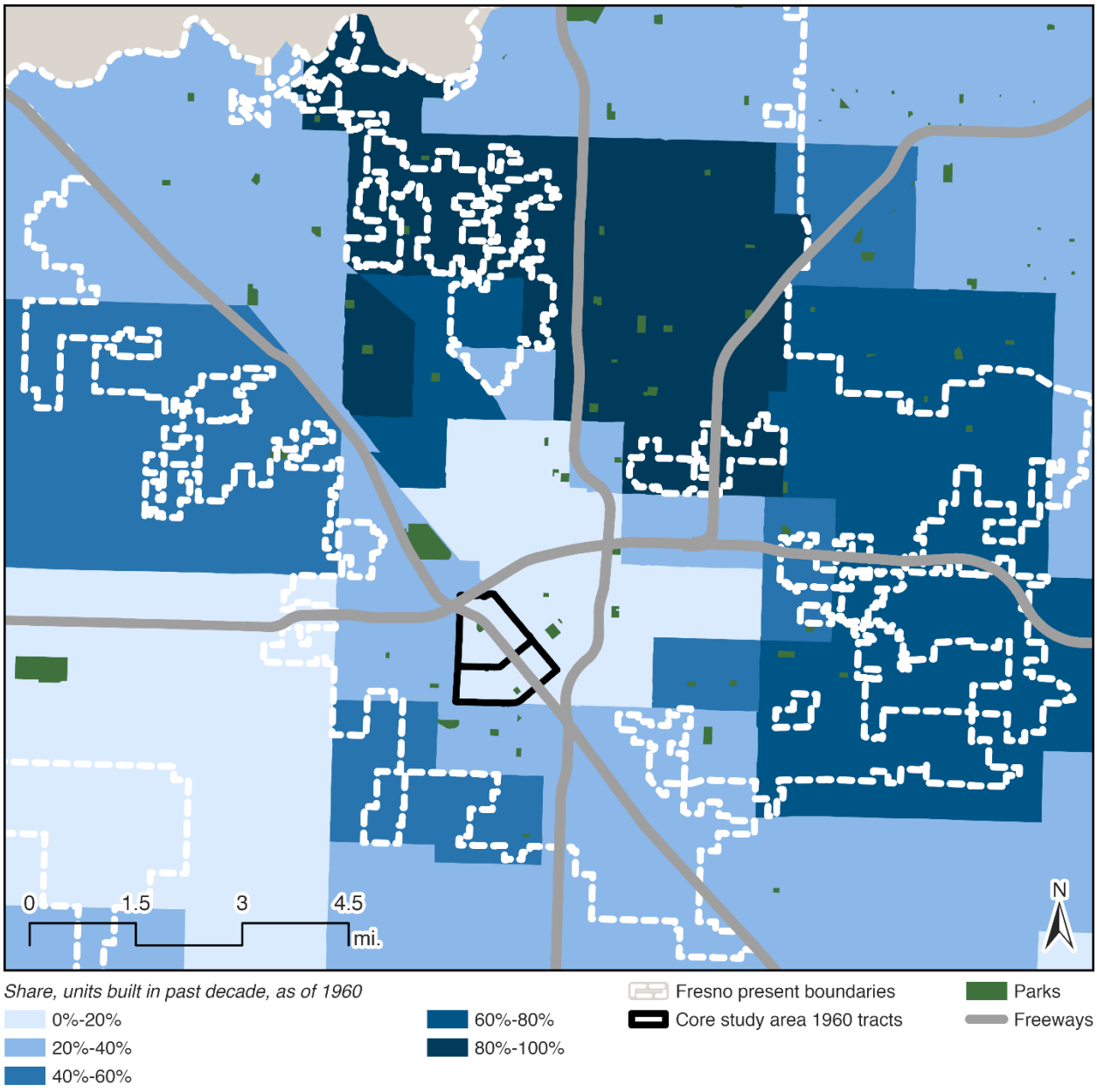
37 percent, growth coming from both gains within the city and annexation of surrounding areas (See **Figure 3-4**) (California Department of Finance, 2024 and City of Fresno, 2016).

Figure 3-4. City of Fresno Annexations



Source: City of Fresno, 2016, p. 11

Figure 3-5. Housing Units Built in Fresno County Between 1950 and 1960



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1960 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960); Social Explorer, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a; Caltrans, 2023b; and Esri, 2024a

The City of Fresno's territorial expansion during the 1940s and 1950s fostered urban sprawl.[29] Like many other regions in the United States, Fresno County was suburbanizing. Between 1950 and 1960, the number of

29. As a report from the Urban Institute finds, "Urban sprawl has continued unabated for decades in the Central San Joaquin Valley, consuming land at a greater rate than population growth" (Freemark et al., 2024, p. v).

urbanized tracts in the county nearly doubled (growing 80% and 79%, respectively), with most of this growth occurring in and around the City of Fresno (Freemark et al., 2024). **Figure 3-5** shows where new housing units were built in the 1950s, based on 1960 census data. Housing development was primarily concentrated in the northern and eastern sections of Fresno and its surroundings, with few new homes constructed in the old urban core. Much of the new housing was in low-density areas. This transformation of the urban landscape was made possible by two related factors: the increase in automobile ownership and the development of the freeway system. As discussed in Part 1 and Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a), the ability to travel faster and farther allowed people to live farther apart, economic activities to disperse, and social networks to expand. The City itself acknowledged the early stages of urban sprawl as "auto-oriented" (City of Fresno, 2016, p. 10). The transformation of US-99 from merely an intercity route to a freeway was a significant part of these changes (City of Fresno, 2016).

Fresno's Political Economy

Three important economic forces influenced the development of the US-99 freeway: agribusiness, downtown businesses, and railroads.

Agriculture emerged as a key economic sector for the region during the latter part of the 19th century. Prior to that, Fresno County's landscape was akin to prairie land, "primarily used for cattle and sheep grazing" (Fresno Irrigation District, n.d.). What transformed this sector was the development of an extensive irrigation system. Irrigated land in Fresno County grew from 500 acres in 1869/1870 to over 306,000 acres in 1899, enabling the agriculture sector to grow exponentially (Shaw, 1969). Fresno's dominance in the county's economic base continues to this day (Fresno County Economic Development Corporation, 2024).

Table 3-1 illustrates the significant role of agriculture in Fresno County compared to the rest of California in 1950, just after the US-99 route was selected. At that time, the entire state was a major exporter of produce, but Fresno had a higher concentration of farms, farm value, and farm labor, including both hired and family labor (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952d). The parity index for value was at least two and a half—indicating that agriculture was at least two and a half times more important to Fresno than to the rest of the state, as normalized by population.

Table 3-1. Fresno County and California's Agricultural Economic Base, 1950

Statistic	California	Fresno County		Parity Index
		Number	Share of State	
Population	10,586,223	276,515	2.6%	N/A
Farms	137,168	10,147	7.4%	2.83
Farm value (1950 $)	$5,557 mil.	$368 mil.	6.6%	2.53
Family and/or hired farm workers	318,977	24,019	7.5%	2.88
Hired farm workers	163,241	11,603	7.1%	2.72

Data source: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952d)

This indirectly influenced freeway development, through the agriculture industry's connections with businesses in the City of Fresno.

As mentioned above, the City of Fresno owes its establishment to the construction of a railroad in 1872. The previous year, Leland Stanford, a Director for the Central Pacific Railroad,[30] chose an open field for a new depot. Subsequently, the railroad became a crucial part of Fresno's economy, allowing both the city and the farmers in the Central Valley to export their produce (City of Fresno, 2024 and *Historicfresno.org*, 2010). The place-making power of the railroad is captured in the following quote:

> *"[The] Railroad Depot, more than any other building in the city, represents the growth of Fresno from a barren plain into the agri-business capital of the world"* (*Historicfresno.org*, 2010).

The railroads, along with the development of the irrigation system, played a vital role in the agricultural sector's prosperity in the Fresno region and the greater Central Valley. Throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century, California's railroads held significant power in the state and, consequently, in Fresno as well. Although the state later managed to reduce their political influence, railroads remained essential to the economy during the period after the Second World War. They served as a lifeline for the region, enabling the export of agricultural products. During the 1950s, railroads carried about half of the intercity commercial freight in the United States, two to three times more than what was transported by trucks. This figure was likely even higher in Fresno, since the city had limited alternatives at the time, such as waterways (Shaw, 1969; Nash, 1962; Craghead, 2019; and National Museum of American History, 2023). Consequently, railroad tracks, yards, and railway operations were economically sacred and not susceptible to disruption or displacement by freeway development. In Fresno, then, this meant building the freeway either west or east of the tracks.

During the decades after the Second World War, Fresno County had a geographically bifurcated economic structure (See **Figure 3-6**) The agricultural sector was located outside the county's main urban area. The rest of the county housed a large majority of employment (62%) and almost all of the agricultural workers (97%). This area also had a higher concentration of jobs in forestry and fisheries, mining, construction, and repair services. The City of Fresno, on the other hand, served as a hub for the region's essential domestic needs and exporting. The city had a relatively higher concentration of jobs in wholesale and retailing; finance, insurance and real estate; and personal/professional/business services.

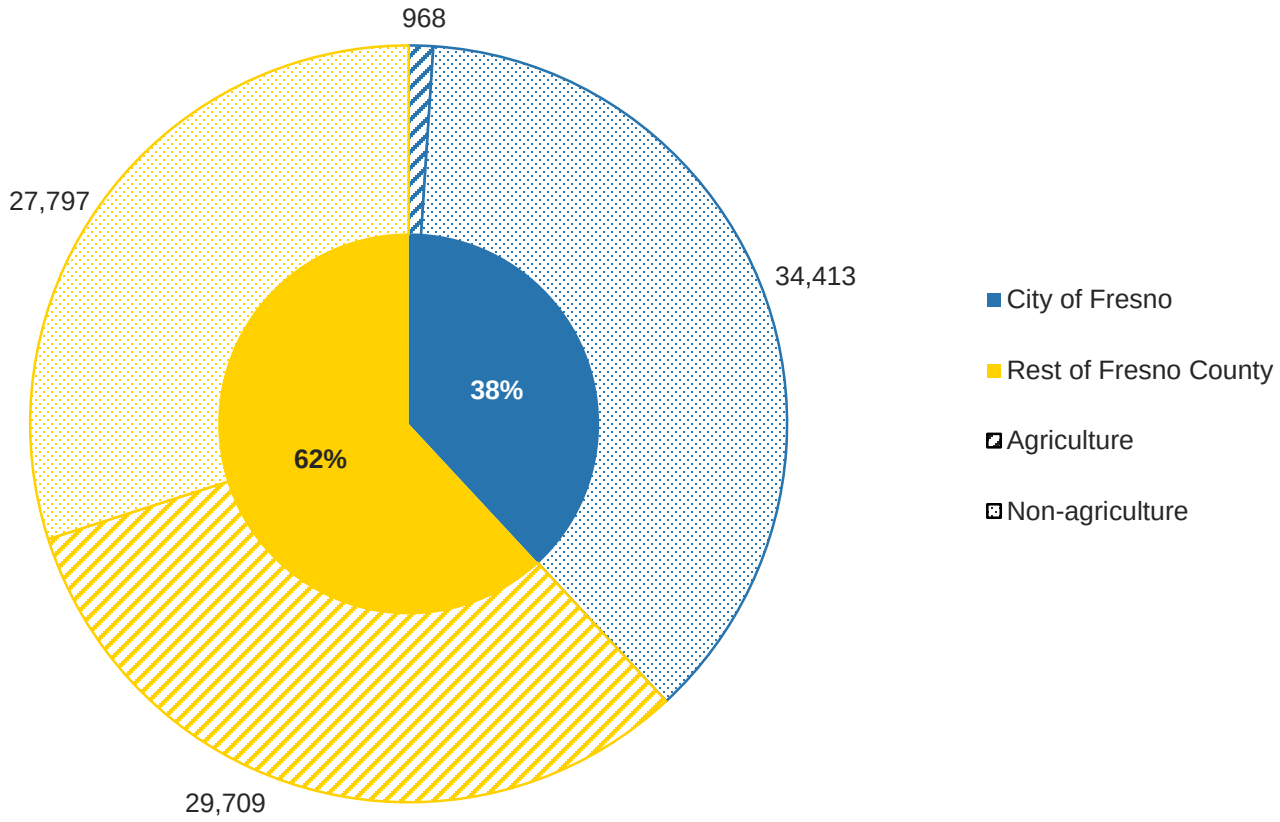
The businesses in the City of Fresno banded together with the 1885 establishment of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce. Although the Chamber included businesses of all sizes, it primarily consisted of small businesses. While these businesses relied heavily on agribusiness and supported its development, they also had their own specific concerns around the day-to-day needs of their members[31] (Fresno Chamber of Commerce, n.d.; Blackford, 1977; and Speiglman and Wittman, 1983).

This narrow self-interest was apparent during the debate around the placement of US-99, as discussed later. At this time, downtown was facing an existential crisis. In the years immediately after the Second World War, policymaking and advocacy heavily focused on the central business district because that was where businesses

30. The tracks through Fresno later became part of the Southern Pacific Railroad and are today part of Union Pacific Railroad (Aberdeen, Carolina, and Western Railway, 2024; *Historicfresno.org*, 2010; and Union Pacific, 2024).

31. See Speiglman and Wittman (1983) for a later example of the Chamber's particular concerns

Figure 3-6. Fresno County Labor Market, 1950



Data source: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952c)

were concentrated. However, the regional restructuring through suburbanization of households, described earlier, led to a nascent but growing dispersion of retailing and other businesses (Calvarese, Osborne, and Moulton, 2016 and Zuk, 2013). The development of suburban shopping malls eventually "...spelled the end for Downtown as the retail hub of the San Joaquin Valley" (Zuk, 2013, p. 38). Counteracting this, in the minds of business leaders, required a freeway that could bring shoppers from the suburbs and beyond to downtown, without causing significant dislocation of existing businesses in the urban core (and regardless of the actual share of drivers that would use the freeway merely to pass through Fresno altogether).

3.3. Fresno's Racial Structure

Socioeconomic Hierarchy

People of color have been a part of Fresno County and City's history since before its founding. The indigenous population in the region were the Yokuts, who were displaced first by the Spanish and then by Americans (Fresno County Historical Society, n.d.-b). Latino/as also had a long-standing presence in the Fresno area (particularly Mexicans). California ceased to be a Mexican territory in 1848, and Fresno was founded by the Central Pacific a

couple of decades later. Many more Mexicans arrived during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1919), and even more migrated to Fresno and the Central Valley during the *bracero* program in the 1940s, which brought farm workers due to a labor shortage during the Second World War (Martínez Nateras and Stanley, 2009; Guzmán, 2012; City of Fresno, 2024; and *Historicfresno.org*, 2010). A significant number of Chinese immigrants entered as exploited laborers in the decades after the 1849 Gold Rush, working on the railroads and in produce-packing. Their numbers declined after the racially-motivated Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Guzmán, 2012; Ong, 1981b, 1984, 1985; Boswell, 1986; Saxton, 1975; and McWilliams and Sackman, 2000). Japanese and later Filipino/as replaced the Chinese, particularly as low-wage agricultural laborers. The Japanese were forcibly removed in 1942 when they were unconstitutionally imprisoned in remote internment camps during the Second World War (Densho, 2024; Guzmán, 2012; National Constitution Center, 2023; and National Archives, 2024). Finally, a population of Black residents made Fresno home since at least 1880, but the largest numbers arrived during the Great Migration (Enunwa, 2012 and National Archives, 2021b).

By 1940, the City of Fresno had a clear racial economic hierarchy (See **Table 3-2**). For one, nativity varied by racial/ethnic group. Nearly all Black heads of household were born in the U.S., along with three quarters of non-Hispanic whites. Meanwhile, slightly more than a third of Asians and a quarter of Latino/as were U.S.-born. There were also significant disparities in educational attainment, as measured among those 25 years and older. White residents had the highest rate of high school graduation, Asians the second highest, and Black and Latino/a residents had roughly the same low rate. This difference in human capital contributed to noticeable disparities in mean annual earnings for those with reported income. Employment discrimination also played a role in the earnings gap. Asians earned about two-thirds of non-Hispanic whites, while Latino/a and Black residents earned less than half. Finally, people of color were far less likely to accumulate wealth through homeownership (Manson et al., 2022). Literature clearly documents a national phenomenon of lower income, restrictive covenants, housing discrimination, and redlining restricting wealth-building through homeownership (e.g., Rothstein, 2017), and we found no reason that Fresno would be an exception.

Table 3-2. Socioeconomic Status by Race in the City of Fresno, 1940

Racial/Ethnic Group	Share, U.S.-born Heads of household	Share, Graduated High School, among Age 25 and Older	Annual Earnings (1939 $)	Share, Homeowners
Non-Hispanic white	77%	42%	$1,210	53%
Asian	35%	31%	$814	34%
Latino/a	27%	15%	$560	37%
Black	99%	14%	$494	34%

Data source: calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)

While people of color accounted for only 12 percent of Fresno's population in 1940, this share grew to 20 percent over the course of the next two decades (See **Table 3-3**).

Table 3-3. Race and Ethnicity in the City of Fresno, 1940-1980

Racial/Ethnic Group	1940		1950		1960		1970		1980	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
White	57,014	94%	84,561	92%	120,806	90%	143,872	87%	156,501	72%
Non-Hispanic white	53,487	88%	78,579	86%	107,137	80%	120,496	73%	136,800	63%
Black	2,002	3%	5,300	6%	10,485	8%	15,875	10%	20,665	9%
Latino/a	3,686	6%	5,982	7%	13,669	10%	26,778	16%	51,489	24%
Asian	1,635	3%	1,778	2%	2,462	2%	5,603	3%	5,956	3%
People of color	7,198	12%	13,090	14%	26,792	20%	45,476	27%	81,402	37%
Total population	**60,685**	**N/A**	**91,669**	**N/A**	**133,929**	**N/A**	**165,972**	**N/A**	**218,202**	**N/A**

Data source: calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1943, 1952c, 1954, 1962a, 1963b, 1973, 1980; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972a; Ruggles et al., 2024; and Gibson and Jung, 2005)

While race was certainly the most significant and enduring societal division in the City of Fresno, there was another crucial socioeconomic cleavage. Since its establishment and throughout the early part of the 20th century, the city also attracted a substantial number of immigrants from various parts of Europe (Hattersley-Drayton et al., 2015). However, there were notable disparities among these foreign-born groups. For instance, many of the Italians and Volga Germans (those who migrated to Russia and their descendants), along with other immigrant groups today not classified as people of color, were initially labeled as uneducated, “antisocial” (State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California, 1918, p. 8), and of a “low moral standard” (State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California, 1918, p. 11). This contrast between low- and high-status non-Hispanic white immigrants is particularly evident when comparing white immigrants born in southern or eastern Europe to those in northern Europe. In 1940, only 14 percent of adults in the former group had completed the equivalent of high school, compared to 34 percent in the latter group; 47 percent of U.S.-born non-Hispanic whites had. In terms of mean earnings, lower-socioeconomic-status white immigrants made 43 percent less than their higher-socioeconomic-status white counterparts (who interestingly earned 16% more than U.S.-born whites) (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)) (See **Figures 3-17** and **3-18** for a map of ethnic enclaves in West Fresno). Although disadvantaged white immigrants held a similar societal position as people of color in some ways, there is one significant distinction: over time, these immigrants and their descendants were able to assimilate economically and culturally into the mainstream (Gordon, 1961, 1964 and Alba and Nee, 2014).

Racialized Spaces

The City of Fresno was not only socially and economically divided by race and ethnicity but was also geographically segregated, a pattern that both reflected and reinforced systematic disparities. The level of segregation can be seen in the dissimilarity index (described above). In 1940, the dissimilarity index for non-Hispanic whites and people of color in Fresno was 0.73, indicating a high level of segregation.[32] This covered some level of variation: relative to non-Hispanic whites, the dissimilarity index for Latino/as was 0.65, 0.83 for Asians, and 0.86 for Black residents (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)).

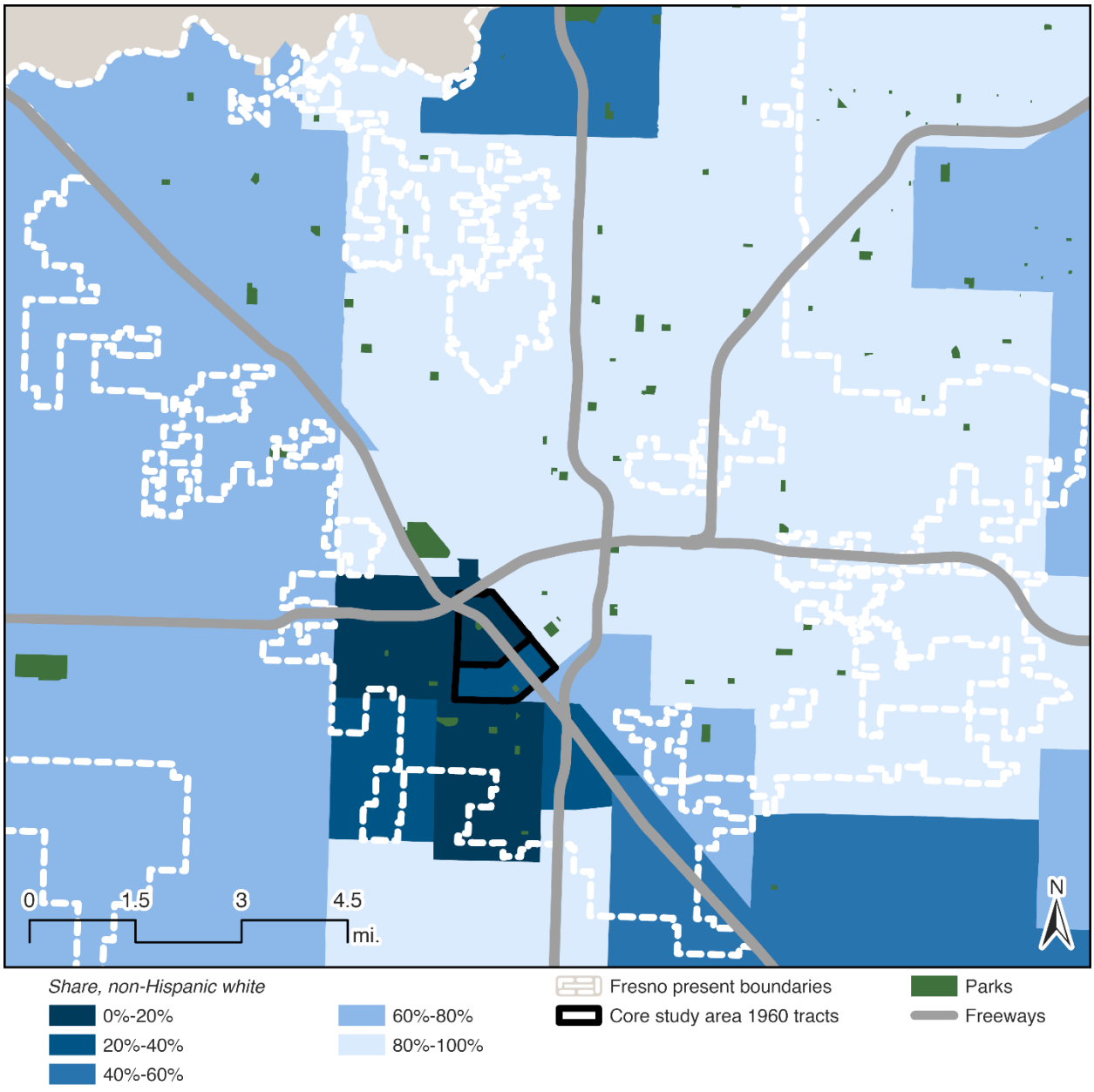
Racial segregation continued over the next two decades. **Figure 3-7** illustrates the racial composition of Fresno in 1960. The darkest-shaded tracts represent predominantly white neighborhoods, while the lightest shade indicates areas predominantly inhabited by people of color. The area with the lowest concentration of white residents was West Fresno. **Figure 3-8** shows the geographic disparities in income. The darkest-shaded tracts represent areas with a high percentage of households earning an income greater than $5,000 in dollars at the time, while the lightest-shaded areas had a low percentage in that category. The poorest neighborhoods tended to be predominantly populated by people of color, whereas white neighborhoods held a mix of high and middle incomes, with lower-income areas located downtown.

The isolation of people of color was clearly seen in West Fresno.[33] Segregation began with the Chinese population, as most of them settled west of the tracks. However, this was not a voluntary decision but rather a result of racial animosity (Guzmán, 2012; Jimenez, 2017; Vandor, 1919; and Thebault, 2018). In 1874, white residents circulated a well-signed petition stating that they would not “sell, lease, or rent to Chinese any property

32. A dissimilarity index calculation between immigrant and native-born non-Hispanic white groups would require digitization of print records beyond the scope of this report.

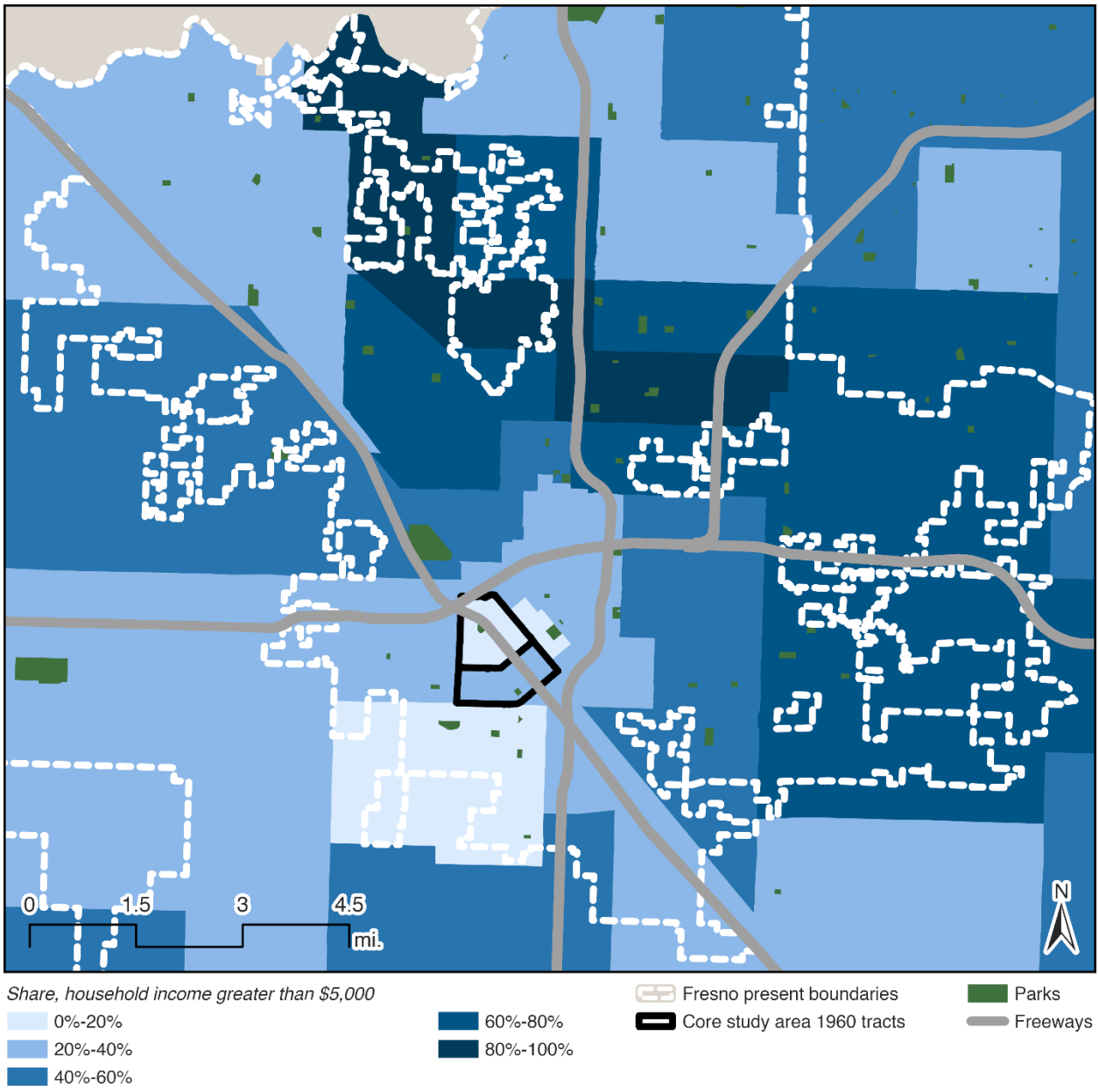
33. For a detailed study of the Chinese, Japanese and Mexican enclaves in Fresno, see Guzmán (2012).

Figure 3-7. Fresno Race/Ethnicity, 1960



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1960 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022); Caltrans, 2023b; and Esri, 2024a

Figure 3-8. Fresno Household Income in 1960 Dollars, 1960



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1960 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960; Manson et al., 2022); U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a; Caltrans, 2023b; and Esri, 2024a

on the east side of the railroad track" (Vandor, 1919, p. 330). This racial segregation persisted for almost a century, resulting in the isolation of different waves of people of color and immigrants who came to the area. The part of town known as West Fresno was the quintessential "wrong side of the tracks," with the railroad often referred to as "Fresno's Mason-Dixon Line" (Thebault, 2018). Segregation was officially enforced through restrictive covenants, which continued to exist into the first two thirds of the 20th century (Sheehan, 2023). **Figure**

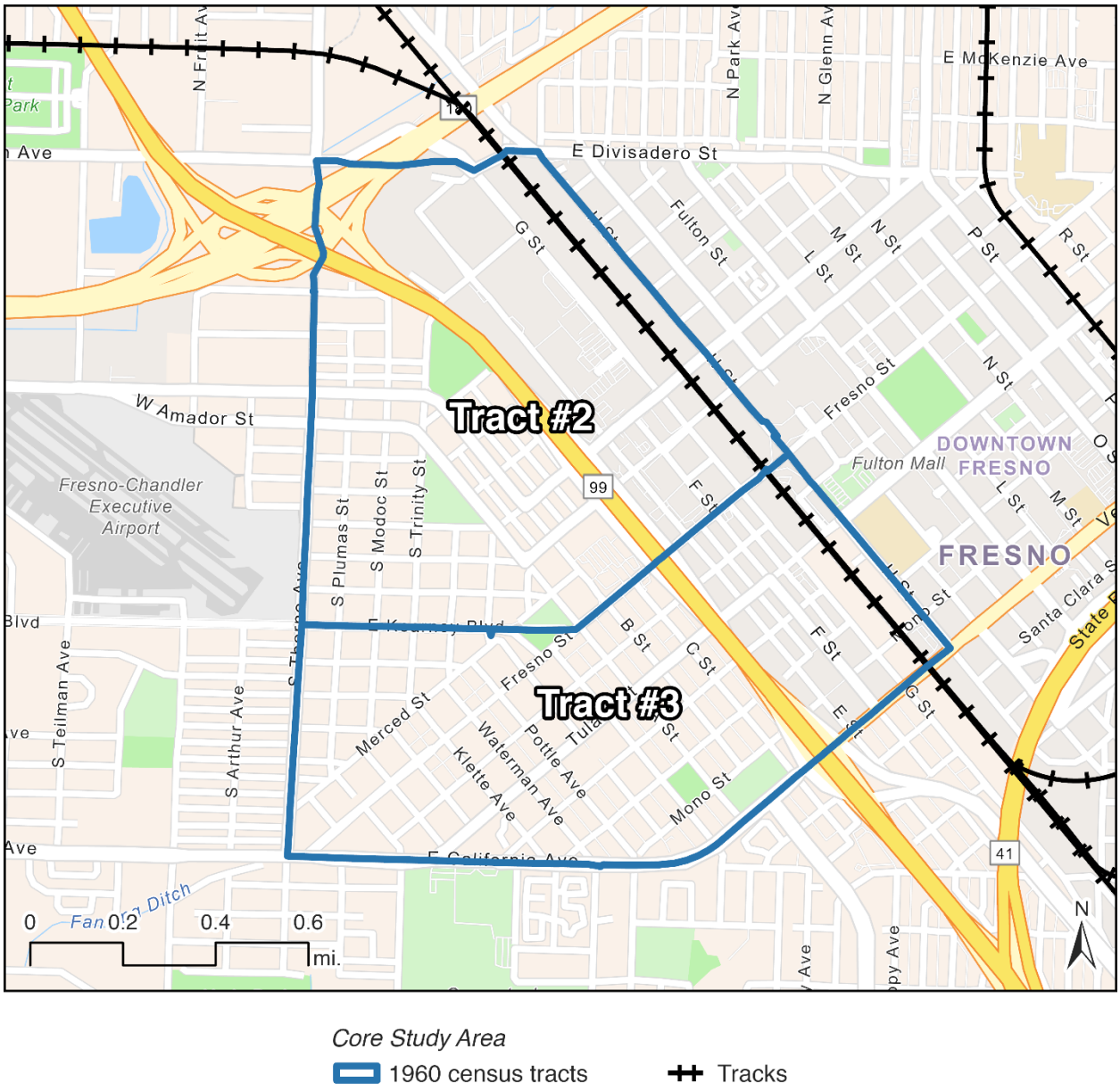
3-9 illustrates the boundaries of West Fresno as it exists today, called the Edison Neighborhoods in city planning documents. In order to match historic boundaries, mostly match historic census tracts, and simplify the borders, for the purposes of our study and analysis, we define West Fresno as a slightly smaller area, roughly forming a triangle bounded by the railroad tracks, East California Avenue and Ventura Avenue to the south, and South Thorne Avenue to the east. **Figure 3-10** shows how our study area corresponds to 1960 census tract boundaries. The tracts do not perfectly match the idealized triangle described above (nor the city's contemporary definition in **Figure 3-9**), but the overlap is sufficient for analytical purposes.

Figure 3-9. West Fresno Today

A map of the Edison planning area.

Source: City of Fresno, 2016, p. 21

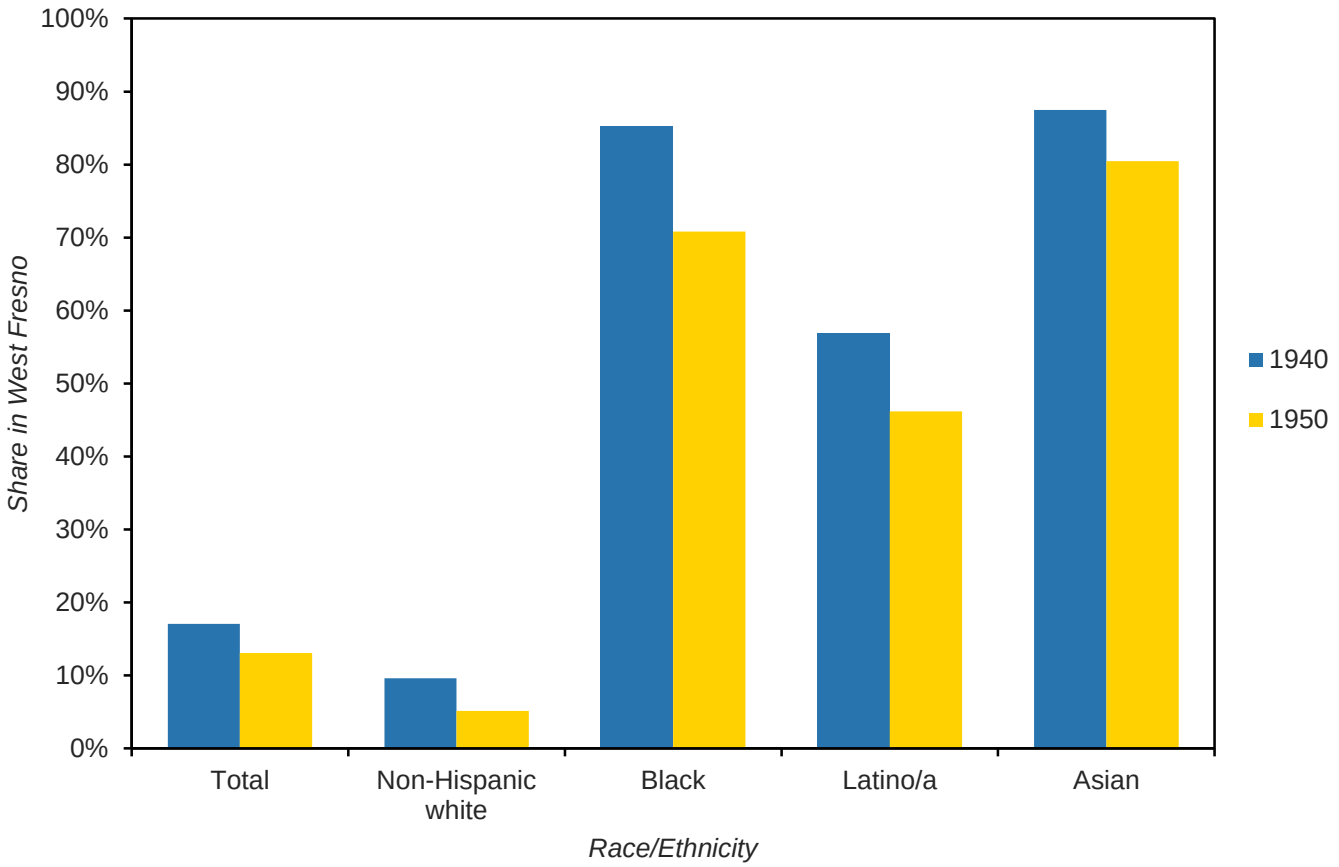
Figure 3-10. West Fresno Study Area



Data source: 1960 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022); base map: Esri, 2024b

Figure 3-11 shows the extent of racial segregation. Over two thirds of the people of color in the city resided in West Fresno, with a higher proportion for Black and Asian residents. In contrast, less than a tenth of non-Hispanic white residents lived there. Although the proportions decreased between 1940 and 1950, the majority of people of color still found themselves isolated in West Fresno (calculated by authors from 1940 and 1950 U.S. Censuses (Ruggles et al., 2024; Ancestry, 2024; and U.S. Census Bureau, 2024)).

Figure 3-11. Share of the City of Fresno's Population Living in West Fresno, 1940 and 1950



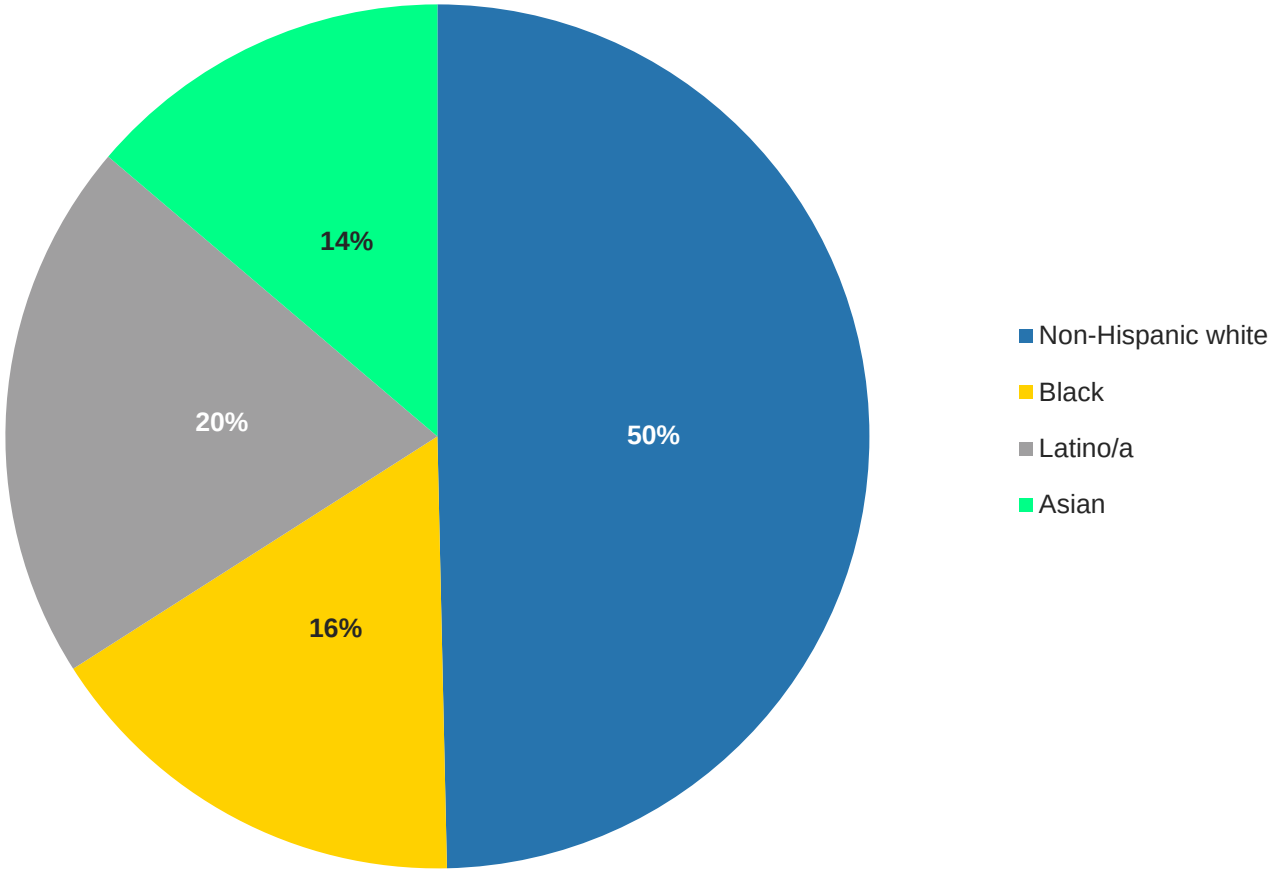
Data source: calculated by authors from 1940 and 1950 U.S. Censuses (Ruggles et al., 2024; Ancestry, 2024; and *U.S. Census Bureau, 2024)*

Although only a very small proportion of white Fresno residents lived in West Fresno, they nonetheless made up a large portion of the population there (See **Figure 3-12**). In 1940, whites accounted for nearly the majority of residents in that community. Of those West Fresno white households, the majority (55%) in 1940 were headed by people born in Italy or Russia (primarily Volga Germans), who were among the white immigrants with low socioeconomic status. In other words, lower-status white immigrants most likely were segregated into West Fresno due to their lower income and perhaps because of ethnic biases, as was the case in cities across the country (W. Clark and Blue, 2004 and Iceland and Scopilliti, 2008). However, the level of their segregation was not as extreme. A third of all Italian and Russian immigrants in the city lived outside of West Fresno—making them less concentrated there than people of color. Moreover, this concentration decreased significantly over time as these immigrants and their descendants were able to move up the economic ladder and assimilate into the white mainstream.[34] Between 1940 and 1950, the number of white residents of West Fresno declined by one fifth, and their share of the total population in that area fell by 16 percentage points (See **Figures 3-12**, **3-13**, and **3-27**) (calculated by authors from 1940 and 1950 U.S. Censuses (Ruggles et al., 2024; Ancestry, 2024; and U.S.

34. This assimilation process began well before the era of freeway development (State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California, 1918).

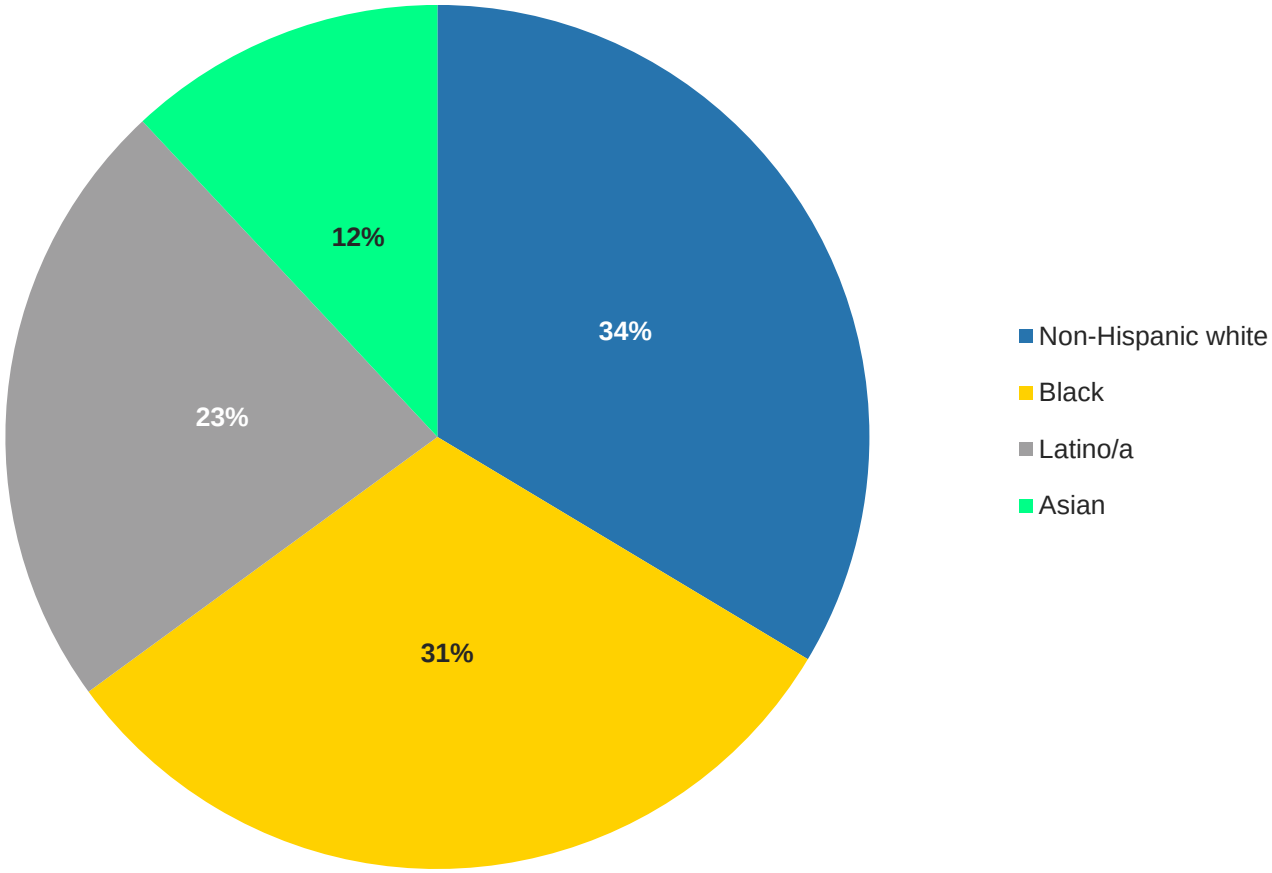
Census Bureau, 2024)). This demographic shift suggests that the ethnic segregation among non-Hispanic whites was far less enduring than racial divisions in Fresno, as present-day U.S. Census data demonstrate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Figure 3-12. Racial/Ethnic Composition within West Fresno, 1940



Data source: calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)

Figure 3-13. Racial/Ethnic Composition within West Fresno, 1950

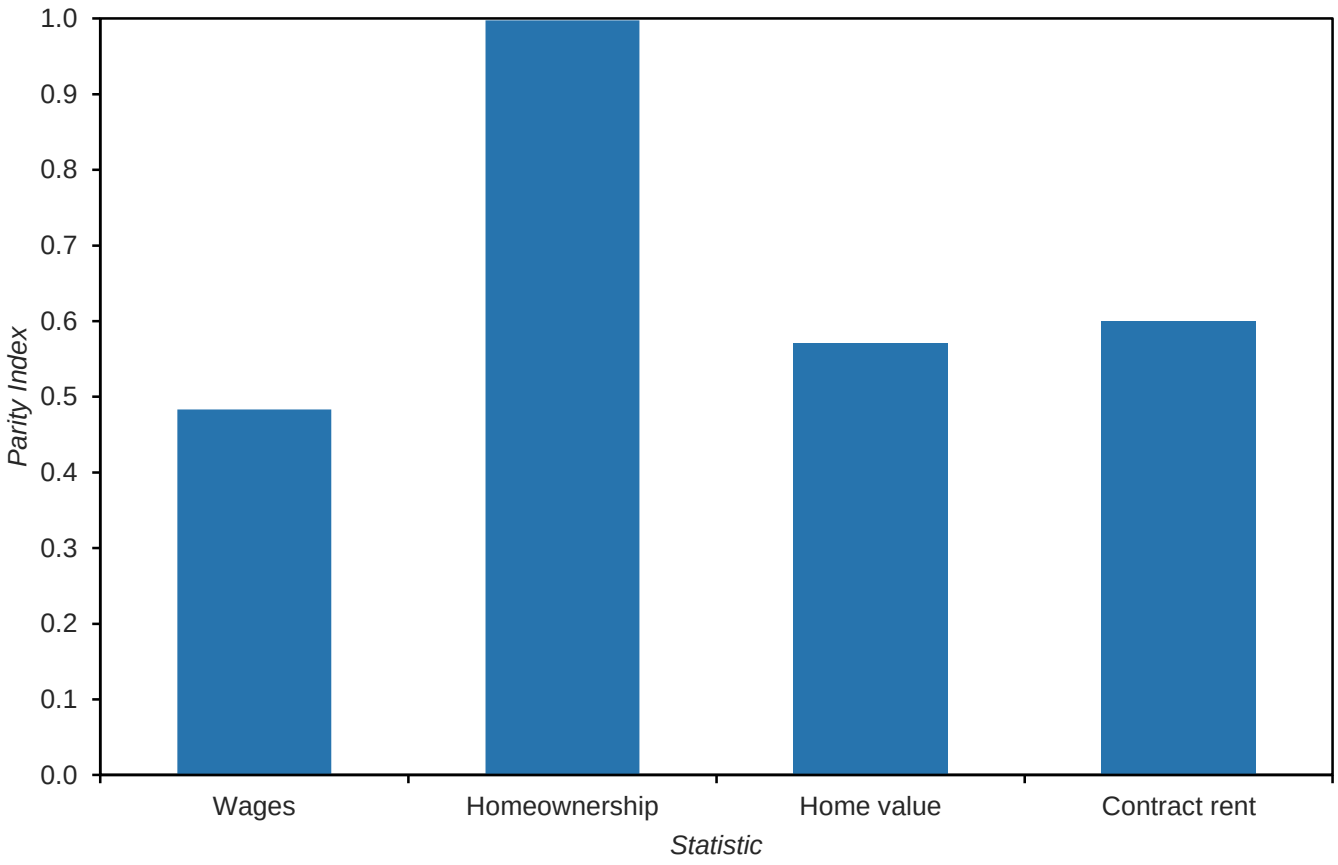


Data source: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024)

Figure 3-14 presents the economic status of West Fresno relative to the rest of the City of Fresno in 1940, using the parity index (A parity index of 1 indicates the same level, <1 indicates proportionately lower, and >1 indicates proportionately higher.). The median earnings for workers in West Fresno were only half of that in other areas. Despite discriminatory lending practices and lower earnings, the homeownership rate in West Fresno was at parity, with roughly half of households being homeowners. The main difference was in terms of home values,[35] with the typical value in West Fresno about half of that in the rest of the city. Additionally, the relative contract rents were also lower, with renters in West Fresno typically paying about three fifths of the rents outside the area. The lower rents were likely due in part to the smaller size and poorer quality of the housing units. Furthermore, West Fresno had a significant number of lodgers residing in hotels and boarding houses (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)).

35. Home value and home ownership are key elements of socioeconomic status, wealth-building, and the popular conception of the “American Dream.” Relatively illiquid wealth in home equity, though, has different effects on household consumption patterns than other types of wealth and than income level. Regardless, meaningful racial differences exist in homeownership rates, rates and amounts of inherited wealth, and intergenerational support for home purchases (Guo and Hardin, 2014; Graves et al., 2019; and Rothstein, 2017).

Figure 3-14. Economic Status of West Fresno Relative to the City of Fresno, 1940



Data source: calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)

West Fresno Internal Ethnoracial Structure

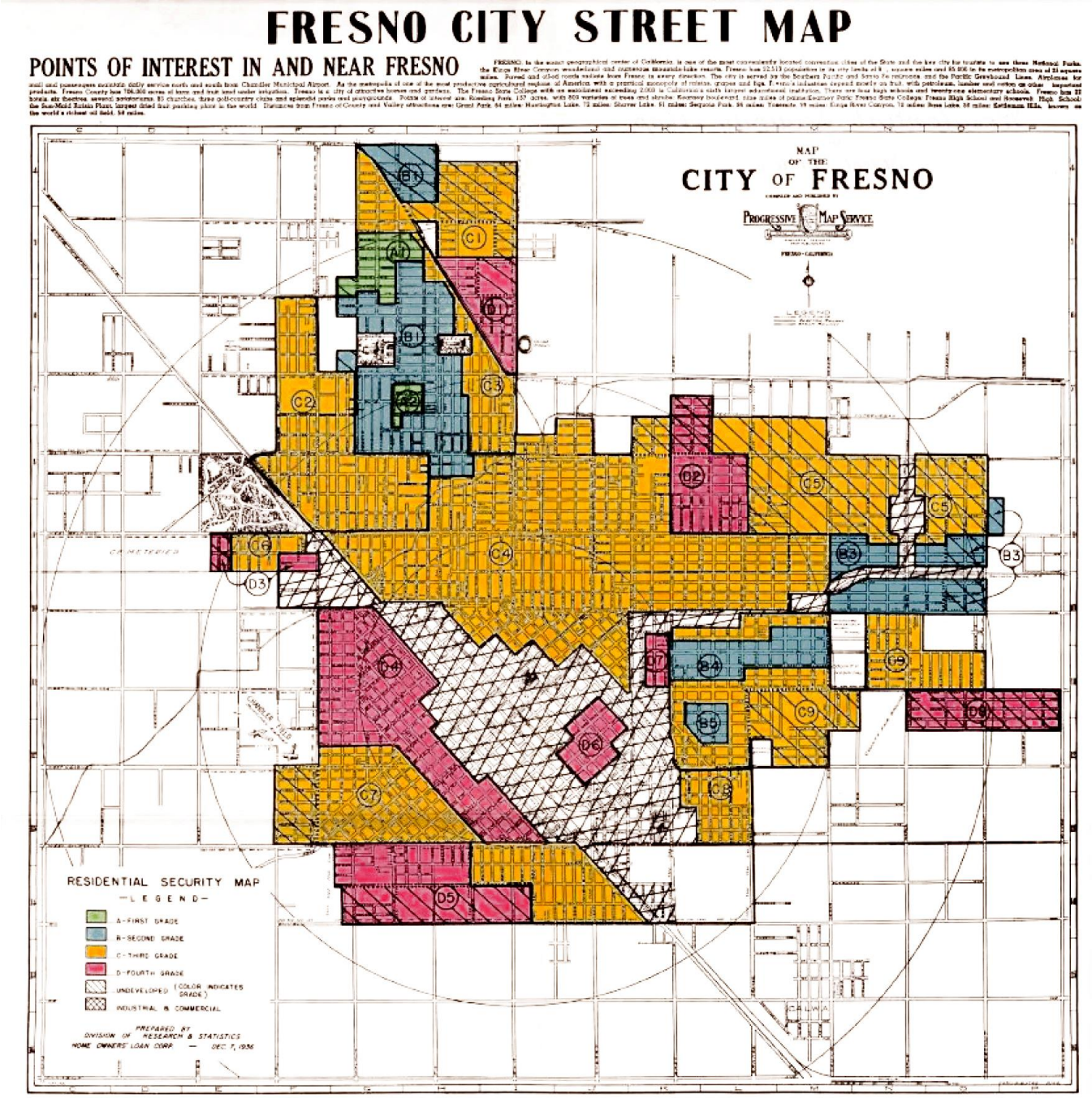
The ethnoracial[36] diversity of West Fresno was spatially fragmented prior to the construction of the US-99 freeway. This fragmentation is evident in the redlining maps drawn by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation's (HOLC) in the mid-1930s. HOLC ranked neighborhoods based on their desirability for mortgage lending; the most desirable areas were colored green, followed by blue, and the least desirable areas were colored in red, with yellow indicating the second-least desirable neighborhoods. This ranking system institutionalized discriminatory practices,[37] as it was based—often explicitly—on racial and economic characteristics. Numerous studies have shown that the neighborhoods classified as the least creditworthy experienced long-term disparities such as higher interest rates, lower homeownership and wealth, housing segregation, increased crime rates, greater climate-change and environmental risks, and poorer health outcomes. Conversely, the neighborhoods classified as more creditworthy have fared better over time (Rothstein, 2017; An, Orlando, and Rodnyansky, 2019; Bloch

36. We use this term to refer to the grouping of the population by race and non-Hispanic white ethnicity.

37. New research offers evidence that since-destroyed maps from the Federal Housing Administration, not the public HOLC maps, were more influential on loan availability (Fishback et al., 2021, 2024), but federal appraisals had a significant effect regardless (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a).

and Phillips, 2022; Hoffman, Shandas, and Pendleton, 2020; Lynch et al., 2021; McClure et al., 2019; Park and Quercia, 2020; and Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a).

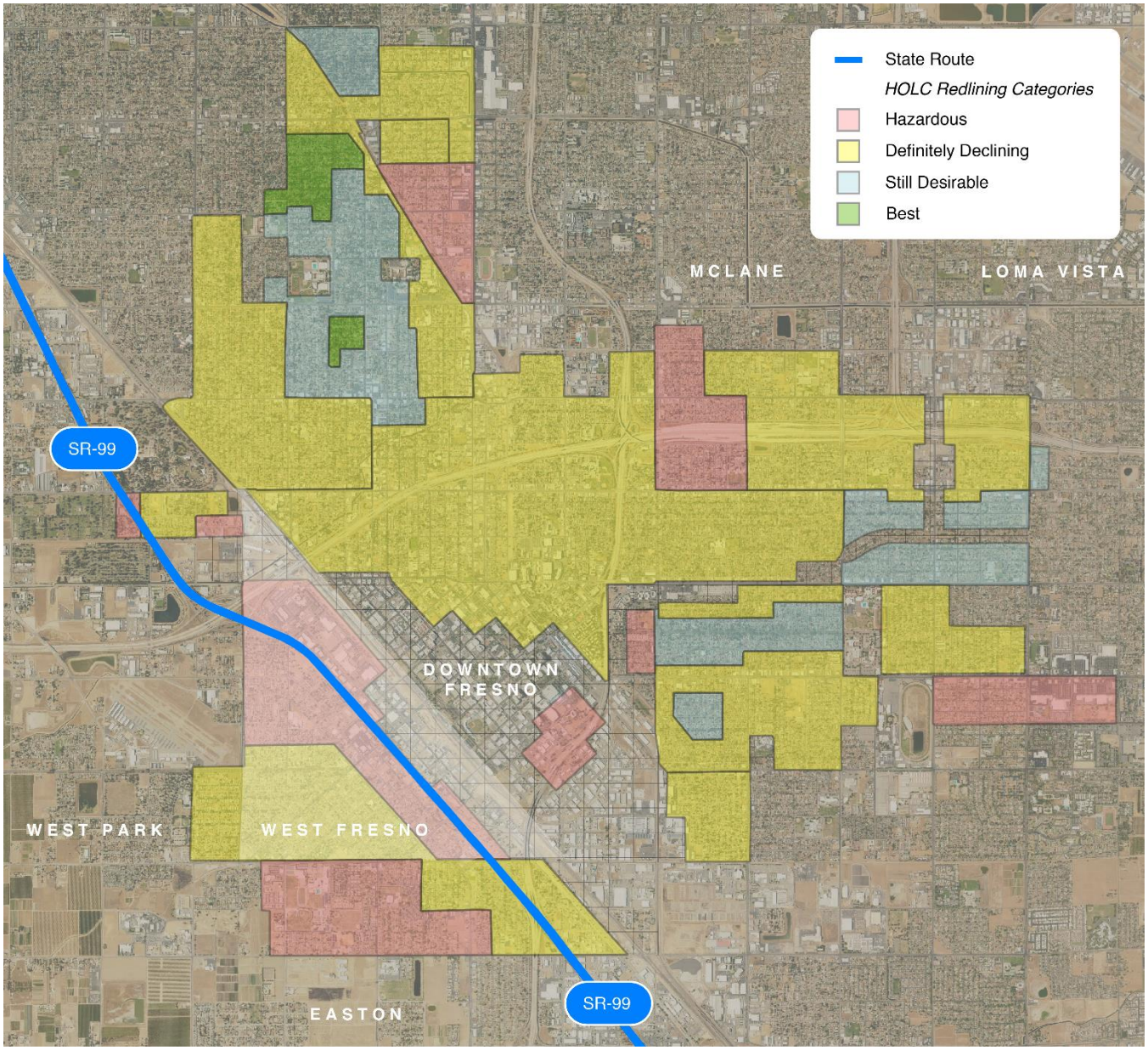
Figure 3-15. 1936 HOLC Redlining Map of Fresno



Source: Nelson et al., 2023

Figure 3-15 shows HOLC's classifications of Fresno neighborhoods, and **Figure 3-16** overlays them with current neighborhoods and US-99 (today, SR-99). Within West Fresno, there are two distinct areas. D4, in red, was located just west of the railroad tracks (Nelson et al., 2023). HOLC characterized this area as having "the most mixed population of any part of the City of Fresno[:]...Japanese, Chinese, [N]egroes, uneducated Italians, and a few representatives of several other races" (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). This was due in large part because the area had "no deed restrictions to protect the property" (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). Economically, the residents

Figure 3-16. Redlining Map of Fresno in Context



Data sources: Nelson et al., 2023 and Caltrans, 2023b; background imagery: Google, 2024b

were “laborers whose incomes range from about $600 to $1,200” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). And physically, there was “no uniformity in its building, and there is little pride of ownership shown” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). The other section of West Fresno, identified as C7, was situated to the west and south of D4 (Nelson et al., 2023). This was the primary area for non-Hispanic white residents, “approximately 30% foreign[-]born, 50% people of foreign parentage...[who were] generally Germans and Russians with a very slight scattering of colored races” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). C7 workers fared better economically, consisting of “laborers, tradesmen, and a few ‘white-collar’ workers, with incomes ranging from $600 to $2,000” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). Moreover, the residents of C7 were perceived as socially superior, described as “frugal and honest—good citizens” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). As evidenced by these quoted assessments, this was a part of a positive stereotype of the white immigrants of West Fresno, which made them more acceptable to the mainstream white population.

Figures 3-17 and **3-18** illustrate the ethnoracial division of West Fresno in 1950 and include the downtown area east of the railroad tracks. The geographic units depicted in **Figure 3-18** are enumeration districts, as defined in Appendix A, Section A.4. Within West Fresno, there were both geographic fractures and overlaps. The majority of white residents were situated east of the tracks and in the Germantown area, while the northern section was predominantly inhabited by Black residents. The area south of the majority-Black area was known as “Little Italy.” Asians predominantly resided in the Chinatown area west of the railroad tracks, while Latino/a residents lived a little to the north of Chinatown and further west. But these boundaries were fuzzy and permeable (See **Figure 3-17**) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024 and U.S. Census Bureau, 2024); Architectural Resources Group, 2006b; Pease, 2007; and ZipDataMaps, 2023).

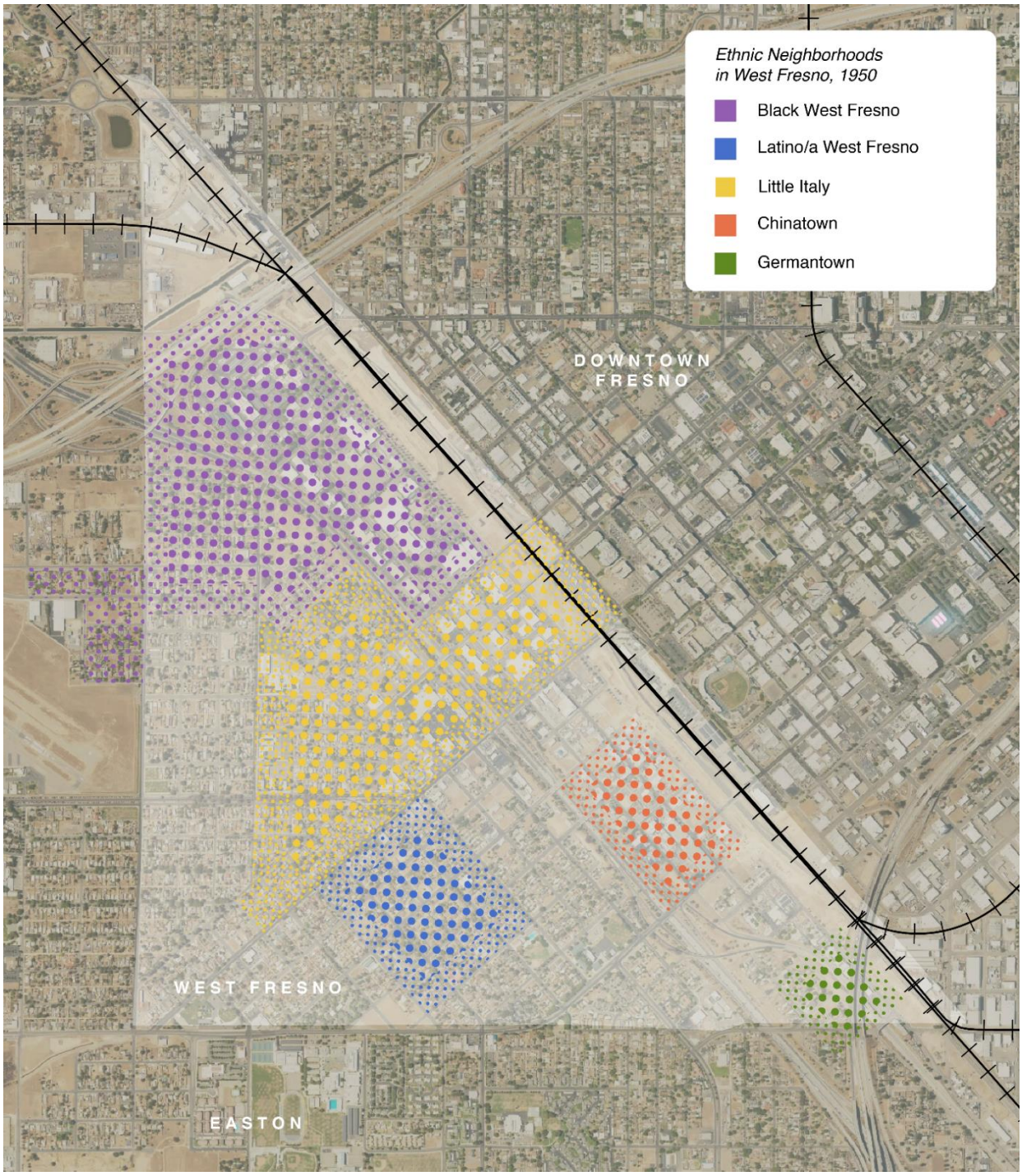
Fresno’s Chinatown was founded in 1872. The heart of Chinatown was located along China Alley, with the first buildings between Mariposa and Tulare Streets. Most of the development in Chinatown took place within these blocks (Architectural Resources Group, 2006a). Additionally, the *bracero* program in 1942 led to the influx of many Mexican individuals into Chinatown (Guzmán, 2012).

Before internment, there were thousands of Japanese migrants in Fresno, many of whom worked in agriculture, and Fresno became the sociocultural center of the Japanese community in the Central Valley. Following wartime internment, a significant number of Japanese residents chose not to return to their former homes or businesses, many of which were in or near Chinatown. This decision may have been influenced, in part, by the increased economic opportunities experienced by second-generation Japanese individuals. But some Japanese businesses and sociocultural institutions remained, such as the Fresno Buddhist Temple on Kern Street, opened in 1899, that stayed in its location until 2018 (Architectural Resources Group, 2006a; *California Japantowns*, n.d.; Fresno Buddhist Temple, 2021; and Domingo, 2024).

Germantown grew from a population of Volga Germans, who immigrated to the U.S. in the late 19th century. Most settled in Fresno from around 1887 to 1914. They were employed largely as farmers but also as general laborers, in packaging, and in railroad work. Germantown, on the southwest side of Fresno, was composed primarily of one-story bungalows and large religious structures. Over the years, the character of Germantown was influenced by urban renewal and the construction of the freeway, which brought about demolition and alteration of buildings (Architectural Resources Group, 2006b).

Italian immigrants arrived in the late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. They typically worked as farm laborers, many of whom later became involved in the wine industry, with others Italians working as merchants, restaurateurs, etc. With assimilation and spatial spread over time, however, these immigrants and

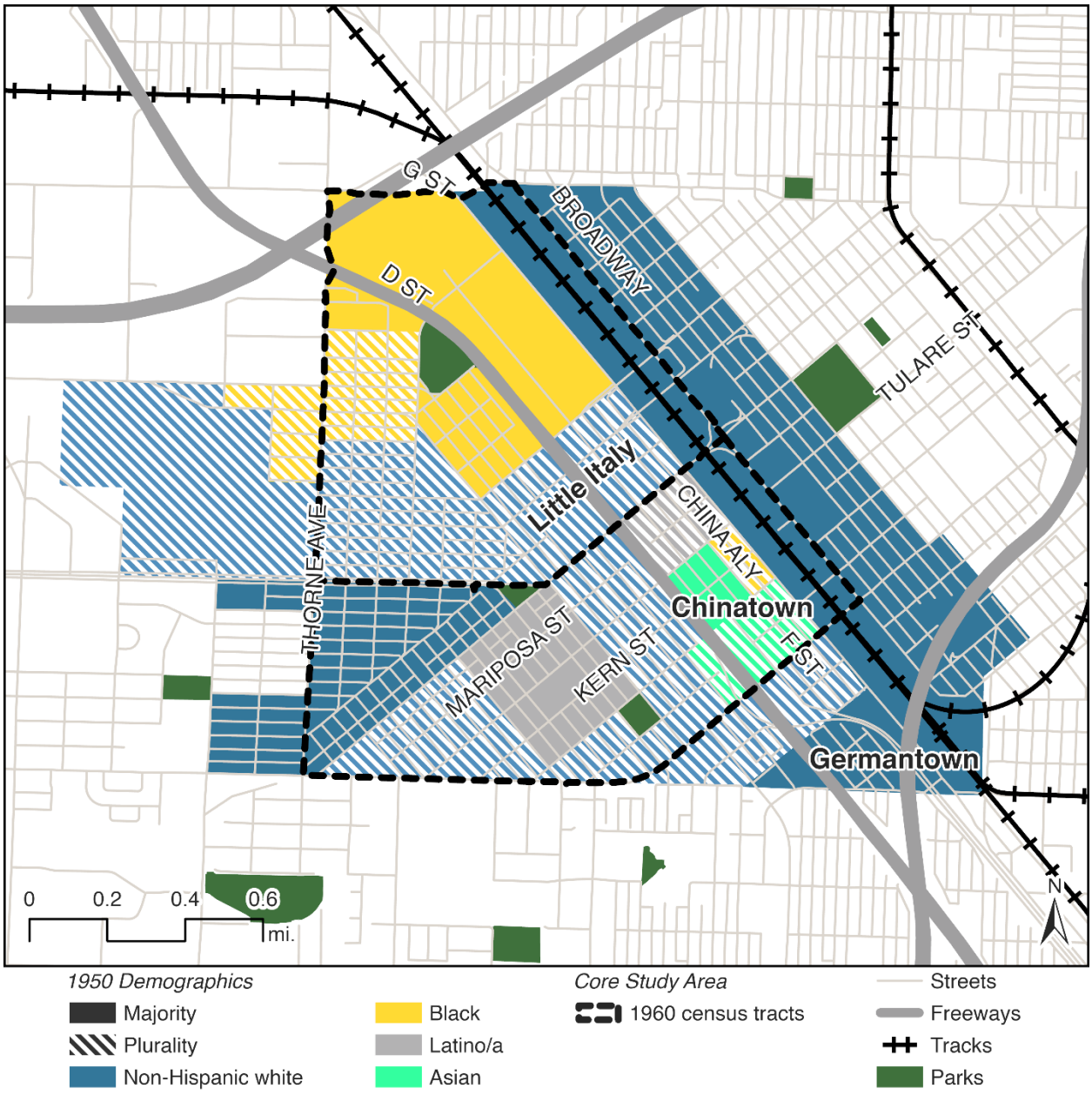
Figure 3-17. Racial/Ethnic Composition of West Fresno, 1950



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (Ancestry, 2024); Scott, 1948; Architectural Resources Group, 2006b; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; and Caltrans, 2024a; background imagery: Google, 2024b

their descendants spread beyond Little Italy (Fresno County Historical Society, n.d.-a; DiBuduo and Giovannetti, 2024; and 21st District Agricultural Association, 2024).

Figure 3-18. Racial/Ethnic Composition of West Fresno, 1950, in Context



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 and 1960 U.S. Censuses (Ancestry, 2024 and Manson et al., 2022); Scott, 1948; Architectural Resources Group, 2006b; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; Fresno County, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

3.4. Freeway Timeline and Alternative Routes

US-99 Background

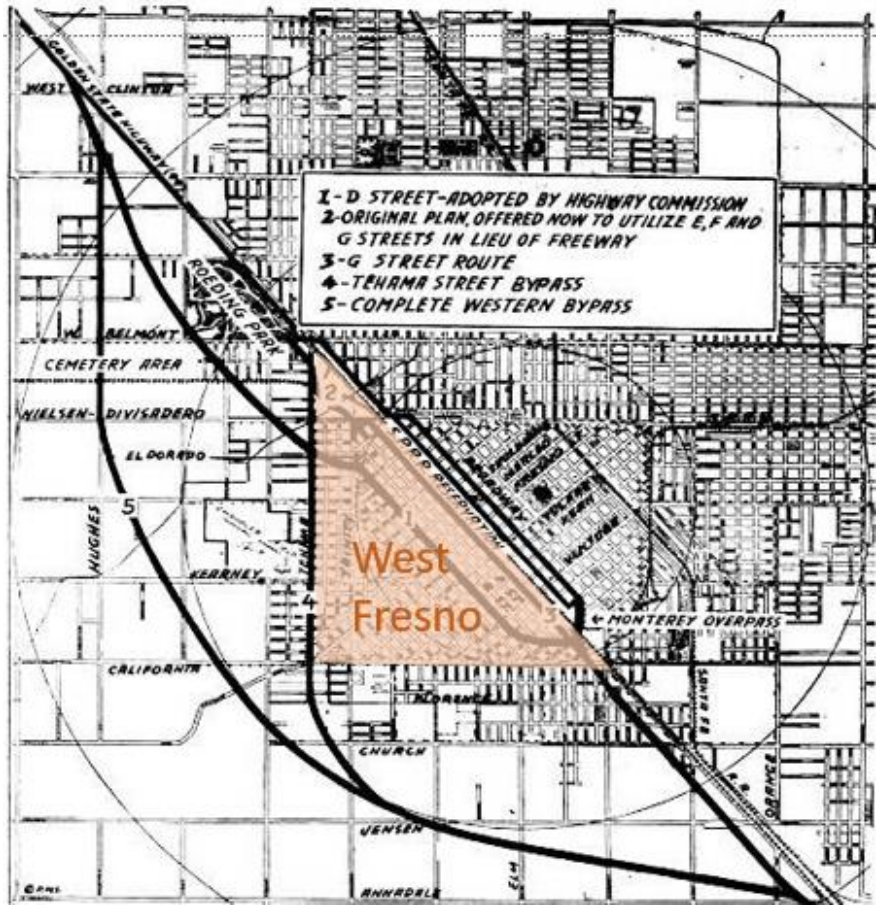
In 1926, US-99 was first designated and signed as part of the U.S.' pre-Interstate system of routes. It ran 1,499 miles from the Canadian to the Mexican border (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020b), earning the nickname "Backbone of the Pacific States" (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020b). In California, it was also known as the "Golden State Highway" (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020a), serving as the major roadway through the greater Center Valley region and connecting the cities of Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, and Bakersfield. Prior to the opening of Interstate 5 in the 1960s, US-99 was the most important north/south roadway for intrastate traffic (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020a, 2020b). It was considered "The Main Street of California" (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020b) because it often ran through the central business districts of cities along its path. These intra-urban segments often operated as major city arterials, with lower speed limits, shorter distances between cross traffic, and more frequent intersections. In Fresno, US-99 ran along Broadway through Fresno's downtown; some other segments of the highway (which changed routing slightly over time) ran along G and H Streets. All of these streets ran parallel to the railroad tracks, with Broadway and H Street to the northeast of the tracks and G Street to the southwest (Historic Highway 99 Association of California, 2020a, 2020b and Challenger Tom, 2017).

Over time, the old highway system became less effective in carrying traffic as the population grew and dispersed into the newly developing suburbs (See Section 1.2). Planners saw a need for the transformation of US-99 from a highway into a limited-access, multi-lane freeway. The challenge was to determine the "best" route for the freeway, considering both the access provided by the freeway and the impacts created by such a massive infrastructure project. The definition of "best," of course, varied by the interests of different groups, as discussed below (U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 2003 and Annor, 1970).

Stakeholders proposed many different alternatives for the freeway (discussed further below), some taken seriously by decision-makers and others given only cursory consideration. **Figure 3-19**, which was presented by the West Fresno Chamber of Commerce, captures many of the possible options, including the historical path of the original US-99 highway. Neither Broadway nor the next block over (H Street) would have been acceptable to city leadership, because they ran through the core of the central business district (as described elsewhere in this part of the report). In 1951, H Street had 75 commercial listings with a mix of industries, and Broadway had 264 listings, with most being retail (Polk and Company, 1952). This would have made a route too expensive due to high property values. Moreover, it is likely that the area's powerful economic interests would have fought any efforts to displace the businesses in the city's central business district. We note, though, that some of the mapped routes would have skirted around West Fresno, running west and south of the neighborhood. These would have passed through then-less-developed areas with low housing density[38] (See **Figure A-11** and Appendix A, Section A.8) (*Fresno Bee*, 1949n and UC Santa Barbara Library, 2012). By doing so, though, these bypasses would not have provided the posited economic benefits of connections to downtown (although the evidence of this actual effect is mixed and dependent on the size of the city or town (M. Collins and Weisbrod, 2000 and Otto and Anderson, 1993)).

38. Examining these bypass routes in the same level of detail as the other considered routes is beyond the scope of this report, especially as they were not given much official consideration.

Figure 3-19. West Fresno Chamber of Commerce Alternate Freeway Routes

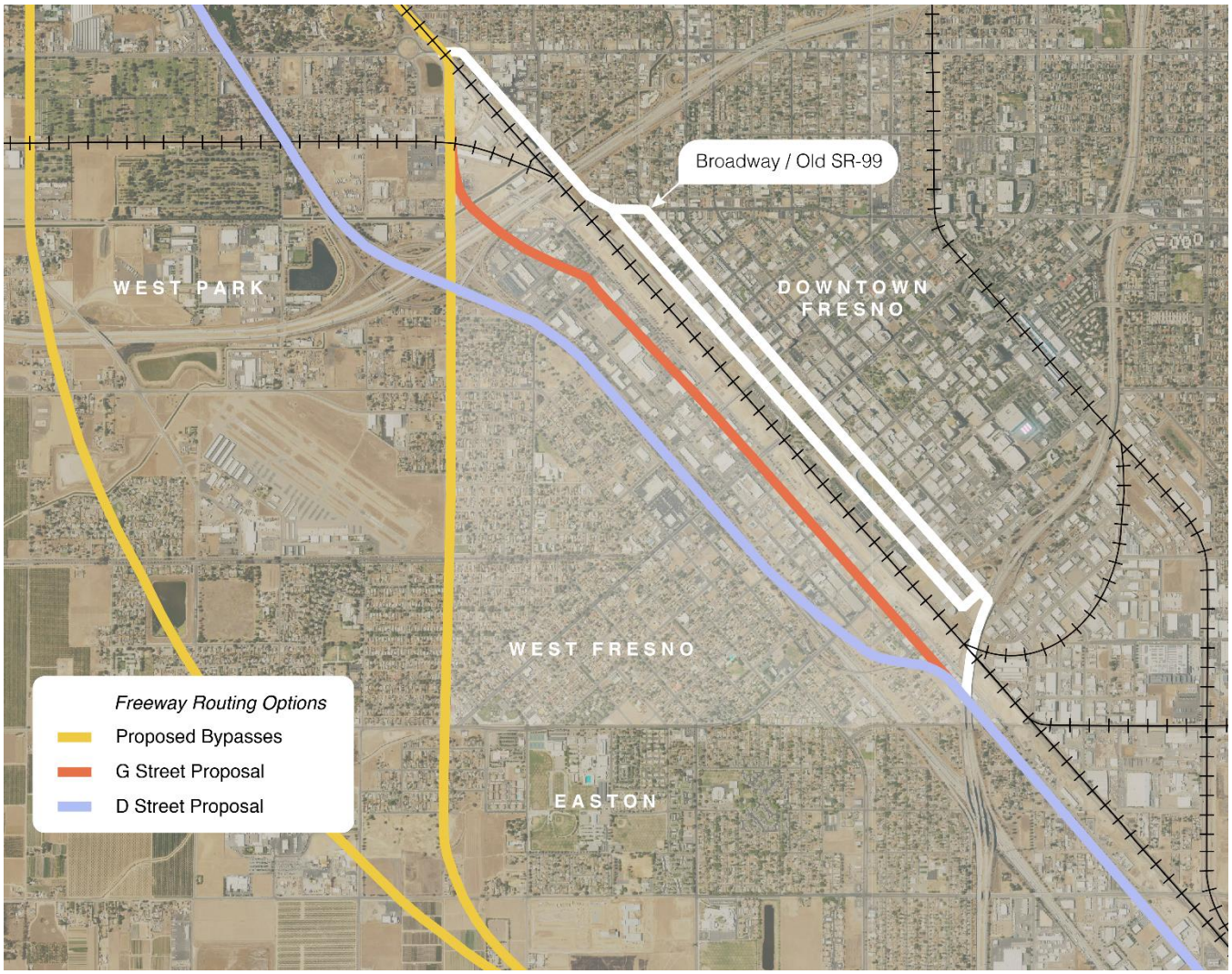


Sources: Fresno Bee*, 1949n and authors*

Alternative Route Analysis

Regardless of the routes proposed by various stakeholders, city, county, and state planners and elected officials seriously considered two major alternatives in West Fresno: at first along G Street (through the commercial strip at the edge of West Fresno, closer to the tracks and downtown) (#3 in **Figure 3-19**) and later along D Street (through much of the residential areas of West Fresno) (#1 in **Figure 3-19**). To better understand the decision-making process (discussed further below), with primary sources on internal deliberations among state staff largely unavailable, we compare the potential impact of these two options (See **Figures 3-20** and **3-21**). We constructed a hypothetical path along each street, each with a width of 165 feet (the approximate width of the current SR-99 freeway). The paths do not include on- and off-ramps in order to maintain comparability (For that reason, the D Street path in **Figure 3-21** differs from the actual, constructed footprint.). We also analyze a route along Broadway, the original US-99 route, as a benchmark for reference purposes, though it was never seriously considered as a potential path for the new freeway (See Appendix A, Section A.8).

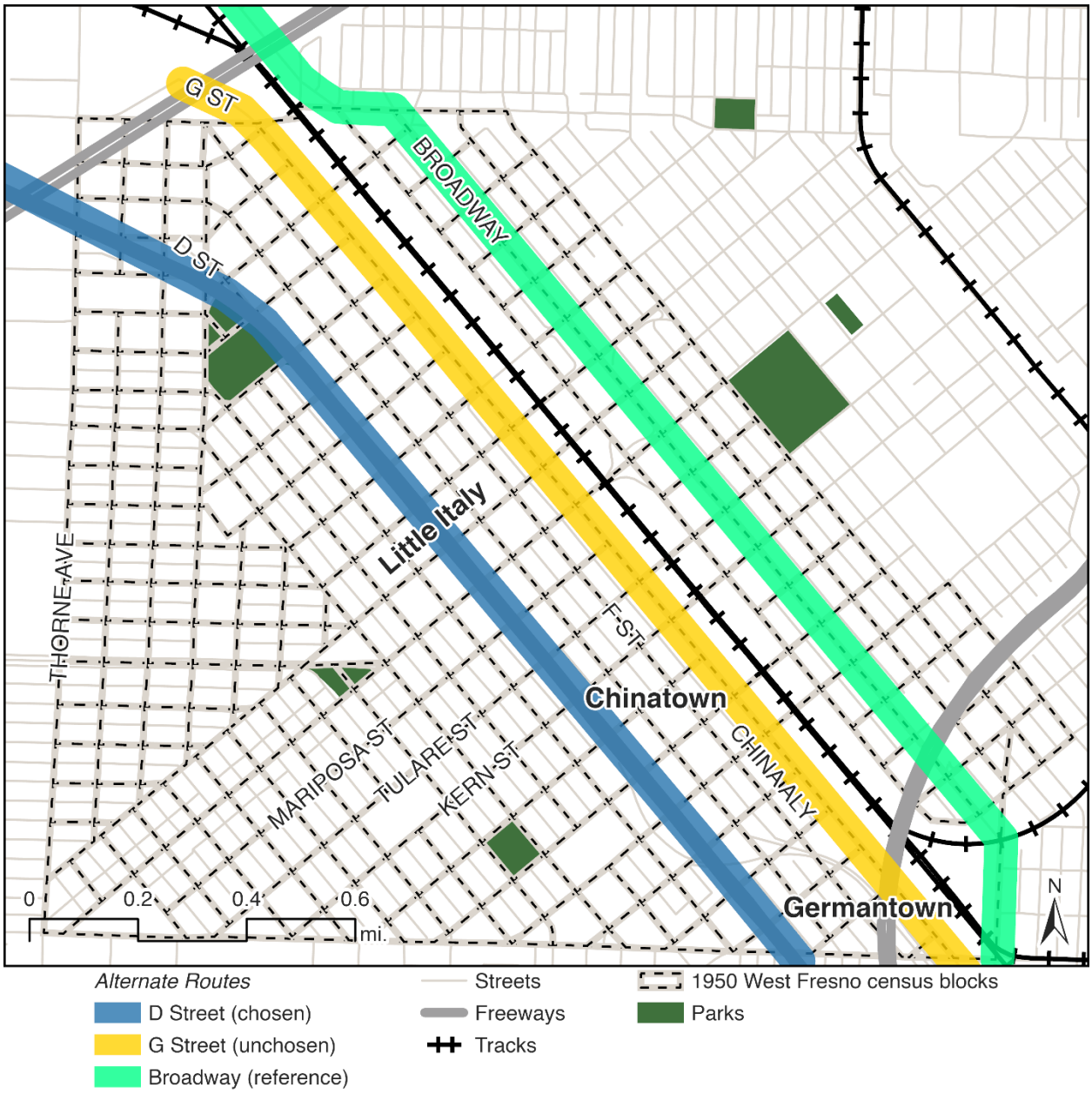
Figure 3-20. Fresno Alternate Freeway Routes



Data sources: Fresno Bee*, 1949n; Challenger Tom, 2017; and Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; background imagery: (Google, 2024b)*

We used 1950 block data to estimate the potential impacts on housing and the racial/ethnic composition of those who would have been affected (See **Table 3-4**). The G Street route would have displaced less than half the number of households as the ultimately chosen D Street route (with Broadway even less destructive) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)).

Figure 3-21. Fresno Alternate Freeway Routes Analyzed



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951); Fresno Bee, *1949n; Challenger Tom, 2017; Architectural Resources Group, 2006b; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; Fresno County, 2024; and Esri, 2024a*

Table 3-4. Demographics of Fresno Alternate Freeway Route Footprints, 1950

Statistic/Demographic	Broadway Route (Reference; Original US-99)		G Street Route (Unchosen)		D Street Route (Chosen)	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
Housing units	70	100%	141	100%	304	100%
Occupied housing units	62	88%	127	90%	290	95%
Homeowner	13	22%	37	29%	147	51%
Renter	48	78%	90	71%	142	49%
White	61	99%	46	37%	143	49%
Non-Hispanic white	59	95%	30	24%	80	28%
Latino/a	2	4%	16	13%	63	22%
People of color	3	5%	97	76%	209	72%
Census blocks	39	N/A	32	N/A	46	N/A

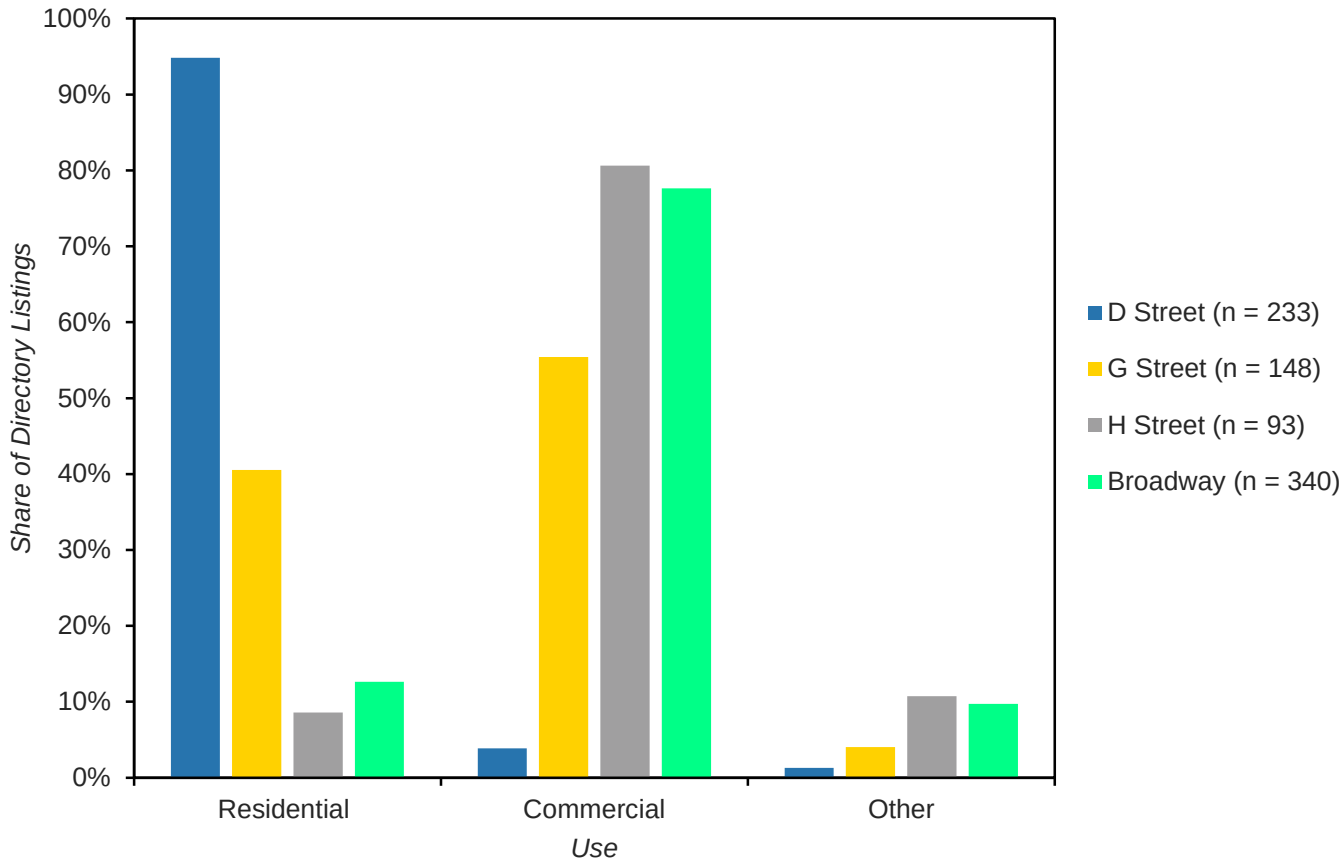
Data source: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)

This difference is not surprising because of different land-use patterns along each route (See **Figures 3-20**, **3-21**, and **3-22**). G Street was the commercial corridor in West Fresno, with 82 commercial listings in the 1951 city directory (See Appendix A, Section A.2 for a description of the city directory). Many of these businesses were related to transport and distribution, such as warehousing (making it similar to H Street on the opposite side of the railroad track). On the other hand, D Street had only nine commercial listings, most of which seem to have been neighborhood shops (Polk and Company, 1952).

Another difference between the two considered streets was their housing tenure. Less than a third of the residents on G Street were homeowners, whereas slightly over half of those on D Street owned their homes (See **Table 3-4**) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)).

Despite these differences, both D and G Streets had a similar racial/ethnic composition, with people of color accounting for approximately three quarters of households (See **Table 3-4**). This is not surprising, given the high level of residential segregation (discussed above). Indeed, any alternative route west of Broadway would have had a similar racial/ethnic composition. Broadway itself, though, located downtown east of the tracks, was home to mostly all white residents (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)).

Figure 3-22. Land Use along Fresno Streets with Alternate Freeway Routes, 1951



Data source: Polk and Company, 1952

Timeline

Ultimately, after nearly a decade-long process documented below, the D Street route was chosen. For context, back in early 1942, the state Highway Commission announced the upgrading of the US-99 to a freeway on a segment connecting Fresno to the south to the railroad town of Calwa (*Fresno Bee*, 1942a). Property acquisition for this segment to the south of our study area began in early 1944, and construction there commenced in 1946 (*Fresno Bee*, 1944, 1946). The plan was initially to have the route continue into the study area near G Street.

However, further routing plans were dramatically altered early in 1949, when the state's Highway Commission recommended an alternative route through West Fresno instead. They argued that moving the freeway to the west, over to D Street, would separate through-traffic from local traffic, while still remaining close to the city's business district. The final route along D Street was selected in 1949, and parcel purchases for the right-of-way soon began. Just a couple of years after the final route was selected, plans for the freeway were expanded from four to six lanes, to accommodate a growing volume of traffic (*Fresno Bee*, 1949b, 1949f, 1949g, 1949l, 1949o, 1952; Shelton, 1949b, 1949c; and United Press, 1949). The long process of selecting the final path through West Fresno, discussed below, was due at least in part to different interest groups pushing their interests in the face of the freeway route's significant consequences.

3.5. The Decision-making Process and Consequences

Setting the Stage

The announcement of the Golden State Highway initially generated interest and excitement. Famed highway planner Gordon Whitnall (See Section 2.7) described the project as a “historic event” and the “first real freeway” in the area (*Fresno Bee*, 1942a). At the time, highway engineers and planners viewed the freeway as vital for the city’s economic development. State highway engineer Earl Scott, for example, believed that “the freeway [would] definitely help business in Fresno” (*Fresno Bee*, 1942b, p. 1-B).

Planners were adamant that the freeway should not bypass the city but instead pass through it. Although there were some concerns about traffic inconvenience, road closures, and adjacent property, the City, County, and state Highway Commission approved an initial freeway contract swiftly (*Fresno Bee*, 1942c, 1942d, 1942e). At the hearing to add the freeway to the county’s master highway plan, “no opposition was voiced” (*Fresno Bee*, 1942b, p. 1-B).

While district highway engineers were enthusiastic about acquiring right-of-way for the freeway, questions about its specific route through Fresno started to emerge. A representative from the Fresno Building Trades Council worried that highway traffic would lead to vacant buildings along Broadway, reemphasizing that the freeway should benefit business properties. The Fresno Merchants Association also expressed concerns about the freeway route and its effect on businesses. As their plans developed, state engineers responded to this by proposing the G Street route for a brand-new freeway right-of-way, to replace the old pre-Interstate route along Broadway. This would, they argued, keep the freeway close enough to the existing core to prevent the development of a new, competing business district, while simultaneously alleviating traffic congestion on Broadway (*Fresno Bee*, 1942d, 1942e).

Public sentiment began to change in the following years, as interest in the project grew. A downtown real estate company placed a newspaper advertisement in 1944 urging readers to vocalize their opposition to the freeway plans, arguing that it would accentuate existing traffic and speeding problems and create new ones (Leas Real Estate and Insurance, 1944).

As construction began on parts of the freeway south of Fresno, anticipation and opposition from the community rose, and alternative plans emerged. Fresno’s school board president expressed concern that the freeway would be close to several schools. A lawyer for Germantown’s Free Evangelical Lutheran Cross Church raised complaints to the city that the church would need to be relocated. The South Broadway Improvement Association feared that closing one surface railroad crossing, as the freeway plans called for, would worsen conditions at another crossing nearby (*Fresno Bee*, 1947a, 1947b).

While the planning process in the early years had its disputes and disagreements, it exploded into controversy in 1949. It was then that the state announced that the freeway would be relocated from the G Street route to the middle of West Fresno, along D Street. The new route would start near Clinton Avenue north of central Fresno, curving west of Roeding Park before turning eastward to align between D and E Streets (See **Figures 3-20** and **3-21**). State engineers quoted in the *Fresno Bee* gave a few reasons for the change: the much cheaper land acquisition costs along D Street; the difficulties of building the freeway, as well as under- or overpasses for surface streets, so close to the train tracks along G Street; and the potential for business development in West Fresno that they believed the freeway could bring (*Fresno Bee*, 1949b, 1949l and Shelton, 1949b, 1949c).

If anyone lodged formal opposition or protest, state regulations required a formal hearing be held. The *Fresno Bee* (1949b) at first speculated that this change might not face any opposition. A state highway engineer stated that "the recommended routing...is laid out to cause the least possible disturbance to private property, to provide the most direct route[,] and to furnish the greatest service to local and through[-]traffic at minimum cost" (*Fresno Bee*, 1949c, p. 24). Similarly, the Fresno Merchants Association endorsed the new route as "a well[-]developed plan...of interest to all Fresnans" (*Fresno Bee*, 1949d, p. 21).

West Fresno Opposition

Contrary to the *Bee*'s prediction, West Fresno's businesses, community organizations, and residents did not take the potentially destructive path of the new proposed route passively. The area had already had a history of activism against being unfairly targeted. Residents and businesses had fought unfair land-use decisions that exposed its residents to a disproportionate share of environmental externalities. For example, residents strongly protested a meat-packing plant opened just beyond city limits in West Fresno in 1947 (Zuk, 2013). As a former city planner and planning commissioner characterized Fresno's mid-century attitude towards land-use decisions:

> *"The auto-wrecking yards, the meat-packing plants, and all of that, push them to West Fresno where the minorities lived. That's okay. That's okay. Put the dump down there. Put everything nasty down there and everything else will go in the other direction"* (quoted in Zuk, 2013, p. 36).

Like these, the freeway was another unwanted and inequitable burden.

Concerted opposition to US-99 came at the tail end of the decision-making process (*Fresno Bee*, 1949e, 1949g). Until 1949, the Division of Highways was not obligated to hold public hearings for projected freeways (*Fresno Bee*, 1949a). However, even when hearings were held—as happened when West Fresno interests did file protests—many individuals from the West Fresno community were reluctant or fearful to speak up, according to a local business leader (*Fresno Bee*, 1949e, 1949g). "The commissioner...who presided [over] had expressed a desire to keep testimony as brief as possible[,] and for that reason[,] many of them did not say anything," he said (*Fresno Bee*, 1949g, p. 9). But that changed in subsequent months.

Community members, including Boy Scout troops, religious leaders, and small business owners, vehemently protested against the D Street plan. They expressed their opposition through committee meetings, public hearings, petitions, and letters to the editor. Some of those who did complain argued that such a late announcement was unfair to property owners (*Fresno Bee*, 1949b and Disgusted Taxpayer, 1949). Led by former Congressman Bertrand Gearhart, as many as 2,000 West Fresno merchants, property owners, and residents condemned the plan, according to their spokespeople (*Fresno Bee*, 1949f). They believed that the new route would act as a barrier, effectively putting parts of West Fresno in a "fenced[-]in belt[,]...bounded on the east by the [railroad] and on the west...by the freeway," per Gearhart (*Fresno Bee*, 1949f, p. 1). "The D Street route is a sentence of death on West Fresno's community life, creating what is in effect a concentration camp between the freeway and the Southern Pacific Company reservation," analogized Gearhart (*Fresno Bee*, 1949o, p. 9). Furthermore, these groups refused to accept this significant "sacrifice" (*Fresno Bee*, 1949f, p. 1), especially as it was "being jammed down their throats" (*Fresno Bee*, 1949f, p. 1).

Churches played a significant role in organizing resistance against the freeway. Religious leaders were among the earliest and most vocal opponents, as several temples and churches were at risk due to the proposed route. These included the Fresno Buddhist Temple, Zion Congregational Church, Wartburg Lutheran Church, and Confucius Temple (Easley, 1949c). Reverend Christian Martin argued that the "so[-]called ['']freeway['] is the costly way—the state should find the right way not the wrong way" (*Fresno Bee*, 1949k, p. 1-B). Reverend Francis

Dowd of Saint Alphonsus Church testified against the construction of another barrier within the city, emphasizing that it would deepen disunity (*Fresno Bee*, 1949g). S.G. Sakamoto expressed concerns about the dangers and noise of the freeway, asserting that the Buddhist Temple would need to be relocated (*Fresno Bee*, 1949k). Though state highway engineers claimed that the Lutheran Cross Church, whose building had been physically relocated in 1947 for the construction of the Monterey Street overpass, would not need to move again or be destroyed for the Golden State Highway, opponents remained skeptical (Bunker, 1948; Van Voorhis, 1948; and Easley, 1949c).

Secular groups also opposed the plan. The Kearney Villa Civic Club strongly opposed the D Street freeway because it would divide the West Fresno area and make it challenging for the community to engage in activities, communicate, or conduct business (*Fresno Bee*, 1949j).

Some of the most well-documented opposition to the freeway through West Fresno came from the West Fresno Chamber of Commerce, which formed in 1949 as a direct response to the proposed route, and claimed more than 200 members (*Fresno Bee*, 1949g). The new group split from the city and county's broader business organizations, because, as one business owner stated, "We feel they are not looking out for our interest—that our interest is not being considered" (*Fresno Bee*, 1949g, p. 9). Former Representative Gearhart supported the group's efforts to prevent the D Street route and advocated for a bypass along Tehama Avenue (now Thorne Avenue) instead (See **Figures 3-20** and **3-21**). The president of the West Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Francis Easley, Sr., frequently wrote letters opposing the D Street route published in the *Fresno Bee*. The West Fresno Chamber of Commerce, along with other business interests, property owners, and community groups such as the Mexican Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Merchants Association, San Joaquin Property Owners Association, Edison Social Club, and the Kearney Villa Civic Club, formed the Coordinating Council of West Fresno (*Fresno Bee*, 1949p, 1949j, 1949n; Easley, 1949a, 1949b; West Fresnan, 1949; and Fresno County Superior Court, 2018). An author who identified as "West Fresnan" (1949, p. 10-C) wrote a letter to the editor of the *Bee* in October 1949, stating that "the Negro organizations and most of the churches" in West Fresno were also participants in this Coordinating Council.

Prevailing Mainstream Forces

Despite this opposition, state highway engineers, municipal staff, and organizations such as the main Fresno Chamber of Commerce and Merchants Association strongly supported the D Street route through West Fresno and opposed a bypass route (See **Figure 3-20**). The City's traffic engineer argued that a bypass would only serve 15 percent of the traffic and provide no benefit to the city; the state's engineers later gave a figure of 18 percent through-traffic. They also raised concerns about the cost of additional paving (although it was not clear whether the total cost of a bypass would have actually been higher, given the difference in land values) and dismissed comparisons to other California cities with bypasses. M.S. Meeker, chair of the county Board of Supervisors, asserted that the D Street route would actually help West Fresno merchants, placing them as the first opportunity for shopping for motorists upon entering Fresno. The state's planners also anticipated a boost in property values near the freeway (which proved a misconception, as our quantitative analysis shows[39]) (*Fresno Bee*, 1949f, 1949g and Shelton, 1949b).

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39. There is not sufficient published data to examine changes in home values from 1960 to 1970, the period after the completion of the freeway (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960, 1970). Doing so would also introduce a methodological problem, as a substantial number of units were destroyed that decade, making the comparison inconsistent. However, from 1970 to 1980 (a period which captures some of the longer-term impact), average home values in Tract #2 (See **Figure 3-10**) fell from 70% to

State engineer Scott echoed this sentiment but believed that the people of West Fresno did not fully understand the project. He presented a sketch ostensibly illustrating how the four-lane sunken freeway would be constructed, with minimal disruptions, frontage roads that could host residential and business uses, ample crossovers, and no required fences. Affected property owners would be given ample time to relocate, and one of the state Highway Commissioners even assured homeowners that they would have the option to physically relocate their dwellings out of the path of the freeway, as the Lutheran Cross Church did (*Fresno Bee*, 1949f, 1949h; Shelton, 1949b; Bunker, 1948; and Van Voorhis, 1948). These promises, though, did not all come to pass, and even at the time, residents accused state engineers of "double talk" (Purdy, 1949, p. 12-B).

The growing criticism did force the state to at least review alternate routings. **Figure 3-19**, published in the *Fresno Bee* (1949n), shows a map of alternate routes that the West Fresno Chamber of Commerce proposed. In response to former Representative Gearhart's "impassioned plea," the state Highway Commission agreed to a more detailed study of alternate routes in May 1949 (McClatchy Newspapers Service, 1949, p. 1-A). Still, state engineers asserted that West Fresno residents were coming around to their proposal; they were quoted claiming that some businesspeople who had signed a petition against the freeway route had changed their stance. However, the opposition remained active and strong in numbers, and they vowed to send a delegation to Sacramento. The West Fresno Chamber of Commerce petitioned the state's Highway Commission to delay the final decision and offered four alternatives they considered superior and more cost-effective. State highway engineers, though, consistently dismissed these pleas (Shelton, 1949a, 1949b; *Fresno Bee*, 1949i, 1949n, 1949m; and Easley, 1949a).

Plans for the relocation of the highway through Fresno along D Street were announced on February 17, 1949. The required hearing, held on April 29, exposed stark division among Fresnans but did not resolve the issue. In the following weeks, West Fresnans organized loud opposition. But the very next day after the Highway Commission publicly agreed to study alternatives, on May 20, the Commission officially approved the D Street alignment (*Fresno Bee*, 1949b, 1949g; McClatchy Newspapers Service, 1949; and United Press, 1949). The freeway through Fresno was completed in October 1957 (*California Highways and Public Works*, 1957).

Various factors, both explicit and implicit, influenced the decision-making process and eventually led to the selection of the D Street route. However, this process often clashed with public opinion, particularly among West Fresno residents and other groups with interests in the area. Despite the publications and presentations of state agencies, Fresno's city government, the California Highway Commission, and other institutions and business interests, which focused on the successes and positive impacts of the freeway during and after its construction, many stakeholders in West Fresno did not align. The archives of the *Fresno Bee* highlight a greater hostility towards the freeway expansion and a more complicated planning and approval process than what was portrayed in official narratives from public agencies.

Direct Impacts

The timing of displacements resulting from the construction of the freeway can be seen in **Figure 3-23**. Some of the earliest right-of-way purchases happened in and adjacent the Chinatown and Little Italy areas. Later, the state purchased land to the north and around Germantown to the south.

50% of Fresno County's average, and in Tract 3 (See **Figure 3-10**) fell from 80% to 59% of Fresno County's average (calculated by authors from 1970 and 1980 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980)). This provides evidence against the idea that having a freeway in the area improved property value, although other factors also contributed to the decrease.

We next estimate the number of housing units lost and provide information on the demographics of those residing under the freeway footprint on the eve of construction. Unlike the estimates in Section 3.4 (See **Table 3-4** and **Figure 3-21**), this analysis uses the actual, constructed footprint of the freeway, including interchanges and ramps (See **Figure 3-24**). Additional methodological details can be found in Appendix A, Section A.9.

Based on our estimates, the freeway construction led to the demolition of over four hundred homes. It likely displaced an estimated one thousand people (based on the average number of people per housing unit) (See **Table 3-5**) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)).

Looking beyond just the footprint itself, the loss in housing units in the surrounding West Fresno census tracts (See **Figure 3-10**, **3-24**, and **3-25**) in the 1950s can largely be attributed to the freeway, based on our analysis of census data on those living under (See **Table 3-5**) and beyond the freeway footprint (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)). This may have been the major contributor to a downward population spiral over the following two decades (calculated by authors from 1960 and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1962a and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972a)).

Renters comprised a significant portion of those who were displaced (See **Table 3-5**) (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)), and it is uncertain whether they received any compensation.[40] Indeed, an article in the official journal of the state Division of Highways noted severe overcrowding in the properties they purchased; nearly 50 people lived in two such small properties in Fresno (Bunker, 1948). Yet, the article also concludes that no substantive assistance could be offered:

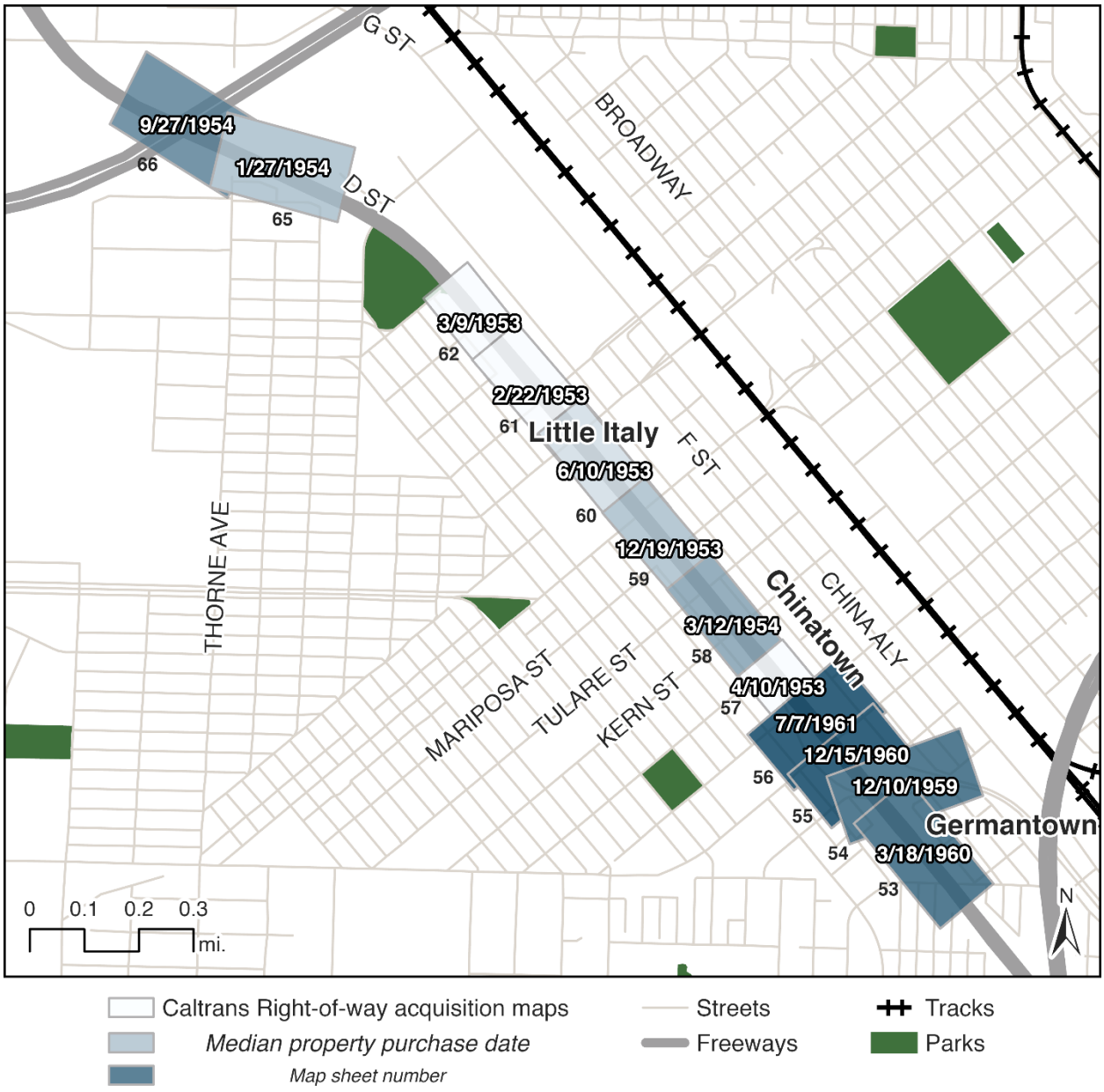
> *"The natural demand of the occupants was that the State provide housing. It was explained that that was impossible. There was no way other than that they solve their own housing problem—and speedily"* (Bunker, 1948, p. 26).

State agents did compile and share lists of nearby homes for sale, but many instead crowded in with relatives or moved to RV parks or vacant lots (Bunker, 1948). The article characterized this as "100 percent cooperation, although grudgingly given at times, [which was] as welcome as it was unexpected" (Bunker, 1948, p. 26).

By analyzing right-of-way purchase documents from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) (Spiker, 2023), we can gain more insights into the freeway's direct impact. Over three quarters of the properties acquired for freeway construction were registered under individual names rather than corporations or organizations. Among these individual property owners, the majority (55%) were non-Hispanic white owners. This

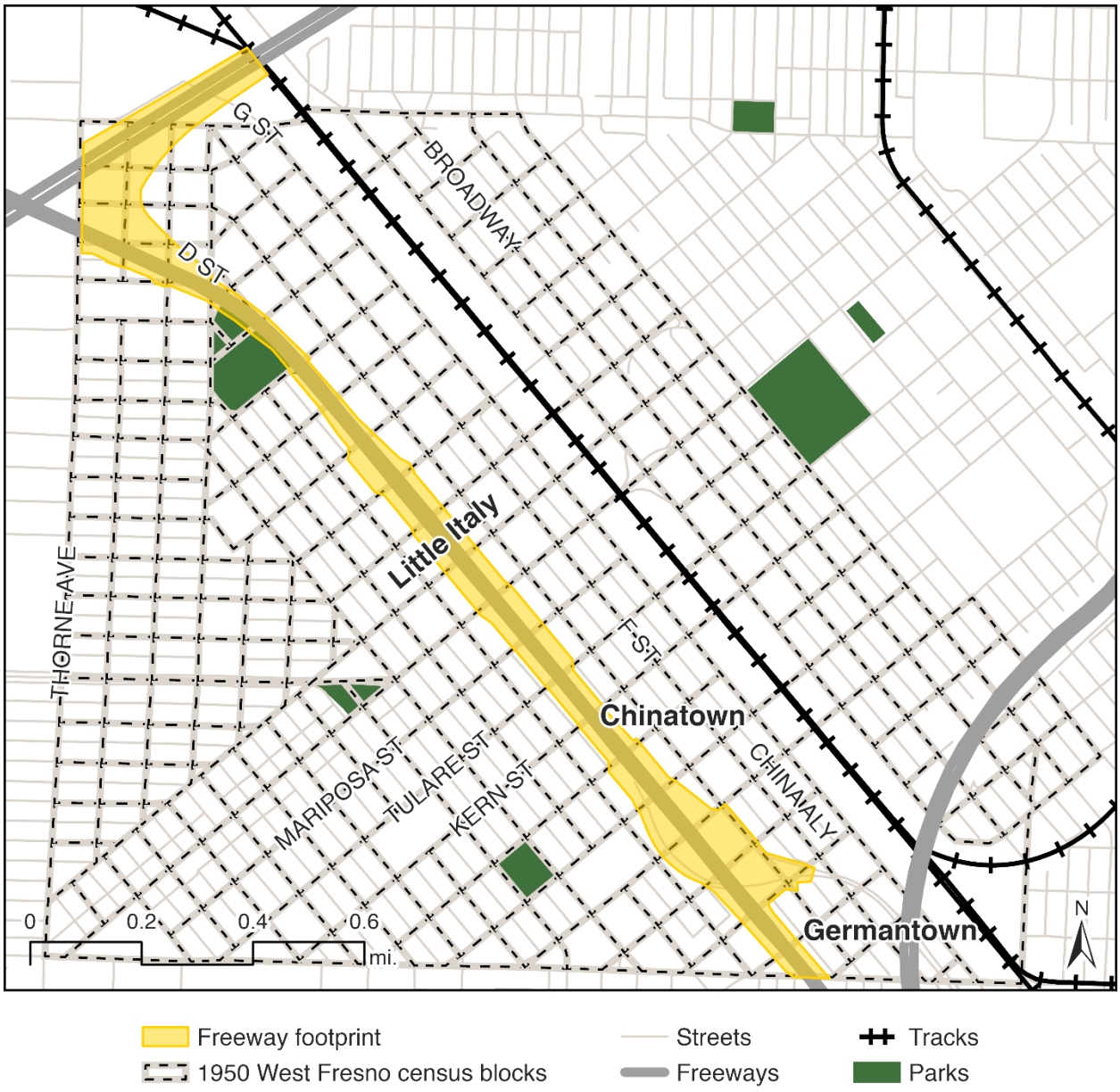
40. There was little material in available Caltrans archives on compensation to renters. However, the state faced numerous complaints about a lack of adequate compensation and relocation assistance prior to the 1970s (Goodwin, 1974 and Kushner and Werner, 1976). For information on efforts to improve relocation assistance, see Bausch, Ferrell, and Johnson (1975).

Figure 3-23. Median Purchase Date of Right-of-way Properties in Fresno



Data sources: Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; Spiker, 2023; Architectural Resources Group, 2006b; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; Fresno County, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

Figure 3-24. Census Blocks under the Freeway Footprint in Fresno, 1950



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951); Architectural Resources Group, 2006b; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; Fresno County, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

Table 3-5. Housing Units Lost and Racial/Ethnic Composition of Households Displaced by Freeway in Fresno, 1950

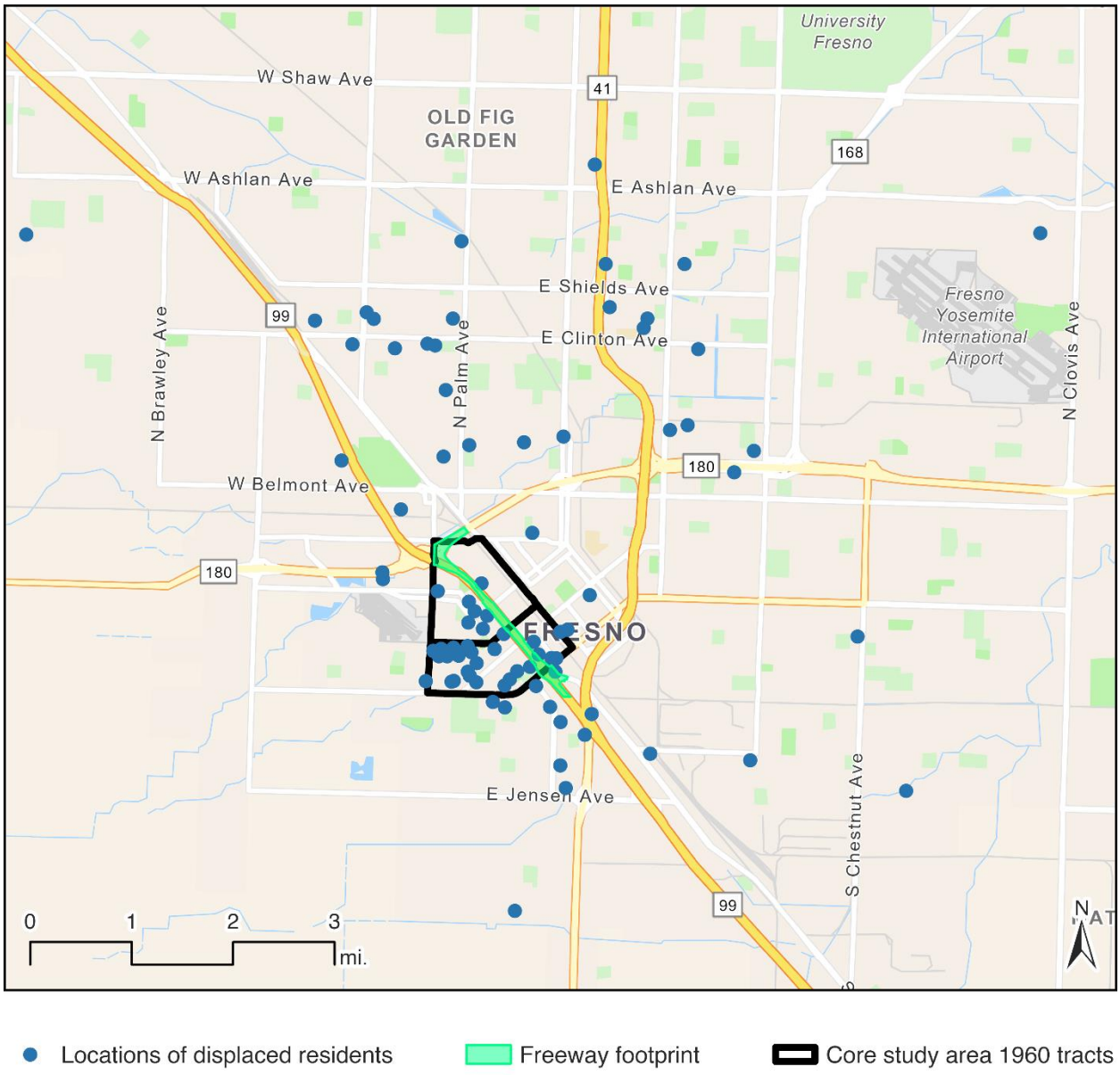
Statistic/Demographic	Number	Share
Housing units	415	100%
Occupied housing units	394	95%
Homeowner	219	56%
Renter	175	44%
White	192	49%
Non-Hispanic white	97	25%
Latino/a	95	24%
People of color	297	75%

Data source: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951)

proportion is larger than the estimated percentage of non-Hispanic white households that were displaced (25%) (See **Table 3-5**). One plausible explanation for this difference may be the possibility that many white owners were non-resident landlords. If this were the case, this situation is consistent with the literature on racialized capitalism, where one group was able to extract income through systematic differences in property ownership (Beeman, Silfen Glasberg, and Casey, 2011 and Fields and Raymond, 2021). The likely lack of adequate relocation compensation or assistance from the state potentially compounded the racial disparity.

We were able to trace some of the displaced residents using information from city directories (Polk and Company, 1952, 1955). By consulting census records and assessing surnames, we determined the race of those who were relocated (See Appendix A, Section A.2 for methodology). It is important to note that the information we have is incomplete. The number of non-Hispanic white residents in the listings was higher than what was counted in the census, while there were very few Black residents. These disparities may be attributed to micro-spatial racial residential patterns at the street-segment level. Nevertheless, the analysis does provide some insights. We classified residents into three categories from 1951 to 1955: 1) those who stayed in or around West Fresno, 2) those who moved to another part of the City of Fresno, and 3) those not found in the City of Fresno directories in 1955. **Figure 3-25** displays most of the displaced residents that we were able to trace. The majority of those from the 1951 listings remained in Fresno. Additionally, among those who remained in the City of Fresno, a higher percentage of people of color than non-Hispanic white people relocated to another place in and around West Fresno. Non-Hispanic white immigrants were economically and socially assimilating in that era, which provided them with more opportunities to leave West Fresno.

Figure 3-25. Relocation of Displaced D Street Residents between 1951 and 1955



Data sources: Polk and Company, 1952, 1955; base map: Esri, 2024b

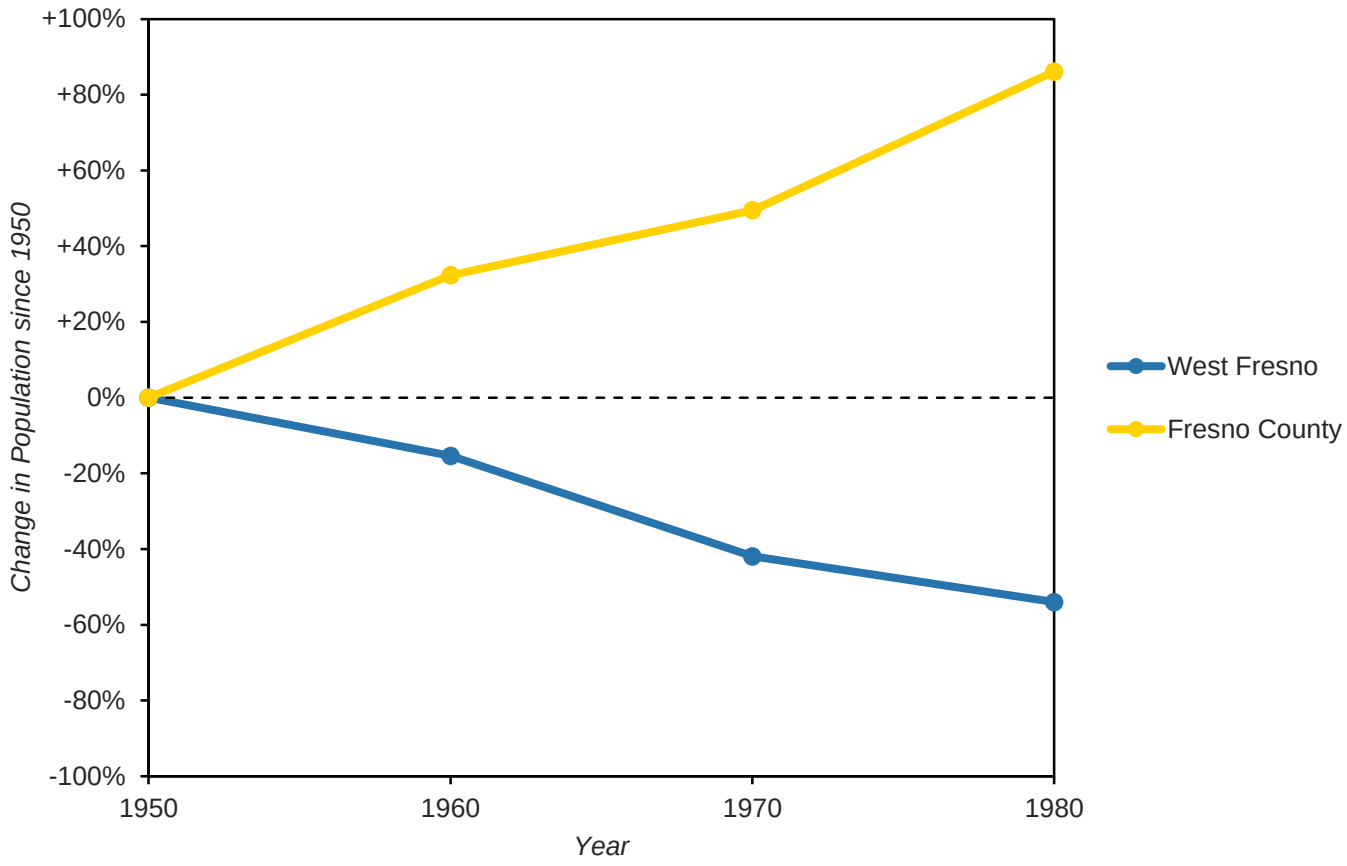
Broader Community Impacts

The degradation of the area caused by the freeway has resulted in the bifurcation of West Fresno. The City's 2016 *Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan* states, "Formerly unified neighborhoods were cut in two by freeways without surface crossings" (City of Fresno, 2016, p. 10). In general, freeways significantly damage connectivity due to a limited number of crossings (bridges and tunnels), forcing people to travel a considerable

distance (by car, on foot, or on other modes of transportation) to reach destinations on the other side of the freeway (Millard-Ball et al., 2022, 2024 and Millard-Ball, 2024). Additionally, travelers often avoid existing crossings because they are inconvenient, unpleasant, and hazardous, effectively making the area an unwalkable neighborhood. This disconnectedness has likely contributed to the decline of West Fresno's commercial corridor, which is located east of the freeway, while the majority of the community's residents live to the west.

Such effects led to depopulation—directly attributable in the 1950s to the destruction caused by the freeway but which continued even after the freeway was opened (See **Figure 3-26**). By 1970, West Fresno's population decreased by 42 percent compared to two decades earlier, and by 1980, it had dropped to less than half of the 1950 population. In contrast, Fresno County's population continued to grow during this period.[41] While the suburbanization of the region played a role in the decline of West Fresno, it appears to be a minor factor. The two

Figure 3-26. Population Trends in West Fresno and Fresno County, 1950-1980



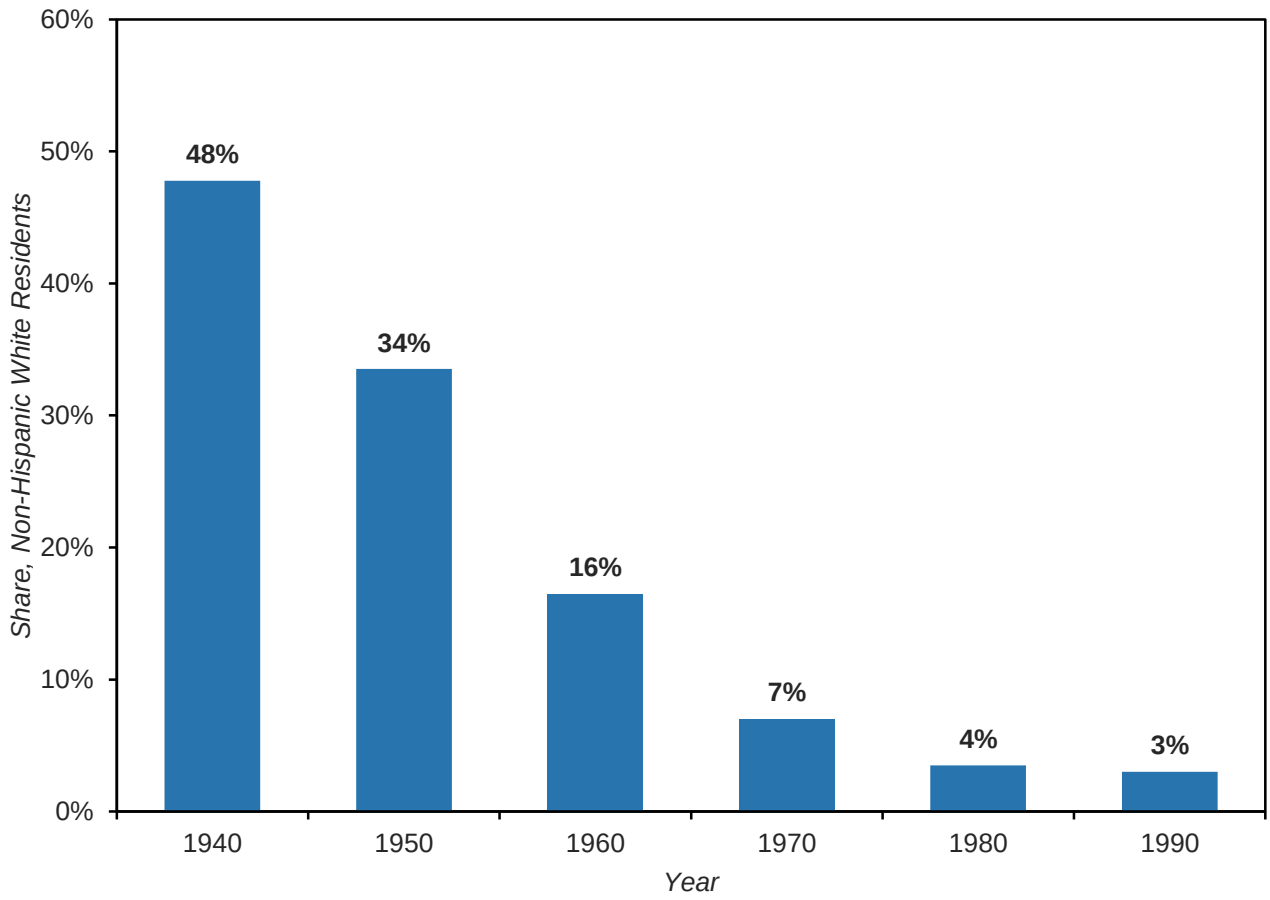
Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951, 1962a, 1980 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972a) and California Department of Finance, 2024

41. We use Fresno County rather than the City of Fresno because annexation contributed to the city's growth. This expanding geographic political unit makes the city less comparable with West Fresno, which did not expand geographically.

census tracts east of the railroad, which include downtown Fresno, only experienced a four percent decline between 1960 and 1980,[42] in comparison to 46 percent for West Fresno (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1962a, 1980; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972a; and California Department of Finance, 2024)). The greater population decline is most likely due to the changes brought about by the freeway in West Fresno.

This degradation and depopulation led to the destruction of the ethnic enclaves in West Fresno. As early as the 1950s, residents of Fresno were already expressing their sorrow over the loss of a once thriving neighborhood. A 1955 *Fresno Bee* article titled "Picturesque Chinatown Was Major Attraction in Fresno" details how, over the course of the previous two decades, the "cosmopolitan population" and dense, bustling business center of Chinatown had been scattered and displaced (Grimes, 1955, p. 20-A). Historic Chinatown buildings were

Figure 3-27. Share of Non-Hispanic White Residents in West Fresno, 1940-1980



Data source: calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990; Gibson and Jung, 2005; Ancestry, 2024; and Ruggles et al., 2024)

42. There is no tract-level data available for 1950, and manually tabulating the census records for areas beyond West Fresno is not feasible within the scope of this project.

replaced with gas stations and garages or simply demolished and left as vacant lots from the 1940s onwards. There is very little left of Chinatown, with a historical marker on China Alley today and the core blocks now completely vacant (Architectural Resources Group, 2006a; Letson, 2023; and Google, 2024b).

West Fresno not only lost population overall but also witnessed white flight (See **Figure 3-27**). This phenomenon began in the 1940s, with a slight decrease in the total number of non-Hispanic white residents (620 fewer) but a significant decline in their proportion of West Fresno's overall population (-14 percentage points). The decline, both in absolute numbers and relative representation, intensified in the 1950s. The white population of West Fresno contracted by about three fifths, reducing their share from 34 percent to a mere 16 percent. This decline coincided with the construction of the freeway. The physical decline of the neighborhood served as a "push" factor, while the assimilation of non-Hispanic white immigrants and their descendants facilitated their departure. Among the most well-documented cases of such displacement is Germantown. The demolition of homes in that area forced out a significant portion of the remaining German immigrant community, leading to the cultural and economic devastation of the neighborhood. Consequently, this made the area more affordable for Fresno's residents of color (Architectural Resources Group, 2006b), a process that facilitated the racial recomposition of West Fresno.

The freeway had a negative impact not only on West Fresno businesses but also on businesses located downtown. The members of business associations that advocated for the D Street route did not benefit from the new US-99; instead, the freeway had the opposite effect (City of Fresno, 2016):

> *"The construction of the freeway loop system [initially US-99 and later, SR-41 and SR-180] has had a devastating impact on Downtown Fresno and its surrounding neighborhoods....Facilitated by the freeways, the City continued to stretch onto inexpensive land to the north and east, aiding the flight of people and businesses away from the center of the city"* (City of Fresno, 2016, p. 10).

Downtown's plight was apparent in 1958 when the Downtown Association commissioned a plan to develop the pedestrian Fulton Mall, designed by famed mall developer Victor Gruen (Wood, 1967; Calvarese, Osborne, and Moulton, 2016; Amos, 2020; and Judge, 2013). But a report for the area's business improvement district, the successor to the Downtown Association (Downtown Fresno Partnership, 2024), characterized the mall as, "by most accounts[,] a failed experiment that, left alone, will continue to deteriorate" (Judge, 2013, p. 3). In 2017, the pedestrian mall was removed and returned to a street. While other factors beyond the freeway contributed, the problem of the city's central business district decay has continued to plague the urban core, despite urban renewal efforts (Amos, 2020; Yung et al., 2022; and ECONorthwest, 2023).

3.6. Conclusions: The Impact of Structural Racism

As stated in the introduction of this part, the Fresno case study allows us to examine how structural racism influenced the development of the US-99 freeway through the disadvantaged community of West Fresno. We define structural racism as a conceptual framework that explains racism at the societal and institutional level rather than the discriminatory actions (explicit and implicit) of biased individuals. Structural racism encompasses both historical and contemporaneous factors. The introductory part of the report provides further details on this phenomenon, including differences in the nature of structural racism between the pre- and post-Second-World-War periods. The findings presented in this part offer a concrete example of how this conceptual approach is useful in interpreting the events in Fresno during the 1940s and 1950s, allowing us to understand the process and

dynamics as products of this structural framework. Some of the following interpretations are common sense, but nonetheless, our goal is to offer a broader perspective of structural racism.

The history of structural racism had a significant impact on West Fresno in three ways. Firstly, it played a crucial role in shaping the societal conditions that determined key groups involved, their power balances, and overall framing of freeway development. Historically, structural racism dictated how Fresno developed and consequently created the cast of actors that influenced freeway development—those representing special economic interests, the racial and non-Hispanic white ethnic groups, and the state's transportation planners. Secondly, larger societal processes also influenced the physical and human landscape, particularly with suburbanization of the region. These larger societal changes led to a political push to modernize the highway system and to the spatial fragmentation of ethnoracial groups, ultimately making West Fresno the "ideal" location for the freeway. The historical creation of economic disparities along racial, ethnic, and geographical lines made this community a logical choice due to its lower property values, which were a result of a stratified labor market based on race and ethnicity. Lastly, history created power imbalances that were evident during the decision-making process. West Fresno was in a weaker political position due to its weaker business community compared to downtown Fresno. Additionally, residents in West Fresno may have had less influence with elected officials due to their smaller number of voters, largely because of a higher proportion of immigrants and people of color. Asian immigrants in particular were marginalized because until roughly the end of the Second World War, they were first ineligible for citizenship and only incrementally given such rights (Ferguson, 1947). Their relatively diminutive number of voters placed them at a distinct disadvantage, as the mayor and city council members were elected at large until 1981 (Vankin, 2021).

People in West Fresno were not just passive victims of a societal machine; they had some degree of agency to take action. This was demonstrated by numerous organizations and individuals in West Fresno, who were not submissive despite their structural disadvantages. They exhibited a remarkable capacity to mobilize and publicly voice their concerns in the fight against being victimized again (The community had previously opposed environmental hazards such as industrial plants (Zuk, 2013).). Diverse groups, such as religious, secular, and business organizations, coalesced around a common agenda: to save their community from the intrusion of the freeway. Unfortunately, they did not succeed in their battle, which might be seen as evidence of their lack of effective agency. However, this interpretation overlooks the larger picture and focuses only on short-term outcomes. The resistance in West Fresno was part of a broader movement for racial justice, which originated from earlier protests against environmental injustices and eventually evolved into a fight for civil rights.

The available information provides insights into how the state operated through its transportation departments. What emerged from the record is the central role of freeway planners and engineers in making choices. This professional class considered themselves technical experts, driven by professional priorities—their goal was to construct freeways that could transport as many people in cars as quickly as possible, while minimizing costs and maximizing the reach of the expanding freeway network. Notably, social justice was not a criterion in their infrastructure decisions. They, however, did not operate within a strong technocratic system and required cooperation from other sectors of society. They needed approval from the city, so they were willing to compromise when necessary, although they aimed to minimize deviations from what the planners considered the most technically sound route. Another important group was downtown business interests. The planners tried to gain their approval by arguing that the freeway would economically benefit the central business district, though these claims were based on little empirical evidence and were later proven false. Public input was reluctantly allowed, but community groups from West Fresno were not empowered to undermine the overall master plan of the planners. Public hearings were more performance than real meaningful engagement. Just as in the discussion about community agency and action, it is important to interpret the role of the transportation agency and its staff

broadly rather than narrowly. Eventually, the department was compelled to enhance its citizen participation procedures and to incorporate broader social concerns to a greater degree, a point discussed in this report's final part.

This case study contributes to and refines our understanding of structural racism in two ways. First, it highlights the complexity of ethnic differentiation within the non-Hispanic white population and of the division between high- and low-status immigrants, as well as their position in relation to U.S.-born white citizens. In economic terms such as earnings, the gap among different non-Hispanic white segments of the population (defined by nativity) was as significant as racial gaps. However, it is important to note that non-Hispanic white ethnic fragmentation was not equivalent to racial divisions. The dominant white mainstream perceived low-status non-Hispanic white immigrants more favorably than people of color. Furthermore, low-status non-Hispanic white immigrants and their descendants were able to eventually assimilate economically, socially and spatially. Therefore, while it is crucial to acknowledge that the negative impact of the freeway affected not only people of color, it is also important to recognize that the long-term consequences after construction varied due to the different groups' trajectories. Racism proved to be a more enduring form of socioeconomic stratification.

The second aspect that this case study clarifies is that the business class was not singular. During the debate surrounding the freeway's route, this sector became divided between those supporting and those opposing the D Street option. This division can be attributed, in part, to specific, place-based, narrow interests. West Fresno businesses sought to protect their livelihood, as did downtown businesses. This inevitably led to conflicting positions. These place-based differences reflect deeper structural aspects of Fresno as a society. West Fresno was the historical product of racism, along with non-Hispanic white ethnic fragmentation, exemplifying how one phenomenon is embedded in another. This interconnectedness was yet another characteristic of the complex nature of structural racism, where one layer of injustice influenced and perpetuated another layer.

Finally, we can observe the role that history has played in shaping the landscape through major infrastructure projects. Interestingly, the railroad industry did not play an active nor highly visible role in the decision-making process, nor was it necessary for them to safeguard their investments. This is unlike in Colton (See Part 2), where the freeway did end up running next to the tracks—a route decision-makers claimed would be less expensive, unlike their claims in Fresno. As previously mentioned, the tracts and yards in Fresno where the railways operated were essentially considered sacred. All parties involved were aware of this reality, taking care to discuss plans for crossings that would not disrupt the indispensable rail operations that supported the region's agricultural economy. This demonstrates another feature of the social structure: that powerful forces can dictate without overtly acting.

Massive infrastructures, such as the built-out railroad system established in the 19th century, continue to exert influence on society long after their construction. This is evident in the case of the freeways developed after the Second World War, which have continued to shape the lives of people even decades after they opened—a historical legacy of racism that continues to harm residents and their community even today. In Section 5.4, we quantify the effects of freeways on the health and access of residents in the Fresno study area and the other case study sites. But we also note that Caltrans today is taking steps to address the freeways' negative legacy. A few miles from West Fresno, for instance, Caltrans is planting trees and constructing the McKinley Community Garden next to a freeway interchange across from a high school. District staff are also modifying their project creation and evaluation processes, including conducting community walk assessments and having community stakeholders inform project development (Caltrans, 2024b and Monson, 2024).

4. San Diego: City Heights

4.1. Introduction

The City Heights Case Study

Beyond the other case studies conducted by our research team (Colton and Fresno above, as well as Pacoima and Pasadena in Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023a) and Stockton in Ong et al. (2023)), the outcomes of freeway building in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego uniquely reveal other ways that freeway development intersects with race.

Unlike the other case studies, City Heights was neither a community of color nor home to a demographic mix of populations when State Route 15 was first planned and when construction commenced (See **Figure 4-1**). Instead, City Heights was overwhelmingly non-Hispanic white—but subsequently underwent a demographic transformation to become predominantly home to people of color.

As we will see in detail later in this part, this community was also unique because the freeway took nearly a half century to complete, constructed in two distinct stages separated by a protracted hiatus. The southern section was built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, while the northern section was built in the 1990s (See **Figure 4-1**). Many residents blamed this disjointed process for an economic decline after the opening of the first section, because the initial segment directed into the neighborhood unwanted and highly disruptive traffic that degraded the quality of life. After a period of white flight, by the time freeway construction recommenced, the community had become “majority-minority.” The new residents gravitated to the area because housing became more affordable, a byproduct of the freeway itself and developers building more multifamily housing around the same time as the pause in freeway construction. The demand for affordable housing cyclically stimulated a growth in City Heights’ housing stock, along with an absolute and relative increase in rental units. During the second stage of freeway development, the area continued its demographic recomposition, becoming predominantly home to people of color. The second stage also differed from the initial stage because freeway design and decision-making had changed dramatically, shifting from minimal citizen participation to more community engagement and negotiation around ways to mitigate negative impacts.

Following further introductory material below, the rest of this part of the report provides the details of the process of racial transformation and the role of freeway development and is organized into four more sections. The first introduces City Heights, its location, and its history, focusing on its racial transformation. The next section analyzes the development of the freeway: the construction of the southern spur and the impact of the traffic from the Spur during the prolonged hiatus in construction. Next, we examine the completion of SR-15, focusing on the negotiation over mitigation and a freeway cap park. We conclude with some remarks on broader insights from the case study.

Figure 4-1. City Heights and Surroundings Geography and Transportation, 1974

Data sources: City of San Diego, 1998, 2024b; background imagery: UC Santa Barbara Library, 2012

The Dynamics of Demographic Changes and Freeway-development Regimes

While the freeway contributed to City Heights' transformation, this change was embedded in a larger dynamic. In the decades after the Second World War, the City of San Diego overall underwent a demographic shift, with an absolute and relative growth of its population of color, which was disproportionately low-income. The city attracted people of color from other parts of the United States, as well as immigrants and refugees from abroad. Like City Heights, the city eventually became majority-minority. The challenge was how to house the annual influx of thousands migrating to San Diego. A part of the adjustment was a regional restructuring associated with white flight from the urban core to newly developed suburbs, which was made possible by the freeway system (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a). This spatial reconfiguration was not unique to San Diego but also a common phenomenon to most American cities. The exodus of the white population did not represent a wholesale abandonment of all central-city neighborhoods. Instead, some white residents left, while some others chose to remain and maintain their neighborhoods as racially segregated enclaves (Boustan, 2010 and Kollmann, Marsiglio, and Suardi, 2018). Housing for the growing numbers of people of color happened through the racial transformation of some neighborhoods that had been overwhelmingly white to overwhelmingly people of color. In other words, the outmigration of white residents was not randomly distributed geographically, but instead the restructuring of the urban landscape occurred systematically at a neighborhood level.

Urban scholars have conceptualized and studied why some places flipped racially, while others remained largely white. Neighborhood flipping was due to what Schelling (2006) argues was a rational economic decision, where white residents sold their homes when the number of residents of color in a neighborhood reached a tipping point. These tipping points occurred when the relative number of people of color reached a level that caused an increasing number of white residents to fear that the neighborhood was on the verge of changing racially, thus precipitating an exodus of white people (Card, Mas, and Rothstein, 2008 and Easterly, 2009). While there is no precise tipping-point percentage, it is likely to occur when people of color become about a fifth of the residents (Card, Mas, and Rothstein, 2008). Obviously, a resident with personal racial biases could exit to avoid having neighbors of color. However, Schelling (2006) argues that homeowners need not be directly prejudicial per se to make this choice, if they believe that others would leave as well. Homeowners may also sell because of a fear of a resultant declining property value. This process of neighborhood flight is self-sustaining, leading to a racial reconfiguration. The individual behavior had societal consequences in reproducing housing segregation, preserving some neighborhoods as white communities while creating spaces for a growing population of color. This was a societal process that happened in most American cities (Schelling, 2006; Boustan, 2010; and Kollmann, Marsiglio, and Suardi, 2018), and as we show, it fits the demographic transformation of San Diego in the post-Second-World-War era.

Neighborhood flipping was not random; it mostly occurred through a contiguous expansion of places that were home to people of color. White residents reacted not just to an increase of people of color in their immediate neighborhood but also to changes in adjacent areas (Morrill, 1965 and Crowder, 2000). The areas in close proximity to neighborhoods of color had a higher probability of white flight. This process could be facilitated by real estate agents who found a profit opportunity to engage in "blockbusting," in which the agents purposefully sold to a buyer of color in a white neighborhood to precipitate a panic by white owners, or trumpeted the threat of buyers of color moving in. This created an opportunity for arbitrage, buying low from those exiting and selling high to people of color willing to pay more to reside in a racially mixed, often economically more prosperous place (Gotham, 2002; Ouazad, 2015; and Bennett, Hartley, and Rose, 2022). This process of systematic contiguous expansion into adjacent areas explains how San Diego accommodated its growing population of color. The borders dividing people of color and white San Diegans shifted outward from decade to decade.

And yet, the origin of City Heights' racial transformation does not fit this process of geographic expansion, because it was not adjacent to the major section of San Diego of residents of color. While contiguous expansion accounted for much of how the city changed spatially along racial lines to accommodate the growing population of color, a neighborhood could (and did) flip without being adjacent to a neighborhood of color (Deskins, 1981). Instead, satellite areas of color materialized due to other factors. A neighborhood can change along socioeconomic lines when new, externally imposed factors make the area undesirable. Locally unwanted land uses (LULUs), such as the placement of factories, landfills, and prisons, tend to suppress housing prices (Rephann, 2000; Schively, 2007; and Smith and Desvousges, 2022). In turn, many neighborhood residents move out to avoid the LULU-generated disamenities. This creates housing opportunities for people of color, particularly those with limited incomes seeking affordable housing.

Numerous studies have found that placing a freeway can impact property values, both positively through access to the freeway and negatively because of disamenities (Seo, Golub, and Kuby, 2014; Seo et al., 2019; Cervero, Kang, and Shively, 2009; and Brinkman and Lin, 2022b).[43] The net impact depends on location-specific conditions. When the negative externalities outweigh the benefits, then the area becomes less desirable, which would motivate existing residents to move out. As documented later, this scenario fits the case of City Heights, where the traffic and other issues created by the "Spur" (the stub of SR-15 left unfinished for decades) were perceived as extremely harmful to the residents' quality of life. City Heights then became a place for the growing population of color that offered affordable housing, in which, in all likelihood, the disruption created by freeway development was a major precipitating factor (Bliesner and Bussell, 2013 and Theodos, 2022). Once the negative impacts of the initial stage took hold, City Heights became majority-minority, albeit with still a significant number of white residents. What started as an exodus of some white people responding to the disamenities later turned into full-fledged white flight, when the number of people of color reached a tipping point, of the type described above. The area underwent a rapid racial transition, despite not being a geographically contiguous area to another area of color.

The second stage of freeway construction in City Heights, then, became comparable in many ways to other cases where freeway development impacted communities of color. For example, Fresno also had a racially diverse population with a declining white population experiencing white flight during the planning and construction of the US-99 freeway. However, white flight in that Central Valley community started before the modernization of the pre-existing route (See Section 3.2), aided by the spatial assimilation of lower-status non-Hispanic white immigrants and their children. By the 1970s, the southern half of City Heights had already been predominantly home to people of color and remained so, but the northern half started as majority white then transformed through white flight into majority residents of color during freeway development. The second stage of freeway development in City Heights experienced white flight during the construction of the northern half of SR-15, although it was preceded by the racial transformation associated with the earlier development of the southern half of SR-15. Overall, City Heights shared a commonality in terms of a demographic reconfiguration but also differed in terms of its magnitude and timing. It is the only case study that experienced the most dramatic recomposition, going from primarily white to primarily residents of color.

The other major difference was that City Heights spanned two disparate freeway-development regimes. The first stage occurred when freeway planning, designing, and siting was technocratic, with planners and engineers positioned as the experts, who knew what was best for nation, states, and cities. Their agenda was to maximize traffic flow and speed and minimize cost per mile. The economic calculus was based on aggregated benefits,

43. Removing a freeway can have the opposite economic impact (Cervero, Kang, and Shively, 2009 and Brinkman and Lin, 2022b).

without much regard to the distributional impacts (who benefited and who bore the cost). Within this context, the concerns of people of color were largely discounted by those in charge of freeway routing and design. Community input was largely ignored or absent during the planning and decision-making processes (Oglesby, Bishop, and Willeke, 1970; Goodwin, 1974; Brown, Morris, and Taylor, 2009a, 2009b; DiMento and Ellis, 2012; Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a; and Ong et al., 2023). Along with the southern segment in City Heights, this was clearly evident in Fresno, where stakeholders in marginalized West Fresno were powerless to prevent US-99 from running through their community. In Stockton, the Asian American community and activists acted too late in the process, a consequence of the structurally inherent limitations faced by many neighborhoods of color that did not have the knowledge and skills to effectively engage with transportation agencies. Even if they had been able to participate in public hearings, it is most likely that their voices would have been ineffective (Ong et al., 2023).

However, the way transportation agencies could act unilaterally had changed by the second phase of freeway development in City Heights. This was due in part to what was called the “freeway revolt,” protests against the many shortcomings of freeway development (Lathrop, 1971; Gotham, 1999; Mohl, 2008; Fackler, 2009; Avila, 2014a; Brinkman and Lin, 2022a; Kirsch, 2023; Schipper, 2023; and Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a). In addition to protests, growing financial constraints to freeway construction also contributed to a slow-down of freeway development (Taylor, 1995; Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a; and Wasserman et al., 2022). All told, increasing opposition to freeway development in the previous decades led governments at all levels to adopt new policies and procedures that provided more meaningful opportunities for disadvantaged communities to engage in planning (DeSoto et al., 1976). Other changes were also enacted, such as requirements to make or improve relocation assistance and to conduct analyses of environmental impacts (Goldstein, 1970). One of the outcomes of these changes was a willingness to mitigate some of the negative impacts of freeways. In City Heights, this took the form of negotiating over placing freeway “caps”—elevated parks or platforms—over below-grade sections, which work to minimize the physical and social fragmentation of freeways[44] and provide opportunities to develop often-lacking community amenities, such as green space and playgrounds (Houston and Zuñiga, 2019). Consequently, this case study offers insights on a process not covered in the previous case studies. Although mitigation was a step forward to offsetting freeway impacts, our analysis reveals limitations of this process as well.

4.2. Background: The Racial Transformation of San Diego and City Heights

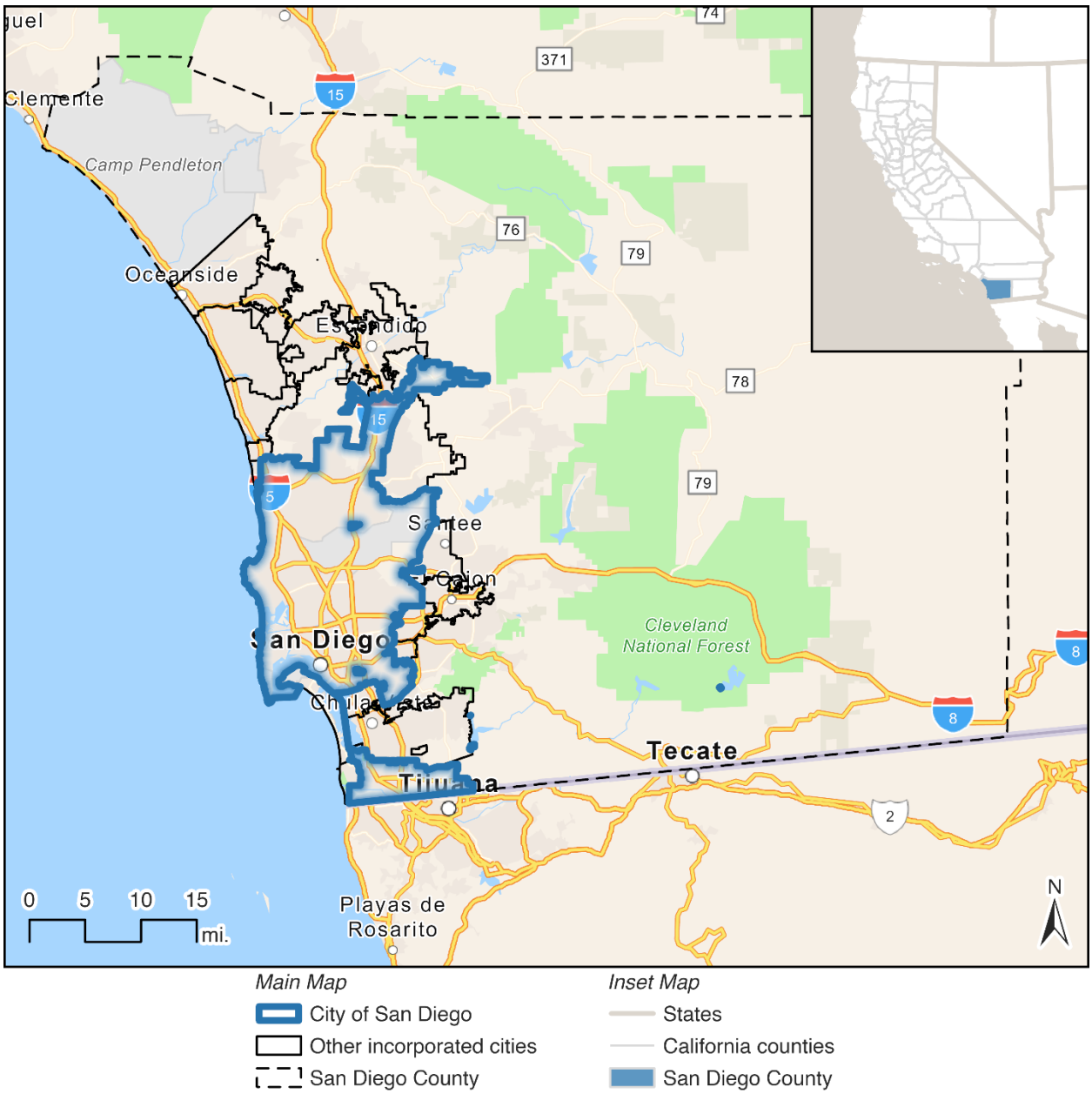
The racial transformation of City Heights is embedded in a larger process of the racial transformation of the City of San Diego. Like the other major cities in California, San Diego was transformed by international and domestic migration of people of color during the second half of the 20th century, as documented in the first half of the section below. One of the neighborhoods that was racially transformed was City Heights, which is discussed further below.

44. On the fragmenting effect, see Millard-Ball et al. (2022, 2024), Millard-Ball (2024), and Van Bohemen, Bekker, and Veenbaas (2004).

City of San Diego

The City of San Diego is located in the southern part of California, near the southwestern corner of the state, and is adjacent to the Mexican border (See **Figure 4-2**) In the pre-colonial period, the area was settled by a Yuman group, becoming known as the Kumeyaay. During the Spanish colonial period, the Gaspar de Portolà expedition

Figure 4-2. City of San Diego and San Diego County

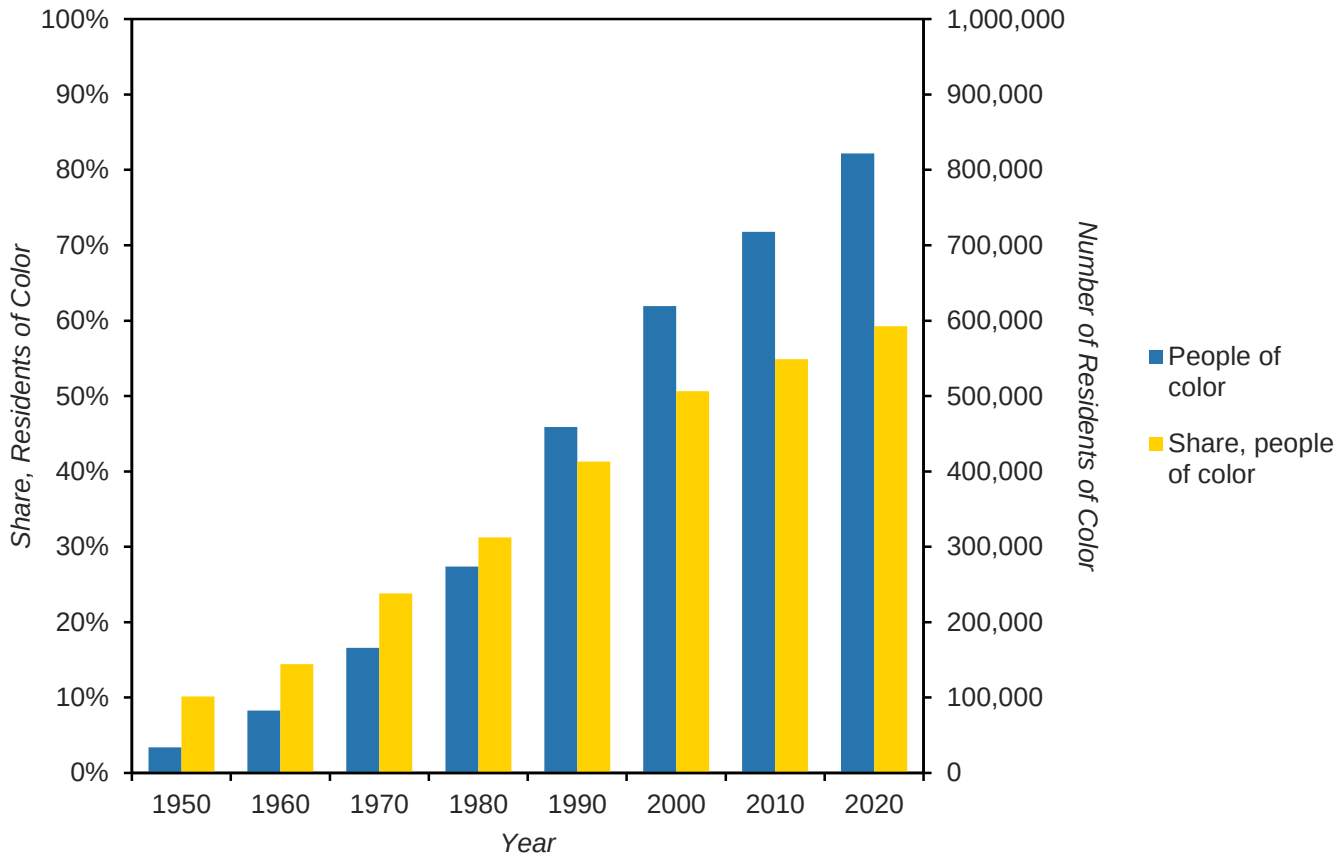


Data sources: San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2010; Hudson, 2022; and California Open Data, 2019; base map: Esri, 2024b

founded the Presidio of San Diego in 1769. In 1804, this region became a part of Alta California, which had a regional capital to the north in Monterey. After the Mexican War of Independence, San Diego became part of the newly established nation in 1821. In the Mexican-American War, San Diego then became part of the U.S. in 1848 and was named the county seat in 1850, when California gained statehood. Today, it is the second-most populous city in California and eighth most-populous in the nation. Its economic base consists of international trade, manufacturing (particularly in the high-tech sector), the military (especially from its naval base), and tourism (City of San Diego, 2024d, 2024e and Mills, 1968).

The City's population quadrupled from just over 334,000 in 1950 to nearly 1.4 million residents in 2020. Not all racial groups, however, grew at the same rate. The number of non-Hispanic white San Diegans peaked in 1990 (just below 652,000 people), more than twice their numbers in 1950 (just over 300,000). Their numbers then declined by an eighth three decades later (around 565,000 in 2020). Much of the city's growth instead came from people of color, whose numbers increased absolutely and as a percent of the total population (See **Figure 4-3**). Their count more than doubled in the 1950s and then doubled again in the subsequent decade. The 1970s saw a net increase of around 108,000 residents of color, around 185,000 in the 1980s, and closed out the century with an additional around 161,000. During this time period, their share of the population climbed from ten percent to 51 percent, making San Diego a majority-minority city (California Department of Finance, 2024).

Figure 4-3. Residents of Color in the City of San Diego, 1950-2020



Data source: California Department of Finance, 2024

From 1950 to 2000, San Diego underwent a dramatic demographic transformation (See **Table 4-1**), characterized by a significant decline in the proportion of non-Hispanic white residents. The city's non-Hispanic white population, 90 percent of the total in 1950, decreased to just 49 percent by 2000. While the absolute number of white residents continued to grow until 1990, their percentage share steadily declined as the city became increasingly diverse (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1954, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)).

During the same period, the Black population also grew, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population. From four percent in 1950, the Black population peaked at nine percent in 1980 and 1990 before declining slightly to eight percent in 2000. However, this growth was relatively modest compared to the dramatic increases experienced by other racial and ethnic groups (See **Table 4-1**) (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1954, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)).

One of the most significant changes was the rapid expansion of the Latino/a population. The Latino/a share of the population increased from just five percent in 1950 to 25 percent by 2000, with particularly pronounced growth occurring between 1960 and 1990 (See **Table 4-1**). This growth reflects broader demographic shifts within the city and the region (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1954, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)).

The Asian population also experienced substantial growth, especially after 1980. Initially comprising only one percent of the population in 1950, the Asian population reached 14 percent by 2000 (See **Table 4-1**) (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1954, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)). This sharp rise can be attributed in part to the Indochinese Immigration and Refugee Act of 1975 and the 1980 Refugee Act, which resulted in an influx of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos following the conflicts in Southeast Asia (Ong and Blumenberg, 1994; Desbarats, 1985; Rumbaut, 1989; and Bryan, 1990).

Overall, the diversity of San Diego's population increased dramatically over these five decades. This shift was primarily driven by the rapid growth of the Latino/a and Asian communities, alongside steady increases in the Black population (See **Table 4-1**) (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1954, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)).

People of color did not settle randomly through the city because of persistent housing discrimination, the cultural and linguistic needs of immigrants and refugees, and limited incomes. As in Colton (See Section 2.3) and Fresno (See Section 3.3), the dissimilarity index reveals the pattern of segregation. **Figure 4-4** reports the dissimilarity index between non-Hispanic white residents and residents of color in San Diego County[45] for the time period covering the development of the freeway in City Heights. Overall, the level of segregation was moderate, with a general decline over time (calculated by authors from 1940, 1960, 1980, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960, 1980, 2000 and Ruggles et al., 2024)).[46]

45. We use the county because census tracts do not perfectly coincide with city boundaries.

46. There are also differences by race. Nationally in the period after the Second World War, Black residents were the most segregated, Asians the least, and Hispanic residents following in between (Logan and Stults, 2022).

Table 4-1. Race and Ethnicity in the City of San Diego, 1950-2000

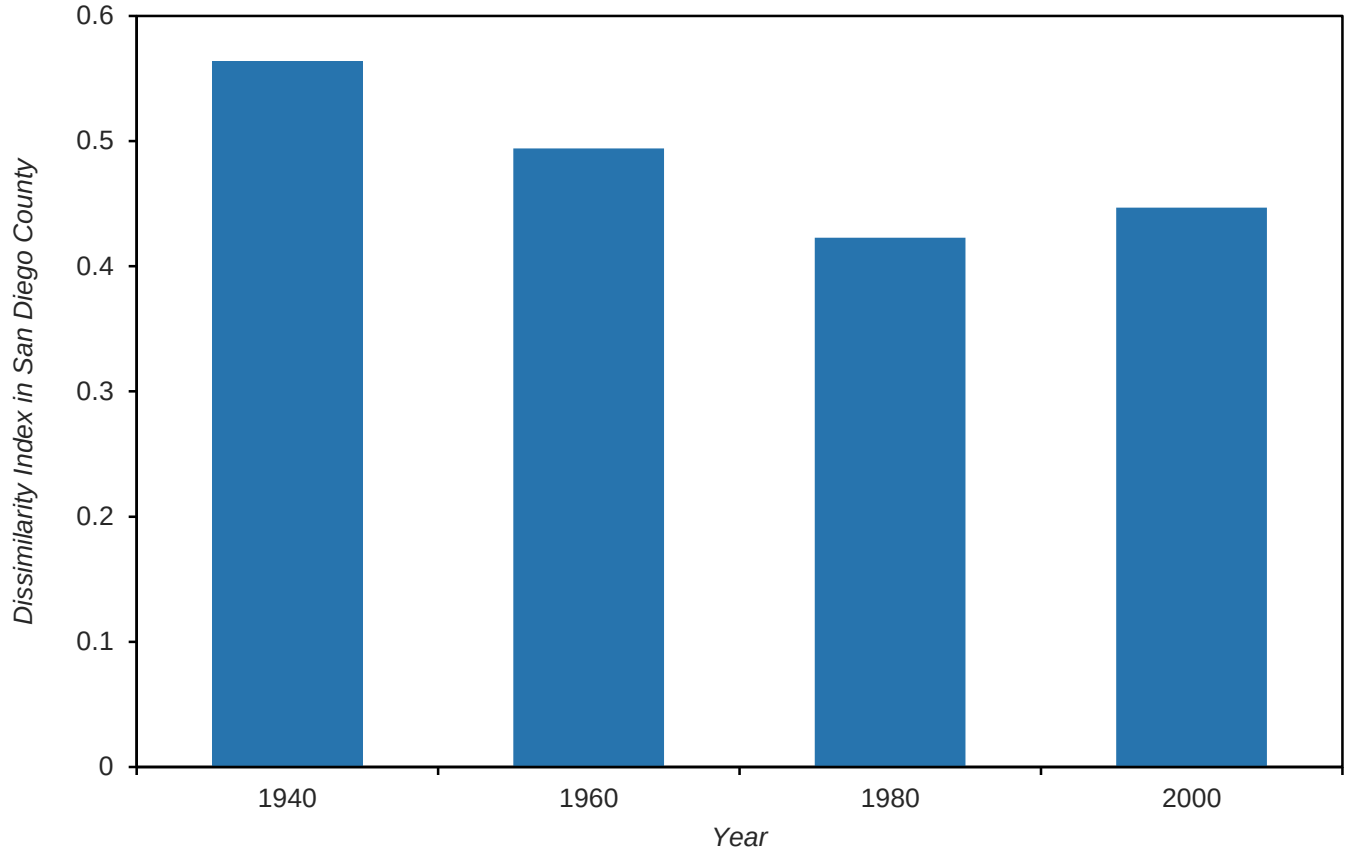
Racial/Ethnic Group	1950		1960		1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
White	316,023	95%	528,512	92%	619,498	89%	666,863	76%	745,406	67%	736,207	60%
Non-Hispanic white	300,533	90%	490,469	86%	530,898	76%	601,960	69%	651,735	59%	603,892	49%
Black	14,904	4%	34,435	6%	52,961	8%	77,700	9%	104,261	9%	96,216	8%
Latino/a[47]	15,490	5%	38,043	7%	88,600	13%	130,613	15%	229,519	21%	310,752	25%
Asian[48]	3,460	1%	10,277	2%	24,310	3%	57,207	7%	130,945	12%	172,821	14%
People of color	33,854	10%	82,755	14%	165,871	24%	273,578	31%	458,814	41%	619,508	51%
Total population	**334,387**	**N/A**	**573,224**	**N/A**	**696,769**	**N/A**	**875,538**	**N/A**	**1,110,549**	**N/A**	**1,223,400**	**N/A**

Data source: calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1954, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)

47. The “Latino/a” category in 1950-1960 represents white individuals with a Spanish surname; in 1970, it includes people of Spanish language or Spanish surname; in 1980-1990, it refers to people of Spanish origin; and by 2000, the category includes those identified as Hispanic or Latino/a (See Appendix A, Section A.6).

48. The “Asian” category for 1950-1970 captures the “other races” category, which includes groups beyond just Asians, although Asians represented a large proportion of this group. This category also includes “American Indian/Alaskan Native” and all other races besides white and Black. For 1980-2000, “Asian” encompasses the “Asian and Pacific Islander” category (See Appendix A, Section A.6).

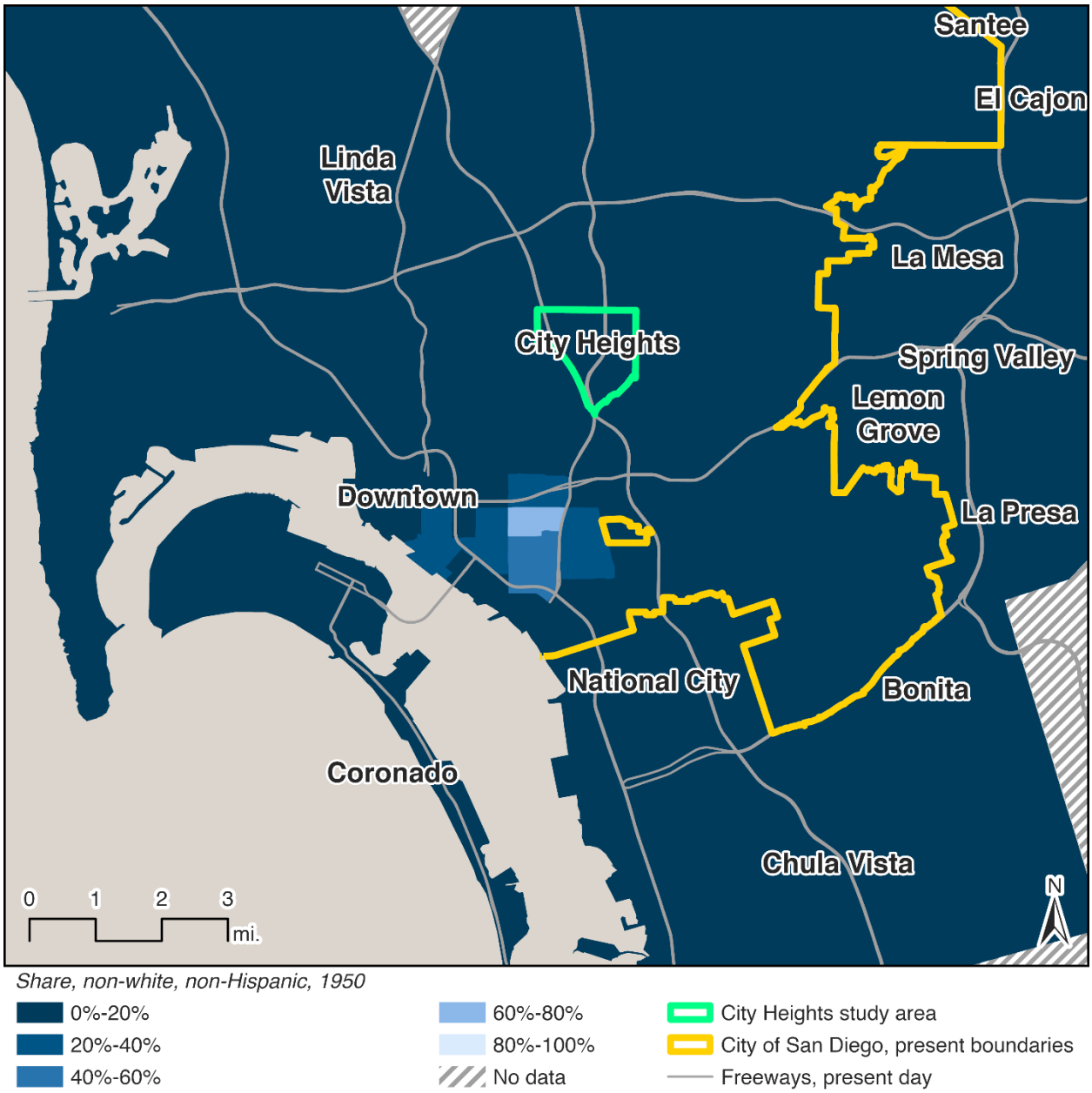
Figure 4-4. Dissimilarity Index between Non-Hispanic White Residents and Residents of Color, San Diego County



Data source: calculated by authors from 1940, 1960, 1980, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960, 1980, 2000 and Ruggles et al., 2024)

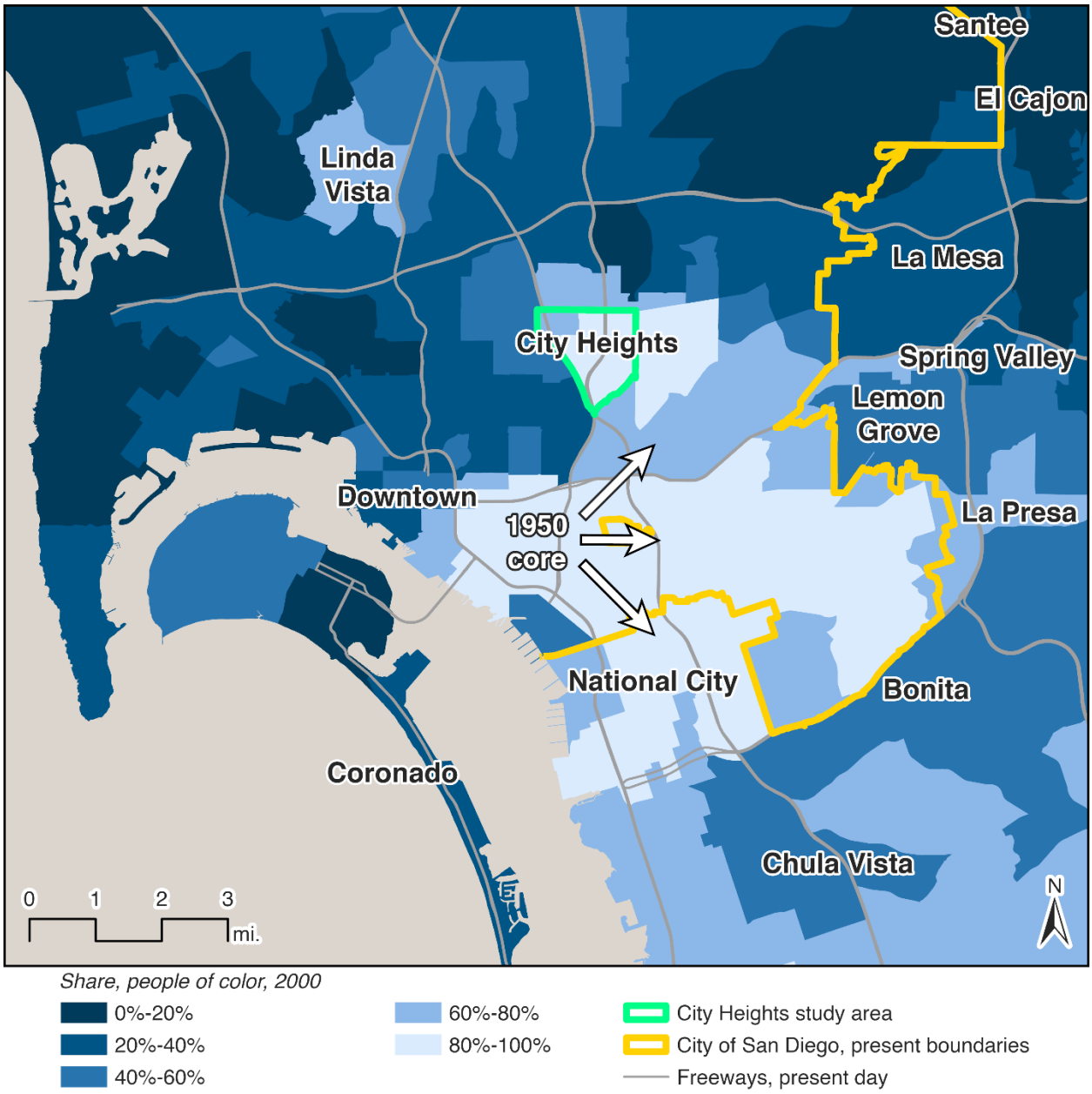
Geographically, the settlement pattern of San Diegans of color followed the contiguous expansion model described above. In 1950, non-white, non-Hispanic residents were concentrated in an area south and east of downtown (See **Figure 4-5**). By 2000, the population of color had expanded northeast, east, and southeast of the original core (See **Figure 4-6**). But there were also satellite communities of color not adjacent to their main concentration, such as the one in Linda Vista several miles north of downtown (calculated by authors from 1950 and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950a, 2000)).

Figure 4-5. Share of Non-white, Non-Hispanic Residents in the San Diego Area, 1950



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950a and Manson et al., 2022); San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2010; and Caltrans, 2023b

Figure 4-6. Share of People of Color in the San Diego Area, 2000



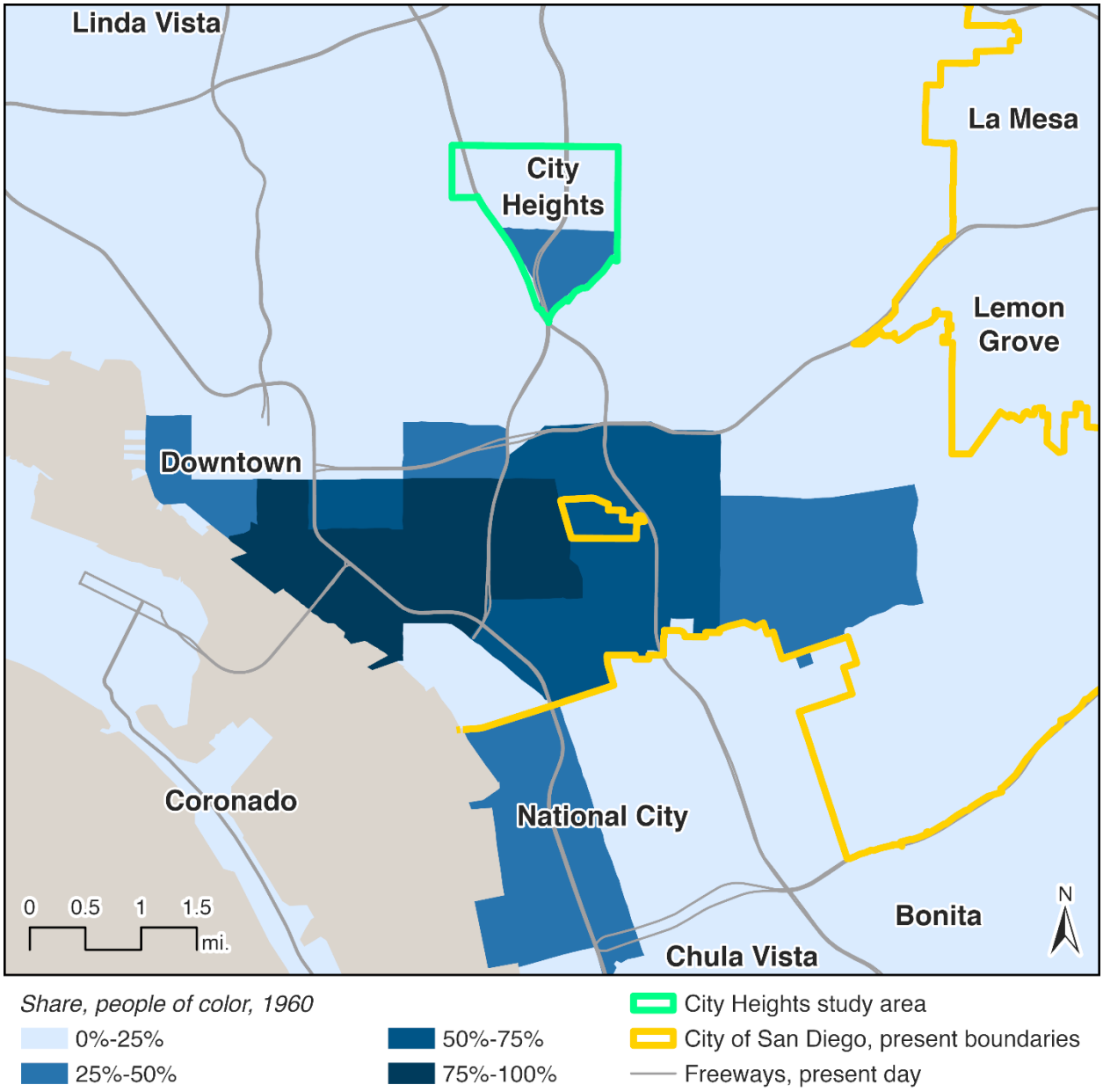
Data sources: calculated by authors from 1970 and 2000 U.S. Censuses (Manson et al., 2022 and U.S. Census Bureau, 2000); San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2010; and Caltrans, 2023b

One of the early satellite neighborhoods of color is visible in **Figure 4-7**, a map of the 1960 share of the population of color by census tract:[49] the small, triangular-shaped census tract north of the main area of color. A decade earlier in 1950, people of color made up less than a tenth of the residents there, below what might be

49. Note that **Figure 4-7** utilizes a color scheme inverted from that of **Figures 4-5** and **4-6**.

considered the tipping point needed to initiate white flight (See Section 4.1). By 1960, people of color were over a quarter of the population in that location, a level that apparently accelerated the exodus of white residents. And by 1970, residents of color composed the majority of that tract (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)). That triangular tract is the southwestern section of City Heights.

Figure 4-7. Share of People of Color in the San Diego Area, 1960

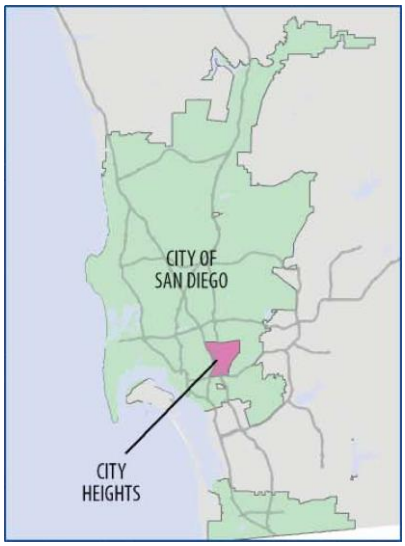


Data sources: calculated by authors from 1960 and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960 and Manson et al., 2022); San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2010; and Caltrans, 2023b

City Heights

Our study area is located in the western half of City Heights. City Heights is an urban neighborhood located about five miles east of San Diego's downtown core (See **Figure 4-8**). Geographically, the neighborhood is surrounded by a system of hillsides and canyons (See **Figures 4-9** and **4-10** and **Table 4-2**) The area is also known as Mid-city and East San Diego. The latter name is tied to its early history, when City Heights was incorporated as an independent city in 1912 known as East San Diego. By 1920, East San Diego had a population of 4,148. In 1923, its residents voted to be annexed into the City of San Diego. Prior to the Second World War, this area was predominantly white and working and middle class; it had two commercial corridors, along El Cajon Boulevard and along University Avenue (Health Equity by Design, 2011; City Heights Town Council, 2024; San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 1920; and City of San Diego, 1998, 2024b).

Figure 4-8. City Heights' Location in San Diego

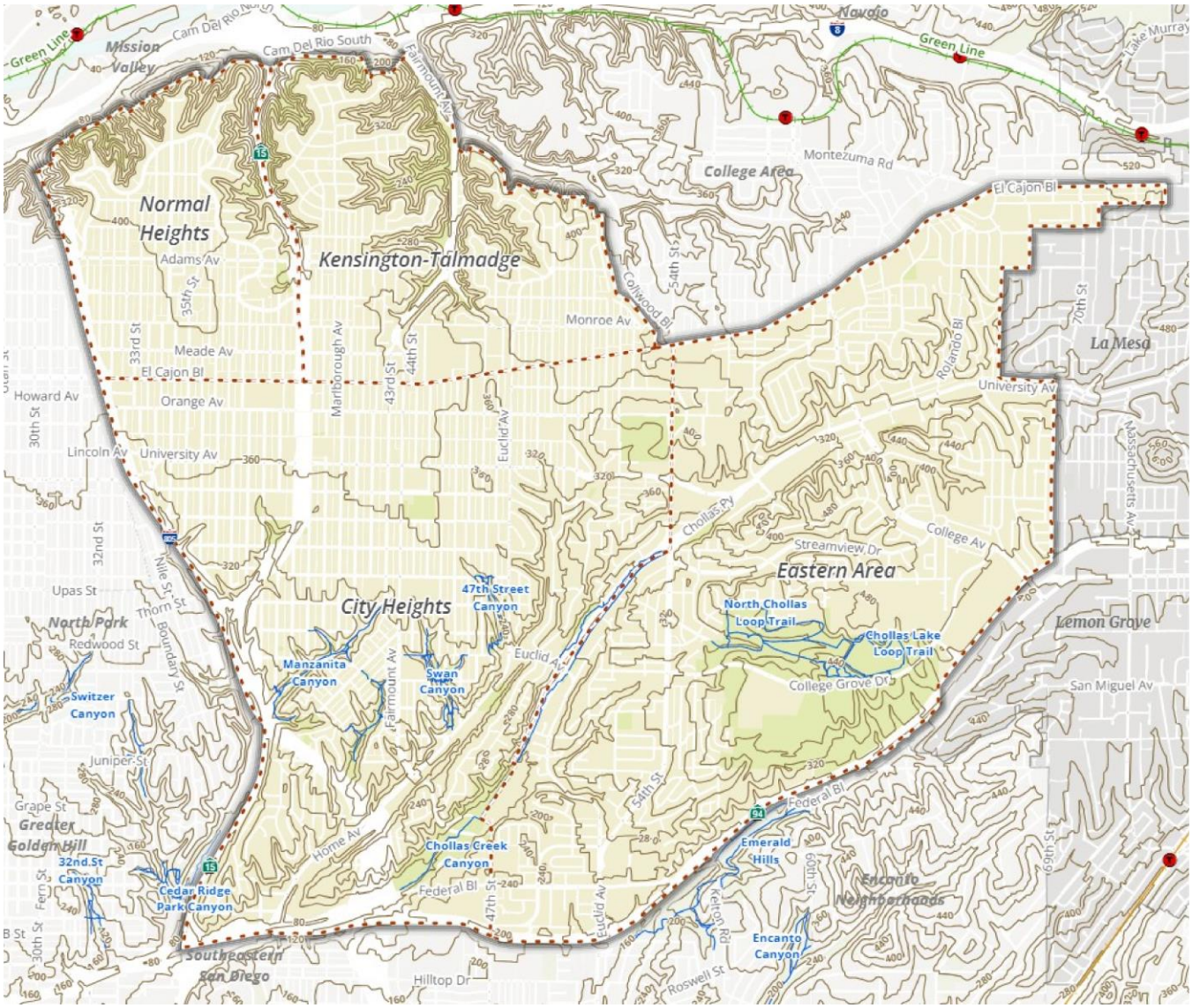


Source: Health Equity by Design, 2011, p. ii

Today, City Heights comprises 16 smaller neighborhoods (See **Figure 4-11**), covering approximately 4.5 miles with about 69,000 residents in 2022. It is a racially and ethnically diverse community of color, with sizable refugee and immigrant populations from Latin America, Southeast Asia, and East Africa. The study area is the northwestern quadrant, which includes Castle, Cherokee Point, Teralta West, and Corridor (Health Equity by Design, 2011 and City of San Diego, 2024a). Our study area is bounded roughly by Interstate 805 on the west, Fairmount Avenue to the east, El Cajon Boulevard to the north, and Manzanita Canyon (See **Figures 4-9** and **4-10** and **Table 4-2**) diagonally to the southeast. One key feature in the study area is SR-15, which runs through the middle. For convenience, we use the term "City Heights" to denote the study area within the broader City Heights area. Operationally and analytically, we also use four census tracts to define the study area. **Figure 4-12** shows

those tracts, identified by the 1970 tract numbers. The numbering of these tracts changed over time, although there was only one change in boundaries (Manson et al., 2022).[50]

Figure 4-9. Topography of City Heights and Mid-city, San Diego



Source: City of San Diego, 2024b, p. 19

50. In 1950, the four were labeled D-16, D-22, E-24, and E-25, respectively. Tract E-25 was larger than the corresponding one for 1960 and onward, so we used census blocks to get a more accurate count matching the study area. In 1960, the tracts were labeled D-16, D-22, E-24, and E-25-A, respectively. From 1970 (See **Figure 4-12**) to 1990, the tracts were labeled #16, #22, #24, and #25.01, respectively. Starting in 2000, Tracts #22 and #24 were split along SR-15 (Manson et al., 2022).

Figure 4-10. Canyons and Freeways in City Heights, San Diego

Data sources: City of San Diego, 1998, 2024b; background imagery: Google, 2024b.

Table 4-2. Canyons in and near City Heights

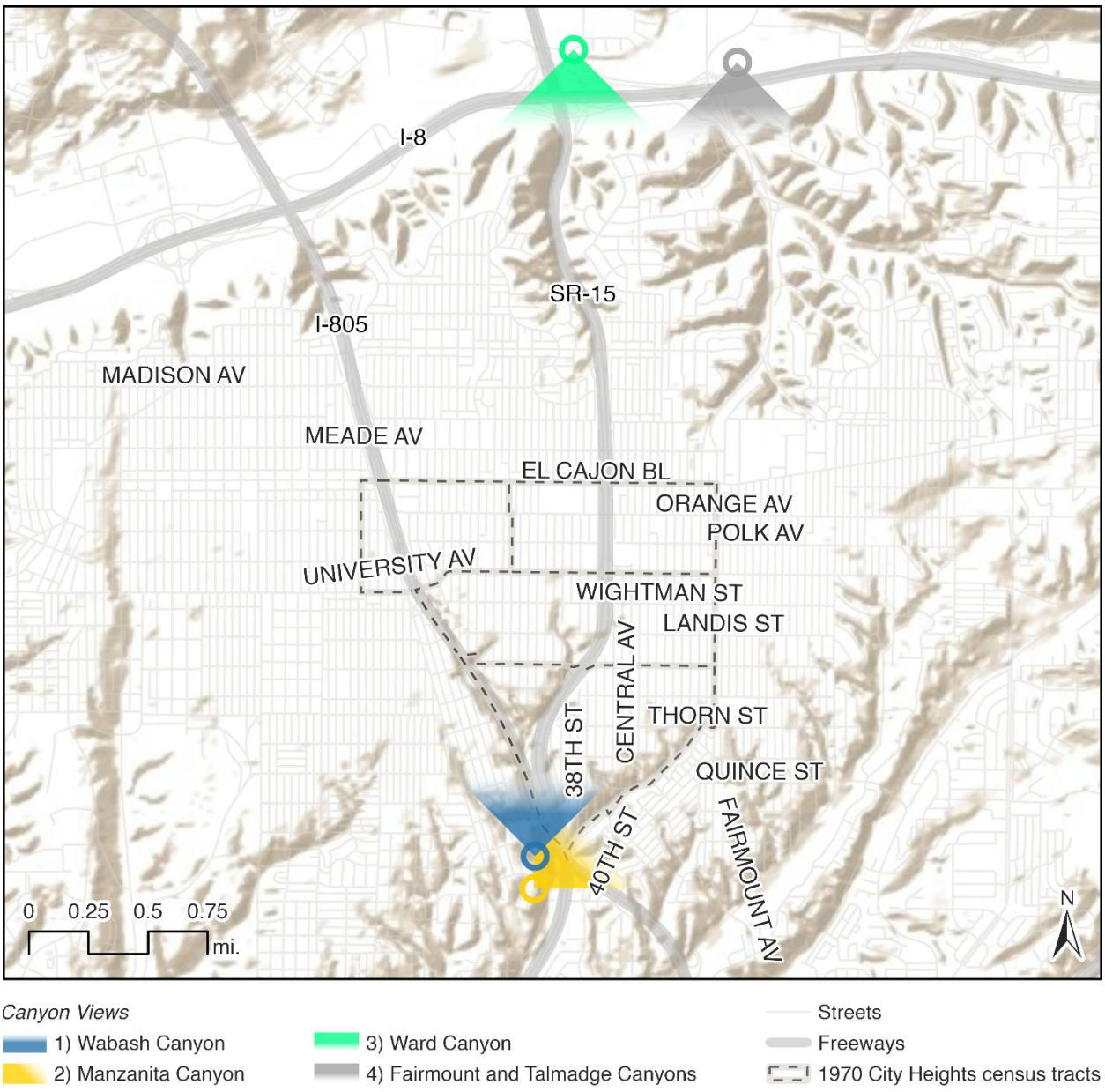
1) Wabash Canyon

2) Manzanita Canyon

3) Ward Canyon

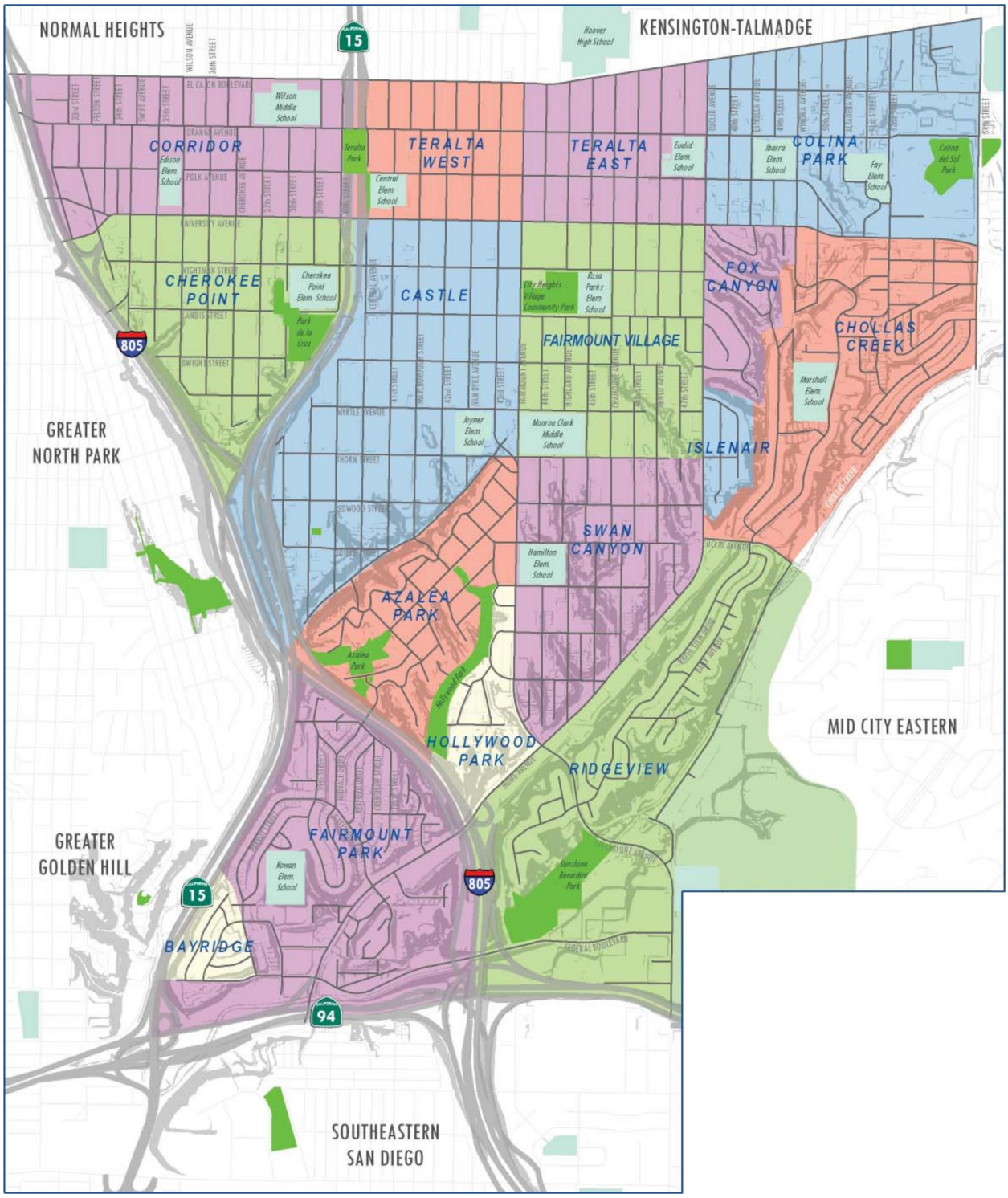
4) Fairmount and Talmadge Canyons

Key Map of Canyon Views



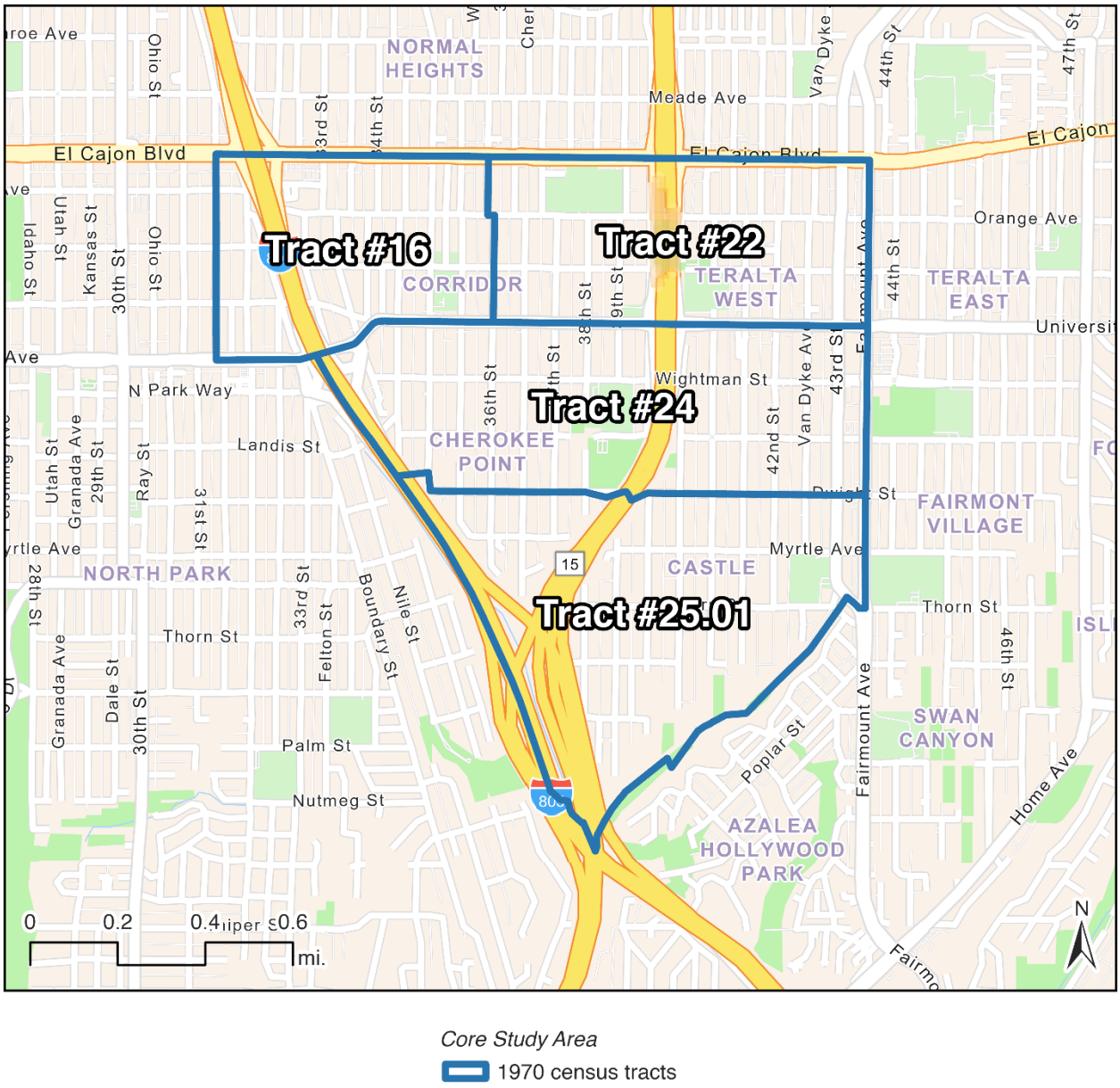
Data sources: 1970 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022); Google, 2024a; City of San Diego, 1998, 2024b; Caltrans, 2023b; and San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2024; base map: Esri, 2025

Figure 4-11. Neighborhoods within City Heights



Sources: Health Equity by Design, 2011, p. ii and authors

Figure 4-12. City Heights Study Area

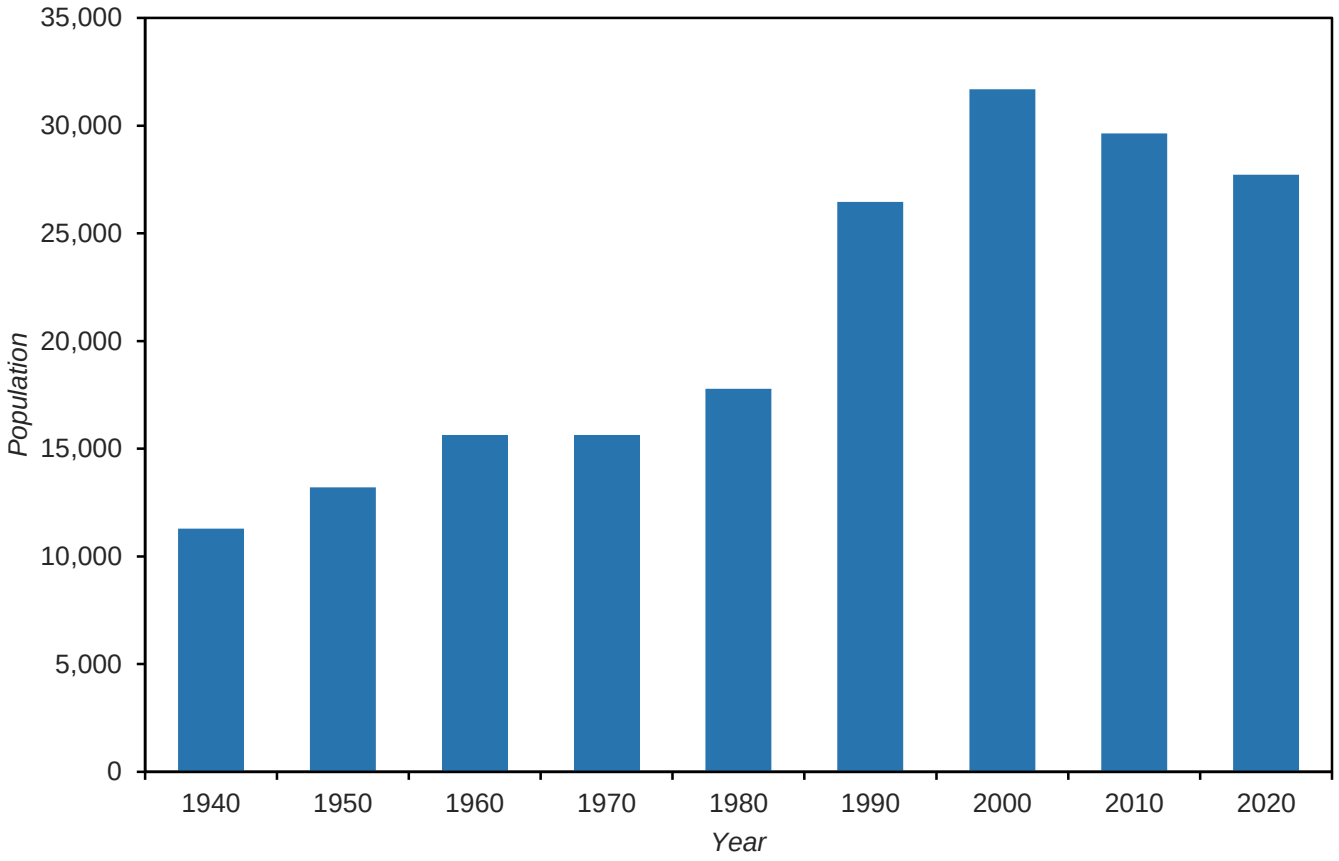


Data source: 1970 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022); base map: Esri, 2024b

Figure 4-13 plots the population of the study area. Decade-to-decade population changes were not uniform, with increases punctuated by stability and then decline. The 1940s and 1950s were a period of moderate growth, averaging about an 18 percent decade-to-decade increase. There was essentially no change in the 1960s and minor growth in the 1970s. The subsequent decade saw a steep increase, with the population surging by a half, but growth again slowed in the 1990s. The first part of the 21st century saw a decline, with population decreasing

by a twelfth each of the two decades[51] (calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c; and Ruggles et al., 2024)).

Figure 4-13. City Heights Study Area Population, 1940-2020

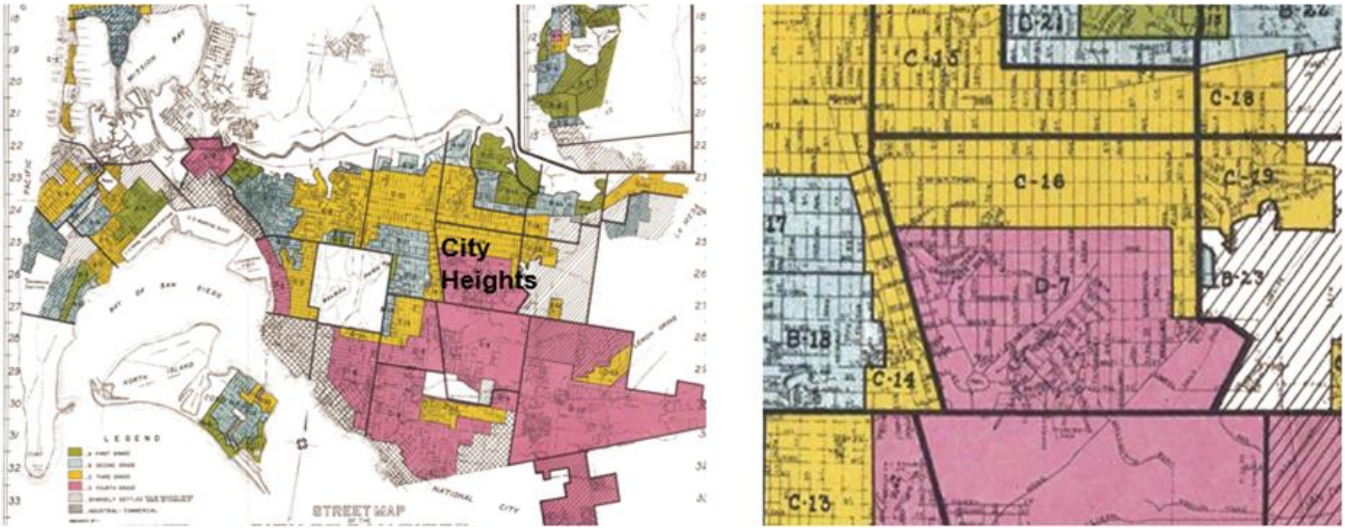


Data source: calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c; and Ruggles et al., 2024)

Before the Second World War, City Heights was a chiefly non-Hispanic white, lower-income area. This can be seen in the redlining map descriptions produced by HOLC in the 1930s (See **Figures 4-14** and **4-15**) (Nelson et al., 2023). HOLC appraised the mortgage lending risk based on neighborhood-level characteristics, including the economic class, employment status, and race/ethnicity of residents (Almeida, 2021; Aaronson, Hartley, and Mazumder, 2020; Ong, Yoon, and Pech, 2023; and Rothstein, 2017). City Heights fell into the least (D or red) and second-least desirable (yellow or C) categories (Nelson et al., 2023).

51. 1940 data approximated from enumeration districts; other years drawn from census tract data (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c; and Ruggles et al., 2024)

Figure 4-14. 1935 HOLC Redlining Map of San Diego and City Heights



Source: Nelson et al., 2023

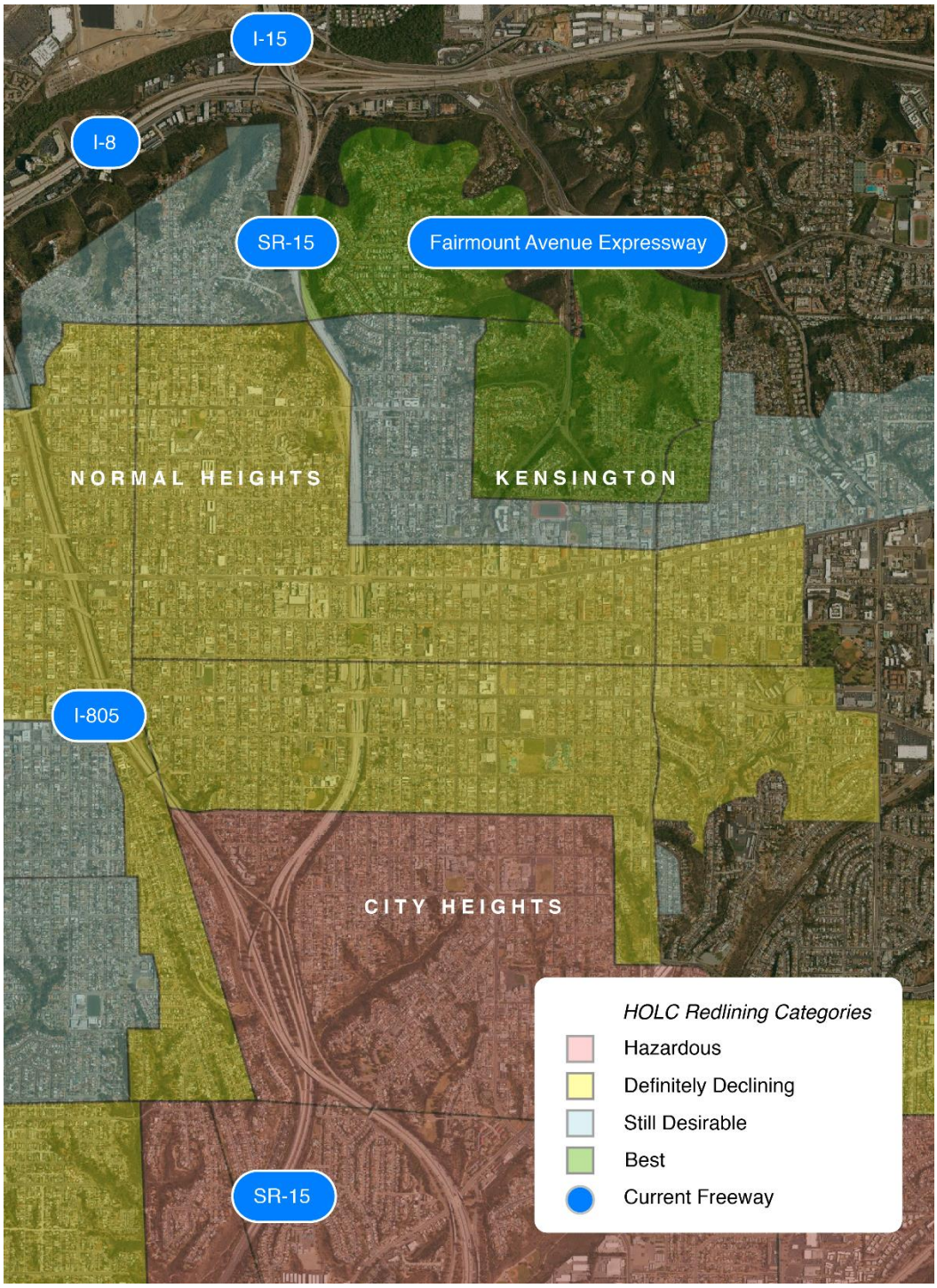
According to HOLC, much of City Heights (D-7 area) was home to “lower salaried white-collar classes, naval personnel, laborers, etc. with income range from $900 to $1,500” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). Demographically, “there [was] no concentration of any foreign element. However, many Mexicans [were] scattered throughout the area” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). There was also spatial variation, with the “northern part of the area [D-7] more desirable than southern, [on] account of transportation, city conveniences, etc.” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). Going further north into the C-16 area, HOLC’s assessment of socioeconomic status was slightly higher, with residents being among the “lower salaried white-collar classes, mechanics, laborers, etc.[, with a] probable range of income [from] $1,000 to $2,000 per year” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). Moreover, “Residents [were] mostly white with some Mexican families, although [with] no racial concentration of any of this latter element” (quoted in Nelson et al., 2023). Despite the presence of Latino/as, City Heights was 96 to 97 percent non-Hispanic white in 1940, higher than the rate for the City of San Diego and San Diego County[52] (calculated by authors from 1940 U.S. Census (Ruggles et al., 2024)).

The racial composition of the City Heights study area went through a dramatic transformation after the Second World War. It remained predominantly non-Hispanic White through the 1950s and 1960s (See **Figure 4-16**). The share of people of color in the area remained below that in the city and county. However, City Heights switched position in the late 1960s, with the share of people of color becoming higher than that of the city and county. In other words, the area was receiving a disproportionately larger share of the region’s growing population of color. By the mid- or late-1980s, City Heights became majority-minority, well over a decade sooner than the city and a quarter-century sooner than the county[53] (calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000,

52. 1940 City Heights data approximated from enumeration districts (Ruggles et al., 2024)

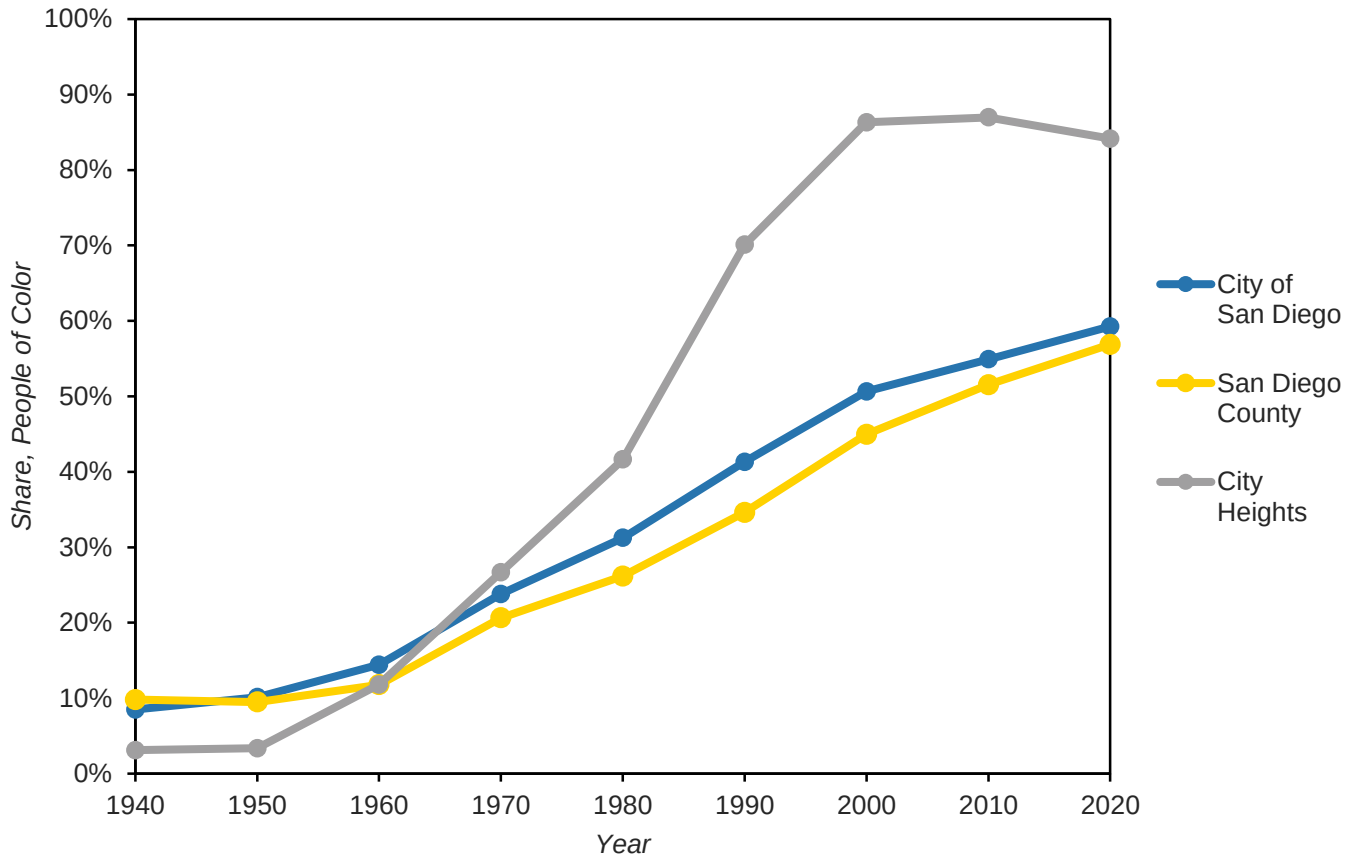
53. 1940 data approximated from enumeration districts; other years drawn from census tract data (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c; and Ruggles et al., 2024)

Figure 4-15. Redlining Map of City Heights in Context



Data source: Nelson et al., 2023; background imagery: Google, 2024b

Figure 4-16. Share, Residents of Color, 1940-2020

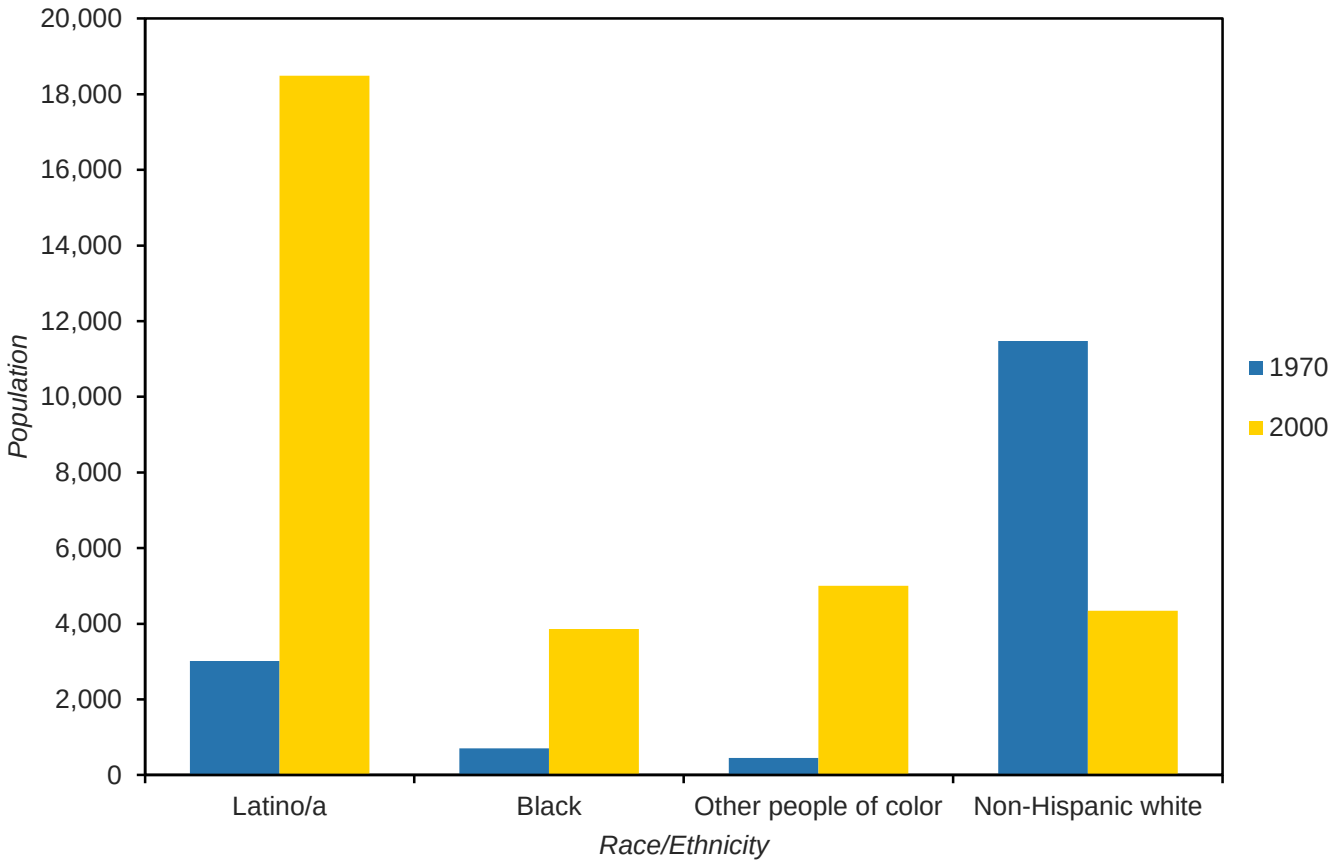


Data source: calculated by authors from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c; and Ruggles et al., 2024)

2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c; and Ruggles et al., 2024)).

During the period of rapid change from 1970 to 2000, the study area's Latino/a population, Black population, and other populations of color increased in absolute numbers, while the white population decreased. However, differences in growth rate among groups of color changed the ethnoracial composition of the residents. Latino/a residents emerged as the single largest group, accounting for a majority of the population at the turn of the century. The Black population also experienced significant growth—about a five-fold increase over the three decades. But because they started from a small base in 1970, they made up only about an eighth of the area's residents in 2000. Others (mostly Asians) comprised the smallest group at the start but experienced an astonishing eleven-fold increase, making them the second largest segment at 14 percent at the end of the century (See **Figure 4-17**) (calculated by authors from 1970 and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c and U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)).

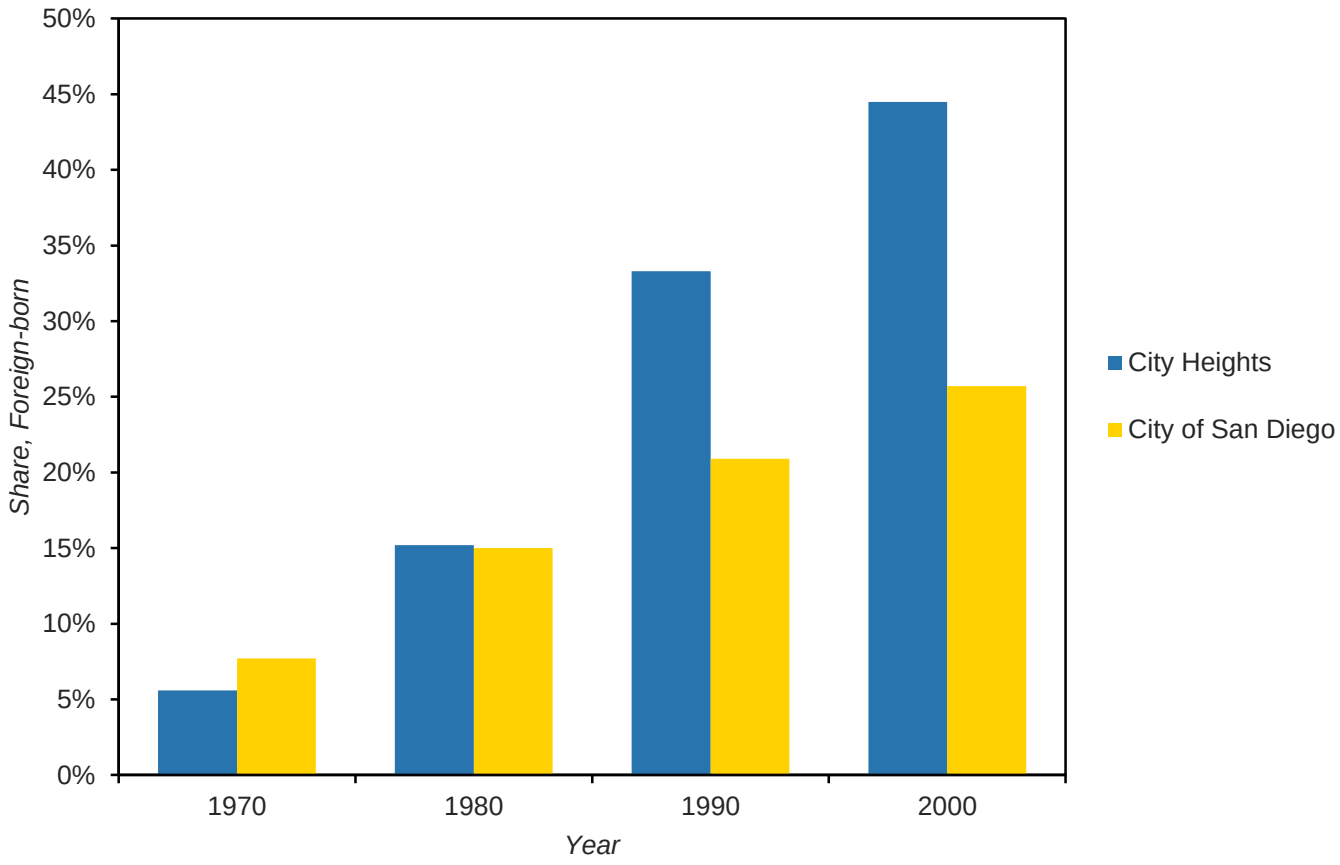
Figure 4-17. City Heights Population by Race, 1970 and 2000



Data source: calculated by authors from 1970 and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c and U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)

Immigration was a driving force behind both the growth and decomposition of City Heights' population, which became more diverse by nativity (See **Figure 4-18**). In 1970, the foreign-born population was only six percent of City Heights' populace, lower than their share of the city overall. Both City Heights and the city increased their foreign-born proportion to about 15 percent in 1980. City Heights' foreign-born population increased dramatically over the next two decades, reaching about 45 percent by 2000, 19 percentage points higher than the city's. An influx of Southeast Asian refugees contributed to City Heights' growing immigrant population (calculated by authors from 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c and U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000)).

Figure 4-18. Share, Foreign-born Population, 1970-2000

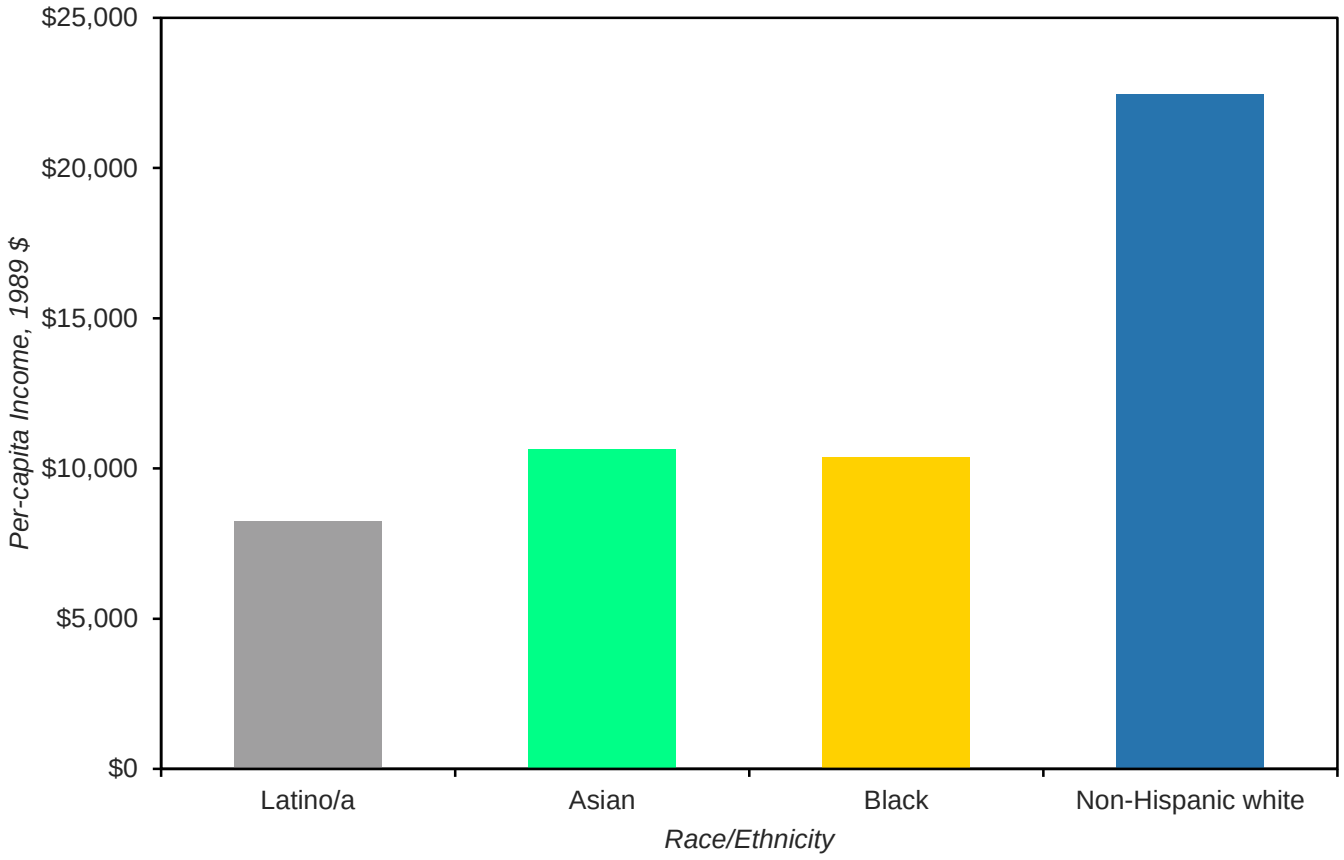


Data source: calculated by authors from 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c and U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000)

A major factor that made City Heights attractive to people of color was the availability of affordable housing, especially given their average lower incomes. For example, per-capita income of people of color in the City of San Diego was only about half of the per capita income for non-Hispanic white residents in 1989 (See **Figure 4-19**), a midpoint year for the rapid growth of residents of color in City Heights (See **Figure 4-16**) (calculated by authors from 1990 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990)). City Heights became more affordable from 1950 to 1970, the decades before the major influx of people of color. Average home value in that area was 67 percent of the average home value in the city in 1950 and then fell to 57 percent in 1970. Relative contract rent was roughly on par with the city's average but decreased to 87 percent. Both home values and rents continued to drop in the subsequent years (See **Figure 4-20**) (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952a, 1961, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1971)). The demand for housing accompanying the post-1970 growth of the population of color had a noticeable impact on the size and characteristics of the housing stock. The total number of housing units increased by a fifth between 1970 and 1990. Half of the units in the area in 1990 were built in the previous two decades, indicating that older housing units were being replaced through new construction. While single-family homes made up over four fifths of the units in 1960, this type of housing was less than two fifths in 1990. Single-family units also declined in absolute numbers, starting in the 1960s and continuing in the following decades. Multifamily units became the

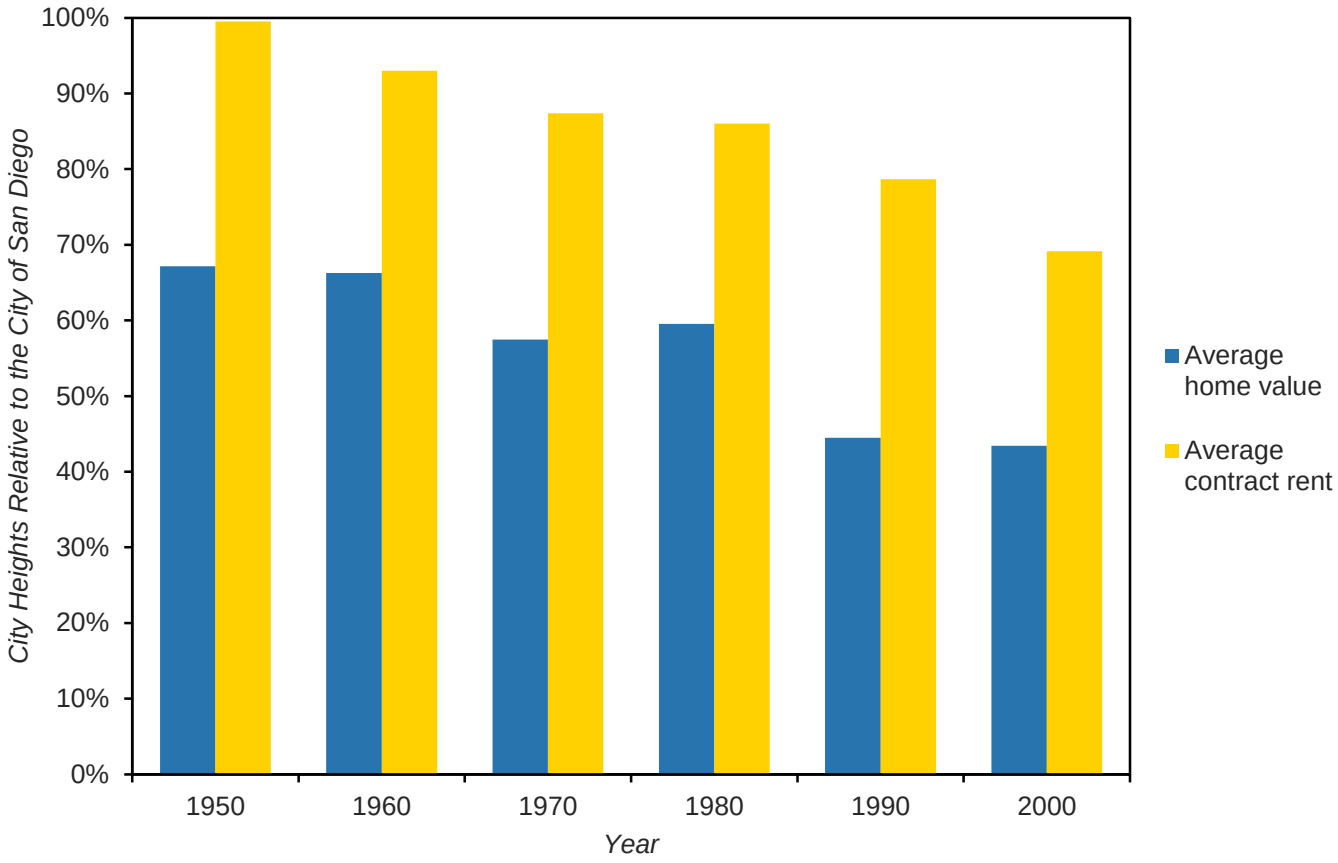
dominant housing type, with a majority of all units located in buildings with five or more units in 1990. City Heights also switched from being majority homeowners (55% in 1950) to overwhelmingly renters (83% in 1990). The decline in homeownership started in the 1950s and 1960s, before the sizable influx of people of color (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1990 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952a, 1962c, 1990 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)). This, along with other changes in the housing market, suggests that even owners of single-family became absentee landlords.

Figure 4-19. Income by Race/Ethnicity in the City of San Diego, 1989



Data source: calculated by authors from 1990 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990)

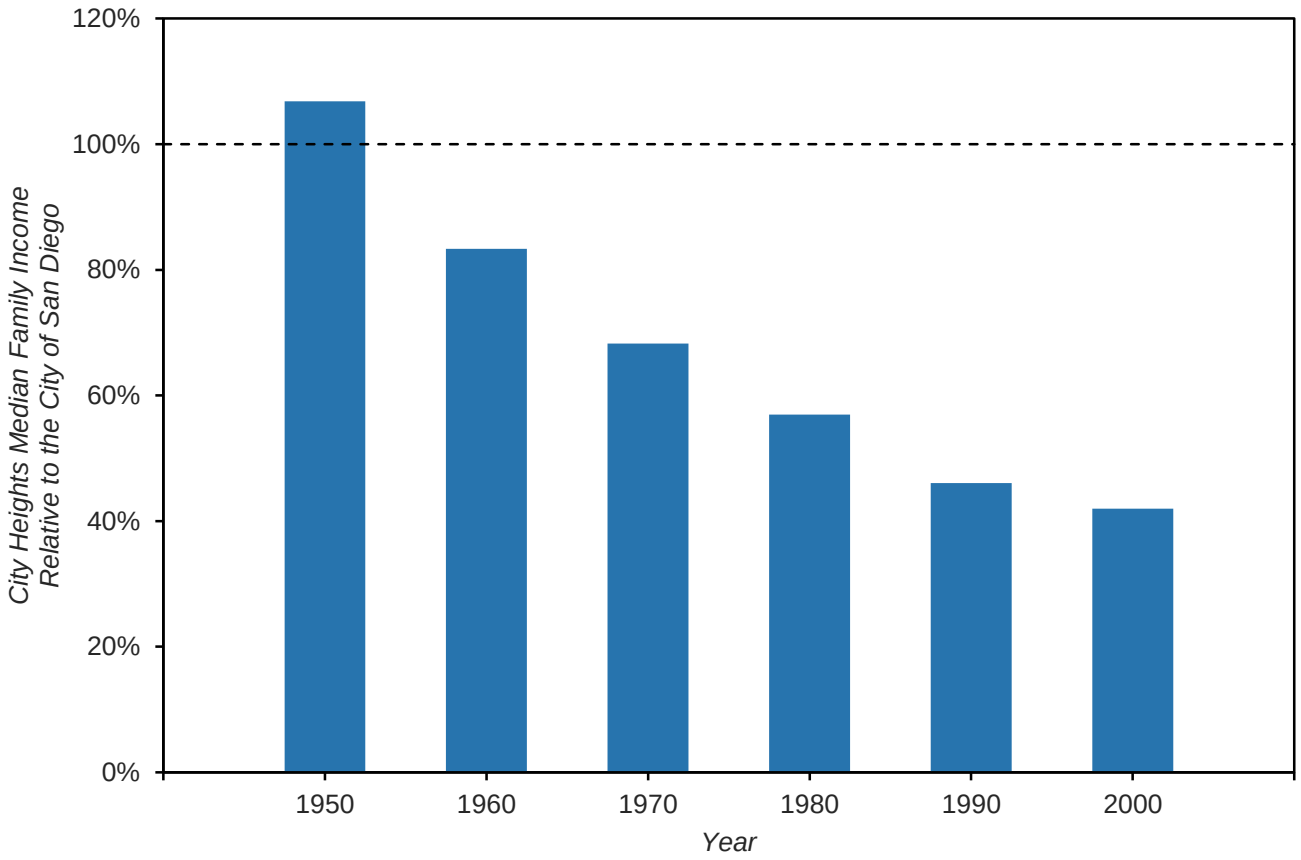
Figure 4-20. Comparison of City Heights and the City of San Diego Overall, Mean Home Value and Rent, 1950-2000



Data source: calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952a, 1961, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1971)

The timing and spatial pattern of the changes in the housing market and the demographic transition are important to understand the role of race in transforming City Heights. The changes in the 1950s and 1960s occurred while City Heights was still primarily white. This can also be seen in the median family income in City Heights relative to the median family income for the City of San Diego, which continuously declined (See **Figure 4-21**). The drop started before the racial transition, commencing in the 1950s (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)). White residents who left City Heights were replaced mostly by people of color. However, these early economic changes set the stage to make that location attractive to a growing number of people of color in the city. Their in-migration started as a slow trickle, but when the number of residents of color grew past a tipping point, City Heights experienced white flight after 1970. As the community racially flipped, the transformation fueled additional changes to the local housing market to meet the needs of the rising number of low-income residents of color.

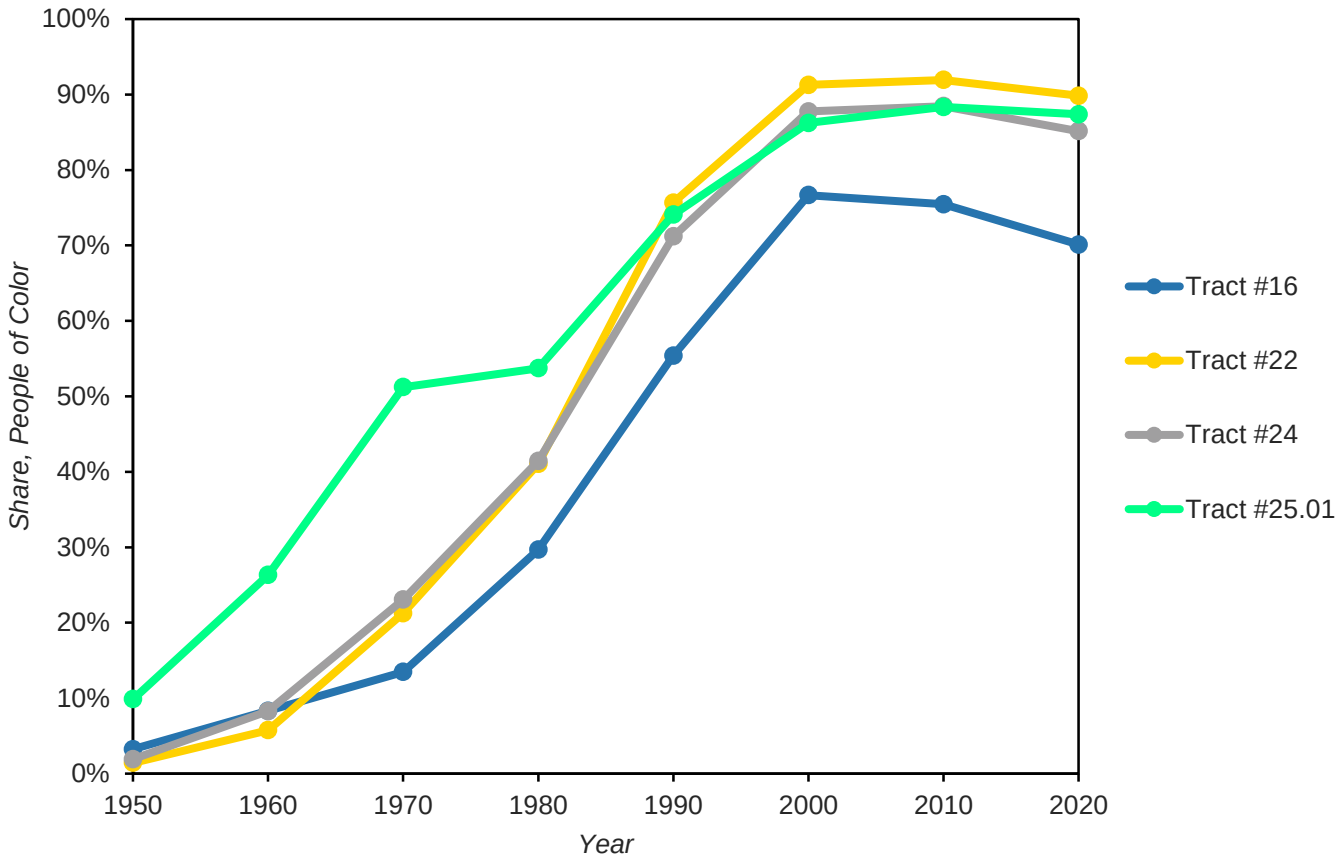
Figure 4-21. Comparison of City Heights and the City of San Diego Overall, Family Income, 1950-2000



Data source: calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)

The demographic transformation did not occur uniformly within City Heights. Instead, it started in the southern tract (labeled Tract #25.01 in 1970), then progressed to the center and northern tracts (labeled Tracts #22 and #24 in 1970), and then finally to the northwestern tract (labeled Tract #16 in 1970) (See **Figure 4-12**). As mentioned earlier, the southern tract (See **Figure 4-7**) reached a tipping point around 1960 and became majority-minority a decade later. The center and northern tracts reached a tipping point around 1970 and became majority-minority a decade and a half later. The northwestern corner was the last to transition (See **Figure 4-22**) (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)).

Figure 4-22. Demographic Transitions in the City Heights Study Area, 1950-2020



Data source: calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b, 1962c, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972c)

City Heights' racial transformation process is consistent with the discussion in Section 4.1 of the formation of satellite neighborhoods of color and white flight. Such a satellite area has its origins when an area comes to be perceived as less desirable due to some new disamenity or disamenities. The spatial-temporal patterns indicate that the transition started in the southern part of City Heights in the 1950s and continued into the 1960s. The two tracts north (labeled Tracts #22 and #24 in 1970) followed about a decade or two later, and the northwest corner (labeled Tract #16 in 1970) was the last to transform (See **Figures 4-12** and **4-22**). The sequencing of events is consistent with contiguous expansion of residential areas of color to meet the demands for housing by their growing population. Two critical questions are: what was the source that precipitated the initial demographic change in the southern section, and were there additional factors that tipped the transition in the other parts of City Heights? In particular, what was the contribution of freeway development?

4.3. Freeway Development and Impacts

The development of SR-15 through City Heights coincided with the spatial-temporal transformation along ethnoracial lines, and the details provide insights into how the two phenomena intersected. This requires us to

disaggregate changes by time periods and locations, because the freeway did not materialize overnight. Its development occurred in three stages, over about a half-century: when the initial, southern half of this freeway was planned and constructed, then when surrounding areas in the northern part of City Heights faced traffic coming to and from the uncompleted freeway, and finally when the last, northern half of the freeway was built. The extended timeline to build SR-15 can be seen in the timing of right-of-way purchases, a necessary pre-

Figure 4-23. Median Purchase Date of Right-of-way Properties in City Heights, San Diego

Data sources: Caltrans District 11, n.d.; Caltrans, 2023b; San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

construction activity (See **Figures 4-23** and **4-28**) (Caltrans District 11, n.d.). There is a two-decade break between acquisition for the southern half and northern half. This gap actually understates the timing issue because, as we describe later, there were also delays between when properties in northern City Heights were purchased and when demolition commenced.

The following subsections analyze the interaction between freeway development and racial transformation. We start with an overview of freeway development within the region. The next subsection examines how the first section of SR-15 impacted the southern part of City Heights. The subsequent subsection discusses and analyzes how the traffic exiting the first half of SR-15 impacted the northern part of City Heights.

SR-15 in a Regional Context

As early as the 1930s, white businessmen, politicians, and landowners in San Diego advocated for expansive growth, with the development of freeway infrastructure as a critical component. They formed the San Diego Highway Development Association, whose members considered themselves civic leaders supporting research to promote freeway construction. The Association leveraged their membership's proximity to power to move their agenda forward. It is difficult to quantify the impact of this boosterism, but it is clear that the pro-growth supporters got their wish, as the city experienced sustained growth through the latter part of the 20th century (San Diego Highway Development Association, 1935-1985). The city grew from a third of million in 1950 to over 1.2 million fifty years later and built an extensive freeway system with four major interstates and six limited-access state routes (California Department of Finance, 2024 and Google, 2024b).

After the Second World War, the Association advocated for the development of a highway system connecting the southeastern seafront with the rapidly growing neighborhoods in the outer areas of the city. The seafront was transforming into an industrial area due to its proximity to two expanding military facilities on the San Diego Bay—the 32nd Street Naval Station and the Naval Air Station North Island on the nearby peninsula of Coronado. The San Diego City Council enabled this seafront development by rezoning the area from residential to industrial uses (Avila, 2014b). The freeway system would also facilitate the suburbanization occurring in the northern and eastern part of the city, allowing suburbanites to enjoy greater movement across the region.

The economic development and freeway development policies advocated by San Diego's white elite had racial dimensions, in common with many other U.S. cities. San Diego's growth attracted—and to a degree was dependent on—the in-migration of people of color, who, as discussed above, disproportionately filled the demand for low-wage workers. There were also spatial outcomes. The rezoning and development of the southeast seafront and harbor area from residential to industrial use harmed Barrio Logan, a predominantly Mexican neighborhood (Avila, 2014b). During this time, non-Hispanic white residents fled many of the inner urban neighborhoods for newer suburban neighborhoods. The freeways facilitated white flight by enabling the suburbanites to reside in racially segregated communities, while still being able to take advantage of region-wide opportunities and amenities. The growing population of color filled in the areas vacated by white residents. This systematic turnover remade the urban landscape along racial lines, as discussed earlier.

Planners saw the Wabash Canyon Freeway, later known as State Route 15, as an integral component of the emerging freeway network. Initial discussions and plans for the freeway through City Heights began in the early 1940's. Local freeway boosters intended for the freeway, an upgrade to the older U.S. Route 395, to become the southernmost segment of SR-15, which would eventually connect to an Interstate continuing north through San Bernardino County (See **Figure 4-24**), then head east through Nevada and Utah, and stretch north to Alberta, Canada. The San Diego segment was planned to start at the Naval Station, continue through Wabash Canyon to

City Heights, and head further north to connect through Ward Canyon in Kensington (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**) (*San Diego Union*, 1948a, 1948b, 1949, 1952).

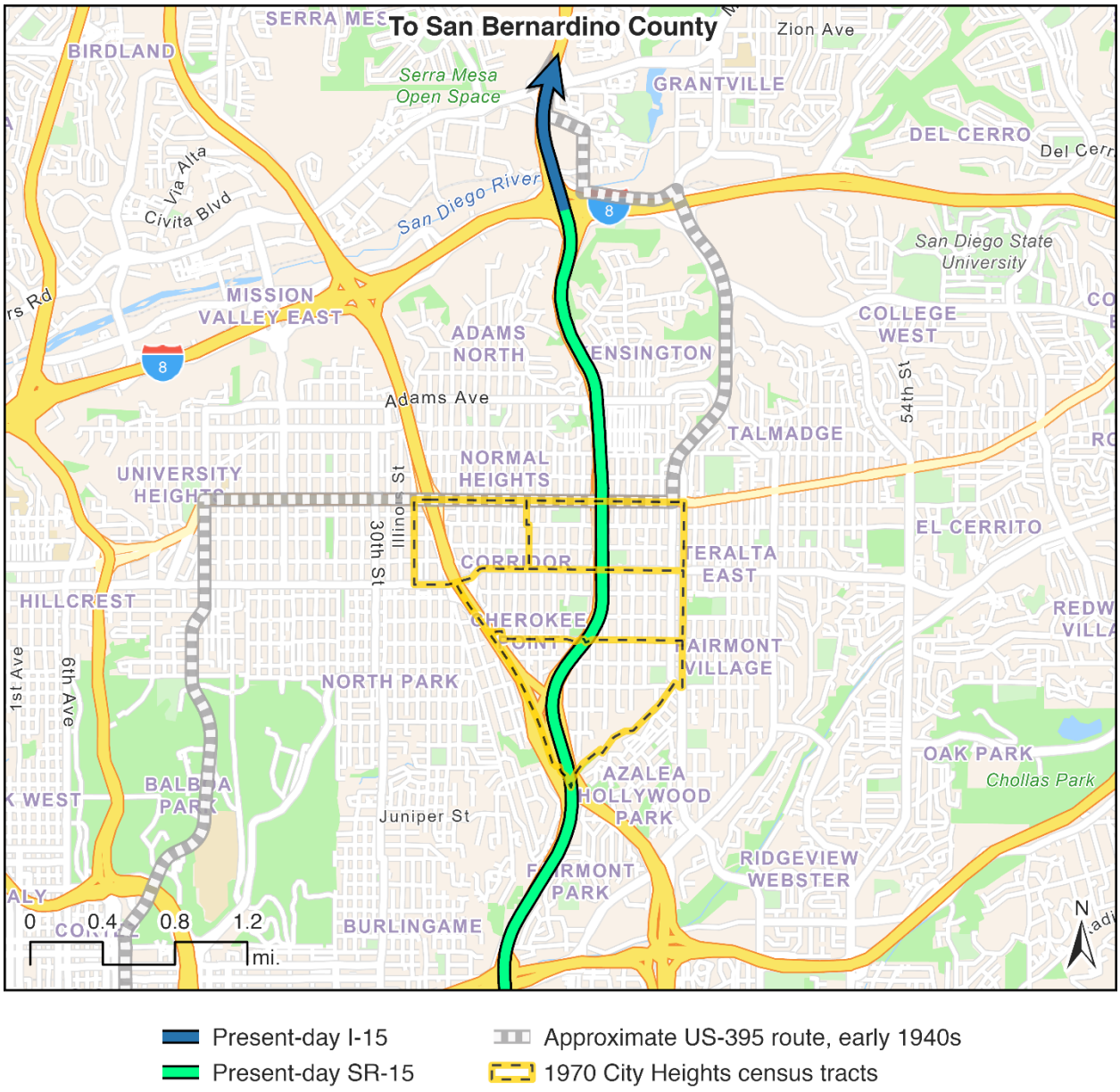
Funding for this freeway, however, proved difficult to acquire. Two decades after planning began, the questions both of funding and of the designation of the roadway as an Interstate were still up in the air. This latter issue was critical, as a federally designated Interstate route could tap more funds. In the early 1960's, Robert Wilson, a congressional representative for San Diego, became a strong advocate for an Interstate designation. He was in regular contact with Governor Pat Brown to elicit his support, stressing the defense and military contributions of San Diego and saying that the designation would facilitate a necessary connection between the area's military bases and the rest of the state. Despite some local leaders arguing that leaving it a state route would allow for faster construction, Representative Wilson kept pushing for designation and construction of Interstate 15 south from San Bernardino County to San Diego. In 1969, parts of the old US-395 route were indeed designated to become Interstate 15. However, the designation ended at Interstate 8 and did not continue south through City Heights and the segment in question for this case study, leaving it as a state route (See **Figure 4-24**) (*San Diego Union*, 1960, 1962, 1969a; *San Diego Union* Washington Bureau, 1961, 1962; and U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans, 1973). This means that, to this day, when one drives south on the I-15 freeway, its designation changes to SR-15 for those seven miles cutting through City Heights.

The California Highway Commission adopted the route of the proposed project through City Heights on June 22, 1967 following a public hearing at the City Concourse Auditorium; a hearing on the freeway design was later held on December 7, 1971 at San Diego Stadium (Caltrans, 1971 and U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans, 1973) (neither location in City Heights). Unlike in the cases of Colton and West Fresno, there is no concrete evidence of any plans or consideration for alternative routes for SR-15; a 1971 draft environmental review only suggested different designs for the same route (Caltrans, 1971).

On one hand, the physical geography of the area constrained possible routes. Ward Canyon is located in the northern section of City Heights where it borders Kensington, and Wabash Canyon is located at the southern part of City Heights where it borders the Azalea Park neighborhood (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**). These canyons served as conduits guiding the route and may have precluded other imaginable routes, such as the path of today's Fairmount Avenue Expressway in the next canyon over (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**). In theory, the SR-15 segment through City Heights is somewhat redundant with I-805 to the west, but the jog required of travelers onto I-805 on their way to or from the many destinations north on I-15 created bottlenecks before SR-15 was completed (See **Figures 4-1** and **4-24**) (Wilkens, 1988). Also, planners saw a direct path as necessary to complete a full, direct freeway connection between Canada and Mexico (Torres Van-Vleck, 2022 and Caltrans District 11, 2016).

On the other hand, the lack of publicly considered alternatives suggests that plans for the freeway routing were kept largely out of the public eye and that there was very little room for engagement from the community, particularly from those who lived and worked in the areas slated for demolition. Rather, discussions around freeway development and placement remained general and broad-sweeping amongst property owners, real estate brokers, retailers and merchants, architects, bankers, and homeowners. These economic interests were more concerned with the economic potential of the area and how freeway development would contribute to financial growth (*San Diego Union*, 1962).

Figure 4-24. Historic and Present Route Designations in San Diego



Data sources: Caltrans, 2023b; Ballard, 2013; Sidetrack Adventures, 2021; San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2024; and 1970 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022)

The SR-15 Spur and the Racial Transformation of Southern City Heights

The construction of SR-15 through City Heights occurred in two sections. The first half, the half in the south of City Heights (See **Figures 4-1**, **4-12**, and **4-25**), went through Wabash Canyon, located at the southern tip of City Heights (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**). More detailed planning for this section occurred in the 1950s. Right-of-

way purchases began in the mid-1960s (See **Figure 4-23**). And, after years of planning and acquisitions, construction on the southern part of the SR-15 freeway began thereafter (Caltrans District 11, n.d.).

For reasons discussed below, construction on this southern part of SR-15 was halted right after the road curved northward around and through Park de la Cruz, before reaching 40th Street near Landis Street (*San Diego Union*, 1969b). This section came to be known as the "Spur," as it opened long before the rest of the SR-15 freeway through City Heights (See **Figures 4-1** and **4-25**). The 2.2-mile Spur was completed in 1973. It directed traffic onto 40th Street, a surface street, for the rest of the trek through City Heights, before connecting to another stub freeway segment in Ward Canyon to the north[54] (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**) (U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans, 1973; Scarr, 1984; and Google, 2024a). The Spur itself effectively cut the area below Landis Street into two.

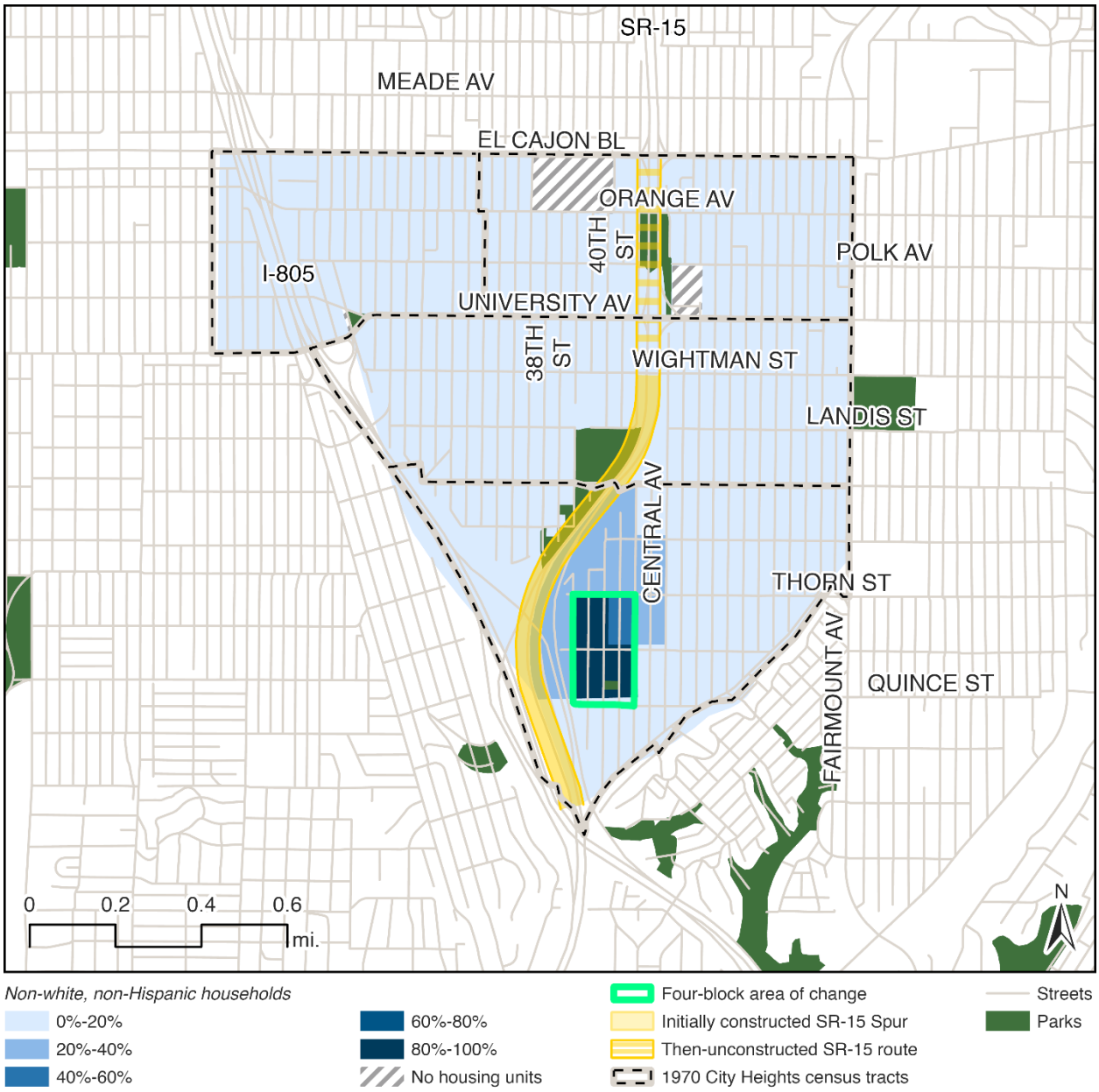
As previously mentioned, the area around the Spur (labeled Tract #25.01 in 1970) (See **Figure 4-12**) first experienced the demographic transformation that swept City Heights. In turn, within the southern part of City Heights, changes occurred in two steps.

The first occurred in the 1950s, when it became clear that the freeway was coming in the not-too-distant future. This apparently was sufficient for developers, exercising economic rational expectations, to safely invest in constructing new housing in anticipation of growing demand (from the perceived freeway-derived benefits of greater accessibility to jobs, shopping, and entertainment throughout the region). The decade between 1950 and 1960 witnessed a building boom. The number of housing units in this southern tract (labeled Tract #25.01 in 1970) (See **Figure 4-12**) increased by 66 percent, nearly matching the increase for the City of San Diego (+75%) and over three times greater than for the rest of City Heights (+21%). While the area remained predominantly a single-family neighborhood (95% single-family homes in 1950; 91% in 1960); the new development increased the proportion of renters noticeably (26% in 1950; 46% in 1960) (calculated by authors from 1950 and 1960 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1950a, 1952a, 1960, 1961)).

Another change in the 1950s for the tract around the Spur (labeled Tract #25.01 in 1970) (See **Figure 4-12**) was an increase in the absolute and relative number of people of color, from 10 percent at the start of the decade to 26 percent at the end (See **Figure 4-22**). The increase—in this decade at least—was *not* due to white flight, since the absolute number of white residents also increased (+37%), but the number of people of color increased at a considerably greater rate (+348%), thus pushing up their share of the population without any net displacement of white neighbors. The housing boom, then, provided opportunities for the city's growing population of color to move into the neighborhood. Yet this growth was not evenly distributed geographically, even within this single census tract (See **Figure 4-25**). Block-level data shows that it was concentrated in a few areas east of the Spur, while the area west of the Spur remained majority white (calculated by authors from 1950 and 1960 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952a, 1952b, 1961, 1962c)). This differential pattern illustrates how a freeway can physically fragment a neighborhood (even before its completion) and enable different development trajectories.

54. The segment of SR-15 through Ward Canyon, to the north of City Heights in whiter Kensington and Normal Heights (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**), was built after the Spur's opening but prior to the full SR-15's completion through City Heights. The "Save Our Canyon" group attempted unsuccessfully to stop the Ward Canyon segment on environmental grounds (Scarr, 1984, 1985; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020; and UC Santa Barbara Library, 2012).

Figure 4-25. Household Demographics by Block in City Heights, 1960



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1960 and 1970 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1961 and Manson et al., 2022); Caltrans, 2023b; San Diego Geographic Information Source, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

Changes in a single four-block area exemplify this process (See **Figure 4-25**). In 1950, the area between 38th, Thorn, 40th, and Quince Streets was sparsely developed, with only 24 housing units. All units were occupied, and non-white households (mostly Black households) lived in 15 of the homes. A decade later, there were 99 housing units—a fourfold increase—but the area was still low-density, with mostly single-family homes. Ninety-five were occupied, 81 by non-white households. The transformation of this four-block area likely had broader implications

for southern City Heights. The increase in the non-white population likely helped push the larger southern City Heights neighborhood toward a racial tipping point by the late 1950s.

The end of the housing boom and white flight came to the area around the Spur (labeled Tract #25.01 in 1970) (See **Figure 4-12**) by the 1960s. There was essentially no net growth in the number of housing units (1,169 in 1960; 1,172 in 1970), with an overwhelming majority remaining as single-family units (92% in 1960; 86% in 1970). What did change was an increase in the relative number of renters (46% to 56%), indicating that many homes switched from owner-occupied to rentals with landlords located elsewhere. Equally dramatic was a racial recomposition of the population. The number of non-Hispanic white residents declined by 37 percent in the 1960s, while the number of people of color increased by 84 percent. By 1970, POC became a majority (51%). Unlike the previous decade, the 1960s experienced a net exodus of white residents, who were replaced by people of color. There was also a sizable economic difference between the white residents who still lived in the area and their counterparts of color. The median income of a family of color in this tract was about seven tenths that of a white family. The southern area remained majority residents of color into the 1970s as well (and to the present) (See **Figure 4-22**) (calculated by authors from 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1960, 1961, 1962c, 1970, 1980, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1971, 1972c)).

The early housing development of southern City Heights was a harbinger or model for an ambitious plan to remake much of the city. The 1965 *Mid-city* plan studied and evaluated the economic potential of Mid-city (of which City Heights was a part). The plan emerged from research funded and conducted by the Mid-city Development Council. This Council consisted of members from East San Diego Chamber of Commerce, East San Diego Property Owners Association, North Park Business Club, and North Park Development Association, who were all centrally concerned with the business development of the growing city of San Diego (City of San Diego and Mid-City Development Council, 1965). The plan's stated goals were primarily to expand commercial activity in the area, by replacing older facilities and building new retail space, and to increase density surrounding the commercial corridors through multifamily developments. The Wabash Canyon Freeway was a key part of this improvement plan, by providing access from Mid-city to all portions of the metropolitan area.

The plan reflected changes that were already taking place in City Heights. For example, the total number of housing units in the City Heights study area increased by 27 percent, from 5,093 in 1950 to 6,490 in 1960, with a large majority of the growth coming from rental units and units in multifamily structures (calculated by authors from 1950 and 1960 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952a, 1962c)). This pattern continued throughout the subsequent decades.

The Hiatus in Building SR-15 and Impacts on Northern City Heights

The coming of SR-15 did not have the promised stimulus effect on the northern part of City Heights. In the two tracts that the delayed freeway would eventually run through in northern City Heights (labeled Tracts #22 and #24 in 1970) (See **Figure 4-12**), the increase in housing units per decade averaged about 19 percent between 1950 and 1990, compared to the city's average of 47 percent. Although new developments were built during the 1990s, there was no net gain in units, because of the units purchased by the state for the freeway. The slower growth rate than the city was due to at least two factors. One, northern City Heights was already more developed than southern City Heights. In 1950, the former was over twice as dense, measured by population per square mile; in 1960, about one and half as dense (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S.

Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952a and Manson et al., 2022)). There was simply less developable space to the north.[55]

The other reason was problems in completing SR-15. Construction through City Heights stalled and did not restart until about a quarter-century later. This hiatus created problems for residents and made them more aware of the negative aspects of freeway development.

One reason for the protracted delay was growing fiscal constraints facing the state's freeway program. Essentially, freeway construction across California began running out of money as early as the mid-1960s. The costs of freeway building skyrocketed: increasing land values in cities dramatically drove up right-of-way purchase prices, maintenance and construction costs spiked, growth in the scope and scale of freeway projects ballooned costs above those of earlier routes, and a political movement to address environmental harms and community concerns now raised costs and design standards. At the same time, highway revenues began to falter: most highway tax instruments, particularly the gas tax, were not indexed to inflation; dense, well-off states like California sent more transportation revenues to the federal government than they got back in spending; and better fuel-efficiency suppressed gas tax receipts relative to vehicle travel. Many California freeways of the period faced these issues (Taylor, 1993, 1995 and Taylor, Morris, and Brown, 2023), but SR-15 was further handicapped because of its lack of Interstate designation (See **Figure 4-24**) (*San Diego Union*, 1969a; U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans, 1973; and Jahn, 1992). "Money always has been a problem for the proposal to extend the freeway along 40th Street," wrote the *San Diego Tribune* (Hughes, 1989, p. B-1). Without the federal cost sharing for being a part of the Interstate system, this segment would have been a low priority in an era of dwindling dollars and rising expenses.

As a result, the state made both cost-cutting measures and delays in City Heights. Newspaper articles indicate the slowdown of the SR-15 freeway resulted in part from the mounting time needed for (relatively newly required) environmental assessments, along with the impoundment of funds for freeway construction coming from the Nixon Administration (*San Diego Union*, 1974a, 1974c). As **Figure 4-23** indicates, land purchases happened in two stages: parcels south of Park de la Cruz were purchased in 1965, but land for the 40th Street section to the north was not purchased, in large part, until 1987 (Caltrans District 11, n.d.). This split in purchases indicates that the state already anticipated a fiscal slowdown before any part of the freeway was built but that the decision was made to carry out the first half of construction anyways, knowing it would not be completed for a long time thereafter. We found no internal documents revealing the internal process of how state planners reached this decision, but it is clear that the implications of the unfinished project on the surrounding neighborhood were not factored into their conclusions.

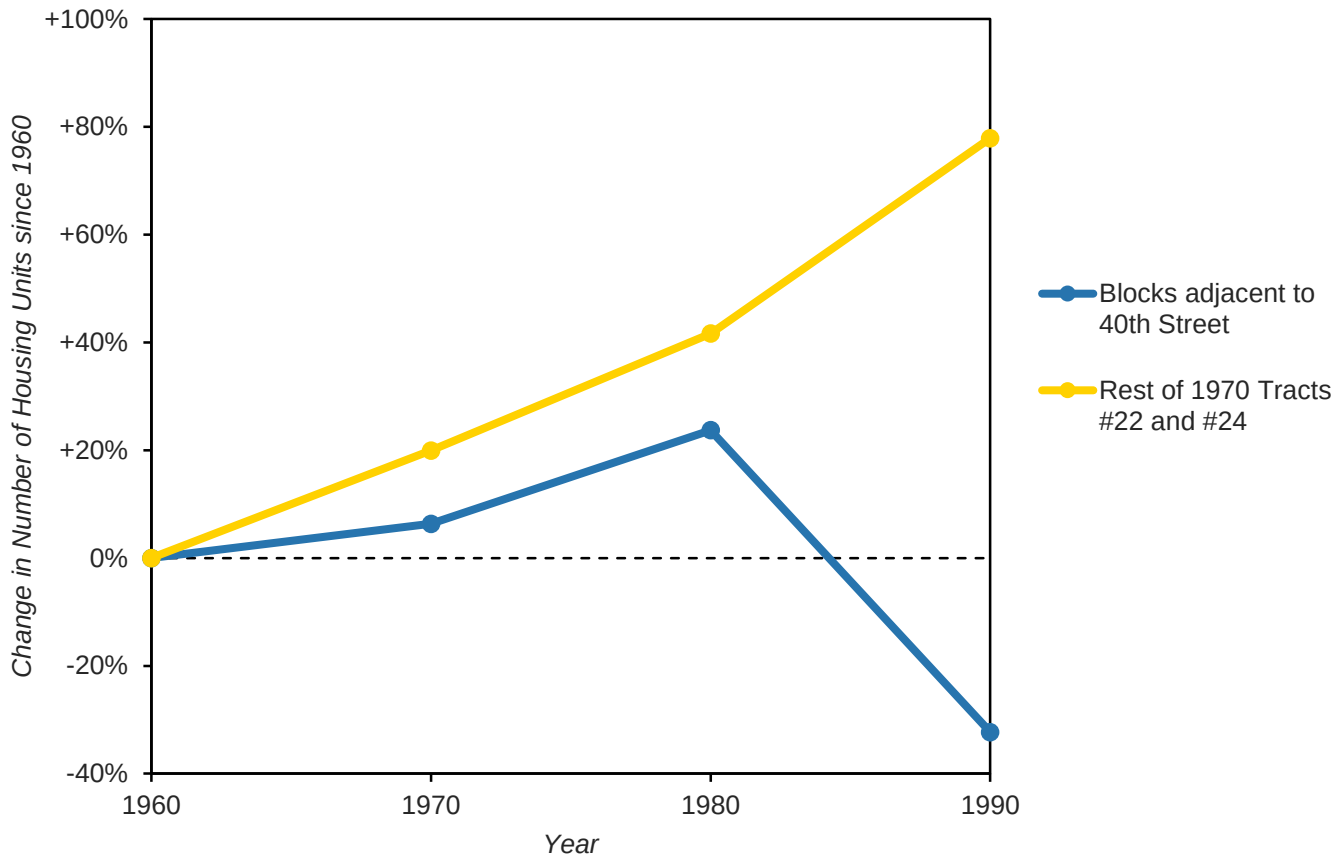
The long pause in building created problems for City Heights. Traffic exited the Spur onto 40th Street, to continue on it for over two miles. At the time, 40th Street was a four-lane thoroughfare with a raised meridian and single-family homes and driveways lining both sides. The neighborhood quickly transformed, as cars raced at highway speeds down its residential blocks. Traffic on 40th Street soon became heavy and congested, with reports of thick emissions, debilitating noise, and crashes happening regularly. According to a state study, about 26,500 vehicles per day used the street in 1984. Its crash rate topped the state average for this type of road (4.02 crashes per million vehicle miles, compared to 3.63) and sat at about four times the average for California urban freeways

55. South City Heights was constrained by Wabash Canyon (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**), parts of which did not allow for construction of buildings. Even after a rough adjustment for this, northern City Heights was denser (calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952a)). The discussion above on the development of four blocks in southern City Heights provides an example of how a sizable number of new housing units were built in areas that had been low-density.

(Caltrans and U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 1985; U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans, 1973; Fairley, 1985; McDonnell, 1991; and Caltrans District 11, 2016).

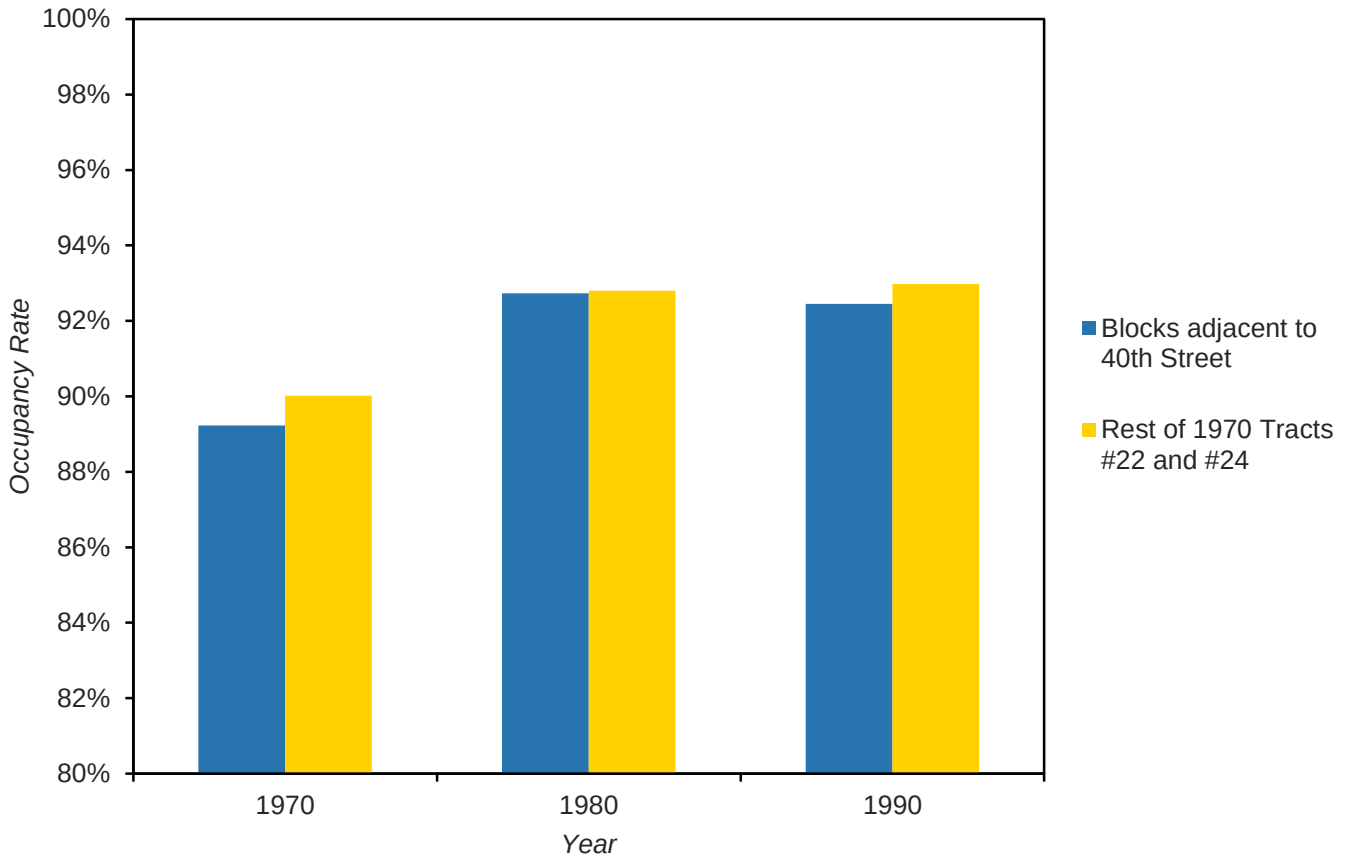
While through-traffic from the Spur hurt the neighborhood in various ways, it appears that it had a minimal impact on housing in the blocks adjacent to 40th Street. We compare these blocks to those not adjacent to 40th Street but still within the two census tracts containing 40th Street through City Heights (labeled Tracts #22 and #24 in 1970) (See **Figure 4-12**). The total number of adjacent units actually increased between 1970 and 1980, although not as much as in the rest of the area (See **Figure 4-26**). The decline in the subsequent decade in the adjacent blocks was due to right-of-way purchases by the state, discussed below. But tellingly, the occupancy rate for housing remained stable in the adjacent blocks to 40th Street, as it did in non-adjacent area (See **Figure 4-27**). In both areas, renters comprised about four-fifth of the residents. Finally, home values and rents in the adjacent blocks followed the trend for home values and rents in blocks further away from 40th Street (calculated by authors from 1970, 1980, and 1990 U.S. Censuses (Manson et al., 2022)). Although the traffic was a nuisance, demand for housing remained high, apparently driven by the need of the growing population of color in San Diego for affordable housing, in a relatively lower-rent neighborhood such as City Heights (See **Figure 4-16**).

Figure 4-26. Housing Unit Change in Northern City Heights



Data source: calculated by authors from 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1961 and Manson et al., 2022)

Figure 4-27. Occupancy Rate in Northern City Heights



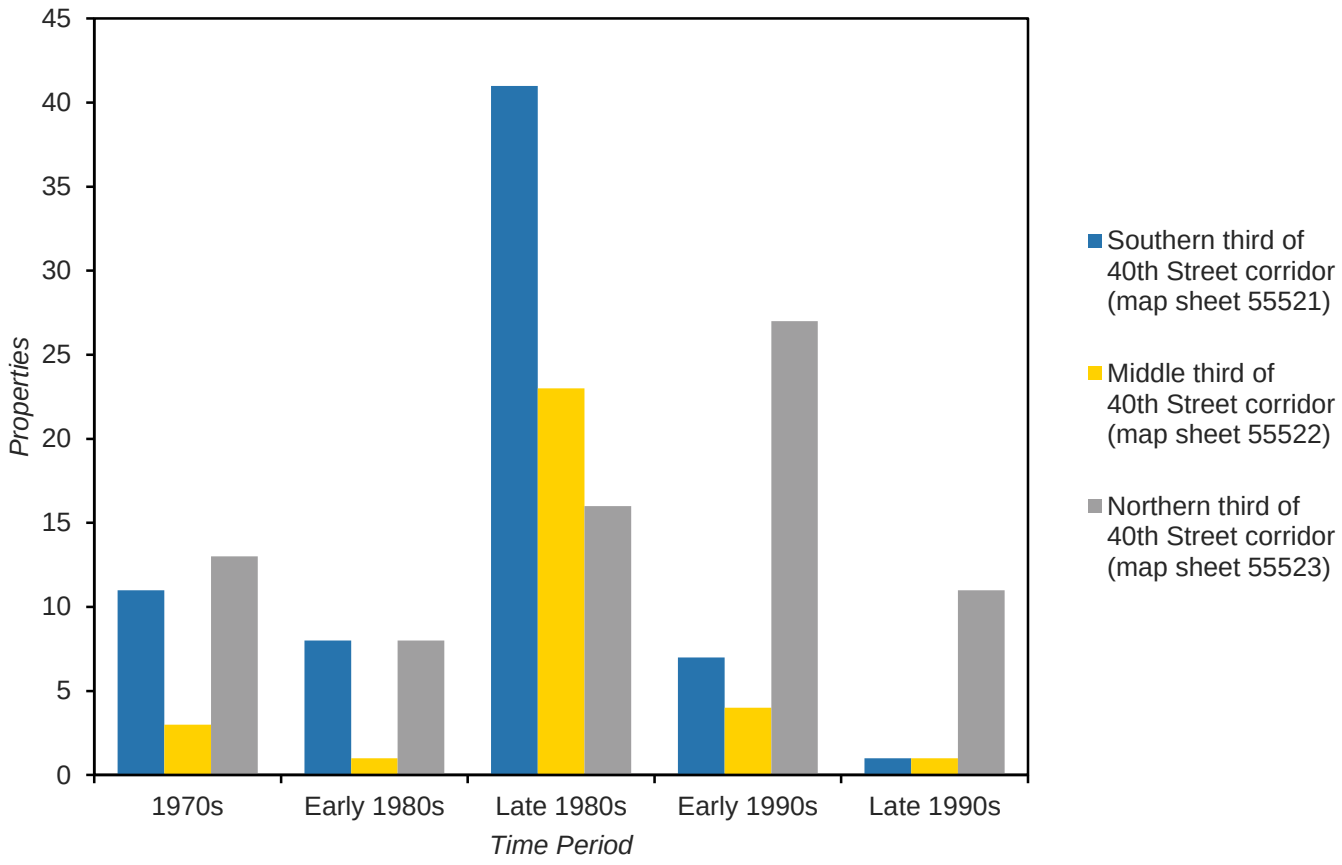
Data source: calculated by authors from 1970, 1980, and 1990 U.S. Censuses (Manson et al., 2022)

Another impact sprung from the way the state managed its right-of-way process. The state started purchasing properties along 40th Street (between 40th Street and Central Avenue) in the 1970s, with over two dozen properties bought, but the buying slowed noticeably in the early 1980s. Sales picked up again in the late 1980s, with the state purchasing the majority of needed properties for the southern two-thirds of the remaining planned freeway. In the early 1990s, the state purchased most of the needed parcels left, with a few additional acquisitions in the late 1990s (See **Figures 4-23** and **4-28**) (Caltrans District 11, n.d.). Environmental assessments from the late 1980s planned for more than 500 dwelling units to be torn down for the freeway (U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 1987 and Barnes et al., 1987). Until they were demolished, these houses sat for years, boarded up and vacant (Torres Van-Vleck, 2022).

Because of the extended right-of-way process, residents along the path were left in limbo. Crime became a dominant concern: residents reported that the vacant units became a haven for drug dealing, prostitution, and gang activity. Several burned down, having become targets for arsonists (Fairley, 1985; McDonnell, 1991; and Bliesner, 2024). A *Los Angeles Times* article documented the woes of residents along the freeway path:

> *"'It's like a ghost town around here,' said Federico Lopez, 30, who has lived...near 40th for two decades and has watched the neighborhood disintegrate from a stable community.*

Figure 4-28. Right-of-way Purchases in City Heights



Data source: Caltrans District 11, n.d.

> *Lopez has placed bars on the windows of his one-story stucco home. Burglars have broken in three times, he says.*
>
> *'It's really dangerous around here now,' concurred his neighbor, Rosie Ramos, who says she's terrified of thieves who prowl the area.*
>
> *Both homes are destined to be demolished for the freeway.*
>
> *'I can't wait to get out,' said Lopez"* (McDonnell, 1991).

According to some residents, the impacts spilled over into adjacent areas beyond the planned footprint. Knowing that the freeway was coming, these residents felt the surrounding neighborhood bore the scars of a quarter century of neglect. In mid-1970s, after the opening of the Spur, testimonies and commentaries depict a once-thriving place that had been left to ruin, where people stopped buying homes because they knew they would be demolished or become devalued (Fairley, 1985; McDonnell, 1991; Cortez, 2024; and Bliesner, 2024). The freeway-induced negatives made many pre-existing residents want to abandon the area, following the conceptual model at the start of this part of the report on how disamenities can initiate neighborhood change.

While it is likely that the negative depictions of the changes along and near 40th Street had some material foundation, the scale of reported decay is not consistent with changes in housing stock. U.S. Census data do not show any significant impact on the number of housing units in the blocks adjacent to the strip, where right-of-way purchasing occurred. Between 1980 and 1990, when acquisition for the freeway in northern City Heights was most intense (See **Figure 4-28**), the total number of dwellings increased by an eighth. The occupancy rates declined slightly, from 95 percent in 1980 to 93 percent in 1990—the 1990 rate is slightly lower than that for the city (94%) but on par with City Heights as a whole (calculated by authors from 1980 and 1990 U.S. Censuses (Manson et al., 2022)). These statistics hardly depict a barren landscape. While the disamenities motivated an exodus of pre-existing residents, they were readily replaced by households seeking affordable housing. Moreover, demand was sufficiently high enough to encourage some housing developments.

Atop potential journalistic or archival biases in support of freeway construction—evidenced by the racially coded language of reports on City Heights' condition—the subjective fear by long-time residents may also indicate a lack of comfort with the broader socioeconomic transformation documented above (See **Figures 4-16** and **4-22**). As white flight occurred in the late 1960s in the southern part of City Heights, there was likely a sense that this exodus would expand northward. The influx of low-income people of color into the northern part of City Heights coincided with the physical damages caused by the state. The freeway, however, was not the only source of change. The construction of affordable apartments by real estate developers like Conrad Prebys contributed to making City Heights a destination for people of color looking for affordable housing (Bliesner, 2024). Unfortunately, racial and economic transformations can be interpreted as making a place more socially disorganized, dangerous, and crime ridden. Thus, northern City Heights experienced two offsetting dynamics, one depicted as a decline associated with white flight and the other as growth to partially meet the city's housing demand during a period of racial transition. The latter outweighed the former—in the census data at least—both increasing City Heights' total population and shifting it to a majority-minority community (See **Figures 4-13** and **4-16**).

4.4. Negotiating Mitigation and the Freeway Cap

Mitigation and Cap Proposals

While fiscal problems delayed the completion of SR-15, freeway design continued in the interim. After the building of the Spur, planning for the 40th Street segment took place under a different set of freeway laws, rules, norms, and politics, as documented in the introduction of this part of the report. Partially the result of the "freeway revolts," transportation agencies had to be more receptive to community demands, address negative social and environmental impacts, recognize that cost and benefits are not equally distributed, and negotiate over mitigating measures. In City Heights, residents disagreed over whether and how Caltrans should complete the stretch of freeway or whether it should be left as a surface thoroughfare. As discussed below, they largely supported freeway construction though disagreed on timeline and design.

Some community members organized in support of immediate and urgent construction of SR-15. Organizing under the name and call for "I-15 Now," they insisted that the only way to address the harmful impacts of the 40th street corridor on the fabric of the community was to build the freeway as soon as possible (*San Diego Union*, 1974a and Torres Van-Vleck, 2024). Another group, the Mid-city Parkway Alliance—organized by the City Heights Community Development Corporation (CDC), which formed in the late 1980s, alongside the Normal Heights Community Development Corporation, the Mid-city Council, the Mid-city Chamber of Commerce, and Kensington Concerned Citizens—had first opposed any new freeway construction that did not also address the crashes and

congestion on the 40th Street corridor. They created a community petition in 1988 and submitted it to their City Council representatives. Later on, the City Heights CDC demanded for community involvement in Caltrans' design and construction process. This organizing led to a community-led design process that advocated for a freeway cap or cover as a way of limiting the disruption to the community the freeway would impose (Mid-city Parkway Alliance, 1988 and Torres Van-Vleck, 2022).

The environmental review documents for SR-15 through City Heights recommended the construction of a depressed freeway as the most feasible and economic option. A viaduct, cut-and-cover tunnel, and bored tunnel were considered but not deemed prudent because of the additional costs of construction and maintenance (U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans, 1973). These options, though, might have planted the idea of a freeway cover, which became a focal point for planning later. When this environmental review was presented to the San Diego City Council in 1974, the only immediate outcome was the formation of a task force which sought to "reduce congestion on I-15" (*San Diego Union*, 1974b), a limited response likely due to a recognition at the time that completing SR-15 would not happen soon.

Over a decade later, in 1985, Caltrans submitted a supplemental environmental review to the San Diego City Council, calling for not just construction of the remaining SR-15 segment in City Heights but also a mitigation agreement, including one block of freeway cover constructed by the state. The report's supplemental documents studied a cap on the stretch of the proposed freeway between Orange Avenue and Polk Avenue (Barnes et al., 1987 and Van Cleave and Fowler, 1985). Such a design emerged as federal officials scrambled to identify mitigation strategies that could lessen dissent and appease growing opposition to freeway construction (Houston and Zuñiga, 2019).

With the city slow to move on the cover idea, the push for a cap came primarily from community activists, who carried out an extensive design, policy advocacy, and fiscal project. The advocates first proposed an eight-block cover—effectively a tunnel—over the length of the as-of-then unconstructed freeway stretch, and then a series of caps covering most of the freeway (See **Table 4-3**). Calling this the "Visions Project," the recently formed City Heights CDC won a grant of $150,000 to lead a community-led design process. The CDC gathered input from over 1,000 community members and retained the architecture firm CBT Architects (which had played a role in the Big Dig in Boston) and an economist from MIT to help with design and fiscal planning, which would include the creation of a redevelopment district to fund the whole project. Over the next few years, these advocates led a series of community design charrettes, lobbying visits to representatives in Sacramento and Washington, report-writing, drafting of designs and artistic renderings, and extensive community organizing (Bliesner, 2024; Torres Van-Vleck, 2022; and City Heights CDC, 1991b).

The Visions Project intended to shift the SR-15 project into one that made the resulting infrastructure into a symbolic and functional center of City Heights, in addition to meeting transportation needs (City Heights CDC, 1991b). "Basically, we were presented with a lemon of a freeway, and we're trying to make lemonade out of it," said a CDC leader (quoted in McDonnell, 1991, p. 1). Freeway construction would serve as an opportunity for rearranging land uses and creating new sites for public facilities, parks, and commercial centers. All of these efforts aimed to develop a community vision for City Heights: not just a freeway cover but also organizing to bring in new grocery stores, a community college facility, parks, a library, and a new post office, among other public amenities (Bliesner, 2013). The cover was also only a part of the transportation improvements envisioned: sound walls along the extent of the freeway, a bike path, a protected bus lane along the freeway, and new and improved transit hubs were among the proposed ideas (City Heights CDC, 1991b). As longtime resident and organizer Maria Cortez said in an interview:

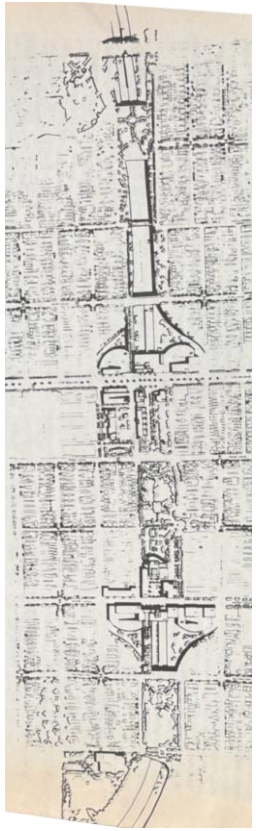
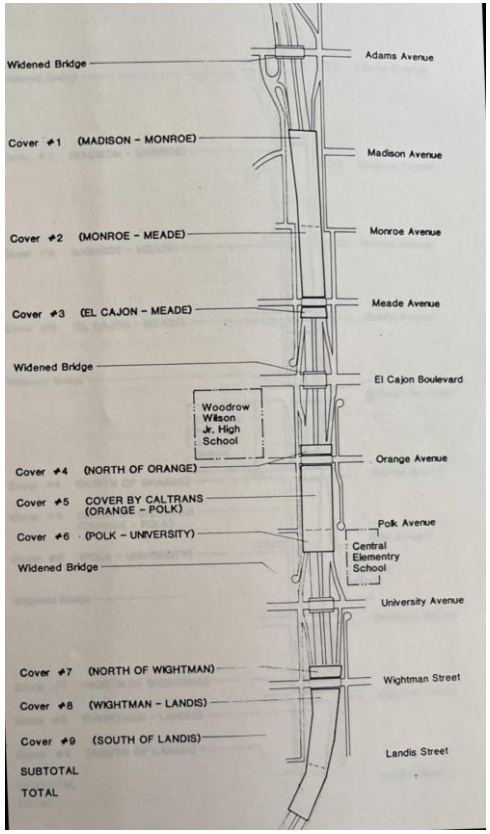
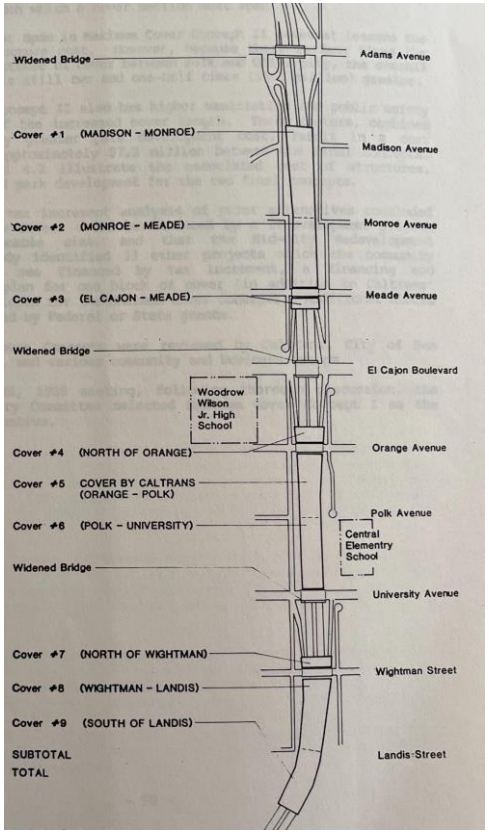
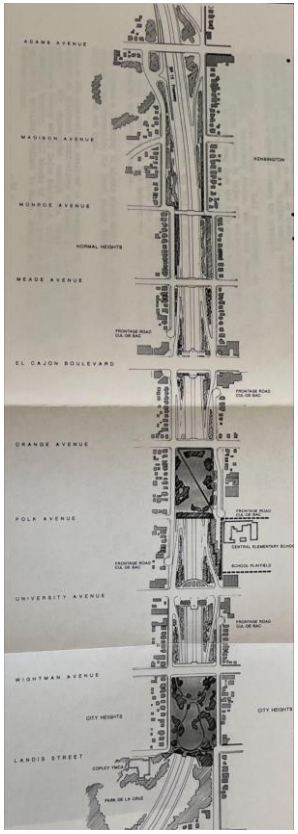
> *"I'm tired of us [City Heights] being the dumping grounds because they think we're dumb. But we're not gonna be the dumping grounds anymore. That's what changed, we started fighting back. Community was being notified. CDC played a big part of that, letting the community know what was going on. This is what we are about"* (Cortez, 2024).

The City responded with their own feasibility studies on a cap, moved in no uncertain terms by the strength of the community advocacy calling for a full cover (HNTB, 1988). The City commissioned a study evaluating alternatives for covering the proposed SR-15 freeway, to address and mitigate the "detrimental effects of the freeway upon the Mid-city communities which it bisects" (HNTB, 1988, p. 1) (See **Table 4-3**). The report ultimately developed two "maximum cover" concepts, each with three caps: along with the Caltrans' proposed cap between Orange Avenue and Polk Avenue (extended down to University Avenue in one of the concepts), the designs also proposed a cap to the north, between Madison Street and Meade Street, and a cap to the south, from Wightman Street to south of Landis Street. The southern cap would have helped reunite the southern part of City Heights by reconnecting the two segments of Park de la Cruz fragmented by the Spur. The study also offered a "recommended implementation concept," with just the middle and southern caps (HNTB, 1988).

To understand the characteristics of alternative cap locations, we examine the number of housing units, population size, and racial demographics within a 700-meter buffer surrounding two proposed cap sites: the ultimately constructed Teralta Park between Orange Avenue and Polk Avenue (See **Figures 4-29** and **4-30**) and one near Park de la Cruz to the south (See **Figures 4-29** and **4-31**), the location appearing second-most often in the cap plans (See **Table 4-3**). We used this radius based on research by Vîlcea and Șoșea (2020), who identified it as the average distance an individual is willing to walk to the nearest park—a distance typically covered within ten minutes. To compare, we utilized 1980 census block data (Manson et al., 2022) to capture the housing units and demographics within the designated buffers.

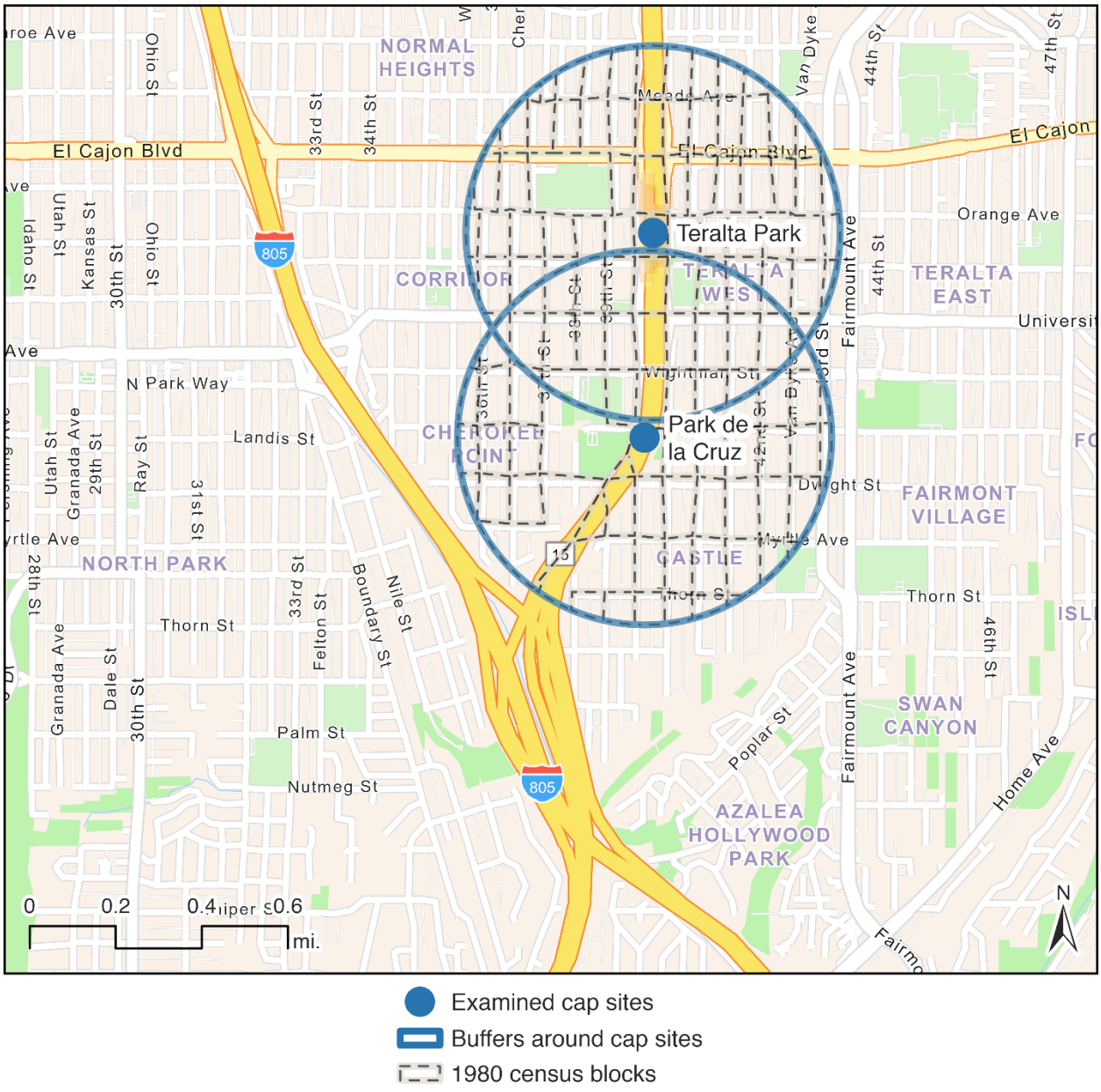
The findings, summarized in **Table 4-4**, reveal that Teralta Park, situated in a more developed area of the neighborhood, served a significantly larger population than the area surrounding Park de la Cruz. Teralta Park would reach 23 percent more individuals, encompassing a total of 8,920 people within the 700-meter buffer area (compared to 7,225 people around Park de la Cruz) (calculated by authors from 1980 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022)). **Figures 4-30** and **4-31** show this in aerial views of the sites today, with the immediate surroundings of Teralta Park more built up than those around the Landis Street pedestrian bridge, adjacent to the existing Park de la Cruz (Google, 2024b). The Teralta Park cap, which previously lacked a park in its immediate area, was positioned to benefit a substantial portion of the community—a mitigation action that partially offset the damage that completing SR-15 eventually created.

Table 4-3. Proposed City Heights Cap Concepts

Visions Project	City-commissioned Study		
	"Maximum Cover I"	"Maximum Cover II"	"Recommended Implementation"
			

Sources: City Heights CDC, 1991a, p. 1 and HNTB, 1988, pp. 48, 49, 53

Figure 4-29. Examined City Heights Freeway Cap Sites and Buffers



Data source: 1980 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022); base map: Esri, 2024b

Table 4-4. Comparison of Buffers around Considered Freeway Cap Sites in City Heights

Statistic	Buffer around Constructed Teralta Park Cap	Buffer around Not Constructed Park de la Cruz Cap
Housing units	4,556	3,369
Residents	8,920	7,225
Residents of color	3,509	3,322
Share, residents of color	39%	46%

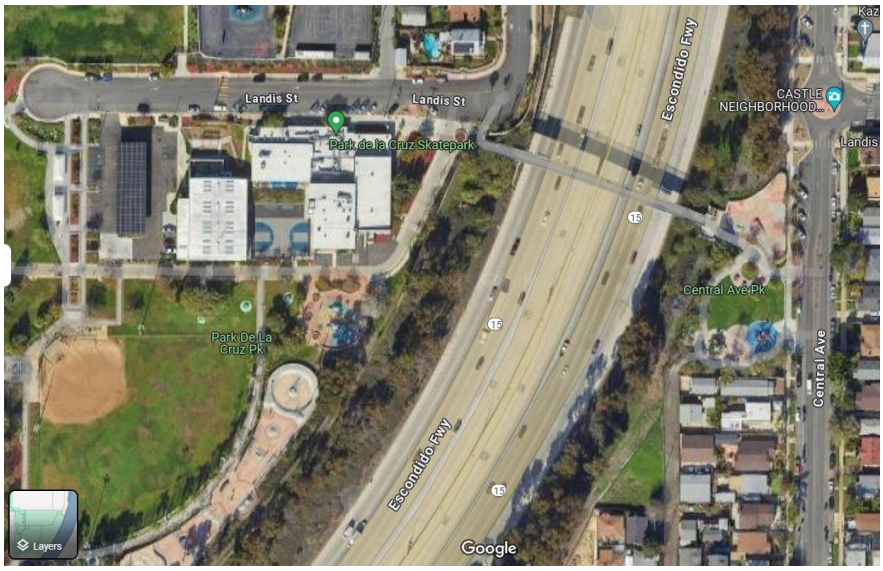
Data source: calculated by authors from 1980 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022)

In contrast, a cap at Park de la Cruz would have addressed past harm by creating a bridge between two racially distinct sections of the community, a whiter area west and an area with more residents of color east of the Spur, and between currently separated existing park spaces. Although it would have served a slightly smaller population, the Park de la Cruz buffer had a higher percentage of people of color (46%) than the Teralta Park buffer (39%) in 1980 (See **Table 4-4**) (calculated by authors from 1980 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022) and Google, 2024b). Thus, a Park de la Cruz cap would have also served another purpose: to redress the past, racially disparate harm done by the Spur, a form of restorative justice discussed in this report's concluding part. In summary, while a Park de la Cruz cap would have proportionally served more people of color, Teralta Park had the potential to serve a larger overall population.

Figure 4-30. Teralta Park Freeway Cap Today

Source: Google, 2024b

Figure 4-31. Park de la Cruz and Landis Street Pedestrian Bridge Today



Source: Google, 2024b

Mitigation Decision-making and Results

Caltrans and other decision-makers always saw completing the freeway as a necessity, deeming the segment through City Heights as a missing link for a highway between Canada and Mexico. While both the larger political climate around freeways and local organizing in City Heights made mitigation measures such as a cap feasible, the location and design of any caps largely still needed to be decided at the same time as the design of the freeway itself, because adding caps later would have been more difficult. Thus, pressure mounted in the early 1990s to come to a decision. Caltrans itself only promised the single-block cap between Orange Avenue and Polk Avenue (Torres Van-Vleck, 2022 and Caltrans District 11, 2016).

The proposals from the Visions Project, from the study commissioned by the City (See **Table 4-3**), and the single cover with funding promised by Caltrans all came to a head during a decisive City Council meeting on April 27, 1992. Organizers had high hopes and thought they had solidified political support for the Visions Project plan. Yet after Caltrans representatives asserted that the Visions Project plan would delay the freeway, support from the Council crumbled at the last minute. Ultimately, the Council decided to move ahead only with the single cap funded by Caltrans, with a more nebulous, ultimately never realized consideration for a second block-long cover between Wightman Street and Landis Street near Park de la Cruz that would be funded by the City (Associated Press, 1992; Bliesner, 2013; Rollinger, 1992; and Torres Van-Vleck, 2022). In this decision, the Council largely rejected the community plan years in the making and opted instead for almost the same option that Caltrans had initially proposed in 1985.

After this decision, freeway construction through City Heights began in earnest, and the final freeway was completed in January 2000, over half a century after planning had begun.[56] While the community-developed

56. To the present, SR-15 south of I-8 lacks an Interstate designation (See **Figure 4-24**), due to interchanges not meeting Interstate standards (AARoads, 2012, 2022).

Visions Project did not pass, Teralta Park, the first freeway cap park in California, was opened in 2001 (AARoads, 2012; Torres Van-Vleck, 2022; Barrow et al., 2019; and Caltrans District 11, 2016). At present, Teralta Park is a community space that connects the homes on either side of the freeway. A wide grassy field lies next to a playground, a basketball court, raised planter beds filled with trees, a picnic area with a permanent shade cover, and a mural along the southern side, all atop the freeway.

Community members also pushed for a strong community development agreement and achieved many smaller successes around the design of the freeway. Before construction began, Caltrans allowed vacant lots to be used as a community garden that became an organizing space. After, two pedestrian bridges, two “plaza decks” on road bridges offering wider pedestrian spaces and transit hubs, and a bikeway parallel to the freeway through Ward Canyon to the north (See **Figure 4-10** and **Table 4-2**) were all built, funded by a variety of sources. The freeway also includes median bus lanes and bus rapid transit stations—the Centerline—advocated for by the CDC. Despite being promised initially, the Centerline was almost axed due to Caltrans safety concerns before community activism and unexpected regional funding saved it (Torres Van-Vleck, 2022; Caltrans District 11, 2016; Sears, 2020; Barrow et al., 2019; and Burks, 2013). The entire stretch of SR-15 is depressed below ground level and bounded by sound barriers on either side. When we visited this site, we noted the impressive scale of amenities this stretch of highway contained.

4.5. Conclusions

The City Heights case study adds additional insights into the interaction between freeway development and larger societal structure and dynamics. The San Diego community is unique among our case studies by revealing how massive, publicly financed infrastructure can contribute to the socioeconomic transformation of neighborhoods. Freeways not only displace people but also make places less desirable for some residents, thus lowering prices in the housing market. In this case, the negative externalities initiated an exodus, which was then filled by others willing to tolerate the disamenities in exchange for affordable units. To be sure, SR-15 alone was not sufficient to cause a racial transformation. The freeway-induced changes to the housing market did not necessarily bring in new residents of color. The exit of white residents could have been replaced by other, lower-income white households, but this did not occur. A necessary factor for what unfolded was the city’s larger demographic dynamics: the attraction of a growing number of people of color, many seeking affordable dwellings. City Heights happened to be one of the places that fulfilled the housing demand of this low-income population. In fact, the demand from this group was robust enough to stimulate the building of new housing units, mainly as rentals and/or in multifamily buildings. The reported and perceived decline experienced by City Heights is linked with the fact that City Heights became home to those with limited resources. It was, at the same time, a growing community, and it became one of the most diverse places in San Diego.

The City Heights case study also adds to our understanding of the larger societal process of the racial transition of neighborhoods. The most dominant means of housing a growing population of color has been through contiguous geographic expansion of the primary section of a city already occupied by people of color. Adjacent areas underwent racial succession because of white flight, caused by the unwillingness by the dominant group to live next to people of color. According to the literature cited earlier in this report and this part, the exodus was probably reinforced by panic-selling even by those who were not overtly prejudiced but feared that property prices would plummet when their neighbors exited. The available data clearly show a decline in home values and rents in City Heights relative to those for the city (See **Figure 4-20**). White flight materialized once people of color started moving in to fill the homes abandoned by prior residents. However, City Heights was not a part of the process of contiguous geographic expansion. Freeway development contributed to making it into a satellite area

of color. Interestingly, the initial response in southern City Heights was to develop more housing based on the perception that the Spur offered a net benefit. The seeding of the emerging satellite neighborhood of color was thus due to assumed amenities from the proposed freeway by developers and not any concerns of possible disamenities. The negative externalities only became apparent once the Spur was completed, and heavy traffic came to City Heights. The process of racial transformation was more nuanced and complicated than indicated by the existing literature.

Finally, this case study introduces us to a new stage in freeway development, where planners, engineers, and decision-makers start to acknowledge the harm done to disadvantaged neighborhoods and people. Our Stockton case study captures some of that transition, but Crosstown Freeway there occurred at the cusp of the transition between the two freeway development regimes. The community activists in that Central Valley city had no effective ability to negotiate for mitigating concessions from the state (Ong et al., 2023). By the time of designing the last segment of SR-15 in City Heights, it was no longer possible to just ignore the unequal distribution of costs and benefits. The previous case studies and an extensive literature have documented that low-income communities of color were particularly overburdened during the early decades of freeway development (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023). They suffered disproportionately from direct displacement, the physical fragmentation of place that weakens social fabrics, and the spillover effects on the areas surrounding a freeway. The change in freeway-building practices opened up an opportunity for community activists in City Heights to demand concessions. They won a freeway cap, which attenuated some of the harmful impacts, although the concession was still insufficient to ensure fully just and fair outcomes.

Today, work continues to redress some of the harms done to communities in San Diego that were split or became isolated because of the freeways. For example, south of City Heights in southeast San Diego and National City, Caltrans and its government and community partners won a Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards grant (a program discussed further in Part 5) to develop visioning plans, programming, and infrastructure near SR-15 and I-805. Initial stages of the project included a conference and an open streets event in October 2024 that closed some freeway on- and off-ramps to traffic and opened them for walking and biking; later stages of the project may include the creation of a new park (Bowen, 2024; City of San Diego, 2024c; Garrick, 2024; Deaderick, 2024; M. Garcia, 2024; City News Service, 2024; and Monson, 2024). Caltrans also hosted sustainability events and closed SR-15 for a fair, art, and another open streets event in March 2024, as part of the Clean California Community Days celebration, an initiative of the state’s Clean California beautification and anti-dumping program (also discussed further in Part 5) (Alvarenga, 2023a, 2023b and Caltrans, 2024b, 2024e).

5. Conclusion

5.1. Our Freeway Research in Context

This report presents the results from the third phase of a multi-year UCLA project to analyze how freeway development intersected with race in California in the decades after the Second World War. When combined with previous findings from the other two phases (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023), the overall project constitutes an unprecedented research initiative to develop insights to assist Caltrans' effort to document and assess the historical impacts of freeways on communities of color. This concluding part summarizes the project's overall research approach, strength and limitations, along with recommendation for future efforts.

Our team is not the first to cover the history of the disproportionate harm inflicted on disadvantaged neighborhoods. There is an extensive literature, as evident by the scores of citations and references included throughout this and two previous reports (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023). Dozens of publications provide detailed place-specific case studies, emphasizing depth over breadth. There are also publications that situate the topic within larger societal structures and dynamics, trading breath for depth. These studies tend to be qualitatively rich but quantitatively more limited. The UCLA project as a whole has taken an approach that combines the best research practices within the field by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to examine each of the sites individually and collectively. The multiple in-depth case studies enable us to go further by adopting a comparative framework, which reveals commonalities that can be addressed through statewide policies and differences that require practical attention to local conditions.

The project's scope and approach enable us to contribute to the body of basic and applied knowledge. It is important to acknowledge that the study of racism has become politically controversial (DeSantis, 2024 and V. Miller, Fernandez, and Hutchens, 2023), particularly around what is known as critical race theory (e.g., Hylton, 2012; N. Garcia, López, and Vélez, 2018).[57] Our goal is not to be enmeshed in an ideological battle but instead speak from evidence. We do not make an ontological assumption about the existence of racism but instead empirically assess whether there were racial disparities and, if so, what were the causes. We frame these questions through the lens of situating events within larger societal structures and dynamics rather than viewing the events in isolation.

One of the project's strengths is the extensive use of quantitative information and tools unmatched by previous studies. This is possible in part because of the growing availability and accessibility of data in recent years and because of the cooperation of Caltrans in sharing archival materials. The appendices below detail the multiple data sources and techniques utilized. The quantitative and qualitative analyses are mutually reinforcing. Historical documents and interviews provide a context to interpret statistical patterns. For example, knowing the timing and sequence of events enables us to better decipher the meaning of empirically observable outcomes. Changes occurring before freeway development set the causal stage for how and why events materialized. Subsequent changes occurring during and after freeway development can be interpreted as the consequences of state action, *ceteris paribus*. Qualitative information also puts a human face on the numbers, providing insights into the lived experience behind the quantified demographic, socioeconomic, and physical changes. Despite us living in an era

57. Our approach is to treat racial disparities as a hypothesis and to adopt an epistemological practice of accepting what the evidence shows.

of big data today, much of the past was neither measured nor recorded. Qualitative information helps fill the empirical gap.

It is equally notable that the quantitative analysis informs the qualitative. Subjective views can be biased, shaded by individual values and motivation. People may filter or construct information, selecting or manufacturing that which confirms their beliefs. Treated carefully, subjective views reveal much about the subject's position and agenda. But methodologically, researchers must be carefully interpreting them, with an understanding that statements may not be objective. Quantitative data enables us to assess subjective statements and claims.

While our project's goal is to implement best research practices, our efforts are far from comprehensive. Limited time, funding, and resources have constrained the work. One severe limitation is the relative unavailability of primary information from people of color, both qualitative and quantitative. This is an inherent problem in the way histories have been collected, recorded, and preserved. Marginalized people and communities are disproportionately underrepresented in historical sources, a systematic exclusion embedded in the larger pattern of societal inequality. When they are included, it is mostly from the perspective of society's dominant and privileged segments, often depicting the disempowered negatively. We made special efforts to give coverage and voice to people of color in order to provide a more balanced accounting. This included searching both mainstream and non-mainstream archives, tapping oral history projects, and interviewing witnesses themselves. Despite this attention, we have been less than satisfied. We accept the imperfections as an unavoidable limitation and hope that future research can find more on the lived experiences of people of color. While we wish we could have done more, the limitations do not diminish the achievable contributions. Our operating principle is not to make "the perfect the enemy of the good." With this, we hope to have made a meaningful addition to advancing the understanding of how freeways impacted people of color.

The rest of this final part of the report summarizes the project's major contributions, as well as its limitations. We first discuss how the case studies have diversified our understanding of freeway development and neighborhoods of color. We next focus on how the project contributes to a broader understanding of the societal structure and dynamics. We then comment on the legacy of freeways, offer suggestions on how to redress past harms, and speculate on future development.

5.2. Diversifying Coverage

The multiple case studies enable us to take a comparative approach. The six distinctive sites across this and our prior research (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023) enable us to identify commonalities and differences (See **Tables 1-1** and **1-2** and **Figure 1-1**), which is important to separate cross-cutting, societal-level processes from unique, location-specific factors. Both types of knowledge are important, the former in framing broad public policy and the latter to guide grounded practice.

The introduction to this report lists how case studies differ in terms of city size (from tens of thousands to millions), intra-city locations (within, adjacent to, and away from central business districts), neighborhood type (central city, surrounding urban community, suburb, and exurb), ethnoracial composition (ranging from predominantly people of color, with different mixes of ethnic groups, to initially predominantly non-Hispanic white), and decades of planning and construction (See **Tables 1-1** and **1-2**). This diversity enables us to understand the common ways that communities of color were structurally disadvantaged through the multiple stages of freeway development.

However, the outcomes can differ, with some neighborhoods being nearly erased (e.g., the Asian enclaves in Stockton (Ong et al., 2023)) and others escaping a freeway running through their backyards (e.g., the Latino/a community in South Colton (See Part 2)). Still others fell in between. Following freeway construction, some populations of color shrank (e.g., Black residents of Pacoima (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a)), and others grew (e.g., people of color in City Heights (See Section 4.2)) in the affected neighborhoods. In five cases, the freeways fragmented the community, creating internal barriers that divided once-more-coherent neighborhoods (City Heights, Fresno, Pacoima, and Pasadena) or nearly fully erased or displaced them (Stockton). In one case, the freeway reinforced pre-existing racial boundaries (Colton). There was also considerable variation in how much residents organized to fight against freeway plans, although the differences may be due to the relative availability and accessibility of information rather than objective differences in action (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023). Nonetheless, there is much evidence that the freeways were not welcomed by communities of color. Many observed commonalities stem from the larger societal structures and dynamics that were present at all sites, a point covered below.

While a comparative approach is useful, it has limitations. Multiple factors contributed to the diversity in processes and outcomes, and it is impossible to calculate the contribution of each factor. As with most historical events, the dynamics were complex, involving multiple societal agents and forces, further complicated by their interactions. Even with six case studies, the project suffers from being over-saturated, where there are more estimated parameters (contributing factors) than data points (case studies). Nevertheless, the interpretations of the available information are reasonable and insightful. Future research will provide confirmation and verification, or negation.

One variation that should be examined carefully in future research is how freeway development was practiced within the regional districts. California delegated much of the on-the-ground freeway design, engineering, and building to regional districts (12 currently) (Bruce-Johnson and Sandoval, 2016; Ballard, 2014; and Caltrans, 2024h, n.d.-b). Each district faced unique challenges and opportunities, due in part to the fact that they operated in regions that varied in economic and social needs, political climates, and geographic and geological characteristics. Moreover, the districts enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, including managing infrastructure projects (Ensch, n.d.). The districts probably had noticeable diversity in their technical abilities, organizational cultures, and leadership, which in turn could have affected interactions with communities of color. The project uncovered some useful official documents, but they reveal little about the underlying values, norms, and organizational culture that guided planners, engineers, and managers. While they were obligated to adhere to established policies and procedures, they appear to have had considerable latitude and discretion. Understanding inter-district variations can identify how institutional practices can overtly and implicitly produce the unjust outcomes experienced by marginalized groups (e.g., Albright et al., 2024; Ong et al., 2021; Ricord and Wang, 2023).

This report provides an example of how the freeway profession can be transformed. The building of SR-15 through City Heights took place over two distinctive time periods separated by decades, with the latter occurring under a regime where the state had to be more responsible for the social, economic, and environmental damages. Over time, the type and magnitude of mitigation efforts expanded, including concessions related to community benefits, affordable housing, contract set-asides and local hiring (e.g., Salkin and Lavine, 2007-2008; Ortiz and Buxbaum, 2008; Hestermann et al., 1993). While these changes were much needed improvements, more changes are needed today, as highlighted in the last section of this part of the report.

5.3. Societal Structure and Dynamics

The project also contributes to an understanding of the role of societal structures and dynamics in producing and reproducing racial outcomes. Structural racism is ingrained in society's institutions and can result in systematic group disparities that are not explicitly based on race, but still support overt racism (such as Jim Crow laws in the South and anti-Asian laws in California) and individual prejudices. Reproduction occurs when the past influences the present, particularly during periods of societal transformation in response to significant new opportunities and challenges. The distribution of benefits and disadvantages is determined by systematic differences in economic status, political power, and social privilege. Consequently, those who are marginalized and disadvantaged are more susceptible to the effects of societal changes. In most cases, the existing racial hierarchy is preserved. However, during transformative periods, marginalized groups have the potential to resist from within, engage in protests, and participate in other collective actions that challenge the reproduction of these dynamics. When the movement against injustices is disruptive enough, it can gradually erode institutional racism. Nonetheless, progress is often slow, not guaranteed, and uncommon. One way to comprehend the nature and dynamics of structural reproduction, as well as its opposition, is to analyze key historical events, such as freeway development.

Our findings confirm much that has been written in the existing literature and augment the body of knowledge by adding examples related to freeway development. One major generalization is that racialized outcomes were the product of fundamental factors and forces. Marginalization of people of color predated freeway development, which placed them in a precarious position. Low-economic status and lower land values made their homes much more vulnerable because of narrow cost-effectiveness criteria in siting roadways. Weak political power limited their influence in decision-making. Because neighborhoods of color were considered blighted, their destruction was perceived as desirable for the greater good (e.g., Ong et al., 2023). Pre-existing conditions placed people of color at high risk of suffering a disproportionately high share of negative impacts when massive infrastructures were planned and built. In other words, pre-freeway history matters to understanding freeway history. More generally, the past shapes the present—not a novel insight but one worth repeating (David, 1994; Mahoney, 2000; and Martin and Sunley, 2006). Various forms of marginalization shaped freeway outcomes: the systematic economic, social, and political imbalances along racial lines mentioned above. These were not independent dimensions, but rather events laid at the intersection of multiple societal spheres.

What is intriguing is that these structured disparities were not absolutely deterministic—that is, being marginalized did not automatically mean that a community of color would be victimized. California did not have a caste-like system where those at the bottom would inevitably suffer all of society's ills. Instead, racism during the freeway-building era operated by greatly increasing the probability of a non-white community being negatively impacted by the freeways, which is consistent with a point brought up in the report's introduction regarding the evolving nature of racism in the era after the Second World War. The importance of history, complex contemporaneous interactions, and probabilistic outcomes define the nature of what other scholars call structural or systemic racism.

The project also contributes to the understanding of race and ethnicity, two overlapping but distinct concepts regarding hierarchical grouping within a society. Race is defined as an ascriptive assignment, often based on phenotype. It is socially constructed, with membership imposed externally (Omi and Winant, 2014). Ethnicity refers to a group that shares a common culture, language, and ancestry, although it can also be an identity without some of the mentioned characteristics (Brubaker, 2004 and Fenton, 2010). Although ethnic groups can be racialized (Lopez and Espiritu, 1990 and Bozorgmehr, Ong, and Tosh, 2016), one distinguishing feature is the durability and comprehensiveness of societal barriers separating groups. Race is one of most durable

stratification categories in U.S. society (Tilly, 1998 and Massey, 2007), whereas many ethnic groups are able to assimilate into the mainstream (Gordon, 1961, 1964 and Alba and Nee, 2014). The latter is particularly true for non-Hispanic white immigrants and their children. This was evident in the Fresno case study (See Part 3), where non-Hispanic white immigrants had started moving out of West Fresno (spatial assimilation which accompanied acculturation and economic assimilation) before freeway development and continued to do so when US-99 was modernized into a freeway. People of color had few options because they were racialized. This finding reinforces the need to incorporate disparate group trajectories into future studies of the impacts of government projects.

The final big-picture contribution is the role of freeway development in restructuring the regional landscape to perpetuate racial segregation. Spatial patterns both reflect and support racial stratification (Ong and González, 2019). Freeways enhanced regional mobility, often reinforcing the multicentricity of many U.S. metropolitan areas (Giuliano and Hanson, 2017; Weber, 2012; and W. Clark, 2008). As discussed in this and our previous reports (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a and Ong et al., 2023), the development of new roadways built for speed and growing automobile ownership also made extensive suburbanization possible (Beauregard, 2006). Freeways enabled many to purchase affordable homes designed to fulfill the American dream of a spacious single-family home on a parcel large enough for a front and back yard (Hayden, 2009 and Archer, 2005). This pursuit led to a massive population growth outside the urban core. For example, the number of residents in the San Fernando Valley, heralded as a prototypical suburban development, more than tripled (Soja, 2014 and Cox Consultancy, n.d.). But this spatial reconfiguration was not advantageous for all, and many communities hurt were disproportionately nonwhite. As previously noted, early freeway building and this spatial reconfiguration occurred simultaneously with a rising racial tension, as people of color and their allies fought for civil rights (Morris, 1984). This was an era marked by civil disobedience and urban riots, as documented in the Kerner Commission report (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). One goal was desegregating housing and schools, and this was partially attained through major court and legislative victories banning governmental and private discrimination (Abraham and Perry, 2003; Pedriana and Stryker, 2017; and Ware, 2012). These results are testimony to the ability of people of color to be social change agents; however, there were countervailing forces and structural constraints that significantly limited progress (e.g., Giddens, 1979). Full integration proved evasive, with segregation declining only modestly[58] (Sørensen, Taeuber, and Hollingsworth, 1975). As our case studies find, freeways contributed to the re-intensification of racial segregation, facilitating white flight, while continued discrimination trapped people of color in the urban core—a phenomenon repeated throughout the country (Kuswa, 2002). For this reason, freeways were complicit in minimizing civil-rights gains.

5.4. Legacy, Today, and the Future

Freeways not only harmed those at the time when they were built but also left a legacy of harm stretching from their opening to today. As we have seen in the City Heights case study (See Section 4.4), attenuating those and other harms became an accepted practice starting in the 1970s by transportation agencies, albeit a practice that was largely forced on the profession from the outside (Brown, Morris, and Taylor, 2009a, 2009b and Goldstein, 1970). Mitigation, however, was often partial and did little to redress past impacts. More recently, we have seen a movement to remedy the past, including efforts at restorative justice.

We quantify the harmful legacy of freeways using several indicators. **Table 5-1** compares the values for the three study areas with their respective cities (See Appendix B for description of the data.). The results show a clear

58. The spatial gains were due in part to economic gains (Farley, 1977).

pattern of the study sites being relatively more disadvantaged today, a continuation of their marginalized position when the freeways were developed. The CalEnviroScreen numbers provide a composite metric broadly capturing the relative position of neighborhoods along socioeconomic, health, and environment dimensions. A higher composite score indicates greater disadvantage (See Appendix B, Section B.3). In all three locations, the study areas are noticeably more disadvantaged. The second indicator captures whether a place (census tract) has little or no access to economic, educational, and other opportunities (See Appendix B, Section B.4). All of the study areas are opportunity-poor, while only a proportion of their respective cities fall into this category. The last two indicators are associated with freeways. Diesel particulate matter comes from mobile sources of air pollutants (e.g., trucks) and has severe health implications (See Appendix B, Section B.3). The levels in the study areas are two or more times higher than for their respective cities, thus disproportionately putting the residents in the study areas at greater environmental risks. Although not included in the table, evaluation of additional variables from CalEnviroScreen shows that residents of the case study areas are also exposed to other pollutants from the traffic going through or adjacent to their neighborhoods. While the study areas bear a disproportionate high share of legacy cost from the negative externalities generated by freeways, they benefit less from the infrastructure, because many cannot or do not use the freeways (See Section 1.2). Though low in all cases, a much higher proportion of households are without a vehicle relative to households in their cities (See Appendix B, Section B.2). Moreover, the vehicles owned by study-area residents tend to be older (i.e., “clunker” vehicles), thus less reliable (See Appendix B, Section B.5) (calculated by authors from California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023; CTCAC, 2024; UCLA CNK, 2022; and U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

Table 5-1. Case Study Area’s Environmental and Access Statistics in Comparison

Case Study	Area	CalEnviroScreen Composite Score	Share with Poor Opportunity Access	Diesel Particulate Matter Score	Households with No Vehicles
Colton	South Colton	67	100%	77	12%
	City of Colton	45	85%	37	4%
Fresno	West Fresno	78	100%	96	22%
	City of Fresno	43	44%	25	11%
San Diego	City Heights	41	100%	53	14%
	City of San Diego	21	18%	27	7%

Data sources: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023; CTCAC, 2024; UCLA CNK, 2022; and U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a

Clearly, stronger mitigation efforts would minimize future impacts, but this does little to address past harms. There is, fortunately, a current effort to redress the historical wrongs caused by freeways, partly in response to the protest movement that followed the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers (*POLITICO Magazine*, 2021) and other cases of racial injustice in policing and other realms around the same time. There are nascent initiatives by the federal government and California to allocate new transportation investments so that a meaningful portion of the benefits flows to disadvantaged communities, particularly those affected by freeway

building in previous decades[59] (White House, 2023; Rebuilding California, 2024; and Monserrat, 2024). Both the federal government and California have initiatives that fall under the rubric of "reconnecting communities," which aims to remedy past and ongoing injustice through new infrastructure (USDOT, n.d.; Caltrans, 2024c, 2024f; and California State Assembly Select Committee on Reconnecting Communities, 2024).

These reconnecting community projects vary in scope and scale. Recently, the federal government has funded such projects in disadvantaged communities across the country through the Reconnecting Communities Pilot, a competitive grant program under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (also called the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law). Program grants support both planning and capital costs and cover elements including pedestrian under- and overpasses, parks, complete streets improvements, public transit, public art, freeway caps, and even freeway removal. Over 20 projects have been awarded in California in two rounds of funding (Caltrans, 2024g; USDOT, 2024b, 2024a, n.d.; and USDOT Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, 2023), including projects close to our research team's previous Pasadena study area and to the San José and Sacramento case study areas examined with UC Davis (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023a). Caltrans has supplemented these with their own Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards program, funding an additional three projects, including one in San Diego discussed in Section 4.5 (Caltrans, 2024f and Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, 2024).

Many of these efforts explicitly or implicitly utilize a restorative-justice framework, a practice adopted from the criminal justice system, which brings victims and perpetrators together to find ways to redress the impacts from criminal acts (Gavrielides, 2020).[60] This requires offenders to accept responsibility and to take actions to repair the harm. When applied to freeway development, the restorative approach requires transportation agencies to acknowledge and remedy their historical role in harming communities of color. The funding of this research project is itself an initial part of the process, recognizing the harm done. Remedies can take many forms, ranging from improving access between parts of neighborhoods fragmented by a freeway to removing a freeway to enable developments that benefit those who had been previously impacted. Restorative justice also opens a door to implement meaningful stakeholder engagement, which would rectify prior biased participatory practices.

These justice-oriented initiatives offer an opportunity to develop new and innovative transportation practices. The field has little to use as models for "best practices," and it must develop procedures and guidelines through trial and error. To maximize learning by doing, Caltrans should implement a rigorous, continuous improvement process that includes near-real-time monitoring, assessment, and mid-course correction. California should also research and evaluate similar justice efforts in other states and adopt the most impactful practices. The lessons learned from such a research effort will enable the state to implement deep institutional changes that will enhance current and future outcomes.

The restorative impact of individual projects depends on their implementation approach. For instance, the Clean California program has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to freeway beautification and public art (making it one of the largest public art programs since the New Deal). Clean California has removed dangerous and

59. Exemplified at the federal level by the commitment of the Biden administration to the Justice40 Initiative (White House, 2023) and in California by directed set-asides of federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act investments and state Active Transportation Program dollars in and for the benefit of designated "Disadvantaged Communities" (Rebuilding California, 2024 and Monserrat, 2024), as well as regional prioritization of investments in disadvantaged areas (e.g., Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 2024).

60. There are also other justice approaches, including distributional, procedural, abolishing oppression and capability empowerment (e.g., Rawls, 1971; Young, 2020; Sen, 1999).

unsightly debris that contributes to freeways' barrier effects and has created lasting artwork that fosters community pride and ownership. But the program has also faced criticism for facilitating enforcement and removal operations against people living in homelessness by freeways—called "sweeps" by many advocates—and because program funds can only be used for infrastructure and post-clearance restoration, not pre-clearance outreach (Caltrans, 2023a, n.d.-a; Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, 2023; Monson, 2024; Donegan, 2024; and Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023b). While sleeping near freeways is dangerous (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023b and Wasserman et al., 2023), programs that displace unhoused people, often without adequate long-term housing available, can echo earlier freeway-induced displacements. Other Caltrans partnerships profiled in Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2023b) and Wasserman et al. (2023) offer models of proactive outreach and housing models. To foster positive outcomes, collaboration between Caltrans and local government is essential.

In a broader context, the success of any restorative-justice initiative within transportation agencies relies on both avoiding repeating past mistakes and addressing negative legacies. For instance, as recently as 2024, the opening of Bakersfield's Centennial Corridor Freeway displaced around 1,000 residents from the majority-minority Westpark neighborhood (Linton, 2024). To address such issues, Caltrans has developed the Transportation Equity Index, a spatial screening tool to identify areas burdened by or benefiting from the existing transportation network. This tool, informed by prior case studies conducted by this research team, will aid Caltrans in integrating equity into planning, modeling, and evaluation processes. Caltrans leadership has committed to using this index in the agency's System Investment Strategy to guide funding allocation (Caltrans, 2024d; Raval and Elbadawy, 2024; Bender, 2024; and Ong et al., 2021). As the state Secretary of Transportation highlighted in 2020, "past transportation decisions quite literally put up barriers, divided communities, and amplified racial inequalities, particularly in our Black and Brown neighborhoods" (Kim, 2020). The extent to which restorative-justice principles and equity tools are embedded in decision-making will determine how effectively the state mitigates past harms and addresses current needs (Bender, 2024).

Moving forward requires anticipating macro-level changes that will likely restructure travel patterns, the transportation system, and the urban landscape (Ong, 2024). One major disruptive force is advancements in communication technology, which enable people to connect and interact with each other virtually at previously unimaginable levels. Modern communication empowers people to work, learn, shop, play and socialize remotely. Digital platforms and social media have supplemented or replaced physical public spaces with a virtual civic plaza. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition, when lockdowns isolated people, shuttered businesses, and upended how organizations operate. Although the federal public health emergency ended on May 11, 2023 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023), many aspects of remote living persist (Speroni and Taylor, 2023). One inevitable consequence is a decline of the necessity to commute to work sites: the proportion of workers who work at home nearly tripled from 2019 to 2022 (6% to 17%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). It is unclear if the percentage will remain stable, increase, or decrease in the coming years, but there is no doubt that we will not return to pre-pandemic commuting patterns.

Climate change is another major disruptive force. We are experiencing global warming, with historically higher temperature averages year after year and more frequent extreme weather events (e.g., unprecedented wildfires, prolonged droughts, torrential rains and heat islands) (Lindsey and Dahlman, 2024 and U.S. Department of Agriculture, n.d.). California has been a global leader in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change by transitioning to renewable energy and promoting active transportation (Huseynli, 2024). One effort is to promote the development of sustainable communities that mix land uses to reduce the number of vehicle trips and lower greenhouse gas emissions (CARB, 2024).

These macro-level changes are transforming and will continue to transform where we live, reshaping the urban landscape and neighborhoods. The ability to adapt to climate change and to work remotely are not evenly distributed. For example, not all have the same access to modern communications technology. Residents in the most advantaged neighborhoods are over one and a half times more likely to have broadband than those in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, and the gap is even greater because of differences in the ability to buy high-speed, optical fiber broadband. The disparity in ability to work remotely is even larger—a nine-fold difference between workers in the most and least advantaged places. Inequalities extend to climate change, with people of color and low-income people at great risk from urban heat relative to those on the other end of the socioeconomic ladder (Ong, 2024 and U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). As California revamps transportation planning and decision making to account for current and future macro-level changes, it is important that the transportation field also pays attention to distribution effects, so we do not repeat past injustices.

Appendix A. Historical Quantitative Data and Methodologies

A.1. Data Triangulation Approach

There is no single source of quantitative data that provides a complete and comprehensive understanding of the potential impact of alternative freeway routes and the direct impacts of freeway construction. Therefore, we "triangulate" by using sources such as census records, address directories, and right-of-way documents. Each of these sources has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Due to the significant amount of time and resources required to construct and analyze the data, as well as variations in their availability, not all sources are used in every case study. We prioritize the most important data sources based on their potential to provide valuable insights.

The single most useful quantitative dataset is the decennial U.S. Census from the U.S. Census Bureau, which is available in three forms. Data at the level of census *tracts* (geographic units of around 4,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b)) provide aggregated information on demographic, economic and housing characteristics. The data, however, are only updated every ten years, and the variables and census tract boundaries can change over time. Moreover, a tract covers a relatively large geographic area and population for this type of detailed analysis; consequently, analysis of tract data can only reveal characteristics at the neighborhood level, not in specific areas under or closely adjacent to a proposed or actual freeway path.

Census *blocks* (usually, actual city blocks bounded by roads (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b)) provide aggregated information and capture residents by race and other housing characteristics. Like tract data, block data are only updated every ten years. And even at this granular level, blocks do not perfectly align with freeway footprints. These data also do not include property owner information or information on non-residential uses. Finally, the paper or scanned block maps available are often in poor condition.

The U.S. Census does collect detailed demographic information, including race/ethnicity, on individuals. The 1940 records at the individual level are fully digitized and available from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), compiled by the University of Minnesota (Ruggles et al., 2024). The 1950 records are available but not fully digitized. No records for 1960 and later decades are currently available publicly, because individual records must legally be kept confidential for at least 72 years to protect privacy (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023c). Assigning records to specific locations along the freeway path can be challenging. Digitizing the 1950 written records was a significant early project effort, and again, the enumeration district (defined below) maps are often in poor condition. Likewise, even the individual data do not indicate property owners nor non-residential uses.

Address directories list households and businesses in a given location. This source does not report the total number of inhabitants or non-resident property owners. The availability of these directories, published by private companies, varies by location, and while some racial/ethnic information can be imputed for those with Asian and Spanish surnames, there is no official racial/ethnic data. Additionally, some individuals without telephone numbers may be missed, and address directories may not be available for all study sites or for the entire study period.

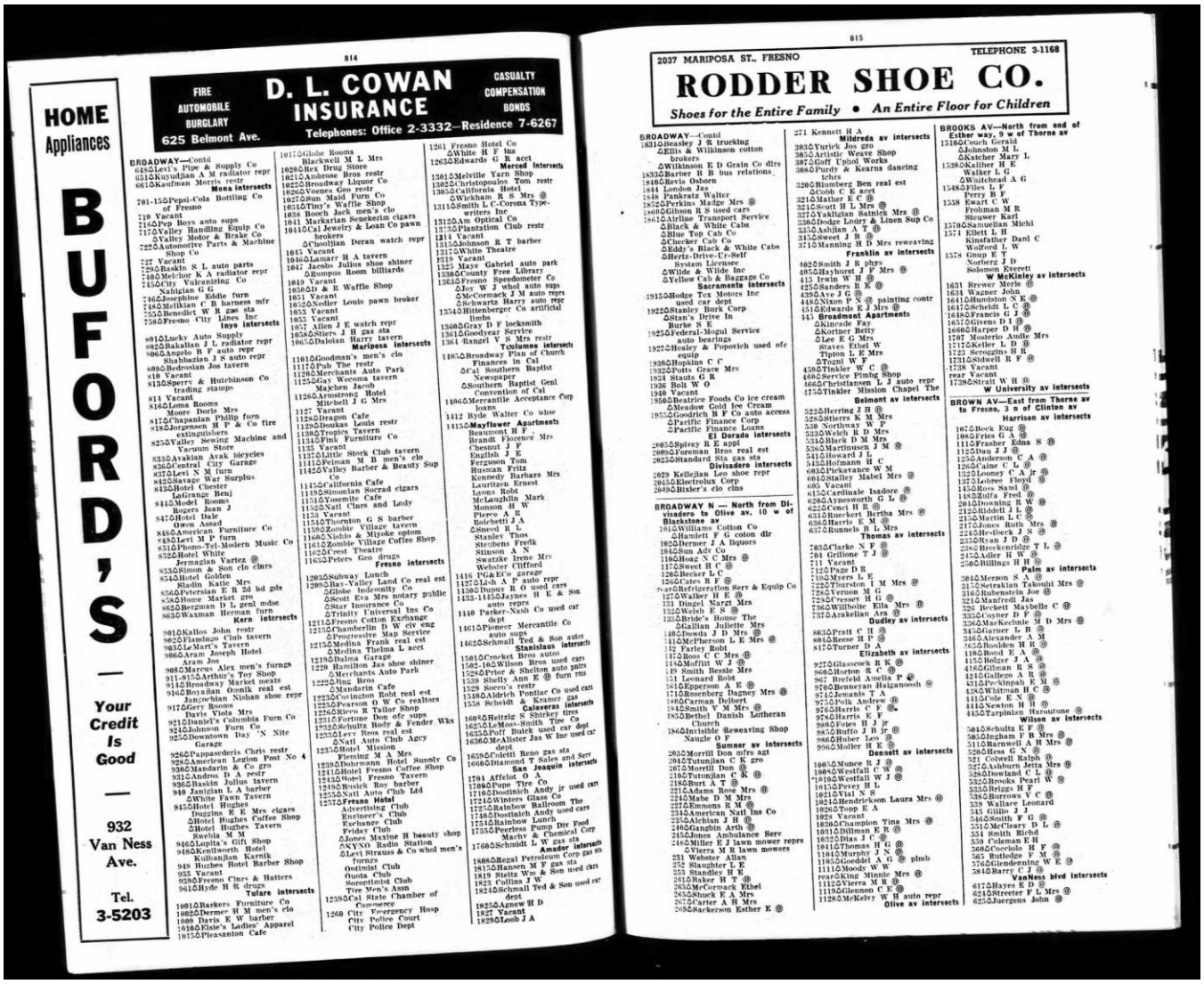
Right-of-way documents from Caltrans show properties that were directly purchased for freeway construction and may indicate the type of property (when commercial/corporate names are listed). However, these documents do not include race/ethnicity information, although it can be imputed for individuals with Asian and Spanish surnames in some cases. Furthermore, they do not provide information on renters, both residential and commercial.

The following sections describe which data sources we used and how.

A.2. City Directories

City directories usually contain information about people such as their names, occupations, and home addresses, as well as information about businesses and other types of organizations like churches and charitable organizations. Historical city directories can be accessed on Ancestry.com, which has a vast collection of directories from different time periods. These records are useful for identifying individuals and businesses that were present in a specific location and during a particular year. **Figure A-1** shows sample pages of one directory, which include a list of individuals and their addresses. We transcribed this information into Excel spreadsheets and then used ArcGIS geospatial analysis software to geocode the locations based on street addresses. We would have ideally liked to geocode this information using historical street data, but unfortunately, such data were not available. Instead, we utilized datasets of current street locations to geocode the information. It is important to note that street names and address numbers can change over time, which may result in inconsistencies in certain locations.

Figure A-1. Example Pages from Fresno Directory



Source: Polk and Company, 1952, pp. 814–815

City Directories and Colton Alternative Route Analysis

The methodology used to identify and track residents who lived on C, I, J, and O Streets before the freeway was built in Colton (See Section 2.5) was a systematic approach that utilized information from telephone and reverse street directories available on Ancestry.com. First, we obtained data from the 1949 Colton city directory for C, I, J, and O Streets (San Bernardino Directory Company, 1949). This dataset provided a list of information on residential, commercial, and vacant properties and other types of listings along these streets, which formed the basis for the subsequent analysis.

Next, we transcribed the data into a digital format suitable for detailed examination. This involved creating clean JPG images of the information for specified street segments and using optical character recognition (OCR)

software to extract and digitize the information from these images. Although the digitized data required considerable post-OCR cleaning due to inherent inaccuracies, it was successfully imported into an Excel database for further analysis.

A significant part of the analysis focused on residential listings. We developed a methodology to differentiate between Hispanic and non-Hispanic residents based on surname information. This involved leveraging a list of surnames from the U.S. Census Bureau, which provided the likelihood that a surname belonged to a particular racial or ethnic group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Additionally, cross-referencing this data with 1950 Census records improved accuracy, especially in cases where the name-matching process yielded ambiguous or missed matches.

Furthermore, to validate the robustness of the results, the same approach was applied to the 1942 directory (San Bernardino Directory Company, 1942), which revealed similar patterns to those observed in the 1949 data. It is important to note, though, that while address directories provide valuable insights into the people and businesses occupying specific locations, they may lack certain demographic information. This necessitates the use of supplementary data sources and imputation methods, especially for racial and ethnic categorizations. Additionally, these directories may not include individuals who do not have listed telephone numbers or who live in hotels or boarding houses.

City Directories and Fresno Alternative Route Analysis

We analyzed listings along D, G, H, and Broadway streets in Fresno, based on the 1951 directory accessed through Ancestry.com (See Section 3.4) (Polk and Company, 1952). The listings were categorized into residential, commercial, and other. The “other” category included establishments such as hotels, boarding houses, government agencies, civic organizations, and religious and non-profit entities. Again, interpretations derived from these directories may have potential errors due to a small number of listings that could be ambiguous or unclear. These factors were taken into consideration to ensure a cautious approach when interpreting and analyzing the data extracted from the address directory for Fresno.

City Directories and Analysis of Displaced Fresno Residents

We used information from Fresno city directories to track the movement of D Street residents who were displaced between 1951 and 1955 (See Section 3.5) (Polk and Company, 1952, 1955). This methodology does not account for individuals who were no longer listed in the later directory. This group likely consists mainly of individuals who moved out of the city, but it could also include those who changed surnames due to marriage or are no longer listed due to other reasons, such as death.

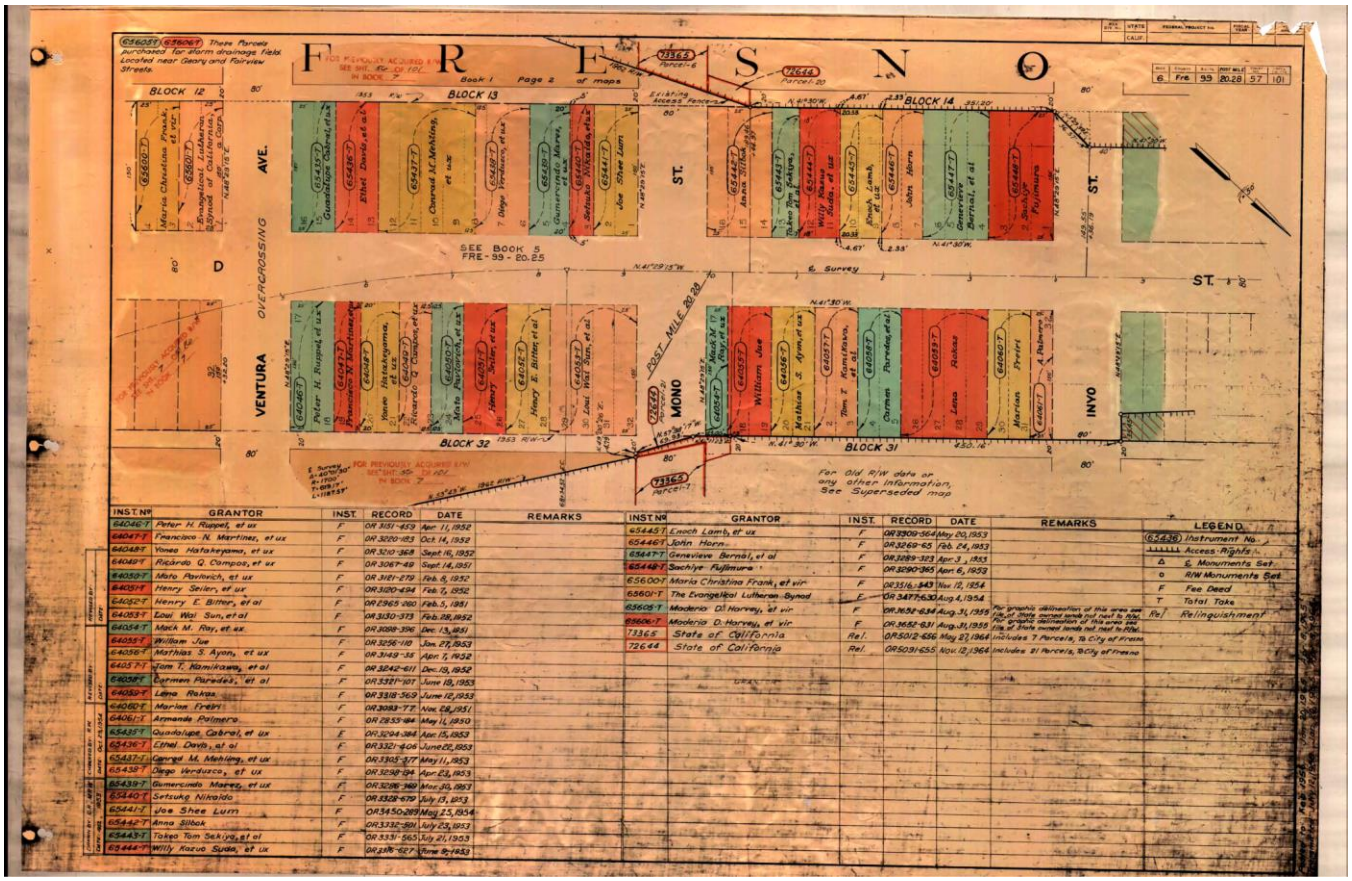
The examination of relocation patterns by race and ethnicity involved consulting census records and assessing surnames to categorize residents, when feasible. This was done by matching names and locations (although it was not possible to find exact matches for many observations). However, the relative number of non-Hispanic whites residents in the listings appeared higher than what was observed in the census data, and there were notably few listings for Black residents. We suspect micro-spatial racial residential patterns may account for this.

We grouped residents into those who remained in West Fresno, those who relocated to another area within Fresno, and individuals no longer located in Fresno. This classification facilitated a systematic evaluation of the relocation dynamics among D Street residents, shedding light on possible trends and patterns in their movements within or outside the city.

A.3. Right-of-way Data

Right-of-way maps and records from the state list the properties purchased for freeway construction. The state used its power of eminent domain (expropriating private property for public use with compensation) but was expected to pay fair market prices for the properties. The sample right-of-way document in **Figure A-2**, for the West Fresno study area, has details of properties purchases and a map. We received right-of-way property acquisition maps from the relevant Caltrans district offices; their formats and numbering differed by region and date.

Figure A-2. Example Right-of-way Document from Fresno

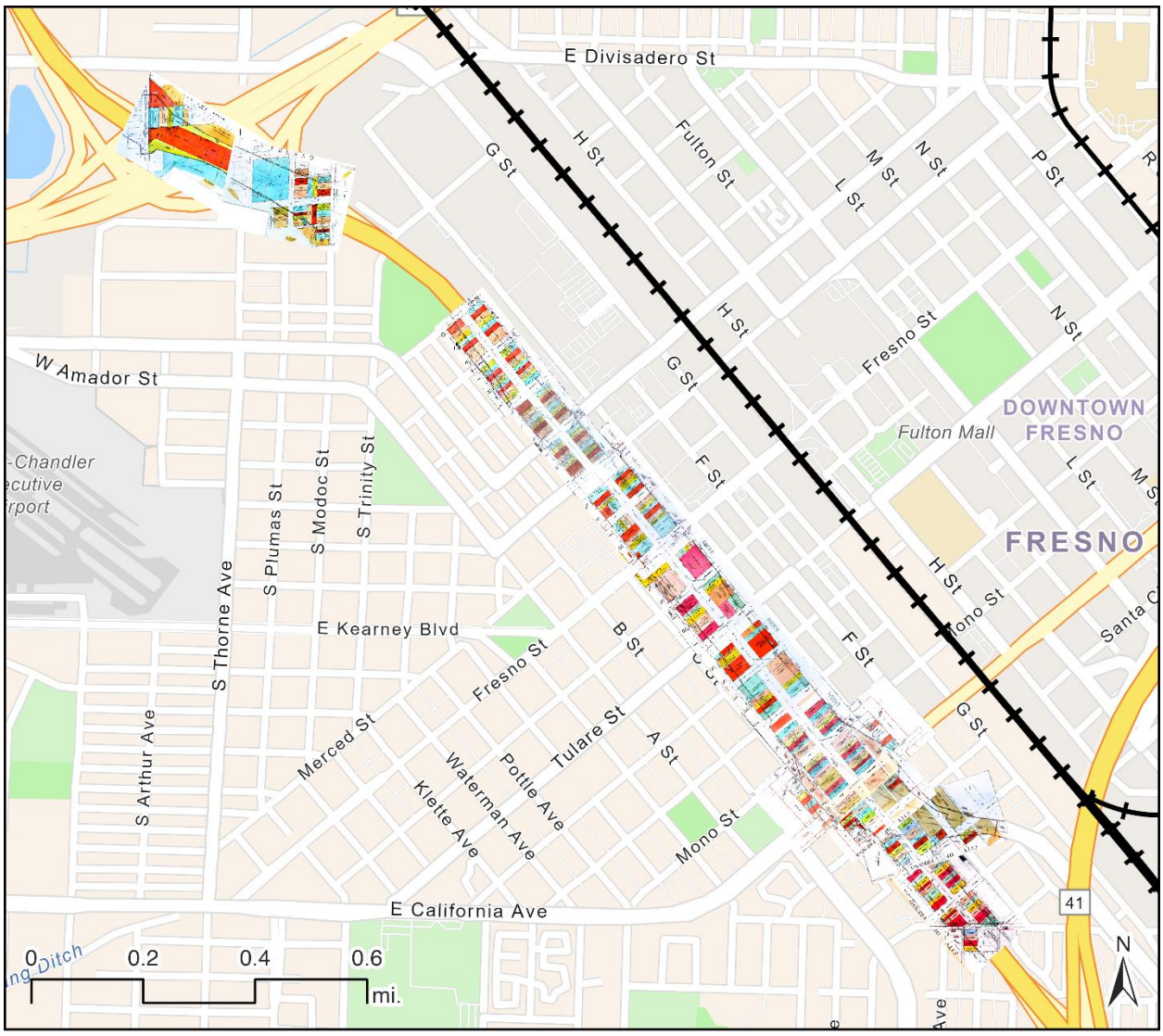


Source: Spiker, 2023

The right-of-way information aids in establishing the spatial-temporal pattern of freeway development. The documents contain information on when properties were acquired by the Division of Highways for freeway construction, as it contains purchase date details. This enables a better comprehension of the freeway construction timeline. By segmenting the freeway and calculating the median purchase date for properties in each segment, we can generate a map illustrating the purchases over time (See **Figures 2-8**, **3-23**, and **4-23**). This approach was employed across all three case study areas (See Sections 2.5, 3.5, and 4.3). Notably, in City Heights, this analysis was enlightening, reaffirming the prolonged nature of freeway development in that study area (See **Figures 4-23** and **4-28** and Section 4.3).

We used information from these maps to identify ownership patterns for residential and commercial parcels. **Figure A-3** shows individual parcels under US-99 in West Fresno, which can be georeferenced to other data. Additionally, it can assist in inferring ethnicity by analyzing the surnames of property owners. The probability of

Figure A-3. Caltrans Right-of-way Property Acquisition Maps and Present-day Fresno



Data sources: 1960 U.S. Census (Manson et al., 2022) and Caltrans District 11, n.d.; base map: Esri, 2024b

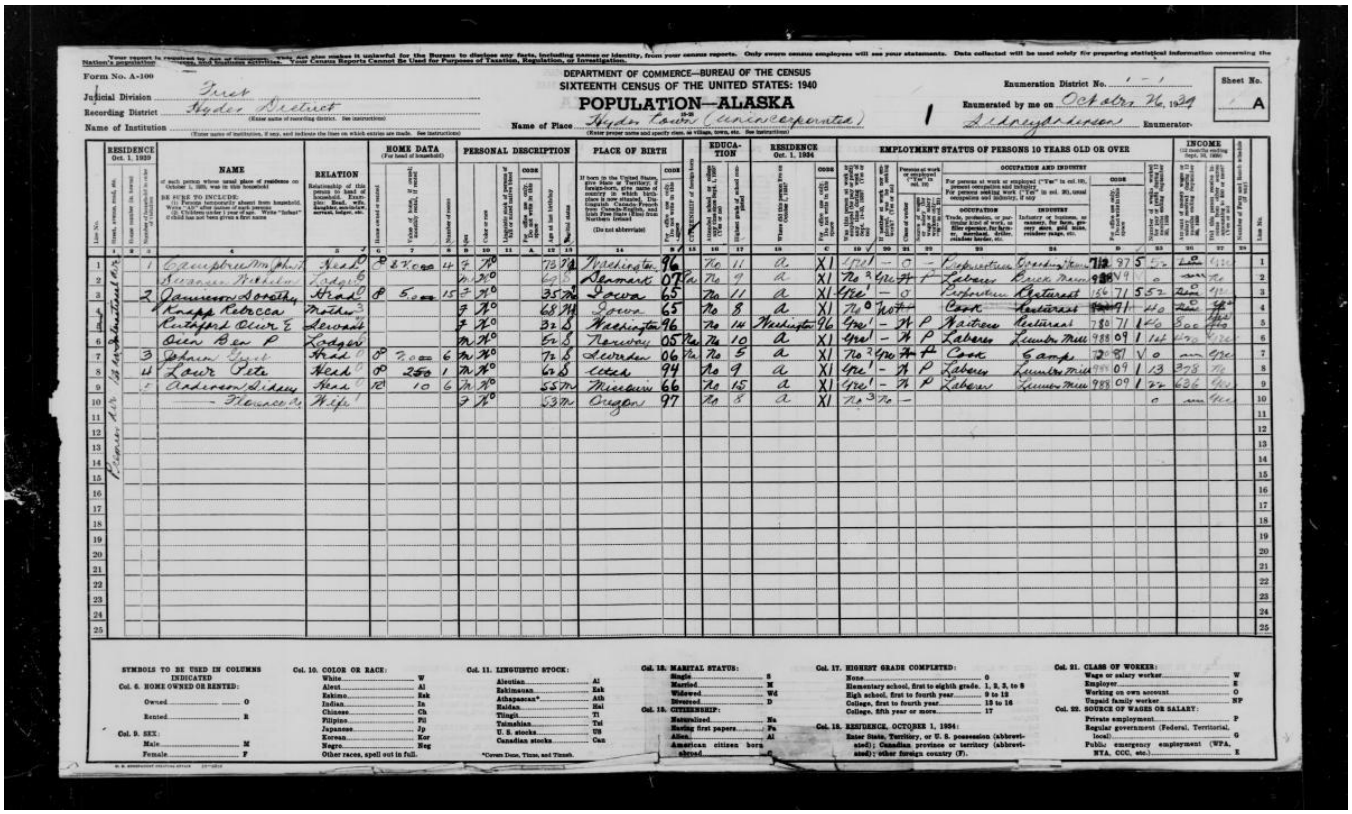
accurately imputing Asian and Hispanic ethnicity is relatively high due to the distinctiveness of their surnames. Conversely, distinguishing between white and Black individuals is challenging since they often share common

surnames. Furthermore, Filipino surnames can also overlap with Hispanic ones, presenting difficulty in differentiation. However, leveraging additional demographic data from U.S. Census Bureau publications and records enables us to gain a more nuanced understanding of the area's racial and ethnic composition. For instance, in Colton, given our knowledge of the city's demographic makeup, we can confidently assert that most of the identified Hispanic surnames correspond predominantly to Latino/a individuals.

A.4. 1940 Census Enumeration District Records

The U.S. Census Bureau released the 1940 U.S. Census records in 2012 (National Archives, 2022b). The National Archives provides free access to the digital images of the books used by enumerators to collect information (National Archives, 2022a). The records are also available from other sources, including Ancestry.com. **Figure A-4** is an image of one of the pages. The records contain information on each enumerated individual, including data on housing, age, race/ethnicity, nativity, education, and earnings. We also used individual-level data from IPUMS (Ruggles et al., 2024).

Figure A-4. Example 1940 Census Record from the National Archives

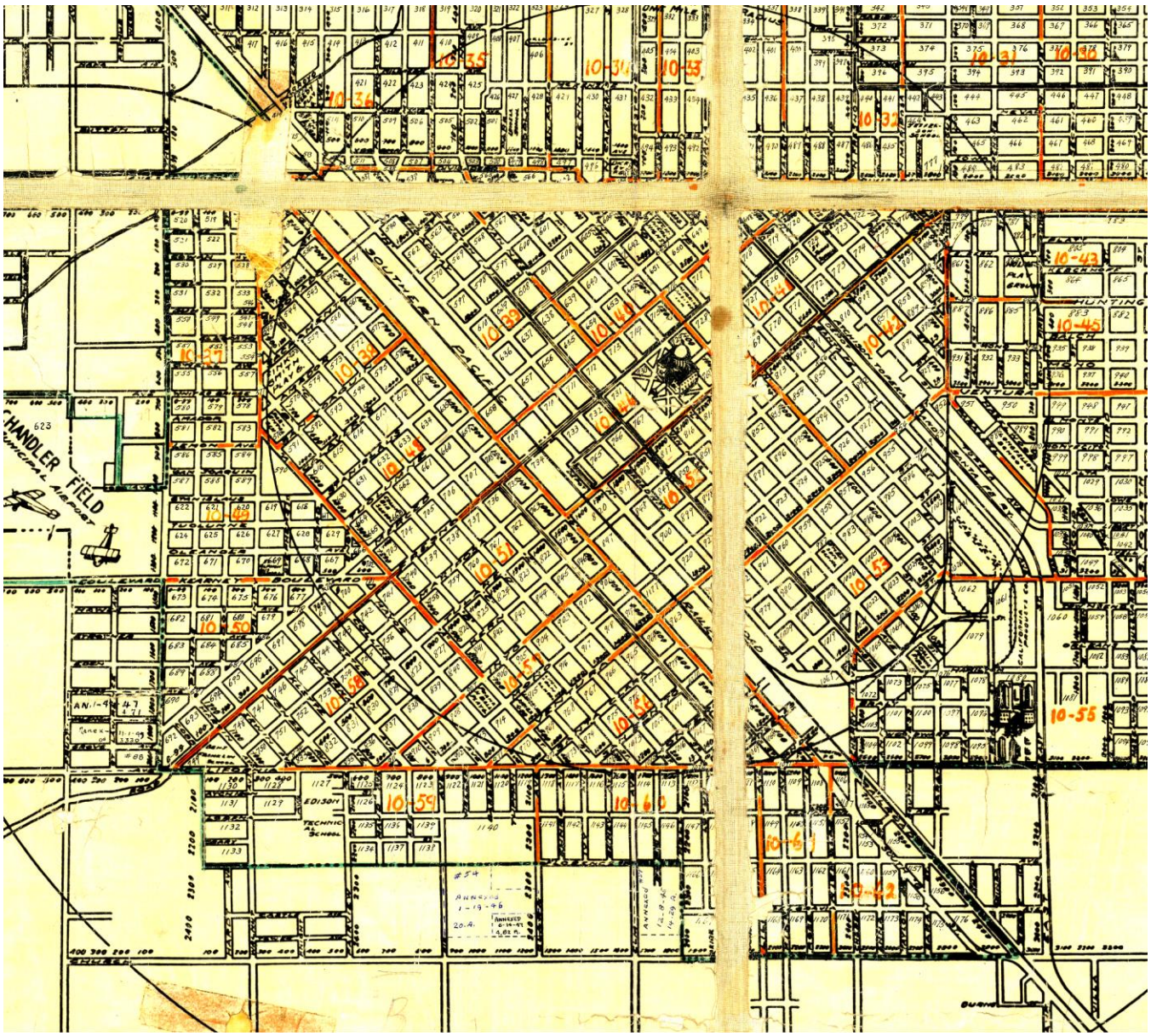


Source: Macchi, 2021

The records are organized by enumeration districts. An enumeration district was an "area that could be covered by a single enumerator (census taker) in one census period" (National Archives, 2021a). **Figure A-5** depicts the 1940 enumeration districts in West Fresno and downtown Fresno. The size of a district varied depending on

population density. The enumerator usually collected and recorded the data in person, moving systematically down one street segment at a time (U.S. Census Bureau, 1940). Their records included the respondent's address, which can be used to geocode the information to street segments and blocks.

Figure A-5. 1940 U.S. Census Enumeration Districts and Census Geographies in Fresno



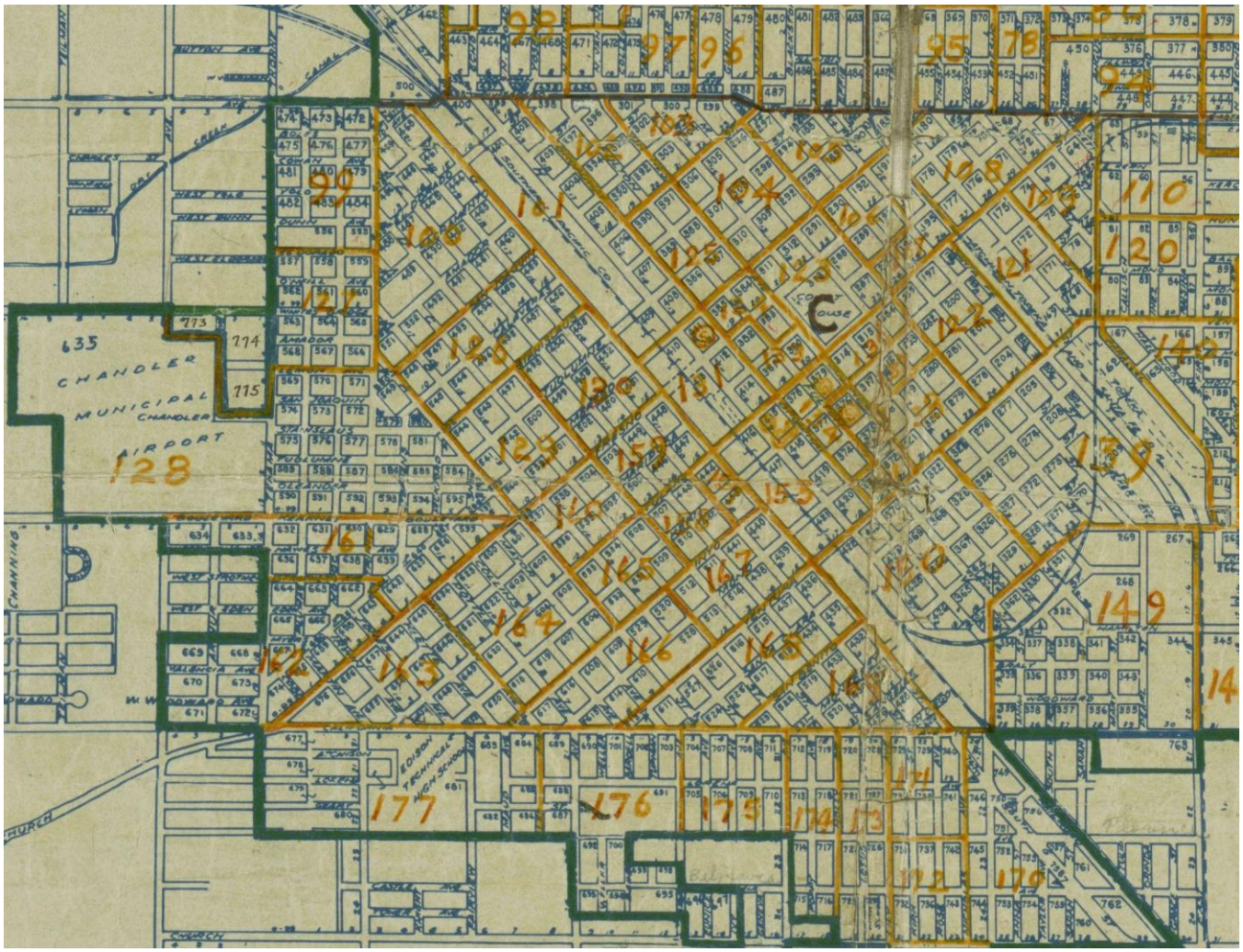
Source: Progressive Map Service, 1940

We used the digitized records from IPUMS (Ruggles et al., 2024) to analyze racial differences. The data were also used to compile the racial/ethnic composition by using the appropriate enumeration districts.

A.5. 1950 Census Enumeration District Records

We transcribed and analyzed individual-level records from the 1950 U.S. Census, released in 2022 (National Archives, 2022c). In some cities such as Fresno, the enumeration districts are grouped into wards, which are roughly equivalent to census tracts in later U.S. Censuses. **Figure A-6** shows these geographies in and around West Fresno, with boundaries similar to those in 1940 (See **Figure A-5**). The ward boundaries are shown in green, the enumeration district boundaries and numbers are shown in orange, and the block numbers are shown in small blue font (Scott, 1948).

Figure A-6. 1950 U.S. Census Enumeration Districts and Census Geographies in Fresno

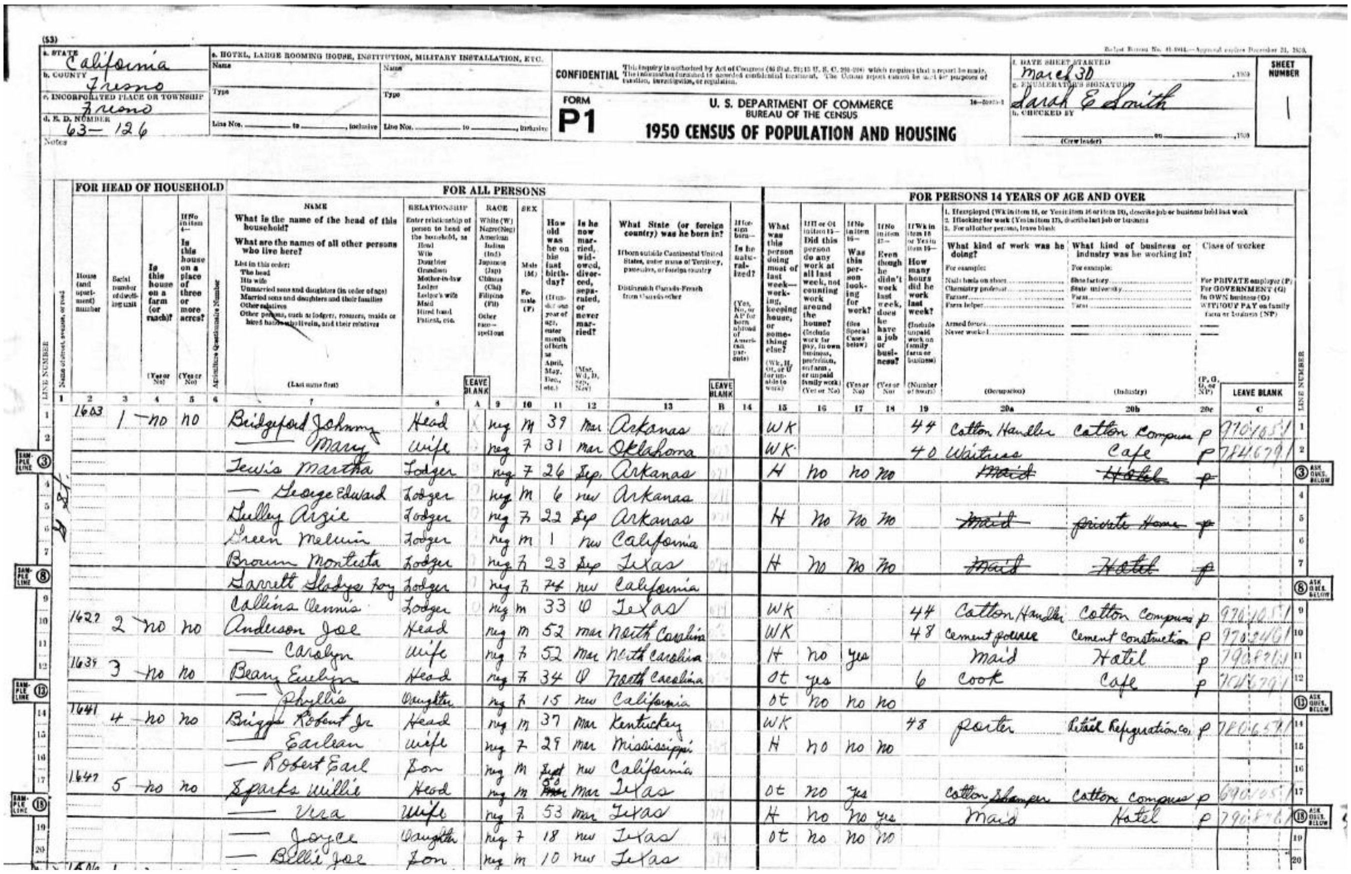


Source: Scott, 1948

Figure A-7 shows the top of a page from a census manuscript for Fresno (Ancestry, 2024). One column gives each person's race in seven categories (white, Negro, American Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and other). The records also identify white people of Spanish origin and countries of birth. We used these records to calculate

demographics for the geographies in our analyses (to the extent that the scope of this project allowed, given the efforts required to digitize these data).

Figure A-7. Page from 1950 U.S. Census Records from Fresno

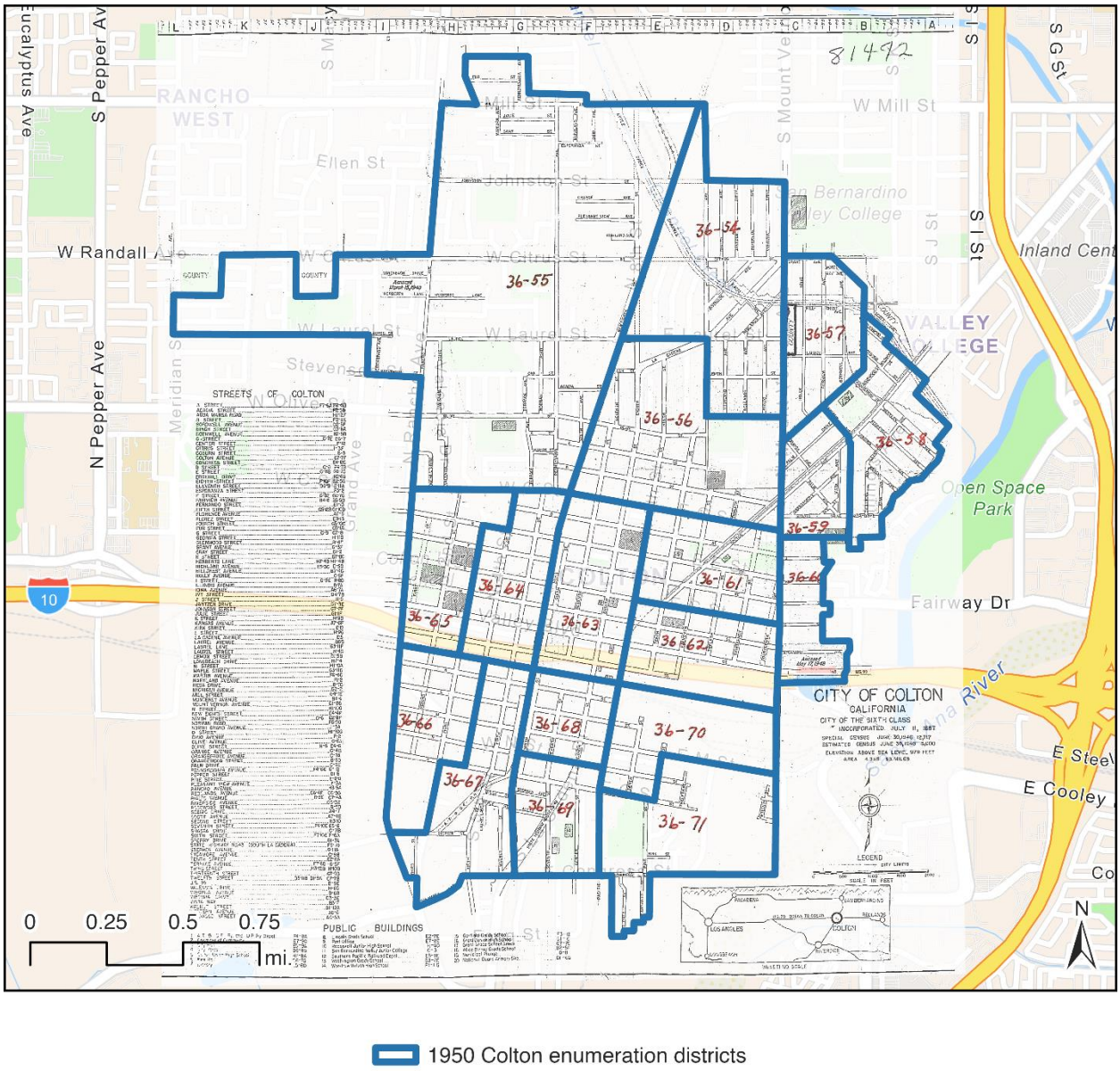


Line	House no.	Serial no.	Farm	3+ acres	Name	Relationship	Race	Sex	Age	Marital status	Birthplace	Activity	Looking for work	Job	Hours	Occupation	Industry	Class
1	1603	1	no	no	Bridgeford Johnny	Head	neg	M	39	Mar	Arkansas	WK			44	Cotton Handler	Cotton Compress	P
2					Mary	wife	neg	F	31	Mar	Oklahoma	WK			40	Waitress	Cafe	P
3					Lewis Martha	Lodger	neg	F	26	Sep	Arkansas	H	no	no no		~~Maid~~	~~Hotel~~	~~P~~
4					— George Edward	Lodger	neg	M	6	nev	Arkansas							
5					Dudley Arzie	Lodger	neg	F	22	Sep	Arkansas	H	No	No No		~~Maid~~	~~private Home~~	~~P~~
6					Green Melvin	Lodger	neg	M	1	nev	California							
7					Brown Montesta	Lodger	neg	F	23	Sep	Texas	H	no	no no		~~Maid~~	~~Hotel~~	~~P~~
8					Garrett Gladys Joy	Lodger	neg	F	74	nev	California							
9					Collins Dennis	Lodger	neg	M	33	Wd	Texas	WK			44	Cotton Handler	Cotton Compress	P
10	1627	2	no	no	Anderson Joe	Head	neg	M	52	Mar	North Carolina	WK			48	Cement pourer	Cement Construction	P
11					Carolyn	wife	neg	F	52	Mar	North Carolina	H	no	yes		Maid	Hotel	P
12	1639	3	no	no	Beard Evelyn	Head	neg	F	34	Wd	North Carolina	OT	yes		6	Cook	Cafe	P
13					— Phyllis	Daughter	neg	F	15	nev	California	OT	no	no no				
14	1641	4	no	no	Briggs Robert Jr	Head	neg	M	37	Mar	Kentucky	WK			48	porter	Retail Refrigeration Co.	P
15					Earlean	wife	neg	F	29	Mar	Mississippi	H	no	no no				
16					— Robert Earl	Son	neg	M	[illegible]	nev	California							
17	1647	5	no	no	Sparks Willie	Head	neg	M	[illegible]	Mar	Texas	OT	no	yes		Cotton Stamper	Cotton Compress	P
18					— Vera	Wife	neg	F	53	Mar	Texas	H	no	no yes		Maid	Hotel	P
19					— Joyce	Daughter	neg	F	18	nev	Texas	OT	no	no no				
20					— Billie Joe	Son	neg	M	10	nev	Texas							

Source: Ancestry, 2024

In addition to transcribing the data from the manuscripts, we also georeferenced and converted PDF maps of enumeration districts into geospatial shapefiles. **Figure A-8** showcases an example of a digitized 1950 enumeration district map for Colton. The figure includes the cleaned and georeferenced PDF map, with each enumeration district outlined in blue and labeled with their respective numbers in red.

Figure A-8. Georeferenced 1950 U.S. Census Enumeration Districts in Colton



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1948; base map: Esri, 2024b

A.6. 1940-1980 Published Census Statistics

After ordering a timeline of freeway planning and construction, we compiled U.S. Census data from 1940 to 1980 (with the U.S. Census before and after construction varying by case study). We examined tract- and block-level aggregated (not individual-level) data. Where necessary, we manually transcribed and digitized these data:

though some tract-level information is available online, other tract-level data and all block-level data in 1950 and 1960 and some in 1970 is not. Block-level data for 1950 and 1960 is only available within the Cities of Fresno and San Diego, but not for Colton, due to the city's small population. As such, no census block data was used for Colton. For later U.S. Censuses, we obtained data from the IPUMS (Manson et al., 2022) and *Social Explorer* (2024).

Figure A-9, a page of the 1950 U.S. Census from Fresno, provides an example of block-level data. Unfortunately, OCR did not work consistently on these files, so we entered the information manually. Multiple researchers entered and verified the data entered; we checked sums of blocks within a tract against tract-level data (though

Figure A-9. Page of 1950 U.S. Census Block Data from Fresno

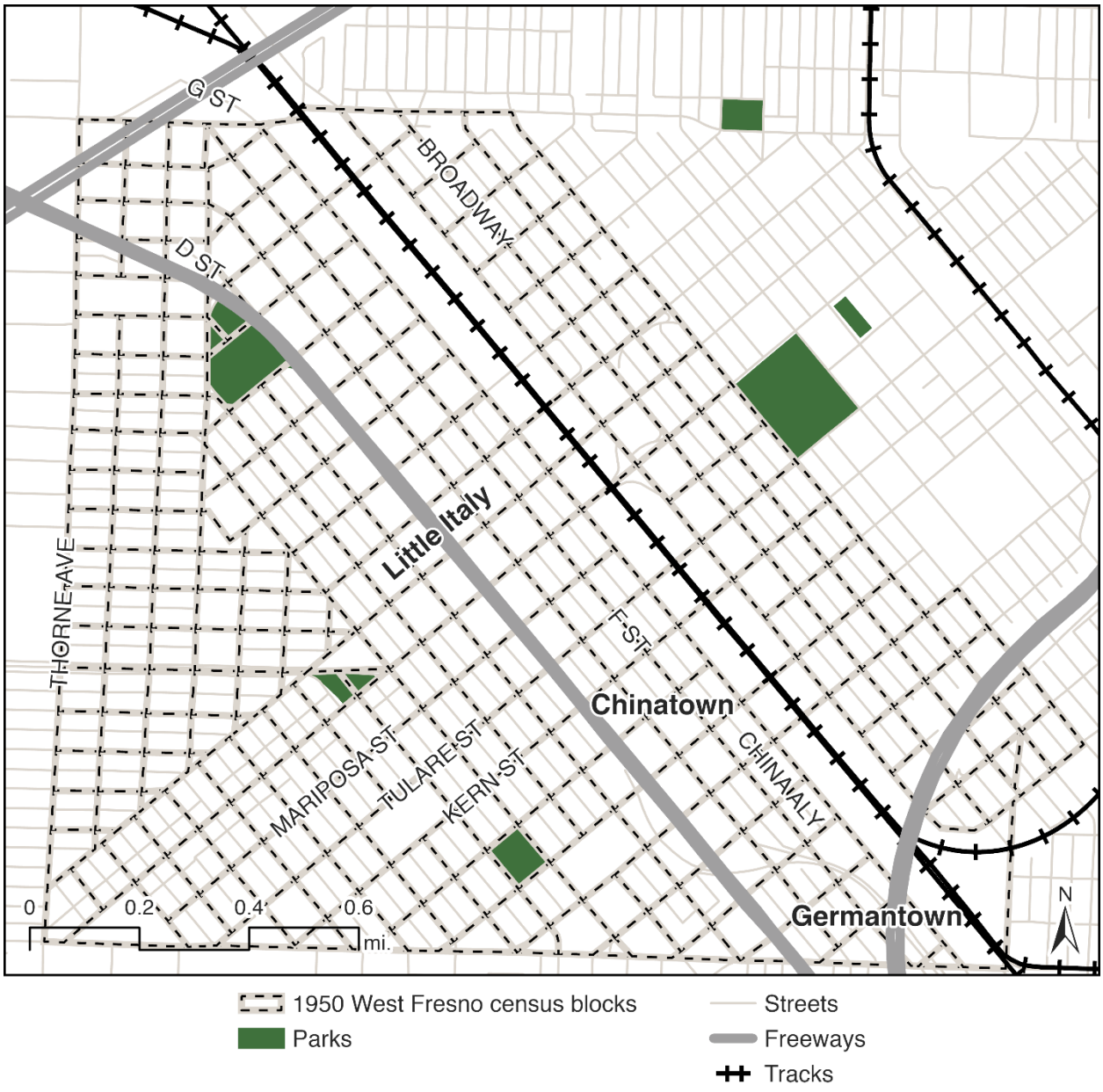
Table 3.—CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSING FOR BLOCK AREAS, BY BLOCKS: 1950—Con.

Block area	Block	All dwelling units by occupancy and tenure					All dwelling units by condition and plumbing facilities			Occupied dwelling units				Contract monthly rent[1]		Value[1] of one-dwelling-unit structures	
		Total	Owner occupied	Renter occupied	Vacant non-seasonal not dilap., for rent or sale	Other vacant and non-resident	Number reporting	No private bath or dilap.	No running water or dilap.	Total	Persons per room		Occupied by non-white	Number reporting	Average monthly rent (dollars)	Number reporting	Average value (dollars)
											Number reporting	1.51 or more					
C	23	13	9	3	1		13			12	12			2		10	18,600
	24	18	15	3			18			18	18		1	2		15	11,466
	25	16	15	1			16			16	16			1		15	9,913
	26	6	5	1			6			6	6			1		5	8,300
	28	17	16	1			16			17	17			1		15	10,200
	29	14	10	4			14			14	14			2		10	12,950
	30	10	8	2			10			10	10			3		7	14,285
	31	12	12				12			12	12					12	15,333
	32	14	13	1			14			14	14					13	11,653
	33	12	12				11			12	12					12	9,916
	34	7	5	2			7			7	7			2		5	7,800
	35	8	8				8	1	1	8	8					8	17,375
	36	17	17				17			17	16					16	8,643
	37	17	15	2			17			17	17			1		15	12,800
	38	10	10				10			10	10					10	16,300
	39	9	9				9			9	8					8	19,125
	40	8	8				8			8	8					8	7,687
	41	9	9				9			9	9					9	11,477
	42	7	6	1			7			7	7			1		6	7,000
	43	6	4	2			6			6	6			2		4	5,975
	44	16	15	1			16			16	14			1		14	10,428
	45	14	14				14			14	14					14	11,535
	46	12	9	2	1		12			11	11			1		7	22,714
	47	6	6				6			6	6					5	20,300
	48	18	17	1			18	1	1	18	18					15	16,866
	49	35	27	8			33	4	4	35	32			8	64.37	25	8,380
	50	16	14	2			16	3	3	16	16			1		13	10,576
	51	7	7				7	2	2	7	7					7	16,371
	52	16	16				16			16	16					15	14,933
	53	17	15	2			17	6	6	17	17			2		15	9,920
	54	34	30	4			34			34	34			4	52.50	30	8,086
	55	25	24	1			25			25	24			1		24	14,979
	56	13	9	4			13			13	13			4	33.50	5	6,000
	58	25	10	15			25			25	25	1	1	15	30.80	9	6,166
	59	15	9	6			15			15	15	2		6	27.16	9	6,555
	60	36	24	12			36	7		36	36			12	21.00	21	4,995
	62	17	13	4			17			17	17			4	37.25	12	4,500
	63	2															
	64	39	9	27	2	1	36	15	13	36	34	2		26	26.42	7	7,928
	65	9	2	5	2		9	2	2	7	7			7	21.71	2	
	68	7	3	3		1	7	2	2	6	6			2		3	14,000
	70	12	6	6			12	1	1	12	11		1	4	25.00	5	20,000
	71	9	2	7			9	3	2	9	8		1	5	32.50	2	
	72	11	4	7			11	3	1	11	11			7	38.42	2	
	73	11	8	2	1		11	1		10	10			3	73.33	7	10,857
	74	24	7	14	2	1	24	2		21	20		1	13	36.84	7	8,571
	75	28	11	15	1	1	28	4	2	26	26	1	1	15	33.93	10	8,300
	76	16	5	9		2	16	6	5	14	14			9	39.88	5	7,600
	77	5	1	4			5	2	1	5	5	1		4	28.25	1	
	78	18	7	10	1		18			17	17			10	49.40	5	8,900
	79	1															

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1951, p. 15

some low-population blocks lack data on certain attributes, suppressed by the U.S. Census Bureau for privacy reasons, which caused minor differences even here).

Figure A-10. 1950 Census Blocks in West Fresno Study Area



Data sources: calculated by authors from 1950 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951); Architectural Resources Group, 2006b; Pease, 2007; ZipDataMaps, 2023; Caltrans, 2023b, 2024a; Fresno County, 2024; and Esri, 2024a

Given that race is socially constructed, U.S. Census questions and the answers given to them have varied over time (Pratt, Hixson, and Jones, 2015). The U.S. Census placed Asians in the “other race” category in earlier decades, where they constituted a majority. Meanwhile, people with a Spanish surname counted as Hispanic in 1970, but by 1980, the U.S. Census Bureau defined Hispanic as people of Spanish origin. Prior U.S. Censuses only collected information on Hispanics who were white, with no data on Asian Hispanic populations, Black Hispanic populations, etc.[61]

In the 1950 U.S. Census, block-level statistics separate “non-white households” into “Blacks” and people of “other races,” with people of Hispanic or Spanish origin counted as white. To estimate counts of Latino/a households, we took the proportion of Latino/a residents in the surrounding enumeration district (for West Fresno) or tract (for City Heights) for each block, a level which did disaggregate Hispanic households, and applied it to the block’s population. This method assumes that Hispanic and non-Hispanic white households were evenly distributed within the enumeration districts and tracts and that these households had similar numbers of people in them. The existing data do not allow us to evaluate biases in these assumptions.

From print and PDF maps, we mapped earlier decades’ census blocks into new geospatial files. **Figure A-10** illustrates an example of 1950 census blocks digitized for the West Fresno study area. We were aided by shapefiles from 1990 census blocks (Manson et al., 2022), but block and tract boundaries change over time, with shifts in population and streets.

A.7. Imputing Missing 1950 Census Data

Because there are no 1950 population statistics available from the published tract report for Fresno, we estimated the total population for the West Fresno study using a method based on average household size and housing unit counts. First, we calculated the average household size for the City of Fresno in 1950 and 1960 (3.09 and 2.96, respectively). We then calculated the ratio of 1950 average household size to 1960 average household sizes, arriving at approximately 1.042. Next, applying this factor to the study area’s 1960 average household size (which was 3.52) yielded an estimated 1950 average household size of 3.66. Finally, multiplying this estimated average household size for 1950 by the housing units for the study area in 1950 (2,963) gave an initial estimate of 10,858 for the total 1950 population in the study area. We used the same method to estimate the 1950 population for the two tracts in West Fresno (See **Table A-1**) (calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951, 1962a, 1980 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972a)).

61. In the geographies we are studying, the Asian category includes the following, by decade: from 1930 to 1970, Chinese, Japanese, and “all other” within “other race”; for 1980, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, and Vietnamese. The Hispanic or Latino/a category includes the following: for 1960, Hispanic: white, Spanish surname; for 1970, Hispanic: person of Spanish surname; for 1980, person of Spanish origin, regardless of race.

Table A-1. Housing and Population Statistics in Fresno, 1950-1980

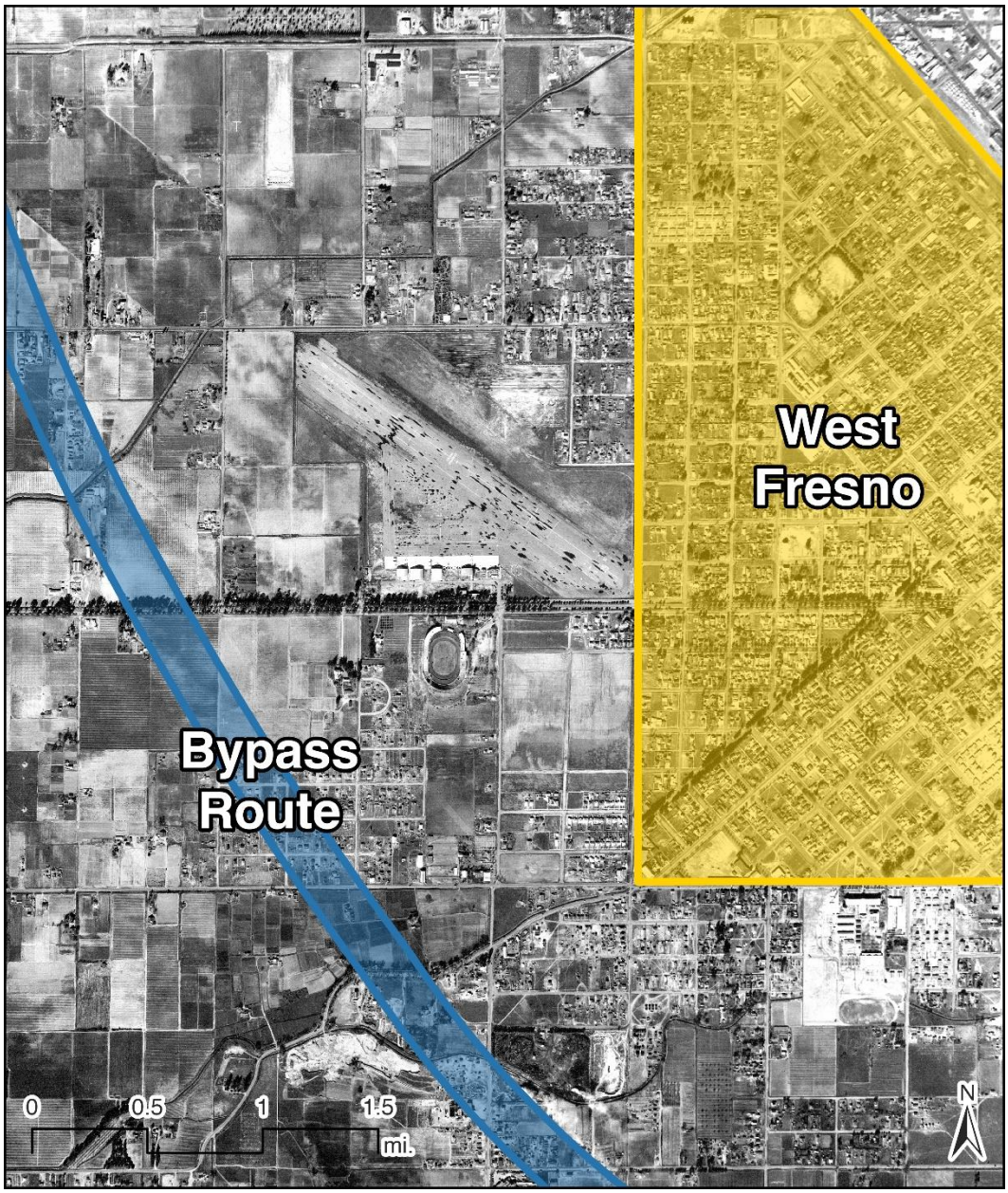
Statistic	Year	Fresno County	City of Fresno	Study Area	Tract #2	Tract #3
Housing units	1950	88,069	29,714	2,963	1,565	1,398
	1960	118,784	45,231	2,612	1,342	1,270
	1970	135,620	57,672	2,129	896	1,233
	1980	193,653	88,749	1,862	707	1,155
Total population	1950	276,515	91,669	10,858	5,364	5,473
	1960	365,945	133,929	9,187	4,415	4,772
	1970	413,329	165,972	6,305	2,582	3,723
	1980	514,621	218,202	4,996	1,959	3,037
Average household size	1950	3.14	3.09	3.66	3.43	3.91
	1960	3.08	2.96	3.52	3.29	3.76
	1970	3.05	2.88	2.96	2.88	3.02
	1980	2.66	2.46	2.68	2.77	2.63

Data source: calculated by authors from 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980 U.S. Censuses (U.S. Census Bureau, 1951, 1962a, 1980 and U.S. Census Bureau et al., 1972a)

A.8. Comparison of Alternative Routes Methodology

For the West Fresno study area, we compared the number and composition of displacements from an alternative route (along G Street), the chosen route (along D Street), and a benchmark (along Broadway) (See Section 3.4). We mapped these routes, based on maps and planning documents, using paths of the same set width and excluding interchanges and on- and off-ramps. This allowed us to compare most fairly between routes, as the unchosen routes never had interchanges designed and mapped. Lacking consistent historical imagery, we used the present-day freeway's width, estimated as 165 feet wide in Fresno, for all routes' mapped paths. For the bypass alternatives, which were dismissed from consideration earlier on (See Sections 3.4 and 3.5), we did use aerial photographs to assess the potential impact instead of a full demographic analysis (See **Figure A-11**).

Figure A-11. Aerial Map of West Fresno and a Proposed Bypass Route



Sources: Fresno Bee*, 1949n and authors; background imagery: UC Santa Barbara Library, 2012*

As discussed above, the U.S. Census Bureau did not start publishing block-level data for Colton until 1970, by which time freeway construction was already completed. For this reason, we had to use a different method of comparison by, relying on city directories to examine residents' demographics and land-use types along the proposed routes (See Section 2.5). We did not conduct an alternative route analysis for the City Heights study area because, to the best of our knowledge, no alternative routes were seriously considered for the freeway path other than along 40th Street (See Section 4.3).

A.9. Direct Impacts Methodology

We used two methods to estimate direct impacts. For the first approach, we mapped the actually constructed freeway footprint, complete with interchanges and ramps (See **Figures 2-12**, **2-13**, **3-24**, and **3-25** and Sections 2.7 and 3.5).

In Fresno, data on property lines from Fresno County (2024) and images from Google Maps (Google, 2024b) helped us map the actual freeway footprint. For that case study, we used the mapped footprint to estimate housing units lost and the demographics of people displaced (See Section 3.5). We developed areal weights, which represent the proportion of the census block covered by the freeway footprint, to estimate the housing units lost. For example, if a census block was completely under the freeway footprint, the total number of housing units is included in the overall impacts. For census blocks that were partially impacted, we used their proportion covered by the freeway footprint as a factor to calculate the number of housing units lost, assuming uniform distributions of housing and people within each block. (See **Figure 3-24**).

In Colton, due to the lack of block-level data described above, we could not use the same exact method. Instead, we aggregated information from the U.S. Census manuscripts (See Section 2.7). We assigned individual households and people to specific blocks, in our area of interest between G and M Streets (See **Figures 2-12** and **2-13**). The U.S. Census manuscripts identify street names and address numbers but not blocks per se. Assuming the numbering system in 1950 is consistent with today's, we assigned records to blocks. Using current maps, we identified the address range for each street segment and determined which side of the street has even and odd numbers. For example, on L Street between 7th Street and La Cadena Drive (formerly 8th street), odd numbers are on the north side, and even numbers are on the south side. To account for temporal changes in the road network, we checked historical maps to identify streets that changed their name, and street segments that were demolished. Once the block assignments were completed, we calculated the racial/ethnic composition for each block. By aggregating the data and analyzing the composition of each block, we were able to estimate the demographic impacts of freeway construction on the local population in 1950.

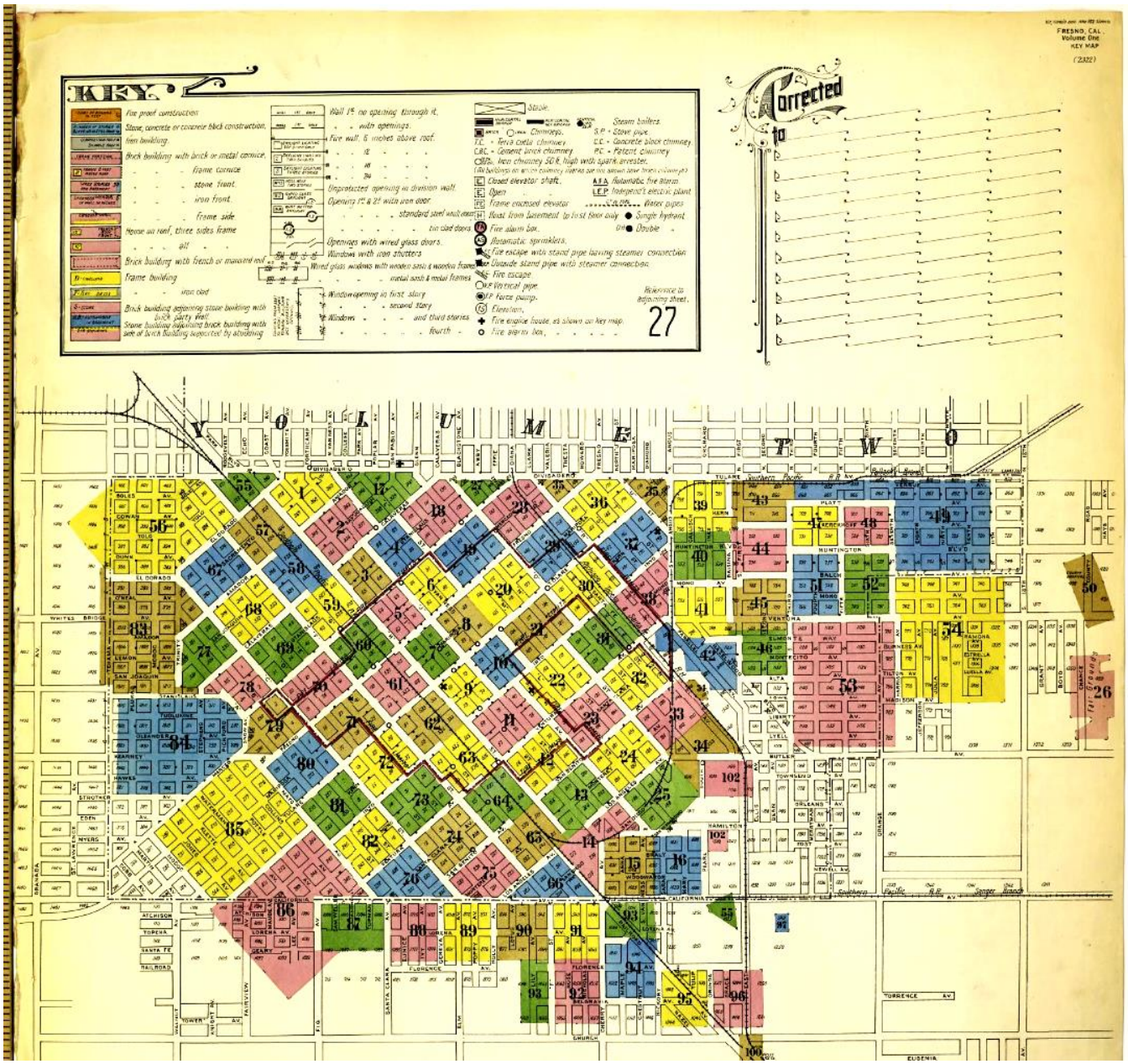
For the second direct impact method, we drew on city directories, described above. This provides insights into the businesses impacted, along with residential units.

In the case of the City Heights study area, a direct impact analysis was not conducted primarily because of the prolonged timeline for freeway development. As a result, there was no single U.S Census decade nor complete set of directories that could be used to estimate the impacts.

A.10. Sanborn Maps

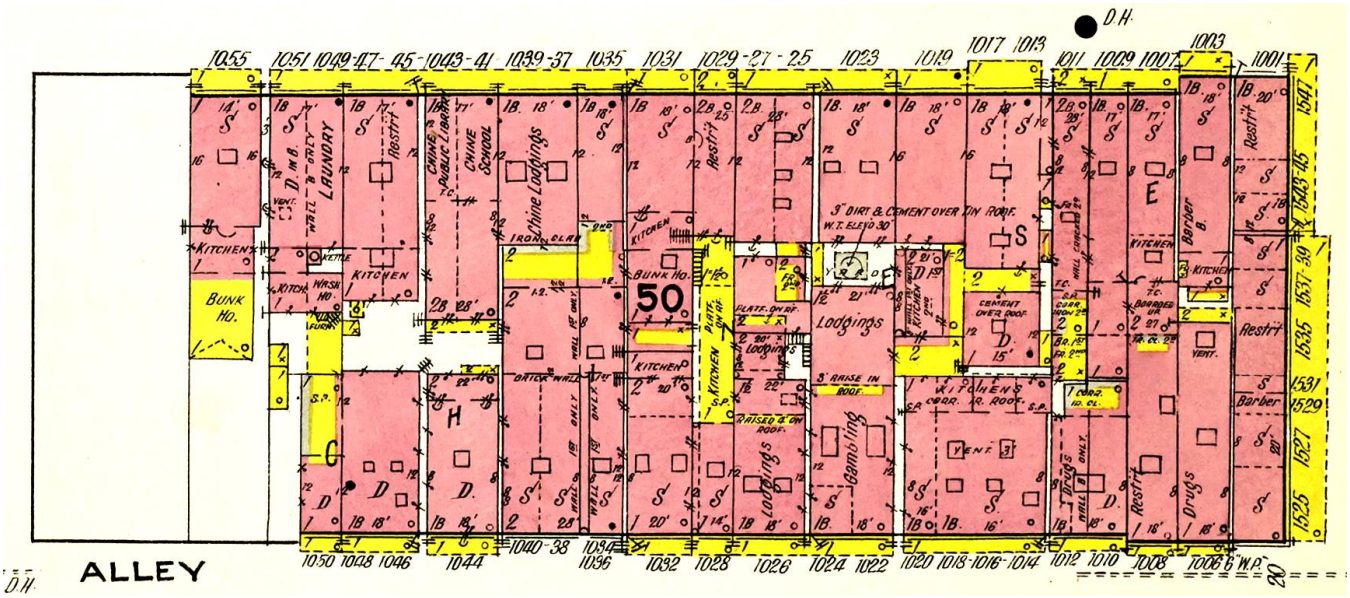
The Sanborn Map Company of New York created parcel-level maps for many American cities to inform fire insurance companies. Although the atlases cover from the 1880s to 1970, not all books are readily accessible. Moreover, the amount of information for each parcel varies, and there is limited information on race and ethnicity (Library of Congress, n.d. and Sanborn Map Company, n.d.). Nonetheless, we consulted the Sanborn maps, but most of what was available to the project predates the time period of primary interest to the project (Sanborn Map Company, n.d.). **Figure A-12** provides an example of the index page for downtown Fresno and adjacent areas. We also used the maps to look at ethnic enclaves. For example, we checked the location of a block in Chinatown and some Chinese owned property between G Street and China Alley. (See **Figure A-13** and Section 3.5) (Sanborn Map Company, 1918).

Figure A-12. Sanborn Map Key of Fresno, 1918



Source: Sanborn Map Company, 1918

Figure A-13. Excerpt of Sanborn Map of Part of Chinatown, Fresno, 1918



Source: Sanborn Map Company, 1918, p. 61

Appendix B. Contemporary Quantitative Data and Methodologies

B.1. Introduction

We utilized multiple data sources, including the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a), CalEnviroScreen 4.0 (California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023), CTCAC/HCD Opportunity Area Maps (CTCAC, 2024), UCLA CNK/CARB Transportation Disparities dataset (UCLA CNK, 2022), and LEHD (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), to assess the current conditions of our study sites in relation to their respective cities. The analysis provides clues on the legacy of freeways, although there are also numerous other factors that contribute to shaping today's situation.

We reviewed key metrics such as pollution resulting from traffic, assessed through the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 dataset (California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023); racial/ethnic segregation and socioeconomic status, examined using data from the ACS (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a); transportation resources, evaluated using the UCLA CNK/CARB Transportation Disparities dataset (UCLA CNK, 2022); and access to opportunities, assessed with data from CTCAC (2024).

By synthesizing information from these diverse datasets, we gain insights into the lasting effects of historical damage caused by freeway development and how these factors collectively shape the current landscape. Due to the volume of information, we included only the most salient of these data points in the body of the report, but a description of each of the datasets mentioned is provided below.

B.2. American Community Survey

The project utilizes census tract-level statistics from the ACS to analyze the racial and ethnic composition, economic status (poverty), and transportation resources (vehicle ownership) of neighborhoods (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). The ACS is a continuous survey that collects information on social, economic, demographic, and housing characteristics of the population. It combines monthly samples to provide up-to-date, detailed information. The ACS offers two types of estimates: one-year and five-year averages. The choice of estimate depends on the population size of the area, with one-year estimates available for populations over 65,000 and five-year estimates for all other areas. The ACS surveys approximately 2.5 percent of the population annually or 12.5 percent over a five-year period (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023b; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023; and Shahzad, 2024). For this project, we use the five-year survey due to its larger sample size, which allows for analysis at smaller geographies such as census tracts. Specifically, this project utilizes the 2018-2022 five-year ACS data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

Poverty Rate

The poverty rate indicator calculates the percentage of individuals in the census tract who are living below the federal poverty level (whose threshold is updated annually for inflation). Poverty levels are based on family size, with some adjustment for Alaska and Hawai'i. For a family of four, the threshold was $27,750 in the contiguous U.S. in 2022 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022).

Households with No Vehicle

This indicator refers to occupied housing units in the census tract that do not have any vehicles (such as passenger cars, vans, and pickup or panel trucks with a capacity of one ton or less) available for use by household members.

B.3. CalEnviroScreen 4.0

Developed by the California Environmental Protection Agency Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, CalEnviroScreen 4.0 is a comprehensive dataset that identifies and ranks communities in California by their pollution burden and vulnerability. Used in state law for various purposes, the dataset includes several key indicators, two of which we have incorporated into our analysis. The first, a composite metric, measures the relative environmental, health, and socioeconomic disadvantages of neighborhoods. It includes two components representing pollution burden—exposures and environmental effects—and two components representing population characteristics—sensitive populations and socioeconomic factors. In total, the composite score uses 21 indicators to characterize pollution burden and population characteristics. The second indicator, which is also included in the overall composite, is diesel particulate matter. Emissions from diesel engines significantly contribute to air pollution in areas near freeways (California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023 and August et al., 2021). These indicators collectively provide a comprehensive view of the environmental burdens faced by communities affected by freeway development. To estimate the key indicators for each study area, we utilized the census tracts within each area and used reported population counts to calculate a weighted average for each of the indicators.

B.4. CTCAC/HCD Opportunity Area Maps

We use CTCAC and HCD's Opportunity Area Maps (CTCAC, 2024) to identify areas in California with characteristics associated with positive outcomes for low-income families, including economic, educational, and health benefits. Additionally, the maps highlight areas with high levels of poverty and racial segregation, providing valuable insights into the broader socioeconomic context of affected communities. In 2017, the maps were adopted into regulations to enhance access to high-opportunity areas for families with children.

For this project, we utilized the 2023 version (The 2024 version was still in the beta stage at the time of this project.). The map categorizes neighborhoods into six primary categories: "Highest Resource," "High Resource," "Moderate Resource," "Low Resource," and "High Segregation and Poverty" (CTCAC, 2024). In our research, we specifically focused on identifying whether the neighborhoods (tracts) in the study area were classified in the last two categories, which we term "poor opportunity access" collectively.

The Opportunity Area Maps presents this information by census tract and, in certain cases (such as rural areas), by block groups (CTCAC, 2024). However, it does not provide information at the city level. To estimate this information at the city level, we used a geographic crosswalk of tracts to cities. The tract-to-city crosswalk was derived from the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 dataset, which includes a column that approximates which tract falls into which cities (California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023). It is worth noting that some tracts partially overlap with neighboring cities or unincorporated areas.

B.5. UCLA CNK/CARB Transportation Disparities Dataset

The project incorporates indicators developed by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge as part of a project funded by the California Air Resources Board, which focuses on transportation disparities and health. The CARB project created indicators and metrics at the neighborhood level (census tracts), specifically addressing variations in transportation resources and accessibility. The CNK/CARB Transportation Disparities dataset includes various factors, such as barriers and alternatives to private vehicles (e.g., interest rates, automobile insurance premiums, proximity to transit), vehicle stock (e.g., the relative number of clean energy cars and older vehicles), travel patterns (e.g., total vehicle miles traveled based on real observed data for small areas, commute vehicle miles traveled, based on observed origin/destination data, mode split), and access to opportunities (e.g., housing/jobs fit for low-income individuals, spatial access to jobs) (UCLA CNK, 2022 and Ong et al., 2024). For this particular project, we only drew on the following indicators from the UCLA CNK/CARB dataset: households with no vehicle and households with “clunker” vehicles.

Clunker Vehicles

“Clunker” vehicles are defined as vehicles that are over 20 years old, based on their model year. Data on vehicle age come from the California Department of Motor Vehicles fleet database, provided by CARB for 2017. As with the indicators from the Opportunity Area Maps, we used the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 tract-to-city crosswalk to estimate city-level figures (California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2023).

Appendix C. Qualitative Data and Methodologies

As a part of our mixed-methods approach, we also conducted qualitative and archival research. We consulted historical documents, government reports, published newspaper and magazine articles, and local oral histories. To identify appropriate periods to search for records, we created a timeline of freeway development, from initial planning to opening and beyond. We also scrutinized secondary materials (e.g., published academic articles and books, theses and dissertations) for leads to primary materials. In addition to the materials discussed in this appendix, the project also used the additional primary historical records described in Appendix A, such as city directories and U.S. Census records.

We must note that all historical materials have limitations. They are occasionally—or often—subjective, reflecting people's potentially biased or distorted views and opinions. They may also represent certain groups and attitudes while ignoring others. Nonetheless, in many cases, this itself can give insights into people's personal agendas, without being taken as objective reality. Meanwhile, the quality and accuracy of reporting can vary greatly. When possible, we attempt to minimize these problems by cross-referencing with multiple sources and with quantitative evidence (and vice versa).

Perhaps one of the most important limitations is inherent biases in what was documented, reported, and preserved. Available materials disproportionately cover the privileged, and the voices and experiences of the marginalized are too often invisible. The disparity is even greater for non-English speaking groups. We attempted to compensate for this inherent disparity by devoting more time and energy to searching for materials related to people of color.

Newspapers and magazines are useful in reporting events and views held by stakeholders. They provide information on key timelines and milestone events, the stakeholders engaged in decision-making processes, and public sentiments and controversies surrounding freeway planning and development. We searched for newspaper articles from the 1940s to the present in indexing services (such as ProQuest, the California Digital Newspaper Collection, and Newspapers.com) using geographic and topical keywords. We identified over 300 relevant newspaper articles (over 100 for each case study). For Colton, we found newspaper articles primarily from the *Colton Courier* and the *San Bernardino Sun*. For Fresno, newspaper articles came largely from the *Fresno Bee*. For City Heights, we found newspaper articles from the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Diego Voice*, and the *San Diego Free Press*. For Colton and Fresno, the newspaper articles explicitly revealed that multiple routes were considered and in fact contested, while for City Heights, the articles consistently referred to a single route. A search of the archives of the publication *California Highways and Public Works*, the official journal/magazine of Caltrans' predecessor department, revealed useful pieces about freeway development (both human interest and technical details) and realignment in later phases of construction.

We complemented our newspaper archival research with other primary sources, including planning documents, professional studies, and maps. We used the Online Archive of California database, among other resources, to search for relevant materials. For historical maps, including freeway maps, we used web portals such as the United States Geological Survey's index of historical topographic maps (National Geospatial Program, n.d.), Esri's ArcGIS Living Atlas of the World (Esri, n.d.), and the David Rumsey Map Collection (Cartography Associates,

2024). UC Santa Barbara's collection of aerial photography was used to identify aerial images as well (UC Santa Barbara Library, 2012).

Caltrans' records at its state headquarters and regional offices were useful, and Caltrans staff provided valuable assistance in identifying relevant materials. Their historical archives contain planning documents, minutes, and correspondences between highway engineers, government officials, key stakeholders, and the general public. A particularly useful source are the right-of-way maps, which are described in Appendix A, Section A.3. In examining Caltrans' archives, we found that some files contained extensive information but others exhibited significant gaps. This suggests that the archival records are not comprehensive and rather variable in their contents. Other than the right-of-way maps, Caltrans generally only holds archival materials from the 1980s or later. Some earlier materials have been transferred to the California State Library. We searched for relevant information there by consulting with State Library staff and using their online catalog and then reviewing materials in person.

For the Colton case study, we visited several local collections at the Colton Area Museum, especially the papers of Larry Sheffield, and the Heritage Room at the A.K. Smiley Public Library. Additionally, we made a public records request of Colton's City Clerk office and were given the opportunity to review the archives of the Colton City Planning office, where we identified primary sources in original planning documents, such as master plans and environmental impact reviews. We also examined the Bridges that Carried Us Over Project digital archives (Tilton et al., 2023) and the South Colton Oral History Project (Rivera, n.d.), both located at California State University San Bernardino. Several local community members assisted in guiding us through these resources and offered valuable insights themselves: Frank Acosta, Henry James Vasquez, Mario Suarez, Christina Perris, and Michael F. Ballard.

We also consulted collections held by institutions outside of the region: the papers of Charles William Eliot (specifically the Colton Freeways documents, as well as preliminary study documents for locations) at the Frances Loeb Library at Harvard University and the Gordon and Brysis Whitnall Papers and Master Plan for Colton, held at Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University.

For the Fresno case study, we had less ability to visit local archives. We were able to visit the Chinatown Cultural Gallery, and we also accessed the online oral histories collection at the Fresno Historical Society (Fresno County Historical Society, 2021, 2023), the digitized maps and data on early Little Italy at the web portal hosted by The Big Fresno Fair (DiBuduo and Giovannetti, 2024), and the limited online information of the African American Historical and Cultural Museum of the San Joaquin Valley (African American Historical and Cultural Museum of the San Joaquin Valley, 2024). We filed a public records request with the City of Fresno for City Council minutes from 1932 to 1954, but they were of limited use due to the poor quality of the scans. We also accessed historical surveys of ethnic communities conducted by the City (Architectural Resources Group, 2006a, 2006b and Chinatown Fresno Foundation, 2023).

For the City Heights case study, we visited several collections: the Special Collections of the San Diego Central Library, including the San Diego Freeways and Highways Collection, the Reference California Collection, and their historic maps collection; the Special Collections at UC San Diego to access historic photos; and the Special Collections and University Archives at the San Diego State University Library to access the Representative Bob Wilson Papers, the City Councilmember Leon Williams papers, the Interstate 15 Construction Burial Grounds Collection, the Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 Records, and the San Diegans, Inc. Collection. We also visited non-library archives, including the personal archives of the founder of the City Heights Community Development Corporation, Jim Bliesner, held in his home and the organizational archives of the City Heights Community

Development Corporation. We submitted a public records request for documents relating to City Council decisions around the freeway to the City Clerk of the City of San Diego, but this yielded little relevant information. We also sent requests for information to the Caltrans District 9 offices. A number of librarians and community members assisted us in accessing documents and offered valuable insight, including Jim Bliesner, Matthew Nye, Jesse Ramirez, Maria Cortez, Randy Torres van Vleck, and Amanda Lanthorne.

Along with more traditional historical research methodologies, we employed several alternative approaches to analyzing the historical materials to better understand the experiences of marginalized groups. These included social history of non-elite classes (Brody, 1979), postmodern critique (Bastalich, 2009), historical political discourse analysis (Jóhannesson, 2010), and critical race theory (Malagon, Huber, and Velez, 2009). Our qualitative research was guided by the following key questions: 1) what were the racial structures and dynamics of that place during the time; 2) what were characteristics of those communities that were impacted by the freeway; and 3) what decision-making processes and key actors influenced (or opposed) freeway outcomes? Beyond decision-making processes, we considered broader forms of planning, such as public engagement and participation. Even though the public was not formally included in state planning, individuals and civic organizations did attend public meetings held by planning agencies. They also wrote to news outlets, who published opinion pieces and commentaries. We employed a hybrid method to assess the validity and reliability of our interpretation of the historical information, two measures that are both controversial and difficult to define within qualitative research (Winter, 2000 and Kleven, 2008). Our approach was to assess consistency across qualitative documents and to complement it with quantitative evidence. This helped us evaluate what we deemed as subjective and what as objective—even if these two concepts were also difficult to pin down.

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