Barriers to Mobility, Barriers to Unity:

Freeway construction and racialized dispossession in San José, CA

By

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Abstract

Like many cities across the United States, San José has been disproportionately adversely impacted by freeway construction. As part of a joint UCLA and UC Davis research team, I authored "The Implications of Freeway Siting in California," which among other research questions asked, "was the choice of freeway alignments racially biased?" This thesis expands upon that research, seeking to understand why and how, even when the freeway planning process may not have documented egregious overt racism, the impacts of freeway siting nonetheless result in qualitatively and quantitatively racially unequal outcomes. Through empirical research including comprehensive reviews of historical documents, key informant interviews, and a geospatial analysis of neighborhood housing characteristics in San José between 1950 and 1980, this thesis shows how transportation infrastructure, particularly Interstates 280 and 680, played a role in the continuous social and physical dispossession of communities of color.

To trace the legacy that freeway construction and has had on communities of color in San José, I conducted research on historical planning archives as well as interviews with civic leaders and community members who experienced freeway construction in their neighborhoods, which revealed how the siting of freeways through the lowest-cost land in the city disproportionately impacted predominantly Latino neighborhoods in San José, such as Washington-Guadalupe, Martha Gardens, and Mayfair. Quantitative analysis further found that freeways were constructed in neighborhoods with lower median incomes and higher Black and Latino populations as compared to the rest of the city. Ultimately, I suggest that strategies like collaborative housing and reforming transportation policy to specifically target disadvantaged communities rather than disadvantaged places can better inform attempts at restorative justice, to redress past harms.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

From the orchard-filled "Valley of Heart's Delight" to the high-tech "Silicon Valley," Santa Clara County, and the City of San José in particular, went through dynamic shifts in the United States freeway construction era between 1960 and 1980. Located at the southern tip of the San Francisco Bay, San José is the third largest city in California with a population of one million. According to the latest 2021 statistics, 60% of that population is nonwhite and/or Hispanic (*San Jose, California Population 2022 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)*, 2022). Home to Silicon Valley, the San José metropolitan region today has the third highest GDP per capita in the world – however, as modern Silicon Valley has grown into a global high technology and innovation hub following the dot com boom, economic and racial segregation have been on the rise (Hansen, 2021; O'Brien, 2016). Looking further back, there is evidence that this pattern of segregation began even before Silicon Valley took off.

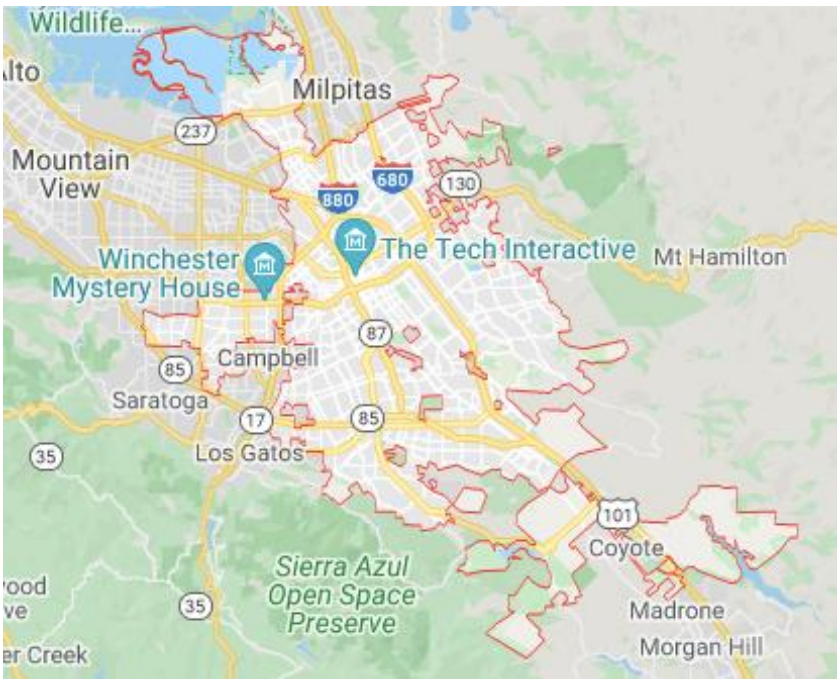
This thesis examines how the dispossession of San José residents has largely been a racialized experience and follows the legacy of how San José's communities of color have been politically, financially, and physically dispossessed by way of discriminatory policies which have set the conditions for transportation infrastructure projects to be sited through their communities. For my thesis, I have conducted archival analysis and key informant interviews to closely consider how transportation infrastructure, particularly Interstates 280 and 680 in San José, have resulted in the continuous social (political and economic) and physical dispossession of communities of color. To trace the legacy that freeway construction has had on communities of color in San José, this thesis highlights how the impacts of freeway siting and construction can be understood through the city's historical processes of segregation, redlining, and finally, urban renewal.

Through the course of this theoretical analysis, I aim to illustrate how a legacy of segregation and redlining dispossessed communities of color even before the construction of freeways, and that this history of dispossession set the conditions for the freeway-building of the 1960s and 1970s to disproportionately result in racially inequitable negative impacts for communities of color. Freeways further compounded the dispossession of communities of color, furthering punishing communities who had already been burned by historical dispossessive policies. Interviews with residents, supported by articles from local historians and writers, point to how the impacts of freeway construction impact communities of color differently than they do whiter and more affluent communities.

While policy and planning documents referencing the siting of freeway routes may not conclusively have proven that the routes of I-280 and I-680 intentionally targeted communities of color, this legacy of dispossessive policies ensured that dense residential minority enclaves were concentrated in the future paths of the freeways, and that a lack of structural political power hindered these communities' ability to win various appeasements which would mitigate the negative impacts which freeways would bring. In various interviews, residents reveal that while white communities were able to win sunken and landscaped freeways that prevented primarily white residents from living directly beneath the noise and smoke, already-dispossessed communities of color were only further dispossessed by the towering freeways which exposed primarily residents of color more directly to noise, pollution, and the threat of physical dispossession of the most affordable homes in the city – displacement often meant nowhere else to go but to leave homes, jobs, and social ties in the city entirely.

Ultimately, a range of forces produced the context in which households, families, and individuals faced the physically and socially dispossessive impacts of freeways. By outlining the process of how communities of color came to inequitably bear the consequences of freeway-facilitated dispossession, this thesis seeks to illustrate some of the ways in which race, directly and indirectly, influences state and private economic action, particularly through the shaping of residential choice and residential dispossession. As San José continues to propose potentially predatory investments, the framework of dispossession argues for a future of anti-dispossessive policy and the pursuit of new transportation investments which explicitly protect the right of the existing community to remain in place.

Figure 1: Map of San José (Google, 2023)



Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

The city, a collector site of agriculture, industry, and economic specialization, has, through the course of history, existed alongside negative social phenomena including the concentration of economic wealth and power, inequitable divisions of labor, and the irony of how alienation and isolation may be experienced in parallel with population density. The form of a city, divided and zoned for separate uses which are influenced by politics and social hierarchies, can then be said to embody or materialize certain relationships of power. By understanding how racism is "not always conscious, explicit, or readily visible," but that structural racism is entrenched in policies and practices which dispossess people of color, including "residential segregation, unfair lending practices and other barriers to home ownership and accumulating wealth," the relationship between investment and dispossession may become clearer (Braveman et al., 2022, p. 171). Finally, framing the process of gentrification as an act of "accumulation by dispossession" may clarify the ways in which the continued dispossession of whomever fills the role of the "urban poor" is structurally necessary to the process of urban renewal. Some communities targeted by transportation investments, such as freeways, may experience greater concerns over the threat of gentrification than others, due to the processes outlined throughout the following thesis.

2.1. Dispossession

In their book *Migrants & City-Making: Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration*, Ayşe Çağlar & Nina Glick Schiller examined how contemporary urban regeneration agendas are not merely multi-sited but "multisighted," meaning that they should be contextualized by the physical movement of people due to war, religious tension, economic or business opportunity, and other social histories and diverse points of view (Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018, p. 3).

Dispossessed and displaced migrants in particular often resettled in abandoned or underdeveloped, low-cost residential areas (Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018).

While investigating the impacts of freeway construction in the report *The Implications of Freeway Siting in California* (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023), a team of UC researchers analyzed the total populations displaced by race and ethnicity to provide evidence of racially disparate outcomes for white and non-white experiences of the freeway construction process. Through this analysis, the team illustrated how freeway-induced displacement disproportionately impacted various cities in California, including San José's neighborhoods of color.

In their understandings of dispossession as a process which produces displacements, Çağlar and Glick Schiller produce two meanings of "displacement," with only the first referring to physical displacement as a "process of capital accumulation" in which "city-, state-, and empire-building processes … [strip] people of land, resources, and their means of livelihood and … [force] them to reposition, reorder, or relocate their lives and relationships" (Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018, p. 19). As freeways bulldozed and destroyed homes, particularly in housing-dense communities of color, many low-income families were displaced out of the only affordable homes in the city and forcibly relocated either to other parts of the city where they risked incurring debt, or away from the city where fewer job opportunities could be found.

In part for this reason, Çağlar and Glick Schiller also define a second meaning of "displacement," though: "the outcome of people losing their access to various social means of subsistence" (Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018, p. 19). This social displacement leads to

“downward social mobility as large numbers of people lose their social positions,” leading to their lives becoming increasingly precarious (Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018, p. 19). In this sense, precarity is not meant to refer to poverty, but rather the ”state of insecurity and unpredictability brought about by neoliberal restructuring of both the terms and conditions of working and living” (Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018, p. 19). Undeniably, the process of freeway construction which disproportionately uprooted households and families in neighborhoods of color also disproportionately stripped families of color of their established roots in land, resources, and, very often, their means of livelihood.

In explaining the process of dispossession, which produces displacements, Çağlar and Glick Schiller begin with geographer David Harvey’s theory of “accumulation by dispossession.” This theory posits that the process of accruing capital, in this sense referring to the unequal social relations through which surplus wealth is appropriated, relies upon dispossession in order to displace the poor at a relatively low cost and transform their wealth and land into new profitable uses (Harvey, 2003; Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018). In essence, this theory also seeks to explain the neoliberal process of urban renewal itself. Harvey provides contemporary examples of accumulation by dispossession as the seizure of communal land, resources, and public space as well as the privatization of public utilities and housing, which are spurred by instruments such as discriminatory mortgages which financialize risks and debts (Harvey, 2003; Simsek-Caglar & Schiller, 2018). Urban dispossession via slum clearance, as a process of urban renewal and for the purpose of concentrating wealth in the hands of the few at the expense of the most vulnerable, places contemporary urban restructuring processes within a broader analysis of dispossessive practices.

These dispossessive practices strip communities of their capacity for collective action and leave them disproportionately vulnerable to risk, instability, and insecurity. In what sociologist Ulrich Beck refers to as the modern "risk society," the goal of modern societies is to normalize and control a world which we do not fully understand – but by "controlling" risks, we believe we may increase the chances of avoiding unwanted outcomes (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999). A risk society understands how large-scale environmental hazards are man-made products of social decisions, and seeks to concentrate wealth as a strategy for risk management, or protection from the many known and unknown risks of modern society – including the risks of being dispossessed of one's home, wealth, health, and quality life (Beck, 1992). By accumulating and concentrating capital, particularly in the suburbs, through the further dispossession of the least powerful and already-dispossessed, "the wealthy can purchase safety and freedom from risk" (Beck, 1992, p. 35). This legacy of dispossession obstructs poorer and dispossessed communities' capacity to organize and may leave communities mistrustful of the institutions which disproportionately expose them to risks such as either housing insecurity or traffic pollution.

Ultimately, freeway siting and construction undeniably resulted in the displacement of many urban homes, a process with results which disproportionately negatively impacted low-income communities and communities of color. By contextualizing this process of freeway-facilitated displacement as the logical result of predatory investment in already-dispossessed communities, we may better understand how the lack of targeted protections for already-dispossessed communities at the time of predatory investment led to racially inequitable impacts. Whether

communities were documented as having organized active revolt against freeways or not, freeway construction itself nevertheless impacted low-income communities of color differently than high-income white communities.

2.2. Research Methodology and Data Sources

Employing a mixed-methods approach, my research explored the effects of freeway siting and construction on neighborhoods of color using primary historical, archival, and interview sources. This was supplemented by research from the UC Davis quantitative research team which looked at a socioeconomic comparison of different freeway routing alternatives considered and explored the demographic and economic changes in areas directly cleared for freeway construction and indirectly affected beyond them.

For the first phase of the qualitative research on the history of freeways in San José, I searched for newspaper articles on archival databases and archival collections (ProQuest, Online Archives of California, California Digital Newspaper Collection, California State Library, San José Planning Department). I obtained sources from online research on Google Scholar, the UCLA Library catalog, and the UC Davis Library catalog. Using geographical and topical search keywords (including "Sinclair," "280," "680," "freeway," "highway," "displacement," opposition," "protest" "equity," "impact," "justice," "minority," "policy," "race," and "transportation") and dates (1950-1980), I identified a selection of articles from the *San José Mercury News* and documents from the San José Planning Department. This newspaper archival research was complemented by other primary sources including planning documents, professional studies, and maps. These sources provided information on timelines and milestone

events, the stakeholders engaged in decision-making processes, and expressed public sentiments during freeway planning and development. Local publications, historic plans for the City of San José and other planning documents, and published histories were used to gain historical insight on racial issues and affordable housing problems in San José and Santa Clara County.

The second phase of qualitative research involved consulting with and collecting oral histories from civic leaders, community members, and local activists who had been displaced by the freeways or who could speak to present impacts of the freeways within their communities. For interviews about the impacts of I-280 and I-680, I spoke with six local community members, activists, and neighborhood organization representatives and two officials, including representatives from the San José Department of Transportation's planning staff and San José City Council.

Chapter 3. Background

Across the United States, roads make up more than four million linear miles of the national geography (Peters, 2015). In the post-World War II period from roughly the 1950s to early 1990s, the United States entered an interstate highway boom era in which freeway construction was undertaken in order to relieve automobile-congested roads and increase economic productivity (Biles et al., 2014; Karas, 2015). Originally justified by the Eisenhower administration as a national defense program, freeways soon became the symbol of a modern nation (Lacy, 2008; Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023). While freeway construction undoubtedly enabled a highly mobile and privileged nation, these achievements did not come without costs and burdens which were disproportionately borne by dispossessed communities of color lacking the institutional power to mitigate the risks of noise, pollution, and displacement to the degree that wealthier white communities were able to. These costs and burdens were concentrated due to the effects of racial housing segregation, which freeways were thought to be a solution to – largely under the adage “if you build it, they will move” (Archer, 2020; Davis, 1965; Estrada, 2005; Kushner, 1979).

Figure 2: Interchange of I-280 and SR 87 (*Unfinished Interchange of 87 and 280*, 1997)

Freeways themselves neither created segregation nor were freeways the original source of racial or economic injustice, though. While this thesis will focus primarily on the role of freeways in shaping the modern racial and economic inequities which persist in San José today, I also aim to contextualize freeway construction in the legacy of segregation, redlining, and urban renewal. The inequities which freeway infrastructure, born from the ideology of urban renewal, exacerbate are the logical successors of a history of inequitable dispossessions which were cemented by redlining, and legal segregation before that.

3.1. California's Segregationist Roots

In a report looking at the roots of displacement in the San Francisco Bay Area, authors at the University of California, Berkeley's Othering & Belonging Institute point to California's "history of exclusion and dispossession, centered on race, and driven by the logic of capitalism" (Moore et al., 2019). Before the construction of freeways, racial inequality in housing was linked

historically to a legacy of racial exclusion from the city, traced back to a history of racial exclusion from the Union state of California itself. Local laws and practices meant to restrict the mobility of people of color directly resulted in "state violence and dispossession, additional policing and extrajudicial violence, exclusionary zoning, racially restrictive covenants, racialized public housing policies, urban renewal, racial steering and blockbusting, and municipal fragmentation and white flight" which would further restrict the capability of communities of color to achieve the quality of life that upwardly mobile, white communities could (Moore et al., 2019; Sen, 1999).

In the early days of California statehood, historian Eugene Berwanger framed the contempt, hostility, and indifference toward Black people in the context of the U.S. West as "Negrophobia," or an attitude of "we don't want them here" (Ruffin, 2014, p. 25). White California nativists, influenced by cultural prejudices as well as the slave-owning practices of settlers from the southern states, believed people of color to be inferior Others who were incapable of self-government and racially (and religiously) unfit for any measure of self-determination (Ruffin, 2014). Under the same logic as expressed by editors of San Francisco's *Californian*, who "[desired] only a White population in California" and who expressed a "preference for an independent… California to the establishment of any degree of slavery, or even the importation of free blacks," non-whites were directly and indirectly discouraged from settling in the cities which white settler sought to civilize (Pitti, 2003, p. 35; Ruffin, 2014).

Figure 3: Sign protesting residential integration in Detroit, Michigan (Edwards, 2018)

Instated to the Union as a "free" state, California still enforced the Fugitive Slave Law in the 1850s. Paired with the state's Testimony Ban, free Black people were forced to bear the full responsibility for proving themselves to be free, while at the same time, it was illegal for African Americans, Native Americans, Chinese people to testify against the white people who accused them (Ruffin, 2014). This legal harassment, as well as discriminatory legal practices to prevent the settlement of people of color within California cities, created a "black-indigenous people paradigm" in which the non-white inhabitants of California had to be either "excluded from the state or demographically contained within white society and thus relegated to inferior status by

law, custom, and enslavement" (Ruffin, 2014, p. 25). However, despite the desire for a racially pure, white California, roughly 300 enslaved Black people still came to do white people's work in the Californian goldfields, and many more were house servants (Ruffin, 2014). Mexican and other Latin Americans, as well as Native American, Asian, and other non-white people, would come to work the mines and agricultural fields through California's racist history, enabling the economic bases of manufacturing and agriculture (facilitated by transportation infrastructure) which would create California's riches.

3.2. Creating a Racialized, Redlined Experience of Urban Space

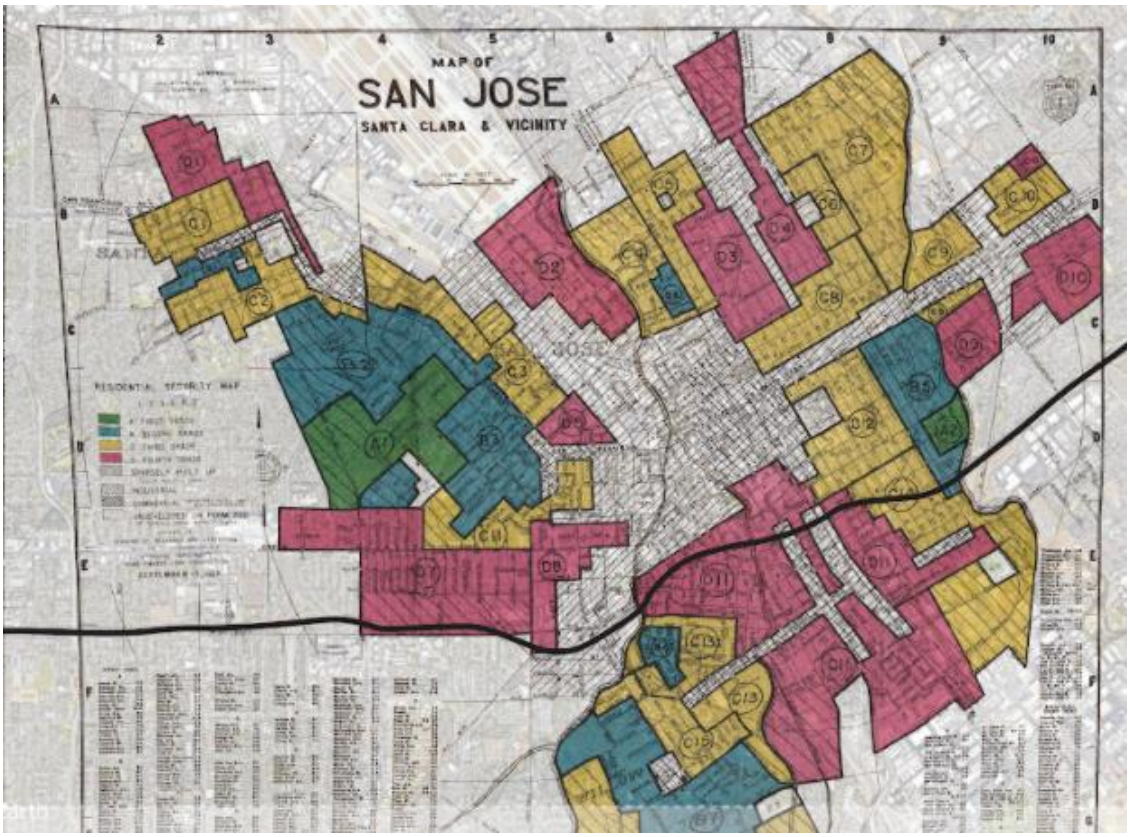
From this segregationist history, California's urbanizing cities were able to institutionalize the segregation of the poor and people of color by categorizing zones of the city which would be determined as "redlined," to be denied prime mortgages, and then "blighted," to be the targets of urban renewal and other predatory investment practices. Just as in the segregationist period, these practices would be aimed at directly and indirectly discouraging people of color from settling in the cities which white residents sought to civilize, urbanize, and modernize.

This process began with a series of maps created by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) which would determine a family's eligibility and desirability for mortgage lending based on the neighborhood they resided in (Aaronson et al., 2021; Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023; Rothstein, 2017). This classification of neighborhoods was primarily based on racial composition, with the first category evaluated on the appraisal form being the percentage of Black residents (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023). Based on these measures, primarily race, loans could be given or denied to families based on the

color-coding system of the HOLC maps in which neighborhoods were ranked from desirable green “A” neighborhoods to hazardous or undesirable red “D” neighborhoods (Aaronson et al., 2021; Rothstein, 2017). This practice became known as “redlining,” in which redlined neighborhoods, impacted by racially segregationist and dispossessive practices, were institutionalized as racialized urban zones in which families of color would struggle to purchase homes, build assets, or overcome the legacy of a racial wealth gap which would continue to widen generation by generation (Ray et al., 2021; Rothstein, 2017; Traub et al., 2017).

Figure 4: San José HOLC Redlining Map, 1937 (Nelson et al., n.d.)

Legend: Red = “Hazardous”, Yellow = “Definitely Declining”, Blue = “Still Desirable”, Green = “Best”



These redlined neighborhoods would serve as templates for the oncoming phenomenon of urban decay or "blight." In response to this perceived social ill, American cities post-World War II would mobilize taxpayer dollars to renew or regenerate so-called blighted areas into aesthetically pleasing, profitable, and desirable land uses. Blight, a term which invoked racial undesirability and social perceptions of racial unfitness or racialized violence, underlaid the political conversation around urban renewal, development, progress, and modernity (Carriere, 2011; Paul, 2012). The criteria used to identify blight would be the direct successor of the racist measures used to identify "hazardous" neighborhoods. This racial undertone then set the conditions for further racialized solutions, including freeway construction, which would redevelop and modernize "hazardous" or "blighted" neighborhoods. Many of the master plans for freeways specifically targeted what were known as decaying slum areas, justified by the violent threat that blighted communities posed to modern traffic standards (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023).

3.3. Housing, the Freeways, and The Role of "Renewal" in the Racial Wealth Gap

The combination of both redlining and blight led to the continuous dispossession of communities of color of wealth, or a household's total saved resources, otherwise measured as net worth (Keister, 2018). This can be contrasted with income, or a household's flow of financial resources from wages and salaries and other sources – sociologist Lisa Keister recognized that income and wealth may be positively correlated but they are only lowly correlated, with Black and Latino families accumulating and keeping far fewer assets and considerably less median and mean wealth than white families (Bhutta et al., 2020; Keister, 2018). Part of the reason for this wealth gap is housing security, which the intergovernmental Organization for Economic Co-operation

and Development (OECD) recognizes as a "central component of households' wealth," accounting for the largest share of household assets (OECD, n.d.).

The ability to accumulate generational wealth via housing value played a significant role in race relations in America, especially as the suburbs created greater access than ever before for the opportunity to be a homeowner. The modern image of the American suburbs came about in the post-World War II boom in household wealth and consumer culture. The suburbs represented a manifestation of the American Dream, complete with space for a white picket fence and the ideal nuclear family unit. The dream of continuous consumption fueled by the pursuit of upward mobility culminated in the cultural, and racial, phenomenon of American suburbia.

Figure 5: Aerial view of a white-only subdivision in San Lorenzo Village, CA, 1950 (Moore et al., 2019)

Most of these suburban homes, however, were built for and bought by white Americans. The opportunity for homeownership "elevated many whites into the middle class and dynamically increased their net worth with little effort" (Ruffin, 2014, p. 94). In California, nearly 33 million families, or 62%, owned their own homes in 1960, the highest level of homeownership since 1890 (Ruffin, 2014). At the same time, only two million Black Americans, or 25% of all Black families, owned their own homes (Ruffin, 2014). While white wealth increased, the disparity in homeownership and the quality of housing in Black and white American would only increase, with many people of color, facing housing discrimination and residential segregation, coming to live in ghettoes and "ring suburbs," or minority middle-income neighborhoods that existed on the outskirts of inner cities (Ruffin, 2014).

Even as families of color moved into poor quality housing in segregated areas of the city, they were still not free from housing insecurity. In the years following World War II, highways came to control the character of the North American built environment, becoming a symbolic representation of the modern city – and with them would come the highly racialized experience of freeway-facilitated dispossession. In California, sprawling freeway development fostered suburbanization and new geographic and social transformations that reshaped racial relationships in metropolitan areas. As the housing boom of the post-World War II era moved areas of high-density housing farther and farther away from areas of high-density job growth, the growing federal highway network bulldozed through communities, often taking the paths of least power: low-income and minority communities, where homeownership levels were already much lower than in white communities.

According to Deborah Archer, the "construction of the interstate highway system contributed to the residential concentration of race and poverty, and created physical, economic, and psychological barriers that persist" through the present day (Archer, 2020, p. 1260). Specifically, freeway developers built the freeways on the "informal boundary lines between white and Black neighborhoods," infrastructuralizing what was once a passable social barrier into an impassable concrete wall that protected white people from Black migration (Archer, 2020, p. 1281). In her writings of how freeways brought "white men's roads through Black men's homes," specifically razing through Black households and the heart of Black communities, Archer noted how major highway construction in America came about at the exact time that American courts were beginning to use legislation, such as the Fair Housing Act of 1968 which prohibited housing discrimination, to strike down the traditional tools of racial segregation, of separate but equal facilities and outright racial zoning laws (Archer, 2020; King, 2021). Highway development came to fill in this gap. At a time when the possibility of indiscriminate housing integration and racial integration were becoming a salient piece of American cultural conversation, Archer argued that freeway construction came to intentionally place walls "right on the formal boundary lines that we saw used during racial zoning," destroying community connection (Archer, 2020; King, 2021).

Not only did freeways contribute to the wealth gap, due to housing instability and dispossession of the capability to accumulate assets, "freeway transportation infrastructure has been central to creating both the sociospatial inequalities and toxic exposures that underpin contemporary patterns of environmental injustice" (Grineski et al., 2013). When densely built communities of color were bulldozed by the freeways, remaining homes were often situated directly in the

shadows of the freeways – literally as well as figuratively. While white communities could, and often did, have the political pull to sink freeways or fight and win sound barriers and other structures to mitigate the negative impacts of freeways, communities of color often struggled to win the same costly appeasements. Greater and more concentrated exposure to the traffic air pollution of cars, medium- and heavy-duty trucks, and even other industrial manufacturing fumes meant that communities of color were more at-risk of developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (American Lung Association, 2023; Gauderman et al., 2007; Rice et al., 2018). Living near a major highway or urban road even increased the risk of premature death, and research has found that those who live less than 50 meters, in the shadow of the freeways, have the strongest association with risk of dementia (American Lung Association, 2023).

Segregation, simultaneously a "cause of racial inequality and an effect of broader racialized systems of dispossession," allowed for some to accumulate capital through the extraction of wealth from others (Moore et al., 2019). While white families were able to buy homes and amass generational wealth, living healthy, active, and even green lives in American suburbia, families of color with few other viable housing options available were dispossessed of their homes, for those who were displaced; their health, for those who remained; and for all, their ability to amass wealth. This was due to both predatory investment in their communities from urban renewal and gentrification as well as disinvestment in their communities from white flight and the declining city tax base (Moore et al., 2019). Freeway construction, often justified through the logic of urban renewal, was a form of predatory investment.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, this act of freeway-facilitated segregation had similar effects on walling off San José's racial and ethnic minority communities to the east of the city, and white residents to the west. Freeway construction would allow the history of spatial distribution in San José, from its earliest waves of urban development through restrictive covenants and housing discrimination against immigrant populations, to continue into the present.

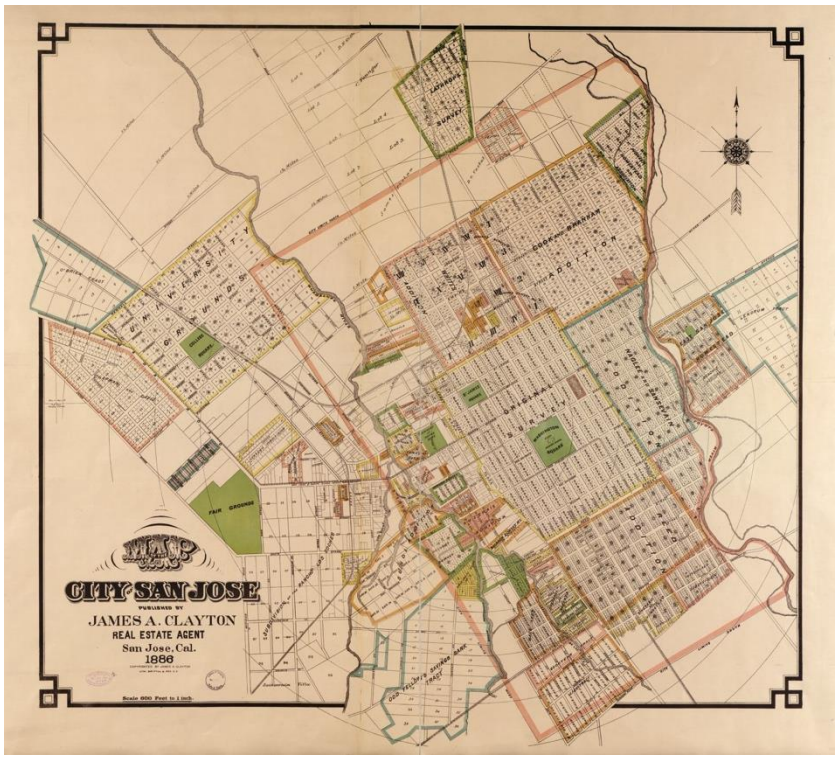
Chapter 4. Dispossession by Interstates 280 and 680

4.1. The Case of San José

When Interstate 280 (I-280) was completed in 1972, it cut through the heart of Central San José. Close-knit neighborhoods such as Downtown San José, the South University Neighborhood (SUN), Naglee Park, Martha's Gardens, Washington-Guadalupe, Tamien, Alma-Almaden, O'Brien, Spartan Keyes, and Greater Gardner were torn apart by a towering concrete freeway. Just a couple of years later, Interstate 680 (I-680) would be completed in 1974 and would bisect San José's Eastside communities of Mayfair and Alum Rock. At the time, the city's non-white and Latino communities resided primarily within Central and East San José. These freeways would come to represent the "informal boundary lines" which demarcated residential segregation into the present day (Archer, 2020).

In the present day, ethnic segregation in San José is largely delineated by US Highway 101 (US 101) – to the west of the highway, there are greater concentrations of white residents, while to the east, there are greater concentrations of Latino and Asian residents. As shown in Figure 6, in 1886, the eastern bound of San José was located at Coyote Creek. Today, Coyote Creek falls through the middle of the city – even US 101 lies east of the creek. At the time of the project study period in 1950, the boundaries of the city at the time encompassed today's downtown area, bordered roughly by Hedding Street on the north, Coyote Creek on the east, Alma Avenue on the south, and the Guadalupe River on the west.

Figure 6: Map of the City of San José, 1886 (Clayton & Britton & Rey, 1886)



In the decades following World War II, San José experienced tremendous growth as Santa Clara County transformed from a primarily agricultural valley to the present-day high-tech Silicon Valley. Prior to the construction of the freeways, San José's agricultural economy was supported by fruit and nut orchards as well as vegetable and dairy farms, with a downtown economy supported in large part by canneries. In the post-war, suburban era, though, manufacturing became the mainstay of San José's economy: by 1952, manufacturing accounted for the majority of San José's employment, and its share continued to increase throughout the 1960s. Military contracts fueled a boom in the electronics industry in Santa Clara County, leading to the emergence of Silicon Valley (PAST Consultants, LLC, 2009). The economic boom of the post-war years led to unprecedented growth in population, employment, and territory, supported by the building of freeways and expressways.

As San José grew, new middle-class subdivisions were built to the south and west of Downtown San José, away from the farms and orchards that made up most of the land to the east of San José towards the foothills. In 1950, San José had 92,000 residents within 17 square miles; twenty years later, San José had grown to 460,000 residents within 135 square miles. In the 1960s, Santa Clara County was the fastest growing county in the entire nation. The massive growth which San José experienced between 1950 to 1970, expanding its borders almost 800% and increasing the city's population by over four times that of its pre-growth population, heavily impacted the populations of color who had previously been restricted from owning land in the city but who now found that the city's expanded borders had assimilated them.

This thesis examines how the dispossession of San José residents has largely been a racialized experience and follows the legacy of how San José's communities of color have been politically, financially, and physically dispossessed by way of discriminatory policies which have set the conditions for transportation infrastructure projects to be sited through their communities. The following sections will delve deeper into the forces of segregation, redlining, and urban renewal which shaped these changing racial and ethnic demographics, to understand how race relations have changed through the span of San José's history and particularly in relationship to the freeways which most directly impact communities of color: Interstate 280 and Interstate 680.

4.1.1. Discrimination and Segregation

Before a pattern of racial and economic *s*egregation could be spatially visualized in relation to the freeway, patterns of racial and economic injustice, mirroring but predating the freeways, long existed for San José's communities of color. Local historians have noted that the racial and

economic housing patterns that can be seen in San José today can be traced back through the city's legacy of racial segregation and inequality (Pitti, 2003). The history of displacement of San José's Latino population can be traced back as far as its colonial history of Spanish settlements and American westward expansion, but in the modern era, the segregation of non-white people meant the placing of non-white communities at the city's eastern border, a pattern which interviewed residents attribute to the history of low-cost land in the city. Most importantly, a combination of discriminatory policies and land use practices, rooted in the city's history, operate to dispossess San José's communities of color today in much the same ways as they did when these discriminatory practices were first introduced.

Founded on November 29, 1777, the pueblo of San José began as a Spanish colony before its colonization by United States forces in 1846 (Beilharz & DeMers, 1980). During this transition period, relations were mostly harmonious between already-established Mexican citizens and a relatively small number of early American settlers, with many of the 150 Americans assimilating into San José's Alta California culture of 750 Mexicans (Pitti, 2003). With the incorporation of California into the Union in 1850, increasing numbers of white American pioneers and settlers brought with them white supremacist ideas of how American yeoman farmers, shipping old-styled Eastern homes from New England to San José, would make Californian lands "productive" in ways that Mexicans and Native Americans were racially incapable of (Pitti, 2003). By this ideology, it was white settlers; right to claim land for themselves, and to claim that non-white people must live, if not outside of their state, then at least outside of their city.

Under the same logic as expressed by editors of San Francisco's *Californian*, who in the 1850s "[desired] only a White population in California," white San Joseans passed vagrancy laws in 1855 to discourage the arrival and prohibit the settlement of Mexicans and other Latin Americans (Pitti, 2003, p. 35). The expulsion of Mexicans from the city of San José was two-pronged, through legal means as well as through economic dispossession. What were once communal properties in Alta California and in Santa Clara Valley were soon legally acquired by incoming white settlers, many of whom relied upon the defrauding of established Mexican Americans. Some Mexican landowners were lied to and signed away land titles believing them to be land leases, while others were issued predatory loans with rising debts that preceded the dispossession of their properties, land or cattle, to white speculators for below-market prices (Pitti, 2003). With no home or work, many would find themselves as renters in racially segregated mining camps like Spanishtown, earning less than a third of the wage of white laborers in addition to being more directly exposed to toxic mercury fumes (Pitti, 2003; Splitter, 1957). This pattern would be seen again in the exact same way when the freeways tore through San José a century later.

By 1860, over nine hundred ethnic Mexicans owned property in Santa Clara County, but only twenty of whom belonged to San José's ethnic Mexican community (Pitti, 2003). Over the next decade, across the entire Santa Clara Valley, the number of Mexican American property owners who reported a "personal estate" dropped from 129 in 1860 to 63 in 1870 (Pitti, 2003). As the demand for labor in the mines and orchards of San José grew, this destruction of Mexican Americans' land base created a new low-wage labor force. Many ethnic Mexicans left the state of California entirely, most for Mexico (Hayes-Bautista et al., 2007; Pitti, 2003). Those who stayed were dispossessed of the land to build wealth, the wealth to own land, and the legal right

to own land or build wealth within San José bounds. In fact, despite California's admittance to the Union as a free state, antislavery laws were notoriously unenforced in San José and slavery was a customary part of San José life as white settlers from pro-slavery Southern states moved in (Pitti, 2003, p. 35; Ruffin, 2014). For Mexican Americans and free Black people escaping persecution from vagrancy laws and fugitive slave acts, their dispossession of the right to land or wealth, facilitated via segregation, forced them to the eastern outskirts of the city.

The city of San José also has a history of dispossessing Asian residents, as well. From the earliest days of the California Gold Rush, Chinese immigrants to Santa Clara Valley were met with great hurdles. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 systemically legalized discrimination against Asian immigrants, but by that time, white residents of San José had already terrorized two separate Chinatown communities with arson – San José's first Chinatown, located in present-day Downtown, burned down in 1866, and the second burned down in 1870. The third and fourth Chinatown communities in San José existed around the same time, but the larger Chinatown burned down in an arson fire in 1887, and the smaller could not accommodate all of the displaced residents. These arson fires contributed in part to sociology James Loewen categorizing San José as a sundown town (Loewen, 2005). By the time that the fifth and final reiteration of a Chinatown was attempted, a history of discrimination and displacement had already driven away many Chinese residents. This last Chinatown finally dwindled and became city property during the Great Depression (Bandlamudi, 2021).

4.1.2. Redlining and "Blight"

As the population of San José grew, developers in 1900 urged white settlers to "secure small orchard farms that pay," such as fruits which required large numbers of seasonal workers to ensure perishable crops could be picked on time. By 1930, white farmers had turned 65% of Santa Clara County into land for fruit trees such as prunes, peaches, and apricots (Pitti, 2003, p. 80). With caps on European and Asian immigration and growing civil unrest in Mexico, many Mexicans came to the Santa Clara Valley to fill the increased labor demand.

Coinciding with this wave of immigration, a housing discrimination tactic known as "restrictive covenants" were introduced in San José in 1920. These restrictive covenants barred non-white residents from living within the city bounds, leaving minority communities segregated into rural, agricultural enclaves to the east of San José's historic borders. (Pitti, 2003; Zlolniski & Palerm, 1996). From 1920 until such covenants were outlawed in 1948, West San José's white residents, fearing that the settlement of Mexican field laborers in their neighborhoods would threaten property values, enforced city covenants "barring property from occupancy or use by all non-Caucasians" (Pitti, 2003, p. 88). Those who were not native-born white Anglos could not live in the city of San José. Excluded from the main city, East San José became a refuge for the city's non-white and Latino populations. Mostly migrant orchard workers, "Eastsider" barrio residents lived in enclaves such as the Mayfair District, characterized by unpaved streets and crowded houses with "'no sewers, no sidewalks, no services, no lights'" (Pitti, 2003, p. 90).

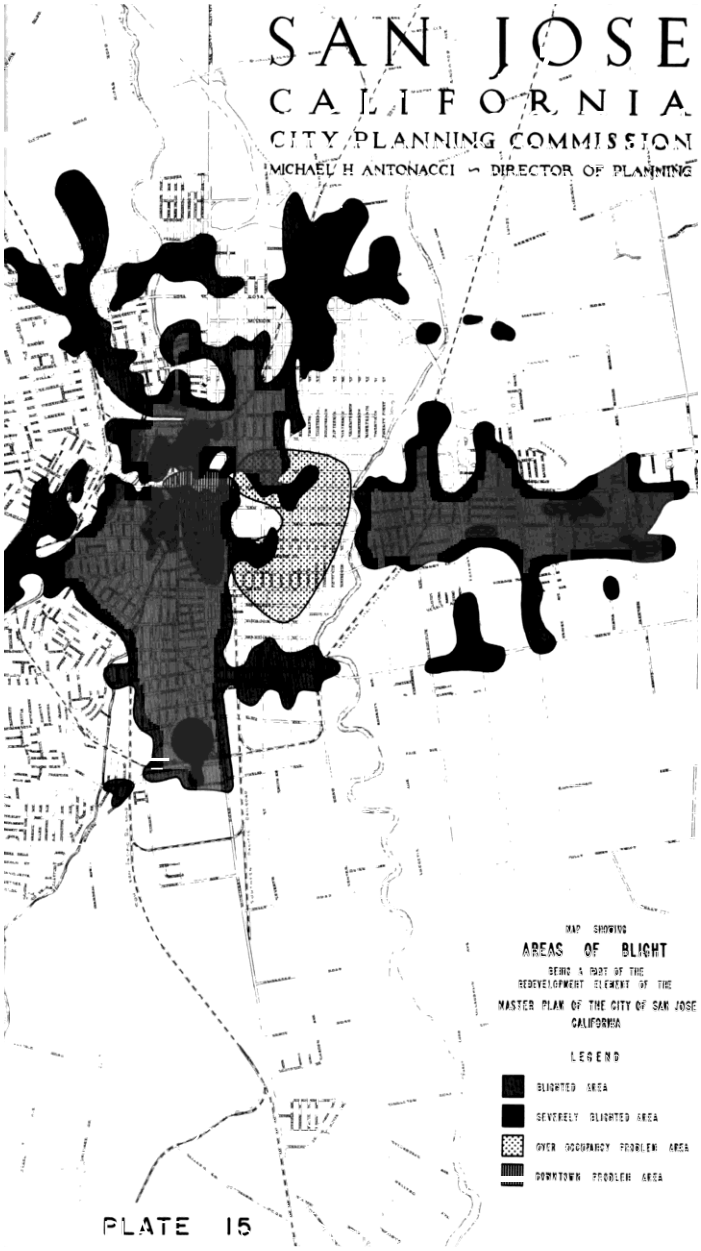
As in other cities across the nation, the 1937 Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps categorized what would become San José's poor communities of color as "hazardous" mortgage

lending. At the time, before the Eastside was annexed into the city, the “hazardous” red zone covered the parts of downtown San José where canneries were concentrated and where many cannery workers resided. Before World War II, Italian and Portuguese immigrants made up the majority of the cannery workforce, but as manufacturing grew after the war and restrictive covenants were outlawed, they were replaced by Mexican immigrants. For Mexican immigrants arriving after the 1930s, many families who worked in agriculture, canning, and construction settled into the main ethnic enclave of Mayfair District in East San José (Zlolniski & Palerm, 1996). In the 1930s, these areas were outside of the formal city limits. As the city annexed land and expanded in the following decades, though, East San José would soon be included in the “blighted” areas which city redevelopment programs crusaded against.

Redlined and blighted areas reinforced residential segregation as lower-income Black and brown families were steered into sub-optimal housing, as a direct effect of their segregation into sub-optimal jobs. Many other non-white San Joseans also came to work in the agricultural and canning industries simply because no other jobs were made available to them. In 1945, the Black Jackson family had moved from Oklahoma, where Inez Jackson had been a credentialed and experienced schoolteacher, to San José, where she was told by the legally “integrated” San José school board that they did not hire Black teachers (Ruffin, 2014). Jackson left education to pick prunes and work in the San José canneries (Ruffin, 2014). Due to pressures from segregated employment as well as segregated housing, many Black and brown families like the Jacksons would continue to move into the HOLC red zones and other “blighted” areas.

In addition to employment segregation, many Black and brown families' search for housing resulted in brokers pushing them away from "Whites Only" rental advertisements and instead towards locations "specifically… for colored people" in the Eastside with "garbage all over the floor, and cans, and broken doors" (Ruffin, 2014, p. 103). Or, families would be pushed to lots directly by the railroad tracks, if they were even offered lots at all – some were even shown "empty [lots] that needed loads of fill dirt before any construction could begin" (Ruffin, 2014, p. 99). In this way, landlords and homebuilders became the driving force behind racial animosity. Due to de jure discriminatory policies and de facto discriminatory practices, low-income families of color were dispossessed of their right to good jobs and to good housing. And, due to rising urban renewal policies, many would soon, again, be dispossessed of their housing and ability to build and maintain social networks and generational wealth – this time, as a direct result of freeway siting and construction.

Figure 7: Map of areas categorized as "blighted," 1958 (Commission, 1958)

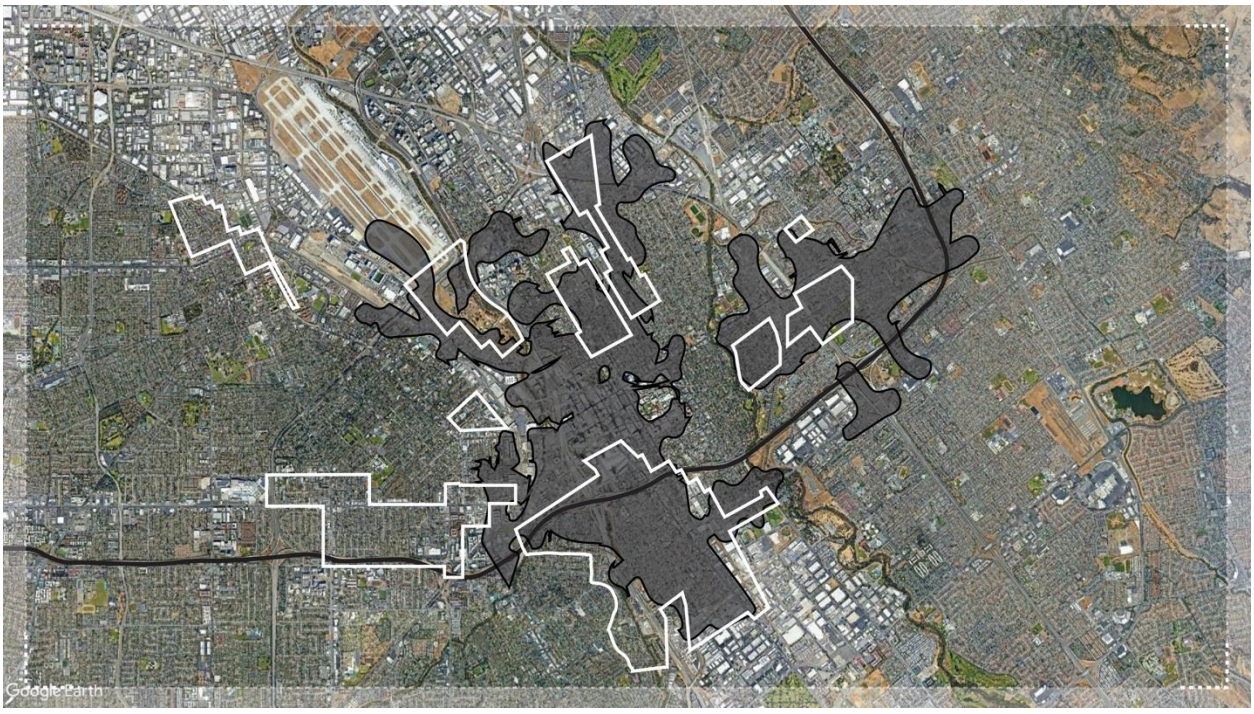


4.1.3. Urban Renewal

During the urban renewal process, San José's communities of color became dispossessed of not just their right to quality homes, but also physically displaced from their newly acquired homes. In the 1950s, historical planning documents show how the city set out to redevelop blighted areas, an effort which disproportionately affected low-income communities of color. The city's

1958 Master Plan mapped “blighted” areas to be destroyed and redeveloped in preparation for the massive urban renewal projects like freeway-building which it would soon undertake, areas which aligned with HOLC’s redlined neighborhoods. Both *San José Mercury News* articles from the time as well as interviews with residents later show how this redevelopment process targeted communities of color (San José Resident 3, 2022).

Figure 8: Areas deemed blighted, redlined areas, and I-280 and I-680 (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023)



The freeway building process thus accompanied the city’s redevelopment efforts. From the city’s planning archives, a 1957 report identified traffic congestion as the city’s greatest problem in the wake of post-war population growth and increased suburban sprawl (PAST Consultants, LLC, 2009, p. 31). The city invested in improvements to its roadways and supported plans by the state

Bureau of Highways (the precursor to Caltrans) to build freeways. By 1955, the Bureau had already initiated route location studies for I-280, meant to alleviate traffic congestion as an alternative to US 101 from San Francisco to San José.

Mexican immigrants who had just in the past couple of decades moved in for employment were quickly facing the brunt of the twinned impacts of both dwindling job opportunities and dwindling affordable housing opportunities, both having been sacrifices for the construction of the Sinclair Freeway, with interviewed residents remembering how the lack of housing led to unstable childhoods (Pitti, 2003; San José Resident 5, 2022). The most immediate effect, though, was the rapid destruction of housing stock in San José and imminent displacement of minority households in the path of I-280 and I-680 through Central and East San José. Santa Clara County's massive urban growth, paired with the housing sprawl to the south and east of the Bay and the rise of the personal automobile, led to levels of traffic, noise, and air pollution that San José residents had never seen before. Soon, residents increasingly began to call for road widenings and freeway developments to mitigate traffic congestion through previously-quiet neighborhoods.

Unlike with cities in the direction of San Francisco, or even north to Marin County, the lack of physical barriers to restrict traffic growth and sprawl in Santa Clara County led to fears that individuals began voicing in historical news articles as early as 1970: that San José's residents would "tolerate an increasing degree of congestion with a slow deterioration of living values with each passing year" (Planners et al., 1972, p. 7). This congestion and slow deterioration of

living values, however, did not dispossess and displace wealthier white residents of San José in the same ways as they did communities of color.

The redevelopment program and subsequent freeway building resulted in the displacement of marginalized families and contributed to a reduction in the stock of affordable housing. In a 1965 article in the *San José Mercury* news, developers claimed that downtown had been improving since 1960 with a decline in "blight." In this article, a city planner argued that "weapons used to combat decay downtown include... better access made possible by developments such as the freeway network, and the urban renewal program" (Brown, 1965, p. 2R). These "developments," under the justification of removing "blight," would target the urban poor of Downtown and East San José.

As the city continued to sprawl, blighted areas of the city continued to be targeted for renewal and the stock of affordable housing decreased despite the city's overall housing growth. In another historical 1968 *San José Mercury* article, local organizers and activists proposed a tent city at City Hall to "dramatize a critical housing shortage in San José and the plight of tenants facing 'gouging' high rents," especially for the "undetermined number of large families in the city's poverty areas have recently been evicted or are facing imminent eviction or inflationary rent increases, in some cases as high as 90 per cent" (Flood, 1968). The article states that in response, Mayor Ron James had said that the Council "'shares the concern' over the lack of housing but, 'I don't feel City Hall is the point of responsibility'" (Flood, 1968).

As high-tech corporations rapidly moved into what would become Silicon Valley, residents began to see a discrepancy in areas of job growth versus areas of housing availability. In the decades after the 1960s growth boom peak in San José, housing production slowed down in the city while jobs continued to grow elsewhere in North Santa Clara County cities. As a result of the imbalance between available jobs and housing, many San José residents commuted to North County cities for employment. Between 1975 and 1980, San José accounted for 56% of Santa Clara County's housing growth but only 30% of the County's growth in new jobs created (Planning, 1984, p. 58). From 1976 to 2001, San José's housing prices grew by 936%, resulting in the highest housing-cost increase in any major urban area in the United States (O'Toole, 2006). Today, many of the areas identified as "D" grade in the 1937 redlining maps and blighted in the 1958 Master Plan are at the highest risk of gentrification.

4.2. Building Interstates 280 and 680

Under the logic of urban renewal, freeways became an attractive weapon in the "war on blight," upgrading so-called "decayed" areas of high unemployment, disinvestment, and crime with modern, high-speed symbols of progress (Carriere, 2011, p. 5). From the 1950s to 1970s in America, the typical highway process began with long-term plans based on projected population growth and traffic flow studies, to predict future trends in demographics and roadway users' needs. The final highway route would be decided by the state highway commission. Once the route was set, state agents would appraise real estate values on the right of way and ensure that property owners were alerted, to make proper arrangements for either the purchase or relocation of their property. After the appraisal stage, actual construction could begin – first, surveyors would stake out the center of the new highway, the clear the right of way. Finally, soil was put

down, then cement and concrete, and finally paint and even landscaping, for some communities (Kimball, 1958). Starting from the middle and working back out to the land, this process spanned the course of several years in San José.

Figure 9: Unfinished Interchange 280 and 680 (*Unfinished Interchange of 87 and 280*, 1997)

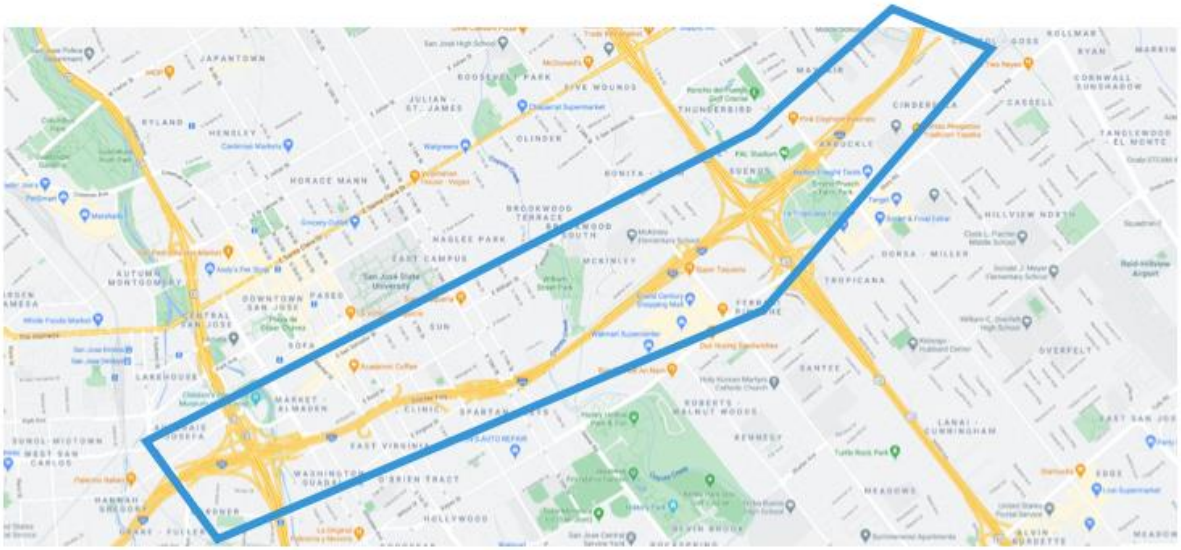
From San Francisco, I-280 runs south into San José until it reaches US 101, at which point the freeway becomes I-680 running north through the East Bay. Driving along I-280 and I-680 through the heart of San José, it is easy to see the disparities along the stretches of freeway that are concentrated through the hearts of San José's communities of color, and the stretches of freeway that pass through the relatively more white and wealthy areas to the west of State Route 87 (SR 87), or the Guadalupe Freeway.

To the west of SR 87, I-280 is a four-lane freeway that is sunken in parts – the freeway speed limits of 70 miles per hour feel enforceable, with greenery such as the grassy hills that the

freeway is sunk through or close, dense shrubbery along the freeway edges acting as natural limiters on drivers' sight lines. Driving into Central San José, I-280 both infrastructurally and visually widens, while driving into East San José, I-680 slopes downhill into the valley as drivers speed up to reach I-280's and I-680's design speeds of 80 miles per hour. The freeway is lifted high above those "blighted" areas of the city where the poor and minority communities live. Drivers are faced with open sight lines and subconsciously encouraged to speed through, far removed from ever facing any evidence of the material existence of the city's "less desirable" populations.

While I-280 and I-680 through Central and East San José were largely planned and funded in the 1960s, with development and construction through the late 1960s and early 1970s, I-280 would not be completed until 1972 and I-680 would not be completed until 1974 (CA Department of Transportation, 2012). Even then, US 101 widenings and the interchange between US 101 and I-280 and I-680 would not be completed until the 1980s.

Figure 10: San José Downtown (I-280) and Mayfair (I-680) Corridor (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023)



4.2.1. Interstate 280

When construction of the segment of I-280 in West San José began in 1958, the goal was to increase access to Central San José and connect Downtown San José to the larger San Francisco Bay Area (San Jose Mercury, 1969, p. 2). Named for Joseph P. Sinclair, the agency's District Engineer from 1952 to 1964, the freeway includes the stretch of I-280 that lies between State Route 17 on the west and I-680 to the east. In 1962, the Sinclair Freeway would be adopted as part of the Interstate Highway System (Faigin, 2020). When I-280 was opened to traffic in mid-1972, the south end of I-280 would continue to default traffic to US 101 and State Route 17 until the completion of I-680. While it does not appear that any alternative routes were considered for the siting of I-280, community leaders in Central San José revealed that the placement of I-280, besides cutting through the least-cost land in the city, was also an act of "threading the needle" between San José State University to the north and a city-owned industrial dump site on Remillard Court, along Coyote Creek, to the south (San José Informant 1, 2022; San José

Resident 4, 2022). While I-280 was operational and opened to traffic by mid-1972, pieces of it remained unbuilt until 1981, such as the Joe Colla Interchange.

4.2.2. Interstate 680

Despite its announcement in 1964, state planning documents reveal that the section of I-680 from US 101 to Alum Rock would not be completed until 1974 (CA Department of Transportation, 2012). From the road-view, my own ethnographic research documents how I-680 passes directly overhead the communities of color that are built flush to the freeway, but looking from below, it is almost startling how close the freeway is built to homes, churches, parks, and parking lots that lie in the shadows of I-680 and the sky-climbing interchange between US 101 and I-280 and I-680. Acting as an extension of I-280 eastward, I-680 allows for the continuation of the roadway network ultimately connecting the Bay Area from San Francisco, to San José, to the East Bay. In terms of freeway realignments or alternative routes, it does not appear that the highway department considered other alignments for this section of the Sinclair Freeway through Central and East San José. The only evidence of any realignment of the Sinclair Freeway is a northward bump of I-280 to the west of SR 87, where the highway was slightly rerouted to the north to preserve the historic Roberto-Suño adobe house, protected by federal law on the National Register of Historic Places (Halberstadt, 1997).

4.3. Community Response to Freeway Building

> "Yet more ethnographic fieldwork frequently shows that people were never particularly positive about the risks in question, or about their controlling institutions. **They may not have expressed their criticism or dissent in public form, but that does not mean they**

> **were not chronically mistrustful of, skeptical of or alienated from those institutions supposed to be in control.** They may simply have been resigned to dependency on that institutional or political nexus, with no perceived power to influence it or make it more accountable."
>
> - Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society* (Beck, 1992, p. 6)

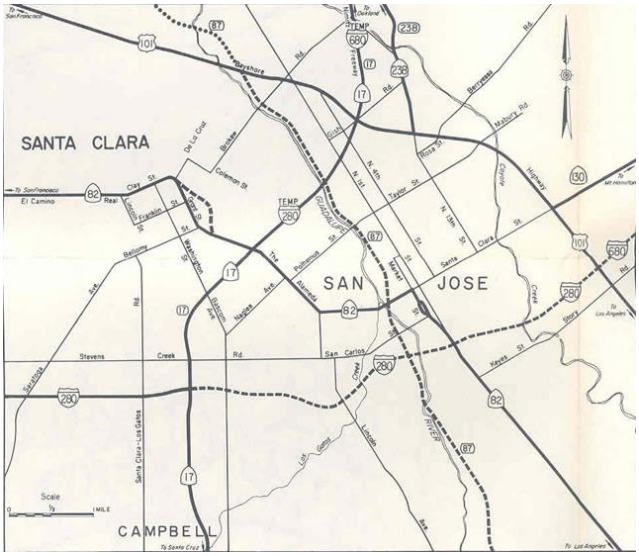
The Bay Area was the site of some of the nation's earliest anti-freeway citizen movements (Mohl, 2004). From their beginnings, residents of all races were wary of the impacts that freeways would have. The inequitable construction of the freeways through Central and East San José communities, as compared to West San José, illustrates which San Joseans were able to protect themselves more successfully from the risks – for example, to the east of downtown, I-280 and I-680 are entirely raised, producing noise and pollution in Central and East San José. Additionally, once-unified communities of color in Downtown and the Eastside were literally walled from each other. The sightline of an observer standing on one side of the freeway looking to the other is obstructed by the freeway itself.

West of downtown, though, many parts of I-280 are sunken. In interviews, residents of Central and East San José have questioned the aesthetic decisions of the freeways built through their communities, such as the lack of stone landscaping, trees, and flowers that can be found on western I-280 where primarily white San Joseans reside. In addition to the later timeline of San José's population boom and freeway construction, the civil rights era in San José would lead to a public engagement process that increasingly attempted to appease its Central communities of color and outright ignore its Eastside communities. However, even prior to the civil rights era, the intense segregation of San José prior to and during its annexation period led San José's

communities of color, especially Latinos of East San José, to ultimately resist conventional ways of assimilation to white San José society (Pitti, 2003). This resulted in a lack of political organization and political power, which, hand-in-hand with a lack of economic power, allowed white Westside San Joseans to contest freeway building and win various appeasements (including landscaping) while Downtown and Eastside San Joseans suffered the full brunt of negative freeway impacts such as noise, pollution, and physically disconnected communities.

One *San José Mercury* article reported that in the 1960s, the "most persistent, if not the most successful Council advisory group" in San José, the Citizens Committee Improvement Committee (CCIC) was formed so that the city of San José could meet requirements for federal urban renewal assistance. In late May of 1965, the CCIC had met to look at long range capital improvement plans for the city. According to a report in the *San José Mercury*, the CCIC heard a report at this meeting, but "took no action on the housing needs of residents in the Gardner district whose homes will be obliterated by the future Crosstown and Guadalupe freeways" (San Jose Mercury, 1965).

Figure 11: Map of I-280, 1968 (Interstate Guide, 2020)



The names of the members of the CCIC and the men appointed to a capital improvement committee that was proposed during the May meeting suggested that the majority of these councilmen were white. In 1965, this would hardly have been surprising, as San José did not elect its first Mexican-American city councilmember until councilman Al Garza was elected in 1971 (Martinez, 2014). In the years since, despite two-thirds of San José's population being ethnic minorities, the city has elected just one Latino mayor, Ron Gonzales from 1999 to 2006, and one Asian American mayor, Norman Mineta from 1971 to 1975 (Alaban, 2021). Several residents who were interviewed recalled that because of this lack of representation in elected city offices, San José's communities of color faced significant barriers in having their needs listened to, much less met in a competent capacity (San José Resident 1, 2022; San José Resident 2, 2022; San José Resident 3, 2022).

Particularly in the construction of freeways, the impacts of property condemnation and dispossession were disproportionately felt by poor communities, even though the community

itself was not engaged in the routing decisions which would condemn and displace them (Ybarra, 1971). Denied high-wage employment and opportunities, San José's sizeable Mexican-American community was economically, socially, and politically poor: "unable to buy a house in the neighborhood of his choice… [and] unable to voice an opinion in the decision-making process which affects his life," one San José community organizer argued that in San José, "poor" people were not necessarily just those with incomes below $4,000 a year (Judiciary, 1972, p. 131). With this poverty came inequitable outcomes for those who were least able to afford housing anywhere other than those cheapest lots in San José, and so lacked political representation and were disproportionately displaced by incoming freeway construction.

Historical documents from the 1970 Metropolitan Transportation Planning Seminars (which included community feedback to MPO board members) document how community leader and president of Santa Clara County's Confederacion de la Raza Unida, Jack Ybarra, presented on the issue of citizen participation in urban transportation planning. Ybarra espoused the importance of involving "the poor, the Mexican-American, the Black, and other minorities" into long-term local government decision-making, stating that "elected officials have failed to be responsive to the needs of this substantial segment of society" due to fear – and when they are involved, it is "to a limited degree in meaningless advisory councils and committees whose recommendations carry little weight in the actual decisions that are finally made" (Planners et al., 1972, p. 36). Referencing I-680 through San José's Mexican barrio, Ybarra spoke of how construction turned hundreds of families into "virtual refugees" within their own city (Judiciary, 1972, p. 131). As Ybarra testified, "it is obvious that there has been little citizen participation in the development of the existing transportation systems" in San José (Planners et al., 1972, p. 37).

As an additional blow to the capacity for communities of color to organize, a 1972 class action lawsuit brought by Mexican-American residents of Santa Clara and San Benito Counties challenged the 1970 census count as misrepresenting Mexican-American and other Spanish-origin people by counting their numbers but not distinguishing between Mexican-American or other Spanish-origin (Confederacion de la Raza Unida et al. v. Brown, 1972). The plaintiffs, which included the Confederacion de la Raza Unida among others, noted that this undercount would cause great harm by cutting funding and resources to poor and minority communities, leading to disproportionate impacts on the Latino communities of East San José. This undercount was one of many city actions that sparked the growing Chicano movement for civil rights in San José.

When civil rights activist and labor leader Cesar Chavez lived in San José's Mayfair neighborhood from 1948 to 1962, Chavez's home parish was the historic Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. In 1953, Chavez helped relocate the chapel to the Mayfair community, where it became the base of San José's chapter of the Community Service Organization, a California Latino civil rights organization. Together the CSO and Father Donald McDonnell, the priest at Our Lady of Guadalupe, led freeway protests and organized against I-680 alongside others in San José's Chicano movement. Interviewed residents remember how despite their efforts, the freeway soon encroached upon Alum Rock (Pitti, 2003; San José Activist, 2022; San José Resident 6, 2022). In the words of Jack Ybarra (1972), participation from certain citizens simply did not mean much to local decision-makers, even with the growing Chicano movement in Mayfair and Alum Rock.

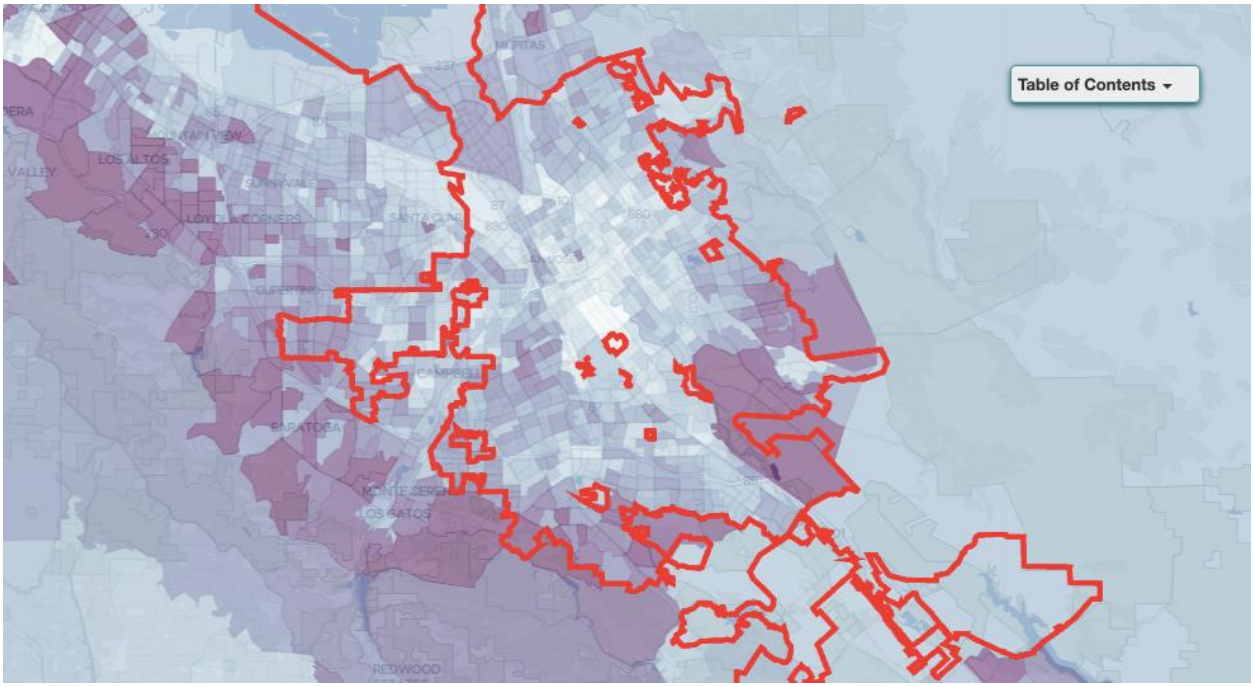
In truth, Latinos of East San José faced other structural barriers to their full political participation in San José society as well, rooted in the city's history of segregation and redlined immigration. East San José, since the times of restrictive covenants in 1920, had developed its own Mexicanidad culture – with few Latinos able to buy houses or experience upward mobility into the middle class, and, due to its relatively late urbanization, lacking the large "urban mass culture that helped assimilate Mexican immigrants [such as] in Chicago, Los Angeles, and other cities," many Eastside residents were, almost by design, left out of mainstream politics (Pitti, 2003, p. 109). Many immigrants residing in the Eastside, then and today, either "avoided becoming U.S. citizens" or faced significant cultural, financial, and structural barriers to accessing the process of U.S. citizenship (Pitti, 2003, p. 109). Through the years of I-680 construction, with Spanish as a dominant language in the community, East San José remained a largely Mexican immigrant community, punished for their own segregation and exclusion with "white men's roads" through their residences (Archer, 2020; Pitti, 2003).

The most affordable, "blighted" homes were razed over, with no thought of replacement housing and no comparably affordable housing built then or now. Minority families displaced by the freeways, but particularly Latino families residing in the densest and lowest-cost Downtown and Eastside housing through which I-280 and I-680 would be built, were often displaced out of the city of San José. This displacement also led to unevenly distributed burdens for displaced Latino populations, including compounded inequities leading to higher risks of debt, stress-exposure, and health risks from air pollution and emissions. Even today, the history of San José's segregation is still reflected in the city's spatial distribution, with the vast majority of the city's Latino population still concentrated in the Central and East side communities. By splitting these

communities, oftentimes literally bulldozing and bisecting previously whole and thriving neighborhood networks, residents' ability to organize and actively participate in the political decision-making process was decimated.

Communities in Central San José were only marginally better off. Rather than being outright ignored, Central San José communities were given various appeasements, according to local activists. Some interviewed residents remark how the city offered the Gardner neighborhood, for example, a community center and community pool around the time of the freeway construction that divided the neighborhood (San José Resident 1, 2022; San José Resident 2, 2022; San José Resident 3, 2022). While communities of color may not have had as much power to win sunken or greenery-lined freeways, even as they were defined by residential instability, stories of the injustices faced by Downtown and Eastside communities, as well as the acts of community resistance, still live on in the existing community today. In the historical words of an 1876 observer of how segregated Mexican residents of San José, communities of color "uttered murmurs not loud but deep" in the face of injustice.

Figure 12: Income Map of San José Census Block Groups, from Lowest (Lightest) to Highest (Darkest) Median Household Income (City-Data, 2019)



4.4. Freeway Impacts on Neighborhoods: Oral Histories of Displacement

> "Las casitas near the gray cannery,
>
> nestled amid wild abrazos of climbing roses
>
> and man-high red geraniums
>
> are gone now. The freeway conceals it
>
> all beneath a raised scar.
>
> … I scramble over the wire fence
>
> that would have kept me out."
>
> - Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Freeway 280" (Cervantes, 1981)

4.4.1. Interstate 280

In the heart of San José, the stretch of Sinclair Freeway that runs from downtown, beginning at Route 87 or Guadalupe Freeway, to US 101 cuts through the center of the census block groups which reported San José's lowest median household incomes (City-Data, 2019). This modern data is not removed from historical housing trends in San José – the city's downtown core is where the oldest and cheapest houses were built. According to present-day residents, the houses in San José's downtown which were seized for I-280's right of way would have been the oldest vintage houses in the city, dating from the 1870s to 1930s. These would have been homes built without foundations, with poorer protection from the elements, standing directly on top of dirt. According to the Planning Department's Interactive Property Assessment website, many of the homes along Sinclair Freeway between Route 87 and near San José State University were built near the turn of the 20th century, from 1890 to 1910. Between the University and US 101, most of these older homes date from around the 1930s to 1950s.

4.4.1.1. Downtown and University Districts

Neighborhoods surrounding I-280 in the central Downtown and University areas include Downtown San José, the South University Neighborhood (SUN), Naglee Park, Martha's Gardens, Washington-Guadalupe, Tamien, Alma-Almaden, O'Brien, and Spartan Keyes. In the years since the initial freeway construction, Downtown has gentrified significantly, with high-rises visible from the freeway and intense redevelopment and investment projects. A stone's throw away, across I-280, the quality of life is vastly different – as residents keenly note, the negative externalities of a freeway, including trash, pollution, displacement, and neglected

populations such as prostitutes and the unhoused tend to, somehow, always land on the south side of the freeway rather than the north (San José Resident 4, 2022; San José Resident 5, 2022).

Before I-280 ripped through the heart of Central San José, these neighborhood communities and neighborhood identities were different. South of San José State University, today's South University Neighborhood and Spartan Keyes neighborhood were a unified downtown community that can trace its namesake to James Frazier Reed, co-leader of the infamous Donner Party. Reed had been dispelled from the party and had traveled ahead to San Francisco through the south bay, eventually returning in the mid-1800s to live on 500 acres to the south of San José's downtown. Three streets in Central San José were named after his wife, Margaret, and two daughters, Martha and Virginia (SUN Association, 2022). One hundred years later, I-280 would separate Reed and Margaret Streets to the north from Martha Street to the south, and the majority of East Virginia Street would be sacrificed for the freeway itself.

In addition to cutting through vital downtown communities, freeway construction also resulted in the displacement of many families. Ironically, the I-280 on-ramp was built directly over what would have been Reed's adobe home at the intersection of Margaret Street and 4th Street (SUN Association, 2022). From an estimate of street maps such as Figure 13, a single interstate on-ramp could have easily torn through as many as 20 to 25 lots on a single densely-built street. The number of homes bulldozed is not an accurate representation of the numbers of families displaced, though – residents whose families had faced displacement from eminent domain recalled instances where a family they knew, or they themselves, had been evicted only for the state to ultimately decide that their home was not necessary to the freeway's right of way. Many

of these homes were redeveloped and resold to different homeowners – interviewees reported that state agents did not work with or notify the originally displaced families about the possibility of buying back their home (San José Activist, 2022; San José Resident 5, 2022; San José Resident 6, 2022).

Figure 13: Density of Spartan Keyes Neighborhood (SCC Planning Office, 2022)

4.4.1.2. Greater Gardner

The Greater Gardner community was also dissected by freeway construction. The Greater Gardner neighborhood's local school, and the neighborhood itself, were named after William H. Gardner, who had bought a lot on Delmas Avenue in 1886, Lot 4 of the Odd Fellows Savings Bank tract. In 1889, Lot 4 was surveyed into 32 house lots, and Gardner had lived in 659 Delmas Avenue on the eastern boundary of that lot. Less than a century later, 659 Delmas Avenue was just one of the homes demolished in 1970 to make way for I-280 (Maggi et al., 2017). Before I-

280, current Gardner neighborhood residents remember when the community was closely entangled with the Sunol neighborhood, Auzerais neighborhood, and the present-day Diridon Station area to the north of I-280 as well as the Washington-Guadalupe and Downtown neighborhoods to the east of Route 87 (San José Informant 2, 2022; San José Resident 1, 2022; San José Resident 2, 2022; San José Resident 3, 2022).

4.4.1.3. Little Saigon

San José's Little Saigon was settled largely in the 1980s with the first wave of Vietnamese immigrants into San José, who moved into the largely commercial and industrial areas where suburban malls were beginning to shutter and close. For the Vietnamese community that settled in the southwest pocket of I-280 and US 101, displacement was less of an issue as Vietnamese families moved into homes in this area primarily from around the 1960s to 1980s. The freeway itself resulted in environmental justice impacts in this community and others, though, who still live in the shadows of the unsunken and noisy Central and Eastside freeways. As successive waves of immigration led to family networks where established Vietnamese immigrants were able to counsel new immigrants about American life, some families encouraged new immigrants to live near the freeway – while the relatively cheaper housing in Central and East San José was attractive enough on its own, the highway intersection also granted mobility to new immigrant families that enabled access to economic opportunities and connection with other community members (San José Informant 2, 2022). This led to the creation of a Vietnamese community centered around Little Saigon. Today, San José is home to the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam itself (Team San José, 2022b).

4.4.2. Interstate 680

To the north of I-680, many of these homes were built in the late 1940s to 1950s, while to the south, many homes were built in the 1960s and 1970s. The history of San José's Eastside is deeply tied to its agricultural history and Latino heritage, and particularly the Mexican-American impact on the community. San José's Eastside barrios were once home to Cesar Chavez, and many of his descendants still reside in the community (Pitti, 2003; San José Resident 1, 2022). The Chicano movement in San José was grounded in the Eastside soil.

In the 1950s, when Chicana Civil Rights activist Sofia Mendoza moved to San José, she once recalled, "'I heard that everybody that was bad lived in East San José. Everybody that was poor lived in East San José. The schools in East San José were no good. I never heard anything good about it. Never. When you drove around, without knowing it, just by appearance, what they were saying was true'" (Alexandra, 2018). With unpaved roads that turned to mud in the rain, the Eastside's largest neighborhood, nicknamed Sal Si Puedes (get out if you can), could have been a reference to the automobiles trapped in the mud or the Eastside's economic underdevelopment (Pitti, 2003). From then until today, East San José remained the center of the city's ethnic Mexican community. From 1960 to 1970, as the farmers, ranchers, packing houses, and canneries who once provided employment to Mexican immigrants were replaced with commercial and industrial businesses that overlooked Mexican laborers, this community was left uniquely disadvantaged within the crossfire of urban development and economic growth which seemed to pass them by (Ybarra, 1972).

San José's Black community also came to be concentrated primarily in the city's Eastside in the wake of the Great Migration. According to the 1970 census, the Arbuckle and Mayfair neighborhoods in East San José were home to the greatest percentages of the city's Black residents, at 14%-18%. Today, the neighborhoods with San José's highest percentages of Black people, at 12%, have shifted from the heart of the city to its edges, showing how Black households have been largely pushed out of the city's economic center (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2016). According to the 2016 American Community Survey, 4% of the Arbuckle neighborhood's population is Black, and the average median household income for the census block has risen – for this particular community, freeway development of I-680 likely played a significant part in pricing out Black households (Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2016). What is particularly concerning is that the corridor near I-680 that is disproportionately wealthier compared to its neighboring Central and East San José census blocks, or that has gentrified the most, overlays those areas where, in the 1970 census, Black households were most heavily concentrated. From 2000 to 2010, across the city, San José saw a -4% decrease in its Black population according to the United Stated Census, putting the city in ninth place in the nine-county Bay Area region for the greatest absolute loss in its Black population (Karner & Marcantonio, 2017, p. 117).

4.4.2.1. Alum Rock

As I-680 curves northward, the freeway cuts directly through the neighborhoods of the Alum Rock district, including Mayfair or Sal Si Puedes, Tropicana, Dobern, Capitol-Goss, and Alum Rock Village. Annexed in 1967, the neighborhood of Mayfair contributed 500 acres and 7,200 people to San José's growth ("City Grew by 7,200 Persons, 500 Acres," 1967). From the road-

view, I-680 passes directly overhead the communities of color that are built flush to the freeway, but looking from below, it is almost startling how close the freeway is built to homes, churches, parks, and parking lots that lie in the shadows of I-680 and the sky-climbing interchange between US 101 and Interstates 280 and 680. Unlike in the Spartan Keyes neighborhood, where a cul-de-sac separates homes from I-280, I-680 was literally built in the backyards of Eastsiders' homes. The line of houses right beside the freeway would face the ever-present noise of moving cars on one side, and a parallel neighborhood street packed with ever-present parked cars on the other.

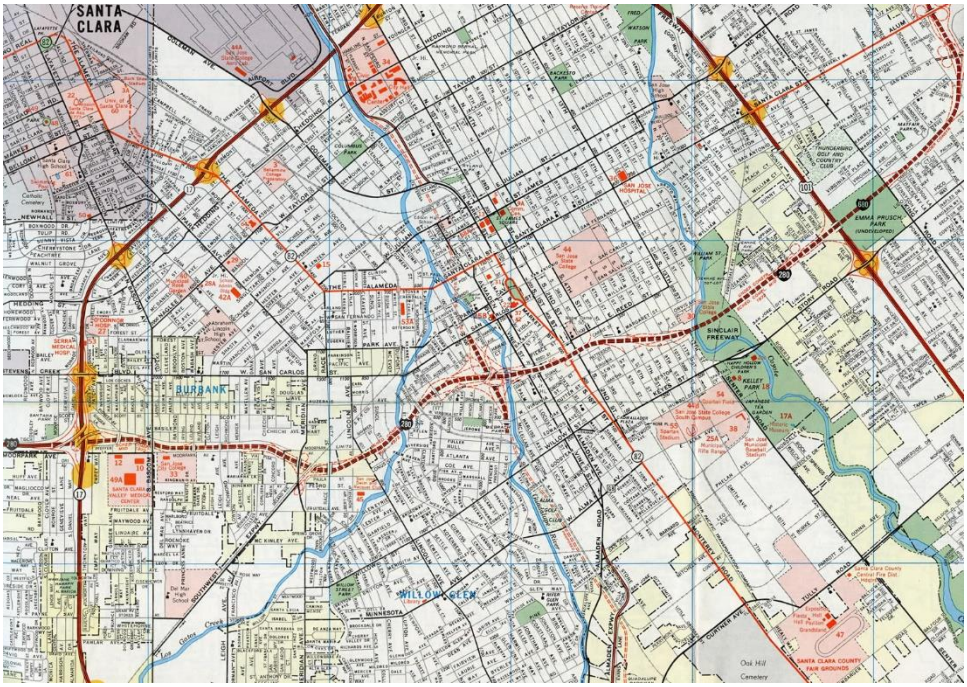
When these homes were taken by eminent domain, residents today recall how their families were not paid fair market prices for the purchase of their home (San José Activist, 2022; San José Resident 6, 2022). With many families moving into San José during the boom years in the 1950s and 1960s, with no warning of the incoming freeway, any family that had attempted to renovate their home would be paid the same pennies as every other displaced family (Pitti, 2003; San José Activist, 2022; San José Resident 4, 2022). Moving anywhere else within the San José would be more expensive than the Eastside, meaning that many families found themselves incurring debts that they had no way of planning for (Pitti, 2003; San José Activist, 2022; San José Resident 4, 2022). If any family had attempted to sue for their home, the money that they would lose on attorneys' fees was certainly not recovered by the purchase price of their home (San José Activist, 2022; San José Informant 1, 2022).

4.4.2.2. Little Portugal and Brookwood Terrace Neighborhoods

San José's Eastside neighborhoods of Little Portugal, Five Wounds, Olinder, Brookwood Terrace, and McKinley-Bonita were particularly impacted by the freeway widening and massive

construction of the interchange between US 101 to Interstates 280 and 680. Little Portugal is the historic heart of San José's Portuguese-American community as well as home to the historic Five Wounds Portuguese National Church, which has stood in the community since 1919 and continues to serve as a cornerstone of the community today (Team San José, 2022a). During the freeway construction era, some families that were displaced by the construction of I-680 were able to relocate to the Little Portugal area (San José Resident 4, 2022; Team San José, 2022a). However, because the interchange and freeway widenings were not complete until the 1980s, residents who were interviewed reported that many families, especially Latino families, were forced to relocate multiple times over the course of these several decades (San José Activist, 2022; San José Resident 4, 2022; San José Resident 6, 2022). The relocations, debt, and quality of life along and because of the freeways put disproportionate stresses upon San José's communities of color.

Figure 14: Map of I-280, 1986 (Interstate Guide, 2020)



4.5. Enduring Freeway Legacy

The construction of I-280 brought a host of issues for those who had been displaced, and also those who now lived in old houses directly beside a roaring freeway. According to the 1984 Environmental Impact Report for the City of San José's Horizon 2000 General Plan, peak hours became even longer, and traffic volumes were greater than before the freeways were built – in an example of induced demand, the freeways intended to mitigate traffic congestion had only created more traffic. In turn, this resulted in more commuters seeking alternative routes and neighborhood streets as well as more traffic going through dispossessed communities, where cheaper-built houses already had the least protections against noise and outdoor pollution (Planning, 1984, p. 59).

This was particularly prevalent for the Central San José communities along I-280, such as Washington-Guadalupe, Spartan Keyes, and Little Saigon, which saw greater shares of drivers hailing from outside of the communities. Commuters from newer sprawling developments in South San José, freight and delivery vehicles traversing San José's downtown and industrial core, and even San José State University students commuting into park-and-rides placed throughout Central San José communities, brought strangers either making their way to or from I-280 (San José Activist, 2022; San José Informant 1, 2022; San José Resident 5, 2022). In 1984, San José's Environmental Impact Report for the city's Horizon 2000 General Plan also proposed plans to further mitigate freeway traffic by implementing "reverse commute" policies, where jobs would be created at the growing southern edge of San José. This would reinforce the role of coupled one-way, high-traffic streets in the communities of color concentrated to the south of I-

280 as workers were funneled from the freeway directly through these communities to new southern job centers (Planning, 1984). Additionally, in the Horizon 2000 General Plan, the city of San José also pledged support to Transportation System Management (TSM) improvement techniques including the construction of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes and park-and-ride facilities (Planning, 1984, p. 59). The park-and-ride facilities built to the south of San José State University, particularly in the Spartan Keyes neighborhood, would also result in increasingly greater traffic and competition for parking for local residents (San José Activist, 2022; San José Informant 1, 2022; San José Resident 5, 2022).

Additional environmental impacts from this heightened traffic also include noise and air pollution. The Gardner community, directly south of the Norman Y. Mineta San José International Airport, bears the brunt of noise and air pollution from both the I-280 and SR 87 freeways, as well as the airplanes which takeoff to the north – south-facing engines roar through the community multiple times an hour. Older downtown houses, some built in and before the early 20th century, circulate much more dirt, dust, and emissions from I-280 than their newer counterparts. In the memories of one resident interviewed for this project, constant soot left their mother in a never-ending war with her white windows and sheer curtains that would turn gray from the freeway's pollution (San José Resident 5, 2022).

Through the heart of San José where I-280 and I-680 interchange, the noise of the freeway is unmitigated by soundwalls the way that it is in other northern communities such as Milpitas. It is only after a five-year fight with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority that the Gardner

community is finally able to move forward with their proposal for soundwalls at I-280, which are set to begin construction in 2023, or so the community hopes.

To the east of US 101, the impacts of freeway development have led to lasting systemic environmental and transportation injustices for the Mayfair community — in 2016, the city's Vision Zero Action Plan found that 33% of all fatalities and severe injuries took place on a few key Priority Safety Corridors, which are inequitably concentrated primarily in San José's south-central core and east side (Fearer, 2015). Two roads which run parallel to US 101, McLaughlin Avenue to the west and King Road to the east, are included in these Priority Safety Corridors. Additionally, Story Road is a six-lane street with heavy car traffic at all hours of the day (San José Informant 1, 2022; Team San José, 2022b). Especially at the intersection of Story Road and McLaughlin Avenue, it is clear that bicyclists, wheel-chair users, the elderly, and many other non-vehicle road-users are closely mixed with vehicle-users on this multi-functional high-speed, high-traffic street. According to one resident, the intersection of King Road and Story Road is one of the biggest and most high-traffic intersections in the city.

And in the McKinley-Bonita neighborhood today, McKinley Elementary School, which lies directly north of Little Saigon's Grand Century Shopping Mall, is impacted by both the dangers of I-280 and US 101 as well as the disproportionate risks McLaughlin Avenue, one of the Vision Zero Priority Safety Corridors, poses to pedestrians. In the four-year timespan from 2013-2017, there were 73 pedestrian collisions and 68 bicycle collisions within a 1-mile radius of the elementary school (Fearer et al., 2018).

Construction did not come without some boons, though. In contrast to how I-680 cut through some communities' backyards, some neighborhoods that were spliced by I-280 suddenly found that they were no longer high-traffic downtown thoroughfares, but instead cul-de-sacs where children could safely romp in the streets. Particularly in the Spartan Keyes neighborhood, bracketed by high-speed and noisy traffic from cars as well as delivery and freight vehicles entering or exiting the on- and off-ramps at 7th Street and 10th Street, the relatively quiet cul-de-sacs gave parents some measure of security (San José Resident 5, 2022). During the construction years, multiple community informants reported in interviews that they have many childhood memories of playing in the construction zone's dirt piles, when the ends of their streets were dirt playgrounds with only the center beam of the freeway-to-be erected (San José Activist, 2022; San José Resident 4, 2022; San José Resident 5, 2022; San José Resident 6, 2022). Today, these cul-de-sacs even host San José's National Night Out events, which are annual police-community partnership events to promote parks, recreation, and neighborhood services (San José Resident 5, 2022).

Chapter 5. Complementary Analysis

As a critique of development ideologies and as a way to explain social dependency theory on the racial effects of poverty, the theory of internal colonialism came to be a way for Black nationalists and Chicano radicals to explain their own dependent status in the United States as a product of forced enslavement and military occupation (Gutiérrez, 2004). From their beginnings in the U.S. and specifically in California, the dispossession of poor people of color repeatedly threatened indigenous values and non-white ways of life. In San José, the wide-scale dispossession of the Mexican community, transformed from a once well-established community to a low-wage, migratory labor force during the city's agricultural era and "absorbed and discarded by white farmers as seasonal needs dictated," turned ethnic Mexicans into an "internal colony" in Northern California (Pitti, 2003, p. 49). Even after the agricultural fields were no longer the main driver of profit in Santa Clara Valley, communities of color continued to be dispossessed through the modern urban renewal era – all "those who took Californio lands profited from racial violence in the Valley" (Pitti, 2003, p. 49).

Today, the city continues to grow, but communities of color remain the least invested in. With the least growth in housing, the greatest share of poor quality housing, the least increase in median income, and continuing threats of displacement from new predatory investment projects, San José's communities of color continue to face the impacts of residential segregation which is exacerbated by the siting and construction of freeways. Through quantitative geospatial analysis of the direct impacts of freeway construction on housing destruction in the freeways' path, destroyed housing was found to belong disproportionately to residents of color (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023).

Using census tract-level data for the study period of 1960 to 1980, a team of UC Davis researchers analyzed tracts based on their adjacency to freeways I-280 and I-680 to determine the shares of people of color residing near the freeways as compared to the rest of San José, as well as the change in total housing units and the change in median family income.

From 1960 to 1980, the tracts adjacent to the freeway, or tracts impacted by freeway siting and construction, had the greatest shares of residents of color (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023). In 1960, 32% of residents in adjacent, "impacted" tracts were Black, Latino, or some other race; after the freeways were completed in 1980, though, this share grew to 68%, half of whom were Latino (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023). Despite a relative lack of growth in total housing units, this share of residents of color increased over the study period, suggesting increasing rather than decreasing residential segregation from 1960 to 1980 as the freeways were constructed.

Table 1: Racial/Ethnic Composition of Census Tracts along I-280/I-680, San José, 1960-1980 (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023)

	Share, Residents of Color, Including Latino/a			Share, Black			Share, Latino/a		
	1960	**1970**	**1980**	**1960**	**1970**	**1980**	**1960**	**1970**	**1980**
Santa Clara County	15%	23%	29%	1%	2%	3%	12%	17%	17%
City of San José	17%	28%	36%	1%	2%	5%	14%	22%	22%
Non-impacted San José	15%	24%	32%	1%	2%	4%	12%	19%	19%
Impacted Tracts	32%	56%	68%	3%	6%	7%	28%	46%	50%

As San José experienced a rapid annexation period and came to be the residential center of the Bay Area, total housing units more than doubled in San José and across Santa Clara County. The neighborhoods adjacent to the freeways, though, experienced a much slower rate of housing growth, with half of the studied impacted census tracts losing housing units between 1960 and 1970 (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023).

Table 2. Total Housing Units, San José, 1960-1980 (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023)

	1960	1970	1980	Change, 1960-1980
Santa Clara County	199,922	336,443	673,817	+237%
City of San José	68,890	136,246	216,653	+214%
Non-impacted San José	52,782	116,765	192,793	+265%
Impacted Tracts	16,108	19,481	23,860	+48%

While the median family income in 1960 for neighborhoods in the path of the freeways was significantly lower than that of the rest of the city, this disparity worsened after the construction of the freeways. From 1960 to 1980, the change in income experienced by impacted households was just 13% as compared to a 49% increase in inflation-adjusted income for the rest of San José (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023). In this period, home and rent values also increased the least for

freeway-impacted neighborhoods in comparison to the rest of the city, with median home values increasing 96% in impacted tracts as compared to 119% in non-impacted tracts, and median contract rent increasing 9% in impacted tracts as compared to 39% in non-impacted tracts (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023).

With access to housing, dispossessed communities of color still lacked the same advantages in wealth generation as their home values and incomes remained depressed because of residential segregation. Based on the theory of accumulation by dispossession, freeways funneled wealth from dispossessed, impacted tracts to the rest of San José and beyond, to the suburbs of Santa Clara County.

Table 3. Median Family Income, San José, 1960-1980 (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023)

	Median Family Income		Income Relative to Santa Clara County			Change in Inflation-adjusted Income
	1960	**1980**	**1960**	**1970**	**1980**	**1960-1980**
Santa Clara County	$7,417	$26,659	N/A	N/A	N/A	+46%
City of San José	$6,949	$25,598	94%	96%	96%	+49%
Non-impacted San José	$7,117	$26,501	96%	99%	99%	+51%
Impacted Tracts	$5,764	$16,027	78%	64%	60%	+13%

Today, the housing across the city of San José remains disproportionately of poorer quality for households of color, as compared to white households. The Department of Housing and Urban Development recognizes four categories of "housing problems:" housing units which lack complete kitchen facilities, housing units which lack complete plumbing facilities, overcrowded households, and cost-burdened households (PD&R, n.d.). Many Latino residents of San José still live in the Eastside, and more than twice the share of Latino households have one or more of the HUD's housing problems as compared to white households (Morales-Ferrand, 2021).

Table 4: San José Household Housing Problems by Race (Morales-Ferrand, 2021)

Race/Ethnicity	**# of Households with any of HUD's Four "Housing Problems"**	**All Households**	**% Households with Problems**
White, Non-Hispanic	48,057	152,121	31.6%
Black, Non-Hispanic	5,858	11,023	53.1%
Latinx/Hispanic	51,719	77,851	66.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	46,939	107,653	43.6%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	271	1,967	13.8%
Other, Non-Hispanic	3,941	36,062	10.9%
Total	156,785	386,677	40.6%

Chapter 6. Policy Implications

It is not too late for reparations and quality improvements for communities of color, though. To ensure that the future is brighter for all residents of San José, the city's Department of Transportation adopted the San José Downtown Transportation Plan on November 15, 2022 as the city's first unified downtown circulation strategy. Historically, city agencies have planned transportation networks on a project-by-project basis, but the Downtown Transportation Plan offers a vision for how these projects impact communities holistically (San José Informant 2, 2022). Included in this Downtown Transportation Plan were ambitious large-scale potential improvement plans called "Big Moves," which included items such as a better-connected trail network through the city and major changes to the downtown freeways. Some options included the transformation of Route 87 into a street-level urban boulevard rather than the existing elevated freeway, decking over I-280 to create public plazas, and consolidating freeway on- and off-ramps to reconnect downtown neighborhoods and reunify San José's segregated downtown community. These "Big Moves" would attempt to recreate a vibrant San José downtown, though it is unclear if they are still under consideration.

Hopefully, the Downtown Transportation Plan will also address not only the holistic impacts of transportation projects, but how entire transportation systems impact communities. In this effort, full citizen participation will be vital. While "Big Moves" to reverse the negative impacts of freeways are a lofty and inspirational goal, communities want these major improvements in addition to near-term changes. Examples of investment projects which serve the needs of the existing communities include: protective guard rails and proper lighting across freeway pedestrian paths, particularly those leading to and from elementary schools such as in the

Gardner and McKinley-Bonita neighborhoods; a 50-acre park on the industrial dump site at Remillard Court near the Spartan Keyes and Little Saigon neighborhoods; and insurance on the historic Church of Five Wounds as new 28th Street/Little Portugal BART station development is proposed.

Transportation projects which promise a safer and better-connected San José are also in the works, but they come with their own sets of potential for dispossession. Members of the community also again face displacement pressures as high-speed rail threatens to tear through the community, instead of following I-280 to prevent the further destruction of homes. While high-speed rail may not come for some time in the future, transit-oriented development in San José's Downtown West, centered around Diridon Station, is also underway. Across I-280 from Diridon Station, cyclists and pedestrians, especially families of school children commuting to the school, park, or pool at the Gardner Community Center, already regularly trek across the dangerous freeway with no rail guards or anything to protect them from vehicle traffic. When the redevelopment of Diridon Station brings both construction and greater numbers of cross-freeway commuters, residents stated fears that the continued lack of freeway safety precautions for non-vehicle road-users may disproportionately endanger vulnerable pedestrian and cyclist populations (San José Resident 1, 2022; San José Resident 2, 2022; San José Resident 3, 2022).

The federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program, which provides grant funding for the planning, design, demolition, and reconstruction of streets, parks, and other infrastructure and is meant to reconnect communities which have been divided by transportation infrastructure, also allocated $2 million to San José. This project funds the review and redesign of Monterey

Highway, which runs through neighborhoods south of I-280 including Alma-Almaden and Spartan Keyes, into a grand boulevard to provide dedicated urban greening as well as transit and bike lanes for a complete street (Padilla, 2023).

6.1. Predatory Investment

However, issues remain with the threat that predatory investments, such as these transportation projects, pose to existing communities of color. Today, many of the areas identified as "D" grade and blighted are at the highest risk of gentrification, with several neighborhoods including Japantown and Little Portugal having experienced advanced gentrification (San José Spotlight, 2019). A report from UC Berkeley's Urban Displacement Project adds that most of Central and East San José are currently undergoing or at risk of gentrification (San José Spotlight, 2019). With new infrastructure developments such as new BART stations and high-speed rail this risk of gentrification in San José may continue to increase and displace vulnerable San José residents.

This does not mean that equitable transportation projects which promise safety, access, and opportunity, particularly for dispossessed communities, should not be pursued. Growth and investment are not the problems that truly threaten to dispossess communities, even when growth seems so rapid and unpredictable with risks that are difficult to be protected from. The greatest driver of the dispossession of communities of color has always been the inequitable distribution of the benefits of investment. Gentrification is a "problem that can only be manifested where vast wealth inequality already exists," and unless residential, income, and wealth inequality are addressed, low-income and low-wealth communities of color will continue to have little say in the futures of their neighborhoods (Miller, 2019).

In the context of dispossession, the continued inequitable outcomes which people of color face, despite equity-focused projects and investments, begin to gain an actionable logic. Policies, especially those aimed at community empowerment, affirmative housing, anti-displacement and anti-gentrification, restorative justice, and other practices which support communities of color's capability to self-determine their own futures, should be explicit in preventing the further dispossession of the existing community. Policymakers and developers should recognize the process of dispossession at work and target the process of "gentrification" for what it really is – the dispossession of the existing community, whose right to remain in place should not conflict with their right to safety, accessibility, and opportunity.

6.2. The Right to Remain

Passing affordable housing policy is not enough to protect existing residents, though – when low-income, low-wealth families of color inevitably move out and the process of neighborhood change welcomes in younger, college-educated renters with medium-income who dedicate a lower share of their income to rent, it will not be because affordable housing policies failed, but because they succeeded. Even if property values remain unchanged, the practice of lending prioritizes white renters over renters of color. Supporting policies such as the proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) for affirmative housing is more important in today's volatile and conservative political arena than ever before (HUD, 2023).

But while affirmative housing is critically important, it is also not enough to merely prevent the displacement of the existing community, or neighborhood change, or the process of

gentrification. A commitment to keeping the existing community able to live in the places they work, and work in the places they live, is most important – whether that means opening the possibility of upward mobility to dispossessed communities of color, or ensuring that the "permanent underclass" is, at the least, able to afford to live in their renewed and regenerated community rather than totally displaced.

Essentially, seeking strategies that build communities' capability for self-determination is critical to protecting community members' right to remain in their communities. Presently, we live in societies in which different populations have "uneven and differential capabilities of mobility," in which the right to self-determine, to freely move according to one's will, is policed in vastly different ways (Adey et al., 2021, p. 13). Mobilities scholar Mimi Sheller, in theories of mobility justice, points out how the right to (im)mobility is unevenly distributed, with the mobility of vulnerable peoples policed in ways that the mobility of those with more privileged intersections of identities are not (Adey et al., 2021; Sheller, 2018).

Along with the right to feel safe moving through public space, Sheller's concept of mobility justice also includes the right to remain in place – to resist the political and market forces which displace people, and to have their safety and dignity intact while (im)mobile. As a recent example of the right to remain, migrant agricultural workers whose "right to remain" was threatened by their forced mobility, following crop seasons from region to region, were disproportionately exposed to COVID-19 during global lockdowns while at the same time experiencing little access to healthcare and no sick leave (Adey et al., 2021). Safety, security, and wealth are tied to the right to freely move of one's own volition, as well as the right to freely stay

of one's own volition – the right to remain in place, and particularly in a home, becomes critically important in a capitalist society in which wealth, primarily, is perceived as a buffer from negative risks and insecurity.

In the same vein, author bell hooks expands upon the role of the right to remain in the idea of "homeplace," which professor of educational theory and practice Bettina Love explains as more than a community but also a site of resistance (Love, 2019). Homeplaces, rooted in community and in place, are the sites in which vulnerable people's emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial struggles are honored and healed. The right to be physically and spatially connected with a community, to build social cohesion and to gather freely and of one's own volition, is just as critical to the right to remain as homeownership and other anti-displacement strategies. Finally, this right to remain must go hand-in-hand with the right to convene and to stay without the (often physical) threat of enforcement, or threat from structures such as the police which enforce the criminalization of vulnerable people and their right to move freely.

Protecting the right to mobility seeks to decriminalize certain mobilities, particularly the mobility of the Othered. In a society in which capital is so tied up in place, or in land, this othered mobility is a natural consequence of dispossessing the Other of the right to remain in place. In a capitalist society in which the ability to bank wealth is critical to generational wealth-building, access to banking services, together with property and homeownership, give community members the stability to remain and to build communities and homeplaces. In this vein, strategies aimed at preventing dispossession must consciously seek to "re-possess" communities of the wealth that they have been systematically stripped of through the processes of segregation,

redlining, and urban renewal and predatory investment. The right to remain in place, in one's home, allows vulnerable communities to bank and build wealth in ways which buffer them from negative risks, protecting vulnerable households from the threats of housing and job insecurity.

6.3. Community Re-possession

The idea of justice for the mobile generates a vision of the future which radically reimagines capitalism itself. Mobility justice is a noble goal to strive towards while we continue to ensure that those who are most at risk today can do more than just survive but thrive, to fully engage in the makings of a just society. Protecting the right to remain, and the right to build capital within a system which greatly privileges the ability to "shelter-in-place," helps empower those whose right to remain is at risk due to their greater likelihood for potentially predatory threats of investment. Other strategies for community empowerment, which protect the right to remain, include collaborative housing, a term which seeks to unite the various related movements such as "community-led," "participative," "resident-led," "co-operative," and "mutual" housing, or even "co-housing" (Hodkinson, 2012). These housing models aim to remove properties off of the speculative market, recycling land locally to be democratically governed long-term by and for the local community in order to ensure affordable housing in the future (Hodkinson, 2012). Collaborative housing sets the frameworks by which communities may begin to self-determine by owning, planning, designing, and operating their own communities.

In the words of Jeanne van Heeswijk, artist and co-creator of the community-owned housing model, Homebaked, "housing is the battlefield of our time and the house is its monument" (van Heeswijk, 2014). The idea behind collaborative housing is not only restricted merely to homes,

though. Collaborative housing movements that protect affordable housing and promote paths to homeownership provide communities the space to store resources and build commons. Urban commons, commonly owned and publicly shared spaces and services, and other "third places" for social connection outside of the home or workplace create the conditions for participatory community planning and design.

Homebaked is a housing and re-use scheme from the English neighborhood of Anfield, home to the Liverpool Football Club. When the Housing Market Renewal Initiative began earmarking buildings in Anfield for renewal, a neighborhood bakery set to be demolished became a site of resistance. Rather than allow the older bakery owners to close and be forced to retire without compensation, in 2011, the neighborhood led a project to create a "small-scale community-led alternative to large planning schemes" which acknowledged residents as the local expertise in planning, design, and development, and invited professional design consultants and other expertise to the table in collaboration with residents (HCLT, n.d.; van Heeswijk, 2014). From this project, residents established the Homebaked Community Land Trust (CLT), which holds land and acts as the long-term steward of community assets. Homebaked CLT is a model for participatory land and economic development, supporting the community-led planning of the entire bakery's retail block to build their own high street (HCLT, n.d.). This method of participatory design and planning, held by the CLT, ensure that all assets and land are co-owned in perpetuity and that businesses and homes on the land remain affordable (van Heeswijk, 2014).

In Northern California, the Bay Area Community Land Trust (BACLT) and the South Bay Community Land Trust run cooperative land stewardship projects to create permanent affordable

housing. By taking property and homes out of the speculative market, these CLTs protect vulnerable families' right to remain in place. In February 2023, the South Bay CLT acquired a four-plex as a community land trust home in a Downtown San José neighborhood near Diridon Station which is experiencing rapid gentrification (SBCLT, 2023). This purchase permanently preserves housing for 10 individuals at the highest risk of homelessness. Supporting these initiatives to return land back to communities, and trusting community members as local experts, helps protect vulnerable communities from the heightened threat of dispossession associated with private developers.

Another strategy to increase the effectiveness of CLTs is partnerships with land banks, which are public entities with unique state-protected powers to acquire and hold properties. Land banks can more effectively purchase and sell properties than nonprofits such as CLTs, but on their own, lack the participatory structure that CLTs provide to work in communities' best interests – such as the creation of long-term, affordable housing. Working together, land banks can transfer properties to CLTs to advance collaborative housing goals and participatory development. All of these structures together provide security to vulnerable communities and act as buffers against the threat of dispossession, ensuring that investment is community-building rather than predatory.

Ultimately, working towards the production of urban commons, or shared urban spaces which enrich communities by funneling benefits back into the communities, goes hand-in-hand with the right to produce perceived, conceived, or lived urban space, as well as the right to physically access, occupy, and use those urban spaces. All these community-building and communal land

stewardship structures additionally put frameworks in place for eventual land repatriation and the equitable redistribution of profits, power, and ecological stewardship back to Indigenous communities. Aligning transportation investments with land-use planning is an important step in the pursuit of mobility justice by recognizing the populations that are negatively impacted and targeting these populations as beneficiaries of policy changes.

While many federal transportation investment projects such as the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program or the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program have goals aimed at reconnecting access to economic opportunities, these programs may fail to create material benefits for the specific communities at risk of displacement, even as economic opportunities increase for other, incoming residents. In the pursuit of strategies which protect communities' right to remain, current transportation investment projects such as those funded through the Reconnecting Communities program could begin including structures for long-term post-project evaluation metrics that seek to create lasting pipelines of communication with the impacted community. These federal and state programs could also create a scheme which incentivizes cities to engage in more transparent community engagement as a requirement for funding. The goal of transportation policy, aligned with the goals of mobility justice, should seek to foster the right to move while also protecting the right to remain in place, un-policed, un-displaced, and un-dispossessed. Transportation policy more widely would benefit from being able to name and target communities whose right to remain in place is especially threatened.

However, real barriers exist that prevent governments from easily pursuing these goals. In part due to the connected nature of transportation facilities, their public nature raises the question of "fairness" when targeting groups as beneficiaries of transportation policy, even when a disadvantaged group can be identified. Addressing the lack of specificity in transportation policy target groups may provide solutions to protecting communities most vulnerable to dispossession. Additionally, the gift of financial resources without strings attached better positions local communities to be able to develop outside of the purvey of the state and create the community resources which would help insure against the risks that transportation investments may carry. This capability to self-determine requires trust which technical experts have historically denied low-income communities and communities of color, though – short of fixing core structures of governance, strategies which prioritize community empowerment best protect communities from the threat of dispossession.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

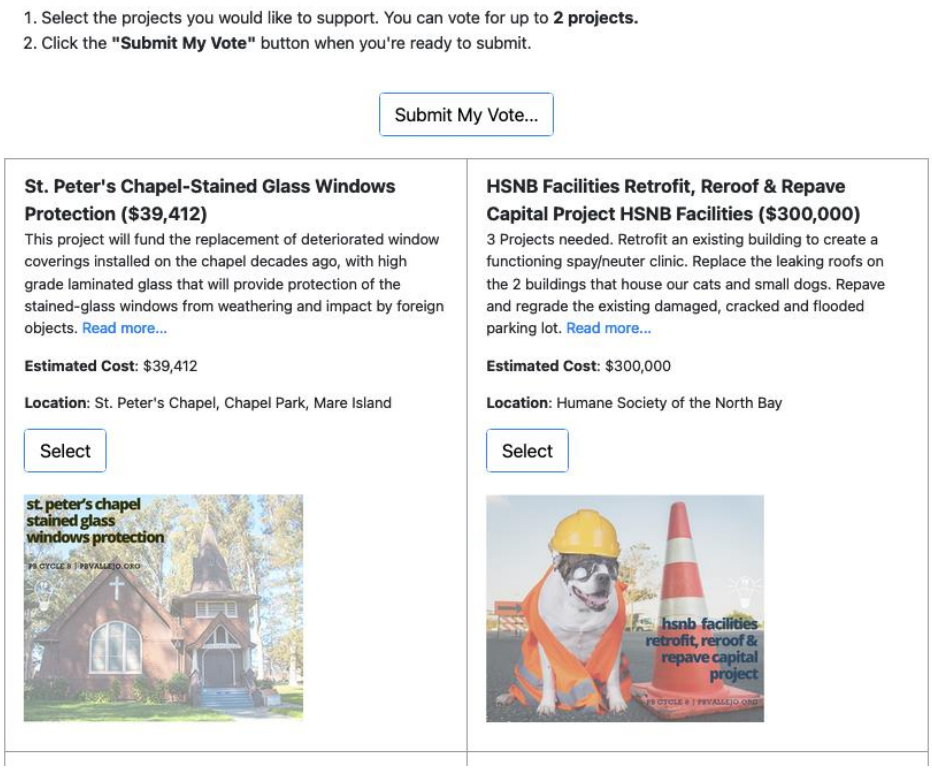
> "A society is free in so far, and only in so far as all the elements composing it are able in fact and not merely in theory, **to make the most of their powers to grow to their full stature**, to do what they conceive as their duty…. In so far as the opportunity to lead a life worthy of human beings is restricted to a minority, what is commonly described as freedom would more properly be called privilege."
>
> - Martin Bulmer, *The Goals of Social Policy* (Bulmer et al., 1989, p. 148)

The construction of roadways has had great impacts on the present of San José. These fears came to play out in real ways for the communities of color that were cut through by I-280 and I-680, as traffic dangers in addition to air and noise pollution disproportionately impact these communities.

Transportation itself, and transportation investments alone, are not the sole drivers of inequality, but the wide-cutting scythe wielded by developers and public officials disproportionately impacts poor communities of color, whether or not the attack was intentionally targeted. Nonetheless, transportation agencies should recognize how the impacts of transportation infrastructure, particularly predatory infrastructural investments born from the logic of urban renewal, have resulted in undeniably racialized experiences of dispossession. As the links between transportation, land use, and housing become ever-clearer, professionals and policymakers involved in transportation and housing should work on local solutions that protect affirmative housing, while also being cognizant that local community-based advocacy groups may sometimes reinforce the exclusion of the communities they represent (Bulmer et al., 1989).

More importantly, commitments to co-intentional community dialogue practices, such as story circles which inherently trust in the power of the oppressed to voice their own reasons and concerns, highlight where professionals trained in social and communications sciences can help technical planners and engineers to co-create solutions that mitigate the dispossession of existing communities (Deardorff, 2019; Freire, 2014). Another practice which seeks to move beyond the pseudo-participation of "slogans, communiques, monologues, and instructions" and towards liberatory participation and self-determination is participatory budgeting, which allows community members to communicate in a low-effort manner to prioritize city projects (City of Vallejo, 2023). Additionally, grant programs such as the federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program should include legislation requiring transportation agencies to document changes in neighborhood demographics before and after the project period as a measure of evaluation.

Figure 15: Vallejo, CA Participatory Budget Voting Form



Ultimately, reforming current land use and zoning practices to provide opportunities for upward mobility to communities of color is pivotal to protecting these communities from the threat of dispossession. In other words, strategies for community re-possession via collaborative housing and participatory development are critical to protecting the rights of low-income communities and communities of color to move freely, to remain in place, and to self-determine their futures. In their own policy recommendations to advance racial equity in housing, Habitat for Humanity recommends action items such as increasing access to down payment assistance and affordable credit as well as reforming zoning for mixed-income communities and ensuring that voucher mobility programs include practices which protect families such as landlord mediation, tenant counseling, and moving-cost assistance (Habitat, 2020). Collaborative housing and other measures of collective development and management of urban commons ensure that the burden of protecting one's family from the threat of dispossession is not borne alone, and that the assets of the community are shared and strengthened.

Gifting land to community land trusts and engaging in neighborhood revitalization in a responsible manner and through a racial equity lens are steps to engage in more just and fair land development that serves the community's needs. In imagining the urban commons and the creation of public community spaces where all (im)mobilities are fully entitled to dignity and respect, the intersection between transportation, housing, and land use becomes clearer than ever before – the right to move, the right to stay, and the right to self-determine are mirrors of each other. At its root, dispossession strips communities of their right to free and dignified mobility. In the words of the Untokening Collective, "streets, infrastructure, and transportation are intimately tied to the human experience. For many, mobility is shaped by deliberately designed barriers,"

such as freeways which divide communities (Untokening Collective, 2017). In the struggle to break down these barriers, building strategies for community re-possession is a first step towards a future in which we may both move and stay easily, fairly, and unafraid (Untokening Collective, 2017).

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