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The Legacy of the Freeway in Sacramento: Mobility (in)justice and Recurrent Gentrification

By

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# Abstract

Mobility justice explains justice and injustice in terms of the movement of people, goods, capital, and ideas according to power structures and resource imbalances at multiple scales. Traditionally gentrification scholarship has dealt with other causes of gentrification, such as rising housing costs, real estate speculation, and demand and supply imbalance. The role of transportation infrastructure and forced community movement is under-examined in the transportation literature. This thesis seeks to apply the mobility justice concept to current gentrification in a case study of the Sacramento neighborhood of Oak Park, using oral history interviews with community members, historic document analysis, and analysis of transportation infrastructure. I find that racial covenants, redlining, urban renewal, and freeway building have all served to influence the mobilities of Oak Park residents, especially low-income people of color. Framing gentrification as part of an ongoing process of mobility injustice allows solutions from mobility justice that prioritize the power, decision-making, and needs of community members over the advancement of capital interests. In the short term, cities can prioritize participatory planning, freeway teardown, housing creation, tenant protections, and enhancement of non-car transportation options to enable residents to stay in their communities and benefit from rather than be displaced by investments and changes.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

Tracing Sacramento's development history in conjunction with transportation infrastructure changes presents an opportunity to examine the overlapping impacts of urban renewal, urban redevelopment and freeway construction on current processes of gentrification and racial segregation. The freeway construction process was a powerful facet of state-sanctioned racial violence and the permanence of the freeway system in the United States, along with the continuing disparate outcomes for health, accessibility, and economic outcomes, points to a need for understanding the impact the process had on current planning processes and infrastructure. Evaluating how historic planning and development practices were used to create physical divisions throughout the city and how those processes laid the foundation for current planning and transportation practices and assessing this through a transportation justice and mobility justice framework will provide insight into the mobility injustices plaguing Sacramento (and California) to this day. I use the framework of mobility justice to connect transportation and gentrification and position gentrification as an element of mobility injustice that can be caused by transportation infrastructure. The broad framework of mobility justice positions transportation as one element of movement, but also deals with the broader movement of people, resources, information, and capital.

The report, the *Implications of Freeway Siting in California* evaluated the impact of freeway building in the 1950s - 1970s on communities of color in four cities, including Sacramento. The research was conducted by a joint team of researchers at UCLA and UC Davis in 2022

(Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2023) and I co-authored the Sacramento section. In Sacramento, urban renewal in the downtown neighborhood of West End displaced thousands of residents prior to the construction of the I-5 freeway and destroyed what was originally the second largest Japantown in California. Prior to urban renewal to develop a new Capitol Mall, the area was home to many Black, Latino, Chinese, and Japanese residents and housed 70% of Sacramento's non-white population (Paul, 2012 cited in Loukaitou-Sideris et al, 2023). The neighborhood of Oak Park, where many Black residents moved to in the 1970s after the destruction of West End, has dealt with recurrent gentrification and displacement for decades that has pushed residents not only out of Oak Park, but out of Sacramento entirely. The same infrastructure that sliced off Oak Park from the rest of Sacramento, I-80, I-5 and State Route 99, upholds a system of automobility that nearly necessitates car ownership to access jobs, healthcare, and recreation and allows higher-income residents to move to Oak Park and price out existing residents.

Through the framework of mobility justice and racial capitalism the history of transportation, development, gentrification, and displacement is traced in Sacramento from the era of racial exclusion laying the groundwork for a segregated city through to the contemporary era.

Identifying gentrification and displacement as iterations of forced mobility widens the scope of transportation disbenefits outside the traditional analyses and sheds light on how transportation infrastructure has historically been wielded as an arm of racialized dispossession and displacement. The theoretical framework in chapter 2 defines transportation equity and transportation justice as two commonly used concepts in the transportation sphere, the intersection of transportation infrastructure and racism, and finally the tie between mobility

justice and gentrification. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology and questions for this report. Chapter 4 lays the groundwork of racial exclusion in early Sacramento that set the stage for urban renewal and freeway building in the mid 20th century. Chapter 5 details freeway construction through Sacramento. Finally, the gentrification and displacement in contemporary Oak Park is described in Chapter 6 and tied back to the freeway displacement of previous decades and the discussion in Chapter 7 address potential short term solutions for housing and transportation.

Prioritizing mobility of goods, capital, and vehicles for decades through continued freeway investment has yielded rampant dispossession, gentrification, and displacement. While some city transportation departments are trying to incorporate transportation equity by looking at the benefits and disbenefits of certain investments for different demographic groups, this approach stops short of addressing many of the concerns community members rightfully have about gentrification as a result of transportation investments and continued prioritization of car infrastructure and mobility over human-scale mobility and access. By connecting the gentrification and displacement processes in present-day Sacramento with the infrastructure changes of the past century, I place gentrification as an outcome of processes of mobility injustice. Finally, I describe ongoing processes of beginning to rectify the harms of transportation infrastructure and gentrification through participatory planning, freeway teardown, housing creation, tenant protections, and enhancement of non-car transportation options that can enable residents to stay in their communities and benefit from, rather than be displaced by, investments and changes.



## Chapter 2. Theoretical Frameworks

Transportation equity, transportation justice, and mobility justice all touch on the ways transportation influences the daily lives of people in either harmful or beneficial ways. The concept of transportation equity has gained prominence in recent years to shift transportation planning from purely quantitative, cost-benefit, efficiency-based analyses into more holistic evaluations that decipher the distributions of benefits and burdens between groups of people and specific neighborhoods. Transportation justice builds on this to interrogate the way we move towards a more equitable transportation system and offers ideas about re-distributing power over planning back into the hands of community members. Mobility justice is the broadest framework and deals not with transportation, but with mobility. Transportation entails a prescribed and closed system of infrastructure, modes, specified externalities dealing with the movement of goods and people. Mobility on the other hand describes the inherent movement of people, ideas, and resources, and because of this flow of movement positions mobility itself as a right not to be hampered by race, border relations, age, or ability. Through transportation justice, people deserve equal access and opportunities and the transportation system should be set up to provide these benefits and through mobility justice people deserve the right to movement (or stasis) which is where gentrification theory and resulting displacement (forced movement) occupies a segment of mobility injustice.

The definitions of transportation equity, transportation justice, mobility justice and the overlaps and differences between the theories are expanded on in the section below. The primary

analytical viewpoint for the case will be mobility justice - as it is far broader and ties more directly into understanding the role of racial capitalism and gentrification and the overlaps between these theories and the transportation system. Racial capitalism and gentrification distinctly tie in the built environment outside of the transportation system to lay the foundation for evaluating urban renewal, segregation, and contemporary gentrification in relation to and concurrent with freeway development. Tying together transportation justice and gentrification and displacement under the framework of mobility justice provides the necessary analytical viewpoint to assess both housing unaffordability and transportation in the case study of Sacramento. To arrive at the analysis of contemporary gentrification and displacement in Sacramento a retrospective on mobility injustices through different eras of Sacramento is presented with a particular focus on those related to transportation infrastructure.

## Transportation Equity and Justice

Transportation equity and justice run the gamut from state-oriented distributive justice evaluations of the current transportation system to society-oriented procedural justice implications for the planning process itself and encompasses a large swath of evolving scholarship. Underlying these theories is the acknowledgement that transportation planning and engineering practices have contributed to and created economic, health, and opportunity disparities and a more just underlying philosophy to guide transportation decision-making is possible and should be incorporated into the field (Verlinghieri & Schwanen, 2020).

Transportation equity is more commonly used by state DOTs, city planning departments, and

transit agencies as evaluation frameworks while transportation justice theories describe what a just transportation system might look like and how the process of change can platform community expertise.

Equity is gaining prominence in the transportation field as an evaluation criterion for new transportation projects, policies, and plans. Just as cost, environmental impacts, and mobility are evaluated, equity - meaning the fairness of the distribution of benefits and burdens of transportation investments - is evaluated. Generally, transportation equity focuses on how the benefits and burdens of transportation are distributed and allows for analyses based on what, for whom, and how much (Karner et al, 2020). As an example, the Caltrans priority populations and disadvantaged communities designations capture population characteristics such as race, poverty, education, and employment along with pollution burden, environmental exposure burden, and sensitive population characteristics (e.g. asthma risk, cardiovascular disease, etc.) to identify communities to prioritize climate change investments (OEHHA, nd). Transportation equity analyses can and are being used by federal, state, and local governments to identify vulnerable communities, assess the fairness of proposed improvements, and measure benefits and burdens of new projects and policies for communities (Bills, 2022). Transportation equity follows the empirical, quantitative-based methodologies of its forebears and compresses the community into facts, figures, and data that can be mapped onto existing transportation planning processes which is beneficial as an evaluation framework that can be mapped onto existing governmental processes but doesn't necessarily invoke more holistic practices that

approach the community as an independent agent with experience, knowledge, and understanding of transportation needs.

While transportation equity identifies the distribution of the benefits and harms of the existing transportation network and proposed alternatives, transportation justice envisions what distributive justice in the transportation sector could look like by integrating theories of justice with transportation specific considerations. Transportation justice includes several subdisciplines and branching scholarship, but generally transportation justice theories can be substantive and distributive or procedural. The substantive theories describe what transportation justice looks like and the procedural theories describe how transportation justice will be reached.

The substantive theories of transportation justice are commonly distributive, which explains the way certain benefits (reaching wanted end destinations such as grocery stores and friends) and harms (pollution, traffic deaths, community dislocation) are distributed throughout the population. Under a distributive justice conception of transportation justice, sufficient accessibility is a right (Martens, 2017; Pereira et al, 2018). Accessibility is generally the ability for people to get from their origin to needed and wanted destinations using an appropriate mode of transportation (Handy, 2020). Martens (2017) primarily describes what a just transportation system that provides and distributes sufficient access to everyone regardless of race, income, or ability looks like and argues that the state should be responsible for providing a baseline level of access to certain members of society. Marten's (2017) maximax criterion

indicates planners should maximize average accessibility levels and ensure that, “accessibility gaps between population groups remain within an acceptable range” (Martens, 2017, p. 12). Martens’ (2017) theory does not deal with procedural justice, or how this transportation justice will be reached, and has some limitations particularly related to mode agnosticism and market overreliance (Martens, 2020; Vanoutrive and Cooper, 2019; Vanoutrive and Cooper, 2020). Pereira et al (2018) revisited Rawl’s difference principle, which was discarded by Martens, to establish a similar, but not identical distributive justice conception of accessibility. Generally, distributive justice provides a useful starting point to discuss transportation justice as a goal of providing access to everyone and is widely cited in the transportation justice literature.

Distributive justice based theories improved on the field by indicating what transportation planners and engineers can strive for when improving the current transportation system. Transportation equity and Martens’ and Pereira’s theories of transportation justice maintain the role of the state as the expert and decision-maker of the transportation sector. The boundary crossing and large scale nature of parts of the transportation system sometimes necessitates some centralized oversight, but vesting power back into the hands of the community is an important consideration for reaching transportation justice.

Procedural justice oriented visions of transportation justice probe the question of whether the state is the correct arbiter of transportation expertise and decision-making and examines how community agency and expertise can be platformed. This shift in the transportation justice scholarship towards less state-centric solutions (Verlinghieri & Schwanen, 2018; Karner et al.,

2020) aligns with and draws from environmental justice scholarship that argues the state has historically been the arbiter of environmental racism and harm and should be questioned as an effective ally in rectifying harm (Pulido, 2017). In other words, mapping justice-oriented calculations onto existing state planning operations still doesn't adequately involve impacted parties (people who will be using and are impacted by the transportation infrastructure) (Karner et al, 2020; Enright, 2019). This critique parallels that of DeFilippis' (2009) critique of the field of community development, as the idea of the state and state adjacent institutions (community-based institutions) knowing better than the people impacted is a crucial underlying dilemma in the field of community development. The field of urban planning provides some insights into community participation and democratic decision-making and agency over the shape of a community. Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation describes tiers of community participation from the lowest rung of nonparticipation through to the highest rung of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). Innes and Booher (2004) discussed public participation methods and the counterproductiveness of existing practice. Karner and Marcantion (2017) discussed the importance of tying engagement to outcome and ways to improve engagement in the transportation sector by identifying unmet needs through a participatory budgeting-esque process, tailoring success metrics based on identified needs, and moving beyond purely quantitative engagement strategies. Re-orienting modes of community engagement is only one facet of procedural justice, but is an important component of addressing transportation justice.

The theories of transportation equity and justice will bolster the analysis by providing the language and methodology to describe the disparate harms caused by transportation

infrastructure decisions of the past. My analysis is more in alignment with the procedural justice oriented theories that describe how we can reach transportation justice and situate current infrastructure within its historical context. While my analysis will not focus on the distributive justice elements of providing adequate accessibility to everyone, it is important to understand the various concepts and theories of transportation equity as a primer on the current state of integrating justice into the transportation sector. In addition, lack of community agency and state-imposed changes to communities are common themes in the procedural justice transportation literature, so evaluating how to bring back agency, ownership, decision-making, and power into the hands of impacted community members is an important consideration for reaching a more just transportation sector. The mobility justice section expands on these ideas.

## Transportation and Race

The provision and siting of transportation infrastructure was a key facet of racialized state violence enacted in the United States, and dictates where and how far people can traverse. In order to have unimpeded access to necessary goods, services, and community people need a certain level of mobility and access - which are jointly created by the transportation system and the rest of the built environment. The racial segregation of the United States predates the freeway infrastructure, but was further entrenched and built into the landscape of the human environment by decisions made during freeway construction and urban renewal. US freeways disproportionately harmed communities of color through both overtly racist siting decisions that continued the racialized displacement of urban renewal and through entrenched decision-

making practices that prioritized cost-benefit analyses that placed freeways in places with lower land values due to decades of disinvestment, redlining, and racial exclusion. The land value disparities in communities of color in the United States is an example of racial capitalism (coined by Cedric Robinson, 1983), which pushed against Marxist conceptions of capitalism that placed class and capital as the crux of everything with the understanding that capitalism was built on a system of slavery, imperialism, and violence.

Understanding the impact of racial capitalism on the shaping of the urban environment is crucial, but particularly so as it relates to developmentalism, transportation system planning, and legacies of injustices in the United States. Displacement and dispossession are two modes through which racial capitalism is enacted (Dantzler 2021). Redlining, urban renewal, segregation, exclusionary zoning, and suburbanization are just a few of the modalities of dispossession and displacement. The development of transportation infrastructure directly played a role in racial segregation. Freeway construction in the 50s and 60s directly displaced thousands of people, the scope of which Mohl 2004 describes:

*[B]y the late 1960s, according to the U.S. House Committee on Public Works, federal highway construction was demolishing over 62,000 housing units annually - affecting possibly as many as 200,000 people each year. And as one urban planner noted, "Displacement will be particularly serious in the big city black ghettos where the supply of housing is inadequate and relocation beyond the confines of the ghetto is severely limited by racial segregation" (Mohl, 2004, p. 680).*



Freeway construction in the 1950s not only directly displaced Black residents, but led to further dispossession by creating the infrastructure necessary for suburbanization and white flight (Barajas, 2021). Dispossession doesn't necessarily refer to physical movement of people away from areas, but can refer to removal of value and disinvestment from certain areas (Dantzer, 2021).

The provision of transportation, along with place-based income and racial segregation between cities, suburbs, and rural areas has led to high mobility and access for car owners in the suburbs and relatively low access for those living in cities and rural communities. Car ownership improves access to opportunities and the majority of zero-car households are car-less because of economic or physical constraints rather than by choice (Brown, 2017). Black and Hispanic households are far more likely to be car less (Blumenberg et al., 2018) and decades of underfunding of transit combined with overprovision of car infrastructure and policies encouraging suburban living has created a spatial inequality where people are not only separated in space, but trapped there by inadequate transportation options as well.

Transportation planning and urban planning explicitly embedded racial injustice into the urban fabric of cities and both fields continue to follow modalities and systems vestigial to the overtly racist planning practices of the mid 20th century. In transportation, “race is undertheorized in explanatory analyses and deliberately omitted from quantitative transportation models” (Barajas, 2021, p. 3). On the urban planning side, Williams’ (2024) defines racial planning as, “the public production of racialized space” (Williams, 2024, p. 72), and describes the ways

white supremacy shaped planning and space. “Planning by state action, planning by state inaction, and planning by private action” (Williams, 2024, p. 68) are the three modes of racial planning identified.

The shift from de jure and de facto segregation in the mid 20th was shaped by the urban planning and transportation engineering disciplines. While federal and state laws began prohibiting overt discrimination with legislation such as Title VI and the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 the implicit racialized outcomes caused by the race-indifferent practices of transportation and urban planning did not rectify the explicit harm caused by earlier transportation and urban planning decisions (Gordon, 2015). The urban renewal of the 1950s and 60s that targeted redlined communities and dispersed nonwhite residents to neighborhoods rife with racial covenants set a foundation of racial segregation that was further bolstered by the cost-benefit analyses that sited freeway infrastructure. And while the distributive justice of transportation equity can help diminish the transportation disparities between car-less households, low-income households, and Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic households located farther from adequate transportation options, it does not explicitly repair past harm or create new processes to vest power back into the hands of communities.

## Mobility Justice and Gentrification

The framework of mobility justice provides a radical vision of the future beyond what currently exists where mobility (or movement) is a right not hampered by borders, race, gender, age, ability, or income. The framework of mobility justice focuses broadly on the movement of

people, ideas, and resources as a concept rather than strictly on the transportation system, which deals with the transportation of goods and people only. By describing justice or injustice as a mobile force, it is one that moves with people rather than being rooted to specific areas and physical space. While direct displacement from transportation infrastructure falls into the realm of transportation injustice, long-range gentrification from transportation and land use decisions occupies the mobility justice sphere. Mobility justice serves as a useful framework to unite housing and transportation injustice that intersects at the community level.

Sheller's (2018) framing of mobility justice ties a wide range of theories from Marxist geography, critical feminist scholars, postcolonial scholarship, transportation justice and equity and is concerned with the macro, meso, and micro scales of movement. Sheller and Urry (2006) contend that modern life can be understood as mobile interplays between people, places, and global capital and that the spatially siloed or capital-oriented frameworks of social science should be untethered and framed as mobile forces. Enright (2019) catalogs the overlaps and gaps of social justice, transit equity, and transportation justice through an evaluation of Free Transit Toronto and Black Lives Matter in San Francisco and argues that the current distributive justice framework prevalent in transportation doesn't accurately reflect and capture the realities and power disparities in the transit space. As Enright states, "Mobility is deeply impacted by embodied practices of racialization, the violence of profiling, the accumulation dynamics of uneven development, and the governance of class and capital" (Enright, 2019, p. 677). While Enright (2019) doesn't directly point to Sheller's mobility justice as the salve to the

limitations of transit and spatial injustice he echoes concerns about transportation justice as the solution to deep-seeded injustices.

Sheller's framing of mobility justice moves beyond the transportation justice ideals of levels of access into the idea of movement related to justice and injustice and how that is related to power structures, participation in planning, and repairing harm (Sheller, 2018). Sheller first pulls in not only transportation, but mobility, as a concept to shift spatially constrained theories of injustice superimposed onto specific places and types of neighborhoods into a more mobile dimension. By using mobility justice as the framework of analysis the seemingly disjointed theories of racial capitalism, transportation injustice, and gentrification can be tied into the greater pattern of mobility injustice at the local scale. Mobility justice explicitly highlights power disparities and legacies of injustice related to transportation infrastructure but also capitalism, land use planning, legacies of racism, sexism, ableism, and colonialism. Mobility justice is an expansive framework, and the full scale and scope of global mobility re-imagining will not be used for the analysis that follows but the general idea of conceptualizing injustice as a mobile force related to race, gender, indigeneity, ability, and global power discourses is a useful framing. The idea of movement as a right that shouldn't be infringed upon and one that cascades into other rights - such as access, safety, citizenship and belonging is also an important component of analyzing the legacy of freeway harm through a more holistic lens.

Gentrification and displacement theories tend to occupy the more place-based segments of sociology - meaning they are assessed as neighborhood or city-level snapshots. However,

displacement, as a form of forced mobility, inhabits the mobility injustice realm. Gentrification generally refers to the in-migration of relatively higher-income residents into a previously disinvested area (Glass, 1964). Infrastructure and land use changes can promote gentrification by reinvesting in previously disinvested areas (Revington, 2015). And gentrification results from increasing demand and cost (Marcuse, 1985). Marcuse's paper on gentrification and abandonment pushed back against the idea that gentrification caused minimal, if any, displacement. Marcuse's definition of gentrification hinged on replacement of old residents - primarily low-income, working-class, and racial or ethnic minorities by newer wealthier white residents. The debate - of whether gentrification was good and whether gentrification caused displacement - was reinvigorated in the early 2000s. It was in this era and spirit of debate that Newman and Wyly (2006) and Slater (2009) pushed against the newfound positive spin on gentrification in addition to the positivist research showing limited displacement originating from gentrification. Slater (2009) revisited Marcuse to push against the idea that gentrification brought needed improvements to a community and lifted the living standards of all. Changing neighborhood compositions and businesses can create displacement pressure which is experienced by communities during transformations (Slater, 2009). These displacement pressures can be conceptualized as "uneven mobilities" in the language of mobility justice. Low-income and minority residents have limited access to political power and funds to resist displacement pressures and neighborhood changes and are shuffled throughout the urban environment based on changing financial and infrastructural realities of the city. Gentrification and displacement exist as a form of mobility injustice where people are subjected to forced mobility. This may lead to transportation injustice whereby people are located farther and

farther away from job opportunities, healthcare, food, and community. The analysis that follows will consider this question in the context of Sacramento's past and present.

Mobility justice provides the broadest base from which to evaluate the cascading impacts of freeway construction on communities of color and low-income communities in Sacramento.

Mobility justice is a transformative idealistic vision of a future radically different from current reality and paints a picture of a just world in which people would have freedom of movement or stasis not limited by race, nationality, gender, ability, age, income, etc. Mobility justice, as a more society-centric grassroots movement does not deal as concretely with incremental change at the city scale in the same way that transportation justice and transportation equity do. The language of transportation justice and sufficient accessibility and the benefits and burdens distribution of transportation equity provide useful concrete micro-scale evaluations to map onto the freeway, urban renewal, and contemporary gentrification in Sacramento and point towards short-term incremental improvements. While the process and manifestations of mobility injustice bridge urban renewal, freeway construction, and contemporary gentrification and displacement into a single throughline of mobility injustice and racial violence perpetrated by the state onto communities of color in Sacramento.

## Chapter 3. Methodology and Questions

The primary motivation is answering the question: what can we learn about gentrification and displacement in Sacramento by viewing the processes through the lens of mobility justice? By

tying mobility justice theory to gentrification and displacement theory in the case study of Sacramento deeper understandings of both mobility injustice and gentrification can be gleaned.

In order to answer this question, I first conducted a brief but thorough deep dive on the history of land use, capitalism, and colonialism in the origins of Sacramento through literature review and historic document analysis. While an adequate analysis of contemporary gentrification, displacement, and mobility injustice could be conducted using a shorter time frame, the link between transportation infrastructure, mobility injustice, and displacement is not solely a contemporary phenomenon and understanding the deep legacy of injustice provides insights into the perspectives of community members being faced with large infrastructure projects in the current age.

As part of a Caltrans project to assess historic freeway displacement in the 1960s, I conducted historic document analysis, oral history interviews, and route plan evaluations. The five oral history interviews conducted in early 2021 provided additional narrative context beyond the archival work. Participants included anti-gentrification activists, long-time Oak Park residents, and a local historian. The content and questions for the semi-structured interviews were focused on the 1960s and 1970s, but interviewees frequently brought up and discussed contemporary issues in their neighborhoods. The case study methodology allows for analysis of phenomena which the researcher does not have control over which answer how or why questions (Yin, 2009). For the historic section, literature was compiled from the UC Davis library and the Sacramento library and includes newspaper articles, history books about Sacramento,

and redevelopment and freeway route plans. In the following analysis I expand on the work done for the *Implications of Freeway Siting in California* by drawing attention to contemporary displacement and gentrification and Sacramento-specific opportunities to address harm rather than the broader California focus of the original report.

## Chapter 4. Manifestations of Mobility Injustice in Early Sacramento (Early 20th Century)

### Early-Sacramento Racial Exclusion (Early 20th century)

As the population of Sacramento continued to grow, racial restrictions were placed on property ownership which shaped early settlement patterns. The downtown West End neighborhood remained one of the few areas of town without racial covenants and initially was home to Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican immigrants along with Black settlers who came to Sacramento prior to the gold rush.

In the early 20th century, the Alien Land Laws prohibited Asian immigrants from owning property in California. The Alien Land Act of 1913 prevented people ineligible for citizenship under the Naturalization Act of 1870 from owning property in California (Gambirazzio, 2011). This largely targeted Chinese and Japanese immigrants and by denying property served as “denial of membership in a community” (Rose, 2000 cited in Joo, 2018). The 1920 Act strengthened the law and prohibited placing land in the name of children born in the United



States (Immigration History, nd). The Alien Land Laws were overturned by the courts in 1948 and 1952 (Immigration History, n.d.). The Alien Land Laws excluded property ownership for Asian immigrants and exemplified an iteration of the mobility injustice of racial housing policies in the early 20th century.

Racial covenants and redlining were additional tools of racial housing policy heavily used in the early 20th century to shape and segregate the urban fabric. Racial covenants were clauses in property deeds that prevented nonwhite people from buying them and served to exclude people from entire neighborhoods or regions (University of Minnesota, nd). Racial covenants sequestered Black residents moving out of the Jim Crow south into specific neighborhoods that were often overcrowded and old. *Corrigan v. Buckley* upheld racial covenants in DC and allowed for the proliferation of racial covenants throughout the country (Thompson et al, 2021).

Redlining was a formal continuation of racially restrictive housing policies that dictated where people could and could not live. Under the New Deal, maps were created by the Federal Housing Administration that marked lending risk based primarily on the racial makeup of community members in each neighborhood (Gross, 2017). Redlining is an example of what Dantzler (2021) described as dispossession, or the removal of value and disinvestment of certain neighborhoods. By labeling these areas as high risk, the neighborhoods in Sacramento with large Asian, Black, or Hispanic populations could not access federal loans to repair and reinvest in their community. Figure 1 below shows the HOLC map of Sacramento and Figure 2 shows the West End neighborhood and the corresponding description from the HOLC map.



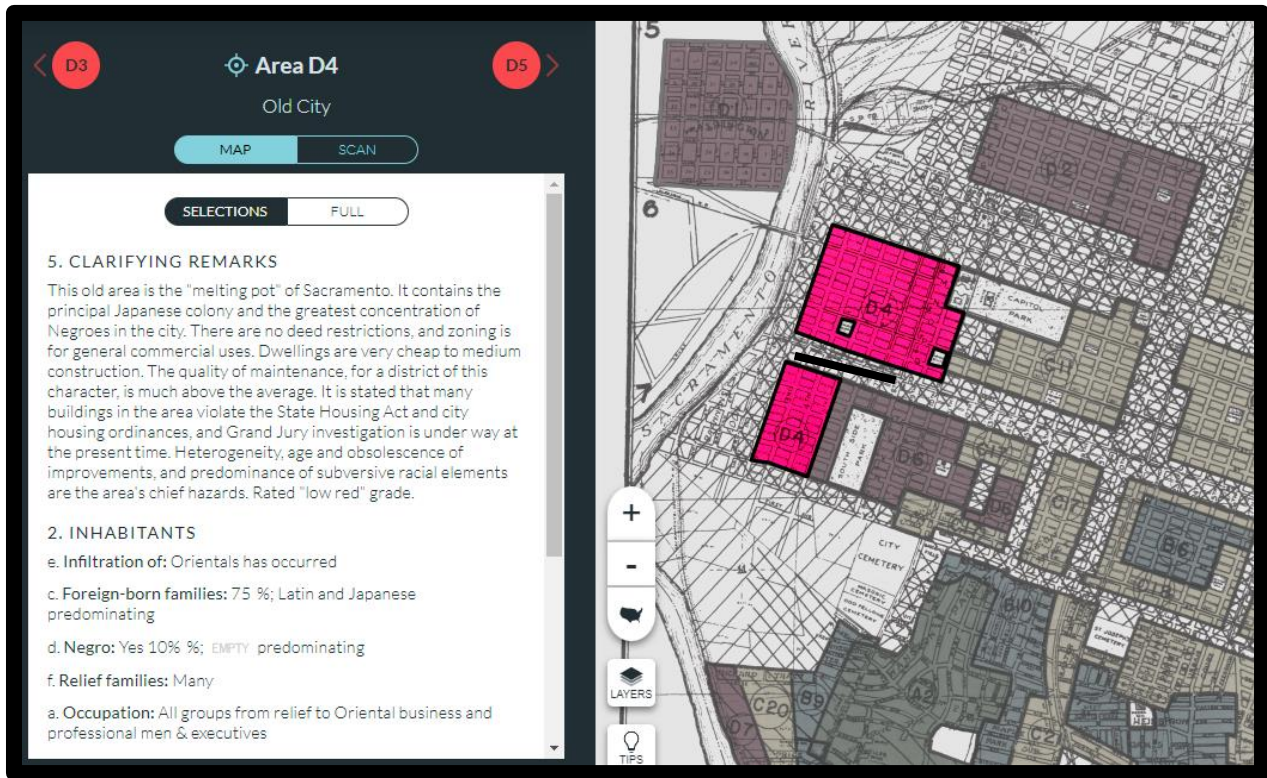


Figure 2. West End Neighborhood

Redlining further entrenched segregation throughout the United States and served as the foundation for urban renewal. In Sacramento, as the city boundaries grew and new suburbs such as Oak Park, Curtis Park, and Land Park sprouted up on the edges of the city, white residents started populating these new areas while restricting movement of Black residents through the use of housing covenants (Fisher, 2023). The racist housing policies of the early 20th century largely dictated where non-white people could live by creating areas of exclusion.

Racial covenants and redlining largely dictated where non-white people could and could not move to, but during WWII the racial animosity against Japanese people culminated in large scale forced displacement out of cities and into internment camps. The internment of United States citizens with Japanese origins during World War II violently displaced thousands of

community members and was followed directly by urban renewal which often targeted Japantowns in California (Joo, 2018). Prior to WWII, Sacramento was home to the second largest Japantown in California (Joo, 2018). The removal of Japanese residents from the West End started the destruction of the West End neighborhood that eventually displaced over 10,000 residents and permanently reshaped the fabric of the neighborhood.

## Chapter 5. Freeway Construction, Urban Renewal, Displacement (1950s onward)

The racial exclusion enacted by policy in the early 20th century gave way to physical manifestations of segregation through the construction of a web of federal and state highways that carved up communities and allowed rapid transportation for wealthy white suburban homeowners into the newly redeveloped central business district core. In a manifestation of collaborative land use planning and transportation planning not seen in the current age, urban renewal and freeway construction in Sacramento worked hand in hand to reshape both the urban core and the outlying suburbs to create a city that to this day seeds disparate outcomes in health, economic opportunities, and mobility based on neighborhood. Large influxes of federal money in the mid 20th century incentivized redevelopment of downtown cores in cities across the United States to be manufactured places of work while the suburbs would be the location of home. This urban reorganization was aided by the freeways in order to ensure suburban dwellers could quickly and easily commute to the downtown core.

Freeway construction coincided with urban renewal and the two processes were often used as dual tools towards the same end - reshaping cities. In Sacramento, urban renewal and redevelopment generally preceded freeway construction, but the freeways, and the prolific federal funds that accompanied them, were used as additional tools of urban renewal. In addition, the newly placed freeways were routed to funnel suburban homeowners into the newly redeveloped commercial cores - in the process bypassing and splitting many existing urban communities. The rampant urban renewal, redevelopment, and freeway building of the mid 20th century laid the foundation for transportation planning, urban planning and car centrism that dominates today. The disparate health, economic, and access outcomes faced by many communities can be directly traced back to this era of infrastructure investment.

The description below does not detail all of the impacts of urban renewal and freeway building on Sacramento, but focuses largely on two neighborhoods: West End and Oak Park. Figure 3 below shows an annotated version of the 1963 planned freeway network with the neighborhoods highlighted in blue. The West End neighborhood was largely destroyed by urban renewal and freeway construction, and was the oldest neighborhood in Sacramento. And Oak Park is a neighborhood that was cut off from Sacramento by SR-99 and US-50 and has dealt with recurrent bouts of gentrification and displacement for the last several decades.



Figure 3. Annotated Sacramento Planned Freeway Network (Hart, 1963 p. 564)

## Capitol Redevelopment

The Capitol Mall Redevelopment project was the primary urban renewal effort in Sacramento in the 1950s and 1960s. While urban redevelopment is somewhat distinct from freeway construction, in Sacramento these processes and planning timelines were linked financially and conceptually. The impetus for the routing of I-5 was to connect the new downtown Capitol Mall and business district with the growing suburbs. In addition, the large sums of federal money provided for freeway construction supplemented urban renewal funds through an agreement that gave any excess land titles obtained for the freeway back to the redevelopment agency. Chronologically, Capitol Redevelopment preceded I-5 construction.

By 1950, the West End was a bustling downtown area home to seven out of ten non-white Sacramentans (Paul 2012; Pyke, 2018). California's 1945 Community Redevelopment Law gave quasi-governmental local agencies the power to combat "blight" (Joo, 2018). The CRL also did not require the local redevelopment agencies to help displaced residents and businesses find new locations, merely that the local governments make a finding that such accommodations "are or will be made available" (Joo, 2018). The American Housing Act of 1949 provided federal funding ostensibly to update and improve public housing with provisions necessitating the creation of new housing. However, the 1954 amendment to the housing act lessened the burden of re-accommodating displaced residents and opened the door for urban renewal with support from federal funds (Pyke, 2018; Joo, 2018). The initial presentation of the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency's first urban renewal plan, the Capitol Mall Project, was on April 14, 1954 (Lango, 2018). On June 15, 1954, the Sacramento city council called a special meeting to hear public testimony for the first time on the proposed Capitol Mall redevelopment project (Lango, 2016). The Capitol Mall Redevelopment Project was backed by many prominent groups including: "the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, the Builders' Exchange, the Association of Landscape Architects, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Sacramento Area Planning Association, and the League of Women Voters" (Lango, 2018). Standing in the way of the redevelopment were the residents and business owners of Japantown, who had just returned and begun rebuilding after WWII internment.

At this very first Sacramento City Council meeting to hear public testimony on the proposed Capitol Mall Redevelopment project Henry Taketa, a prominent Japantown resident, spoke against the plan, explaining why they returned to the neighborhood:

We have our whole heart and soul in what will take place here. Our fathers and mothers came here in their youth, and now they are reaching the twilight years of their lives... We have considerable fondness for our community. For that reason after our wartime dislocation we always dreamt of coming back here and when I say coming back here I mean to Sacramento. I would say 90% of the people who lived here before the war have returned (Lango, 2018).

This meeting had such a large turnout that two additional sessions were added and hearings were extended to July (Joo, 2018). Many of the opposers were Japanese Americans and the organized opposition also included 32 business and property owners represented by the prominent Black civil rights attorney Nathaniel Colley (Joo, 2018). However, the public testimonies and oppositions did not sway the all and the day after this criticism, the Sacramento Bee wrote, "Any community leader who would reject such an opportunity [for redevelopment] might properly be called the representation of blight" (Sacramento Bee, June 6, 1954 Editorial Page; Wildie, 2013).

Figure 4 below shows the original redevelopment plan for the Capitol Mall along with the Homeowners Loan Corporation "hazardous" or redlined areas and the original Japantown. The area in the bottom left of the figure, the West End neighborhood was described below and received the rating of D for the reasons described below,

"This old area is the "melting pot" of Sacramento. It contains the principal Japanese colony and the greatest concentration of Negroes in the city. There are no deed restrictions, and zoning is for general commercial uses. Dwellings are very cheap to



medium construction. The quality of maintenance, for a district of this character, is much above the average. It is stated that many buildings in the area violate the State Housing Act and city housing ordinances, and Grand Jury investigation is under way at the present time. Heterogeneity, age and obsolescence of improvements, and predominance of subversive racial elements are the area's chief hazards. Rated "low red" grade" (Mapping inequality).



The motivation for redevelopment of the West End neighborhood can be summed up by a quote from the former executive director of the SRA Jerome Lipp explaining why demolition began on the east side of the redevelopment area:

“Many criticized [the redevelopment plan] correctly and said, “Most of the slums are down on First and Second Streets. Why are you beginning at Sixth and Seventh Streets? Why don’t you go down to where slums really are?” But the original plan was if we began at the river, we would spread the slums and the blight ahead of us as we bought property, and [the blight] would encroach further east into the healthy tissue of the community. [The West End Slum] was like a cancer. It was marching east into other areas and Buildings. Nobody wanted to build around Seventh and Eighth Streets because of the filth that was spreading into the area. If you take it out of there, the whole area starts to come back. [Therefore,] we began easterly and began moving west to drive it into the river. That [is how] we were able to clear out [the blight].” (Wildie, 2013)

The Capitol Redevelopment Plan was approved without changes in spite of the community opposition. Initially, there was a hiccup in the redevelopment plan when California voters struck down Proposition B, the redevelopment bond issue, on November 2, 1954 (Wildie, 2013). This small success for the Japanese-American community was short-lived as a new funding structure was quickly devised. This novel tax increment financing allowed the city to finance the plan with future tax revenue from the projects that would eventually inhabit the redevelopment area. This method was later copied throughout the country (Paul, 2012).

Overall, there are varying estimates of the number of people displaced and buildings demolished by the Capitol Redevelopment Plan and the building of I-5. The redevelopment plan itself estimated 408 families in the Capitol Mall Riverfront project Area, 795 individuals, and 361 “estimated business concerns.” Of the 645 buildings within the project area, 14 were designated to remain in the project (Capitol Redevelopment Plan 1963, p. 21). According to the 1977 redevelopment plan, “Much of the housing which was in the area in the early 1960’s is now gone, a result of demolition activities by the State” (Capitol Redevelopment plan, 1977). According to Wildie (2013), there were 2,652 residents in the Capitol Redevelopment project area. Based on estimates from other sources of populations pre and post redevelopment the official counts of individuals in the area were likely undercounts and in addition was only the official count for Redevelopment Area No. One.

The Capitol Area Redevelopment Plan area consisted of 21% Black residents, 30% Asian-American residents, and 13% Latino-American residents (Wildie, 2013). According to the 1977 redevelopment plan for the same area the demographic composition in July 1975, after the original redevelopment, was 83.1% white, 4.9% Black, 7.2% Latino, 3.4% Asian-American. The overall population loss in the downtown area from the Capitol Mall redevelopment, SR-99 and US-50, and zoning changes to Alkali Flat was 31,000 between 1950 and 1970 (Burg, 2013). The redevelopment process occurred concurrently with the freeway construction plans, and the siting of the downtown freeways served to provide access to the soon to be redeveloped downtown and clear out the remaining areas.

## Interstate 5

The planning of Interstate 5, which runs from Canada through to Mexico, coincided with existing urban renewal and redevelopment plans in the city of Sacramento. However, I-5 was delayed by backlash from community members concerned about historic preservation. The freeway was planned in conjunction with the redevelopment plans for the Capitol Mall detailed previously and one of the original members appointed to the Redevelopment Agency was Fred J. Grumm, former Deputy State Highway Engineer (Herod, 1965). Routing I-5 through downtown would finish the work started by urban renewal in clearing the West End neighborhood and any additional land purchased for construction of I-5 that was unused would be provided to the redevelopment agency. Backlash came over the historic preservation of a few blocks next to the river that harkened back to the gold rush history of Sacramento (Partido, 2018). The state was largely unwilling to reroute I-5 to circumvent this area however, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior sent a telegram to Governor Brown indicating that the birthplace of the transcontinental railroad could be designated a national historic landmark and should not be destroyed by I-5. Eventually, the routing was settled to save 3 blocks in downtown Sacramento along the riverfront to preserve the gold rush history of Sacramento. This historic preservation fought for by the federal government and several community groups stands in stark contrast to the treatment of Japantown which was described as “blight.”

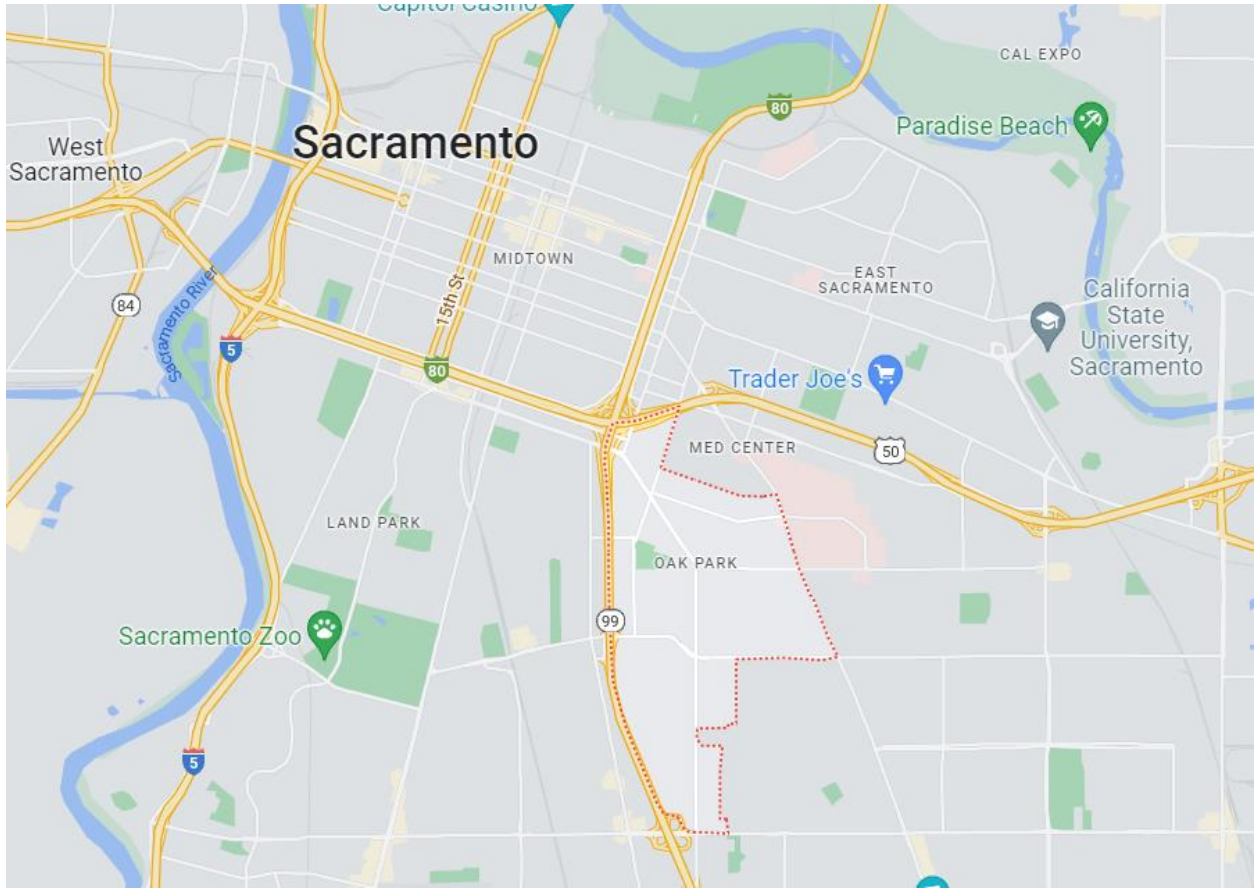
Although fewer oral history interviewees mentioned I-5, one of the interviewees noted that the creation of both I-5 and SR-99 disrupted the use of Stockton Boulevard as a main entry into the city – which had historically been used for people to come to the Sacramento State Fair

(Interview 4). The State Fair was located in Oak Park and served as a major destination for the neighborhood but was moved in 1967 (Gray, 2023). The freeways directly and indirectly reshaped the urban fabric in Sacramento, and the connection between funneling visitors directly to downtown rather than through peripheral business districts laid bare the changing priorities of cities during this era.

## Oak Park and State Route 99 and US Route 50

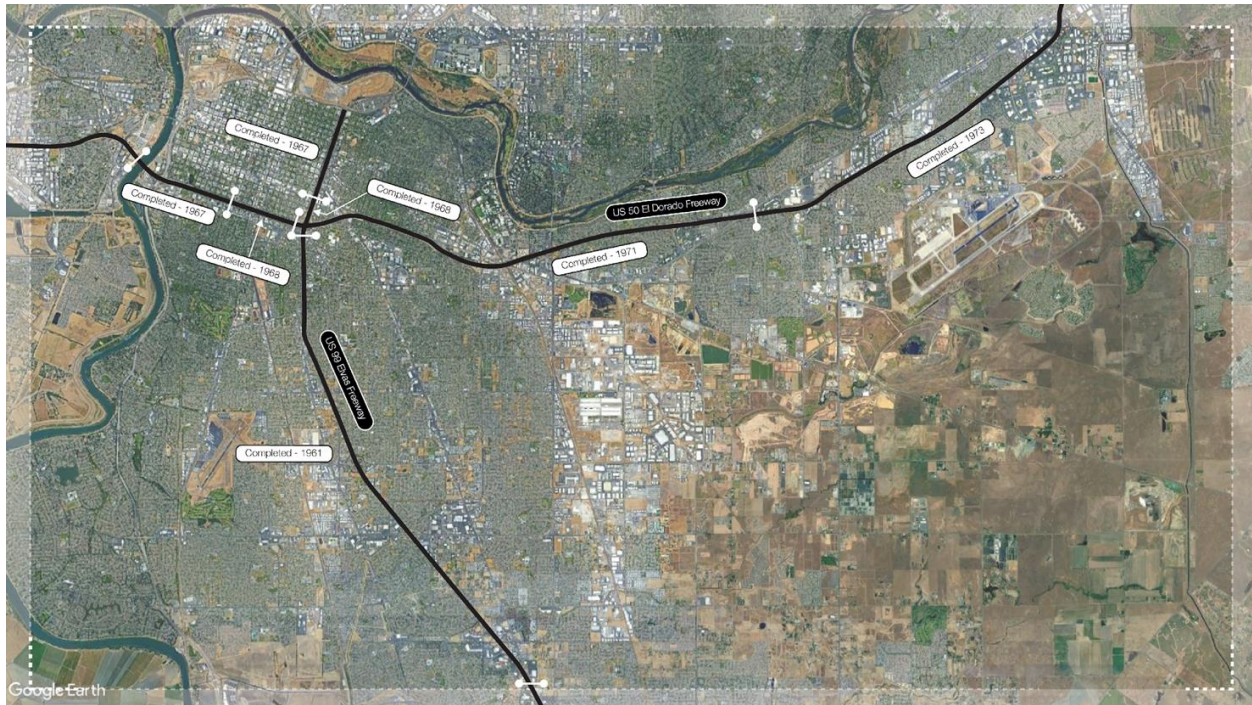
After being displaced from the West End due to redevelopment, many of Sacramento's Black residents moved to Oak Park, one of the few neighborhoods without racially discriminatory housing policies (City of Sacramento, 2021). The neighborhood composition underwent a drastic change in the 1950s as a result of the influx of Black residents from the West End neighborhood that was demolished and the white flight to the suburbs (Burg 2010). The construction of the freeways assisted the demographic stratification of the area.

SR-99 and US-50 sliced through and divided Oak Park from the rest of Sacramento as shown below in Figure 5.



*Figure 5. Location of Oak Park Neighborhood in Relation to SR-99 and US-50 and Sacramento*

Figure 6 shows the timeline of when each section of US-50 and SR-99 was completed.



*Figure 6. Chronology of US-50 and SR-99 development (Loukaitou-Sideris et al, 2023)*

The construction of SR- 99 in the 1950s split the adjacent communities of Oak Park and Land Park, one was a more affluent white area on the west of highway and the non-white lower income population to the east (Castañeda, 2010). As indicated by an interviewee, “The 99 specifically was created to keep Oak Park separate from Land Park and Curtis Park to create a separation” (interview 2).

SR-99 also routed traffic away from Stockton boulevard, which had been the main thoroughfare. The businesses along Stockton and Broadway that had relied on new visitors coming through this route went into a state of decline and many closed which led to job loss in the community (Deering, 2008). SR-99 turns into I-80 at the junction in Oak Park, as shown in Figure 1, and connects Sacramento with the Bay Area.



Construction of US-50 on the northern side further isolated the neighborhood from downtown (Simpson, 2004). This coupled with the California State Fair Commission's decision to move the fairgrounds from Oak Park to northern Sacramento escalated the economic decline of the area (Castañeda, 2010). The construction of US-50 from 34<sup>th</sup> Street to further east restricted the access of the residents of Oak Park. A temporary off-ramp was provided to serve the eastbound traffic. However, the off-ramp was closed in the early 1970s with the completion of the freeway which led to protests and opposition by the residents of Oak Park and eventually the off-ramps were opened again. Later in 1972, the Highways Division took the step of permanently removing the ramps and cutting off the access to Oak Park from the US-50 freeway (Sacramento Bee, May 21, 1972, p. 5). A community member said,

*"That highway was built to cut off community members from other areas of the city and there's no doubt about it that this is a redlined neighborhood" (interview 4).9950*

Community members interviewed about SR-99 and US-50 shared similar themes of community loss, dislocation, and neighborhood change.

## Chapter 6. Contemporary Sacramento

### Background on Housing Crisis

Housing unaffordability is not a uniquely Californian experience, although the state stands out in the US for exceptionally high median house costs and rents. Recurrent bouts of gentrification and displacement plague Sacramentans, and in recent years rising housing costs, the 2008

financial crisis, and influxes of remote workers have displaced longtime residents. While the current causes of displacement and gentrification are less overtly racist than the racial covenants of the past, they can be and have been traced to the groundwork laid by historic racist housing policies.

Homeownership rates are falling across California. In 2021, 43.5% of adults in California owned their home, while the average homeownership rates in the US are over 15 percentage points higher (Shoag et al, 2023). It was also found that fewer homeowners are paying off their mortgage and the age of homeownership in the state is increasing. Shoag et al 2023 found that the homeownership gap came from inability to afford a home rather than lack of desire. While homeownership is not the only route to having shelter, it is an important component of wealth building and stability that remains out of reach for many Californians.

The 2008 housing crisis marked an additional inflection point in housing unaffordability and dispossession - particularly in Sacramento. Income inequality and housing unaffordability had been growing for decades prior to the recession and the recession served as a large wealth transfer away from all households except those in the highest income brackets. The losses varied by race and wealth for “African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and others” fell to 27% of the 2003 level in 2011 while for non-Hispanic whites and Asians it fell to 69% (Pfeffer et al, 2013). Hernandez (2009) documented how subprime mortgages were targeted at non-white residents of Sacramento and mirrored and upheld long standing racial segregation in the housing market. In 2007 Sacramentans experiencing foreclosure lost an estimated \$54 million

in addition to losing their homes (California Reinvestment Coalition, 2008 cited in Hernandez, 2009). Hernandez (2009) traced the disparities in subprime lending and foreclosures in Sacramento from redlining and other structural factors through an intergenerational racialized housing process. Critically, Hernandez points out that relying on existing market mechanisms cannot solve inequality and more attention should be paid to the influence of historic practices on current processes.

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate housing trends in Sacramento as remote work trends in the Bay Area allowed exodus to Sacramento. Mondragon and Wielend 2022 found that half of the 23.8% rise in US housing prices between December 2019 and November 2021 could be accounted for by the shift to remote work. And according to data from Redfin, the top destination of workers moving out of the San Francisco Bay Area was Sacramento (Salzano, 2023). This was a continuation of a trend that predated the pandemic as Bay Area residents were priced out of the region and flocked to Sacramento (Ho, 2019). Rising housing prices across California are pricing out residents, preventing homeownership, and leading to displacement throughout the state. Influxes of residents from wealthier areas of the state, such as the Bay Area, have led to gentrification in Sacramento and concerns of additional displacement. Most recently, the Aggie Square project has led to backlash from local community members worried about additional gentrification and displacement. Understanding the more contemporary causes of displacement and gentrification in Sacramento, while keeping in mind the groundwork laid by historic policies can provide insights into where solutions may or may not be found.

## Oak Park - Recurrent Gentrification as Mobility Injustice

Statewide housing unaffordability has led to increasing levels of housing instability and significant gentrification and displacement in Oak Park. In a telling summary of the link between historic planning practices and current day displacement, a current Oak Park resident compared the Aggie Square project with the West End redevelopment of the 1950s saying, “You could kind of say the west end was today’s aggie square on a whole different level” (interview 4). Displacement through gentrification and rising housing costs is less overtly violent than the bulldozing of the West End in the 50s and 60s but still results in loss of place for residents.

Hernandez (2009) documented the disparate impacts of the recession between neighborhoods in Sacramento based on race and income. Homeownership rates among Black residents of Sacramento have not recovered from the recession. In 2006 in Sacramento, 43% of Black residents were homeowners, while in 2019, that percentage was only 33% (Hooks, 2022). Some of the displacement is occurring from in-state movements from higher cost of living areas, like the Bay Area, to Sacramento, where tech workers can outbuy local residents (Anderson, 2021).

An upcoming video documentary by local activist Eliza Deed and community organizer Michael Benjamin II presents interviews of dozens of long term residents reacting to questions about historic displacement in their neighborhoods. Residents discuss losing access to schools, watching neighbors move away, and losing neighborhood businesses. These interviews, along with those conducted for Caltrans, are focused on the displacement of the 1960s and 70s but directly mirror sentiments of current residents speaking with news outlets, public officials, and

in town hall meetings about current displacement occurring in Oak Park. Housing injustice is mobility injustice at the regional and country-wide scale. As housing prices rise in city centers such as Sacramento residents move out to more rural areas in the Central Valley (Boarnet et al, 2023) and are forced to commute long distances to work.

Investing in new housing, improving transit, and prioritizing active transportation are all critical actions in mitigating climate change, making cities more livable, and allowing residents to live closer to work but changing the cityscape could inadvertently lead to displacement pressures and recreate impacts of the freeway construction of the past century. The overlap between transportation infrastructure changes and gentrification is complex, multifaceted, and an area of intense study right now in the transportation literature (Chapple and Sideris, 2020; Delmelle, 2021). Improving the material conditions that lead to increased deaths, health disparities, and disconnection from the rest of the community is important, as is making these changes in concert with the community through targeted anti-displacement strategies such as producing affordable housing, preserving existing affordable housing, creating tenant protections and rent stabilization measures, and safeguarding against commercial displacement of small local businesses (Chapple and Sideris, 2020). Under the framework of mobility justice, anti-displacement strategies that uphold the agency of the community and transportation investments that materially improve current conditions go hand in hand.

# Chapter 7. Discussion

## Integrating Housing, Transportation, and Mobility Justice

As illustrated by the interviewee that compared Aggie Square with the West End teardown of the 1950s, causes of displacement are not differentiated by impacted residents. Whether caused by freeway expansion, gentrification, or racial exclusion, the outcome is the same - loss of home. Highlighting the role of transportation infrastructure in perpetuating harm and displacement through mobility injustice realizes the role that transportation plays in dislocation while acknowledging that transportation infrastructure decisions are only part of the story. In Sacramento, the I-5 freeway through downtown spared the remnants of the Gold Rush Era to preserve a specific facet of history while clearing out the remainder of the historic West End neighborhood not yet demolished by urban renewal. The SR-99/I-80 routing first cut off Oak Park from the rest of Sacramento and later the freeway on ramp was removed - meaning residents could not even use the infrastructure that sliced up their community.

True mobility justice will be reached through a radical reimagining of how communities are shaped, where borders are created, and who has ownership over decisions impacting their communities. As the untokening collective (2020) clarified, mobility justice is not a theory to be watered down and fit into policy goals by academics or policymakers, it is for “individuals from marginalized groups” (untokening collective, 2020) and connects with fights for sovereignty over indigenous land, bodily rights, and finally transportation justice. In short, mobility justice is

bigger than fighting against gentrification in a neighborhood in Sacramento and the recommendations that follow should largely be used as starting points or jumping off points for a greater discussion.

## Addressing Housing and Transportation Injustice in the Short Term

Karner et al (2020) categorizes transportation justice solutions into either state-centric or society-centric approaches. State-centric solutions, such as developing new equity metrics and evaluating the benefits and burdens of new transportation infrastructure, can be useful but alone will not create transportation justice. Mobility justice falls into the society-centric categorization and requires full reimagining of many existing systems of injustice to reach mobility justice. Society-centric solutions are more transformative and must include the insights of impacted community members in a manner of “epistemic inclusion” rather than surface level consultation (Sheller 2018). Transformation rather than piecemeal reform partially summarizes the difference between state-centric and society-centric approaches to transportation justice or mobility justice. Transforming the unjust system that created the segregated physical and economic environment of Sacramento (and beyond) is critical, but in the short term reform that moves away from imparting more harm can serve as a useful starting point. In the interim, searching for transformative mobility justice is still important to make changes to mitigate existing disparities even though they may not lead to full scale societal change. Participatory planning, freeway teardown, and housing reform can all mitigate some of the disparities caused by the legacy of the freeways and urban renewal in Sacramento.

Since the nature (cost and scale) of transportation infrastructure largely necessitates state intervention, a key component of striving for justice is re-envisioning the processes of planning to circumvent the black box of “techno-rational” planning and create a transparent, just, and participatory process. Cooper’s (2023) analysis of current Sacramento transportation planning processes found that the participation methods used by the city largely fell into the categories of placation or consultation - both degrees of tokenism - from Arnstein’s ladder of participation. Arnstein’s ladder describes in ascending order versions of community engagement that move from nonparticipation, tokenism, to degrees of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). In order to change the format of transportation planning, processes should strive to move from tokenism to citizen power by creating true partnerships and delegated power.

Implementing participatory planning processes can improve the outcomes of more state-centric solutions detailed below. Freeway teardown can begin to repair the harms brought to communities by the freeway, but should be done in a conscientious and community-led manner to avoid more opportunities for the state to reshape neighborhoods against the interests of the community. Interventions to improve the justice of the current infrastructure should be locally informed and must account for the knowledge, experiences, and wants of current residents (Verlingieri and Schwanen, 2020). Large scale infrastructure projects (including freeway teardown) necessitate state intervention due to the sums of funding and organization necessary. Prioritizing community partnerships in planning can ensure that additional reform actions - such as freeway teardown or housing reform - are conducted in a community-led manner.



The Reconnecting Communities Grant through the USDOT provided \$200 million per year for 5 years for cities to apply for planning or construction grants related to freeway teardown or capping starting in 2022 (USDOT, nd). These funds are an opportunity for cities to begin rebuilding neighborhoods that were cut apart by the freeways. Caltrans has a state program that allocates \$149 million to convert highways into multimodal corridors (Caltrans, nd). The budget speaks to the goals of a state, and \$149 million is a pittance (0.8% of the annual budget) compared to the annual allocation for freeway maintenance. Although minimal, the funding opportunities from the state and federal government signify growing interest in beginning to rectify some of the harms wrought by the freeways.

The City of Sacramento submitted a proposal for the neighborhood of Old North Sacramento that is surrounded by State Route 51, the Union Pacific Rail Spur, and Highway 160. While Old North Sacramento was not one of the communities highlighted in the case study, it is another example of disconnection through freeway infrastructure and targeted disinvestment. In the application, the city detailed community organizations to work with, plans to add bicycling and walking infrastructure, and opportunities to connect the riverfront recreation area and open space area that is currently blocked by the State Route 51 loop. The plan will connect with surrounding neighborhoods to prioritize active transportation infrastructure, transit connections, and safety interventions. Grant awardees have not been announced yet, but application for funds signifies growing interest in beginning to repair the harms caused by freeways in Sacramento.

In addition to freeway teardown, Sacramento needs to invest in housing reform to ensure that community members are able to stay in their neighborhoods without being displaced by constrained supply and increasing housing costs. As detailed in the housing crisis section, rising housing costs are pushing residents out of city centers into undeveloped greenfield areas in California which have less access to transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure and serve to further entrench car dependency. Mitigating the housing affordability crisis through policy reform can help stem some of the gentrification in Oak Park if rents decrease and anti-displacement measures are prioritized.

In recent years the California housing crisis has triggered some policy reform to address rampant unaffordability. Policies can remove restrictions for building new housing, create incentives for affordable housing, directly support renters or buyers or promote the building of temporary shelters. Some solutions in California have been aimed at removing or limiting certain existing regulations to encourage densification. SB 9 - the HOME Act allowed homeowners to split single family parcels and five bills promoted the building of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in some form or fashion. There are various state programs aimed at improving housing affordability but these programs may not be robust enough, quick enough, or comprehensive enough to solve the underlying inequality at the base of housing instability and unaffordability.

SB 9 was passed in 2021 and allowed homeowners to split parcels in order to build up to four homes on their single family lot. Metcalf et al 2021 estimated that it could allow up to 700,000 additional homes to be built, although limitations such as local zoning (unit size and height restrictions), lack of expertise, and restrictive local ordinances would largely hinder much building. Applications for split lots have been limited in the program's first year with Los Angeles receiving the largest number of applications - 211 (Garcia and Alameldin, 2023). In contrast, the bills to promote ADUs have been more successful. AB 881 and AB 68 were two of five bills passed to encourage accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and streamlined approvals and prohibited lot size and coverage restrictions that local governments had. 20,000 ADUs were permitted in 2021 (Ward, 2023). SB 35 passed in 2017 was intended to streamline permitting of new housing, in particular affordable housing. 11,000 units were approved between 2018 and 2021 as a result of SB 35 (Kendall, 2023). SB 375 the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 aimed to integrate land use and transportation planning and created exemptions from CEQA for projects that were aligned with the sustainable communities strategy (Mawhorter et al, 2018). The variety of bills passed in recent years have created some incentives for builders or homeowners to increase housing and attempted to streamline the permitting process in some instances.

The recent bills passed in California aim primarily to stimulate housing supply in the state. These bills have had varying influence on housing supply but may not be enough to counteract the affordability crisis. Additional legislation has created tenant protections, added funding for CBOs addressing homelessness, and addressed CEQA exemption processes. Targeting housing

unaffordability through the housing industry alone - particularly at more local levels - may not be sufficient to counteract the greater global processes at play but could serve as stop gap measures that help slow the rate of displacement.

## Chapter 8. Conclusion

Whether displacement is the direct result of dispossession through transportation infrastructure or more indirectly through long-term gentrification the result is the same - loss of home. Injustice is mobile and is created not only by the reshaping of space, capital, and belonging but also on imposed limitations of mobility at all scales. Treating gentrification as a static process that occurs on the neighborhood level, rather than a dynamic process that is directly entwined with transportation justice, global market forces, and settler colonial orientations of land value silos the problem.

Understanding and theorizing gentrification and displacement matters not just on an abstract level, but on a practical level - particularly in California. As housing costs continue to rise and people are forced out of temperate coastal areas and major metropolitan regions into increasingly dispersed and commute-oriented lifestyles, what does this mean for both the climate and the community?

Housing unaffordability, gentrification, displacement, and transportation injustice seem like disparate problems occupying different fields of expertise and technical prowess until examined under the framework of mobility justice. Under this lens, these outcomes are part of

the same process of disparate potential mobilities dictated by uneven power dynamics. Tying, briefly, the instability and anxiety of settler colonialism to the mobility and immobilities within cities begins to tie the global to the local.

The segregation and injustice imposed by the freeway system of the 1960s is a permanent physical marker and upholder of state-inflicted racial violence. The ongoing gentrification and displacement in Oak Park provides compelling evidence that the issues imposed by the transportation planning process of the 1960s did not leave or reform, but permanently marred the built environment, policy sector, and planning industry such that these issues are infinitely recreated. Transportation injustice is not solely a transportation problem, just as housing injustice is not solely a housing problem. Uneven mobilities, and mobility injustice relies on constant maintenance, renegotiation, and subjugation that cannot be counteracted by piecemeal solutions placed into communities by planners.

In order to understand the relationship between gentrification and displacement and transportation infrastructure it is necessary to pull in the framework of mobility justice. While transportation justice improves upon transportation equity and delegitimizes pure quantitative-based solutions, mobility justice explains why people are hesitant to approve new bike lanes, housing, and transit in their communities. While transportation and housing reform cannot bring about mobility justice single handedly and negate all of the ills of past and present, they can serve as a starting point to create communities structured around choice and belonging, rather than exclusion and displacement.

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