URBAN RENEWAL OR URBAN REMOVAL?
AN EXAMINATION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT EFFORTS FOR THE JORDAN DOWNS HOUSING PROJECTS IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

by

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Ashley Hansack has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation in Sociology-Environmental Studies.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the potential contradictions, inconsistencies, and inequities that arise in the execution of sustainable development and environmental remediation in communities by examining the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects in Watts, Los Angeles. In 2008, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) proposed a plan to tear down the Jordan Downs Housing Projects to make way for a new "urban village" that will include both subsidized housing and housing sold at market-rate values. For decades, the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts have been associated with urban blight, particularly after the 1965 Watts Riots. For this reason, HACLA has teamed up with two non-profit, affordable housing developers, the Michaels Organization and Bridge Housing Corporation, in hopes of creating a more sustainable and healthy community for the residents of Jordan Downs. The goal of this project is to transform the Jordan Downs Housing Project from a hub of intergenerational poverty, violence, poor health, and illiteracy, to a thriving and socioeconomically diverse community with great services, resources, and businesses for all members of the community.

My research investigates how local key stakeholders including residents, community stakeholders, activists, government officials, scholars, and representatives from the housing developers speak about the environmental and social consequences that may result from the redevelopment of a 700-unit public housing site called the Jordan Downs Housing Projects located in Watts, Los Angeles. Specifically, I examine the way key stakeholders speak about the environmental remediation occurring on the site and how the inclusion of environmental amenities, such as open spaces, bike lanes, and trees, will impact the economic development and demographic make-up of a community. Within my investigation of the impact of environmental remediation and amenities on this community, I also touch upon broader issues of urban

contamination, green development, and Environmental Justice. I focus on the relationship between greening and the redevelopment of cities because there is a national trend to create sustainable cities that simultaneously work to meet the demands of a growing population and reduce the human footprint on the natural environment. Across the United States, cities are developing alternatives to vehicles, electricity produced from fossil fuels, and the production of tremendous amounts of waste in order to reduce the destruction of the natural environment. Although cities are moving in the right direction by attempting to be more sustainable and environmentally-friendly, my investigation of the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects illuminates how greening, or the lack thereof, can facilitate injustice toward the most disenfranchised groups in our society if equity and justice are not the principle factors guiding plans that seek to promote sustainable development.

I center my analysis on the way key stakeholders frame the environmental toxics found on the site and how key stakeholders speak about the positive and negative consequences that may result from the $1 billion reinvestment plan. I spoke to several types of key stakeholders—including government officials, community activists, and residents—in order to examine how people with varying levels and types involvement in the redevelopment process speak about the environmental toxics found on the site and how they conceptualize the future of Jordan Downs and Watts as a result of this redevelopment project. I find that there are major inconsistencies between the level of toxicity found on the Jordan Downs site and how that information is being communicated to the public. Although high levels of toxic metals were found on the housing site, key stakeholders frame these toxics in a benign way and as a result, the toxics are not being remediated to the fullest extent. For this reason, I argue that the lack of full remediation of environmental toxics on the existing housing site is perpetuating environmental injustice in the

communities of Jordan Downs and Watts. I suggest that key stakeholders, like HACLA and the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) reevaluate the initial findings of the soil tests of the existing housing site conducted and have a more transparent reporting process to address the issues of environmental injustice currently being perpetuated in the redevelopment process.

Additionally, I examine the way key stakeholders conceptualize how this added investment will affect the local community. Many representatives from HACLA, DTSC, the housing developers, and the community frame the added investment as a positive thing that will work to catalyze more investment in the area. I argue that although Watts is in great need of investment after decades of disinvestment, investment in this area can potentially lead to widespread displacement of low-income, minority families in Watts due to institutional racism and market dynamics that work to allocate environmental goods to wealthier and white populations and environmental hazards to minority, low-income populations. The ultimate goal of this research is to pinpoint current flaws in the redevelopment plan in order to offer strategic solutions so that key stakeholders can work together to effectively use their resources to move forward in their goal of promoting sustainable, healthy, and equitable revitalization in the community of Watts.

Within my thesis, I first review literature centered on green gentrification, housing segregation, and the siting of environmental toxics and then frame my case study within Environmental Justice and Critical Race theory. Next, I lay out the background information of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects, the redevelopment plan, and the current controversies revolving around the redevelopment process. Then, I explain the methodology used to gather and analyze my data. I go on to present and analyze the results of my study. I conclude by exploring the implications of my research and offering suggestions of how to mitigate the negative effects

that may result from the incorporation of sustainable principles into redevelopment projects of historically disenfranchised communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has analyzed the ways environmental remediation and environmental amenities impact communities that primarily consist of low-income, minority populations. Within these past studies, scholars have found that low-income minority groups are often disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards (primarily through the siting of LULUs). Additionally, scholars have found that added environmental amenities in a neighborhood can lead to the displacement of original residents whether it is intentional or not. Housing segregation, market dynamics, and institutionalized racism also play a major role in working to move environmental hazards near marginalized populations and environmental amenities further away from those same populations. This literature review examines issues of green gentrification, the siting of LULUs, and social pollution in order to showcase the ways social inequalities can be reproduced and/or further exacerbated in attempts to incorporate sustainability principles and practices in communities.

Ruth Glass first coined the term gentrification in the 1960s to describe the changing demographics of communities in London as higher income people replaced working class people in numerous neighborhoods (Banzhaf 2012:24). Along with a change of demographics, gentrification is also thought to be accompanied with rising property values, new construction and renovations, and an alteration of local businesses and services (Banzhaf and McCormick 2012:25). In the United States, gentrifiers are often categorized as "affluent, young, single, urban professionals, and young, married couples [...] or small families" (De Sena 2012:70). Although people from varying racial and socioeconomic backgrounds are capable of changing communities, white people with higher incomes have greater power to alter neighborhoods because they have greater economic, political, and social power in the United States;

consequently, their presence and involvement in a neighborhood has the potential to completely change the culture and economy of a community.

Environmental or "green" gentrification is a subtype of gentrification that has resulted from this push to integrate sustainable development into cities. Green gentrification is described as the process of higher income people displacing lower income people as environmental amenities are included or restored in communities (Gould and Lewis 2012). Implementing environmental amenities such as bike lanes, trees, open green spaces, and clean waterways into neighborhoods can lead to gentrification because it increases the desirability of a neighborhood. This desirability is often reflected in increased property values due to increased safety, aesthetics, and positive health factors (Bunce 2009; Dale and Newman 2009; Dooling 2009). There has been extensive research on how the implementation of open spaces (Voicu and Been 2008; Wolch, Bryne, and Newell 2014; Eckerd 2011; Pincetl et al. 2003) and the redevelopment of brownfields (Essoka 2010; DePass 2006; Eckerd and Keeler 2012; DeSousa,Wu, and Westphal 2009) increase property values in neighborhoods.

Since many people living in poverty are renters (as opposed to property owners), they suffer the greatest threat when property values rise because when property values increase, rent prices increase. In boroughs like Harlem (Checker 2011) and Brooklyn (Gould and Lewis 2012), low-income residents were forced to move out of their communities because they could not afford the rising rents spurred by the greening of neighborhoods. For this reason, Gould and Lewis (2012) argue that environmental goods can end up exacerbating environmental inequalities instead of alleviating them. The authors state: "The benefits of the environmental good are thus distributed away from those who lived near it, and upward to those who can afford

to be attracted to it" (Gould and Lewis 2012:114). For this reason, many scholars argue that greening neighborhoods can lead to the displacement of low-income, minority people.

While some critics argue that cities are always undergoing demographic transitions, other scholars argue that gentrification occurs when people are forced out of their neighborhood due to unlawful evictions or their inability to pay their rents. As an example, the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts have undergone a major demographic transition where they primarily consist of Latino people, although the communities were primarily Black in the early 1950s (Castillo, Estrada, and Woods 2010:2). Scholars do not categorize this shift as a process of gentrification, however, because one minority group has replaced another minority group; the socioeconomic status of Latinos is similar to those of Black residents and the poor conditions of the neighborhood remain. The presence of Latinos has mostly influenced the culture of the community, rather than its economic value or its political/social power. Therefore, even if affluent white people have no intention of altering a community, their presence in certain neighborhoods poses a risk for gentrification because of their elevated status in society.

Sometimes business people and communities strive to create improvements that are associated with the gentrification of neighborhoods because many positive economic factors can stem from increased property values and business. In Brooklyn, for example, investors aimed to renovate Prospect Park in order to increase real estate values and attract wealthier residents (Gould and Lewis 2012:122). Investors saw great potential in this park and worked to capitalize on that untapped potential. The investors' efforts were successful in the ways that they completely transformed the park: the park became a hub for activities like running, biking, and picnicking (Gould and Lewis 2012:127). The authors state that the park was "no longer perceived as a place one goes to get mugged"; instead, Prospect Park is now seen as a vibrant,

beautiful, and safe place (127). With these positive changes, however, came negative consequences that fell on the shoulders of the most vulnerable populations. Homeless people were displaced from the park and minority and working-class residents were forced to move further away from the park due to the high costs of living spurred by the renovation project (Gould and Lewis 2012:122). As a result of these added environmental amenities, there were serious and easily-identifiable consequences that show that vulnerable populations are extremely susceptible to displacement.

Although it is not unethical to work to improve cities to make them more economically viable and safer, Essoka (2010) believes it is problematic to exclude certain populations from the benefits of those improvements because those exclusionary practices work to recreate the unequal structures that keep minority and low-income people in the most marginalized positions of society (304). In my theory section, I discuss the ways Schlosberg (2009) speaks about the importance of incorporating recognition justice (which is the way people are recognized and valued in a system) into decision-making processes (14). By excluding certain populations from decision-making processes, inequalities are perpetuated because certain groups of people are being left out of the conversation and are therefore less likely to reap any benefits from social change.

Housing segregation practices have also played a central role in the distribution of environmental amenities and hazards in society. Although explicit racist language is no longer written in the law, racist practices that occurred in the early 1900s still affect our present day decisions on how goods and burdens are distributed in our cities. Been (1994) speaks about the distribution of LULUs (Locally Undesirable Land Uses), which include toxic release inventory sites, waste dumps, freeways, abandoned plots of land, and homeless shelters, to show how the

distribution of these sites are more likely to be located in low-income neighborhoods populated with Latino and Black people. Racist and classist housing practices across the nation date back to the Jim Crow era when the government and financial institutions implemented different types of zoning policies, restrictive covenants, and redlining practices to limit where minority and poor populations could live (Harvey 1989; Essoka 2010:300). Until the 1960s, the government did not give mortgages to people living in minority communities (Morello-Frosch 2002:486). A study conducted over a 30 year period in Los Angeles found that toxic facilities were intentionally placed in communities of color (Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts 2009:414). Pulido, Sidawi, and Vos (1996) also found that Mexican-Americans residing in Los Angeles had higher exposure to industrial pollution than white people, as a result of racially biased urban planning policies from the previous century. These blatant forms of racism have resulted in a concentration of environmental hazards in inner-city neighborhoods and cleaner environments in the outskirts of cities where wealthy, white populations live. It is important to examine the history of the formation of neighborhoods in order to understand how the distribution of environmental amenities and hazards are influenced by those factors now. As Essoka (2010) states: "Gentrification in urban U.S. cities is not simply a consequence of land values. Its racial component and inequitable outcomes are undeniable" (311). Evidently, race and class are factors that contribute to the formation of neighborhoods and the unequal distribution of environmental hazards in our society.

In addition to Been's concern about how the siting of LULUs work to further perpetuate the marginalization of poor, black and brown people, she also encourages people to think more critically about how environmental hazards are distributed in order to address greater issues of inequality. She calls for an examination of environmental inequality issues in combination with

economic inequality issues when she states: “The dynamics of the housing markets therefore are likely to cause the poor and people of color to move to or remain in the neighborhoods in which LULUs are located, regardless of the demographics of the communities when the LULUs were first sited” (1994:3). In this quote, Been speaks about environmental issues through a broader lens to illuminate how much market dynamics play a role in altering neighborhoods. She argues that it is more important to examine people’s ability to move into or out of neighborhoods than just solely analyzing the initial siting of LULUs.

Other scholars have also found that when LULUs are located in a neighborhood, higher income residents move out, and poor minority residents move in (Been and Gupta 2007; Banzhaf and Walsh 2008). Studies also indicate that communities that are most successful is resisting the siting of LULUs often have higher levels of education, income, and fewer populations of people of color (Bullard 1996). Wealthier people often have more resources to move out of polluted neighborhoods, while low-income individuals do not. Mohai et al. (2009) highlights this point by stating: “...more affluent residents who have the financial means move to more environmentally desirable [locations], and hence more expensive neighborhoods. Poorer residents without such means are left behind” (414). As a result of the limited options disenfranchised populations have, neighborhoods are further polarized and the exposure to environmental toxics becomes highly dependent on one’s identity.

In bridging the link between environmental inequality and economic inequality, Been (1994) shows that the greatest inequality lies in the power of choice (that is often fueled by and equated with money). Higher income people often have more choices to move out of an environmentally risky place. For this reason, Been argues that working to remove environmental hazards from a community or distribute LULUs equally across neighborhoods will not work to

alleviate inequalities because the market dynamics of our capitalist system will work to redistribute hazards to economically disadvantaged communities over time. Campbell (1996) reiterates this point by stating: "economic segregation leads to environmental segregation" (299). Eckerd (2011) further highlights the link between market dynamics and environmental amenities and hazards by stating: "...land values tend to be relatively higher near amenities and relatively lower near disamenities and tend to adjust as those amenities and disamenities change" (34). The analyses completed by Campbell (1996), Been (1994), and Eckerd (2011) ultimately explain how market dynamics are likely to distribute or redistribute environmental hazards to low-income people if economic issues and discrimination are not taken into account in the siting of LULUs.

Within the examination of racist and classist sitings of environmental hazards and the distribution of LULUs due to market dynamics, it is also important to think about people's exposure to toxics as well. Faber (2008) argues that marginalized groups often face the "quadruple exposure effect" where they are exposed to toxics in their homes, in their work, and in their neighborhoods (31). In terms of poor air health quality, a study based in Los Angeles found that 71% of Black people and 50% of Latino people live in highly polluted areas, compared to 34% of White people (Faber 2008:31). The concentration of pollution in neighborhoods has tremendous potential to greatly impact the lives of people living in those communities because toxics accumulate in our bodies and interact with different substances in unknown ways. Faber (2008) categorizes the fourth component of the "quadruple exposure effect" as "faulty cleanup efforts implemented by the government or the waste treatment industry" (32). So on top of having greater exposure to environmental toxics, state entities engage in slower or faulty remediation plans in these neighborhoods as well. To illustrate, Lavelle and Coyle (1992) found that environmental hazards in white communities are cleaned up

faster and better, compared to the environmental hazards in minority communities (S1). Faber's examination of the "quadruple exposure effect" illuminates the ways minority groups are often disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards in several different areas in their lives. All in all, Faber's analysis indicates that environmental injustice is much more prevalent in the lives of marginalized groups.

Higgins (1994) also speaks about this phenomenon of "social pollution" as a reason for the unequal distribution of environmental toxics among neighborhoods. He states that "appropriately polluted spaces" are created when society agrees to place unequal burdens on communities that consist of people with less economic, social, and political power. Higgins (1994:262) states:

> ...when environmental pollution is relegated to such appropriate socially polluted spaces, the environmental pollution is really 'in its place' and therefore is not as noticeable as an anomaly or as an aberrant thing; it is relatively invisible in its physical and cultural separation from predominantly white, elite center of power. By the same token, the more 'socially polluted' the place, the more appropriate it is to direct environmental pollution to that place.

Higgins talks about a vicious cycle that occurs when society permits disadvantaged communities to bear the greatest brunt of these environmental toxics; once toxics are placed in a community, the placement of the environmental toxics continues to devalue the community and the people of that community. In many ways, the unequal protection and regulation of environmental laws in disadvantaged communities is rooted in the idea that communities of lesser value (that often seem to correlate with darker skin and lower socioeconomic background) do not have to be held to the highest standard of health and safety. Mohai et al. (2009) also state that since people of color have often been associated with "barbarism, filth, dirt, and pollution" (416), it is easier to place environmental burdens on them because it seems legitimate to degrade them since they are

already seen as lesser people. Therefore, it is evident that cultural racism serves as the foundation for institutional racism and environmental injustice.

Lastly, Luke (2005) critiques the push to promote sustainable community development because he sees it as a way to further commodify the land and promote consumerism. He questions the sustainable aspects of the projects gaining headway in cities because he sees the ways it promotes a capitalist system that relies on the exploitation of the environment as a means to sustain itself. Does greening really mean sustainability? Or is greening being used as a tool to promote economic growth under a facade of sustainability? Luke (2005) calls for a critical examination of sustainable development as a whole. Similarly, Logan and Molotch (1987) suggest that there is a growth machine ideology embedded in society where people feel the need to create and expand as opposed to scaling back. They state that resistance against the growth machine is often seen as an "illogical and disruptive effort to interfere with the natural forces of the market place" (Mohai et al. 2009:417). Nevertheless, Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that growth should not always be the solution to the problems our society faces, particularly because growth is not usually distributed or enjoyed equally among populations.

By reviewing previous research focused on green gentrification, the siting of LULUs, and social pollution, it is evident that housing segregation, market dynamics, and institutionalized racism have played major roles in determining how sustainable principles and practices impact the allocation of environmental hazards within different neighborhoods and the economic development and demographic make-up of a community. Research from past scholars indicates that there is a high risk for the perpetuation of social inequalities in the remediation of environmental hazards and the inclusion of environmental amenities in communities if efforts to promote sustainable development are not combined with efforts to address social ills.

THEORY

My examination of the redevelopment plans for the Jordan Downs Housing Projects are rooted in Environmental Justice theory and Critical Race theory. Environmental Justice theory examines inequalities and the formations of fairness and equality in our nation, while Critical Race theory examines social issues in society through a lens of identity, particular race. I investigate the remediation efforts and implementation of environmental amenities in Jordan Downs through both Environmental Justice and Critical Race theory because the distribution of environmental hazards and amenities among different communities is inextricably linked to race and racism. Although race is a social construct, racism has manifested in our society in tangible ways through institutional racism, housing segregation, the unequal distribution of LULUs in cities, and slow or nonexistent remediation of environmental contamination in low-income, minority communities. Examining the redevelopment efforts of Jordan Downs through these theories illuminates how historical patterns of discrimination recreate inequality in redevelopment processes in our present day, even if key stakeholders do not intend to do so.

Environmental Justice Theory

Environmental Justice focuses on how environmental amenities (i.e., green space, bike lanes, and clean air) and environmental hazards (i.e., polluting facilities, waste dumps, and toxics) are distributed in society. Particularly, Environmental Justice is concerned with how peoples' identities affect the distribution of environmental goods and bads in society. Schlosberg's interpretation of Environmental Justice describes the multitude of factors that play into the execution of Environmental Justice, the elimination of environmental injustice, and the interconnected nature of distributive, recognition, and procedural justice.

Within my examination of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects, I rely on Schlosberg's breakdown of Environmental Justice into: distributive, recognition, and procedural justice. There has been a great amount of literature focused on the distributive aspect of Environmental Justice. Schlosberg (2009) categorizes distributive justice as the equal distribution of environmental amenities and hazards in our society (12). As illuminated by several scholars including Pulido (1996) and Pastor, Sadd, and Hipp (2001), toxic sites are often in closer proximity to low-income and racially minority communities than wealthier, white communities. Therefore, disadvantaged communities are often most impacted by grave health problems like asthma and lead poisoning. Environmental Justice seeks to challenge these unequal forms of distribution in order to alleviate the disparities that lie between different racial and socioeconomic groups.

Recognition Justice is described as the way that people are recognized and valued by others in society (Schlosberg 2009:14). Recognition justice is an essential component to equal distributive practices and Environmental Justice more generally because it takes into account the value of different people's opinions, thoughts, and lived experiences in society. Without the recognition aspect of Environmental Justice, there is a risk of leaving certain voices out of a conversation and enacting ineffective solutions to inequalities in our society. People who are not taken into account do not have a seat at the decision-making table and therefore cannot have a stake in the solutions being offered.

The equal protection of the environmental law also ties into the ways people are recognized in society and also how toxics end up being distributed in the nation as well. For example, Bryant (1995) found that in the Superfund cleanup programs, it took twenty percent longer to categorize toxic sites as "hazardous waste sites" in racially minority communities, as

opposed to white communities (5). It is evident that when people are valued unequally in society, it is likely that distribution of environmental amenities and hazards is not equal either.

There is also a psychological component to recognition justice in the ways that people rely on the acknowledgement of others to recognize themselves (Schlosberg 2009:16). The recognition of one's existence and one's differences plays into the ways individuals perceive themselves in society. The status component of recognition justice is more centered on structural forms of justice by examining the way people are valued and respected within institutions. Disrespect and cultural domination are two ways one's status can be devalued in society.

Finally, procedural justice works to incorporate ideas of fairness through the judicial system. This component of Environmental Justice advocates for the fair and equitable distribution of resources through policy (Schlosberg 2009:25). Equity within the political realm of society is crucial to the elimination of institutional practices that have historically disenfranchised low-income communities of color. Having authority to enact broad-level policy changes tremendously influences how people are recognized and therefore, how resources are distributed amongst different people and communities.

Distributive, recognition, and procedural justice are all interconnected in the ways that they advance and stifle one another. Unfortunately, without distributive justice, it is very difficult to have recognition justice to achieve procedural justice. These forms of justice work together in a feedback loop: in order for one form of justice to be present, the other forms of justice need to be in place. Additionally, deficits in one area of justice harm others forms of justice. The interconnected nature of these forms of justice within Environmental Justice in many ways makes it difficult to address injustices because there are so many social issues that influence people's lives before they even make their own individualized choices. Therefore, it is important

to work to simultaneously implement distributive, recognition, and procedural justice in pursuit of Environmental Justice.

Lastly, it is important to note that Environmental Justice is often used interchangeably with terms like Environmental Injustice and Environmental Racism. Although each phrase revolves around the fair treatment of people, they have different connotations: Environmental Justice takes on a more optimistic view, while Environmental Injustice and Environmental Racism are more explicit about the wrongs occurring in society. Bullard (1996) defined Environmental Justice as the "equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations" for everyone (493). On the other hand, Taylor (2014) explains that Environmental Injustice occurs when the "distribution of these [environmental] hazards and risks that leave the poorest people—those least able to adapt—quite vulnerable" (95). Lastly, Environmental Racism is defined as "…any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color" (Bullard, Johnson, and Torres 2011:9).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race theory examines social interactions and practices through race, racism, and power dynamics (Delgado and Jean 2001:3). Specifically, Delgado and Jean (2001) state that Critical Race theory examines issues of race, racism, and power through a broader lens that encompasses "economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious" (Delgado and Jean 2001:3). Within these examinations, there is also this "activist dimension" to Critical Race theory where scholars seek not only to understand the condition of our society, but to also change them (Delgado and Jean 2001:3

Instead of focusing on how individual actors commit racist acts, Critical Race theory is centered on the way institutional racism permeates and manifests in our society. Jones (1997) defines institutional racism as "...laws, customs, and practices which systematically reflect and produce inequalities in American society...whether or not the individuals maintaining those practice have racist intentions" (131). The focus on institutional forms of racism is useful in the examination of race because it extends beyond debates of whether people intend to be racist or not, and provokes discussions of why certain populations are overwhelmingly disadvantaged in our society. The focus on institutional racism also shifts the conversation to speaking about how racism is embedded in social structures and institutions.

Although institutional racism is often invisible, it is just as detrimental as other explicit forms of racism because it has ability to permeate into society and affect people's lives in positive and negative ways based on their racial identity. In the United States, institutionalized practices that discriminate based on race have been deemed illegal for more than 50 years. However, Critical Race theory brings racism and race to the forefront of conversations by challenging people to think about why minority groups, such as Black and Latino people, continue to face the greatest social problems in our society. In focusing on institutional forms of racism (as opposed to isolated incidents of racism), the conversation becomes more about the overarching social structures within our society, instead of focusing on what individuals in disadvantaged positions need to work on in order to get themselves out of bad situations. Critical Race Theory looks at the ways one's identity influences their decisions and lifestyles before they have a choice to make decisions for themselves.

Another key component to Critical Race theory is the way it incorporates intersectionality in the examinations of race, racism, privilege, and power in our society. Delgado defines

intersectionality as "the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings" (2001:51). Intersectionality takes into account how different forms of disempowerment and oppressions combine with one another to influence people's choices and life outcomes. It indicates that forms of oppression and disempowerment are a lot more complicated when intersecting identities are taken into account. Race and class, for example, are often two factors that are investigated in combination to one another to explain why disparities among different racial and socioeconomic groups are so closely linked.

Both Environmental Justice theory and Critical Race theory are useful in my examination of the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects because they urge me to look at how certain identity factors (like race and class), historical processes, and the distribution of environmental amenities and hazards interact with one another. It is suggested by a review of literature that there is a strong relationship between the unequal exposures of environmental hazards in low-income minority communities and that low-income minority people are often displaced when environmental amenities are added to their neighborhood. Pastor et al. (2001) succinctly summarizes the link between distributive, recognition, and participatory justice within Environmental Justice theory and Critical Race theory by stating that: "communities with low levels of voting behavior, home ownership, wealth, and disposable income are more vulnerable to high concentrations of polluting facilities that other communities...these characteristics are often highly correlated with race" (19).

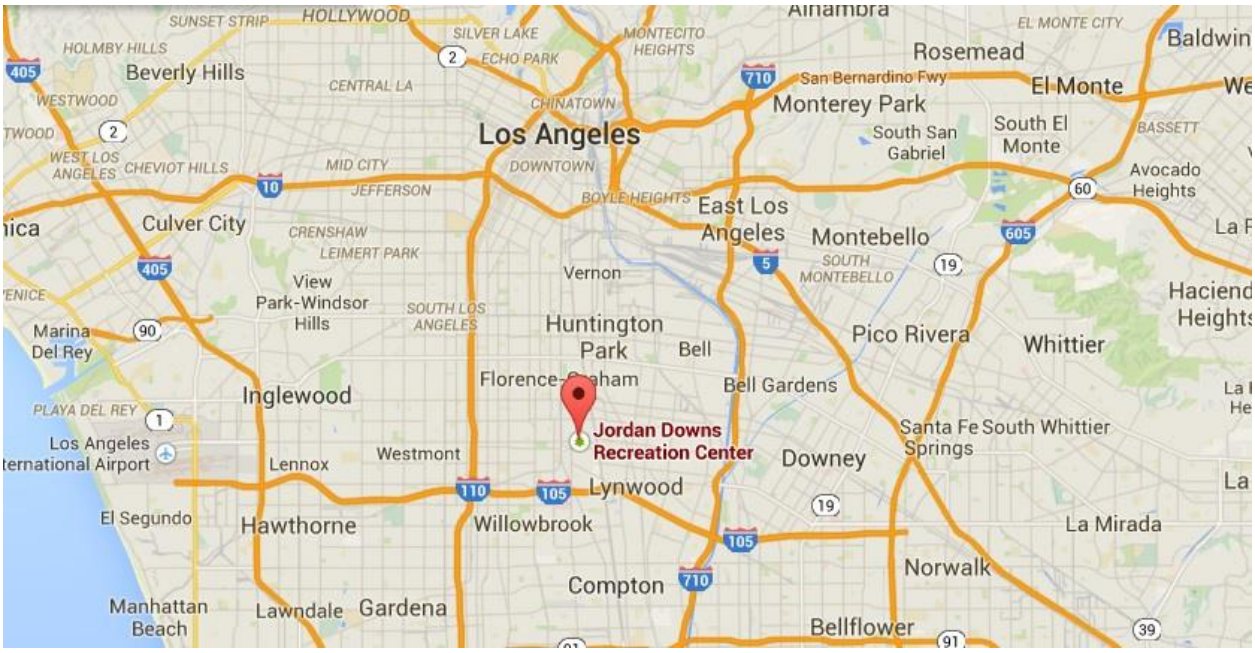
All in all, examining the redevelopment efforts of Jordan Downs through both Environmental Justice and Critical Race theory illuminates the ways in which the distribution of environmental hazards and the allocation of environmental amenities are inextricably connected

to race and racism. Young (1990) emphasizes the importance about talking about how identities and social structures influence Environmental Justice by provoking us to think about broader issues of inequalities that underlie environmental problems. Specifically, race and racism have been major factors in determining unequal distribution of environmental hazards in minority communities and the further marginalization of individuals in disadvantaged positions in society. Together, Environmental Justice and Critical Race theory show that poor, black and brown residents (like the ones residing in Jordan Downs) are often negatively affected by the implementation of sustainable development and faulty remediation plans as a result of former and current discriminatory practices based on race and other identity factors.

BACKGROUND

The Jordan Downs Housing Projects is a 700-unit public housing site located in Watts, Los Angeles (see Figure 1). Originally, Jordan Downs was designed to be temporary housing for employees working at the nearby factories during World War II. In the 1950s, the Jordan Downs Housing Projects became a permanent public housing site under the management of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA). By the 1960s, the units were predominantly occupied by African American residents who migrated from the South to California because of the economic opportunities provided by the war industry (Castillo et al. 2010:2).

Figure 1: Map of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects in Los Angeles, CA



Source: Google Maps

Recent data from a HACLA report indicates that Latinos now predominantly occupy the housing project with 67% of residents identifying as Latino/Hispanic and only 32% residents identifying as Black (Castillo et al. 2010:2). The community of Watts has gone through a similar demographic shift with 70% of residents identifying as Hispanic/Latino (most of who are of

Mexican descent) and 28% of residents identifying as African American or Black (City Council District 15 2013:2).

Within the housing project, the average median income per household is $15,502 and 9 out of 10 residents receive some form of government aid (Castillo et al. 2010:2). Seventy-five percent of the household are led by single mothers, 62% of the residents are unemployed, and 50% of residents have lived in Jordan Downs for over 5 years (Castillo et al. 2010:2). Issues of intergenerational poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, violence, poor health, and disenfranchisement have plagued the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts for decades. In an effort to break these cycles, government officials, community members, and two housing development organizations are teaming together to redevelop the Jordan Downs Housing Projects and revitalize the community so more opportunities and resources are available to residents in the housing project as well as the broader Watts community.

Redevelopment Plan

In 2008, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa proposed a $1 billion plan to rebuild the Jordan Downs Housing Projects into a mixed-use and mixed-income facility. This new development will be a part of a private/public partnership among HACLA, the Michaels Organization, and Bridge Housing Corporation. The project includes a one-for-one replacement of the existing 700 public housing units and an addition of 1,100 affordable and market-rate units. The breakdown of the additional affordable and market-rate units consists of: 700 affordable rental units (including 100 senior units) funded through tax credits and 400 market rate condominium units (Department of City Planning (DCP) 2008a:3). There will be an addition of 1,100 square feet of retail space and an additional 9 acres of green space in the completed property. The plan finalized by representatives from HACLA and the housing developers also aims to improve

sidewalks and implement 6’ wide bike lanes. All buildings will be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified as well; this means that the construction and operation of these facilities will be environmentally responsible. Additionally, city officials and developers plan to extend Century Boulevard, a main commercial street, through the middle of the new development which is intended to serve as the “spine” of the revitalized housing project.

Figure 2: A render of the future Jordan Downs Housing Projects

Source: Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

The denial of a $30 million national grant called the Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) and the elimination of the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) has prolonged the redevelopment process, but the project is still underway as stakeholders continue to work to secure funds for the project. In early 2015, HACLA and the City of Los Angeles reapplied to the $30 million CNI grant and they should know if the Jordan Downs redevelopment project is a finalist for the grant in the summer of 2015. Nevertheless, government officials and housing developers are still looking to secure other forms of public and

private funding in order to reach their $1 billion goal. Since they are building this development in four phases, HACLA and the housing developers are simultaneously acquiring funding and working to build the new facilities. As of January 2015, the process of removing contaminated soil from one portion of the property began. The construction of new housing facilities are expected to start shortly after the cleanup of the factory site is complete. Once the new section of housing is built, residents from one portion of the existing housing projects will move into these new units. Since this project is being built in four stages, there will be a continual loop of residents moving into new housing and their old homes will then be demolished to make way for the construction of new housing facilities.

In addition to the changes occurring to the built environment, there is also a human capital component of the plan. HACLA is providing resources to jumpstart and further fund support group programs, job training programs, adult education/literacy programs, and youth programs (Castillo et al. 2010:3). They also plan to assign a case manager to each family to aid with the transitioning process from the old buildings to the new ones (Castillo et al. 2010:3). This portion of the redevelopment aims to facilitate a smooth transition for residents into the new development and to give residents the resources they need to break out of the cycles of unemployment, poverty, gang affiliations, illiteracy, and poor health. Scholars in the area argue that without this human capital plan, the redevelopment process is bound to be a poor investment because benefits will not outweigh the costs since the built environmental will change, but the social conditions will remain the same (Castillo et al. 2010:3). For this reason, HACLA has already allocated a tremendous amount of resources and energy into community outreach and engagement. Throughout the whole redevelopment process, HACLA has held meetings to get

feedback from residents, to answer the questions of residents, and to inform residents about the progress and setbacks throughout this long redevelopment process.

Controversy surrounding the Redevelopment Plan

The redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects has been quite a controversial issue because critics argue that this project promotes the increased policing of residents in the area, furthers the privatization of public housing nationwide, and dismisses the environmental contaminants found on site. The L.A. Human Right to Housing Collective, an advocacy group focused on securing housing for homeless and low-income people in Los Angeles, has been one of the most vocal and powerful groups raising concerns about the redevelopment of Jordan Downs. They have organized residents to demand the halt of unlawful evictions of current Jordan Downs residents, to demand that HACLA and DTSC extensively examine and clean up the contamination on the property, and to encourage government officials to think about alternative modes of improvement that does not further the privatization of public housing. Within the community, there is also this concern that the proposed mixed-income housing plan will significantly change the demographic make-up of the community at the expense of the displacement of long-time and extremely low-income residents in the housing project and in the neighborhood of Watts.

Residents and community organizations have united together because they believe there has been an increase of criminalization of residents that have resulted in unlawful evictions. Before the redevelopment project was proposed in 2008, a grid of surveillance cameras was installed in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects in 2006. In 2011, the Community Safety Program was initiated in several different housing project sites in Los Angeles, including Jordan

Downs. The Community Safety Program permanently placed 45 police officers in 4 housing project sites (Hagstrom 2013). The officer's duty is to enforce the law and to build relationships with residents and community members (HACLA 2014). These new policing tactics have been controversial in the community because even though there has been a significant decrease in robberies, rapes, assaults, and homicides in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects (Hagstrom 2013), critics argue that these new tactics are leading to the hyper-policing of residents. Some key stakeholders argue that this hyper-policing leads to the increased criminalization of residents which results in the displacement of residents through evictions.

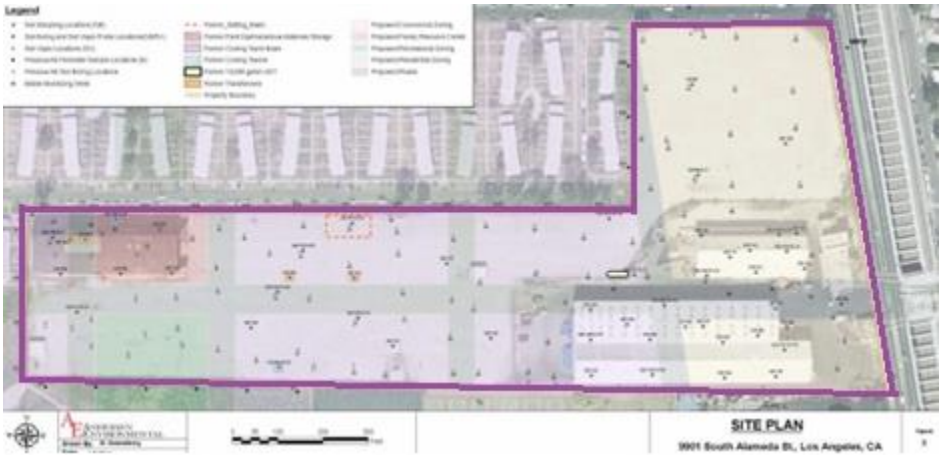
The issue of the further privatization of public housing has also surfaced since the new Jordan Downs "Urban Village" will be managed primarily through the two non-profit organizations, the Michaels Organization and Bridge Housing Corporation. Jordan Downs is currently solely owned by HACLA as a public entity. Critics argue that with this new public/private partnership, there will be fewer protections for residents and public housing will be less affordable. HACLA and other stakeholders state that this public/private partnership is necessary because since the 1980s, there have been significant decreases in federal funding for public housing. Federal legislators have enacted policies to shift money away from public housing because these public housing sites do not provide enough revenue to manage general upkeep and repair damages. For this reason, government officials are now experimenting with other forms of funding like tax credits.

Specifically, HACLA is also moving in the direction of prioritizing mixed-income housing because this form of housing is seen as a tool that has potential to bring in racial, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity into poor, densely populated, crime-ridden, and isolated communities. Nonetheless, community groups like LA CAN continue to push HACLA to

examine alternative modes of project development and funding so that public housing in Jordan Downs is not privatized.

Lastly, there have been major environmental concerns (primarily from outside advocacy groups) about the toxics present in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects site. The major concern of environmental toxics stems from a 21 acre site located in the middle of the housing project. These acres are fenced off with a tall brick fence. This site is known as the factory because it was a steel mill in 1940s and later a repair facility and storage site for trucks.

Figure 3: Factory site in the middle of the Housing Projects (outlined in purple)



Source: Andersen Consulting 2014

In 2008, HACLA purchased the vacant 21 acres for $31 million dollars (Perez and Vilchis 2013:8). HACLA chose to redevelop the Jordan Downs Housing Projects as opposed to other housing projects in Los Angeles because they saw the unique opportunity that these 21 acres provided. Members of HACLA envisioned building new housing units on the vacant 21 acres first, and then moving residents from one section of Jordan Downs into those new homes to avoid displacing residents.

Before purchasing the land, HACLA knew the 21 acre site was contaminated but they did not know to what extent. Once HACLA purchased the site, they ordered an investigation of the 21 acre site. In 2013, a Human Health Risk Assessment found high levels lead, arsenic,

trichloroethylene (TCE), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the soil (DTSC 2008b). Shortly after these results were released, HACLA agreed to enter a voluntary cleanup agreement for the whole factory site under the supervision and guidance from the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC 2014). The current plan is to allocate $8 million to remove 33,600 cubic yards of soil from the factory site and replace it with clean soil (DCP 2008b).

Once residents, community members, and several different advocacy groups found out about the great presence of toxics on the 21 acre factory site, however, they demanded HACLA to complete extensive tests of the whole Jordan Downs Housing Projects site. There were some concerns about the possible migration of the toxics from the factory site into the existing housing sites and concerns about an explosion from a nearby metal recycling company that occurred in December 2002. As a result of this explosion, 2,000 tons of hazardous waste (including lead and PCBs) in the soil was removed from a high school's baseball field (DTSC 2006). People had concerns about possible contamination of toxics from the explosion at the high school since the housing projects borders the southeast section of the school.

Community members are also pushing for further testing of the existing housing site because studies show that Watts, as an entire community, is very polluted overall. Data shows that areas surrounding the Jordan Downs Housing Projects are ranked among the top 10% of California's most contaminated land (Barboza 2013). A lot of this pollution stems from Watts' history of heavy industrial activity. Although industrial activity has declined in the area in recent decades, Watts is tainted with a lot of chemicals and metals that were once used in the agricultural and manufacturing industries in Watts. For this reason, key stakeholders argue that even though there may not be toxics on the existing housing site from the migration of toxics

from the factory site or the 2002 explosion, it is likely that there are dangerous levels of toxics near people's homes in the housing project from previous industrial uses.

After much pressure from the community and advocacy groups to do extensive testing of the existing housing site, HACLA agreed to examine the areas bordering the 21 acre site to determine whether contaminants had spread outside of the fenced-off 21 acre factory site. They hired the Andersen Environmental Consulting group to sample soil from 30 different locations near the factory site and although they found elevated levels of lead ranging from 23 to 145 parts per million, representatives from the DTSC stated that "no further action is necessary with regards to the metals in [the] surface soils" because "lead concentrations detected in the soil are similar to those found in urban areas in Los Angeles" (Barboza and Garrison 2013; Andersen Consulting 2014; DTSC 2014). Concerns about the premature disapproval of toxics in the existing housing site at Jordan Downs have arisen from community members because the recommended state level is 80 parts per million, at which further health screening is advised. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) categorizes uncontaminated land at 50 parts per million (Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR) 2010). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP), lead is a neurotoxin that is known to have irreversible effects and cause illnesses like cancer and other neurological diseases (CDCP 2011). Children are especially susceptible to the harmful effects of lead because their nervous systems are not fully developed and their bodies absorb more from the ambient environment (CDCP 2011). Nevertheless, there are no plans set to remediate the soil on the existing housing site although some levels of lead found greatly exceed the levels recommended by the state of California.

Although representatives from HACLA, DTSC, and the housing developer have accepted that the health of current and future residents will not be compromised by the contaminants found on the property, groups like the L.A. Human Right to Housing, the Physicians for Social Responsibility (LA), and the Legal Foundation of Los Angeles continue to demand HACLA to clean up the whole project site to its fullest extent. As of now, however, HACLA has only made a public commitment to clean up the 21 acre factory site.

Lenny Siegel, the Executive Director of the Center for Public Environmental Oversight, also expressed his concern about the current vapor intrusion at Jordan Downs because even though traces of trichloroethylene (TCE) have been found in groundwater and soil samples in the project site, DTSC recommended that nothing be done to address this environmental issue. For this reason, Mr. Siegel argues that vapor intrusion was "prematurely dismissed" in the draft Remedial Action Plan (RAP) prepared for DTSC (Siegel 2013:3). He states that the high levels of TCEs found pose a tremendous risk to humans, particularly pregnant mothers. Mr. Siegel urges HACLA to engage in more extensive testing of the project site to determine the spread of vapor intrusion and the source of it as well. Although HACLA has agreed to look into this issue of vapor intrusion more, there is no formalized document publicly available indicating how HACLA will address this issue to make sure residents are safe from harmful environmental toxics.

Unfortunately, issues of environmental toxics and injustice are not new to the community of Watts. For this reason, some proponents of the redevelopment argue that the residents of Jordan Downs and Watts should support HACLA's current cleanup efforts because those plans are going to make Jordan Downs and Watts cleaner places to live in, regardless of whether they clean up the soil in the existing housing site or not. In other words, even if HACLA only

accomplishes the bare minimum to clean up the toxics found in the project site, the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts are going to be healthier places for people to live in compared to how they are now.

METHODS

From December 2014 to January 2015, I conducted 19 in-depth, semi-structured, in-person and phone interviews with people involved in the redevelopment process of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects. I interviewed government officials, representatives of the housing developers, scholars, residents from Jordan Downs Housing Projects and Watts, and community activists. To identify possible interview participants, I searched "Jordan Downs Housing Projects" on the Google search engine. I scanned various articles and government documents online relating to the history of Jordan Downs and its redevelopment plans. Then, I engaged in purposive sampling where I noted the names of people whose names were repeated various times. I considered some people because of their particular stance on the issue (either they were explicitly for or against the redevelopment of Jordan Downs) or because they seemed to play a major role in the redevelopment process.

Once I had an idea of the core people I wanted to speak to, I emailed everyone and asked if they could refer me to other individuals who were involved in the redevelopment of Jordan Downs or knowledgeable about the current economic/community development efforts in Watts. I was also able to leverage some connections through my personal contacts since I live and have worked in the area. I reached out to my former supervisor at an organization called T.R.U.S.T. South LA and she was able to connect me with high profile government officials. A friend from high school who currently lives in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects helped me reach some residents as well. Once I secured my contacts, I submitted an IRB proposal in order to conduct interviews and it was approved in December 2014. After interviewing a few community stakeholders, I was informed about various community meetings regarding the redevelopment of

Jordan Downs and Watts more generally. These gatherings helped me connect to other people for interviews.

I used a non-probabilistic snowball method because it was important for me to identify the individuals most involved in the redevelopment efforts. Although the project involves several different people and organizations, it was crucial for me to pinpoint the individuals that were extensively involved or highly knowledgeable about the project. I also wanted to make sure I contacted people and organizations who had publicly taken a stance as to whether this redevelopment project will positively or negatively impact the residents of Jordan Downs and the community of Watts. Nevertheless, I spoke to a range of people with varying involvements in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects because I wanted to make sure to get a representative and holistic view of the redevelopment project. I conducted one interview with two participants at the same time because they were from the same organization and they wanted to do so; all the other interviews consisted of one participant.

The semi-structured interviews aimed to reveal how different stakeholders spoke about the current environmental and social conditions of the Jordan Downs and Watts community and the consequences that may result from the redevelopment of a 700-unit public housing site. For the interviews, I drafted a list of questions (refer to Appendix A) which had a list of general questions and then subsections with more specific questions for certain stakeholders. I added clarifying questions throughout the interviews to address points of confusion or to have people be more explicit about their thoughts on how the redevelopment efforts will impact the Jordan Downs and Watts community. The interview questions asked about people's personal involvement and the participant's opinions concerning the environmental toxics present on-site, the implementation of mixed-income housing, and how the redevelopment project will

economically and socially impact the community of Watts in the future. The interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to an hour and a half and they were audio recorded.

After completing the interviews, I divided participants into general categories including government officials (n=4), scholars (n=3), residents (n=4), representatives from the housing developers (n=2), and community activists/members (n=6). A few participants overlapped between categories as some worked and lived in the community. Ultimately, however, I decided to categorize participants primarily through their professional career titles because that was the primary way they interacted with the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects. I found that the individuals who overlapped in different categories often had the most insightful observations and predictions to share about several different aspects of the redevelopment project.

After transcribing all the recorded interviews, I coded the transcripts based of emergent themes from the interviews (refer to Appendix B). I used an inductive and deductive method to develop codes: after each interview, I took some time to reflect on what the individual had just said and I brainstormed a few codes; after I listened and transcribed each interview, I brainstormed a few codes based on the common themes that surfaced. Before I began to formally code interviews on NVivo, I gathered the most pertinent draft of codes into a list and defined what each code meant so that I could reference the meaning of the code if needed. While I was coding the interviews on the NVivo program, I also further developed some codes. After writing the analysis section of my thesis, I omitted codes from my code category list that were not prominent in my interviews.

As I analyzed the transcriptions, I noted how people framed the state of environmental toxics in Jordan Downs, how people spoke about the disinvestment in the South LA and Watts

region, and how the redevelopment of Jordan Downs could serve as a catalyst of investment in the area. In the analysis section of this thesis, I primarily dissect how key stakeholders framed the environmental toxics found on the existing housing site in a benign way and the ways they expect investment to affect the community in positive (i.e., safer neighborhoods) and negative (i.e., displacement) ways.

Additionally, I scanned through various online newspaper articles and government documents primarily to understand the progress of the redevelopment project since its inception in 2008. These sources were also helpful because they gave me an idea of people's involvement and personal stance on the redevelopment project before I interviewed them. I did not end up coding any aspects of these articles for my thesis projects because the 19 interviews I conducted were more nuanced and complex. Many of the interviews also highlighted of the same information and controversies that were stated in the online sources. All in all, the online articles and government documents were primarily used to inform my personal knowledge about the redevelopment process and for information in the background section of my thesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the first section of my analysis of the interviews with the key stakeholders involved in the redevelopment project for Jordan Downs, I focus on how different people speak about the environmental toxics present in the housing project. I find that there is a major disconnect between how members of HACLA and DTSC speak about the level of toxicity of the environmental toxics present on the site and what the results of the soil testing conclude about the toxic levels present in Jordan Downs. I suggest that DTSC and HACLA use benign framing to belittle the toxicity of the hard metals and vapor intrusion found on site. By framing the toxics in a benign way, these state entities are only required to clean up some of the toxics as opposed to all of them. For this reason, I argue that the benign framing by HACLA and DTSC is furthering environmental injustices in Jordan Downs and the community of Watts because after the redevelopment is done, there will still be a high presence of environmental toxics in the area which poses a major risk to future residents.

The second half of my analysis focuses on how key stakeholders speak about the way this $1 billion investment in Jordan Downs will spur further investment in the broader community. I find that several key stakeholders do not talk about the potential for gentrification in this area as a result of the redevelopment of Jordan Downs. Instead, I find that many government officials and community members interviewed are excited about the potential changes this redevelopment will bring forth onto the community. I nevertheless argue that there is great potential for green gentrification as environmental amenities, like bike lanes and open spaces, are added to the community.

I conclude the analysis portion of thesis by discussing how environmental hazards and amenities can negatively impact low-income minority residents in the ways that market

dynamics influence distribution patterns so that the greatest burdens are skewed toward the most vulnerable populations. My research demonstrates the complexities of the issue at hand and how many of the key stakeholders have the best intentions with the execution of this project. Nevertheless, when working with populations that have been disenfranchised time and time again, it is imperative that justice and equity-driven principles be combined with efforts to promote change. I conclude by arguing that if equity and justice are not the center of the redevelopment of Jordan Downs, the redevelopment project is bound to negatively affect the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts by perpetuating environmental injustice by failing to appropriately cleanup the site and by displacing residents through green gentrification.

Justification of Environmental Toxics

The framing and decision-making processes of environmental toxics by DTSC representatives plays a major role in the remediation process of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects because HACLA has hired DTSC to test the property, determine what environmental toxics are present on the site and at what levels, and lastly, to come up with a remediation plan to address environmental issues (if any). I begin this portion of my analysis with a quote from a DTSC representative in order to illustrate the ways DTSC conceptualizes the hard metals found in Jordan Downs. The representative states:

> We did some sampling in the housing area to see if there was any contamination in the existing housing and we did not find any. We also did a screening for metals. What we found was a very normal distribution of metals in Southern California. There has been extensive testing at the 21 acre and outside the 21 acres to make sure that people are safe.

From this statement, the DTSC representative states that there are no environmental problems at Jordan Downs because there was no contamination found. Although metals were found on the site, the representative emphasizes the harmless nature of these environmental toxics by claiming

that the distribution of metals is "normal" for this region of California. She also goes as far as to say that "people are safe." As stated in the Background section of my thesis, however, the testing completed by the Andersen Consulting firm found that 47% of the samples taken from the existing housing area contained levels of lead above state levels of concern. HACLA is also reevaluating the issue of vapor intrusion that DTSC dismissed early on in their consideration for the remediation plans for Jordan Downs.

Background levels are also a major component to the justification of the environmental toxics present in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects. The environmental toxics found on the existing site have not been deemed unsafe because DTSC argues that the levels found in Jordan Downs are similar to the levels found in other areas of Los Angeles. They categorize these levels as "background levels". The ATSDR (2009) defines background levels as "an average or expected amount of a substance or radioactive material in a specific environment, or typical amounts of substances that occur naturally in an environment." I could not find any document indicating how DTSC quantified the background levels in the communities of Watts. Subsequently, I could not determine whether these acceptable background levels are set at levels that pose a risk to the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts. Nevertheless, HACLA, DTSC, and the housing developers compare the levels of lead in Jordan Downs to these background levels in order to justify the lack of cleanup in the existing housing. To highlight how key stakeholders justified the inadequate clean-remediation plans at Jordan Downs, I show a conversation with a government official from HACLA below:

> **Interviewer: Has there been any testing on the actual part of Jordan Downs where the housing is?**
>
> Interviewee: Yes, there has been testing outside the [factory] site and the levels there were similar to the background levels of the LA area so there are no contamination concern on the off-site soil in the [Jordan Downs] neighborhood.

Interviewer: So those background levels are similar to other levels in LA?

> Interviewee: Background is levels of chemicals that are present already. Sometimes background is below or above screening grounds. So whatever is available in the area is. Near the Jordan Downs site is within the background.

All in all, DTSC's framing of the environmental toxics present at Jordan Downs is problematic because they are dismissing the harmful nature of the environmental toxics found on the site. When asked if HACLA is doing an adequate job in mitigating the toxics at Jordan Downs, the same representative from DTSC states: "Well, you're talking about something that doesn't exist. As I said, when we did the testing, we issued no further action. There's no mitigation needed at this time." In this quote, the DTSC representatives dismisses the presence of environmental toxics at Jordan Downs altogether by reiterating that the toxics do not exist. The key stakeholder suggests that there is no remediation plans needed for toxics that are not present. At last, this DTSC representative illustrates their influence on HACLA's decision-making processes by stating that HACLA has adequately addressed the environmental toxics based on DTSC's recommendation. The DTSC representative states: "They've [HACLA] been doing a good job in terms of what we've asked them to do."

Since DTSC has framed the environmental toxics as a harmless and nonexistent issue, it seems like HACLA is doing what they are supposed to be doing in not cleaning up the site extensively. There is no need for extensive environmental cleanup if there are no harmful toxics in the first place, right? A government official involved with HACLA further defends their lack of cleanup by referring to DTSC's conclusions by stating: "HACLA has been complying with DTSC's request and they have done what they were asked to do." Again, in many ways, this representative is correct: HACLA is doing their job right because they are complying with the recommendations set by DTSC. The problem with this justification of environmental toxics,

however, is that DTSC's dismissal of the environmental hazards present in Jordan Downs causes HACLA to dismiss the environmental toxics as well and not move forward with an extensive remediation plan. The quote below adequately illustrates how DTSC's problematic framing influences HACLA's decision-making processes. Another representative from HACLA states:

> There was no scientific evidence at all of any toxics on the residential site. There's never been any evidence that there was toxics…other advocacy groups were concerned that some of the toxics had spread to the residential site even though the testing didn't show that…The test results came back [and indicated] that there were not elevated levels of any of these matters on the existing residential site. So as a result of that, the cleanup plan doesn't require any additional clean up on the residential site.

In this quote, the HACLA representative justifies the lack of cleanup needed in the existing housing site by referring to the test conducted by Andersen Consulting and DTSC's conclusions that stated that no remediation was necessary. Using DTSC's findings to justify the lack of remediation in the existing housing was a common theme in my conversations with government officials.

Although HACLA is at no fault for relying on DTSC to survey the soil at Jordan Downs, they are at fault for complying with recommendations that issue no further remediation in the existing housing site. As a public entity, HACLA's duty is to provide safe and affordable housing for the residents of Los Angeles. Instead, HACLA is allowing bureaucracy to cloud their mission and perpetuate environmental injustices toward one of the poorest communities in Los Angeles. A representative from HACLA nevertheless states that HACLA is limited in their solutions. One obstacle is property boundaries. The representative from HACLA states "Property boundaries are limiting even though contamination is widespread." Although the representative acknowledges how property boundaries limit the extent of remediation in the ways that entity's may not be able to address widespread problems of contamination, the representative does not go on to offer solutions on how to address the environmental toxics within the property boundaries

to the fullest extent. In many ways, this representative of HACLA highlights the Agency's limitations in order to justify the inadequate cleanup of the existing housing site.

At this point in time, there are no plans to remediate the existing housing site. A remediation is not occurring because DTSC dismissed the environmental toxics on the site and HACLA has not questioned those conclusions, despite the fact that several residents, community members, and advocacy groups have voiced their concerns about the dangers that lie from the presence of hard metals and vapor intrusion at Jordan Downs. Lenny Siegel, the Executive Director for the Center for Public Environmental Oversight, is the only individual that has been able to encourage HACLA to reconsider the original recommendations set forth by DTSC. After writing a scientific reanalysis about how vapor intrusion should not be ignored in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects (Siegel 2013), HACLA committed to complete further testing to investigate vapor intrusion on the site. In his report, Mr. Siegel states: "…in reviewing available documents, I found that the vapor intrusion pathway had been prematurely dismissed…" (2013:3). He states that the levels of vapor intrusion found in Jordan Downs pose a great risk to the community, particularly pregnant mothers and children (Siegel 2013:4).

The fact that Mr. Siegel's piece was able to challenge DTSC's initial recommendations indicates two things: first, it shows that expert knowledge backed by science (as opposed to historical or personal recounts) is more valued in this redevelopment process. Several different parties, including residents and community members and activist, have demanded extensive testing and remediation of the hard metals at Jordan Downs, but they have not had much luck in changing HACLA's initial stance. The fact that Mr. Siegel's claims are backed by science adds more legitimacy to his claims so HACLA has informally committed to revisiting the issue of vapor intrusion. Second, Mr. Siegel's report also confirms that DTSC has wrongfully interpreted

the data because Mr. Siegel came up with completely different conclusions based on the same data and formulas that DTSC relied on to say that vapor intrusion at Jordan Downs was not a problem. The inconsistencies in the reporting of vapor intrusion therefore bring into question the reporting of the hard metals on the existing housing site. If DTSC incorrectly interpreted the problems of vapor intrusion present in Jordan Downs, how sure can the public be about their interpretation of the hard metals found on the existing housing site? Instead of revisiting DTSC's reporting on the hard metals, however, HACLA has remained firm in their decision to only remediate the vacant 21 acre factory site in the middle of the housing projects.

Although representatives from HACLA and DTSC were the primary stakeholders that framed the environmental toxics in this benign way, a majority of the key stakeholders who spoke about the environmental toxics justified the toxics present in Jordan Downs by speaking about the overall polluted nature of Watts as well. To highlight, I want to begin by showcasing a quote from a representative from one housing developer. He states:

> When they finish, [that site] will be cleaner than any site around it. If you say Jordan Downs is unsuitable for housing, then you have to go across the street and say your site is unsuitable too. And you guys over there, your site is unsuitable too. ...Like if you really feel strongly that you can't build Jordan Downs in a way that is suitable for housing, then we shouldn't let anybody live down there...Jordan Downs is as habitable as everything else in South LA. There is no such thing as a clean site down there. You have to do your remediation.

This representative from the housing developer touched upon a lot of important points including the toxics present in the overall community of Watts and the need to do wide-scale remediation. The most important point from this statement, however, is the way this key stakeholder states how the Jordan Downs community will be cleaner than it is now and cleaner than the rest of Watts. In comparing Jordan Downs to its current state and the rest of the community, the current remediation plan for Jordan Downs is framed as a positive thing for the community. When we

look at the remediation plans on their own, however, they seem inadequate and incomplete because they do not address all environmental concerns that pose risks to the general public. Nevertheless, other key stakeholders (like this representative from HACLA) emphasizes the way HACLA is actually working to be proactive and cleanup an area that has been contaminated for decades. He states:

> …in my opinion, that fact that we purchased that land and engaged the EPA to help us determine what the contaminants are and how we have committed money to clean that up, that's a big deal. That's huge. If we hadn't started that process, it would still be sitting there. Whatever is down there would still be sitting there with no plans to do nothing…So it's like this is one of the better things of the [redevelopment] project.

In this quote, the representative from HACLA addresses the fact that HACLA's initiative to clean up the Jordan Downs Housing Projects has brought the environmental issues in the community to the forefront; with this, HACLA is working to address the environmental issues and counteract the fact that nothing has been done in this community for decades. Later on, the same representative states: "Now, when it's all set and done, Watts will be healthier and cleaner for everyone." The excerpts from this HACLA representative highlight the unique position HACLA serves in this redevelopment process because it is likely that without HACLA's proposed redevelopment project, there would be no discussion about how to clean up the factory site or existing housing site. The representative of HACLA brought up these important points as he expressed his frustrations with all the criticism that HACLA has been receiving for their remediation plan. This key stakeholder ultimately does not see the remediation plans as being inadequate; instead, he frames HACLA as being a proactive entity that is working to alleviate environmental injustice—not perpetuate it.

Furthermore, several key stakeholders also talk about the extent of remediation that can be realistically accomplished in a community that is so highly polluted. When asked about how

to address issues of environmental contamination in Jordan Downs and Watts, a representative from the housing developer questioned me by stating: "Do we want to just empty out Watts?...You have to draw a line. Yes, there is lead in the soil. Ambient lead. So, do we send everyone packing?" He frames his questions under a realistic framework and is critical about what type of remediation plan is feasible in this community because Jordan Downs is not just an isolated community with grave environmental issues; these environmental issues affect the whole neighborhood. Moreover, an environmental scholar also raises obstacles that relate to limited funding and time of organizations. When speaking about cleaning up the groundwater to address concerns of vapor intrusion in Jordan Downs, he states:

> Even in the best circumstances, that could take decades…the difficulty is there is no one to pay for it right now...HACLA partners did not cause the contamination so it's unlikely that the state would require them to go the extra mile and do the cleanup…

With environmental cleanups, there are some major obstacles that relate to funding and time. Unfortunately, even if there were no issues in HACLA and DTSC's reporting of the environmental contamination in the existing housing site, they would still be limited in the type of remediation they can conduct due to limited resources. The quotations from the representative of the housing developer and the environmental scholar show that there are a lot of obstacles that inhibit full remediation of hazardous land when we think under realistic terms.

Additionally, a long-time resident also talks about the polluted nature of Watts by highlighting the poor overall quality in the area. He states:

> You want to talk about heavy pollution? We're talking about a place where not only is the soil contaminated, the air is smog. If I woke up one morning and said I want to take a big huff of smog, I would open the door to my window and take it all in.

Although this resident's comment is quite comical, he brings up issues with air pollution in the area to further reiterate the overall polluted nature of Watts that extends past the contaminants

found in the soil. As stated earlier, Faber (2008) indicates that minority groups are often disproportionately affect by environmental hazards through the "quadruple exposure effect" in the ways that they are exposed to toxics in their homes, work, neighborhoods, and through inadequate cleanup processes. This disproportionate amount of toxics makes it difficult to know where to start and end remediation. For this reason, I argue that focusing on the overall pollution of Watts can be quite daunting and even discouraging. This focus on the overall polluted nature of Watts creates this idea that it is extremely difficult and maybe even impossible to cleanup any aspect of Watts. Even though key stakeholders are framing the issue of contaminants in Jordan Downs under the framework of the overall polluted nature of Watts to have a conversation about what type of remediation is feasible, their framing also works to dismiss the need for HACLA to clean up the existing housing site so that resident of Jordan Downs can live in spaces that do not pose major dangers to their health.

Interestingly, one resident stated that there is no need to clean up any area in Jordan Downs. When asked about her opinions of the environmental contaminants being left near the existing housing as recommended by DTSC, she states:

> …To be honest, I am one of those people that say that is okay. We have lived so much time with that lead and no one has died. So I say, if they clean [the site], it's okay. If they don't, it's okay. What bad has it done to me? Or my kids...Do what they do it, okay. It doesn't affect me. Nothing has affected me if there was or wasn't lead...

Similar to DTSC and HACLA representatives, this resident justifies the presence of environmental toxics by speaking about the minimal effect these toxics have on her and her family. She does not think the land at the factory or near the existing housing site needs to be remediated because she does not think that contamination poses a serious risk to the community.

Ultimately, I conclude that by comparing the issues of environmental toxics at Jordan Downs to its potential future state and the environmental issues of the broader community,

representatives from HACLA and DTSC justify the effectiveness of the current remediation plan that only aims to clean up the soil in the factory site. Although they are right in saying that Jordan Downs will most likely be a cleaner place even after this limited remediation, by defending the current remediation plan, they are also defending the lack of clean up that leaves dangerous levels of toxics present in the soil near the existing housing site. This contradiction is difficult to navigate because although it is positive that the government is taking the necessary steps to remediate land that has been polluted for decades, they are also perpetuating injustices by failing to clean up the whole site to the fullest extent.

Impact of Redevelopment

Another common theme that arose in the key stakeholder's discussion about the impact of the redevelopment project is their hope that this expected $1 billion investment in Jordan Downs will lead to more investment in the greater community of Watts in the long run. Although a majority of key stakeholders framed this "investment leading to more investment" idea in a positive light, community members also brought up the point that displacement is often linked to investment. In this section, I discuss how different people framed investment leading to positive and negative outcomes for the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts and I conclude by speculating how the additional environmental amenities included in the redevelopment plans will impact these communities based on past studies and historical processes.

To begin, I highlight how key stakeholders positively framed added investment in Jordan Downs and Watts. In the following quote, a representative from HACLA talks about the positive assets this redevelopment project will bring into a community that has been disinvested in for decades. He states:

> It [the Redevelopment Project] will ultimately be 700 or 800 million dollar reinvested in a really important part of the Watts community and this is the first major reinvestment in Watts in 35 years. So it provides employment opportunities, it provides equity for the people currently there. It provides hope for the future.

This key stakeholder frames investment as a positive asset to Jordan Downs and Watts by speaking about how this project will create jobs and offer hope. The most important aspect of the quote, however, is the link between Jordan Downs and Watts. Similar to this key stakeholder, several people interviewed spoke about how the redevelopment of Jordan Downs will facilitate the redevelopment of the greater Watts community. To illustrate, a community member who is an active member of the Watts Neighborhood Council states:

> My hope is that this project will begin to (and it has begun to) bring attention to this community; to begin to bring investment in this community; to begin to address and try to counteract all these decades of disinvestment year after year after year after year…I hope this project will lead to a better Watts.

The community member is hopeful that the rebuilding of Jordan Downs will positively affect the development of Watts as well. As shown by the two excerpts above, decades of disinvestment in Watts more generally was one of the major themes that arose in discussions about the investments. Key stakeholders brought up this history of Watts in order to argue that a major investment, like the one being brought forth from the Jordan Downs redevelopment project, is something that the community desperately needs. To further reiterate this point, a representative from HACLA states:

> There hasn't been this large of an investment in Watts ever. So what happens is that across the country that when you begin to see this type of investment it's a catalyst for additional investment. Right? So we want to be the catalyst, right, that begins to allow businesses and entities to say hey we can invest here.

Although this government official reiterates the point that investment is a much needed asset to the community of Watts, he also brings up the important point that HACLA wants to create a domino effect of investment in the area. By investing in Jordan Downs, they want to serve as a

"catalyst" so that other entities are encouraged to invest in the greater area as well. Even though it is clear that investment is needed in the community to counteract years of disinvestment that has exacerbated social problems likes poverty and unemployment in the area, other key stakeholders question whether this added investment might end up hurting the community (instead of helping it) in the long run. A long-time resident, scholar, and community activist states:

> Development without displacement is really, really great. But there is nothing that has shown us that that works. It's inevitable to develop and not displace...the development of Jordan Downs is going to impact housing around Jordan Downs. Rents are going to go up and people who are renting are going to be impacted by it. It is always a give and take.

This community member draws a link between development and displacement to show that the investment in Jordan Downs can lead to the displacement of people due to increased property values. Unlike other key stakeholders who simply saw the investment of Jordan Downs as a positive asset to the broader Watts community, this community resident addresses some legitimate concerns about how development will impact the greater Watts community. She continues to dissect this potential issue of this displacement when she talks about how investment can exacerbate social problems in the ways that the displacement of people continues to move around social problems around, instead of addressing them:

> Displacement means that someone leaves and you move away and you are still living in poverty…you just create the concept of the ghetto somewhere else, you just live in poverty somewhere else…so we're not resolving the conditions of the people. We're just solving the issues of a built environment.

This critical perspective is useful when thinking about the potential outcomes from the investments going into Jordan Downs because there is a potential for more negative outcomes to surface than positive ones. Past research indicates that the displacement of low-income residents (which is a component of gentrification) has potential to occur in the communities like Watts

when so much investment is being funneled into the community (DeSena 2012; Gould and Lewis 2012; Checker 2011). HACLA's goal in rebuilding the Jordan Downs Housing Projects is not only to improve the larger Watts community by being a catalyst for investment, but to also improve the lives of the people currently living in the community. Their efforts to improve people's lives, however, can be lost within the aims to further investment in the community. Since there are no conversations about how to make sure that people currently living in the area get to stay in the area, I argue that there is a major risk of displacement of low-income, minority residents, particularly the ones who border the Jordan Downs site. Since I found that historically, low-income, minority people have been impacted the most negatively from housing segregation (Faber 2008; Pulido et al. 1996; Morello-Frosch 2002), gentrification (Essoka 2010; DeSena 2012; Gould and Lewis 2012), and the distribution of LULUs (Been 1994; Mohai et al. 2009; Been and Gupta 2007), I see the ways the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts are susceptible to these same negative pressures and consequences.

Unlike residents in Jordan Downs, the residents of Watts do not have the right to organize and the protection of affordable housing in their housing contracts. Most importantly, there are currently no protections in place to stabilize property taxes and rents for the residents of Watts; because of this, the residents of Watts face the greatest risk for displacement if gentrification occurs in the area. When speaking about the potential increased values that the redevelopment project might spur in the area, a government official speaks closely to the vulnerability of the renters. She states:

> So anywhere where there are neighborhoods that have a preponderance of single family houses that are rented are especially vulnerable because as markets change, and as owners make decisions to sell based on speculation or [they] do major rehab and then re-rent. Any community that has single family properties will be affected because those renters don't have any special rights.

In Watts, 70% of residents are renters (WCS 2013:14). For this reason, I argue that there is a major risk for displacement if gentrification were to arise from all the investments that are being initiated in the community. Past research reaffirms this point by finding that renters are often the first group to be pushed out of neighborhoods due to their inability to pay higher rent costs (Checker 2011; Gould and Lewis 2012). Even though the 700 unit public housing units have been secured in the redevelopment of Jordan Downs Housing Projects, there is a looming threat to the rest of the community because there is no rent stabilization ordinance in place to protect renters which make-up a majority of the Watts population. Important stakeholders from HACLA and the housing developers are not having conversations about ways to protect the integrity of Watts by making sure that residents outside of Jordan Downs are not displaced from the improvement efforts. Even though we cannot predict the exact outcomes of the redevelopment process since Jordan Downs has not been rebuilt yet, it is important to have discussions about gentrification and displacement before redevelopment projects begin because research from previous scholars shows that gentrification is likely to occur when environmental toxics are remediated and when environmental amenities are included into neighborhoods (Voicu and Been 2009; Wolch et al. 2014; Eckerd 2011; Dooling 2009; Bunce 2009; Dale and Newman 2009; Eckerd and Keeler 2012; DeSousa et al. 2009; Pincetl et al. 2003).

Thoughts about what constitutes gentrification versus natural change in a community also came up in my interviews with key stakeholders. When asked about the potential for gentrification to arise from the vast implementation of investment in any given area, a government official brought up the point that change is a natural phenomenon in cities. She states:

> Cities are living organisms that are constantly changing and if you look throughout time, that's always been the way...that's just of the nature of human civilization. That people

> move around. And it's an especially dynamic environment when you live in a metropolitan area that's one of the key regional drivers of an economy...

Although it is true that cities are constantly changing and that people are constantly moving to different places all the time, this change and movement is often categorized as displacement when it is forced. The forceful nature of displacement can stem from the physical removal of people or through market dynamics. Even though the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts are bound to continue changing by going through demographic transitions, it is important to be critical about how the $1 billion investment will affect the community and whether the changes spurred by the redevelopment process will create gentrification and perpetuate the disenfranchisement of low-income, black and brown residents.

In speaking about gentrification, another community member also talked about the positive aspects that are associated with the increased investment of any given area. Gentrification often has a bad connotation, but this community stakeholder speaks about the positive changes and assets it can bring to a community. She states:

> You get to have grocery stores with non-rotting vegetables and you get to have stores where you can have access to higher quality but cheaper goods, like Costco and Trader Joe's…You get to have access to pharmacies that wouldn't come into your neighborhood otherwise…police will come. They will actually respond to calls. You can get a taxi in and out of your neighborhood at night. Crime rates will go down. Violent crime rates will go down.

This community stakeholder states that there are positive changes that can be facilitated from increased investment in a community because the neighborhood becomes more valued and respected. As noted earlier, Gould and Lewis (2012) found that gentrification is sometimes very intentional in communities because of the added benefits it brings forth. Although the community member above was critical about the privatization of Jordan Downs and the potential for displacement from the added investments in this area, she also recognized that there are some

positive factors associated with gentrification. Ultimately, it is evident that the major conflict within the issue of investment in Watts is that it is desperately needed but at the same time, it can work to tear the fabric of this neighborhood apart. In particular, when asked whether or not Jordan Downs should be rebuilt or not, a HACLA representatives states: "Well what's the alternative?...What do you do?" Do we leave the community the way it is or take a risk and hope that improvements distribute equitably? Some of the residents of Jordan Downs expressed their interest of leaving Jordan Downs the way it is. In particular, one long-time resident state:

> There was a time where I would have said yeah, tear it down. It is an eye sore. There is no good coming from it and there is just no hope. No hope…absolutely no hope for Jordan Downs in Watts. But now...I'm in this position where I understand this as my community. It's the only thing I've known for so many years now. If I want to tell you the real story it's that they're [the residents] tired of having outside groups coming in. They just want to be left alone.

Similarly, another resident spoke about her satisfaction of the current Jordan Downs Housing Projects development. She states: "In my opinion, the way it is now, it is okay. I like the way it is right now...I say the apartments are good. Strong. So I don't know why they plan on tearing down Jordan Downs." The residents raise important questions about potential alternatives to leaving the community as it is. When thinking about ways to improve communities, there is this incentive to constantly innovate and grow. As Logan and Molotch (2007) state, however, this sort of mindset might actually be the source of our social problems. For this reason, it is important to think critically about the plans being presented and long-term solutions on how to make sure that this project actually ends up helping the people it intends to help and that this is actually what the people want.

All in all, I argue that the redevelopment of Jordan Downs has the potential to bring positive change into Jordan Downs and Watts, but it needs to be done in a way that does not further marginalize people through displacement. Since the redevelopment of Jordan Downs is

such a massive project, there are a lot of components to the redevelopment project and a lot of people and their interests are involved in the project as well. When explaining the execution of the redevelopment project, one community stakeholder states: “There’s a lot of elements to it that if one or two of them go bad, the whole thing is going to go bad.” Ultimately, it seems like many people involved in the redevelopment project have good intentions. Like the community stakeholder stated above, however, there is a lot of potential for error for a project of this scale. Through my analysis of Critical Race theory, I find that since racism is an institutionalized entity in our society, racism permeates and manifests in many ways even if people in the present day do not attempt to promote racism. Racism, however, has influenced the formation of social structures, like laws and regulations, so if people are not active about ways to stifle the presence of racism in our society, it may be perpetuated. Through my analysis of Environmental Justice theory, I find that factors like racism hold a great amount of power in influencing the ways environmental hazards and amenities are distributed in society. These distributions are often unequal in the ways that disadvantaged groups often reap the least benefits from environmental amenities and the most harm from environmental hazards. The issues of environmental contamination on the existing housing site and the way investments in the community are being positioned at the Jordan Downs Housing Projects are examples of how redevelopment processes can perpetuate inequality if issues of race, class, equity, and justice are not discussed and explicitly addressed.

CONCLUSION

Through my study of the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects in Watts, Los Angeles, I investigated how environmental remediation and sustainable development are being conceptualized and executed in this specific site. Within my examination of Jordan Downs, I investigated the ways key stakeholders framed the environmental toxics on the site and also how they foresee the added environmental amenities affecting the community of Jordan Downs and the broader community of Watts. In order to avoid perpetuating environmental injustice through faulty remediation plans and displacement of low-income, minority residents, I suggest that key stakeholders engage in a more transparent reporting process of the environmental toxics on the site; that evaluation of toxic levels be based on health considerations (as opposed to how ubiquitous the contamination is); and that a Community Benefits Agreement be drafted and stabilization policies be enacted for the community of Watts so that local businesses, homeowners, and renters end up benefiting from the added investments in the long run.

My research demonstrates that environmental toxics on the existing house site will remain because key stakeholders are justifying these toxics under a benign framework that claims that the toxics are harmless or nonexistent. Since representatives from HACLA, DTSC, and the housing developers embrace a benign framing of the environmental toxics, the general public is not aware of the levels of contaminants on the site and the risk they face. This miscommunication and misreporting perpetuates environmental inequalities in the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts. The fact that environmental injustice is being perpetuated in this community is ironic because from my conversation with key stakeholders—particularly representatives from HACLA and the housing developers—it seems like they are working on

this project in hopes disrupting the cycles of disinvestment and marginalization that these communities have faced for decades. Therefore, I argue that the government should effectively clean up the existing housing site so that environmental injustice in Jordan Downs and Watts is not further perpetuated.

Furthermore, although it may not be intentional, key stakeholders also justify the presence of these environmental toxics and praise their planned cleanup efforts by explaining how polluted Watts is overall and how the levels of toxics found in Jordan Downs are similar to levels found in other parts in Los Angeles. Instead of focusing on how to address the dangerous nature of the toxics in this particular community, key stakeholders use comparison referents to belittle the harmful nature of toxics in the community. By defending these environmental hazards, representatives from HACLA and DTSC also unintentionally perpetuate the vicious cycle of social pollution that makes it okay for disadvantaged communities to bear the greatest brunt of environmental hazards. The fact that it is socially acceptable that Watts and Jordan Downs are highly contaminated communities reaffirms this idea that they are "appropriately polluted spaces", as Higgins (1990) states. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that although the remediation plans are inadequate and flawed, they still work to cleanup some areas in the community.

The idea that some remediation is better than no remediation is also a common theme that surfaced from the interviews. Representatives from HACLA and the housing developers emphasize the proactive aspects of the remediation plan to illustrate the positive aspects of the remediation plan. They point out a very important question as well: if we do not embrace the current remediation plan then what will the future of Jordan Downs be? Is it better to leave the community how it is or is it better work to at least clean up some contaminants? Although those

arguments also work to dismiss the flaws of the current remediation plan, those key stakeholders bring up a good point in saying that there is a need to work under a realistic framework and set realistic goals because full remediation may not be possible due to limitations of time and funding. Although these communities are in desperate need of intense environmental remediation, it may not be possible to clean up these neighborhoods to their fullest extent.

Overall, I suggest that the disconnect between the environmental toxics found on the site and the way they are being communicated to the public stems from the faulty interpretation and reporting of these results, rather than faulty testing. This shows that in order to begin to address the problems of environmental toxics, HACLA needs to revisit the data from the initial testing, instead of using resources to conduct new test. As of now, HACLA has not committed to reevaluating the initial data because their remediation plan aligns perfectly to DTSC's recommendations; it seems like there is no need to revisit the initial testing if nothing harmful was found. Being proactive about this remediation plan and addressing issues that have been brought up is essential to the success of this project because these issues will continue to resurface and intensify years from now if they are not met with solutions in our present day. I can only see HACLA moving forward with the reexamination of the initial testing if the public is made aware of the faulty interpretation and misreporting going on. Community mobilization and widespread criticism could potentially encourage HACLA to engage in a more fair and just redevelopment process by reevaluating the data more objectively and being clear about the risk the toxics pose to residents.

With a lack of transparency regarding the environmental toxics at Jordan Downs, there has been a lot of miscommunication about the environmental conditions in the site. As a result of this miscommunication, residents and community members are not aware or do not have the

scientific backing to defend the unhealthy conditions of the contamination. Subsequently, residents and community members have had a difficult time pressuring HACLA to issue full remediation of the current existing housing site. This miscommunication also does not necessarily mean that key stakeholders intend to perpetuate environmental racism in the community. Nevertheless, Critical Race and Environmental Justice theory indicate that there are embedded injustices in the world that often make people in marginalized people the most vulnerable to social ills. In order to address this disproportionate impact, inequalities from the past and present must be brought to the forefront so they do not continue to influence several aspects of our society invisibly.

Aside from the problems of environmental toxics in the redevelopment project, I also investigate how people expect the $1 billion investment to affect the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts in the future. Many people interviewed spoke about their hope of this $1 billion investment in Jordan Downs leading to more large-scale investments in the broader community. Many key stakeholders hope these investments will be positive for the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts because they hope that these added resources will work to counteract years of disinvestment. Through my analysis, I find that there are only a small number of key stakeholders concerned about long-term, negative consequences that will result from these investments that include the implementation of environmental amenities. Out of the participants interviewed, only three stakeholders (all of whom were community members) were explicitly concerned about this redevelopment process spurring gentrification in the area. When speaking about gentrification, other key stakeholders talk about the ways cities naturally change and how gentrification is not necessarily a negative consequence. Nevertheless, through my historical analysis of greening cities in the Literature Review section, I note that there is a high potential

for gentrification in the broader Watts community because housing segregation, racist policies, and market dynamics have worked in tandem in perpetuating the way that environmental goods are allocated to wealthier and white populations and away from minority, low-income populations.

Although many key stakeholders were excited with the redevelopment project, a number of people were skeptical and critical about the current plans. Nevertheless, only two key stakeholders were adamant about their opposition to the entire plan. I see a lot of potential in this redevelopment process, but I also see a lot of problems that can arise in the future if we are not cautious about the contaminated land being built on and the potential for gentrification in the area. Based on my research, many people are not speaking about the concerns for gentrification in the area because it seems like such a distant idea when the project has not even been built yet. People instead are concerned about how to secure funding, jobs for local people, and the one-for-one replacement of public housing units.

One of the main reasons I conducted this study is because I think it is important for there to be community-level research done by people who have close ties to the communities being studied. It was very important for me to get the perspectives of the residents living in Jordan Downs and community activists because I find that those who deal with the issues at hand through their lived experiences are often dismissed in research, despite the fact that those people often have the best grasp on the problem and the best strategies in mind of how to move forward with solutions. Ultimately, through this study, I seek to link the gap between academic research and lived experiences with my insider status as a Watts resident and community activist and with my outsider status as a Whitman student. I recommend for future researchers to engage in this

same reflexive process by constantly thinking about how their identity affects their research and how their research can benefit the community they study.

One limitation to my research is my insider status since I am a resident of Watts. Although my insider status helped me reach a number of key stakeholders involved in the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects, it can also be seen as a limitation to this study because it can be seen as a form of bias since I am personally invested in my community of Watts. Even though I believe that change is definitely needed in my community, I do not want to see that change promote more environmental injustice and the displacement of low-income, minority people like myself. Despite the fact that my personal investment in the outcomes of the Jordan Downs redevelopment project has been the driving force of thesis, I have been extremely conscious about the limitations that stifle the potential for full remediation on the site and the natural processes of change that cities go through as time progresses. Being able to expand my critical thinking beyond my personal motives and thoughts has been a rewarding and challenging process that has made me realize how complicated remediation and redevelopment plans can be. Since I am committed to returning to my community of Watts to engage in environmental justice and community/economic development work, I will be sure to maintain this critical state of mind and be aware of all the complexities embedded in this type of work in order to ensure that my activism promotes positive change in the lives of disadvantaged populations instead of negative outcomes.

If unlimited resources and time were available, I would have spoken to more people involved in the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects, particularly advocacy groups. Even though I was satisfied with the number of community activists I spoke to, I was not able to schedule interviews with some vocal members in advocacy groups because they were

inundated with work from their organization. Furthermore, it would have been useful to speak to people involved in completed redevelopment projects, like Pueblo del Sol in Los Angeles and Cabrini Green in Chicago, to get a sense of the successes and failures of those projects.

Within my research, I emphasized the voices of government officials (including representatives from HACLA and DTSC) and housing developers because their thoughts and opinions hold the most weight in the decision-making processes for the redevelopment of Jordan Downs. The fact that DTSC has framed a lot of the environmental problems as a benign or nonexistent issues has caused other key stakeholders, like representatives from HACLA and the housing developers, to also frame the issue in the same way even though the results from the soil testing tell a very different story: the soil is contaminated and they exceed levels that are deemed safe for human health.

Within my analysis, I also note whose voices hold the most weight within the redevelopment process. I find that even though residents of Jordan Downs and community members have pushed for wide scale remediation of the entire site (not just the factory site) as a result of these findings, only one person who is known as an environmental scholar from outside the community has been able to challenge the early premature dismissal of the toxicity of the vapor intrusion on the site. Even then, HACLA has only committed to look into the issue instead of committing to set up specific plans to address the issue of vapor intrusion.

All in all, I find that "expert" knowledge plays a major role in determining the presence of environmental toxics and contesting the toxicity of them as well. The thoughts and suggestions of the residents who have lived in the community for years and community activists who work with these communities everyday does not hold as much legitimacy and power as other stakeholders unfortunately. For this reason, I argue that even though HACLA is engaging

in extensive community outreach to inform and involve communities in the redevelopment process, there is a major lack of recognition justice because when these people raise concerns, they are not addressed. Schlosberg (2009) argues that without recognition justice, it is difficult to achieve equitable distributive practices and procedural justice. Therefore, it is important to not only include residents and other stakeholders in the redevelopment process, but to recognize them as valuable stakeholders in the project with legitimate thoughts and concerns. One way to value these residents and community members is by giving them power. The L.A. Human Right to Housing Collective has proposed that HACLA engage in Participatory Budgeting process to meaningfully engage residents in decision-making processes about how money is spent. This process would shift power to residents so that decision can be made more democratically. If residents have power, their suggestions and concerns will be taken more seriously as well.

In order to limit the possibilities of displacement of current residents in the communities of Watts, I recommend that HACLA work closely with the City of Los Angeles to make sure that added investments and assets do not end up tearing the social fabric of the community apart in the long term. I predict that once the new housing, commercial, and retail spaces are built around that area, there will be tremendous pressures by outside developers to acquire houses, remodel them, and sell them for much higher prices. Drafting a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) for large-scale development in Watts is one way developers, community groups, and the city can work together to make sure that added amenities do not end up marginalizing the residents of Watts through displacement. Local hiring should be a major emphasis in the CBA as well. The CBA should require a certain percentage of local hiring for the construction of new developments and the management of these developments. That way, people who live in the community are economically empowered and can contribute to the growth of these new

developments. Lastly, enacting policies that stabilize property taxes for homeowners and rents for renters near large-scale development is another way to inhibit the potential for displacement. With these policies in place, residents will still be able to stay in their homes even if the value of properties rise drastically. Moving in this direction with these policies are a few ways key stakeholders can move forward in addressing issues of the built environment and the social issues that are rooted in that as well.

There also needs to be more transparency within the overall redevelopment process, especially with the environmental contaminants found on the site. Although it may not be feasible to clean up all of Jordan Downs due to the constraint of limited resources, it is important that people know the risks they face by living in that community and make the choice of whether they want to remain in the neighborhood regardless of those environmental risks. By making the environmental issues present on the site explicit to the general public, key stakeholders can also begin to reframe the conversation so they are talking about solutions instead of ignoring the problem. For this reason, it is important that DTCS, HACLA, and the housing developers work amongst each other to extensively examine the results and be clear about the effects of the toxics found so that there can be a discussion among all key stakeholders about the feasibility for the remediation process. If it is not feasible to clean up all the toxics on the existing housing site, it may be possible to implement certain tactics to further reduce negative exposure for the people living there. Furthermore, DTSC and HACLA should also gear more resources into making sure there is high quality science communication so that the general public is able to understand the information being presented. Engaging residents in popular education tactics could be one way DTSC and HACLA could make science more understandable and accessible to the general public.

From speaking to many involved parties separately, I also realize how useful it would be for all key stakeholders to have meetings where they discuss the potential flaws and improvements of the project as well. From my observations, all key stakeholders have the intention to improve the community of Jordan Downs and Watts, albeit in different ways. Although people do not necessarily meet eye to eye, I see how key stakeholders would benefit from different perspectives and alternatives if people put their personal issues with people aside. Instead of allowing disagreements and conflicts consume conversations, it would be useful for more consistent discussions (including debates) to occur among key stakeholders so that misunderstandings are cleared up and ideas are circulated. With this collaboration in place, the redevelopment process has more potential to address the community's needs instead of potentially creating waves of destruction.

All in all, my analysis of the Jordan Downs redevelopment efforts reveals how difficult it is to achieve distributive justice when dealing with environmental hazards and how difficult it is to bring identity factors (like race) into discussions even though race influences many decisions and social processes. Distributive justice, as Schlosberg (2009) describes, is very difficult to achieve in society because past research indicates that market dynamics will always work to allocate burdens to populations with the least amount of economic, social, and political power (Mohai et al. 2009; Been 1994; Been and Gupta 2007; Banzhaf and Walsh 2008). Been (1994) specifically speaks about the link between environmental and economic segregation being the basis of the unequal distribution of LULUs. This means that even if there is a full remediation of environmental toxics in the existing housing site at Jordan Downs, market dynamics will shift so that low-income, minority populations (like the ones residing near Jordan Downs) will reap the least amount of benefits from these improvements. Therefore, without government intervention

through the implementation of policies, like rent-stabilization ordinances, distributive justice may not be achievable with the redistribution or elimination of environmental hazards.

Furthermore, although the focus on institutional racism in the Critical Race theory proved to be useful in my argument of the potential for further marginalization of residents in Jordan Downs and Watts through this redevelopment plan, I had a difficult time constructing tangible solutions on how to address these forms of institutionalized racism. Since institutionalized racism is embedded in our everyday processes and social structures, it is difficult to pinpoint it in decision-making processes and interactions. Institutionalized racism is abstract in the ways that we know it is present, but it much harder to point out with legitimacy since it is not acceptable in society for individuals to claim that an act or thought is rooted in racism. For this reason, I suggest that even though Critical Race theory should continue to emphasize the invisibility and domination of institutionalized racism in society, it should also work to emphasize the individual acts of racism that created the foundation for institutionalized racism to exist today. With these historical recounts embedded in the explanation of current institutional racism, the idea of racism in our present day society will seem less abstract and more credible to future generations that may not be exposed to the hate and violence minority groups endured throughout U.S. history.

Future research on sustainable development and urban revitalization should investigate redevelopment plans through a more in-depth, longitudinal study in order to track how neighborhoods are affected by redevelopment processes. This way, people can have more concrete ideas of how communities change and what factors contribute most to that change. This type of research would give city officials, developers, and scholars a better idea of how certain amenities can affect an established community in both positive and negative ways. Further

research should also investigate how acceptable levels of toxics are determined from the state and what kind health effects are common for those levels.

I conclude by stating that the redevelopment of Jordan Downs Housing Projects has a lot of potential to improve the health and future outcomes of the residents of Jordan Downs and Watts. Currently, however, the lack of transparency of the toxics on the existing housing site and the lack of discussions about how greening will affect the community are two flaws that can end up promoting environmental injustices. The goal of this project is to promote urban renewal to give the residents of Jordan Downs a better chance to achieve greater life outcomes. In many ways, the $1 billion investment can be the catalyst for positive change in the communities of Jordan Downs and Watts. There is great potential for people to attain better health through the remediation of environmental toxics and the inclusion of environmental amenities in these communities. Nevertheless, there should not be an assumption that the integration of these environmental factors will automatically result in equitable processes. Instead, key stakeholders need to work together to constantly think about ways that they can integrate these environmental principles into the community to promote equitable and just outcomes for the low-income, minority people currently residing the Jordan Downs Housing Projects and Watts community.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

General Questions

- What do you do professionally?
- Do you live in this area? If yes, for how long?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Personal Involvement

- What is your involvement in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects?
    - How did you become involved in the Jordan Downs Housing revitalization project?

Developing Jordan Downs Housing Projects into an "Urban Village"

- Should Jordan Downs be rebuilt? Why or why not?
- What do you hope will result from the rebuilding of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects?
- Are there any aspects of the redevelopment project that you like or wish would change?
- How involved are the residents in the planning process for the redevelopment of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects?
- What changes (if any) do you think will occur with the revitalization of the brownfield site in the community of Watts?
    - What benefits (if any) will result from the revitalization project?
    - What harm (if any) will result from the revitalization project?

Mixed-income Housing

- What does mixed-income housing mean to you?
- How do you feel about the proposal to implement mixed-income housing at the Jordan Downs Housing Projects and why?
    - Do you think the implementation of mixed-income housing will change the community of Watts?
        - If yes, how and why?
        - If no, why?

Environmental Toxics

- What toxics are present in the Jordan Downs Housing Projects site?
    - What are the effects of those toxics on humans, the land, air quality, etc.?
- Is anything being done to cleanup these toxics?

    - If so, what is being done?
    - If not, why?
- In your opinion, is the site of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects (including the adjacent vacant lot) suitable for developing?
- Are the levels of toxics on the Jordan Downs Housing Projects site (including the adjacent vacant lot) acceptable?
- Whose responsibility is it to clean up the toxics?
- Has there been enough transparency in the communication about the toxics from the city to the community?
- Has the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) done an adequate job attempting to mitigate toxics in the Jordan Downs Projects site?
    - If yes, why?
    - If no, why? What else can be done?
- How important is it to you that the contaminants surrounding the development be cleaned up?

Future of Watts and Jordan Downs

- How can we make changes to improve our neighborhood, but also keep people in their homes and the integrity of our neighborhood intact?
- How can we make sure we do not end up promoting gentrification in Watts/ South LA or replicating what happen in Ujima Village with the plans to revitalize the Jordan Downs Housing Projects?

Questions specific to representatives of the Housing Developers

- What does your company define as affordable housing?
- What does your company define as mixed-income housing?

Question specific to People associated with the Government

- Why was Jordan Downs chosen as a site for revitalization?
- Why was mixed-income housing (as opposed to affordable housing) chosen for the Jordan Downs Housing Project?

Questions specific to Residents

- Do you feel included in the planning process?
- If the project is rebuilt, do you feel like you will be able to come back? Why or why not?

APPENDIX B

Coding Categories

1. Disenfranchisement
2. Disinvestment
3. Investment
4. Outside Interests
5. Distrust
6. Affordable Housing
7. Mixed Income Housing
8. Criminalization
9. Improvement
10. Catalyst
11. Solutions
12. Alternatives
13. Change
14. Environmental Toxics
15. Clean Enough
16. Influence of funding
17. Stigmas
18. Resident and Community Involvement
19. Privatization of Public Housing
20. Racial tensions
21. Racism
22. Redevelopment
23. Displacement
24. Gentrification
25. Inequities