

“It Definitely Feels as if It’s Happening *to You*”

A Case Study of the Personal Effects of Gentrification in Highland Park



Source: Michael Robinson Chavez, *Los Angeles Times* 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report focuses on the effects of gentrification on residents and business owners through a case study of the rapidly changing Los Angeles neighborhood of Highland Park. The report first presents an in-depth analysis of the process of gentrification, its debates, and its potential causes and effects, then applies the theories to Highland Park and greater Los Angeles. Through a series of 15 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of Highland Park, the report discovers psychological effects, increased homelessness, affordability concerns, the creation of community conflict through an “us vs them” mentality and a lack of trust, and debates over cultural destruction. Finally, the report analyzes other neighborhoods of Los Angeles that may be targeted for gentrification and provides strategies for positive change in the city, such as the creation of a cultural center, mural preservation strategies, the implementation of a No Net Loss program, considerations for affordable housing, community organizing, and the utilization of Occidental College’s resources.

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INTRODUCTION

I vividly remember the first time I visited Occidental College. As my mother drove down York Boulevard, I asked her if she was sure she was driving the right way. My experience had taught me that colleges like Occidental were not located in neighborhoods like Highland Park. In fact, all the other colleges I had visited were situated in cutesy college towns with yogurt shops, cafes, and sandwich places that offered discounts to students. College towns did not look like my hometown of El Sereno, but Highland Park did. When we turned onto the street for the college, I was completely dumbfounded. How could such an institution be near so many people who looked like me in a neighborhood that looked like home?

I would be lying if I said I did not complain about Highland Park during my first year at Oxy. I frequently told my friends that I wished there were more places that I could walk to around the area, like restaurants and maybe even a movie theater. Interestingly, within my first year at Oxy, as if someone heard me, two new sandwich places opened on the boulevard and a little down the way, Maximiliano and Fusion Burgers opened their doors to customers. Signs popped up promising a new ice cream shop and walking to bars on York Boulevard became the norm for college seniors. I was surprised at how fast new establishments were opening and I became fascinated by the changes. Suddenly, I found myself driving the boulevard extra slow so I could take in all the new shops.

In stark contrast to my introduction to York Boulevard, I can now eat a srirachosin donut accompanied with some brown rice green tea ice cream for dessert after I finish my acai bowl from across the street. Then, to wash all that down, I can grab a chai-chata from the café across the street from my best friend's favorite taco truck. I could post a picture of all my purchases to Instagram and use #happeninginhighlandpark to let all my friends know where I am. The hashtag boasts over 1,250 affiliated posts, varying from artsy pictures of fruit bowls and coffee to activist artwork of a bear

drinking a beer and wearing a shirt reading, “don’t feed the hipsters.” The change on York Boulevard is undeniable, even to people who have never walked the boulevard. The *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *LA Weekly*, *National Public Radio*, and various other well-respected news outlets have covered at least one story on the changes in Highland Park. The neighborhood has practically become a gentrification buzzword; when people are talking about gentrification in Los Angeles, they’re talking about Highland Park.

As soon as I realized this, I began to see and hear the word everywhere. Everyone is talking about gentrification and I knew the neighborhood and the word were quickly becoming synonymous. As an Occidental College student and a frequent visitor at Highland Café, I wondered what my role was in the process and whether or not I was a perpetrator of gentrification. I wondered what being a perpetrator of gentrification meant, and what gentrification meant in and of itself. I had so many questions about the process that it was an easy choice to thoroughly investigate the issue. However, I never could have anticipated the effect this project would have on me.

Community change involves so much more than new shops and flipped homes; it involves *people*. The new businesses on York are only scratching the surface of what has been changing. Beyond the boulevard, apartment complexes are raising rent over \$400 within two months and refusing to make building improvements with the hope of kicking people out. The Arroyo Seco was filled with victims of these increases and entire families struggled to learn how to live without a roof over their heads until the city decided to clean the area and tear down these makeshift homes. Simultaneously, some new residents (the “gentrifiers”) were priced out of their own previous neighborhoods and find Highland Park to be affordable. In this stage of gentrification, Highland Park finds itself in a crucial moment of transition. If community organizations and the city step in, there is great potential in the neighborhood. Only in Highland Park can I witness Latino teenagers and adults

chase a loose chicken down the street with the help of a white police officer. Only on York Boulevard can I watch a twenty-something year-old White male with a perfectly crafted ironic moustache and thrift store clothing stroll down the street, fancy coffee in hand, as an older Latino man in a white tank top parks his low-rider to grab some cash from the ATM on the same block. Before displacement changes an entire community, the new and the old are forced to learn how to work together. In an ideal world, these new changes can benefit the new and old neighbors, allowing the improved neighborhood to be called home for people of a variety of backgrounds.

I started this project because I wanted to hear and share all these parts of the story. I have read countless studies on the economic benefits of the process, but it is rare that people look beyond that. Interviewing people gives this story a different narrative and it helps truly capture how all those involved with the neighborhood are handling the change. Finally, understanding the lived experience of gentrification aids in the development of potential policy solutions that truly address community needs.

York Boulevard doesn't look like home anymore, but certain real estate companies have told me that I may have to redefine my own definition of home soon as my hometown of El Sereno gets slated for its own gentrification process. If I've learned anything during this process, it's that gentrification will not stop when my research does. Every day, my gentrification Google-alert reveals anywhere between 5 and 15 different articles making reference to the phenomenon across the country. This is not an issue that only affects me as an El Sereno resident and Oxy student, but one that is affecting communities in several large cities across the country that are beginning to feel growing pains. Cities are rapidly changing and it's imperative we find out how to change for *everyone* and not just a select group of people. So I'm asking, how are residents and business owners experiencing gentrification in Highland Park and how can everyone benefit from the changes?

Part 1: Gentrification

A Google-alert for gentrification delivers a comprehensive email at the end of each day with a list of recently published articles that have mentioned the word. For the past 8 months, the alert has yielded anywhere between 5 and 15 results daily. In the *New York Times* alone, the word “gentrification” appeared in 210 of the articles in 2014, as compared to 160 in 2013 (NYT Data Labs). In the first three months of 2015, the newspaper has published over 50 articles pertaining to gentrification. On the opposite coast, the *Los Angeles Times* featured over 30 articles pertaining to the issue within Los Angeles alone within the same period of time. This small fact indicates the prevalence of the issue within the United States. Articles from the Google-alert originate from Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Portland, Austin, Richmond, and Denver, just to name a few. This shows gentrification to be something affecting not just one small part of the nation, but the nation as a whole. As cities continue to grow and space continues to shrink, gentrification becomes a real issue when space is only available for those who can afford it.

While the increased use of the word has generated more awareness of the effects of gentrification, it also creates complications. Gentrification has become a buzzword utilized by developers to encourage people to move into what they also often call an “up and coming” neighborhood. With the developers’ manipulation of the word, it is slowly starting to lose its meaning. In fact, a study recently accused the *New York Times* of continuously misusing the word (Barton 2014). The study cross-referenced the *Times*’ definition of gentrification and identification of gentrifying neighborhoods with that of three other urban scholars and found discrepancies between them all. The study argues that all scholars define gentrification differently due to the political implications of the word and this vague definition holds serious research implications. For this reason, it is important to understand the origin of the term and how it has developed over time.

Origin of the Term

When Ruth Glass first introduced the term “gentrification” in 1964, she meant it as a deliberately ironic explanation for the rapid movement of upper class “gentry” into the inner city area of London typically associated with the working class. This influx of an entirely new, wealthier population began blatantly changing the neighborhood. To explain the phenomenon, Glass used the word gentrification, defining it as the invasion of upper and lower middle-classes into the working class quarters of London, causing the houses in the area to transform from “shabby, modest mews and cottages” into “elegant, expensive residences” (Glass, 1964). Glass goes on to explain gentrification as more than the mere transformation of the façade of buildings, but also of the people inside of them, stating, “once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district, it goes rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the social character of the district is changed” (Glass, 1964). At the time, Glass’ analysis of London’s boroughs seemed contradictory to popular trends in most cities. From an outsider’s perspective it appeared that lower income residents were moving into city centers while upper income residents were settling into the suburbs away from the grit of the city. With this popular opinion in mind, Glass believed London to be an anomaly. Unbeknownst to Glass, however, various cities in the United States were already beginning to see their own signs of gentrification. New York was almost concurrently undergoing the changes that inner city London was experiencing, yet the city was calling it something else at the time.

New York’s Brownstoning

While Glass called her version of the change “gentrification,” New York was a little less original and defined the process as “brownstoning.” Brownstoning on the east coast of the United States gained its name from the chocolate brown colored soft sandstone used for the construction and façade of buildings in New York. The process began in 1968, four years after the creation of Glass’ term, with the founding of the Brownstone Revival Committee by Everett Ortner (Lee, Slater, Wyly

2008). The Committee compared the process of change to a “love affair,” stating that change could only happen if a person looked at a house with love and could see the potential within a building (Lee, Slater, Wyly 2008).

Seen as a revitalization process, or a “genesis” as pro-brownstoners called it, the process both transformed neighborhoods and displaced residents (Lee, Slater, Wyly 2008). New residents were rapidly moving into New York neighborhoods and changing the way these neighborhoods both looked and felt. The cultural character of the area began to change as walls were power-washed and buildings were renovated to display the neighborhood’s “genesis.” Although the term was new at the time, brownstoning neighborhoods eventually began to be associated with gentrification. In fact, a 1974 New York Times article as well as a 1984 New York Department of Planning report brought attention to the similarities between the two concepts (Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008). While the word “gentrification” was never actually used in the Department of Planning report, their ideas for “reinvestment” pointed to brownstoning neighborhoods as key locations and alluded to the idea of displacement. In response, proponents of brownstoning took to *The Brownstoner*, a New York newspaper of the time, to promote gentrification (Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008). The newspaper describes gentrification as the explanation of “areas where development activity results in the displacement of low- or moderate-income families by higher income families” but claims the process to be one of “genesis” rather than one of “genocide” (Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008). The article proceeds to discuss the positive benefits of such a process and how brownstoning significantly aids New York communities.

“Gentrification? I Prefer ‘Transformation’” -Steve Jones

In conversations about the issue, people will argue that gentrification significantly benefits communities while others, usually the displaced, will argue that the benefits only aid those who recently moved in and can afford these new amenities. The controversy of the word’s association

with both displacement and revitalization has influenced the creation of euphemisms in order to avoid conflict. For example, politicians and planners tend to avoid the term “gentrification” itself and instead lean towards euphemisms such as “reinvestment.” Replacing gentrification with several other euphemisms such as “revitalization,” “rehabilitation,” and “urban renaissance” is common. In fact, avoiding the word is more normal than not in order to draw attention away from the inevitable displacement while simultaneously bringing attention to the vast benefits that result from allocating more money to an area. Cities themselves have historically attributed different names to the process in order to dance around the term, resorting not only to phrases such as “brownstoning” in New York, but also “homesteading” in Baltimore and “red-brick chic” in San Francisco (Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008). Yet, even with a variety of synonyms for the phenomenon, the original term’s popularity has increased in popular American news media, demonstrating the increased awareness of gentrification throughout the United States. In fact, since 1964, the amount of times the term has appeared in the *New York Times* alone has skyrocketed, peaking in 2011 with over 240 articles referencing the process (Figure 1). *The Los Angeles Times* published nearly 20 articles about gentrification within LA in the month of March alone. Looking at the word 50 years later, the term has become a buzzword to describe neighborhoods often also described as “up and coming;” a trend that doesn’t stray from the original substitution of “genesis” in the 1960’s and 70’s.

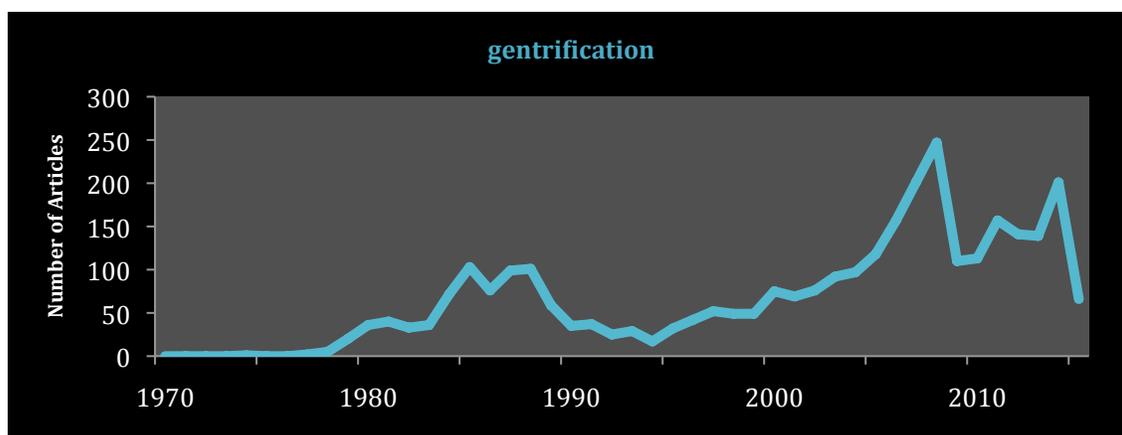


Figure 1 Frequency with which the word "gentrification" has appeared in *New York Times* articles since 1970 (NYT Data Labs)

The Debate Over the Definition

Although the term emerged in irony, the definition has not changed much in the past 50 years. The term today is defined by Merriam-Webster as “the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poor residents.” Neil Smith (1982), a well-respected scholar of gentrification, defines the term in words close to those used by Glass in stating, “by gentrification, I mean the process by which working class residential neighbourhoods are rehabilitated by middle class homebuyers, landlords and professional developers.” However, Glass, Smith, and Webster fail to thoroughly explore the change in a neighborhood’s character and culture as a result of the process. While there is obvious change in the exterior of buildings, what happens to the people inside of them? Are they the same or have they gone somewhere else?

Gentrification is often at the top of the list of debates for urban development and this is largely due to its overarching influence on all aspects of a neighborhood. Gentrification is “simultaneously a physical, economic, social and cultural phenomenon,” changing the way a neighborhood looks, feels, and operates beyond its economic structure (Hamnett 1991). Within the past 50 years, gentrification has become a very disputatious issue. To many, gentrification has been regarded as the “savior of the inner cities” and a sort of panacea for the problems of blighted neighborhoods, while others look at it as a “threat to inner city working class areas and a prelude to the wholesale conversion of parts of the inner city into a bourgeois playground” (Hamnett 1991). For this reason, gentrification has not only gained popularity (and controversy) in national news outlets, but also in the field of urban geography. The concept itself represents the conflicts between “culture, preference and human agency and... the imperatives of capital and profitability” (Hamnett 1991). As gentrification emerges globally, the subject is more and more frequently appearing in conversation and scholarship. The discussion of

gentrification is multi-faceted, but one of the most important parts of the conversation is in asking what causes the process.

Natural Process vs Calculated Process

An interesting debate regarding gentrification is whether it is a natural or calculated process. One side of the debate believes gentrification to be “an organic, natural and even random process, shaped by an uncontrollable market economy” (Mirabal, 2009). This side of the debate also argues that within the context of the city, certain groups naturally move in and out of places and fuel the change. Some scholars see gentrification as a “temporary and small-scale aberration in what is seen as a... natural and dominant process of outward migration of people from inner cities” (Rose 1984) and others as “the result of a temporary squeeze or a cyclical housing squeeze, where there was an imbalance between the rates of new housing construction and new household formation” (Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008). As neighborhoods within cities begin to grow and transform, people become caught up in the new restaurants, bike lanes, and cafés that begin to line the streets and wave the changes off as “the nature of the city” (Mirabal, 2009). Yet, there is evidence to support the contrary to this belief.

Smith argues that planners and developers are well aware of the possibilities in a neighborhood prior to investment (Mirabal 2009). Smith has argued and shown gentrification to be a calculated process meant to allow developers, real estate companies, speculators, and investors to make high returns on investments, claiming, “the economic geography of gentrification is not random; developers do not just plunge into the heart of slum opportunity, but tend to take it piece by piece. Rugged pioneersmanship is tempered by financial caution” (Smith 1996). The very idea of intentional gentrification is controversial simply due to its association with the process of

displacement. This controversy places gentrification in a battleground and challenges ideas of restructuring by throwing culture, economy, and politics into conflict with one another.

The debate over the natural or calculated cause of gentrification goes much further than market flow. Some people, especially newspaper reporters, argue that a gentrifying neighborhood can be identified by a popular new café or park that they believe has served as a catalyst for change. If this is to be regarded as true, the question from there becomes: does a neighborhood change because of the interest in a new café or does it change because of the people who invested in the café originally?

Production Based vs Consumption Based Phenomenon

For the scholars who have investigated and argued the causes of gentrification within the framework of a capitalist economic system, theories can be situated into two opposing sides: consumption and production (Hamnett 1991). Production-based theories stress the “production of urban space, the operation of the housing and land market, the role of capital and collective social actors such as developers and mortgage finance institutions on the supply of gentrifiable property” (Hamnett 1991). In short, production-based arguments claim that the development of new spaces independently encourages a new audience for the area and results in large-scale reinvestment upon success.

The consumption theories, on the other hand, focus upon the production of gentrifiers and their associated “cultural, consumption and reproductive orientations” (Hamnett 1991). In other words, consumption theories believe new members in a neighborhood to have an eye for taste and know what sorts of businesses to invest in. Consumption theories look at early consumer preferences and believe the changes to be driven by their taste. After all, “gentrification cannot occur without gentifiers” (Hamnett 1991).

The debate is ongoing as to whether gentrification is a production-based or consumption-based process although many argue for the consumption-based theory, arguing, “gentrifiers are not the mere bearers of a process determined independently of them” (Rose 1984). While several have weighed in on either side of the discussion, the best two examples of arguments for the debate are Neil Smith and David Ley. Smith’s rent-gap theory leads him to believe in a production-based theory of gentrification. He finds gentrification to be a result of globalization, neoliberalism, and the changing role of the state, arguing that gentrification is “a back to the city movement by capital, not people” (Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008 and Smith 1979). Ley, on the other hand, approaches the concept of gentrification from the consumption side, believing the process to be a result of early consumer preferences and a consequence of major changes in industrial and advanced capitalist cities (Hamnett 1991).

Smith’s Production-Based Rent-Gap Theory Argument

Smith argues, “it appears that the needs of production – in particular the need to earn profit – are a more decisive initiative behind gentrification than consumer preference” (Smith 1979). However, Smith does not discount the importance of the consumption side. He calls the relationship between both consumption and production a “symbiosis,” but one in which “production dominates” (Smith, 1979). To further discuss the consumption side, he argues that the “preference for profit” is the consumer preference that is most prominent- in other words, stating that even the consumption side has desire to produce (Smith, 1979). In this analysis, it appears individuals are not much more than pawns in the hands of capital investors. Smith’s emphasis lies within his theory of the rent gap.

A commonly accepted idea of a potential cause of gentrification, especially for those who believe in the production-based theory, is the rent-gap theory. The rent gap theory was developed by Smith in 1979 to describe the typical catalytic factor of the process of gentrification. This theory

focuses heavily upon the relationship between land and property value and explains the fluctuations of investment and disinvestment in neighborhoods. In an article for an art initiative, “Enough Room for Space,” Smith (2008) explains both “gentrification in brief” and the rent gap. He states the rent gap as:

When neighbourhoods experience disinvestment, the ground rent that can be extracted from the area declines, which means lower land prices. As this disinvestment continues, the gap between the actual ground rent in the area and the ground rent that could be extracted were the area to undergo reinvestment becomes wide enough to allow that reinvestment to take place. This rent gap may arise largely through the operation of markets, most notably in the United States, but state policies can also be central in encouraging disinvestment and reinvestment associated with gentrification.

In other words, the rent gap is the difference between potential economic returns and the actual economic gains from its current use (Mathema 2013).

Ley's Consumption-Based Argument

For those who do not believe in the rent gap or the production-based theory of gentrification, the consumption-based theory is the other side of the argument. In fact, the rent gap is one of the largest points of contention between Smith and Ley (Mathema 2013). Ley's argument claims the transformation of labor force, the active role of government, and the re-assertion of the role of individuality as the three factors that drive the forces of gentrification (1980). According to Ley, the major changes in industrialization have invited more white-collared workers into traditionally blue-collared neighborhoods. These white-collared workers have a higher demand for different types of goods than the blue-collared workers do. From this lens, it is clear that the changes in the demographics account for the changes in all other aspects of the neighborhood, such as housing, retail, and restaurants. With an increase in white-collar workers, a neighborhood changes from a goods-producing society to a service-producing society, resulting in a rise in office workers (Hamnett 1991). Simultaneously, a post-industrial society features a more active role of government in the area

and results in the increased power of interest groups in local politics- allowing for the shift of power based upon citizen demand. In sum, this theory focuses more upon the demand of the ever-growing white-collar labor force than the activities of private businesses. Ley emphasizes early consumer preference and discusses production as merely an aid to what consumers begin. While the consumption side of the argument acknowledges the importance of production in expediting the process of gentrification, it does not see production as the main cause. Regardless of the cause, however, gentrification typically unfolds in three stages.

Three Stages of Gentrification

Kalima Rose's contribution to PolicyLink's *Beyond Gentrification Tools for Equitable Development* (2001) is perhaps the most widely known breakdown of the process of gentrification. In her evaluation, Rose breaks down the process into three progressive stages. Rose (2001) explains the process as follows:

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

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

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

These stages are important for understanding gentrification and the measures that can be taken in order to impede the process. In situating a neighborhood into the three stages of gentrification, a population can establish strategies to combat the process and can also become aware of the changes in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Susceptibility to Change

One of the most discussed questions in conversations surrounding gentrification is what factors contribute to neighborhood changes. Reviewing different studies of the process, several themes emerge. First and foremost, is the existence of a rent gap in an area. Usually, for a neighborhood to gentrify there is a significant difference in possibility of property value and the actual value of property. But it does not stop there. Through a thorough review of literature, it is apparent that the neighborhoods within a variety of cities currently experiencing gentrification have several qualities in common, which can be seen in Table 1.

<p>Gentrification Checklist: What Factors Make a Neighborhood More Susceptible to Change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The existence of a “rent gap” <input type="checkbox"/> High proportion of renters <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to city centers <input type="checkbox"/> Comparatively low housing values <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to popular areas or other gentrifying areas <input type="checkbox"/> Access to public transit <input type="checkbox"/> Good “structural bones” – a significant portion of historical homes that have not been victim to multiple renovations 	<p>Gentrification Checklist: Signs of Gentrification in an Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance of a new coffee shop, park, and/or gastropub <input type="checkbox"/> Displacement of previous residents and businesses <input type="checkbox"/> Increased property values and rent <input type="checkbox"/> Influx of young professionals/“hipsters” <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance of neighborhood as “up and coming” in a national print magazine or newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Higher priced goods in new, trendy shops <input type="checkbox"/> Government investment in the area <input type="checkbox"/> Rampant home renovations <input type="checkbox"/> Increase in walkability/bikeability of streets
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Table 1: Gentrification Checklist

Most neighborhoods have a high percentage of renter-occupied units, are within close proximity to the central hub of the city, have or gain access to transit (bike lanes, walkable streets, accessible public transit), and have comparatively low housing values when assessing adjacent neighborhoods (Smith 2007). A high proportion of renters make the population change easy as property values increase and renters are kicked out. If a neighborhood is within close proximity to another affluent or popular area of the city but has lower property values, it typically gains the overflow from these more popular neighborhoods. As people struggle to afford popular areas, they

flock to the adjacent parts of the city, are able to easily access popular hubs, and eventually recreate the space as their own- for a fraction of the cost. In fact, a sample of American cities showed that 90% of gentrified neighborhoods were in close proximity to an environmental amenity or cultural institution (Ley and Dobson 2008). Neighborhoods susceptible to gentrification typically have a higher population of public transit users, which means that the area has the possibility to become more pedestrian friendly in the future. Finally, susceptible neighborhoods typically have a high proportion of historical homes whose unique characteristics are highly valued. While plumbing and electrical wiring can be redone, the actual building cannot be redone as easily and therefore, areas with a high proportion of attractive home exteriors, as is often seen with historical homes, tend to be more susceptible to change. Investors are more likely to put money into these beautiful homes than they are into a less attractive home (Ley and Dobson 2008).

Part 2: Effects of Gentrification

Both Ley and Smith's arguments demonstrate that studies on gentrification tend to focus upon the economics of the process rather than the lived experiences of those within gentrifying neighborhoods. Gentrification's effects reach far further than the results of producer or consumer preferences, especially when the consumer population is rapidly changing.

Factors Leading to Displacement

As stated in the definition, gentrification leads to displacement. This occurs for a number of reasons. The first of which makes logical sense: with the increase of property values, lower income residents can no longer afford the neighborhood. Neighborhoods can see property values at least double in the process of gentrification and long-time residents find themselves victims to high and rapid increases in rent (Smith 2007). When property values truly have potential to grow, landlords increase rents, which often subsequently causes tenants to leave. In fact, this is quite common.

Tenants of apartment complexes in gentrifying neighborhoods find themselves victims to high rent increases and eviction notices. These tenants, even those who have occupied the building for decades, are then forced to leave due to an inability to pay (Biro 2007). With vacancies, the owner of the building then markets each apartment at a much higher cost to others who are willing to pay higher amounts to come into a neighborhood with a promise of an urban renaissance. The increase in property values and the buzz of the potential of a neighborhood increase popularity for an area and reduce vacancy rates, which also encourages further development for the area (Atkinson and Bridge 2005). With this encouragement, new businesses tend to appear.

The new businesses that emerge in an area undergoing gentrification help bring an increased social mix and help reduce suburban sprawl by bringing more business into smaller neighborhoods (Atkinson and Bridge 2005). However, this also comes at a cost. The new businesses sell their products for higher prices to benefit from the new, wealthier population moving in. Further, they bring a new feel to the neighborhood. Often, they bring a type of food or service not typically associated with the neighborhood or they “redefine” a popular cuisine, such as tacos, and charge exorbitant amounts for a typically cheap meal. In some cities like San Francisco, restaurants sell these redefined tacos for \$12 a pair (Arellano 2014). On the other hand, some long-time businesses, such as hardware stores, benefit greatly from the flipping of houses in their areas. Yet, for the most part, long-time businesses in these areas have trouble staying afloat when standing next to brand new yoga studios and juice shops. Long-time businesses that want to survive in gentrified neighborhoods have to give in to popular trends to remain significant. However, attempts to look like other businesses but still sell traditional food only intensify the differences in class for long-time residents and new neighbors. Long-term residents interviewed about the change often expressed the sentiment that they no longer felt welcome in their own neighborhood upon the arrival and popularity of the new shops.

Urban Pioneers and Columbusing

Over time, those who move into an area prior to its change have earned the name “urban pioneers,” which calls attention back to the colonization of peoples. In fact, some people have even called the discovery of gentrifying neighborhoods “Columbusing” (Salinas 2014). This concept of Columbusing refers to the “discovery” of something that has “existed forever” (Salinas 2014). With this “discovery,” however, also comes a loss of the value in what has been discovered. The pioneers that happen upon whatever neighborhood they find do not acknowledge the previous culture but rather make it their own with a whole new set of new uses such as coffee shops, breweries, and other goods and services. While the pioneers may bring with them new ideas and more opportunities for employment and local revenue, the common lack of appreciation for previous traditions and cultures that accompanies their arrival can be detrimental.

Erasure of History

For many, gentrification is seen as a “panacea to a neighborhood’s ills” by generating more revenue and investment, making a neighborhood seemingly safer, and increasing its value (Mirabal 2009). However, for so many others, gentrification means what it means: displacement. This displacement can go so much further than just the people who leave their residences- it can mean an entire erasure of history. Gentrification can lead to the loss of a neighborhood’s rich history as those who held the stories of significant buildings and monuments are pushed out of an area (Mirabal 2009).

Part 3: Methodology

Tackling the issue of gentrification was like taming a wild beast. To begin, the word gentrification itself has become incredibly loaded since Ruth Glass' creation of the term in 1964. The connotations associated with the word have transformed over time and, in recent years, the word has been used to explain the changes in Brooklyn, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and several other large cities. However, the increased use of the term within the past 30 years is not necessarily indicative of an increase in incidents of gentrification. As previously mentioned, a recent study concluded that several scholars and the *New York Times* have incorrectly identified gentrifying neighborhoods within the last 30 years (Barton 2014). Beyond being misidentified in print, personal connotations and social constructions have led most people to read the "middle class or affluent people" phrase of the definition as "rich white people," and has thus transformed gentrification into a racial issue. Therefore, to begin the project, I investigated the history of the term from its origin in 1964 through several different debates over time to its current definition in 2015. I largely relied on the book *Gentrification* by Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly and followed many of Neil Smith's publications and other scholar's responses to his arguments. For this paper, I define gentrification as the process of reinvestment in a traditionally working class neighborhood in conjunction with the arrival of wealthier people, leading to increased rents, property values, and evictions, changes in demographics such as increased median income and reductions in household sizes, an increased supply of high-end housing, retail, and restaurants, and, finally, a significant shift in the culture and character of an area. This process often results in displacement. To measure the process of gentrification, I used four specifics of reinvestment identified by Benjamin Grant, an urban designer in San Francisco, to indicate the changes that take place in a gentrifying neighborhood (Grant 2014):

- **“Demographics:** An increase in median income, a decline in the proportion of racial minorities, and a reduction in household size, as low-income families are replaced by young

- singles and couples.
- **Real Estate Markets:** Large increases in rents and home prices, increases in the number of evictions, conversion of rental units to ownership (condos) and new development of luxury housing.
 - **Land Use:** A decline in industrial uses, an increase in office or multimedia uses, the development of live-work "lofts" and high-end housing, retail, and restaurants.
 - **Culture and Character:** New ideas about what is desirable and attractive, including standards (either informal or legal) for architecture, landscaping, public behavior, noise, and nuisance.”

Case Study of Highland Park

This project presents a case study of Highland Park in Los Angeles, California. In order to evaluate the neighborhood on the standards provided by Grant, I used Census and American Community Survey data obtained through the website Social Explorer to analyze the demographics of the neighborhood. Since Highland Park is a small neighborhood within the much larger City of Los Angeles and is divided by two separate city council districts, 1 and 14, neighborhood boundaries are contestable. This presents a flaw in the data, as neither census tracts nor city council districts are made based on neighborhood boundary lines and therefore some of the data accounted for actually comes from adjacent neighborhoods. Furthermore, the census tracts in 2000 are different from census tracts in 2010 and 2013; therefore, mapping by census tract makes it difficult to have consistent data over the course of several decades.

The *Los Angeles Times*' Mapping LA project demonstrates the difficulty in identifying neighborhoods. The project was meant to spark a conversation about the different neighborhoods of Los Angeles and asked locals to posit their own opinions on where neighborhood boundary lines truly lied. Residents enthusiastically argued over boundary lines created by the newspaper and insisted that their lived experiences proved the inaccuracy of the lines proposed by the project. Thus, the Mapping LA project proved the malleability of neighborhood boundary lines and set a precedent for my own evaluation of Highland Park.

For this paper, I utilized the census tracts identified by the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council's *The State of the Highland Park* report to gather and analyze neighborhood demographics. The report based its selection of census tracts upon the area under jurisdiction of the neighborhood council recognized by the City of Los Angeles. Because of Highland Park's hilly topography and Los Angeles' politics, the boundaries of the neighborhood are windy and complicated. Therefore, although the report identified 24 census tracts to encompass the area of Highland Park, the neighborhood shares almost half of the census tracts with adjacent areas. About 30% of the identified tracts are less than 50% within the boundaries of the neighborhood (Appendix). This presents a flaw in the data and should be considered in future research.

Information for the 24 census tracts was provided by the decennial US Census data for the years 2000 and 2010. Since most of the changes in Highland Park have occurred within the past 7 years, data was also obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is annually conducted to evaluate the demographics for government programs and randomly samples groups year-round to update data. This project also utilized ACS data for the year 2010 because the 2010 Census did not ask respondents to identify their annual household income. In order to compare median income across the years of 2000, 2010, and 2013, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI Inflation calculator was used to adjust income to 2000 inflation adjusted dollars. The most recent ACS reports for 2013 were used in as many cases as possible.

Interview Approach

Beyond researching demographic data for Highland Park, I conducted 15 interviews with stakeholders of Highland Park, with most interviewees being long-time residents of the community. I chose to utilize this approach in my project because people's stories of displacement capture not only the immediacy of the issue, but also the effects of gentrification beyond mere economic gains or

losses. The purpose of this paper is specifically to look at the effects changes in a neighborhood had on the people within it and I saw it as impossible to report on the issue without speaking with community members. The inclusion of voices adds a dimension to the topic that shows not only what has happened, but also what could have happened, and what may happen in the future. It gives data life and truly validates much of the information that can be found within literature reviews, while also highlighting some issues that may not been obvious prior. Including voices of those who hold stakes in the neighborhood's redevelopment provides a dimension of a hopeful future that may be attainable by all parties involved.

Subjects were selected based on their relationship with the neighborhood and were connected to the project through a friend or personal relationship. There was no compensation provided for their time and most subject interviews lasted about an hour. Of the 15 subjects, 10 were women and 5 were men, 11 were Latino, 3 were White, and 1 was Asian. All subjects were asked questions based on their personal experiences in Highland Park and were allowed to opt out of interviews at any time. Although the interviews were meant only to last about half an hour with 10 pre-selected questions, most interviews lasted about an hour due to the subject's passion about the subject. 14 of the 15 interviews were recorded and later transcribed and broken up into several themes presented later in this paper.

Business Approach

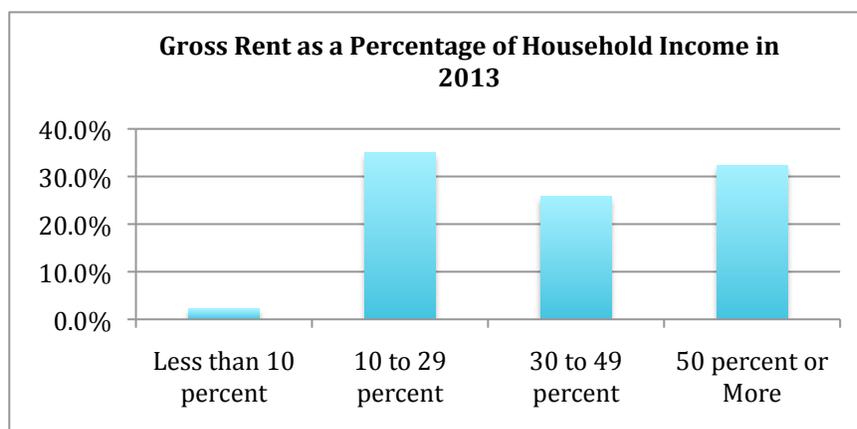
Talking to Steve Jones, a man who has flipped over 50 homes in Highland Park, he will say the change in Highland Park began with Café de Leche, the popular coffee shop on the corner of York Boulevard and Ave 50. In fact, he claims gentrification often begins with what he calls a "stake in the ground," such as a coffee shop or a vintage store, that will encourage other shops to do business nearby and residents to live in close proximity. Rudy Martinez will not disagree. Another developer,

Martinez opened *Marty's*, a bar on York Boulevard, around the same time that The York, Johnny's and Café de Leche all opened their doors. Martinez claims that it was the three bars that started the change in the neighborhood. With this in mind, I evaluated the establishments of businesses on York starting from the opening of Café de Leche in 2008. I picked the now well-established three-block stretch of York Boulevard between Ave 50 and Ave 53 and evaluated businesses that had been opened in that year and continue to operate to this day. In order to do this, I used Los Angeles' Open Data's Active Businesses resource to identify currently active businesses along the boulevard. This data is flawed in that it does not provide any information for closed businesses, which makes it difficult to track neighborhood changes. However, the data is effective in its demonstration of the types of businesses that have been able to come onto the boulevard and thrive within the past 7 years.

Part 4: Case Study of Highland Park

Gentrification in Los Angeles

For several years, Los Angeles has been in the running for the title of the city with the most unaffordable rental market in the nation, along with New York and San Francisco. While it has maintained a title as *one* of the most expensive cities in the nation, in 2014 the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs officially declared Los Angeles the most unaffordable rental market in the country. The report found 52% of the Los Angeles metro population to be renters paying an average rent constituting about 47% of their income, making the median rent burden for Los Angeles the highest in the country (UCLA 2014). To put these numbers into perspective, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that the average individual/family should spend no more than thirty percent of their income on housing costs (Schwartz 2010).



Source: ACS 2013 Estimates

Figure 2 In Los Angeles, a large percentage of renters spend more than the recommended maximum of 30% of their household income on rent. In fact, over 30% of the population pays over 50% of their household income on rent.

In Los Angeles, 60% of renters are spending more than the recommended 30% maximum and the problem is only getting worse (Harvard Center for Housing Justice 2014). Los Angeles County's median rent rose 25% from 2000 to 2012, while the median income dropped 9% indicating an increasing trend in the unaffordability of housing (Khouri 2014). This housing pressure has resulted in the movement of somewhat wealthier middle class residents of Los Angeles to move in typically lower income areas of the city. Three prime examples are Silver Lake, Eagle Rock and Echo Park.

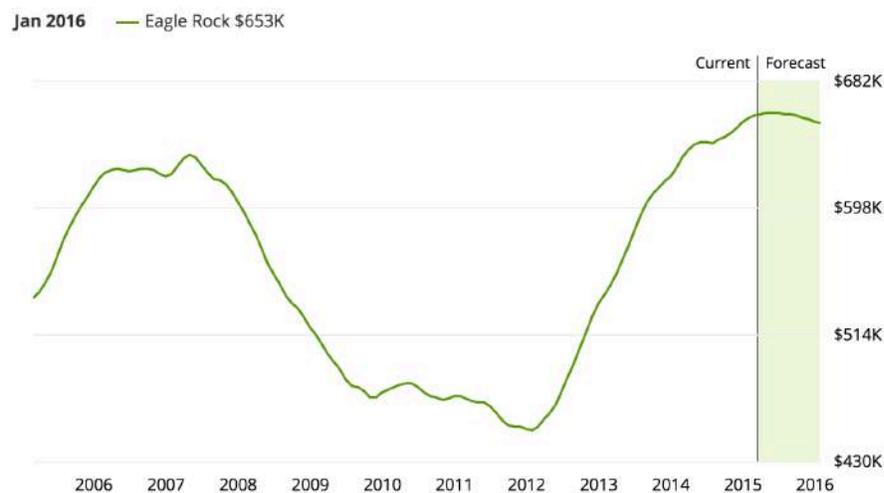
Silver Lake

Interestingly, Silver Lake is used as the example of what a completed gentrified neighborhood looks like, but it is difficult to find any news or journal articles on the changes that occurred within the area. The area regarded by some as the “grown up” version of other gentrifying areas and is mentioned in every gentrification conversation (LA Weekly 2012). However, finding its history online is almost impossible. Searching for stories of displacement in Echo Park or Highland Park, the first three links provided by Google are recent news stories. In fact, Highland Park even has its own NPR Marketplace story. However, looking for Silver Lake, several different searches with several different key terms yielded few results for concrete information as to what used to be in the area before. This could be because the process of gentrification reportedly finished in the mid-2000s after

beginning in the 1990s, but it could also simply be yet another effect of gentrification; an erasure of history. In the process of gentrification, it is common that the previous history and traditions of the neighborhood get lost within the new traditions and there is little left within the neighborhood or otherwise that tells the story of what was (Mirabal 2009).

Eagle Rock

Eagle Rock is a city adjacent to Pasadena and Northeast Los Angeles and was named the second of the “Hottest Neighborhoods of 2014” by the real estate website Redfin. The neighborhood has seen significant changes within the past 15 years. In 2012, absentee buyers purchased 18.6% of homes sold in Eagle Rock and investors purchased 2 in 5 homes sold in Eagle Rock (Lazo 2012). Since then, housing values have significantly increased. Eagle Rock’s home values have sky rocketed within the past 3 years, from \$451,000 in 2012 to \$660,000 in 2015 (Zillow.com). Rent in the area has increased to a little over \$2,600, almost \$100 more than the average for the city of Los Angeles (Zillow.com). This is a large result of people moving out of the nearby neighborhoods of Silver Lake and Pasadena as they find themselves unable to afford those areas after significant changes.



Source: Zillow.com March 2015

Figure 3 A visual representation of the increases of home values in Eagle Rock. Efforts to redefine the neighborhood revitalized the housing market and have led to drastic increases in property values over the past 3 years.

The neighborhood is changing in other ways as well. A stretch of Colorado Boulevard was featured in an episode of the *FOX* Sitcom *New Girl* as a street of quirky Portland and the characters passed by artisan cheese shops and yoga studios so popularly known to the Boulevard now.

Echo Park

Echo Park is perhaps one of the more talked about neighborhoods in the discussion of gentrification in Los Angeles. It began its gentrification process along with Silver Lake, but has received much more publicity about the changes, especially in light of the new renovations to Echo Park Lake. Between 2000 and 2010, the neighborhood saw a 10% decrease in its Latino population and a 10% increase in its White population (US Census). At the end of 2014, an article was published in the *Los Angeles Times* about a family being evicted from their home in Echo Park after 31 years of residency (Lopez 2014). The story discussed the threat of demolition for the family's building in order to build 5 housing units on the lot, which are estimated to sell for \$800,000 each. Just as Eagle Rock has seen a large jump in home values over the past 3 years, Echo Park has seen a spike in home values from \$360,000 in 2012 to \$600,000 in 2015 (Zillow.com). Median rent in the area is about \$2,437/month (Zillow.com). Echo Park's convenient proximity to Downtown Los Angeles is a large factor in its appeal, yet its median price is now becoming too exorbitant for many people who have lived there and many others who want to.

Highland Park

Looking back at the causes, effects, and stages of gentrification, there is one neighborhood of Los Angeles that fits the bill almost exactly. In accordance with the Gentrification Checklist (Table 1, see page 14), Highland Park can check off the majority of susceptibility factors and signs of gentrification. Appearance of a coffee shop? Check. Café de Leche appeared in Highland Park in 2008 and is now regarded as the hipster hub of the neighborhood. High population of renters? Check.

The ACS 2007-2011 analysis of Highland Park shows 60% of housing units to be renter occupied. Proximity to a central hub of the city? Check. Highland Park is less than 15 minutes away from Downtown Los Angeles and studies have shown that almost 90% of gentrified American cities were near an environmental amenity of significant cultural institution (Ley and Dobson, 2008). Looking at that information, Occidental College, yet another cultural institution, lies right on the border of Highland Park and Eagle Rock. Access to public transportation? Check. The Metro Gold Line opened its Highland Park stop in the summer of 2003 and the neighborhood began implementing bike lanes in 2006. Increase in property value? Another check. Highland Park's property values are sky-rocketing, with once fore-closed houses that sold for \$240,000 being flipped to sell at \$530,000 (Clark et al 2014). In fact, one house just went on the market for one million dollars (Redfin). Redefinition of the neighborhood with words and phrases such as "revitalized" and "up and coming?" Definitely check. In 2013, Redfin ranked Highland Park as number one on its list of the top 10 up and coming neighborhoods in the entire United States (Ellis 2013). Large influx of "hipsters"? Check. In fact, there are so many hipsters in Highland Park and they are so negatively received that popular coffee shops, such as the previously mentioned Café de Leche, can pick up Wi-Fi signals not so politely titled "Fuck You Hipsters" (Meraji 2013). Government investment in the area? Check. In 2012, Councilmember Jose Huizar implemented the York Boulevard Improvement Plan as part of his Living Streets LA Initiative and built a small parklet on the boulevard to encourage pedestrian usage (Improvement Vision and Action Plan). The parklet came around the same time as the implementation of the bike lanes and other small improvements on the boulevard; fulfilling yet another checkbox: increased walkability/bikeability of the streets.

Highland Park is undoubtedly undergoing change. The demographics are shifting, property values are increasing, and the neighborhood simply looks different. Now that more people are talking

about gentrification, it seems as if Highland Park is under the microscope, serving as a case study of how a neighborhood handles change and what that means for the people who live there. Highland Park is the quintessential example of gentrification and will be used as a case study in this paper to investigate the way gentrification affects residents and business owners experiencing the process.

History of Highland Park

Highland Park is a neighborhood with a rich history on the edge of Northeast Los Angeles. The first suburb of Los Angeles, the neighborhood's history extends back to the 1600s with the settlement of the Tongva tribe in the area (KCET, 2013). In the 1660s, Highland Park would see its first of many major demographic shifts when the Spanish settle the area, renaming the river the Arroyo Seco and the area Rancho San Rafael.

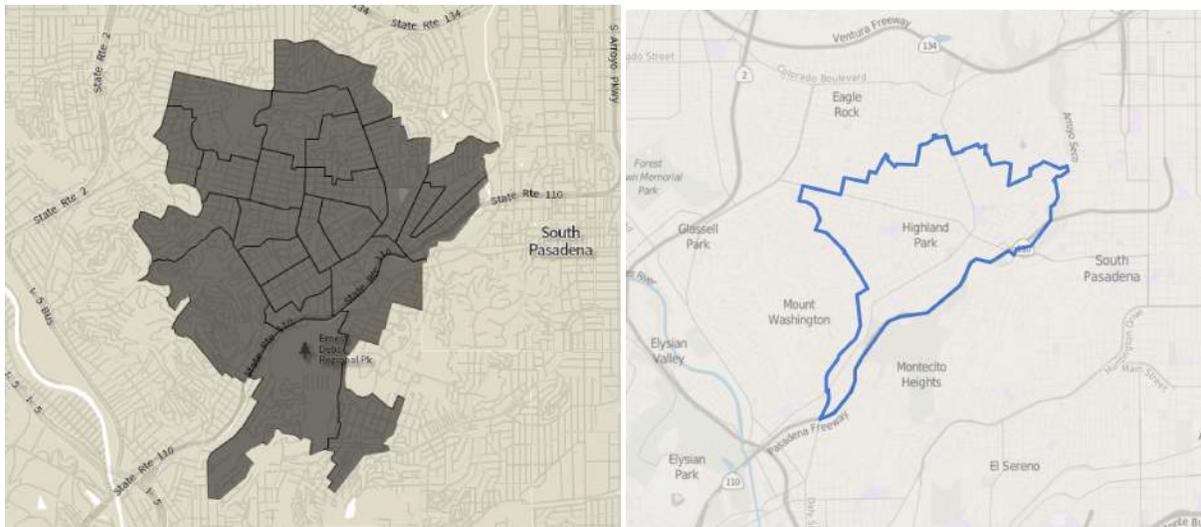


Figure 4 Highland Park's boundary lines are debatable. The two figures presented here represent the 24 census tracts identified by the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council as Highland Park boundary lines (left) and by the *Los Angeles Times* Mapping LA Project (Screenshot of Social Explorer and Mapping LA).

The most well-documented history of the area begins after the Mexican American War when California became part of the United States. By 1869, Rancho San Rafael was purchased and subdivided by Alfred Chapman and Andrew Glassell (KCET 2013). As the City of Los Angeles began to grow, Highland Park was developed by an arts and culture scene (The State of Highland Park). The Arts and Crafts Movement led by William Lees Judson and George Wharton James truly

shaped the region in its efforts to connect architecture and construction with their physical landscape (KCET 2013). This arts movement can be best seen in El Alisal, the home developed by Charles Lummis that represented the movement's resistance to the Industrial Movement and emphasis on hand-made items rather than machine-made (The State of Highland Park).

In 1895, Highland Park became the first suburb of Los Angeles and received benefits in the form of municipal services such as water and police protection. Additionally, the development of the Pacific Electric rail line that ran from Downtown Los Angeles to Pasadena sparked a real estate boom in Highland Park. However, the boom did not last too long. In 1940, the Arroyo Seco Parkway, the first freeway of Los Angeles, shot through Highland Park and drew residents into their cars and newer suburbs further away from Downtown Los Angeles. With the development of the parkway, both the Pacific Electric rail line and Highland Park suffered. As a result, rents in the area began to decline in the 1950s and Mexican immigrants saw Highland Park as an ideal neighborhood to settle (KCET 2013). With the large influx of this Mexican population, Highland Park became an essential neighborhood in the Chicano movement during the 1960's and 1970's. It was during this time of political activism that white flight began to occur. A predominately white suburb prior to the decline in property values due to the development of the freeways, the white population began to move out as Mexican immigrants moved in. Now a predominately Latino neighborhood, the area slipped into decline due to increased poverty and poor educational and social services (KCET 2013). With this decline, Highland Park, Cypress Park, and Glassell Park all also became associated with gang activity, claimed by the notorious Avenues gang (Lazo 2012).

Highland Park was hit hard by the housing crisis in 2008, but investors took advantage of the abundance of foreclosed homes and began to remodel and sell the homes to people priced out of nearby neighborhoods Silver Lake and Echo Park (Lazo 2012). Furthermore, Highland Park has the

development of a Metro Gold Line stop, bike lanes, and “sidewalk culture” unseen in most of Los Angeles (Lazo 2012). In recent years, people began to move eastward when the housing boom began pricing people out of Silver Lake and Echo Park. Highland Park today is largely recovering from the housing crisis of 2008 and experiencing serious demographic shifts.

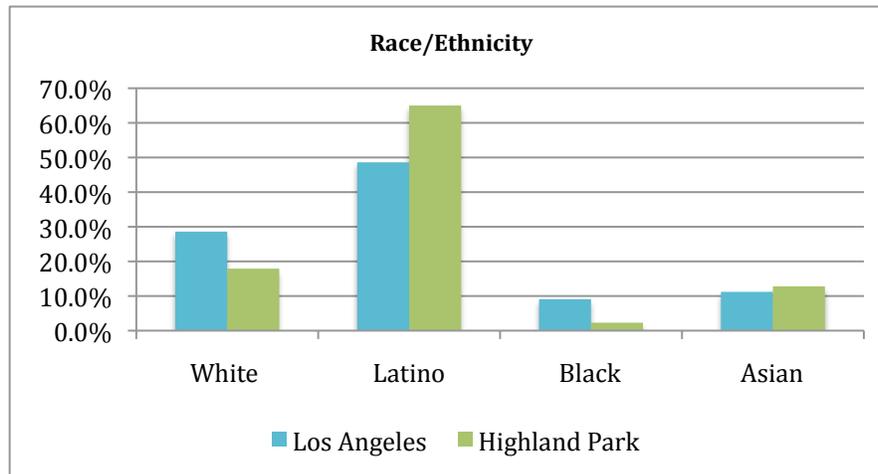
Highland Park Today

In the years leading up to the declaration of its title of Redfin’s “Hottest Neighborhood of 2013” and the years after, Highland Park has significantly grown. Highland Park gained its title as the Hottest Neighborhood with a 73% increase in home sales and a 31% increase in home prices (Redfin). Since then, home values have only continued to increase. Today, Highland Park has a median home value and household income higher than Los Angeles. Median household income for the area is over \$51,500 and median home sale prices are over \$625,000 (ACS 2013 Estimates and Zillow). However, the neighborhood suffers from a severe housing burden, which is defined as spending more than 30% of one’s income on rent (The State of Highland Park). In Highland Park, about 55% of renters pay above the 30% recommended maximum of their household income. Additionally, nearly 45% of Highland Park’s residents live below the poverty line. Although home sale values and median household income are increasing, there is a large proportion of the population that cannot truly afford to live in Highland Park.

Race/Ethnicity

Highland Park differs greatly from the racial/ethnic demographics of the City of Los Angeles as a whole. The area is dominated by the Latino population that makes up about two-thirds of the neighborhood, compared to just under 50% in the City of LA. Furthermore, the White population in Highland Park is much smaller than that in Los Angeles, comprising only 18% of the neighborhood as compared to 28.6%. It is obvious that the influx of Latinos during the 1960’s is still prevalent in

the neighborhood, but the demographics are changing. The 2010 Census revealed Highland Park to have a slightly smaller White population (14%) and a larger Latino population (nearly 75%).



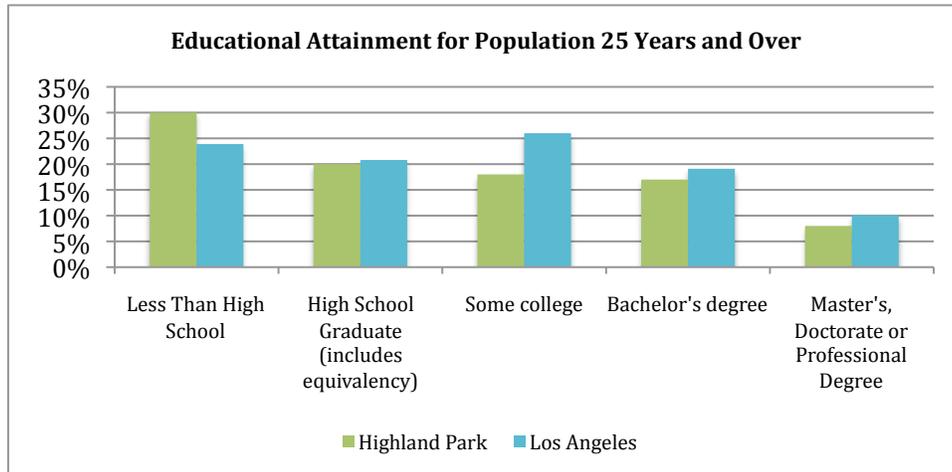
Source: ACS 2013 Estimates

Language

With such a large Latino population, it comes as no surprise that one of the main languages spoken in Highland Park is Spanish (The State of Highland Park). The American Community Survey 2007-2011 reported that over 9 languages are spoken within the boundaries of Highland Park, with the two predominant languages being English and Spanish. Over a third of Highland Park residents report that they speak English “less than very well,” as compared to the City of Los Angeles with a limited English proficiency rate of 30% (The State of Highland Park).

Educational Attainment

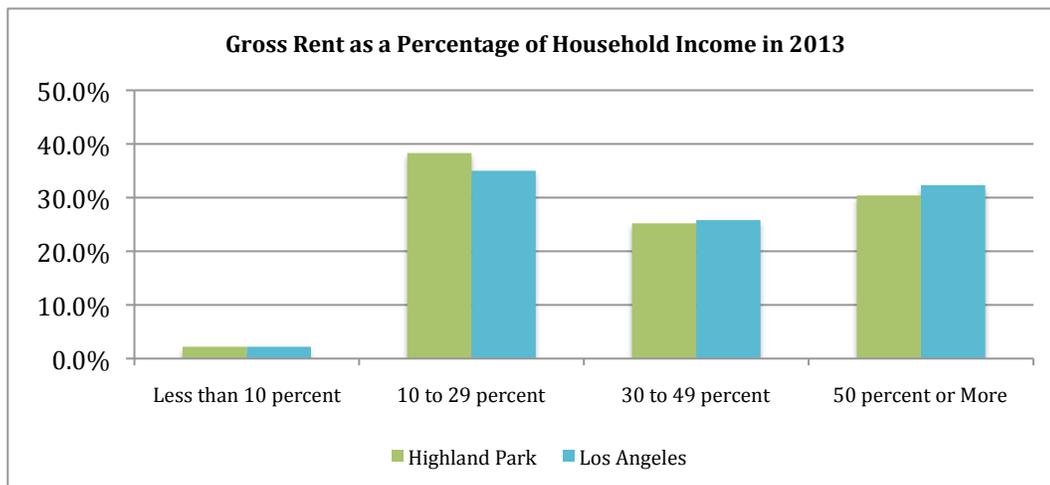
Highland Park’s population is less educated than that of Los Angeles. Most residents have less than a high school education at a higher rate than the city and across the board, Highland Park has lower levels of education with a smaller percentage having graduated high school, attended and graduated from college, and received a post-graduate degree. Lower levels of educational attainment are indicative of lower possibilities to earn a higher salary. With Highland Park’s demographics, it is logical that the majority of the population is paying a higher percentage of their income on housing.



Source: ACS 2007-2011

Rent as Percentage of Household Income

Well over half of Highland Park’s renters are paying more than the recommended 30% maximum of income on rent. In fact, over 30% of renters are spending 50% or more of their income on rent in the area (ACS 2013 Estimates). The numbers are not much different than that of the City of Los Angeles as a whole, showing that Los Angeles is having a housing burden in general, with rents too high for a majority of the population.

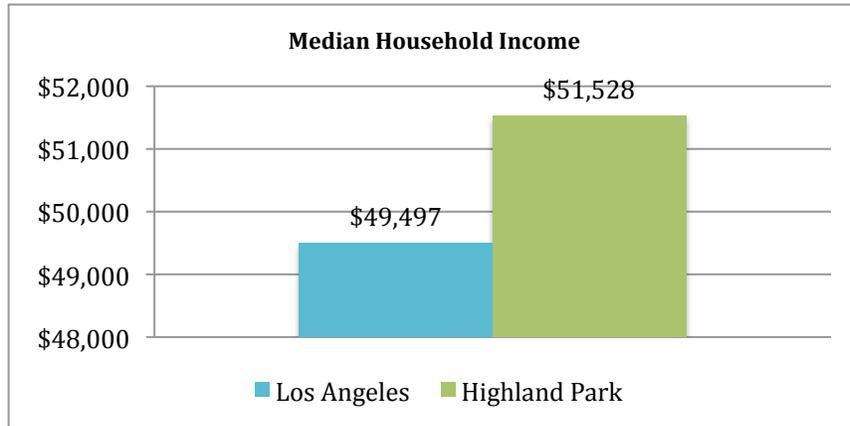


Source: ACS 2013 Estimates

Median Household Income

The median household income for Highland Park in 2013 was about \$2,000 above the median for the City of Los Angeles. However, the \$2,000 makes a small difference in terms of rental

affordability, as can be seen in the previous figure, as housing and rental prices increase in Highland Park.



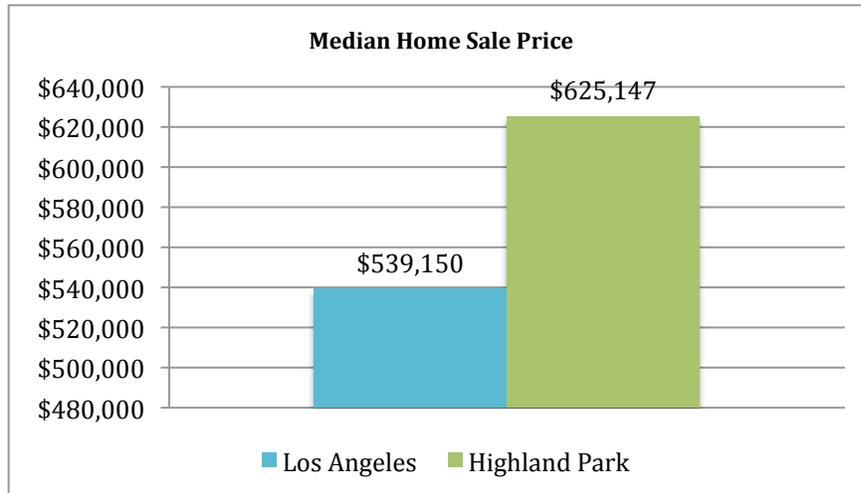
Source: ACS 2013 Estimates

Median Rent and Median Home Sale Price

Despite the majority of the population paying a significant amount of their annual income on rent, Highland Park’s median rent is about \$200 lower than the median rent of the City of Los Angeles. This lower average indicates a higher rate of affordability for renters in the neighborhood as compared to Los Angeles, yet home sales prices indicate homes to cost significantly more in Highland Park than in Los Angeles (about a \$86,000 difference).



Source: ACS 2013 Estimates



Source: Zillow.com March 2015

Highland Park and Gentrification

Highland Park and gentrification have practically become synonymous in Los Angeles. Looking at the demographic snapshot of Highland Park today, it is hard to truly understand this. To put the changes occurring in Highland Park into the context of the gentrification conversation, it is important to understand the shifts in the neighborhood over time through the lens of Grant's four specifics of reinvestment to indicate the changes that take place in a gentrifying neighborhood.

Demographics

According to Grant, a gentrifying neighborhood should anticipate “an increase in median income, a decline in the proportion of racial minorities, and a reduction in household size, as low-income families are replaced by young singles and couples” (2014). The data provided by the US Census shows exactly that, with increases in median income, a decline in the Latino population, and smaller population density in the neighborhood of Highland Park.

Median Household Income

Highland Park's median household income increased over \$3,000 within 10 years compared to Los Angeles' significantly smaller \$884 growth in the same time frame. This fulfills Grant's first specification under demographic changes and the general definition of gentrification: an increase in

median income, or the influx of a wealthier group of people. This drastic increase in household income over time can indicate a change in several other demographics such as population, types of jobs, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment. It also indicates an increase in the value of the neighborhood as it shows a wealthier population moving in and therefore having a higher spending capacity, which could influence both rental prices and the types of businesses provided within the community.

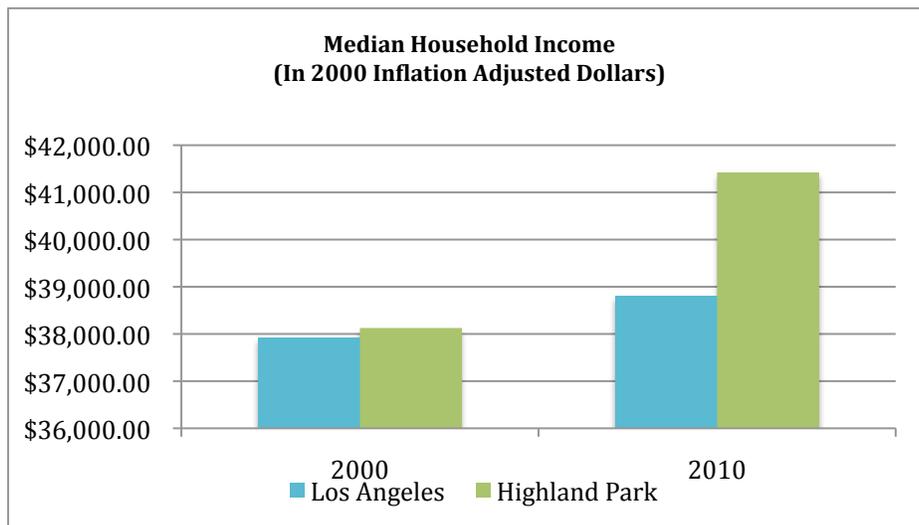


Figure 5 Highland Park's median household income has grown at a rate 3.7 times faster than that of the City of LA (US Census)

Race/Ethnicity

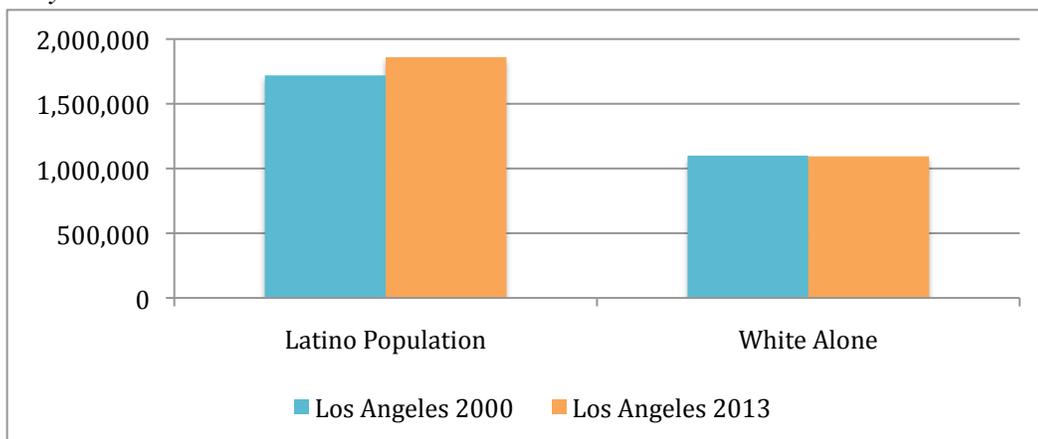


Figure 6 Changes in the White and Latino population for the City of Los Angeles between 2000 and 2013 indicate a rapidly growing Latino population in Los Angeles and a relatively stagnant White population change (US Census and ACS 2013)

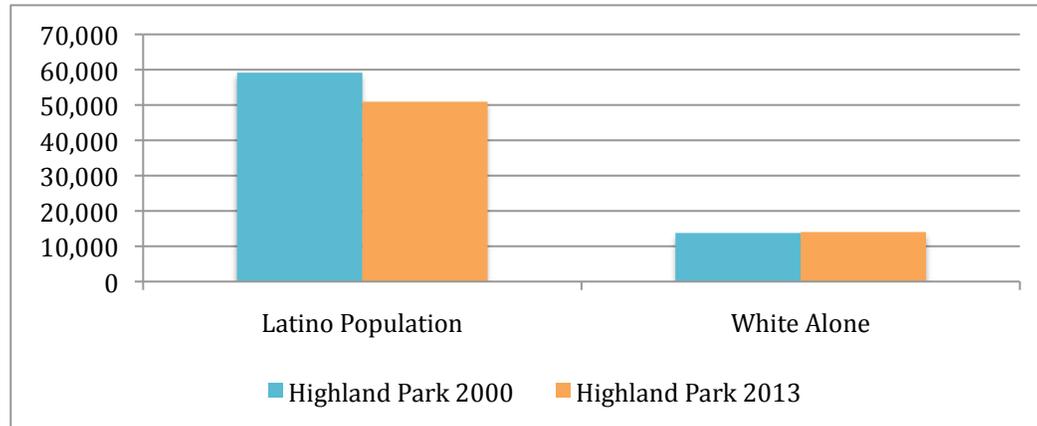


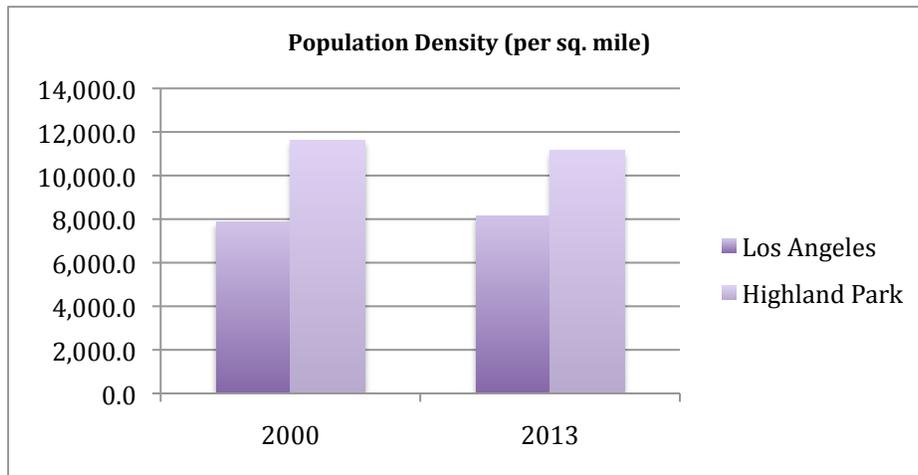
Figure 7 Changes in White and Latino populations within the neighborhood of Highland Park between 2000 and 2013 indicate potential displacement of Latino families (US Census and ACS 2013)

These two figures represent the second specification under a change in demographics outlined by Grant: a decline in minority populations. Notably, while Los Angeles as a whole is experiencing an increase in its Latino population, Highland Park is seeing a significant decrease in its Latino residents. The nearly 14% decrease in the neighborhood's Latino population is remarkable in comparison to an 8% increase in the City of Los Angeles. However, assertions from Highland Park residents that the White population is significantly increasing seems false as the population changes by a mere 2% in the neighborhood. This is similarly reflected in the race/ethnicity changes for Los Angeles as a whole, but could also be indicative of changes in household size and tenure. In other words, the Latino population could be declining at a rapid rate due to displacement and the 2% White population moving into these vacated units may be moving in with smaller families.

Population Density

Grant's final specification for demographic changes lies within the reduction of household size as young couples and singles replace low-income families. Looking at the previous two changes in demographics and the change in population density, Highland Park fulfills all three specifications in regards to demographic change. Population density is an indicator of the amount of people living within a certain space, meaning a decrease in population density would be representative of smaller

household sizes. Looking at Highland Park, a decreased population density in comparison to a small increase for the city is indicative of young singles and couples moving into units previously occupied by large families.



Source: US Census 2000 and ACS Estimates 2013

Figure 8 A decrease in Highland Park's density is representative of the neighborhood's shift from households with large families to households with young singles and couples, a trend often associated with gentrification.

Housing

Grant claims the second specification of gentrification to be a change in the real estate markets, which I will call housing. In his specifications for the changes in housing, he claims there will be “large increases in rents and home prices, increases in the number of evictions, conversion of rental units to ownership (condos) and new development of luxury housing” (2014). Although it is not possible to track evictions, personal stories and news articles of evictions from Highland Park have emerged in recent years. Aside from the difficulty in tracking evictions, data shows that Highland Park is experiencing significant increases in rents and home prices, the conversion of rental units to ownership, and the development of luxury housing.

Increases in Rents and Home Prices

In 2012, an article for the *Los Angeles Times* claimed the median home price in Highland Park to be \$308,250 within the last three months of 2011 (Lazo 2012). Three years later, another article

reported the median home price within the last three months of 2014 to be \$531,000, representing a 72% increase in prices within 3 years (Barragan 2015). This data could be largely skewed based on the malleability of Highland Park's neighborhood lines and the reporters' data sources. However, according to an online real estate database that uses the same boundaries every year for Highland Park, the neighborhood's median home price still skyrocketed with a 50% increase within 3 years, jumping from \$365,000 in December of 2011 to \$548,000 in December of 2014 (Zillow).

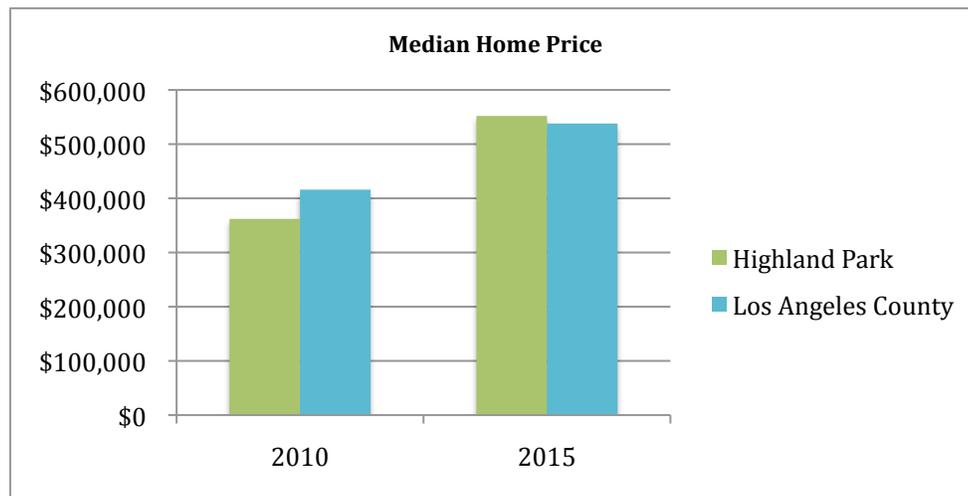


Figure 9 Rapid increases in Highland Park's median home prices indicate the possibility of gentrification in the area (Zillow.com).

Comparatively, Los Angeles' median home prices to increase from \$380,000 to \$527,000 within the same time frame, representing a smaller 38% increase for the city as a whole (Zillow). Therefore, although property values are increasing throughout the city as whole, the increase in Highland Park is significantly more drastic. Additionally, Los Angeles witnessed a 11.5% median rental price increase between December 2011 and December 2014, whereas Highland Park saw almost double the increase at a nearly 20% increase in the same amount of time (Zillow). Again, Highland Park's increased rental rate at nearly double that of Los Angeles shows that the neighborhood is rapidly increasing in value and fulfilling the first specification of housing changes for gentrification in the area.

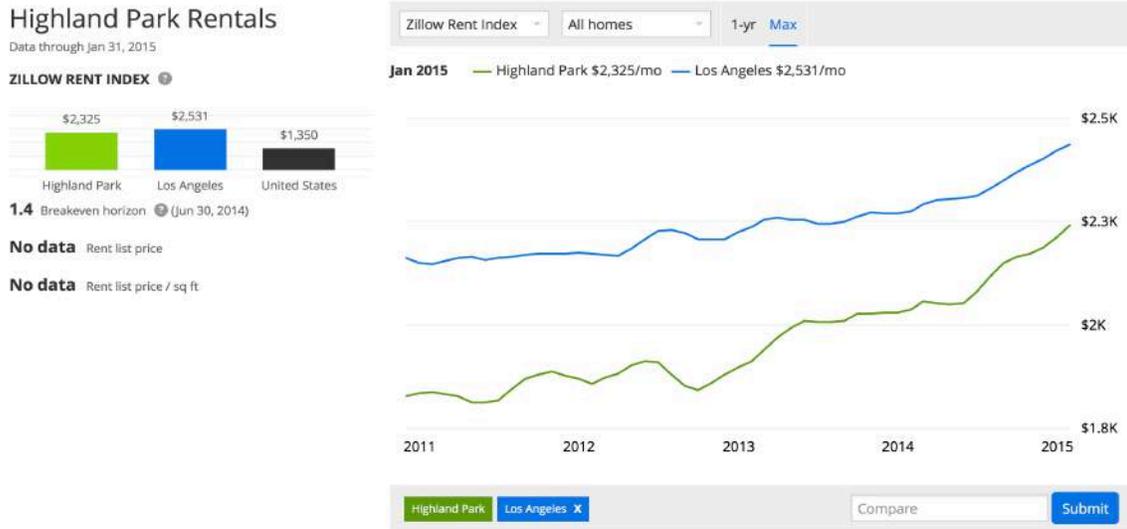


Figure 10 Increases in rental prices for Highland Park and Los Angeles show an increased demand for the area and the ability of new residents to pay higher rates for rents, which is one of several indications of gentrification in an area (Zillow.com).

Renter Occupied vs Owner Occupied

Highland Park yet again fulfills the definition of gentrification in its conversion of renter occupied units to owner occupied units. While the City of Los Angeles has shown slight increases in both renter and owner occupied units, Highland Park has demonstrated a slight increase in owner occupied units and a significant decrease in renter occupied units. Owner occupied units represent an investment in an area, which can lead to more personal care of an area and increased property values. Further, this could lead to owner investment in the area and the development of more luxury spaces such as condos and more luxury housing.

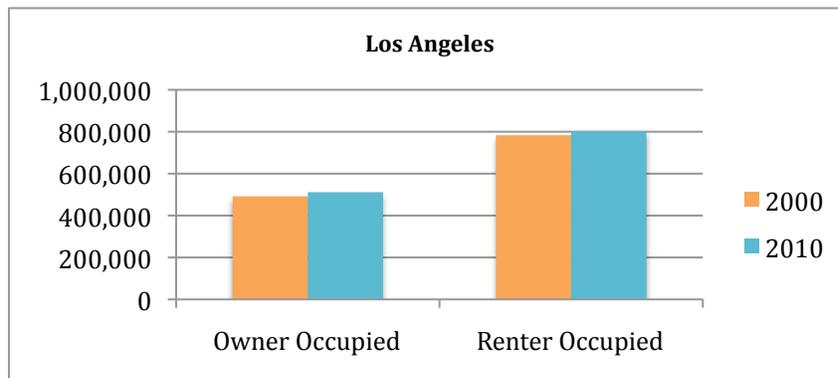


Figure 11 Los Angeles saw an increase in renter occupied units between 2000 and 2010 and also features more renter occupied units in the city as a whole.

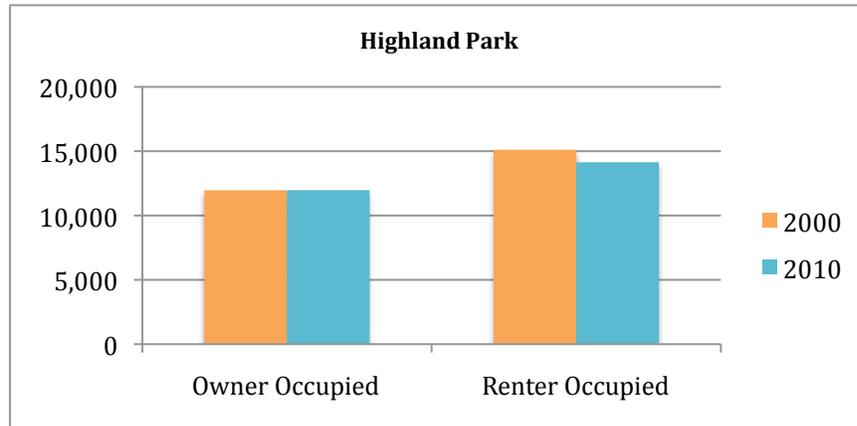


Figure 12 Changes in renter and owner occupied housing in Highland Park have shown decreases in renter occupied units between the years 2000 and 2010- one of several indications that the area is gentrifying (US Census 2000 and 2010).

Luxury Housing

In 2014, Highland Park began to see a million dollar housing boom. Several homes were sold for over \$1 million in 2014, all with stunning views of the neighborhood from the top of various hills. The homes have all been transformed and renovated from since their previous purchase and are reportedly selling to “Westiders moving into the area with lots of money to throw around” (Barragan 2014). Over 5 homes have been sold for over \$1 million in Highland Park and all at significantly over the asking price. This fulfills Grant’s last specification for housing changes: luxury homes.



Figure 13 A home on Rangeview Ave that sold for \$1.048 million, compared to its previous price of \$565,000 (Redfin)

Land Use

Grant’s third gentrification specification is land use. He claims gentrifying neighborhoods will see “a decline in industrial uses, an increase in office or multimedia uses, the development of live-

work “lofts” and high-end housing, retail, and restaurants” (2014). Highland Park fits this bill the most in its development of high-end housing, retail and restaurants. Within the past 7 years, York Boulevard has seen a drastic change in the types of retail and restaurants along the Boulevard. The physical changes on York make it hard to contest the existence of gentrification in Highland Park. York’s businesses, both old and new, are experiencing face-lifts as most businesses adjust to the new popular demands. The boulevard looks nothing like it did even 2 years ago (Figure 14).



Figure 14 Highland Park’s York Boulevard’s shops, old and new, are experiencing face-lifts and new ownership as the area gentrifies. These photos show the changes in businesses between the years of 2011 and 2013 (Solis 2013).

Simultaneously, Los Angeles is currently undergoing a process of rezoning and Highland Park is being overlooked for Historical Preservation Zones, which makes it more susceptible for change.

New Businesses

Talking to Steve Jones, a man who has flipped over 50 homes in Highland Park, he might say the change in Highland Park began with Café de Leche, the popular coffee shop on the corner of York Boulevard and Ave 50. In fact, he claims gentrification often begins with what he calls a “stake in the ground,” such as a coffee shop or a vintage store, that will encourage other shops to do business nearby and residents to live in close proximity. Taking this opinion into consideration, it appears there may be some truth to this statement.

Since the establishment of Café de Leche in 2008, over 30 new shops and restaurants have opened up within a three-block stretch of the café. Measuring the stretch of York from Ave 50 down to Ave 53, artisan ice cream, a yoga studio, two sandwich shops, an e-cigarette shop, several vintage clothing stores, and a record store have all opened their doors to passersby. Additionally, the neighborhood still has more to come. The long vacant Verdugo Pet Shop recently sold to the owner of a restaurant in Glendale called *Recess*, a Californian-meets-Mediterranean comfort food restaurant with a baja burrito featured as the cheapest entrée on the menu at a whopping \$16. The restaurant plans to expose the building's bow truss ceiling in the interior and have a back patio. They will have an open kitchen, full bar, and takeout counter (Hermann 2014).



Figure 15 Artist rendering of what will become Recess #2 (Hermann 2014)

Culture and Character

Grant defines a change in culture and character as “new ideas about what is desirable and attractive, including standards for architecture, landscaping, public behavior, noise, and nuisance” (2014). These sorts of changes are indicative of gentrification as noise complaints are often used as racial profiling tactics, which often occurs with gentrification as racial/ethnic demographics change (Davis, 2000). In Highland Park, a change in culture and character is almost palpable. In fact, Maria

Sanchez¹, a third generation Highland Park resident, will be the first one to say something about the cultural change. Sanchez told me, “I think there’s some cultural tension that comes with gentrification.”

“Our living styles are different,” said Sanchez as she talked about her and her new neighbors on the street, “Our next-door neighbors like to have parties with a banda band and it’s really loud. But culturally, and I mean not ethnically culturally, but *Highland Park culturally*, we don’t call the cops... According to the way I grew up, you just don’t call the cops. You go over there if it’s three or four in the morning and tell them to stop, but you don’t need to call the cops. But suddenly, somebody’s been calling the cops.” Sanchez says the long-time residents of the block are pointing to the new white couple that moved into a house on the street. But the changes in culture reach beyond calling cops on parties. Sanchez also lamented the notable decrease of bouncy houses on front lawns. Growing up, she always saw large bouncy houses in front of houses for birthday parties and now, she hardly ever sees them at all. Sanchez, however, was not the only person I interviewed who mentioned a change in the Highland Park culture, or what some called, “the Highland Park way.”

Rebecca Morales², the owner of a small art studio in Highland Park, explicitly mentioned the feeling of change in culture. “I think it’s a cultural difference,” she noted of the change in atmosphere on York Boulevard. She says Highland Park has more of a “country feel” and is starkly difference from the city mentality of many of the people moving into the area. Of Highland Park she says, “People here still say hi to each other. But... I was walking down the street and there were these people walking toward me and I looked at their faces, and they didn’t look at me. Not at all. I didn’t even exist. And I thought, wow, those are the new people moving into Highland Park.” Morales believes it is important for newcomers to be “educated on the Highland Park way.” The “Highland

¹ Subject requested to remain anonymous; a pseudonym is used for the purpose of this report

² Subject requested to remain anonymous; a pseudonym is used for the purpose of this report.

Park way” for Morales is the simple act of saying hello upon encounter, whether it be on the street or in a store. For John Nese, the owner of Galco’s Soda Pop Shop, the oldest business on York Boulevard, and perhaps the greatest resource on the history of Highland Park and Los Angeles in general, the “Highland Park way” is the American way, with the idea of “you have a problem, boy, I’m going to help you, I’m going to make sure you make it.” Nese says, “That’s the way Highland Park was, it’s been that way from the very beginning. But now it’s changing.”

With this significant change in culture, it is unsurprising that many people now feel unwelcome in Highland Park. Some residents discuss the sudden feeling of an us vs. them mentality, where it feels as if some groups are more welcome than others and neither group wants to interact with the other. However, this is unsurprising. For so many people, gentrification is a very personal issue and it becomes easy to blame a group of people or one person for these sorts of changes. The streets that have been home for so long suddenly do not feel familiar. Tania Pineda-Camacho, a born and raised Highland Park resident who also attended Occidental College, told me that it is more common for her to hear about a new restaurant on York Boulevard from another friend who read about it online rather than for her to notice it on her daily commute to work. Often confused about the desire of her friends to meet her two blocks from her house, she feels lost in the changes. How can she feel like Highland Park is home if she’s never heard of (or been able to pronounce) Schodorf’s? The community is rapidly changing in more than just demographics and home values, it is changing in its culture and character. On the other hand, Steve Jones argues that the Latino culture is so embedded in the development of Highland Park, that it could never really leave the area. Rather, he believes the neighborhood will become an interesting blend of cultures, much like communities in New York. The changes in Highland Park and the way people feel about them are complex and difficult to grasp, however it is undeniable that the culture and character of the neighborhood is

changing. This can be seen mostly in the resident interviews I conducted, which will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

Part 5: “It Definitely Feels as if it’s Happening *to You*”: Personal Stories from Highland Park

Betty Avila leaned over the table told me in frustration, “it definitely feels as if it’s happening *to you*” as we sat at a table in the Coffee Table in Eagle Rock. Avila is a young Latina who works for Multicultural Communities for Mobility, an organization that brings together minority cyclists in the Northeast Los Angeles area. While she is not exactly a native to Highland Park, she considers told me that she has always considered Highland Park home because she never saw boundaries while she was growing up, she simply saw Northeast Los Angeles. Born and raised in Northeast Los Angeles, Avila had grown used to Northeast Los Angeles being one big neighborhood, but now she admits that she can barely recognize the area anymore and she’s not the only one who feels like the changes are out of her control. In fact, one long-time business owner told me that he felt the area was being targeted for change by developers who “own politicians.” As a result, the feeling of helplessness was a common theme in interviews as people admitted to feeling victimized by the changes they never asked for. Naturally, a common theme that emerged from this feeling of victimization was that of no longer feeling at home. Some of this emerges from racism that has seemed more prevalent recently, whether it be in the form of microaggressions or blatant accusations. Nine of the fifteen of the people I interviewed (all but two of the people of color) had stories of racism and microaggressions. However, this does not only apply to people of color. Since gentrification is typically associated with White hipsters, White residents wonder how they are being received. As a new White resident in Highland Park, Zachary Hoover is happy to feel welcome on his own block. Most of the neighbors on the block have been there for a significant amount of time and were warm and welcoming to Hoover and his wife. However, he wonders how people view him when he’s at Café de Leche. He asked me,

“am I a gentrifier? What does that mean?” Highland Park’s gentrification and the conversations about it have created what feels like a two-sided issue, where each side feels that the other is judging them. In my own experience, I realized that I had become anxious when I walked into Café de Leche or Berry Bowl. Would I be seen as a gentrifier? Would long-time residents lose trust in me for spending time in these businesses and therefore refuse to be interviewed?

After conducting 15 interviews with people associated with Highland Park, several different themes emerged. The psychological effects of gentrification, increased homelessness, lack of trust in politicians and developers, a sense of helplessness, the creation of an “us vs them” mentality, and affordability were all addressed within the course of a conversation with the subjects. For developers, a common theme was the idea of being the “first” to develop the area and take a chance on making an investment, and debates over cultural loss. The stories shared by those I had the chance to speak with demonstrated the changing culture and character of the neighborhood highlighted by Grant (2014).

Psychological Effects: Historical Trauma

Although not explicitly mentioned in interviews, it is apparent that historical trauma is a common factor in the experiences of long-term residents. The concept of historical trauma has been introduced by recent studies in public health to describe a particular trauma that passes through generations within communities who have experienced large-scale catastrophic events, or “historical unresolved grief” (Brave Heart 1998, Mohatt 2014, and Estrada 2009). The concept was first utilized to describe the condition of Nazi Holocaust survivors, but has since been utilized to understand communities of African Americans and Native Americans. In particular, this concept applies to those who have experienced community-level collective loss, but has yet to be applied to communities displaced by gentrification.

Raúl Homero Villa argues, “the experience of being displaced in multiple ways from a perceived homeland has been an essential element of Chicanos’ social identity in this country” (2000). Looking at the relatively recent history of Chavez Ravine and Dodger Stadium, it comes as no surprise that the predominately Latino population of Highland Park would have strong feelings against the “revitalization” project in Highland Park. Latinos in Los Angeles carry with them a history of being overlooked, undermined, and exploited and carry those heavy memories with them. In Highland Park, the new developments and displacement have instilled strong feelings of animosity toward newcomers and new businesses. Long-time residents and business owners are hesitant when talking about revitalization and what that could mean for them.

Psychological Effects: Feeling Unwelcome

Gentrification reaches far further than physical displacement. In Highland Park, long-time residents have asked new storeowners the questions “can I come in?” before entering due to feeling unwelcome (Medina 2013 and Blackmore 2014). Many residents, such as Melissa Uribe Ochoa, feel unwelcome walking down the streets they grew up on. Ochoa feels uncomfortable walking down York because of the looks she receives when wearing her native dress, a new experience for a life-long resident. Ochoa has been dressing that way her whole life and used to receive warm hellos, but now feels unwelcome in her clothes in her own home. She feels the new stores are not meant for her or any of her friends or family in the area, despite them having lived there for decades.

Rebecca Morales, owner of a small art studio in Highland Park, was excited about the new store not far from her studio that seemed to have exactly her style of clothing in the windows. Upon entering the store, she noticed two older white women talking to the owner of the store at the counter. Morales looked at the different merchandise and when she was about done walking around the store, the two white women left with polite goodbyes from the owner of the store and her husband. Morales

expected a similar situation, but was not acknowledged. Soon after, two younger blonde women walked into the shop and were cheerfully greeted, offered assistance, and held a lengthy conversation with the owner. Morales did not even receive a goodbye when she left the store. “Then you start *feeling* color in a way I didn’t before” she told me. Unfortunately, Morales is not the only one. Yim Tam, a teacher at Franklin High School, says she feels she’s not “the type of customer [the new business owners] are looking for.”

Tam is well-known for her dedication to the community and she works hard to have her students invest in the community as well. In preparation for a class project where Tam’s students would take a walking tour of York and talk to new business owners, she spent a day on her own walking into the new businesses along the boulevard to inform the owners of what she was hoping to do. She walked into several stores where her existence was barely acknowledged. She felt that if she had been blonde and younger, employees and owners would have jumped at the opportunity to talk to her. However, her inability to fit that demographic made her feel unwelcome in the stores. Furthermore, upon informing employees or business owners that she was a teacher at Franklin High School, the newcomers admitted that they hadn’t even heard of Franklin High School before, despite the school being less than a 5 minute drive from Cafe de Leche and other new businesses on York. For Tam, who is used to receiving warm welcomes from anyone familiar with FHS, this was representative of the changes in Highland Park and the change in the culture. The neighborhood now felt detached and unaware. But feeling unwelcome goes beyond just businesses.

Cindy and Wendy Dueñas, young Latina residents of Highland Park, moved into Highland Park about two and a half years ago, drawn to the neighborhood because of its affordable housing. Outside of their apartment, they have overheard their property manager say things like “this is why I don’t like Mexicans” while walking away from a conversation. Additionally, the Dueñas sisters are

now looking for a new place to live as Highland Park becomes unaffordable for them. Within two months, rent for their building increased by over \$400. The residents who are able to stay in Highland Park are forced to feel like outsiders within their own neighborhood and as other adjacent neighborhoods become too expensive, the culture of Highland Park continues to change and looks less like home every day.

Psychological Effects: Imposter Syndrome

Two storeowners in two separate neighborhoods of Los Angeles experiencing the changes of gentrification are frequently asked the question; “Can I come in?” from long-time residents of the areas (Medina 2013 and Blackmore 2014). The funny thing is that both Edmundo Rodriguez and Armando de La Torre, owners of Elsa’s Bakery (Highland Park) and Guisados (Boyle Heights) respectively, only have façades similar to the new businesses, but have familiar food inside. Both the café and restaurant serve traditional food familiar to long-time residents of the neighborhood and haven’t necessarily “redefined” the food either. De La Torre claims that when he first opened Guisados in Boyle Heights, locals would ask him if they could come in if they weren’t white. With the changes in businesses, long-time residents hesitate to venture into new storefronts in their neighborhoods, even if the business provides services similar to those traditionally in the neighborhood. This is yet another effect of gentrification- the feeling of being an outsider within one’s own neighborhood.

Homelessness

John Nese, the owner of Galco’s Soda Pop Shop, the oldest business on York Boulevard, describes the recent changes as detrimental specifically because of the increase in homelessness. Nese claims there has never been as much visible homelessness in the history of Highland Park. The increased rental prices of apartments and homes in Highland Park have led to a sharp increase in homelessness along the Arroyo Seco. According to the North East Los Angeles Alliance, 70% of the

homeless along the Arroyo Seco are from Northeast Los Angeles. Entire families are finding themselves without a place to sleep because of the significant rent increases in the area. One building on Avenue 64 and Garvanza has seen an increase of over \$400 in three months, which has forced many to find a new place to live (Cindy and Wendy Dueñas interview). However, this problem is being manifested in different ways along the region. While some residents find themselves suddenly homeless, others find themselves forced to move to another neighborhood in search of more affordable housing.

Affordability

Ironically, people are moving into Highland Park because of its impressive affordability in comparison to other Northeast LA neighborhoods and long-time residents are moving out because of its new lack of affordability for them. Within the Northeast LA area, Glassell Park, Eagle Rock, and Silver Lake have received mass publicity for their recent revitalization- all three have been associated with the issue of gentrification for the past decade. Every person I interviewed discussed the affordability of Highland Park, whether it was a long-time residents whose family initially moved in because of cheap housing prices, or a new resident who moved in because of its much cheaper housing prices as compared to Eagle Rock, Silver Lake and Echo Park. Zachary Hoover, an organizer for LA Voice, moved to Highland Park with his wife because of the affordability of the area as compared to their previous neighborhood of Eagle Rock. However, the move wasn't easy. Other buyers outbid them 9 times and in their eight month long search for homes in the neighborhood, prices rose 12%. The Dueñas sisters have a similar story. The sisters moved into Highland Park due to its affordability in comparison to the rapidly increasing prices in Hollywood and having been living in a Highland Park apartment with their mother for the past two and half years. The stories of these two families moving into Highland Park is representative of the level of affordability that

Highland Park provided for a variety of groups prior to its recent spike in both home values and rent. As home values rise all over the City of Los Angeles, it is becoming more and more difficult to find an affordable home within the city and within close enough proximity to take advantage of it.

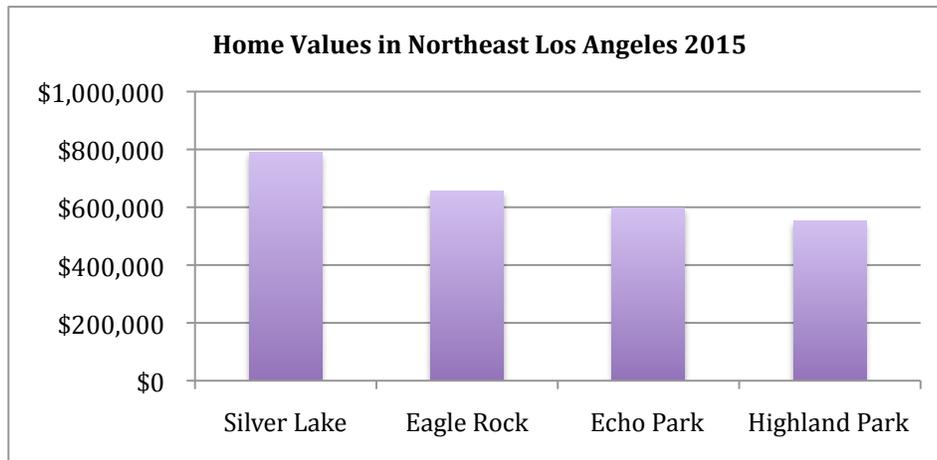


Figure 16 Highland Park is significantly more affordable in comparison to its neighbors where many of Highland Park's new residents are coming from (Zillow.com March 2015)

Us vs Them

On January 8, 2015 in the back room of Ave 50 Art Studio, the Northeast Los Angeles Alliance held an event they titled “There’s No Place Like Home.” The event aimed to provide a safe space for community members to talk about the issue of gentrification and sparked this conversation by beginning the event with a screening of the film *Flag Wars*, a documentary about two historically oppressed groups in Columbus, Ohio that struggle over the issue of gentrification. The event had a relatively large turnout, filling all the chairs in the studio for the screening and some attendees even sat on the floor due to lack of available seating. Most of the attending community members could not stay for very long, but those who could remained to have conversation about the film afterwards.

The post-film discussion allowed people to express their feelings about gentrification and became a very empowering space because people felt they were not alone in what was happening. Those who remained for this discussion rearranged their seats to form a large circle and discuss the film and their own feelings on the issue in Highland Park. One of the more memorable moments was

the strong response to an idea I shared with the group. Group moderators had asked if anyone wanted to share what they thought about the film. After several people shared their opinions, I raised my hand and shared that I noticed that the groups in the movie had few conversations with each other and a lot of conversations *about* each other. To me, it appeared the process of gentrification in this situation created an “us and them” conflict and I asked the group if they thought it would be possible to combat that process in Highland Park, using an example of another small neighborhood I had heard about that approached the issue of gentrification by inviting new neighbors to the homes of long-time residents for dinner and educating them on the history of the neighborhood. Although several people nodded and snapped in agreement with the idea of blending the two communities of people in Highland Park, not everyone thought it was a good idea.

One woman agreed it was a “nice idea,” but angrily expressed that she and her family didn’t have the time to invite “those people” into her house, not that she wanted “those people” in her home anyways. Another woman echoed her sentiment afterwards, stating that she also did not want “those people” in her home when they were doing so much harm to the neighborhood. Both responses earned a lot snaps of support from the rest of the people in attendance. Suddenly, it felt like the “us and them” conflict that I noticed in the film was not specific to Columbus, Ohio. In the back room of Ave 50 Studio, I realized Highland Park was undergoing its own us and them conflict where long-time residents and new residents saw each other as the problem, but refused to talk about it.

Betty Avila, a lifetime resident of the Northeast Los Angeles area, admits that she initially thought of gentrification as, “I’m the victim, they’re the bad people, they’re doing things to me and they don’t care” but says she’s realized that the definition is much more nuanced than that. “While some people are coming here because it’s a cool place to live, I think some people started coming here because it was an ok neighborhood they could afford.” Avila can understand why she initially

thought of herself as the victim, however. She asked me if I had taken the time to look through the comments on articles about the changes in Highland Park, then explained, “it’s a very heated, very passionate dialogue. But also sometimes I think really blinded. There’s a lot of “me vs them,” “you’re one of them...” I think it’s hard for folks to have a conversation that’s really practical when both sides are defending their right to be here.”

John Nese is a great example of someone who is defending his right to be in the neighborhood. Nese says when “those people” come into the area, they begin to bring a group of people who are “strictly predators.” Nese grew up in Highland Park and currently owns and runs the neighborhood’s oldest business. Having grown up in Highland Park, Nese saw the White flight in the 1970s and the transformation of the area since then. Nese’s personal experiences with developers have taught him that this sort of growth in Highland Park leads to the influx of people who plan to invest solely to make money and no longer care about the neighborhood. Miguel Ramos, a lifetime resident of Highland Park and organizer for both the NELA Alliance and Multicultural Communities for Mobility, expressed his frustration with this conflict, “It’s me or you, it’s never together. It’s never us.” For so many people, gentrification in Highland Park is an us and them issue, where “them” is always the problem, but “us” is never the solution.

The changes have even instigated an “us and them” mentality for some developers in Highland Park. Rudy Martinez calls other developers “poachers” due to his experiences meeting developers who flip homes in one neighborhood until they can no longer profit, then move onto the next neighborhood that might make them some money. Martinez differentiates himself from these “poachers” with his own connection to the neighborhood. An Echo Park native, Martinez found himself priced out of a Northeast Los Angeles neighborhood and now feels personally invested and attached to the improvements in Highland Park and the surrounding areas. He points to other

developers who leave a neighborhood once they have benefitted as much as possible and asserts, “I was one of the pioneers [of Highland Park,] but I am *still here*. I live here.” Martinez lives in Eagle Rock and has no plans to move any time soon. He wants to see the changes continue in Highland Park for his children and plans on continuing to help see the changes through long after the “poachers” have left.

Lack of Trust

Nese compares the current situation of the people in Highland Park to “sheep being led to slaughter.” He, like several other people I interviewed, expressed a lack of trust in the developers and politicians during our conversation. He expressed frustration with the way City Council members have handled community change and claimed that he believed it to be “less than ideal,” in that Nese has felt uninformed about changes or that he has only been given part of the story. Yet the community’s lack of trust lies in more than just the elected officials. Rebecca Morales claims, “it’s not the hipsters who are the problem, it’s the developers.”

Community members feel developers are in the area solely to make money and not to interact with the people. Morales points to the fences that characterize the new houses as an example of developers saying “we’re here for the house, not to mingle.” These fences, called “hipster fences” by community members, are tall-slatted wood fences that do not allow a passer-by even a glance at the front of the house. Jessica Ceballos, who spent her entire childhood in Highland Park, expresses her frustration with the new changes. She believes developers have looked at Highland Park as potential profit and have completely neglected the culture in their development efforts. “Boyle Heights is Disneyland and Highland Park is Epcot Center, but where is the culture?” she asked me. Ceballos, much like the other long-time residents I talked to, sees the developments in Highland Park as trivial

improvements when compared to the destruction of their culture and of what Highland Park used to be.

Debates Over Cultural Loss

Developers, on the other hand, would disagree with long-time residents about cultural destruction. The developers I interviewed both disagreed with the word “gentrification” for the negative connotations often associated with the word. Steve Jones, a more well known flipper of homes in Highland Park, prefers the word “transformation” because, he claims, “that’s what it is.”

“That’s what is happening,” Jones told me, “the neighborhood is transforming, we don’t need to call it gentrification.” Jones refuses to use the word gentrification because he believes the changes in Highland Park to be positive and does not want to associate what is happening with any sort of negative process. This is not surprising in light of the attitudes long-time residents have toward developers. But Jones is not the only home flipper who prefers to use a euphemism for gentrification.

Rudy Martinez was the host of *Flip This Neighborhood*, where he was featured flipping homes in Northeast Los Angeles, for four TV seasons, and prefers the word “rebirth,” also claiming “that’s what it is.” Martinez does not believe that people are being evicted from homes or purposely displaced. He, just like Jones, believes the changes in the neighborhood are the result of a lot of market forces at work, as people get pushed out of more expensive neighborhoods, they have to find other areas nearby. In fact, both see the changes in the neighborhood as a positive improvement. Jones believes the culture in Highland Park to be so imbedded in its identity that it will not disappear, in fact, his favorite part of Highland Park at the moment is the mixture of cultures, claiming pride in the “disparities of culture, race, wealth, that make it vibrant.” Martinez says the influx of different people has changed the way the schools operate and the safety on the streets. Furthermore, he thinks the new businesses offer opportunities to young residents through job opportunities that may help

children stay out of trouble. He acknowledges, however, that to achieve complete “rebirth” of an area, some people “need to be displaced.” Martinez says those that need to be displaced are “the cancer of these communities,” when they participate in gang culture and refuse to take care of their property. Both Jones and Martinez believe the changes are significantly improving the community and made no mention of any sort of “us vs them” mentality.

Claims to Gentrification Fame

Another thing Martinez and Jones have in common is their claim to Highland Park. Both men told me “I was the first” when they talked about the changes that occurred in the neighborhood, insisting that their personal investment in Highland Park is what sparked the changes. Martinez opened Marty’s Bar on York Boulevard in conjunction with The York and Johnny’s and feels that the three bars truly instigated change in the area. Maybe he’s not wrong. Marty’s, Johnny’s, and the York all opened a year before Café de Leche and were met positively by the community. In fact, The York and Johnny’s are still standing on the boulevard and are filled with people every night of the week.

A year later, Café de Leche opened its doors and eventually became Jones’ number one marketing tool for homes in the area. Jones says “the coffee shop was kind of ground zero for the whole thing.” Upon reflecting on the changes in Highland Park and its current reputation, Jones said, “it’s nice to know I had something to do with it,” a statement Martinez almost said verbatim himself a month later when I spoke with him.

Part 6: The Complexities of Change

Throughout the course of my interviews, it became clear that gentrification is much more nuanced than a two-sided issue, as Avila mentioned in her interview. People I interviewed found themselves struggling to decide how they felt about the changes. Avila herself admitted that as much as she wanted to hate one of the new bars on Figueroa Boulevard, the friendly Latino staff and the

nice atmosphere of the bar continuously make it hard for her to hate it. During an interview with a long-time resident Aislynn Guzman, I was pointed to an auto shop I had never thought too much about. “See that auto shop?” she asked me, “It used to be a crack shop... and now they’re trying to do something about it. It looks nice, they’ve remodeled.” Tania Pineda-Camacho says she feels as if someone thought specifically of her when they began to open bars on York around the time she turned 21. However, Avila, Guzman, and Pineda-Camacho are all young Latinas in their twenties, the age group all the new businesses in Highland Park are specifically trying to cater to. Maria Sanchez is a mother with two children who grew up in Highland Park and told me that she could not figure out how she was possibly benefitting from the changes.

A recent opinion article in the *New York Times* by Hector Tobar argued that in “Highland Park, as in other Latino barrios of Los Angeles, gentrification has produced an undeniable but little appreciated side effect: the end of decades of de facto racial segregation” (2015). Just looking at Highland Park, it is easy to see where Tobar would get this idea. For example, as part of Councilmember Jose Huizar’s re-election campaign, York Boulevard recently closed to traffic for a street fair to celebrate the grand opening of the new park on York Boulevard and Avenue 50. Councilmember Jose Huizar cut the ribbon for the new park, the Highland Park Neighborhood Council had its own table to mingle with residents, and businesses from all over Highland Park had tables where they sold merchandise and food. The event, aside from the art walk, was the first that truly allowed all residents, old and new, to mingle and see what Highland Park has to offer them. While the event seemed to prove the integration of the neighborhood, trends in other cities prove that neighborhoods that undergo rapid change in the same way as Highland Park quickly segregate within a number of years due to displacement (Adler, 2015). Further, integration stops beyond the variety of people on the street. A series of studies showed that the integration assumed to come with

gentrification stops at the school level as newcomers often opt out of the local public school system (Hannah-Jones 2015). There are several arguments that separate the community on gentrification and whether or not it is entirely beneficial; some of those arguments are outlined in this section of this project.

Owner's Rights vs Renter's Rights

There are both owner's and renter's rights laws in place to ensure justice for both groups, but which group's rights come first? If a family has been living in a home for decades and is suddenly handed an eviction notice, is that fair? But, what if the family did not take care of the home and the owner wants a new tenant who they know will take care of the property? The debate is difficult and ongoing. It is a question to consider in gentrification debates.

Blending of Cultures

Highland Park is one of very few places I am aware of that allows me to buy \$1 tacos from a taco truck and a \$5 coffee within ten feet of each other on a regular basis. Steve Jones probably described it best- Highland Park is in an interesting stage of transition where neither one nor another culture is currently dominant, they're both struggling to find a place to thrive. Highland Park is currently a vibrant mix of cultures with potential to learn from each other. Rudy Martinez believes this new change is important for long-time residents in that it provides new opportunities for work and take pride in the community in a whole new way. Several new businesses have hired local residents, but others, such as Town Pizza, have not hired anyone from the area. Despite the inevitable displacement that has come with these neighborhood improvements, the area maintains a large population of lower-income Latino residents who could potentially benefit from all the changes along York and the rest of Highland Park. Highland Park is in a powerful moment of transition that, if managed correctly, could be beneficial to all the people involved.

Part 7: “Well, El Sereno and Boyle Heights Are Looking Pretty Good”: Which Neighborhoods Could Be Next?

As Highland Park’s property values and rents increase, people are beginning to move out of the area and into other adjacent areas that have lower property values. In recent months, several neighborhoods have been identified as potential sites for future gentrification by developers interviewed for this project and by news sources such as the *Los Angeles Times*. Boyle Heights, Lincoln Heights, and El Sereno are just three of the neighborhoods mentioned by both Steve Jones and Rudy Martinez. These areas are within close proximity to Highland Park and other gentrified neighborhoods such as Silver Lake and Echo Park. Furthermore, these neighborhoods find themselves situated near the city center and have remarkably low median home sale values in comparison to Highland Park.

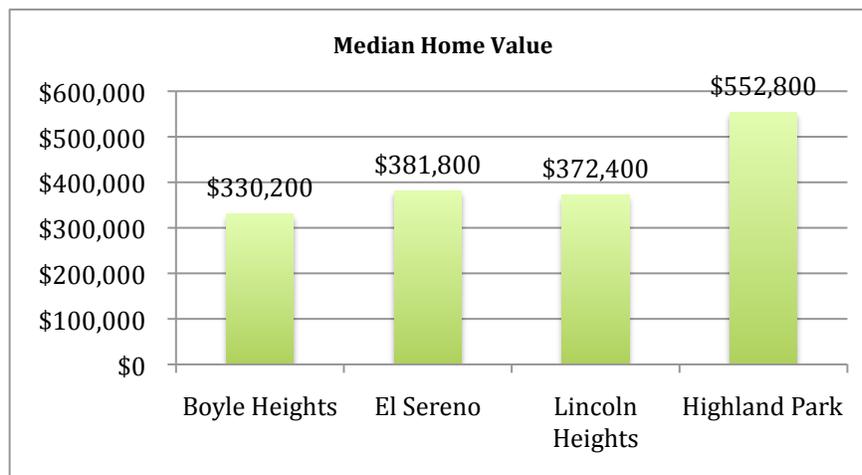


Figure 17 Median home values for other neighborhoods identified as potential sites of future gentrification demonstrate this potential in their remarkably low median home values (Zillow.com March 2015)

Boyle Heights – Gentrification Hot Spot for 2015?

Boyle Heights began 2015 with a large banner strung above Mariachi Plaza reading “Ya Basta! Boyle Heights says no to gentrification!” (The Eastsider LA 2015). In 2014, Adaptive Realty, a real estate business focused on Boyle Heights, printed fliers that read “Why Rent Downtown When You Can Own in Boyle Heights?” (Barragan 2014). The neighborhood has been a potential site for

gentrification for a long time now, but community organizations such as East LA Community Corporation and Union de Vecinos have fought against the potential. The community's residents are perhaps the most reactive of most of the Northeast Los Angeles areas and have pushed back against ideas to destroy Mariachi Plaza in order to build medical offices and against the destruction and reuse of the Sears Tower (Gross, 2015). A lot of this comes from community organizations and from the new phenomenon of *gentefication*.

Gentefication is the process of “more well-to-do and younger Mexican-Americans returning to the neighborhoods their parents fled” (Medina, 2013). With this phenomenon, a neighborhood maintains much of its culture, but still pushes out a lot of lower-income residents by increasing property values. Interestingly, Boyle Heights is the only neighborhood associated with gentefication so far. Both Jones and Martinez had never heard of the term before, however both were quick to name the area as the next for their housing projects. Both men have begun investing in some of the homes in the area and anticipate spillover from Highland Park's success.

Lincoln Heights

Lincoln Heights expects to open a deli and bottle shop by the end of April of 2015 called *The Heights* (Elliott 2015). The deli shop is not the first business to spark talks of gentrification in the neighborhood. The Corn Man, a popular food stand in the neighborhood, and La Chuperia, a craft beer and torta shop, have ignited conversations about the changes and brought in a new population of customers to the area (Elliott 2015). Median income for the neighborhood increased from \$30,579 to \$33,019 from 2008 to 2012 (Sagha 2014). The neighborhood is adjacent to Highland Park and may see some of the overflow from the area begin to change the area.



Figure 18 The new deli and bottle shop expected to open in Lincoln Heights by the end of April (Elliott 2015)

El Sereno

Councilmember Huizar proposed the implementation of parklets in Highland Park on York Boulevard and in El Sereno on Huntington Drive as part of his Living Streets LA initiative (livingstreetsla.org). While York's parklet has been successful in its implementation, Huntington Dr's new parklet is often vacant with plants that did not live very long after being planted. This failure could be a result of many things, but is mostly the result of the wide street. Huntington Drive, first of all, has not yet seen an influx of new business that would attract walkers along the street and, furthermore, does not meet general living streets expectations. Living streets typically cater to the pedestrian and cyclist, curb traffic, and are usually narrow enough that a person could yell across the street to a friend and be heard (livingstreetsla.org). Huntington Dr does not fulfill any of those requirements. The parklet is relatively neglected and even an eyesore.

As a resident of El Sereno, I find it hard to believe that any sorts of changes are occurring in my neighborhood so far. The moment I find a new coffee shop, I may change my mind because I do think El Sereno would be an ideal target for gentrification due to its affordability and proximity to

Downtown Los Angeles, but I do not believe the movement eastward has hit this neighborhood yet. Interestingly, what I found during this research process was that a few of the people I talked to told me about friends that had just moved into El Sereno because of the lack of affordability of Highland Park. Because many people wanting to return to Highland Park are priced out, they're finding themselves in El Sereno, a similar East Los Angeles neighborhood adjacent to Highland Park within close proximity to Downtown Los Angeles and Pasadena. Two interviewees told me of their plans to move to El Sereno or of several friends from Highland Park who had just moved there, so El Sereno could potentially be the next space for gentrification as second and third generation Chicanos are pushed out of Highland Park eastward and establish their own communities.

The area already has a group fighting against gentrification in response to the changes occurring in Highland Park and Lincoln Heights. Lincoln Heights' potential for change places El Sereno in a difficult spot since the two neighborhoods touch. Both Martinez and Jones identified El Sereno as a potential future site for investment, but neither have current investments in the neighborhood. It is a neighborhood to watch, but should be behind both Boyle Heights and Lincoln Heights on the priority list.

Part 8: Strategies for Positive Change

Unfortunately, there is no singular realistic solution for the issue of gentrification. As this paper has demonstrated, gentrification does not solely affect one part of a neighborhood, but rather has overarching effects for the entire neighborhood and those adjacent to it. Unfortunately, the City of Los Angeles also puts complications on policy solutions. For example, one of the more common suggestions to combat the issue of displacement that comes along with gentrification is the implementation of inclusionary zoning (Rose 2001). Inclusionary zoning requires developers to offer a certain percentage of housing at below-market rents and sales prices and has been implemented in

several cities across the nation (lahd.lacity.org). In fact, inclusionary zoning was one of the largest strategies pushed by the Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn (Rose 2001). The City of Los Angeles, however, has a complicated history with this solution.

A motion to implement inclusionary housing, or zoning, in Los Angeles was proposed by five different councilmembers in 2004. The motion defined inclusionary housing as a “program that either requires or encourages developers of market rate housing to also provide a given number of units at below-market rents or sales prices” (lahd.lacity.org). The committee defined these “below-market rents and sales prices” as affordable housing, which means these units would provide homes to households earning 30%, 50%, 80% and 120% of area median income (lahd.lacity.org). This inclusionary zoning policy would have addressed the issue of affordable housing citywide, but was disallowed in court (Arturo Chavez). However, this was not LA’s first attempt at policy mandating affordable housing considerations for developers. In previous efforts to create similar policy, Los Angeles developed the Central City West specific plan for an area west of the Harbor Freeway near downtown LA (Shigley 2009). This plan required developers to set aside 15% of their projects that contained more than 10 units for affordable housing. Rents for those units were required to be affordable for the life of project or 30 years, whichever was greater; however, in 2004 Geoff Palmer asked the city to waive this condition when he began to build in this area (Shigley 2009). The City denied his request, but Palmer sued in response, arguing that the plan violated the Costa-Hawkins Act. In 2009, the California Court of Appeal for the Second Appellate District officially sided with Palmer. The *Palmer* decision of 2009 stated that inclusionary zoning was directly in conflict with a provision of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act of 1995, a state law which does not prohibit local governments from adopting rent-control policies, but rather establishes “vacancy decontrol” (Shigley 2009). Vacancy decontrol allows landlords to set the new rental price when a unit becomes

vacant; yet the Costa-Hawkins Act specifically grants all landlords the right to set the initial rental rate for new housing units. Therefore, with the ruling for *Palmer*, inclusionary zoning was deemed illegal in the City of Los Angeles and had statewide implications. Since the Costa-Hawkins Act is a state law, *Palmer* made it so that local governments throughout the state no longer had the power to implement inclusionary zoning. In response, California Assembly Bill 1229 was drafted, aiming to restore the power of local governments to enforce inclusionary zoning, but Governor Jerry Brown vetoed the bill in 2013 (Preston 2013). The city's history with inclusionary zoning makes it an impossible solution for the housing crisis in Los Angeles. Thus, without this policy, it seems that the first step to combat displacement would be the simple maintenance of current affordable housing units. However, this, too, is complicated in Los Angeles.

Affordable Housing Crisis

The City of LA has over 1.42 million housing units, with 62% of those being multi-family homes (about 880,581 units) and the other 38% being reserved as single-family housing (HCIDLA Affordable Housing Database 2014). Of those 880,581, only 8% (almost 69,000 units) are affordable. Citywide, 15,737 of those multi-family affordable units are “at-risk.” At-risk affordable housing is housing that “has received a type of government assistance or incentive under a federal, state, and/or local program (or a combination)” and whose rental restrictions will terminate and/or can be converted within 5 years (Los Angeles Department of Housing). This usually occurs through prepayment or maturity of federally insured mortgages and the expiration of covenants and use restrictions of City-funded projects (Los Angeles Department of Housing). According to a presentation given to City Council in 2015, over 5,500 units will no longer be affordable by the end of 2016 alone. By 2019, over 15,700 units will no longer be offered at affordable rates. If the city is

not proactive, there will be a severe loss in housing and those who currently occupy the at-risk units may have no place to live.

At-Risk Units by Council District			
Council District	Councilmember	Properties	Affordable Units
1	Cedillo	70	2,506
2	Krekorian	58	1,096
3	Blumenfield	10	936
4	LaBonge	12	607
5	Koretz	6	183
6	Martinez	18	987
7	Fuentes	17	786
8	Parks	54	1,031
9	Price	43	854
10	Wesson	49	1,571
11	Bonin	5	112
12	Englander	14	442
13	O'Farrell	61	2,089
14	Huizar	39	1,840
15	Buscaino	16	697
Total		472	15,737

Figure 19 Breakdown of at-risk units by Council District. CD1 has the most at risk, followed closely by CD 13 (LA Dept of Housing)

Los Angeles Rent Stabilization Ordinance (LARSO)

Los Angeles implemented the Los Angeles Rent Stabilization Ordinance in 1979 to provide rent control for dwelling units constructed prior to October 1, 1978 (lahd.lacity.org). This means tenants within a rent-controlled building may not experience an annual increase in rent more than 3% and must receive notice of the increase 30 days prior to its implementation (lahd.lacity.org). Furthermore, the ordinance restricts evictions in its requirement that landlords prove the reason for evicting tenants. However, single-family dwellings on a lot are exceptions to the ordinance, regardless of their year of construction (lahd.lacity.org).

Potential for Eviction, Despite LARSO

LARSO allows for evictions if the owner of the property should decide to move in. The owner must provide notice to the current tenant of the plans to move in and provide relocation assistance in the process. The highest probability for evictions in Los Angeles, however, comes through the Ellis

Act. The Ellis Act of 1996 allows property owners to remove all their properties from the rental market and evict all tenants (Mirabal 2009). Owners must give tenants first right of refusal if the unit is returned to the rental market, meaning previous tenants may get priority in returning to the housing, but the increase in rent often deters returners. Owners must pay \$4,500 to low-income tenants and \$3,000 to elderly or disabled tenants if evicted under the act (Mirabal 2009). According to Mirabal, the act was infrequently used until the recent onset of gentrification in San Francisco and is a possibility in Highland Park.

It is important to keep LA's restrictions on inclusionary zoning, its housing crisis, and rent control in mind when creating new policy solutions for the future. The rest of this section will focus upon the potential solutions that can be implemented in Los Angeles and potentially in other cities.

Creation of a Cultural Center

A significant fear for many of the people of Highland Park is the potential of cultural loss through the process of gentrification. As the streets begin to look increasingly unfamiliar, I spoke with several residents who wondered what this process would mean for the culture that has defined the neighborhood for so long. For this reason, I propose the creation of a cultural center in Highland Park that will serve as a preservation of neighborhood culture. The center would ideally hold events for both long-time and new residents to not only mingle, but also learn about the history behind the neighborhood of Highland Park and how it is currently defined. The Lummis House already partially serves as a tool for the history of the area and its programs could thus be expanded to perform more outreach in order to allow for greater understanding of Highland Park.

Mural Preservation

Highland Park has traditionally been an area influenced by art. The neighborhood features a number of murals that emerged out of the Chicano Movement of the 1960's and 70's and largely tells

the story of this period of time (KCET Departures). This period of time saw a significant shift in the population of Highland Park and the creation of Chicano culture in a neighborhood that was participating in the Walkouts and housing several of the Chicano activists who were essential to the movement. These murals are fundamental characteristics to the neighborhood and depict a history essential to the area and its residents. Highland Park should work to preserve these murals and even look for ways to create new artistic depictions of Highland Park history.

No Net Loss Program

The South Los Angeles Community Plan of 2014 proposes a “No Net Loss Program.” This program plans to work with relevant city agencies to explore the creation of a program that minimizes displacement of residents through ensuring no loss of affordable rental housing in target transit-oriented development geographies (Community Plan 2014). The program would preserve existing affordable housing, covenanted or not, or the production of new affordable housing. This means that prior to every transit-oriented development within this community, developers must evaluate the number of affordable housing units and ensure the maintenance of those units. If No Net Loss programs are expanded to reach out to any neighborhood anticipating development, Highland Park would greatly benefit from the program. Highland Park could argue its relatively recent development of the Gold Line to qualify for current understandings of No Net Loss policy, but future policy recommendations should push to allow the program for any community undergoing rapid change.

Affordable Housing Considerations

Future affordable housing developments in Highland Park should consider granting residents first priority on residency. According to Arturo Chavez, Chief of Staff for Gil Cedillo, many affordable housing developments also threaten the influx of community members from other neighborhoods. Chavez’s experience has shown him that residents from other neighborhoods often

organize themselves and “come in on busses to turn in stacks of applications” to live in the affordable housing units (Arturo Chavez). Cedillo’s office is planning to build an affordable housing complex called Transit Village on the Gold Line parking lots on Marmion Way between Avenue 59 and Avenue 55. The development will be composed of 3 different structures with 60 units, 40 of which would be affordable (Arturo Chavez). The development has met a lot of controversy as Highland Park residents have argued over the size of the building, its aesthetics, and its provision of parking lots. The community arguments have delayed the building of the project in the midst of rapid redevelopment and increasing rental rates. When the project breaks ground, outreach should be performed to aid Highland Park residents who have been displaced or face the threat of being displaced in applying to live in the new housing and, furthermore, developers should grant priority to their applications in order to help maintain the culture of Highland Park.

Community Organizing

Community organizing has been identified as a potential deterrent of gentrification (Ley and Dobson 2008). In the Mission District of San Francisco, political activism was observed to “discourage many realtors and developers from risking investment in an overly volatile, although desirable, urban spot” (Ley and Dobson 2008). A community group in this district of San Francisco initiated the “Yuppie Eradication Project” in response to the massive influx of newcomers to the area. The project used large posters to declare the district a “no-go area for gentrifiers, with the threat of ‘class war’” (Ley and Dobson 2008). In Highland Park, the North East LA Alliance (NELA Alliance) held a similar action in November of 2014 where they taped large eviction posters to the windows of new businesses along York Boulevard. The reasons for eviction stated on the posters were three-fold:

1. Your business is not accessible to the working class
2. Your business is not culturally inviting for others to participate in
3. You have neglected the consequences that you have placed on the renter community (Leguim Samor 2014)

The posters ended with the request for the businesses to “check your privilege” and initiated a heated debate in the community surrounding the issue of gentrification. While this perpetuated the “us vs them” issue within the neighborhood in many ways, it prompted an important conversation and helped the NELA Alliance establish a reputation for itself. Since this public art performance, the NELA Alliance has expanded its community outreach.

For the months of March and April, the NELA Alliance has held a series of workshops in the community surrounding the issue of gentrification. The events include tenants rights workshops, panel discussions, and provision of space for community conversation. NELA Alliance has partnered with Occidental College, the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, and the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council to put on this series of workshops. The group is developing rapidly and has great potential to make change in the neighborhood should it further expand its reach and agenda.

As of right now, the agenda for the NELA Alliance is immediate action. The group is seeking to raise awareness of the issue of gentrification and work to save community members from getting displaced or priced out of their residencies. NELA Alliance should look towards creating a long-term strategy for Highland Park. NELA Alliance has been working closely with the residents that have faced eviction and been priced out of their housing, therefore the group has the best connection to the residents who would benefit from the affordable housing development on Marmion Way. The group should plan on assisting these displaced residents with applications for the housing to ensure they not only get to stay in the community, but also have a place to live. Furthermore, the group should be evaluating the ways the community can become engaged in creating policy recommendations for Los Angeles as a whole that may deter the displacement that comes with gentrification. NELA Alliance can work with the community to develop their own Community Plan similar to those developed by South Los Angeles and Boyle Heights.

Regional Approach

With the threat of gentrification emerging in adjacent neighborhoods, the NELA Alliance should consider hosting a convening or conference to aid other communities in creating preventative strategies. A group of El Sereno residents that calls themselves El Sereno Against Gentrification has already met a few times in 2015 to discuss strategies to combat gentrification. A partnership between NELA Alliance and El Sereno Against Gentrification may be beneficial not only in ideas and solidarity, but also in gaining larger awareness of the issue and eventually pushing for citywide change. A convening or conference that also includes other Northeast Los Angeles neighborhoods would provide a high potential for alliance building, which would be beneficial in pushing policy in City Hall.

Maintain Business Competition

In an interview with Marketplace for the York&Fig piece that aired in late 2014, Steve Jones talked about mixers that he and his real estate agent have begun to host for some of Highland Park's new shops. The mixers provide a space for shop owners to talk about how to get the city to deal with issues like overflowing garbage cans and "all the gum on the sidewalks" (Clark et al 2014). Jones says the group is intended to be a part cross-promotion, part support group, but the only people being supported in these groups are new shop owners (Clark et al 2014). While this does provide an excellent space for new businesses to bond and work on smart strategies for community and business improvement, it simultaneously perpetuates the "us and them" mentality that is emerging in Highland Park by blatantly excluding businesses that have been in the area for much longer than the new businesses.

Long-time businesses should not only be included in the mixers for businesses, but they should also have their own mixers in which they discuss ways to remain competitive in the

neighborhood. As the population of Highland Park changes, older businesses need to find a way to appeal to both old and new audiences. In my interview with Jones, we were sitting in Café de Leche at a window that faced out across the street to Junior's Discount. Jones commented on the value of the space across from the popular café and discussed how the party store no longer seemed to fit with the changing community. "The clock is ticking," he told me.

Older businesses should have a space to discuss strategies to remain competitive before the clock runs out. Elsa's Bakery is an excellent example of changing to fit the community. While the space is still frequented by community members because of the friendly familiar looking faces of the employees and owners, the bakery has kept up with the changing environment of Highland Park by becoming almost kitschy in its appearance, overemphasizing the culture that still defines Highland Park. Older businesses can attempt to remain competitive by performing outreach to new businesses, changing advertisements, and simply repainting the storefront. As Elsa's successfully demonstrated, culture does not have to be lost with redecoration, merely reorganized.

Utilizing Occidental College

Occidental College has been adjacent to Highland Park for the past 100 years. In recent years, as Highland Park has begun to change with gentrification, the College has been more aggressive in its plans to expand into the community. The college recently purchased a property on York Boulevard and Armadale and has asked students, faculty, and staff to provide opinions on what the space should be utilized for. Of the seven purchased units, four will be reserved for institutional use and the other three will be used for retail space in the future (Request for Proposals York Boulevard 2015). The College can utilize this space to make a positive impact on the community.

Local Hiring

Occidental College has the opportunity to implement certain community strategies that cannot be quickly implemented on the neighborhood level. With the units reserved for retail, the college should implement a local hiring promise, where the businesses that occupy the space must either be developed by a resident of the 90042 zip code and/or all of the employees must reside in the 90042 area. The South Los Angeles Community Plan also has considerations for a local hiring policy, stating that this policy would promote job training and community investment (2014). Local hiring policies allow for the development of transferrable skills that increase earning potential over time (PolicyLink). Furthermore Occidental College should make a commitment to positively contribute to the community and this could be one of the first ways in which they do so.

Further Research

Due to time restrictions and the immense size of the project, I had to focus on specific aspects of the change in Highland Park. This project focused upon the effects of gentrification on people in Highland Park, but could have expanded to focus on gentrification's effects on more neighborhoods of Los Angeles, the role of certain grants such as the recent award from Bloomberg Philanthropies and institutions in the area such as Occidental College, and many other aspects of the change. Future research should consider the following topics.

Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Team Program

In December of 2014, Mayor Eric Garcetti announced Los Angeles as one of twelve U.S. cities selected to participate in the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Innovation Teams program (Garcetti 2014). The program seeks to "improve the capacity of city halls around the nation to effectively design and implement new approaches that improve neighborhoods and resident's quality of life"

(Garcetti 2014). Los Angeles will receive up to \$2,550,000 over the course of three years to create an innovation team, or “i-team,” that plans to focus on neighborhood revitalization.

Rick Cole, Los Angeles Deputy Mayor for Budget and Innovation, is heading the Los Angeles i-team and plans to utilize a collaborative approach incorporating place-based and place-making efforts with anti-poverty strategies in order to uplift low-income neighborhoods (The Planning Report 2015). In an interview, Cole admitted to the threat of gentrification within these efforts to revitalize neighborhoods of the city, but seemed assured that the city’s future efforts to enhance neighborhoods would take the original culture of the neighborhood into account and therefore reduce gentrification potential (The Planning Report 2015). Further research into the plans of the i-team and the potential impact of their innovations is crucial as the city looks to invest this \$2.55 million in neighborhood improvements which could result in further gentrification.

The Role of Occidental College

Occidental College closed a deal with a property on York Boulevard and Armadale Boulevard for \$1.59 million in the hopes to make Occidental more visible from York Boulevard. Occidental spokesman Jim Tranquada, told the *Occidental Weekly* “it’s easy to drive by on York and not know Oxy’s just a block away. We’re hoping when we renovate the building to make it more obvious that Oxy is nearby” (Drinkard 2014). In a visit to Oxy’s Telefund program, Anne Cannon, the national chair of Oxy’s Board of Trustees, explained the Board’s plans to change all nearby roads to appear more “presentable” on the drive into Oxy. She went on to discuss the school’s attempts to “get rid of” an auto body shop on Eagle Rock Boulevard that she believes is an eye sore. The college is also attempting to buy more property in the area to transform into offices and homes for professors. Although Occidental has a three-year mandatory on-campus living requirement, many juniors can opt to live off campus and about half the senior class typically lives off-campus every year. With a

growing student body and a lack of space on campus for them to live, more students are beginning to live in homes nearby rather than on campus. Looking at other schools with similar issues, such as the University of Southern California, which has completely overtaken a significant area of South Los Angeles, this could have serious implications for the neighborhood.

Interestingly, the purchase of the Armadale property is the first big step for the college in reaching out to the community. Some of the faculty has accused the college of disaffiliating themselves with the neighborhood until recent popularity encouraged the college to take pride in its location. Future research should be conducted on the amount of property Oxy owns in the area, future plans for expansion and outreach, and steps the college can take to reduce its impact on displacement in the community.

Detailed Study on Housing

AirBnB is a service where homeowners can rent out their homes or a room in their homes for short periods of time. The service is becoming more popular and is a good tool to earn a little extra money from an extra room in the house or when the owners are away for a few days. Future research should investigate the role of AirBnB in Los Angeles housing stock and Highland Park housing stock specifically- how will this further affect the housing shortage? The service allows short rentals for higher prices- for people looking to explore Los Angeles, Highland Park may boast the best location available to gain immediate access to the city and its surroundings. Venice and Hollywood claim 4% of their housing to be AirBnB opportunities, meaning these homes will become spaces for tourists to come and go, overlooking the need for Los Angeles residents (Logan, Reyes, and Poston 2014). How will this further affect the housing shortage and burden in Highland Park?

Beyond AirBnb, future research should study housing affordability in the area and displacement. The City of Los Angeles has data on the number of evictions in an area, which should

be obtained and analyzed. Are most of the evictions due to Ellis Act or is there another way property owners are evicting their tenants? Future research should investigate how many current units in Highland Park qualify for rent control and the effects of expanding LARSO's required date of construction by 5, 10, and 15 years for buildings constructed in 1983, 1988, and 1993. Furthermore, future research should investigate the ways Los Angeles can address the housing crisis in Los Angeles by searching for potential funding for the Housing Trust Fund in the Cap and Trade Program implemented by California Assembly Bill 32 and development fees.

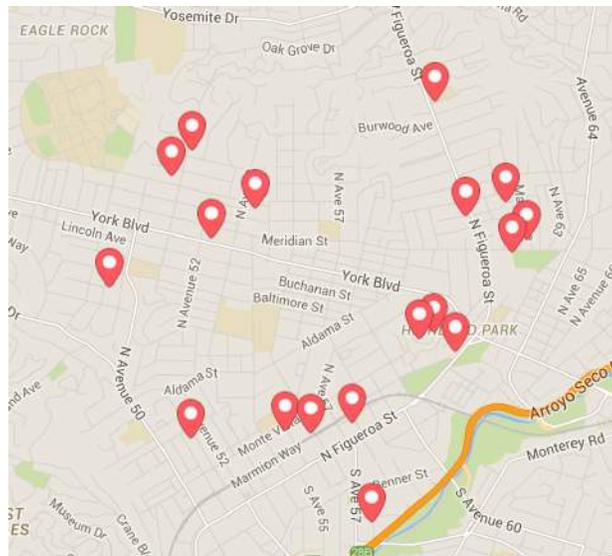


Figure 20 The Northeast Los Angeles area has an abundance of AirBnB opportunities, including the opportunity to stay in a "Highland Park Dream Apartment!" (airbnb.com)

Figueroa Boulevard and Northeast/East Los Angeles

This project focused specifically upon York Boulevard due to its rapid changes in such a concentrated space. However, Figueroa was recently identified for Mayor Eric Garcetti's Great Street Initiative that plans to invest more money into specific streets of Los Angeles and create a more vibrant space. Figueroa has seen some new businesses move in, but a lot of it is still vacant and looking the way Highland Park did for many years. Future research should investigate specifics of Mayor Garcetti's plan, why Figueroa has seen change at a much slower pace than York, and how future changes on Figueroa will further affect the neighborhood.

Beyond Figueroa Boulevard, El Sereno, Boyle Heights, and Lincoln Heights should be further investigated as neighborhoods that may be susceptible to gentrification. Demographic analysis of all three neighborhoods should be performed and recommendations for strategies for change should be posited in order to address the issue.

Community Health Implications

As the interviews for this project showed, gentrification has numerous mental health effects. Future studies should perform more in depth research on the long-term psychological effects of gentrification and other mental health implications. This could be result in the implementation of mental health clinics, specifically specializing in trauma, which would be open to the community. The results of this research could encourage future health and wellness code considerations for development and may prompt the implementation of community health strategies to address the effects.

Closed Business Data

Although Los Angeles' Open Data resource provided abundant information on the active businesses within Highland Park, it does not have information on businesses that have closed in the area. This made it difficult to track the different types of businesses that came and went within a select period of time, or ever. Future research should evaluate the shift in types of businesses along York throughout the years to investigate the change in taste for the neighborhood. The trends in business development may be indicative of the changes within the neighborhood and a detailed analysis of the changes over time and conjecture about which factors may have caused business closure will be important for future research. This data would also be essential in evaluating the period of time in which much of Highland Park experienced blight and a lack of businesses.

Conclusion

It is no secret that the community is changing in Highland Park. The streets, its businesses, and its pedestrians look nothing like they did five years ago. The data quantitatively proves shifts in the direction of gentrification and community members have qualitatively proven changes in neighborhood culture. Beyond the economic changes in property values, gentrification is affecting the psychological well-being of Highland Park residents. The process has instigated imposter syndrome and historical trauma, created an “us vs them” mentality, and a lack of trust in developers and politicians. However, Highland Park holds great potential in addressing the changes through the Northeast Los Angeles Alliance, which has already proven itself as a strong community-based group. The NELA Alliance could develop further from here to reach out to other community groups and eventually push community-based policy recommendations for the city as a whole. Occidental College could step up as a large cultural institution in the region to alleviate some of the impact on long-time residents by initiating local hiring policies for their new property and allowing the community to use the space. The city can institute a no net loss policy for future developments in order to maintain affordable housing despite new developments in an area.

As this project has proven, the issue of gentrification is not unique to Highland Park and will not stop when this project is done. Ruth Glass herself states, “once this process of gentrification starts in a district, it goes rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the social character of the district is changed” (Glass, 1964). Ideally, the process in Highland Park can be altered by the recommendations in this report, if not stopped. The rental market in Los Angeles is becoming increasingly less affordable and other neighborhoods similar to Highland Park are facing the risk of gentrification as a result. Looking at this study in the broader context of the city, the process of gentrification in Highland Park is just a small commentary on the housing crisis in the City

of Los Angeles as a whole. About 52% of the Los Angeles metro population is paying about 47% of their income on rent (UCLA 2014). As a result, middle and lower income Los Angeles residents are struggling to find affordable housing in the city. Unfortunately, this scramble to find affordable housing further perpetuates the problem of its absence. People are forced to move out of their homes due to drastic increases in rents and property values and, in many cases, those who are pushed out have to leave the city and sometimes even the state (Yim Tam). As the most unaffordable rental market in the nation, Los Angeles needs to become proactive in its strategies to combat the housing crisis, such as maintaining affordable housing by preserving the at-risk properties, funding an Affordable Housing Trust Fund that will permit the construction of more units within the city, and raising the minimum wage to living wage levels so people can afford rent. The issue is much larger than this project and it is going to take several teams of people to address.

Appendix

Census Tract	% in Neighborhood Council Boundaries
181500	10%
181600	45%
183101	100%
183103	100%
183104	100%
183220	100%
183221	90%
183222	40%
183300	100%
183401	85%
183402	15%
183510	100%
183520	100%
183610	100%
183620	100%
183701	100%
183702	25%
183810	100%
183820	100%
185100	15%
186203	35%
199300	50%
201301	50%

Figure 21 The 24 census tracts identified by the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council (*The State of Highland Park*)

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