THE FIRST CYCLE OF GENTRIFICATION
IN WEST OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: 1998-2008

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
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By

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Gentrification is a complex process of urban change in which higher-income residents and commercial uses replace those of lower socioeconomic status. This thesis examines the process of gentrification between 1998 and 2008 in West Oakland, California, describing the transformations that occurred in the area and the extent to which gentrification is represented by these changes. West Oakland did gentrify, albeit in a slower and less dramatic manner than was expected. Increased land values and residential displacement, combined with an influx of wealthier residents, highlighted these shifts. However, it is a neighborhood to which wealthier residents and large developer capital came later than other nearby neighborhoods. Factors including local government development policy, community involvement in the redevelopment of the neighborhood, and city housing policies altered the course and arguably limited the extent of gentrification in West Oakland. Today West Oakland can be seen as a neighborhood that remains vulnerable to gentrification while at the same time it is a place of last resort for large flows of capital to settle and enact a process of gentrification.
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I. Introduction

This is an upcoming area. Beautiful victorians, artists everywhere, lofts all at reasonable prices for the bay area. Where else can you get a 5000 sq foot lot with a 2000 square foot victorian at or under $600k? All 7-10 minutes from San Francisco. Bart is just around the corner and there is an almost private onramp that puts you directly to the fast track lane.

- (craigslist.org 2007)

Gentrification is a complex process of change in the urban environment that is often accompanied by polarizing debates about the revitalization of urban neighborhoods. Researchers describe gentrification essentially as a process by which higher-income households and more affluent commercial users displace those of lower economic standing. Neighborhoods that were for decades areas of disinvestment become sites that are recognized by private developers, local governments, and homebuyers as sites for new profitable investment. These changes create further transformations in the character and culture of these neighborhoods (Kennedy and Leonard 2001a, Hackworth 2002.) Gentrification transforms both the built landscape and the demographic composition of neighborhoods. It is not simply a succession of different groups in urban space, but a reflection of social struggles around the right to inhabit space. These spatial transformations often follow similar trajectories, but different places undergo these phenomena in unique ways that are conditioned by local political, economic, cultural, and physical characteristics.
West Oakland is a low-income neighborhood within Oakland, California (see Figure 1) whose distinctive experience with gentrification is the result of community members, developers, local media, and political figures articulating and trying to implement their different visions of the neighborhood. These struggles determine the functions of urban space, and who will have access to that space. They contribute to the production of a landscape that is highly varied in its residential and commercial makeup and physical characteristics. Global flows of capital fuel gentrification in cities throughout the world, as cycles of economic expansion and contraction correspond with cycles of speculation into and disinvestment from urban real estate markets. At the local scale, city governments, community groups, and regional economic patterns condition the specific uneven manner in which these global flows of capital are metabolized. Gentrification is the expression of these local forces and the land use policies they help to enact. It reveals the class-based social struggles that take place in cities and ultimately influence the function and form of neighborhoods.

Uneven development simultaneously creates spaces of investment and disinvestment, and at different geographic scales. Within the Bay Area there are richer and poorer cities, and these are comprised of richer or poorer neighborhoods. At the neighborhood scale as well, West Oakland is plagued by poverty and unemployment in some places, while an adjacent block may be the site of newly built upscale lofts. Gentrification is not a seamless process.
Instead, it grows in flurries of economic activity within the context of local constraints and catalysts. These bursts of development that transform the physical and social landscapes are finite in that they conform to economic cycles of expansion and decline that may follow larger regional or national trends, but adhere to local conditions as well.
West Oakland’s experience with gentrification, although one of shortened duration and intensity relative to other Bay Area neighborhoods, corresponded to the cycle of economic boom and bust between 1998 and 2008. This cycle comprised two speculative bursts and collapses, beginning with the internet, or dot-com, bubble beginning in the late 1990s and continuing with the real estate bubble that came to an end in 2008. These periods of economic prosperity and decline often fuel phases of gentrification in urban neighborhoods, and during this period West Oakland underwent its first cycle of gentrification, as parts of the neighborhood changed rapidly while others remained as they had been for decades. Previous to this first cycle, West Oakland had been mostly a site of disinvestment, whose land values were significantly devalued relative to many surrounding areas and a large proportion of whose residents were vulnerable to displacement from gentrification. Despite the transformation that occurred, there is only a small amount of research focusing on West Oakland’s particular experience between 1998 and 2008. This research looks at various aspects of gentrification in West Oakland in an attempt to inform current land use decisions, so that the community may develop in a manner that reduces vulnerability to gentrification in the future.

The main focus of this thesis is to demonstrate how uneven development occurs in a gentrifying neighborhood like West Oakland, and how specific conditions in and outside of that neighborhood produced a type of gentrification
that was late in its arrival relative to neighboring areas and short in duration. West Oakland didn’t entirely escape gentrification, but the tremendous wave of speculation in the Bay Area that produced gentrified neighborhoods bypassed West Oakland to a large degree. Most of all, the case of West Oakland shows at once how vulnerable to gentrification low-income urban neighborhoods are, while simultaneously they exhibit a great inertia toward change through periods of tremendous regional economic prosperity. West Oakland is an urban neighborhood in which the capital flight of the past contributed to deeply entrenched poverty that goes unchanged by the market; rather, the economic pressures brought to bear on a neighborhood like this one decrease concentrations of poverty by displacing its lower-income residents. Although the average home price in West Oakland increased more than 800% between 1998 and 2007, with a concurrent escalation of rents, these changes contrast deeply with the continued unemployment, crime, and deterioration that characterize many areas of the neighborhood. In other words, gentrification is largely a phenomenon that transforms the place in which lower-income people live, while those same people are typically not the beneficiaries of the larger economic shifts happening around them. The degree to which gentrification occurred in West Oakland illustrate the intransigence of economic divisions in American society, and how these social divisions appear in the physical landscape.
Local factors, directing or at times contesting the larger patterns of developer and real estate capital, play a central role in determining the irregular patterns of investment across the landscape that come to define neighborhoods. Areas where new development projects begin to change the demographics of an area, other parts of town where residents demand benefits from developers: these and other visible shifts create the actual contours of gentrification in each locality. Within this framework it becomes easier to see how and why gentrification in West Oakland occurred differently than in other neighborhoods.

This thesis examines the trajectory of this cycle of gentrification in West Oakland, California from 1998 to 2008. It specifically addresses the factors that contributed to or limited this process, and particularly the role that community residents play in shaping development policy and practices there. Through the use of census and archival data, as well as through interviews with community residents, gentrification in West Oakland will be described. West Oakland presents something of a paradox in that its location in the Bay Area, along with other important factors, made it an ideal neighborhood for a wave of gentrification during the economic boom of the late 1990s. Its proximity to downtown San Francisco and to a lesser extent downtown Oakland, along with its supply of cheap Victorian housing stock and easy access to San Francisco by the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART) and major freeways, all made West Oakland a logical choice for the attentions of city promotion and development capital.
Parts of West Oakland did experience gentrification as significant changes in home values, rental prices, and resident demographics. However, in 2008 the neighborhood still remains one of the poorest areas in the East Bay, its appearance little changed on most of its blocks. This research aims to shed light on the changes that occurred there during the decade of 1998-2008, and what influenced these changes.

A variety of factors reversed the disinvestment that characterized West Oakland throughout previous decades and changed the neighborhood in significant ways between 1998 and 2008. West Oakland provides an important case study of a low-income neighborhood experiencing gentrification, albeit in an abbreviated form. Despite West Oakland's geographical proximity to centers of high-wage, technology-based jobs in the Bay Area, the neighborhood did not experience the unchecked gentrification anticipated during the long economic boom of the late 1990s (Harvey et al. 1999, Yee and Quiroz-Martinez 1999, Nieves 2000.) Instead, the preconditions were established for a more subtle form of gentrification that has become more visible in the landscape only years after the economic boom subsided. A variety of factors, including community involvement in land use policy and continued government neglect contributed to the character of gentrification in the area. A relative lack of active involvement by city government in the development of the neighborhood further served to limit the extent of gentrification in the 1990s. Gentrification did occur in West Oakland,
but it remained an area overlooked by large amounts of developer capital that landed in the Bay Area. The entrenched problems of crime and unemployment still characterize the area, because economic boom periods that made gentrification possible did not benefit everyone in the region; gentrification does not address inequities, it simply shifts the problems elsewhere. Although the neighborhood may be primed for a more complete transformation, 2008 economic trends point to an abrupt halt to gentrification in West Oakland.

West Oakland has remained an area of disinvestment through much of the late twentieth century. Yet, after World War Two it was the economic core of the city’s port, industrial, and manufacturing operations. Today, however, despite the burgeoning international trade that fuels the economic vitality along the West Oakland waterfront, the neighborhood is visibly marked by decades of economic decline and neglect. Its physical boundaries are demarcated by major highways to the north, west, and south, and by downtown Oakland’s central business district to the east. The condition and extent of the neighborhood correspond to its diminishing postwar relevance in the Bay Area; West Oakland’s contemporary rediscovery by investors owes to its proximity to the employment centers of both downtown San Francisco to the west and Silicon Valley to the south (see Figures 1 and 2.)

Researchers have identified characteristics that make a neighborhood vulnerable to gentrification, including regional job growth and housing market
pressures, along with a community’s social cohesion, political leadership, housing tenure and type (Ley 1996, Smith 1996, Kennedy and Leonard 2001a, Shaw 2007.) West Oakland has had many of these characteristics over the past few decades, and according to theory on gentrification, would be an optimal location for large-scale public and private capital to invest (Harvey et al. 1999, Yee and Quiroz-Martinez 1999, Kennedy and Leonard 2001b, Kennedy 2008.) It did not, however, gentrify to the extent that scholars and community members believed it would during the height of the economic boom, although the changes that occurred there negatively impacted its many working class and poor residents.

Despite rising land values and evictions, West Oakland remained mostly a zone of widespread disinvestment. It may seem incongruous that rising real estate values do not necessarily correlate with visibly gentrified spaces. However, it is important to consider West Oakland not merely as a discrete geographical unit, but as one neighborhood subject to the pressures of a chronic housing shortage throughout the Bay Area that inflates land values even in the less desirable places. It is beyond the scope of this thesis, but worth mentioning, that the real estate market at larger geographic scales condition the final costs of housing in West Oakland, as surpluses of investment capital held by large mortgage lenders became more easily available and cheaper to borrowers across the United States. Unemployment, poverty, and crime figures have
remained among the highest in the Bay Area even as home prices and rents exploded (Padilla et al 2005, ACPHD 2005, McKinley 2007.) The astronomical rise in land values were to a large extent fueled by the flood of speculative capital in real estate regionally and nationally, and did not necessarily correlate with a surge of investment into West Oakland itself on the part of city government or
private developers. West Oakland underwent gentrification, evidenced by its significant rise in property values and population shifts, and yet widespread unemployment and poverty eclipse the sporadic changes in affluence that occurred there. Despite the surge in rental prices that followed the rest of the Bay Area during this time, these deep social problems still characterize the area.

The destruction of the Cypress Freeway in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, and its reconstruction in 1998 at the perimeter of West Oakland, altered the landscape dramatically, as did previous urban renewal projects. Unlike those, however, the fall of the Cypress Freeway has benefited residents and has drawn attention to the development potential of the area, a change that has encouraged both beneficial revitalization efforts and speculation that has stalled these benefits (see Figure 3.) Its collapse reconnected parts of the neighborhood that had long been separated by this physical barrier, and residents welcomed its removal. Between 1998 and 2008, West Oakland changed in some dramatic ways, as new homebuyers came into the area and development projects went up at rates not seen for decades, raising questions about the impacts of change upon residents. An abundance of capital circulated throughout the area as a result of the speculative financial bubble in the late 1990s and again in 2003. Gentrification is a complex process of urban change that is sometimes difficult to distinguish from economic development that benefits a community. Sometimes the effects of investment are not seen until years later, while an initial burst of
speculation and displacement may not precede a wave of investment that dramatically transforms a neighborhood. As the housing market slows, however, this initial wave of gentrification may be coming to a close in West Oakland. I will begin with a chapter describing the significance of this research to the gentrification literature and to urban land use and housing policy. This will be followed by a review of the literature on gentrification, emphasizing recent studies and directions in gentrification research that inform the framework of this research. A methodology section will explain and justify the sources used in this research. Next, indicators of gentrification in West Oakland will be assessed. These data include changes in home/rental prices, evictions, income, ethnic composition, and educational attainment of residents. The factors that play a role in affecting these changes will then be described; the story of gentrification in West Oakland will be told through each of these frameworks, including city economic and land use policies, local redevelopment policy, and community involvement in revitalizing the neighborhood. Finally, the findings of this research will be discussed in the final chapter in relation to future policy options for minimizing gentrification in West Oakland.

This research is primarily concerned with assessing the influence of a variety of forces affecting gentrification in Oakland, and the flows of investment that constitute the engine of urban development. Economic decisions made by
Figure 3. Urban Renewal Projects and Transportation Construction Through West Oakland.

Source: maps.google.com, Solari 2001, and Author
private investors and developers are influenced by potential profits, or exchange values, to be gained from commercial and residential real estate investment and production. These pursuits are further conditioned by local political influence, and are often at odds with the use values desired from urban space by local residents, such as affordable housing and community control over land use decisions. As speculative patterns emerge in cities, local governments are more able to direct funds (through tax breaks and other subsidies) than local community organizations. Profitability shapes the patterns in which capital settles in city space (Logan and Molotch 1987.) Neighborhoods that are not perceived by investors and developers as having the potential to generate acceptable rates of profit do not change as dramatically or rapidly. West Oakland is one such urban neighborhood whose needs have been placed beneath the regional transportation and economic priorities for decades. Only in the last decade has West Oakland become an area for investment to settle, and only because of two enormous and sustained economic booms that took place during these ten years; the focus of this thesis is to look at the effects of these new circumstances.
II. Significance of Research

This thesis contributes to the literature that examines gentrification as a consequence of urban economic development, and more specifically to the identification of factors that play a role in either hindering or advancing gentrification in urban space. It also contributes to a body of knowledge regarding West Oakland, emphasizing the particularities of the place and its inhabitants, and describing its transformations in the context of shifts occurring in the Bay Area. Although the Bay Area was the epicenter of the Internet boom of the late 1990s, very little literature exists regarding Oakland during this time. It is my hope that this research can be used to inform future land use decisions in West Oakland and other neighborhoods around the Bay Area before the next cycle of gentrification begins.

Within the past ten years West Oakland has undergone a process of gentrification in which certain areas changed significantly while the majority of the neighborhood remained much the same. This research attempts to fill some of the gaps in understanding gentrification as an uneven process of development in cities, and looks at the multiple forces both internal and external to the neighborhood in question. West Oakland is an excellent case study for observing these forces; it illustrates how gentrification is engendered by a variety of influences from economic development policy choices at the city level to
individual consumer choices. Equally important are revitalization efforts brought about through community-led activism and participation in redevelopment planning.

Gentrification represents a decidedly different course of development than revitalization. Policies that emphasize improving employment, housing, and environmental conditions for residents of low-income areas will result more often than not in a revitalized neighborhood. Unmanaged real estate speculation, poor tenant protections, and a planning vision that encourages projects that contrast with the needs of low-income residents promote gentrification instead. Gentrification occurs because a place itself becomes commodified, and these market forces subsume the previous significance of the place. The false choice of gentrification being the only way for urban areas to move out of poverty only allows the market to shape urban development. Additionally, revitalization efforts can simultaneously improve communities in ways that, without the existence of adequate tenant protections and other measures, make the area a potential site for gentrification.

West Oakland’s future may include a combination of revitalization that enhances the lives of its current residents, and gentrification that displaces some of these residents. This research aims to examine some of these contradictions in community involvement in the redevelopment process. It also contributes to an understanding of the important role of community organizations in opposing
gentrification through various modes of engagement, from shaping public policy to more direct involvement with developers. While much of the current literature on the subject promotes the idea of “managing” gentrification, this research follows from the perspective held by others that gentrification research can and ought to contribute to understanding the phenomenon better in order to fight it (Slater 2006.)

This research does not attempt to refute gentrification theories; it seeks to point out the complexities of urban economics, politics, and culture through which gentrification takes shape. It attempts to explain West Oakland as a place that gentrified in a particular way because of its local context, and did so in ways that differed from the expectations of both gentrification researchers and local observers. The limits of gentrification, and the resistance of both people and place to the process, is a phenomenon that goes largely unexamined by urban geographers in recent years (Slater 2006;) an analysis of these spaces integrates the different approaches to understanding the causes of gentrification that are outlined in the literature. In the next two sections I provide background on West Oakland and review the main themes of gentrification literature, emphasizing that which is most relevant to my own research.
III. Study Area Background

West Oakland’s history has always been tied to the transportation networks that shaped the Bay Area over the past 150 years, the flows of goods and people essential to the region’s economic growth. It is therefore not surprising that the neighborhood’s surrounding highways identify its geographic boundaries: CA Highway 24 to the north, Interstate 580 along its eastern edge, Interstate 880 to the west and south (see Figure 3.) West Oakland's importance to the regional economy was established once it became the terminus for the transcontinental railroad in 1869 at the intersection of Seventh Street and Adeline Street. Composed of a diverse group of residents of primarily Italian, Chinese, African, Portuguese, Mexican, Swedish and German descent, the neighborhood was home to many rail, dock, and ship workers. Flows of people and goods by railroad, ship, ferry, and light rail systems were essential to the growth of the city, and made the neighborhood a vital and dynamic area. However, shifts in the regional economy, particularly over the second half of the twentieth century, brought new transportation networks through West Oakland that facilitated regional economic development at the expense of the residents and businesses in the neighborhood.

West Oakland’s African-American population grew in response to employment
opportunities largely with the Pullman railroad porters, and during the
shipbuilding and port-industry boom of the Second World War they became the
majority group in the neighborhood and have remained so to the present
(Bagwell 1982.) Between 1890 and 1940, Oakland’s total Black population rose
from 1.3 percent to 2.8 percent of the total population, from 699 to 8,642. As
migration ramped up during World War Two, Black population jumped to 37,327
(9.3% of the total population) in 1945, and 41,00 (10.1% of the total population)
by 1948. Migration continued after the war years, so that by 1960 the total Black
population was 83,620, constituting 22.8 percent of the total citywide population
(see Table 1.) Although more precise figures at the neighborhood level are
unavailable to describe population by ethnicity, the majority of Black households
settled in West Oakland during this time (Brown 1970.)

For the first half of the twentieth century, Oakland, along with other East Bay
towns, formed the industrial heart of the metropolitan region. Between 1900 and
1930, Oakland grew from about 67,000 inhabitants to more than 264,000; this
population increase was supported by a number of key industries from canneries
to auto production, and creating a powerful capitalist class as well as a vast
working class population (Walker 1998.) Among the industries most critical to
West Oakland’s early ascent were its extensive shipbuilding facilities, sustaining
thousands of workers from the Civil War through World War Two. West Oakland
urbanized rapidly during this period, extending streetcar lines from the waterfront for miles and enabling a vast amount of property development.

However, urban decline and suburban expansion accompanied the U.S. postwar economic boom. As economic activities became spatially decentralized, central business districts were still of sufficient importance to a section of corporate and real estate interests in most cities. Through remaking the central

Table 1. Oakland Population By Ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Black Population</th>
<th>Black as % of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>48,862</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>66,960</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>150,174</td>
<td>3,055</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>216,261</td>
<td>5,489</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>264,083</td>
<td>7,503</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>302,163</td>
<td>8,462</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>400,935</td>
<td>37,327</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>415,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>384,575</td>
<td>47,600</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>367,548</td>
<td>83,620</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>361,561</td>
<td>124,710</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>339,337</td>
<td>159,351</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>372,242</td>
<td>163,335</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>399,484</td>
<td>142,460</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006(estimate)</td>
<td>377,256</td>
<td>114,342</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

city and its core neighborhoods, these owners and investors hoped to restore land values in Oakland. Downtown Oakland’s merchants and property owners were financially weakened in the suburban exodus and the demise of the streetcar. Those centrifugal economic forces encouraged local elites to redevelop the urban core, in an attempt to bring middle class consumers and businesses back to the city (Walker 1998, Rhomberg 2004.) The consensus on urban renewal shifted from a policy for housing the poor (that received little elite support), to one of replacing them with more affluent residents.

After World War Two, West Oakland, characterized as “blighted” since the 1930s by city officials, was targeted for vast renovation efforts. From the 1940s through the 1970s, housing projects were built over leveled neighborhoods that had been designated as residential areas of poor quality (see Figure 3 and Figure 4.) Eminent domain was used by federal agencies as well as local government to relocate thousands of people from West Oakland, dispersing many to other parts of the city. By 1957 the Cypress Freeway cut through the neighborhood, followed by the Grove-Shafter Freeway. Later in 1969 the construction of a new Post Office distribution facility at Seventh and Wood Streets forced the relocation of hundreds of families. The Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART), built during the 1960s and completed in 1972, removed more blocks of housing to build the West Oakland station along the Seventh
Street commercial corridor, effectively wiping out the main business district in the area. (Hausler 1990, Cornell 1999, Rodriguez 1999.)

Throughout these decades of spatial restructuring, West Oakland became a predominantly African-American neighborhood, and this has remained the majority population since. Between 1940 and 1950, the black population in West Oakland rose from twelve to fifty percent as black migration from the south continued and white flight began. Between 1955 and 1966, more than 163,000 Whites moved out of the city to newly emerging suburbs, effectively reducing the resistance to black mobility within Oakland. In particular, much of the “flats” of Oakland (and Berkeley) became available to blacks as their population grew from 47,000 in 1950 (eighty-five percent of these lived in West Oakland at the time) to 125,000, one-third of Oakland’s total, by 1970. West Oakland maintained a much higher proportion of African-American residents, so that by 1980 they represented eighty-seven percent of the neighborhood’s population (Bay Area Census 2009.) Despite their numbers, lower-income residents were excluded from participating in many local policy decisions until the late 1960s. Agencies like the Target Area Advisory Committee, a city-created citizen’s group meant to manage participation in urban renewal efforts, heavily represented homeowners instead of tenants. Poverty programs at the time similarly placed residents with higher incomes in leadership positions, despite the organized opposition to these policies by poor residents (Rodriguez 1999).
Figure 4. Residential Security Map of Oakland, 1956.

Source: OCPC 1956.
The draw of investment to San Francisco and to the new suburbs left West Oakland as a marginal space between the places of postwar economic dynamism. However, the marginal spaces were reengineered like the outlying agricultural lands and the prosperous urban cores. Huge federal expenditures financed the redevelopment that took place in urban cores throughout the U.S., restructuring transportation networks and social life in places like West Oakland and entrenching social inequalities further in the urban landscape (O’Connor 1973, Hausler 1990.)

Beginning in the 1950s, federal urban renewal programs destroyed housing stock throughout West Oakland in order to rebuild higher income residential areas near downtown. Property values in areas surrounding downtown to the west had been declining for decades, many businesses began to relocate or went bankrupt, and city and business officials hoped that the “massive physical destruction of large parts of West Oakland” for redevelopment and transportation projects would solve their financial woes (Rodriguez 1999, Self 2004: 81.) By 1958 a redevelopment agency had been created for Oakland, planning the future of the central city in line with the wishes of its real estate and downtown retail members. Building freeways across West Oakland followed from these plans as well, and planners believed that traffic flow between the new suburbs and San Francisco would also benefit the retail core of central Oakland (Zettel 1963, Oakland City Planning Department 1964.)
Concerns about the potential for large-scale displacement in West Oakland were rooted in an awareness of urban renewal efforts in American cities over the second-half of the twentieth century, and particularly in the devastating effects that freeway construction, slum clearance, and other activities carried out by local government over the last fifty years (Harvey et al. 1999, Shoemaker 2002.) Large sections of West Oakland were razed to make room for freeway and mass transit in the postwar years, and sections of the neighborhood were physically isolated from each other by freeways. Thousands of families were forced out of their homes to accommodate the changing regional economic geography. The physical landscape created through urban renewal programs increased the obstacles to West Oakland’s prosperity, as the neighborhood was rebuilt over decades not according to the needs of its residents, but to the demands of a changing regional economy. Toward those ends, West Oakland served primarily as an economic dead zone situated between the new spheres of production and consumption of downtown San Francisco and the suburbs, and in the postwar era its residents fell deeper into poverty (Zettel 1963, Rodriguez 1999, Self 2003, Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2004.)

West Oakland had been vital to the Bay Area’s economy throughout the first half of the twentieth century, but its significance declined tremendously by the 1970s. As urban renewal projects proceeded, the economic base supporting
many West Oakland residents eroded. The 1962 containerization of shipping cargo at the Oakland docks left many people without work, and manufacturing jobs moved out of Oakland towards suburban areas. Adding further to these blows to West Oakland’s economic vitality was the systematic abandonment of private and public capital going towards loans for homebuyers and upkeep of properties (Getz 2008.) By the 1990s, West Oakland ranked among the poorest neighborhoods in the Bay Area, with corresponding low rates of home ownership. The economic boom beginning in the later half of this decade changed the neighborhood in important ways, although West Oakland arguably remained a place of last resort for most of the investment capital circulating throughout the region.

The San Francisco Bay Area was the epicenter of the “dot-com” boom, a period of intense speculative investment in the high technology sector that lasted roughly from 1995 to March 2000. Fueled by enormous amounts of speculative investment capital, high technology research and business enterprises flooded the region with high paying jobs, bringing an influx of more affluent newcomers seeking residence in a region already experiencing a critical shortage of housing units (NPHANC and GA 2002, Getz 2008.) During this economic boom, housing prices in the San Francisco Bay Area began to ascend to record levels; although income levels rose dramatically as well throughout the Bay Area, the wage divide
widened and poverty increased (Greenwich and Niedt 2001.) On the heels of the high tech bubble came an avalanche of real estate speculation in the Bay Area and throughout the U.S., beginning in 2003, that further magnified land values and exacerbated housing difficulties for many Bay Area residents. Gentrification in West Oakland took place in the context of this regional housing shortage that was made worse by the expansion of internet-related jobs in the Bay Area. This chronic shortage added pressure on local housing markets like West Oakland, fueling rent and home price increases that greatly diminished the affordability of the neighborhood (Yee and Quiroz-Martinez 1999, NPHANC and GA 2002, Getz 2008.)

Although most of the 150,800 newly created jobs were located to the south in Silicon Valley and across the bay in downtown San Francisco, a “domino effect” of economic activity and housing pressures spilled over into nearby cities (Yee and Quiroz-Martinez 1999.) Local Bay Area governments competed for private capital investment in commercial and residential real estate. Neighborhoods changed visibly as residents and business owners were evicted or priced out; the initial effects of the dot-com boom were felt first in San Francisco’s South of Market and Mission neighborhoods. However, by 2000 Oakland had become a destination of choice for developers, renters, and homebuyers looking for investment potential or more affordable alternatives to San Francisco’s high
pressure housing market (ABAG 2001a, Edrington, 2008, Durandet 2004, Getz 2008.)

Some neighborhoods throughout the Bay Area rapidly transformed into expensive, or more expensive, enclaves of the new employees working in high technology and related-services industries. Others, despite their location in the path of this economic storm, changed very little. West Oakland, among the oldest and poorest neighborhoods in the East Bay, was less of a site for investment as real estate capital settled in other parts of Oakland and neighboring Bay Area cities. Residents, scholars, and community organizations, however, were concerned about the imminent gentrification of West Oakland, pointing to the rapidly increasing rental prices beginning in the late 1990s that fueled residential displacement (Harvey et al. 1999, Yee and Quiroz-Martinez 1999, Kennedy and Leonard 2001b, Kennedy 2008.) Ultimately, West Oakland did gentrify, although this occurred later in the economic boom cycle and without the far-reaching changes feared by some.

Already highly vulnerable to economic pressures in the housing market, West Oakland was disproportionately affected by the three hundred percent spike in the city’s eviction rate between 1998 and 2000 (Salazar 2006.) More affluent residents came in to replace those who left. These evictions and other signs of gentrification began in the late 1990s in West Oakland, but it proceeded largely without the assistance of local government policies and large developer capital.
In these and other important ways gentrification was stalled in West Oakland despite the inflation of home values and rents. Relative to other Bay Area neighborhoods, West Oakland remained a place of last resort for large-scale public improvements that encourage private capital, and investments of this sort did not make any significant inroads into the neighborhood until several years after the economic boom subsided.

A slow and continuing groundwork for gentrification in West Oakland was set in motion by the economic dynamism of the dot-com boom, however, and this process has occurred alongside revitalization efforts that seek to counter displacement and other negative effects of gentrification. As development policies have shifted in West Oakland to more actively reshape the area, and as community-based organizing for greater tenant protections has grown, gentrification has to some degree been minimized. The involvement of community organizations and other actors have provided a small countervailing influence to gentrification in West Oakland, although their power is limited.

In 2008, the decline of the national housing market signals the end of a decade long cycle of gentrification in West Oakland, and potentially a return to previous decades of relative neglect. To place West Oakland’s experience into a broader context within the body of gentrification literature, the next section will explore the main approaches and debates on the subject. Those theoretical
frameworks in the literature that are relevant to understanding the particularities of gentrification West Oakland will be discussed.
IV. A Review of the Literature

A considerable amount of scholarly research exists on the subject of gentrification. This literature review will examine the main foundational concepts of gentrification and will discuss the evolution of these ideas through debate among scholars. It will contextualize these concepts in the specific history of West Oakland’s development in the Bay Area. It will then look at new research in the gentrification literature and how this informs my own research into West Oakland.

This thesis seeks to understand the social, economic and political forces that affect gentrification in West Oakland, and in particular how community members attempt to navigate the complex terrain of urban revitalization while minimizing the potential for the negative impacts of gentrification. Very little has been written about this experience in West Oakland, and this research aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the neighborhood as it has changed over the ten year period between 1998 and 2008.
1. Uneven Development in Cities

The process of uneven development in modern cities, wherein flows of investment cycle through urban neighborhoods, is a theoretical foundation for many urban geographers and is fundamental to gentrification theory (Smith 1982, 1987, Harvey 1989b, Wilson 1991, Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003, Atkinson 2003.) Uneven development refers to the lack of economic and functional uniformity across space that results from structural economic and political forces. This unevenness may be observed at different geographic scales, and helps to explain the processes by which some cities thrive or decline, as well as how impoverished areas persist within prosperous cities. The use of uneven development for most scholars is rooted in Marxist approaches to urban analysis. Socioeconomic differentiation is rooted in the restless and competitive nature of capital accumulation, creating poles of wealth and poverty at different spatial scales. Capital is invested irregularly across space, and this translates into inconsistencies in the urban social landscape, often into distinct areas of wealth and poverty maintained through the abundance or absence of capital flow. The constant movement of capital through productive spheres (like housing construction) and reproductive spheres (like mortgage lending) makes lasting changes to the built environment and to the social composition of places.
The built environment changes in accordance with the spatial requirements of production and consumption. A factory must be located somewhere; if that factory is closed the building remains but loses its original exchange value-producing qualities, specifically its ability to generate profit through rent. Meanwhile, new spaces may become sites for investment. Because periodic crises of overaccumulation are inherent to capitalist production, new or rebuilt spaces are continually created to renew diminished profit rates (Walker 1978, Harvey 1982.) In North American cities during the post-World War Two era, whole neighborhoods were virtually abandoned by capital in order to facilitate the accumulation process elsewhere. Formerly thriving parts of town, like West Oakland, became ghettoes and older industrial centers fell to ruin as suburban development exploded.

The reverse of this disinvestment pattern is also part of the urban landscape as dilapidated and previously neglected areas are transformed into upscale residential and commercial zones through reinvestment. When this occurs, those of a higher socioeconomic position frequently replace working class residents, the main characteristic of the process of gentrification. This pattern has repeated itself across American cities and internationally over the past decades, wherein large-scale changes in urban environments are largely influenced by the imperatives of the real estate market, often with minimal participation from the individuals most adversely affected (Feagin 1986.)
A widely discussed manifestation of uneven urban development is the gentrification of low-income neighborhoods. Although suburban real estate continues to expand across the U.S., cities increasingly attract more investment in the built environment relative to undeveloped suburban land, as central cities once again become the hubs for economic growth. But the capital that is returning to cities concentrates unevenly across space, and the effects of new investments may be more detrimental to the residents living there. While some areas experience gentrification, other neighborhoods may continue to go unnoticed by investors, looking much as they did decades earlier. Although these neighborhoods avoid the wholesale dissolution of advanced gentrification, they are not unaffected by changes occurring at the metropolitan and regional scales. Some have experienced an affordability crisis although little developer capital enters the neighborhood. This apparent paradox helps to explain how West Oakland changed during the decade of 1998-2008, as an area largely overlooked by both capital and local government despite its location in the Bay Area during a period of sustained economic prosperity. Uneven development also helps one understand how some areas of West Oakland can become the focus of new development projects, while other areas nearby remain unchanged by the gentrification occurring around them.
2. Defining Gentrification

In the 1960s British sociologist Ruth Glass described changes in declining areas of London, where inflows of middle-class residents began rehabilitating older homes and subsequently raising property values. Glass’ research showed the negative effects of these changes as lower-income renters were, over time, priced out of their neighborhoods. The replacement of one class with another, more affluent one was the focal point of Glass’ analysis. Researchers typically describe gentrification as a process in which higher-income households and more affluent commercial users displace those of lower economic standing. At the same time the price of the housing supply rises sharply, ownership becomes more prevalent, affordable housing declines, and subsequently the overall physical condition of buildings is improved (Hamnett 1991, Atkinson 2002, Slater 2006.) Coinciding with these changes are transformations in the character and culture of these neighborhoods, including new businesses and uses of public space that are either inaccessible to or incongruent with preexisting residents (Kennedy and Leonard 2001b, Hackworth 2002.) Often zoning changes are made to a neighborhood in order to facilitate these new uses and make industrially zoned land available for larger residential and commercial developments (Davidson 2002.)

The definition of gentrification used here distinguishes itself from revitalization
in urban communities in that, while both processes may improve the “physical, commercial and social components of neighborhoods and the future prospects of its residents through private sector and/or public sector efforts,” revitalization does not displace current residents, although “[g]entrification sometimes occurs in the midst of the revitalization process” (Kennedy and Leonard 2001b.)

Defining gentrification is necessary for anchoring an analysis of neighborhood change, particularly in light of recent scholarly efforts to replace the term with less critical names like “urban renaissance”, and where the emphasis among scholars have shifted to managing gentrification rather than opposing it (Slater 2006.) Smith (1982) described gentrification as the primary expression of uneven, or differentiated, investment at the urban scale. It is not an aberration of the classic model of urban growth that leads to suburban expansion, but a “continuation of the forces and relations that led to suburbanization” (150.) In other words, gentrification is another dimension of the same spatial strategy that once disinvested in central cities, but now finds them to be profitable arenas again. Regional job growth and tightening housing markets make areas like West Oakland more attractive to an influx of developer, realtor, and homebuyer investment (Kennedy and Leonard 2001a.)

Gentrification is a complex process of urban change in which large capital follows smaller investors. Early “pioneer” gentrifiers seeking both a home and an investment opportunity in their home are still part of newly gentrified landscapes,
but their presence draws attention to the speculative possibilities of neighborhoods for developers and bigger investors. On the other hand, neighborhoods with virtually no pioneers building sweat equity may be targeted for redevelopment, rezoned for new land uses, and set on a course of gentrification (Ley 1996.) The variety of place-specific factors, including neighborhood composition and the role of local government in land use, combined with a historically uneven landscape of investment within cities, makes gentrification a highly varied occurrence (Beauregard 1990.) Yet, despite important distinctions to be made among trajectories of neighborhood change, gentrification signifies in each case the remaking of space for use by residents and consumers of higher socioeconomic strata.

Displacement of residents (either through evictions or lack of affordability to current residents) and the accompanying loss of social cohesion are the two most serious negative impacts of gentrification. In the 1980s debate occurred between researchers who looked at national figures for displacement, with estimates as high as 2.5 million persons annually according to one study (Legates and Hartman 1986.) Displacement as a consequence of gentrification is a difficult problem to analyze, and little research has taken place on the subject in recent decades, despite some important contributions to the subject matter (Atkinson 2000, Atkinson 2002, Freeman and Braconi 2004, Newman and Wyly 2006, Slater 2006.)
3. Human Agency versus Structural Arguments

The most heated debates have focused on the root causes of gentrification (Smith 1979, Smith 1996, Ley 1996, Slater 2002, Lees 2000,) weighing the role of human agency and cultural factors against economic structures as the prime mover of gentrification. As a result of these disagreements, gentrification research became “one of [the] key theoretical and ideological battlegrounds in urban geography, and indeed in human geography as a whole” (Hamnett 1991: 174.) While these arguments have persisted for decades, most contemporary researchers find that a more comprehensive analysis of gentrification develops from recognizing the “complementarity” of culture and economy (Lees in Phillips 2004: 12.)

Like those who employ a supply-side analysis of gentrification, researchers who emphasize consumer choice instead as its driving force also argue that the decline of traditional industry and the increase of advanced technology in the production process significantly altered the class composition of the urban workforce (Hamnett 1991.) Shifts in the composition of urban workers over the last few decades to include more highly educated individuals, more women, larger numbers of unmarried people, and more couples without children brought different residential choices (Ley 1996.) This changing division of labor gave more economic power to individuals who had different aesthetic and lifestyle
preferences than traditional blue-collar households. Most importantly among these was a rejection of suburban residential locations and a desire for a more cosmopolitan urban lifestyle. These preferences translated into demand for urban housing, often in older, more affordable parts of the city that contained attractive homes.

Gentrification takes hold in an area once land speculation begins, prices rise, and older residents’ tenure becomes precarious. Speculators and developers market whole neighborhoods to buyers, effectively creating demand in a particular location through appealing representations of a neighborhood that sometimes confer a level of romance and risk upon potential buyers (Smith 1996, Mele 2000.) In other words, consumer agency is greatly amplified by prevailing economic and political forces. Finance drives the real estate market creating new spaces available for consumption. The notion that the sovereign individual in society makes consumer choices independent of these forces ignores the market dynamics that create demand among consumers in the first place. It also neglects the central role that state intervention plays in gentrification, the role governments play in reshaping patterns of urban land use and ownership through policies ranging from slum clearance to subsiding development projects. Without these large-scale efforts to bring capital into urban centers, consumers of gentrified space would have far less options. The “back to the city movement”
took shape within a setting of active political and economic involvement from the federal to local levels of government.

These new urban residents are the result of structural changes in the labor force over the past fifty years, as many workers became employed in service-related industries while traditional manufacturing jobs declined. Coinciding with these changes in the urban workforce are new tastes in housing and other commodities, and larger amounts of disposable income to fuel their demand (Walker 1981, Harvey 1989b, Sugrue 1996, Brenner 2002.) However, individual consumption preferences alone do not produce gentrified spaces. Consumer agency does not wield the same political and economic power as large flows of speculative real estate capital, and mortgage loans have always been the precondition for gentrification.

Rather than articulating the causes of gentrification, individual preference theories demonstrate how changing consumer habits may be harnessed in order to complete the circuit of capital. Gentrification may begin in a neighborhood as individuals move without the assistance of larger development capital. However, in the case of West Oakland and countless other places, early gentrifiers cause little change in the landscape until the area is noticed by larger economic players and governmental agencies capable of directing money into development projects. In this context, the inflow of wealthier residents and homebuyers into West Oakland must be seen in the context of a vastly overinflated housing
market that impacted the neighborhood to a far greater degree than the limited number of new residents.

Consumption-based theories emphasize one agent of change among many, often far more influential actors on the production side of the housing equation: namely the “builders, developers, landlords, mortgage lenders, government agencies, [and] real estate agents” and both private and public entities promoting gentrification as a social good (Logan and Molotch 1987: 57.) These producers of urban space are engaged in a relationship with consumers, influencing demand through advertising and production of desirable housing options. Urban history in North America is one of uneven spatial divisions of wealth, labor, and living conditions that took shape through the housing market (Jackson 1985.) Suburbs and central cities typically enforced racial and class segregation through discriminatory covenants and as a consequence of racially biased lending patterns, and rapidly emerged as two poles of accumulation and disinvestment. Gentrification marks the rise of land-oriented capitalists who direct fiscal resources back towards the urban housing market, reproducing on a smaller scale this socioeconomic spatial polarization.

Some contemporary research focuses on the culture of gentrifiers and the creation of inner-city lifestyles as a relationship joining production and consumption arguments (Rofe 2003, Butler and Robson 2003.) A distinction is made between “production gentrifiers” who act as “investors in a pre-fabricated
identity, rather than [consumption gentrifiers] actively constructing their own place-based identity” (Rofe 2003: 2522.) As gentrified spaces become more widespread and more deeply entrenched in cities, less advertising and state provision of amenities is necessary to induce demand (Butler and Robson 2003.) Gentrification becomes the predominant style and policy priority in cities, and it is promoted as the key strategy to achieving a livable city (Harvey et al. 1999, Atkinson 2004, Slater 2006.)

In contrast to these consumption-based theories are the explanations embodied in Neil Smith’s rent gap theory, which has been widely discussed and used as a methodological and conceptual tool for understanding gentrification (Smith 1996, Harvey et al. 1999, Weber 2002, Slater 2006.) The rent gap is defined as the difference between the existing rent that a property can command and the potential for this rent to increase through capital improvements. As a result of chronic disinvestment in neighborhoods, this gap becomes sufficiently large to attract new capital investment, and developers are often further encouraged by economic assistance from local governments. The rent gap theory is not intended to be the sole determining factor of gentrification, but rather to show the critical role of speculative capital and state institutions in the urbanization process (Smith 1987, Clark 1992.)

The rent gap is a consequence of the uneven nature of capitalist growth across space. The “contradictory product of capitalist accumulation, which provides
economic growth at the expense of particular places, fractions of capital, and populations” is exemplified in the concurrence of suburban development with inner city disinvestment (Fainstein et al 1983: 275.) As capital jumps from place to place, in cycles of speculative boom and bust, it leaves its mark on the landscape and built environment. Areas previously devalorized by capital flight, like many inner city neighborhoods, may years later become prime areas for a new infusion of investment.

The creation of gentrified spaces depends upon large capital flows targeted at specific working-class areas. These flows must be justified both in economic terms (producing profit) and as a social good (reversing decay, deconcentrating poverty). An assemblage of land speculators, developers, and pro-gentrification political figures and agencies on the one hand, and an affluent set of consumers desiring these spaces are both essential parts of this dynamic.

4. Suburbanization and the Rediscovery of the City

The history of modern suburbanization is directly linked to the withdrawal of investment in older housing markets like West Oakland. In the early twentieth century the land market surrounding central urban areas originally developed for industry but quickly became a dynamic residential market as developers shaped an emerging middle-class identity that hinged on homeownership. Taking
advantage of cheap rural land was also a direct response to a shortage of avenues for profitable investment in the city at the time, due to the inherently long turnover rates of real estate investment (Harvey 1982, Walker 1981.) A spatial solution to the necessity of recirculating capital was found in suburban expansion, aided over the decades by new transportation technologies, by expanding urban populations, and by class and racial divisions in American society.

In Oakland during the 1940s private developers were encouraged by discriminatory federal housing policies that channeled vast amounts of mortgage capital to suburban-bound whites. Federal housing and mortgage loan strategies also adhered to racially discriminatory “covenants” that allowed only whites access to new housing; blacks became concentrated in West Oakland and the industrial corridor throughout East Oakland. Restrictions were sometimes violently enforced by white residents when blacks attempted to move in (Rhomberg 2004.)

Blacks still lived primarily in West Oakland, and residents seeking home loans there were refused as postwar capital investment in residential property gravitated toward the suburbs through the policies of the Federal Homeownership Association and the redlining practices of the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation that designated most inner city neighborhoods as too risky for investment. An Oakland Residential Analysis, published by the city’s Planning
Department in 1956, depicted West Oakland as seriously lacking in indicators of residential quality, prioritizing that neighborhood for urban renewal efforts (see Figure 4.) Among the indices used were substandard lots, overcrowded and dilapidated buildings, high levels of juvenile delinquency, and low incomes. In a manner consistent with the priorities of the period, a predominance of mixed land uses was also identified as having a deleterious effect on neighborhood quality (OCPC 1956.) While many of these uses may have been hazardous to human health, the disdain of mixed land uses also points to the preference among planners and government agencies for new suburban development. These factors combined with the decline of blue-collar jobs in Oakland throughout the second half of the twentieth century to make West Oakland into a predominantly African-American ghetto. The disinvestment that deeply impacted and shaped the character of West Oakland drove down land values there so that by the decade between 1998 and 2008 the area became realized as having great potential for profitable reinvestment. The earlier neglect experienced there positioned West Oakland for its decade-long cycle of gentrification.

Shortly after 1945, discriminatory housing and employment laws became a fixture of Oakland’s landscape. As white property owners moved out of West and East Oakland, social inequality and polarization increased (Rhomberg 2004; Self 2003.) Meanwhile, West Oakland deindustrialized rapidly, and the withdrawal of capital from the local economy left a landscape of “boarded
houses, shattered storefronts and vacant industrial land” (Sankalia 1999: 9.)

Black residents who remained in West Oakland as others moved away felt the
effects of job losses and economic abandonment most intensely. The
neighborhood became a devalued and neglected space throughout the postwar era.

While poverty and unemployment characterized West Oakland into the 1970s, the metropolitan Bay Area economy revived, sparking a return of capital to
downtown San Francisco and Silicon Valley, as the centripetal pull of
employment and business opportunities increasingly attracted investment capital
to those areas. Scholars have noted the shift in urban land use beginning in the
1970s, as growing financial and corporate service industries drew real estate
developers back towards metropolitan areas (Harvey 1989b, Ley 1996.) This
new economy began to replace the declining manufacturing base of cities, and
the subsequent loss of stable blue-collar jobs in these places further diminished
living conditions in working class neighborhoods (Walker 1981, Harvey 1989b,
Sugrue 1996, Brenner 2002.) Depressed land values in these neighborhoods
that had been unattractive to investors and consumers alike just a decade earlier
now represented investment opportunities as urban economies transformed.

The need for capital to reorder its strategies of profit-making at that time led to
both spatial and temporal solutions, or “fixes” to the crisis of the falling rate of
profit (Harvey 1982.) Mechanisms of expanded credit and debt available to
consumers (temporal fixes), coupled with the rediscovery of the city as devalued space ready for new investment, created a blueprint for gentrification. As the private sector shifted into the financial, real estate, and insurance industries, it simultaneously began moving operations back into the central business districts of certain cities, including San Francisco (which had always maintained its position as financial capital of the western U.S.), rehabilitating and developing new office buildings (Zukin 1987, Wyly and Hammel 2002.) Paralleling the corporate rediscovery of the city were new employees of the financial and corporate service economy who began moving into older parts of the city and rehabilitating their homes.

Cities were forced to restructure too, and many began to create conditions more favorable for financial investments as manufacturing slipped further. Under this new regime too, highly mobile and deregulated capital could determine with more force the conditions under which it would settle in certain places (Harvey 1989a.) An early form of neoliberalism became the predominant economic ideology in cities from the 1970s to the present, as city budgets became more austere while legal obstructions and taxes on investment capital were minimized:

Whereas the major territorial axis of economic competition prior to the 1970s pitted regional and national economies against each other, by the 1990s the new geographical axis of competition was pitting cities against cities in the global economy. This competition takes place not simply in terms of attracting and keeping industrial production but also in the marketing of cities as residential and tourist destinations (Smith 2002: 447.)
This logic of interurban competition prioritizes those residents and visitors who have a higher “consumption potential” (Beauregard 1986: 50), the winners of restructured urban labor markets and of gentrification. Scholars have attempted to understand the massive transformations to urban space over the past several decades through identifying historical moments, or waves of gentrification, and these waves to some degree help explain how gentrification proceeds in West Oakland.

5. Three Waves of Gentrification

The concept of “waves of gentrification” is an attempt to model urban change within cycles of economic activity and political trends, with each phase resulting from previous economic restructuring, political shifts and changes in the social composition of urban places. Despite local variation among cities, each wave of advancing gentrification marked many North American cities with similar patterns of social displacement and demographic change.

First-wave gentrification, occurring between the late 1950s and the national recession of 1973, was the result of urban renewal efforts undertaken by many city governments to reverse the decline of private investment in the inner city. These urban renewal strategies were largely driven by local and federal funds and had severe implications for the working class across the United States
Urban renewal was carried out through a process in which certain areas were identified as blighted, which further discouraged investment. These practices were followed by large-scale housing demolition of blighted neighborhoods, and construction of new transportation infrastructure and city attractions such as convention centers, through which urban tax bases would be replenished (Cordova 1991.)

During this first wave, large amounts of public funds were used to underwrite risks to investors and developers working on central city projects, and aggressive urban renewal policies guided city planning priorities. West Oakland’s 1956 Residential Quality map (see Figure 4) described an area that lacked the characteristics of a stable, vibrant neighborhood. This map at the very least supported the vision Oakland planners were developing for West Oakland, a vision that rationalized the demolition of vast swaths of low-income homes. The map in effect reduced much of West Oakland to an area that should be shunned by banks and investors, unless their efforts coincided with the city’s plans to level it. Urban renewal policies were enacted with both political and financial federal support between the late 1940s and the early 1960s. In particular, the 1949 and 1954 Federal Housing Acts “gave cities the power to assemble land, clear it of offending uses, and finance redevelopment” (Walker 1998: 4.)

Urban renewal expelled thousands of people from central city neighborhoods while others were relocated to public housing projects. The policies of urban
renewal did little to help increasing joblessness among the urban blue-collar workers. One study placed the number of U.S. urban housing units eliminated during the 1960s at “ten percent of all central city residences occupied by whites and twenty percent of units occupied by blacks,” not including displacement due to “more routine market forces” (Dahmann in Logan and Molotch 1987: 114.) In West Oakland, urban renewal “created the blight that it sought to ameliorate” (Solari 2001:35.) Urban renewal in West Oakland did not gentrify the area by any account, instead it wiped out businesses along the main 7th Street corridor. The Acorn project, the first foray into urban renewal that the city attempted, not one unit of housing was built after demolition until 1969.

Where the federal government had been active in realigning cities to the new paradigm of economic growth after the war, they pulled back from assisting cities by the late 1960s, ending subsidized housing programs by 1973. In many instances, agencies applied the term “blighted” to “long-standing and stable communities,” which were then subject to demolition (Cordova 1991: 25.) These areas, condemned through the designation of blight, became justified targets for urban renewal and renewed cycles of investment and accumulation in the built environment (Solari 2001, Weber 2002.) Virtually all of West Oakland was classified as “blighted” by city officials as early as the 1930s, and this characterization set the stage for the bulldozers and displacement of redevelopment through following decades (Rhomberg 2004.) Urban renewal
projects waned by the early 1970s, partly because financing projects became difficult as urban economies experienced inflation and cuts in federal funding. These difficulties were compounded by local hostility to the displacement caused by urban renewal. By the later part of the 1970s, however, a new wave of gentrification became prominent in cities across the U.S.

The massive-scale leveling of inner city core neighborhoods during the first wave of gentrification eradicated older land uses that had become obsolete in the circuits of capital accumulation; new values had to be created in order to bring these spaces into productive use. Smaller working class homes, whose mortgages typically were paid off, along with small businesses serving the area, were sacrificed for new housing and retail for wealthier residents (Walker 1981.) Funding for large-scale government programs dried up in the recession of the early 1970s, and new forms of investment capital reemerged in the aftermath to create a second wave of gentrification across North American cities. As the housing market rebounded by the late 1970s, gentrification became a more spatially generalized phenomenon in which the private sector took the lead, financed to a lesser but still important degree by local, state, and federal government.

This second wave of gentrification was facilitated by government subsidies in the form of block grants and other mechanisms designed to encourage private enterprise, but by the end of the 1970s government spending in cities was greatly
reduced. This era coincided with a shift from a declining Keynesian distributive state to a leaner and deregulated entrepreneurial urban management style, often promoting economic development with subsidies to developers and other more passive methods of encouragement (Harvey 1989a, Bounds and Morris 2006.) Real estate became an important investment arena for private capital sources that recognized the rent gap, or potential profits of purchasing land at depressed values in cities around the U.S. (Harvey 1989a, Hackworth and Smith 2001.) Economic revival in the new financial sectors made city land desirable again, and working class residential areas were promoted to the new middle class as economical and exotic alternatives to the suburbs (Smith 1996.)

During this second wave, however, West Oakland’s population fell deeper into poverty as suburbanization continued to draw people and retail establishments away from the city. Oakland’s Postwar Planning Committee noted the trend in 1945 towards the homebuilding boom outside of Oakland that threatened city tax revenues, property value losses, and the impending decline of the central business district (Oakland Postwar Planning Committee 1945.) The flight of investment and employment from the neighborhood, and from the entire city, continued the downward trajectory of property values and livelihoods of many West Oakland’s residents. Gentrification was far from a reality there, as efforts to revitalize downtown, largely unsuccessful, constituted the main focus of the city administration’s economic policies (Rhomberg 2004.) The dynamic financial
services sector aggregated mainly in the central business district of San Francisco. The stock market crash of 1987 and the ensuing recession created another dramatic slowdown of gentrification throughout the United States, prompting some to claim that the return of capital to the city would prove to be a short-lived phenomenon (Bourne 1993.) However, by the 1990s a third wave occurred across the U.S., in which gentrification reestablished itself as the defining feature of urban housing policy. Third-wave gentrification became more deeply rooted in the life of cities than ever before, remaking urban landscapes into more wholly transformed spaces with "shopping, restaurants, cultural facilities, open space, [and] employment opportunities-whole new complexes of recreation, consumption, production, and pleasure, as well as residence" (Smith 2002: 443.) This new round of investment did not occur evenly across urban space, however. While some neighborhoods experienced more thorough shifts to wealthier residents and commercial uses, there were neighborhoods like West Oakland that still appeared much as they had for decades.

Neoliberal economic policies are equated with a third wave of “postrecession”, or third wave gentrification, distinguishing it from previous eras of gentrification (Hackworth 2002). First, the consolidation of developer capital during the recession of the 1990s now allows for far more concentrated investments in large urban development projects. Second, the state more actively intervenes in the
process of planning gentrification than it previously had during second wave gentrification. This may include financial assistance, media promotion, and more aggressive policing for minor offenses. Third, social movements that once challenged gentrification are more marginalized politically. Two trends were identified in this regard. Often the very people resisting gentrification were themselves displaced in previous periods of gentrification. More likely, activist organizations transformed into state-sponsored affordable housing organizations whose mission emphasizes more conciliatory and market-friendly approaches to preventing displacement and securing more affordable housing. Lastly, neighborhoods once overlooked by investment capital become areas of intensive speculation and transformation.

Yet, despite the entrenchment and diffusion of gentrification in North American cities, pockets of disinvestment like West Oakland paradoxically survive in locations that would otherwise seem to fit the model of a neighborhood slated for intense speculation. This third wave of gentrification transformed West Oakland, but the gentrification there has proceeded along very slowly and unevenly, and in 2009 the neighborhood is far from being gentrified as the housing market takes a downturn. Moreover, downtown Oakland did not truly begin a process of gentrification until the mid-1990s third wave, and West Oakland lagged even further behind in this regard. Thus the first cycle of
gentrification in West Oakland highlights the geographic limitations of capital’s ability to reshape urban environments.

6. Third Wave Gentrification, Global Economy and Neoliberal Politics

Uneven development manifests as intense economic polarization at different geographic scales—among rich and poor countries, regional rust belts and boomtowns, and within cities. A once narrow conception of gentrification applied merely to housing markets and consumer demand has developed into a far more encompassing analysis of the process as an aspect of global economic, political, and cultural shifts (Smith 2002, Atkinson and Bridge 2005.) Gentrification is the “visible spatial component” (Sassen 2001: 261) to the restructuring world of global capital networks. Gentrification’s appearance is contingent upon local economic, political, and cultural contexts, yet its outcomes are for the most part unchanged:

The important point here is the rapidity of the evolution of an initially marginal urban process first identified in the 1960s and its ongoing transformation into a significant dimension of contemporary urbanism…[which] portends a displacement of working-class residents from urban centers (Smith 2002: 439.)

Saskia Sassen (1996) found that as economic activities become more spatially dispersed in the global economy, they simultaneously require more centralization. In particular, the need for more concentrated management
requires urban infrastructure for the “command and control” functions of key financial industries, as well as their support networks. Metropolitan regions are indispensable in fulfilling these new centralized functions in the economy, since “many of the resources necessary for global economic activities are not hypermobile and are, indeed, deeply embedded in place” (Sassen 1996.) Not all cities house these command and control functions, however. Cities like Oakland, situated near both Silicon Valley and San Francisco, may experience gentrification regardless, as regional housing and commercial real estate pressures extend beyond the economic centers (Yee and Quiroz-Martinez 1999.)

Cities are now super-commodities, and it is the business of city officials to market their respective places as pro-business in order to capture the mobile capital circulating around the globe. Urban space is still, despite the predominance of suburban development, an important investment channel that requires managers to ensure increased land values. Despite internal divisions, a consensus prevails to “eliminate any alternative vision of the purpose of local government or the meaning of community” (Logan and Molotch 1987: 51.) The vision that continues to gain ideological strength is that of the city governed by neoliberal social and economic policy.

Urban neoliberal policy increasingly permeates urban political culture and housing market policy, advocating rigid free market solutions, deregulation of capital, and severe economic austerity imposed on the public as the only formula
for a prosperous society. They are the localized urban corollary of a global attempt to return to a period of profitable economic growth. Yet neoliberal attempts to displace the problems of capital accumulation into new spatial and political forms are seen as temporary and plagued with contradictions, failing to restore economic growth rates and creating a vast global oppositional movement (Jones and Ward 2002, Weber 2002, Harvey 2006.) The neoliberal turn marks a decline of the liberal Keynesian model of state intervention prevalent in cities until the 1970s. Public investment in health, housing, infrastructure, and education was previously considered critical to the functioning of the economy and represented working class gains. At the same time, regulation of the private sector and capital mobility were maintained to moderate the irregular cycles of accumulation, which had reached such devastating proportions during the 1930s (Newman and Ashton 2004, Brenner et al 2005.)

The “distributive” city, materializing through decades of social struggle, has given way to cities based on severe economic discipline and a gradual trend toward more punitive politics. City governments increasingly must respond to the imperatives of unyielding market logic or lose access to vital resources (Hackworth 2002, MacLeod 2002, Brenner and Theodore 2005, Slater 2006.) Reduced federal funding to local governments and the rollback of federal agencies like HUD that restricted the private housing market, push cities further towards a fiscalization of planning policy. California cities have the added burden
of drastically reduced property tax revenues from the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, deepening the fiscalization of urban land use planning (Fulton and Shigley 2005.)

As cities themselves become commodities in a competitive global economy, an “embrace of public-private partnerships, deregulation, fiscal austerity, cross-subsidies, and market solutions” (Blomley 2004: 30) combines with police and state apparatus to enforce market discipline, as evidenced by the rise in repression of anti-gentrification activities over the last two decades. Cities more often contend with resistance to gentrification in less directly malevolent ways, (this is the case in West Oakland) and the proliferation of affordable housing nonprofits and community development corporations attests to the strength of these movements, the ability of the state to recuperate dissent, and the tensions of local governments that are anything but monolithic in their application of the neoliberal agenda (Robinson 1995, Smith 1996, Hackworth 2002, Mele 2004.) The continued devalorization of certain places and residents contrasted with the intense capital flows into others creates a strikingly divided city environment. Resulting class antagonisms are increasingly subdued through “zero tolerance” policies in the city, marked by heavy-handed police tactics and surveillance of public space.

There is an underlying economic logic behind the ideology of zero tolerance social control policies. Increased police presence and the criminalization of
certain behaviors in public space serve to prepare neighborhoods for middle class residents and retail. In an increasingly competitive market for global capital, urban economic development becoming dependent on creating and regulating places (HoSang *no date*.) This revanchism is increasingly found in urban politics is primarily a means of reducing economic risk in the urban environment (Smith 1996, Lees 2000, MacLeod 2002, Slater 2002.)

7. The Undiscovered Parts of the City

One of four components of postrecession gentrification is the broadening and deepening of the process geographically. Some neighborhoods that have previously undergone a residential and commercial upscaling experience “supergentrification,” in which extremely wealthy homebuyers, often employed within the financial sector, move into an area that has already gone through a wave of displacement to accommodate middle class residents (Lees 2004, 2004, Butler and Lees 2006.) On the other hand, neighborhoods close to the central urban core overlooked during previous eras of gentrification receive the attention of the local state and often larger corporate developers able to underwrite greater risk in their investments. Although the neighborhood did not witness the overwhelming levels of gentrification that concerned some, West Oakland has
increasingly become the recipient of development capital and has changed in significant ways.

Yet, gentrification literature lacks explanations as to why neighborhoods like West Oakland are overlooked in the first place, why investors ignore relative advantages in some places. The small amount of research that has gone on in this area provides a justification for analyzing these factors in west Oakland.

Using case studies, Shaw (2007) identified four factors at the local scale influential in hindering the advance of gentrification into a neighborhood. The first is the quality and size of the housing stock in an area that may be amenable to potential homebuyers and developers looking to rehabilitate housing units in order to realize their potential ground rent, thereby closing the rent gap. Second is the status of housing tenure and security in the neighborhood. Places with higher proportions of longstanding owners, as well as the presence of rent and eviction controls, tend to resist gentrification better than others. Third, the existence of local communities who are able to develop a political culture and organize to demand property tax relief, affordable housing, and other measures fare better than those places lacking strong social networks. Fourth, the assistance of a progressive local government, which is typically tied to cohesive community groups, often can prevent a wide range of gentrification ills. Other scholars have noted the importance of racial fears (Zukin 1987) as a potential limiting factor in the selection of housing among individual gentrifiers, despite the
existence of other favorable characteristics. Additionally, the role of discourse in shaping perceptions of place must be included in any explanation of the spatial logic of gentrification.

8. New Assessments of Gentrification

Recent appraisals of gentrification research point to an “almost total silence” on the part of researchers with respect to the effects of gentrification on displaced populations, and on lower-income residents in areas adjacent to gentrified zones (Slater, Curran, and Lees 2004: 1142.) Instead, serious critiques of gentrification have shifted to “somewhat centrist” approaches of looking at the behaviors of gentrifiers themselves or at interminable debates about the minutiae of defining gentrification (1141.) Much contemporary research in the field has shifted towards a less strident critique of gentrification, or more generally support for the process with some reservations (Freeman and Braconi 2004, Hamnett 2003.) Many recent studies promote the advantages of gentrification while treating its negative consequences as unalterable. Instead, more researchers speak of managing rather than fighting gentrification (Slater 2006.)

Freeman and Braconi argue, based on their research in New York City, that gentrification does not definitively cause displacement of low-income residents.
Rather, increased job opportunities, amenities, and neighborhood safety stemming from gentrification encourage lower-income residents to remain, despite added financial burdens. Newman and Wyly (2006) have put forward the most comprehensive critique of Freeman and Braconi’s research to date. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, and many of the same datasets used in the other study, Newman and Wyly reject the notion that displacement is not a major consequence of gentrification. Instead they argue that more gradual and indirect displacement pressures make gentrifying cities unaffordable to low-income and moderate-income residents. They note the importance of affordability controls in limiting displacement in the Freeman and Braconi study, and that erosion of these controls in the future will cause widespread displacement in gentrified neighborhoods. A study by the Fannie Mae Foundation (Hsu 2004) identified government subsidies and rent-control programs to be critical factors inhibiting displacement in the neighborhoods studied by Freeman and Braconi, and that these were being dramatically cut from New York’s housing budget. Additionally, they found that a significant number of displaced, who either became homeless, crowded into housing, or left the city, were not counted in Freeman and Braconi’s study.

Researchers who maintain a more critical perspective on gentrification concern themselves with the policy implications of advocating for market solutions to urban problems. It is argued that city governments can either
compete for increasingly mobile capital or face permanent crises of capital flight (Slater 2006, Shaw 2007.) Presenting gentrification and displacement as the only option for urban regeneration is a false choice offered by local governments and developers currently formulating neoliberal urban policy. However, as in the case of West Oakland, active community members who want a voice in the remaking of their neighborhood may influence these policies.

Existing literature on gentrification has extensively analyzed various dimensions to the phenomenon of gentrification. The theoretical approach of uneven development emphasizes the use of geographic scale for comprehending the mechanisms that drive difference in the urban landscape. Through years of debate over the role of agency in gentrification, researchers have arrived at a point where a variety of local forces can be seen as actively shaping gentrification, increasing the level of complexity with which we can analyze the process. A wealth of historical research into urbanization and suburbanization provides the context for understanding patterns of investment and disinvestment that support Neil Smith’s rent gap theory, an indispensable tool for contextualizing gentrification in West Oakland. Less attention has been devoted to the overlooked spaces in cities, the places that seem to be the next area to be transformed, but for which any change comes very slowly. West Oakland is an interesting place in this regard, so central in the Bay Area and yet so far removed from its economic dynamism. Researching the particular nature
of West Oakland’s decade-long cycle of gentrification will, it is hoped, be of some benefit to local community members and policy makers who seek to understand how this neighborhood changed, and what forces affected those changes.

By examining the forces that affected gentrification in West Oakland during this period, this thesis will look more deeply into the local context from which these factors emerge. A minimal amount of scholarly literature on limiting factors of gentrification exists, and this thesis discusses the factors identified in West Oakland, and how they interact with the course of investment and gentrification there. How community members engage in land use decisions, and the significance of these decisions as limiting factors to gentrification will be discussed; the degree to which gentrification can be resisted effectively is a concern among recent scholars discussed in the literature review, and this question informs my own research. I contend that community members in West Oakland can manage to some degree the detrimental effects of gentrification, yet they are minor players in the larger speculative housing and commercial real estate markets that have significantly transformed Bay Area communities over the past decade.

Finally, I will look at West Oakland with Jason Hackworth’s conceptual framework of “waves of gentrification” in mind, and assess the changes in the neighborhood in relation to this theoretical approach. To avoid confusion, I distinguish between the term I use to describe a period of gentrification in West
Oakland as a cycle, and Hackworth’s theory of gentrification “waves”. I use the term cycle to correspond with a moment in which several combined indicators of gentrification occur at a rapid pace, and then stop rather abruptly. This cycle follows the economic cycle of expansion and decline between 1998 and 2008 closely. The fluctuations in the regional, national, and even global flows of capital, their vitality in the housing market, created produced local changes in the overall makeup of West Oakland. On the other hand, a “wave” of gentrification in this thesis refers to theoretical observations and assumptions about previous eras of gentrification, emphasizing the underlying similarities across urban areas in the United States. This attempt to model gentrification will be assessed in the context of West Oakland’s recent experience. Although it will be shown that West Oakland did not follow these theoretical developments very well, it has gentrified over the past decade in its own “cycle.” Therefore, the first cycle of gentrification in West Oakland will be discussed as it follows or departs from of “wave” theories of gentrification across the North American urban landscape.
V. Research Methods

Analyzing gentrification in urban neighborhoods requires a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. Because gentrification is a complex reordering of urban space, with changes occurring from the scale of one city property to a metropolitan region, certain data may not be accessible at the precise scale needed. There may be problems applying decennial census data to changes taking place in periods of time shorter than ten years. Some of this data is available through yearly American Community Surveys. As a result, many studies on gentrification employ anecdotal evidence in lieu of empirical information (Kennedy and Leonard 2001a.) This is particularly true regarding West Oakland household eviction data. Although residential displacement (either directly from eviction or indirectly through nonaffordability) is a central claim of critics of gentrification, the data to empirically support such claims is virtually absent. There is great difficulty in gathering data on former residents of a neighborhood, most of whom left without initiating legal action.

Nonetheless, the data used for this thesis are meant to support hypotheses about gentrification in West Oakland, and an array of data sources are used to
present a picture of changes in the neighborhood with explanatory power despite data gaps. Although there have been two notable studies of West Oakland done in recent years (Robert Self’s 2003 *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* and Chris Rhomberg’s 2004 *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland*), very little research exists that assesses gentrification there, and the actual changes occurring at that level (Yee and Quiroz-Martinez 1999.) The research is an attempt to develop a picture of neighborhood change through three primary methods of data collection:

1. Quantitative data obtained primarily from the United States Census 1990 and 2000 years, as well as the American Community Survey 2006. Demographic change, home price/rental price, income and other data relevant to an accurate characterization of neighborhood will be used.

2. Archival primary source material, from local newspapers, planning documents, community-based land-use policy documents, and other sources are used to assess a variety of factors that either promote or limit gentrification.

3. Interviews with key informants involved in West Oakland development issues, including community residents, redevelopment committee members, planners, developers, realtors, local politicians, and local urban
policy researchers provide qualitative evidence of the changes that took place in West Oakland.

First, I will look at a number of different indicators to assess the character of gentrification occurred between 1998 and 2008, and the rate at which gentrification related changes took place. These indicators include changes in home values and rents, evictions, and other demographic information. These census figures will use data for the 94607 zip code as this most closely encompasses the West Oakland area (see Figure 5.) The area within zip code 94607 is the most accessible geographical category for data covering the years between the 2000 American Census and the present. I will also look at census block group data for areas within West Oakland yet not covered by zip code data. These data will be compared with figures for adjacent zip codes, Oakland, and Alameda County. Although data observed at the census tract level may reveal smaller-scale differences within West Oakland, information for the entire zip code is most useful for understanding differentiation at the city scale. Because gentrification is a complex process that transforms neighborhoods in numerous ways, it is important to look at census figures that most closely reflect these changes to both the place and the people living there. Much of this data is only significant as an indicator of gentrification when analyzed in conjunction with other data, whether from the United States Census Bureau or elsewhere.
Next, I will use a variety of archival material, primarily from local newspapers, planning documents, and material published by community groups in Oakland focusing on the impacts of the dot-com era in Oakland, and especially in West Oakland, during the period between the late 1990s and 2008. These sources contribute to a narrative of gentrification in West Oakland from a variety of sources and encompass material that ranges in perspective on issues of gentrification. Documents produced by Oakland’s Planning Department, Community and Economic Development Agency, and Redevelopment Agency articulate land use, housing, and other policies that shape West Oakland; this thesis focuses specifically on the role these policies have played in contributing to or mitigating against the more serious negative consequences of gentrification. Local news media sources shed light on a variety of subjects related to gentrification in West Oakland, often editorializing in the process. Material produced by community organizations is an especially informative source of data regarding the opinions and research of those most directly affected by these negative, and sometimes positive, effects of gentrification. Each of these sources is representative of different individuals and groups, yet also reveal the degree of collaboration between community members of West Oakland and city agencies to formulate policy that reflects the concerns of residents.

Finally, I conducted interviews with individuals closely associated with land use planning, economic and community development in West Oakland.
Interviewees were selected based on their familiarity with these subjects as professionals or as community activists. Participants included current members of the following populations: housing developers active within the West Oakland neighborhood; employees of city and county agencies involved with economic and community development or planning within West Oakland; community members from West Oakland involved with a community-based organization concerned with gentrification or redevelopment in the neighborhood; local policy researchers focusing on urban development; and local politicians that have been involved with these issues (see Appendix 1.)

Participant selection was accomplished through a purposeful sampling technique. Opportunistic and snowball sampling methods were also used as I learned of other potential participants through outreach and data collection. Outreach to interview subjects occurred through engagement at community and public meetings, as well as email and phone communication. Questions posed to the subjects covered a wide range of themes related to West Oakland land use and housing policy, community political participation in these policies, local economics and investment patterns. Interview questions are listed in Appendix 2.

This study is constrained by certain limitations in data that are important in assessing both the driving forces and limitations of gentrification in West
Oakland. First, eviction data is difficult to assemble. The problems of analyzing displacement from gentrification have been noted by other researchers (Atkinson

Figure 5. Zip Code Map of West Oakland and Adjacent Areas.

Source: Social Compact 2005
2002.) Many evicted households often do not seek assistance with any organization, whether it is a legal advocacy group or public agency, and are not counted in any figures. Court records do not reveal causes of eviction or trial outcomes and are made inaccessible through cost and retrieval time. Records of eviction notices do not correspond with actual evictions and are unreliable data in this regard. Tracking of displaced households for research purposes is beyond the scope of this thesis. The evidence for evictions used here is mainly anecdotal therefore, and I have tried to provide empirical data to support claims of eviction rates when available.

Second, trying to understand why a neighborhood like West Oakland does not gentrify as expected would require an investigation into the choices made by developers and homebuyers that did not move into West Oakland during the late 1990s. Although concerns about crime as well as racial attitudes may be factors in limiting gentrification in West Oakland, it was not feasible to assess these here.
VI. Findings

Gentrification is a complex process of urban change affected by numerous factors, including government economic and land use policy, the dynamics of capital investment, cultural tastes, and the responses of those living in neighborhoods experiencing gentrification all play a role in how it occurs. The primary concern of these findings is to analyze some of the more prominent influences conditioning gentrification in West Oakland between 1998 and 2008, in order to better understand the uneven process of urban development. Researchers have used a range of data, both quantitative and qualitative, to illustrate the process of gentrification (Hamnett 1991, Kennedy and Leonard 2001b.) Some of these measurements are inherently problematic to the gentrification debate as some residents may welcome changes that are, to other residents, emblematic of gentrification. For example, rising home prices benefit the home-owning population in a neighborhood, while potentially putting those same homes out of range for prospective buyers living there. While this research does not dispute the positive effects of increased public and private investment in lower-income urban neighborhoods, the emphasis here is on the unfair burden of negative impacts some residents’ experience.

Gentrification studies highlight the vulnerability of groups to displacement and other negative impacts and the degree of social power these groups are able to
wield in the face of more powerful economic and political forces. To analyze the replacement of one socioeconomic stratum with a more affluent one, census data provides an important source of data to show changes occurring over time in one specific geographic area. Qualitative data, from planning documents to newspaper articles and interviews, may provide insight into the issue of local political influence, and may yield a more complete picture of the motivations driving public policy, and to concerns of residents about their neighborhood.

This research focuses first on the measurements used to assess levels of neighborhood change that indicate gentrification. I have looked for spikes in residential mobility and demographic change in West Oakland. Although there may be a baseline of mobility in any neighborhood, due to evictions, divorce, job changes and other factors, these are not of concern to this research. The second findings section examines the forces influencing development in West Oakland, and the extent to which such development contributes to gentrification. West Oakland is a neighborhood encompassing almost six square miles, and this section touches on some of the more striking land use trends and conflicts there.
1. Measuring Gentrification

This study uses six main categories to measure gentrification trends: changes in housing data, eviction data, income data, ethnic change, educational attainment, and residential consumption patterns. Gentrification literature uses these measures as indicators of neighborhood change, as well as qualitative data derived through interviews with key subjects and archival resources. These quantitative data describe physical changes to the landscape, economic change in housing markets, and social change in the makeup of neighborhoods.

Although data for new residents’ year of arrival into West Oakland is unavailable in between census periods, 2000 Decennial Census data shows the beginning of an immigration trend that continues into 2008 and can be better understood when combined with other census figures provided in this section. West Oakland experienced a significant demographic shift between 1998 and 2008, and this shift illustrates the changes occurring in the Bay Area economy while simultaneously describing finer scale transformations at the neighborhood level.

The rise in new residents to West Oakland during the 1990s occurred largely during the last three years of that decade. Over fifty-five percent of West Oakland residents surveyed by the U.S. Census in 2000 moved there between 1995 and 2000, while less than seventeen percent moved to the neighborhood in the five-year period prior to that. Almost one-fifth of the decade’s new residents
moved there between 1999 and March 2000, when the high technology boom was at its peak. These indicators of gentrification show a short burst of rapid change in West Oakland, appearing later there than in other more gentrified neighborhoods in San Francisco, and are consistent with comments made about Oakland, and particularly West Oakland, being a place of last resort for new residents and developer capital to settle.

a. Housing and Home/Rental Price Change

Changes in the value of land, as reflected through home and rent prices, are an important indicator of gentrification in neighborhoods. Home prices soared throughout the Bay Area between the late 1990s and a decade later, but the spikes in West Oakland home sale prices exceeded most Bay Area neighborhoods by several orders of magnitude. Median prices for both home sales and rental units are commonly used to analyze these trends, and are used by the city of Oakland for its own data collection (Oakland CEDA 2004, InfoOakland 2004.) The median price for homes within the 94607 zip code area sold in March 1996 was $39,000. At that time, the median sale price citywide was $145,000. These depressed land values remained out of step with the rest of the city although the real estate market had begun heating up throughout
much of the Bay Area. By July 1998, the real estate market in Oakland had not yet begun to take off. The 94607-area year to date (YTD) median home price as of July 1998 was $55,000; meanwhile, the 1998 median YTD sale price for the entire city of Oakland was $215,000.

By 2005, however, West Oakland no longer lagged behind much of the city (or the Bay Area); it had undergone an enormous shift in home sale prices. Averaging January, July, and December of that year, home sale prices averaged $457,000, increasing from 1998 by over 700%. These averages rivaled those for the city of Oakland. Relative to income levels in West Oakland, these figures reflect an increase that far outpaced the buying power of the overwhelming majority of residents in the neighborhood (ORA 2005.) West Oakland’s average sales prices climbed higher in 2006 to over $500,000, although figures from the first four months of 2007 signal a decline in these prices to $462,500. This trend is consistent with national home sales and price figures beginning to decline as of 2007.

The dramatic spike in home prices in West Oakland put homeownership out of reach for a majority of its residents. Of course, for those already owning their homes, these value leaps were welcome news. Renters typically bear the heaviest burden of increased housing costs in gentrifying neighborhoods, and often the least legal protections as well. In California, Proposition 13 has protected longtime homeowners since 1978 by from increases in their property
taxes as a result of increased home valuation (Fulton and Shigley 2005.) West Oakland has a large proportion of renter-occupied versus owner-occupied units, and concerns over gentrification focused mostly on tenants of unsubsidized units. Rental units decreased only slightly from 69.9% of total units in 1990 to 68.4% in 2000. Yet between 2000 and 2006, the percentage had dropped to 61.8. During this same period owner-occupied units increased consistently from 15.5 to 24.5 percent. Combining these numbers with other demographic changes in the neighborhood suggests that most new homeowners were not local residents when they purchased a home in West Oakland. An increase in homeownership, particularly when home values are beyond the means of most residents, is employed as an indicator of gentrification (Kennedy and Leonard 2001, Butler and Lees 2006.)

The addition of many new residents correlates with anecdotal evidence from newspapers, community residents, and others regarding the appeal of West Oakland to those escaping the high prices across the Bay starting in the late 1990s. West Oakland’s residential stability, the percentage of those who stay in the same residence for five years or more, was stable during the 1990s but fell significantly between 2000 and 2006.

According to one twenty-year resident of the neighborhood near Macarthur BART station, a few new “gentrifiers” moved in and started fixing up homes with the anticipation of making money in real estate market in the period between
2000 and 2003, while some others came looking for affordable homes for themselves. Real estate values really began ascending in 2003, bringing far more speculation. Numerous houses were bought from older people who benefited from their values increasing, often by speculators who used properties mainly as rentals, and then resold them after a couple of years. Overall this had a negative impact on the neighborhood as people with a commitment to improving the area moved out (Rice 2008.) Another West Oakland resident recognized during the same time period the “flipping” of properties - houses sold specifically for short-term profit in a rapidly inflating housing market - through homes changing ownership without anyone even moving in (Macdonald 2008.)

The 94612 zip code showed an even steeper decline in residential tenure over this time, suggesting the impact of Mayor Brown’s 10K Plan that was designed to draw ten thousand new, middle and upper income residents to the downtown area. The decline in residential stability further bolsters the claim that West Oakland's population increase represents a replacement of many older residents with newer households. Although many developments completed in the six-year period between 2000 and 2006 were built on vacant land, a significant percentage of new residents moved into units previously occupied by tenants paying lower rents.

Rental prices also rose considerably in West Oakland during the period between the late 1990s and 2007. Median rents increased from $311 in 1990, to
$437 by 2000, and then to $664 in 2005 (US Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2005). The importance of rent and home price figures is in their relation to the income levels of residents, as a strong indicator of affordability in a neighborhood and of the vulnerability of residents to being priced out of their neighborhood. In 1999, before the staggering rise in West Oakland’s home prices, only thirty-five percent of the neighborhood’s residents could afford to pay a typical monthly mortgage payment on a median priced home, while sixty-nine percent were not able to afford an apartment at the median rent (Pacific Institute 2002.) These rates would be significantly lower in 2007, making West Oakland possibly the least affordable Bay Area neighborhood relative to its residents’ socioeconomic status. The high demand for housing in the Bay Area, magnified further during the dot-com boom, assured that increasingly expensive apartments were never vacant for long. Rent and home price increases are one aspect of gentrification, representing changes to a place, and these changes are necessarily linked to changes occurring in the population.

b. Residential Displacement Data

The central problem of gentrification is the lack of social power wielded by low-income residents, and their resulting vulnerability to displacement and the loss of their community. Although other indicators of gentrification may be as
important, displacement due to eviction or rapid rent increases are both real consequences and potent symbols of gentrification. However, tracking actual displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods is difficult, and there is a limited amount of this data in the literature that goes beyond inferring displacement estimates from data sources (Atkinson 2002.) Eviction figures are particularly elusive because so many evictions occur without legal adjudication.

Until the Just Cause ordinance of 2003 passed by a voter-sponsored initiative in Oakland, there were few protections for renters. The Just Cause ordinance, originally voted down by the Oakland City Council, was later passed by a citizen initiative. It prohibited “no-cause” evictions throughout Oakland, and as a result the number of evictions throughout Oakland dropped. West Oakland’s Council representative Nancy Nadel, who supported the ordinance, commented that prior to its passage she received calls about evictions every day, whereas afterwards the volume of calls dropped to almost nothing (Nadel 2008.) This was an important victory for residents throughout Oakland, and especially for lower-income households. Despite the existence of eviction defense, tenants’ rights, and community law organizations in Oakland, many of those evicted did not take any action, as many tenants are unaware of their legal rights or of assistance from local organizations.

Neighborhoods with a high percentage of renters are at a higher risk of economic displacement from gentrification, and West Oakland has some of the
lowest home ownership rates in the Bay Area (see Tables 2a through 2d.)
Between 1990 and 2000, renter-occupied units there fell slightly from 69.9 percent of residents to 68.4 percent. However, by 2006 that number had fallen more dramatically to 61.8 percent, a substantial departure of renters in a relatively short period of time. In real numbers, renter-occupied units declined and then increased to about the same level (6111 units) throughout the 1990-2006 census period, and the percentage decrease in these is due to larger increases in both owner-occupied and vacant units. Although there has been no net loss of renter-occupied units, the enormous increase in median rental price in the neighborhood suggest that a cycling of newer and wealthier tenants took place over that time; this is consistent with other census data revealing changes in the makeup of West Oakland.

Oakland’s eviction rate jumped three hundred percent over a fifteen-month period between the summer of 1998 and the fall of 1999. In the two-year period prior to the Just Cause ordinance of 2003, there were 1910 reported evictions without cause in Oakland (Harvey et al. 1999.). These cases were compiled from three of the six nonprofit organizations providing assistance to tenants. One study note that over three times that amount are estimated to have gone unreported (Hartman and Robinson 2003.) This estimate is more consistent with Oakland’s Rent Adjustment Program, who received 10,590 eviction notices during the 2006-2007 fiscal year, up twelve percent from the 2005-2006 fiscal
Table 2a. Renter-Occupied Units by Percentage of Total Units.

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<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
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<td>43.9</td>
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<td>70.0</td>
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Table 2b. Renter-Occupied Units by Number of Units.

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Table 2c. Owner-Occupied Units by Percentage of Total Units.

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Table 2d. Owner-Occupied Units by Number of Units.

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<td>60,142</td>
<td>62,484</td>
<td>66,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Oakland</td>
<td>1,354</td>
<td>1,736</td>
<td>2,481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Housing Units Summary Report 2008.demographicsnow.com
year, in which they received 9417 notices (CEDA 2007c.)

Renters are most vulnerable to displacement, but they are affected differently based on the type of rental unit they occupy. A 2004 study carried out for HTH Ltd., a local developer at the Wood Street Station, found that of the 9,369 housing units in West Oakland, roughly eighty percent were rental units. Of these rental units, about seventy percent fell under the city’s Rent Adjustment Ordinance that sets yearly rent increase limits, either as rent-controlled private housing or as public housing and assisted living units. This left about two thousand units in the neighborhood that are legally exempt from protection against unchecked rent increases.

This study was done at the request of the developer to empirically assess the neighborhood’s vulnerability to gentrification that may occur from these development projects; it came about after the 2003 Just Cause ordinance and did not focus on evictions as a cause of displacement. As for the rest of the renters deemed safe from these increases, the study noted that a form of exclusionary displacement still has the effect of shifting a neighborhood from low to higher-income residents, as those who vacate a unit voluntarily may not be able to afford living in the area as rents go up (Conley Consulting Group 2004.) Others have disputed these assessments of vulnerability to gentrification in West Oakland, and have conversely found that almost seventy percent of the
neighborhood’s population should be recognized as vulnerable to, rather than protected from, the pressures of gentrification (Mundie et al. 2005.)

On the other hand, West Oakland’s rise in land values benefited numerous homeowners. Many of the subjects interviewed for this research alluded to homeowners in West Oakland benefiting from the appreciation of home values (Getz 2008, Macdonald 2008, Rice 2008, Nadel 2008.) These individuals saw neighbors or other residents, particularly older African-American homeowners and their descendants, able to sell their homes at prices far exceeding their original purchase price. Many of these homeowners bought their homes decades before the boom, and often moved to suburbs or out of California entirely after selling their homes (Hill 2006.) This “up and out” phenomenon is consistent with current research into contemporary African-American migration (Bailey 2005, Frey 2004, Ginwright and Akom 2007), and is an important aspect of contemporary gentrification that affects perceptions among residents and policymakers, tempering concerns about displacement with examples of the beneficiaries of the process.

c. Income Data

Income-level data reveal important transformations that occur in gentrifying neighborhoods. This data provides a more detailed picture regarding who is
moving into and out of an area, and illustrates more vividly the main component by which gentrification functions: that is, the replacing of lower-income households with those of higher incomes. Some trends are immediately recognizable in West Oakland from Tables 3a and 3b. West Oakland’s poorest residents, whose household incomes ranged between $0 and $19,999, fell dramatically in real numbers between 1990 and 2006. The next income level ($20,000-$29,999) was virtually unchanged, while households making between $30,000 and $49,999 increased in a proportion that might be expected to coincide with typical cost of living and wage increases over fifteen years. Incomes higher than $50,000, though few in numbers, became the most rapidly increasing strata in West Oakland during this time, with those households making between $100,000 and $124,999 increasing by over one thousand percent within this sixteen-year time frame. Projections for 2011 show the greatest population increases will continue to be among the top four income brackets, while all others income levels are projected to change moderately. Perhaps most important about Tables 3a and 3b is the rapid change that occurred before 2000 (the majority of which happened during the last three years of that decade), and the slowdown of this demographic change in the years between 2000 and 2006. The gentrification that took place in West Oakland got an initial start in these earlier years as new residents moved in, but then subsided to a more moderate pace of change. It can be said that gentrification there, while significant, was late in
Table 3a. West Oakland Household Income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Population</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21,177)</td>
<td>(21,306)</td>
<td>(23,545)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Income</td>
<td>Percent of Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0-$9,999</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-$19,999</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$29,999</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-$39,999</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-$49,999</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$59,999</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-$74,999</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-$124,999</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000-$149,999</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000+</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3b. West Oakland Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-$9,999</td>
<td>-30.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-$19,999</td>
<td>-13.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$29,999</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-$39,999</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-$49,999</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$59,999</td>
<td>187.2%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>250.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-$74,999</td>
<td>242.5%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>350.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>191.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>306.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-$124,999</td>
<td>383.3%</td>
<td>129.7%</td>
<td>1010.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000-$149,999</td>
<td>213.6%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>404.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000+</td>
<td>256.7%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>440.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

coming and short in duration.

By 2004 West Oakland still had among the highest poverty rates in the Bay Area, with 36.2% of its population living below the poverty line. The University of California at Santa Cruz Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community determined that 60.8% of the neighborhood’s population lived on less than half of poverty-level incomes (compared with 24.1% for all of Alameda County), a more reliable statistic for measuring households’ ability to meet their needs (Pastor, Jr. et al. 2004.)

Although household income trends reveal a lot about changes in West Oakland, other data sets are useful to understand more fully the makeup of the neighborhood in terms of ethnic background, educational levels, and consumption patterns. The replacement of poor and working-class residents in an area with a wealthier group of people involves wider changes in the area’s character.

d. Ethnic Composition in West Oakland

Researchers have used information about household income and ethnicity, drawn from decennial census data, to illustrate socioeconomic and cultural change in gentrifying neighborhoods. While gentrification is primarily defined as a phenomenon in which class power transforms space, in many cases these
transformations are more visible as new ethnic groups replace others. The primary motive of making profits from remaking urban space translates very frequently into uprooting people based on ethnicity. West Oakland has transformed significantly and in ways that indicate an advancing rate of gentrification taking place in the past ten years. First, West Oakland’s population surged between 2000 and the latest 2006 census update, from 21,306 people to 23,545, while surrounding areas remained relatively constant (except for the 94612 downtown area). While West Oakland's population had stayed roughly constant between 1990 and 2000 (21,177 and 21,306), it grew by ten percent in the following six years and is projected to increase another 4.28 percent by 2011, while surrounding neighborhoods are projected to stay virtually the same.

Coupled with this rise in population within West Oakland and downtown is the striking ethnic shift taking place in these areas. Gentrification often takes place in neighborhoods that are composed primarily of ethnic minorities, and researchers have observed the racial dimension to gentrification (Kennedy and Leonard 2001b.) This is particularly important in the case of West Oakland due to its predominance of African-Americans, many who have lived in the neighborhood for several decades. Residents categorized as white have not lived in West Oakland in such high numbers since the mid-twentieth century, after postwar suburbanization drew tens of thousands of white families out of older urban neighborhoods throughout the U.S. In 1990, whites made up 10.3 percent of the
population in the 94607 zip code. Surrounding areas ranged from three to five times that proportion. Blacks accounted for 63.2 percent of residents, however that number dropped to 51.7 percent of West Oakland’s population by the 2000 census and down to 39.6 percent by 2006. Whites in West Oakland increased only marginally between 1990 and 2000 (8.3 percent) to make up 11.1 percent of the population there. Yet in the following six years, their numbers increased to 19.8 percent of the population (an increase of 24.6 percent.) These ratios far outpace similar trends in nearby areas. There were substantial increases for both Asian and Hispanic ethnic groups in West Oakland, yet these population increases were largely paralleled by similar changes in surrounding neighborhoods of Oakland. Those identifying as Hispanic increased from 7.5 percent of the West Oakland population in 1990 to 12.6 by 2000, and 16.3 percent by 2008. Asian individuals experienced an even greater rise in numbers in the 94607 zip code (which includes part of downtown Oakland’s Chinatown) from 21.4 percent in 1990 to 25.9 percent in 2000, and 31.9 percent in 2006.

The percentage increase for White residents between 1990 and 2000 was 8.3 percent, whereas the increase was 22.0 percent and 70.3 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic ethnic categories, respectively. However, between 2000 and 2006 these percentages shifted tremendously. White residents increased during this six-year period by 97.1 percent, while Asian residents increased their population by 33.3 percent and those of Hispanic
ethnicity had a population increase of 34 percent. Whites therefore began migrating more rapidly into the neighborhood during the six-year period while Asian population change increased slightly and Hispanic movement dropped to half its previous rate of increase.

Gentrification must be understood as more than a shift in ethnic groups. Although these changes often indicate the replacement of lower-income households, this is not always the case. Increases in international immigration from Asian and Latin American countries invariably result in new points of entry and residence for these immigrants, with lower-income neighborhoods like West Oakland absorbing higher proportions of these newcomers. Not all Asian and Latino households were immigrants, and neither did they consistently belong to one socioeconomic level. West Oakland appeared to be undergoing several different processes at once during the decade between 1998 and 2008. As gentrification proceeded slowly in the neighborhood, wealthier residents moved in. Census Bureau data from the 2000 census showed that White, non-Hispanic median household income was $58,281, while Hispanic or Latino households was $27,183. Black household median income was the lowest at $ 17,562 and Asian household median income was only slightly higher at $18,021. The gentrification marked by households of significantly higher incomes moving into the area are therefore correlated with an influx of White residents, while Hispanic
or Latino households exhibit a less dramatic upward pressure on the neighborhood land values.

e. Educational Attainment and Consumption Patterns

Other demographic data helps to paint a more complete picture of changes related to gentrification, including rising education levels and different consumer habits of new residents. Gentrified neighborhoods are associated with more highly educated incomers who occupy a far greater proportion of professional occupations than lower-income residents. Educational attainment rose dramatically in West Oakland relative to adjacent communities. The percentage of residents holding either a Bachelor’s or Graduate degree there increased from 9.0 (in 1990) to 14.8 (2000) to 26 (2006), while those earning Associate’s degrees and High School diplomas remained constant (Population Summary Report 2008).

Supplementing this information is a marked increase in number of vehicles per household over time (Table 4.) West Oakland surpassed other neighborhoods except for the downtown area in this regard, despite a rising level of automobile ownership across the four adjacent zip codes. Most of the increase in all areas took place during the period between 2000 and 2006, suggesting an important shift in disposable income among newer residents of
West Oakland and downtown. Family size has remained almost entirely constant throughout this period, making greater vehicle per household ratio especially striking.

Table 4. Average Vehicles Per Household.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zip Code</th>
<th>94607</th>
<th>94609</th>
<th>94608</th>
<th>94612</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household Summary Report 2008. demographicsnow.com

Consistent with these census figures are changes in employment opportunities throughout the East Bay, and throughout California and the United States. Shifts in employment across the East Bay over the last twenty-five years, and especially in the late 1990s, created an "hourglass economy" in which high wage and low wage sectors are expanding while middle range jobs disappear. As 16,000 manufacturing jobs were lost, 15,000 new manufacturing jobs were created, primarily in low-wage assembly positions. Of the 150,800 jobs created
in the East Bay during the 1990s, 62.3% were in the service sector, a wide category containing retail, government, banking, health and business related positions. Twenty-five percent of these service sector jobs, 37,200 were business service jobs, a category that is roughly divided between high-wage computer technology positions and low-wage janitorial and security jobs. It is also worth noting that ten percent of all new East Bay jobs are temporary positions, leaving many workers in precarious employment without benefits (Greenwich and Niedt 2001.)
2. Factors Influencing Gentrification in West Oakland

a. Geographic Proximity to Boom-Related Employment Centers

Urban researchers have described geographic location as an essential characteristic that makes a neighborhood a potential site for gentrification (Ley 1996, Smith 1996, Shaw 2007.) West Oakland has always been ideally situated for both residential and commercial development projects. As the first densely settled area in the East Bay, this area prospered due to its waterfront access and, by 1869, its position at the terminus of the transcontinental railroad. Its economic importance lasted roughly until the decades of disinvestment, housing discrimination and unemployment following the Second World War left West Oakland a predominantly African-American ghetto. However, during the dot-com boom and at present, West Oakland still retains its appeal to homebuyers, developers, and businesses because of ideal location and transportation access at the virtual center of the Bay Area (Getz 2008.)

During the late 1990s, West Oakland occupied an ideal location within the dynamic of the Bay Area. Freeway access at various points across the neighborhood led West to San Francisco, south to San Jose, and north to Emeryville and Berkeley. The West Oakland BART station was a short ride under the Bay from downtown San Francisco. During and after the economic
boom, politicians, developers, and journalists proclaimed the virtues of residential and commercial investment in West Oakland (DelVecchio 2000, Ginsburg 2004.) Foremost among these was its proximity to transportation infrastructure leading to the higher-wage employment centers in the region, San Francisco and San Jose. This older industrial inner city neighborhood plagued by chronic poverty, pollution, and enormous racial disparities, began looking to some developers like a “gold mine” during the height of dot-com era exuberance (Matier and Ross 2000.) Yet, while Oakland became the next frontier for some developers in search of Bay Area real estate that was not already built out and heavily regulated, most rushed to invest in areas other than West Oakland.

Gentrification in the neighborhood continues to be a slow process, with numerous projects that were planned during the late 1990s only beginning construction a decade later. Despite a steep rise in land values and evictions, West Oakland generally continued to be a zone of widespread commercial disinvestment, looking not much different a few years after the dot-com era than it had over the previous few decades. Nevertheless, the neighborhood’s location within the regional economic and transportation nexus makes it appealing to developers today (Getz 2008).
b. Supply and Type of Housing in West Oakland

Despite the destruction of almost half of the housing stock during the 1950s and 1960s urban renewal and freeway projects, a significant amount of single-family and two-family housing remains in West Oakland, much of it constructed in Victorian style and dating from the early to mid-twentieth century (Harvey et al. 1999, Kennedy and Leonard 2001a.) The majority of these dwellings fit into two main categories, the “informal worker’s cottage” and the “almost polite house” (Groth and Gutman 1997.) Both of these types were usually built by their inhabitants, a factor that contributed to unique attributes even within an adherence to certain building styles. Over the years, many of these houses were also raised to add a story or enlarged from their original footprints. These structures are considered desirable to potential homebuyers for their architectural detail and other aesthetic qualities. The quantity of older housing like this is considered to be very influential in determining gentrification potential (Simon 2008.) According to census figures, many homebuyers and renters came to West Oakland during the late 1990s, and continue to do so today. That this is partly due to the appeal of the housing stock is consistent with existing gentrification research (Ley 1996, Shaw 2007.)
c. The Aftermath of the Cypress Freeway Collapse

“No longer divided by an elevated freeway, West Oakland is being taken seriously by major development interests” (CEDA et al. 1998.)

Over one mile of the double-decker Cypress Freeway collapsed in West Oakland during the October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake; neighborhood organizations responded quickly to the state transportation agency’s plan to rebuild in the same spot. Their participation throughout the environmental impact assessment eventually forced the relocation of the Cypress Freeway to the perimeter of West Oakland and stood in marked contrast to the lack of input residents had when the freeway was originally constructed (see Figure 3.) Its eight lanes of traffic originally displaced six hundred families and dozens of businesses and plagued remaining residents with excessive noise and automobile emissions; its removal is pointed to as a key to the revitalization of West Oakland (Gross 1989, Jackson 1998, CalTrans no date, McKinley 2007, Lederer-Prado 2008.) It is also seen as the first sign of gentrification in the area; some of the first market-rate housing developments were built at the foot of the old freeway route in the northwestern corner of West Oakland, while the other area of major development sits on West Oakland’s southwestern edge (Bailey 2005, see Figure 6.) The rerouted Cypress Freeway’s completion in 1998
opened up four square miles along the old route that have been redesigned as a greenway that today promotes residential and commercial development along its route (Witt et al 2001, ORA 2003, Zamora 2004.) The removal of the old section of freeway has opened up new opportunities for land use that can be very beneficial to the area, and created land use conflicts that reflect growing tension over gentrification.

Towards the northern end of the boulevard, renamed Mandela Parkway after the freeway came down, sit thirteen acres of land that once housed the American Steel and Pacific Pipe companies. Oakland Planning Commission staff had recommended the rezoning of this large area for mixed-use development, and then abruptly withdrew its proposal in 2007 at the request of new mayor Ron Dellums, until a more participatory process to decide the future of those parcels could be undertaken (OCPC 2006, OCPC 2007, Allen-Taylor 2007b.)

At issue is the loss of industrial-zoned land in West Oakland, and Oakland generally, that has partly been responsible for the lack of jobs in the area. Opponents of rezoning argue that Oakland is in need of a more stable job base, particularly for its lower-income residents, and that taking more of these industrially-zoned lands out of use would diminish the capacity for the neighborhood to create jobs, opening them up to construction of market-rate
Figure 6. Active and Completed Major Developments in West Oakland (to November 2008).
units that would further jeopardize the stability of the neighborhood (Allen-Taylor 2007c, Burt 2007.) Large property owners control most of the land in this part of West Oakland, having purchased the parcels after the rerouting of the freeway. Since that time there has been almost no investment in these properties, and building development that could benefit the neighborhood has been hampered by the conditions of the existing buildings. Owners of these properties have banked on the rezoning of their properties to a mixed-use residential category, and do not offer longer-term leases for potential tenants wanting to move into the area; these obstacles hamper efforts by the city’s Community and Economic Development Agency (CEDA) to encourage new industries in key sites along the corridor (Lederer-Prado 2008, Nadel 2008; see Figure 7.)

To date they have been unwilling to make deals with prospective tenants, and instead wait for the opportunity to turn many of these parcels into market rate live-work lofts. Proposals to rent space to various businesses, including a bakery, coffee producer, solar panel company, wind turbine company, and dance troupe have all been rejected by landowners hoping to develop their property in the future (Nadel 2008, Cornu and Haraburda 2008.) In March 2008, the Oakland City council approved a resolution keeping industrial lands in West Oakland protected from zoning changes, except under strict guidelines that would be decided on a project basis.
That these parcels remain idle attests to the powerful market forces that shape West Oakland. The potential increased value of these properties as residential sites has been severely diminished by the actions of the City Council. Thus the perceived rent gap has fallen dramatically at these sites. This limitation on gentrification may open up the properties for use that contributes to the revitalization of the neighborhood, or they may remain in their blighted state, contributing nothing to the local economy or to the profits of the landowners. This issue is discussed in the following section on the West Oakland Redevelopment Area and the use of eminent domain.

Gentrification is intricately tied to the rebirth of Mandela Parkway; the paradox of such grassroots efforts to improve the neighborhood is that they may contribute to the eventual displacement of the same residents working to make West Oakland a more livable place. As one West Oakland resident stated, "This is the best it's looked here in fifty years…all these buildings, roads and park are great. It's changing fast, though. I don't know if I could afford to move here now" (Zamora 2004.) These revitalization efforts make an area more livable for its residents but they do not necessarily make its residents less vulnerable to displacement. Community groups focused on public health and other issues facing West Oakland residents are keenly aware of this and are often involved with preventing displacement at the same time. These groups emphasize how vulnerability to both displacement and environmental toxins facing communities
like West Oakland are manifested unequally across geographic areas, as are the new market rate development projects (Pacific Institute 2002, 2006.)

Figure 7. West Oakland Opportunity Sites for RFQ February 2008

Source: City of Oakland CEDA 2008.
d. The 10K Plan

"This is earth, there's no space outside the market." (Jerry Brown in Waldman 1999.)

Jerry Brown won his 1998 mayoral bid in Oakland with a plan to draw 10,000 new residents downtown. This was a key piece of his platform, along with a commitment to reduce crime, create new charter schools, and support the arts in Oakland (Harvey et al. 1999, Salazar 2006, CEDA 2007d.) These housing units were to be priced at market rate and located along the Telegraph/Broadway downtown corridor, as well as Jack London Square and Chinatown. Figure 8 below shows the housing developments built as part of the 10K Plan. Developments in West Oakland, which is located west of Interstate 980 on the map, can be seen above in Figure 7. Mayor Brown's plan intended to draw higher-income residents to downtown Oakland and initially established no requirements for affordable housing units. Neither were there any options to collect money either from developers or from the sale of downtown properties to fund the construction of affordable units elsewhere. Brown persuaded voters to approve a Strong Mayor initiative early in his term, granting him authority over redevelopment and other economic development decisions (Ingram 2005.)

The Plan was promoted to developers around the Bay Area as an opportunity
Figure 8. 10K Plan Oakland Housing Developments.


to build market-rate units without the high prices and bureaucratic obstacles imposed by neighboring jurisdictions (Matier and Ross 1999, Getz 2008.) When the Plan was announced, West Oakland City Council representative Nancy Nadel wanted the city to look into parcels available for affordable housing and
ways to regulate real estate speculation, before increases in property value that might come from Brown’s invitation made these prohibitive. There was virtually no support on the city council for her proposals (Nadel 2008.)

Brown responded to critics of the 10K Plan at a 1999 public meeting by posing two choices for Oakland: gentrification or “slumification,” and further attempting to satisfy community members by asking them if they wanted to “shop or not” (Dupont, Elissa, and Csekey 1999.) After San Francisco supervisors placed a moratorium on live-work condominium developments throughout the city in 1999, Brown arranged a meeting with the San Francisco Residential Builders Association to draw potential investment to downtown Oakland. Oakland has always maintained a strong downtown focus in its economic development priorities, and the 10K Plan continued in this mold. The downtown area typically attracts the most high profile projects, the kind that propel the careers of whatever city officials are involved. As Mayor, Brown was able to mobilize a large amount of his staff to the Plan at the expense of other neighborhoods and other avenues of economic and community development (Simon 2008). It may also be argued that downtown is simply a different market than neighborhoods like West Oakland, and that much of the development there during the dot-com boom did not necessarily happen at the expense of other neighborhoods. Similarly, it can be argued that gentrification that came to West Oakland was a result of Brown drawing attention to the city. Nevertheless, the political influence
driving the 10K Plan was a powerful motivator for developer capital to settle in these parts of the city.

Brown prioritized housing, long recognized as a net cost to urban economies, above commercial and other land uses that typically bring in revenue to cities:

"Market-rate units are needed to bolster the tax base ... If you can figure out a way to create a social utopia, I will consider it. But absent that, we've got to go with the flow, and the flow should be [to get] capital to pay for all these other things like schools" (Brown in Oakland Tribune 2 December 1999.)

The logic of the 10K Plan was that the presence of new residents with a larger disposable income than average Oaklanders would persuade retail to follow them into the city center, encouraging a revitalization of the core of Oakland. However, retailers were slow to follow the residential boom into the core, and Oakland now derives a much smaller proportion of its budget from sales tax compared to most large cities in California (Levy 2005.) Meanwhile, properties in the Jack London Square waterfront were emphatically promoted as trendy lofts for newcomers. Brown purchased a warehouse apartment in the rundown industrial and commercial zone around the waterfront in 1993; by 1999 real estate values there had doubled (DelVecchio 1999.)

The 10K Plan continued after the stock market bubble burst and the dot-com engine in the Bay Area decelerated. Despite more than 400,000 jobs lost in the Bay Area between 2001 and 2003, Oakland officials still pursued the plan to attract wealthy residents into the area (Zuckerman 2004.) Adding to inflated
home prices was the Federal Reserve’s move to cut interest rates in the recent recessionary period. Real estate became the refuge of last resort for investment capital, and demand among millions of homebuyers, despite their declining real wages, was fueled by favorable loan arrangements (Foster 2006.) The housing market therefore did not cool off following the collapse of the stock market and high-tech bubbles, but continued climbing far beyond the rates of increase driving other commodities upward.

Brown brought further attention to his 10K Plan by becoming one of the new residents near downtown. In 2002 he moved into the previously dilapidated Sears-Roebuck building just north of downtown, a property bought by his campaign manager John Protopappas. Brown immediately set out to make the neighborhood more appealing to investors and new residents (Counts 2003, Johnson 2003.) Brown’s crackdown on crime was essential to his plans to revitalize downtown (Waldman 1999.) One nearby building was forced to discontinue its Section 8 subsidized housing agreements, effectively forcing out a majority of its tenants, at Brown’s request. When the Oakland Housing Authority failed to initiate this, Brown enlisted the head of the federal Housing and Urban Development agency to usurp the local housing department’s power. Although older residents appreciated some of these efforts, Brown’s controversial efforts only began once he moved there (Counts 2003.)
While Mayor Brown was primarily concerned with developing the downtown area, others were taking notice of West Oakland’s potential. “West Oakland’s time has come,” reads the opening line of the West Oakland Transit Village Study, a document aimed at encouraging revitalization of the area surrounding the West Oakland BART station. Aware that West Oakland is now “being taken seriously by major development interests,” the three city agencies involved in this document proposed an intensive transit-oriented development model for the area as a focus for the neighborhood’s revival. Primary importance was given to the production of affordable housing for rent and purchase as a means of avoiding economic displacement of current residents (Oakland’s Community and Economic Development Agency, the Oakland Housing Authority, and San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit 1997.) Development of the West Oakland BART transit village is now one component of a larger redevelopment process that covers virtually all of West Oakland. The next section looks at the West Oakland Redevelopment Area in detail. In particular, the role of community participation in the redevelopment process and the housing policies in the Redevelopment Plan are examined and discussed as major elements that will shape the future of West Oakland as it transitions to a more fully gentrified neighborhood in the Bay Area or is able to revitalize without the displacement and other negative effects of gentrification.
e. The West Oakland Redevelopment Area

1. Community Participation in Redevelopment

Virtually the entire West Oakland neighborhood falls within a Redevelopment Area, a legal term applied by local governments that enable a range of financing, planning, and land use options designed to reverse the trajectory of disinvested communities. The Redevelopment Plan for West Oakland was adopted by Oakland City Council in November 2003 and contains the remaining areas not included in three prior redevelopment efforts. Two of these, the Acorn Oak Center Redevelopment Areas, were introduced respectively in 1961 and 1965 as urban renewal projects for the city. The third area was created in 2000 and covers the decommissioned Oakland Army Base. The latest Redevelopment Area, covering the rest of West Oakland, contains 1546 acres and is divided into three subareas: Prescott/South Prescott, Clawson/McClymonds/Bunche, and West Macarthur/Hoover (see Figure 9.)

The West Oakland Redevelopment Project (WERP) was created in 2001 in response to community groups’ concerns about the negative effects of decaying and vacant structures, crime, and the absence of retail stores in the neighborhood. Community groups had already been discussing redevelopment as early as 1989, but rejected the city’s plans after the earthquake to create an
Figure 9. Redevelopment Boundaries in West Oakland

emergency redevelopment area because it would have given too sweeping
powers of eminent domain. Redevelopment was again discussed in 2000 at the
request of the community, which wanted more input into the planning process
rather than rushing it through (Nadel 2008.) The Plan lists twenty-nine goals,
which are aimed at maintaining and promoting commercial revitalization,
improved infrastructure, employment opportunities, public safety, and other
concerns vital to the neighborhood. The main emphasis of the Plan is apparent
in its first four goals, however, which are:

1. Improve the quality of housing by assisting new construction,
   rehabilitation, and conservation of living units in the Project Area.

2. Maintain and improve the condition of the existing very low, low,
   and moderate income housing in the Project Area.
3. Increase opportunities for homeownership in the Project Area.
4. Develop renter stabilization strategies that encourage and assist
   renters to remain in the Project Area (ORA 2003.)

These goals articulate a redevelopment strategy that recognizes the potential
vulnerability of West Oakland residents to economic displacement from new
investment flowing into the area. To make this objective more explicit, Goal 17
is to “promote equitable development that benefits the residents of the Project
Area and minimizes the displacement of current residents and businesses”
(Redevelopment Agency 2003.) Realizing these goals is one of the primary
challenges for community groups there working to avoid further displacement,
and is an easier task for the community advisory group called the West Oakland
Project Area Committee (WOPAC) when applying their own tax increment-financed funds to projects. As land values appreciate in the areas surrounding redevelopment projects, the increase in property taxes pays off the initial debt of the venture. Projects funded directly through redevelopment for 2007 include financial support for a 14-unit affordable homeownership project near West Oakland BART station, expanding the People’s Community Partnership Federal Credit Union (the only financial institution in West Oakland), and development of the Mandela Foods Cooperative (a locally-owned and operated grocery store and health education center). The WOPAC also funded the design of the Northern California Land Trust’s affordable arts center and housing development, as well as various park, streetscape, and environmental cleanup projects throughout the neighborhood (City of Oakland 2008.)

The WOPAC was able to direct close to four million dollars to these revitalization projects in 2007, and this figure will increase as tax increment funding funds from the area rise in conjunction with property values. The principles in this redevelopment area are in some ways the results of lessons learned from past redevelopment abuses in West Oakland. Wendy Simon, area manager for the WERP, noted that current redevelopment in West Oakland bears no resemblance to the adjacent Acorn redevelopment model begun forty years ago, insofar as no people will be relocated in this new redevelopment area
A nagging paradox to the efforts of the WOPAC to limit gentrification through revitalization that benefits current residents is that the redevelopment process itself is aimed at increasing property values in a neighborhood, and redevelopment projects depend upon financing from increasing property tax revenues.

Under California Redevelopment law, the WOPAC was formed to advise the Oakland Redevelopment Agency (ORA) on both the wording and the implementation of redevelopment policy. The WOPAC consists of seventeen neighborhood residents elected by the community to represent them. Each subarea has five representatives, including a tenant, a homeowner, business owner, and two representatives of community organizations. In addition to these fifteen there are another two at-large representatives. Elections for these positions were held at a local school and anyone with proof of residence within the project area could vote. Since the original participants were first elected in 2002, there has been some turnover, upon which anyone fulfilling the qualifications necessary for the vacant position can nominate themselves. WOPAC members then decide who will fill vacant positions.

The advisory body’s members are residents concerned with issues ranging from housing affordability to community health and safety. Several of them are longtime activists on behalf of these issues, while at least two other members are local realtors. While there is much debate over issues in WOPAC meetings,
members seem to generally share a common vision of West Oakland’s
devlopment; if anything, a shared sense of neglect from the city defines these
meetings. Their oversight has helped to make redevelopment policy that is
substantially different from the urban renewal of past decades. Aside from
shaping the original redevelopment plan, the WOPAC advises the ORA on
actions ranging from the selection of development projects to design criteria
(such as land coverage and traffic circulation) associated with approved projects
(Oakland Planning Commission 2003.)

The WOPAC is unique among Project Area Committees in that its members
insist on meeting with developers interested in projects in West Oakland,
although there is often little correlation between the wishes of the WOPAC and
the decisions of the Planning Commission (Simon 2008.) The committee
criticizes lack of city support for some of its programs, blaming city inaction for
failing to get its programs off the ground. At a February 2008 WOPAC meeting,
there was common agreement about this problem, pointing out among other
examples a two-year delay hiring a planner to work with the WOPAC on
neighborhood improvements (WOPAC meeting 2008.)

Perhaps most importantly, the Redevelopment Area Plan requires very
specific criteria for applying eminent domain powers, severely limiting these
powers in most parts of West Oakland. The controversial history of relocation
and property takings during previous decades’ urban renewal efforts in Oakland
made later redevelopment plans explicit about the limits of eminent domain for redevelopment. As a result, plans such as the adjacent Central City East (2003), and Broadway/Macarthur (2000) redevelopment areas did not allow eminent domain (Simon 2008). Likewise, West Oakland residents representing two of the three subareas (Prescott/South Prescott and West MacArthur) explicitly prohibited eminent domain in the WERP based on their knowledge and experience with eminent domain in the past.

Only property in the Clawson/McClymonds/Bunche subarea may be subject to eminent domain under the Redevelopment Plan (see Figure 10); representatives of this subarea believed it might be beneficial to allow some parts of the subarea to be eligible to eminent domain powers in order to put blighted or underutilized properties at the service of redevelopment activities. Within these boundaries residential properties must meet strict requirements to be considered for eminent domain action by the city. First, the property must not be owner-occupied. Properties occupied by renters having three or less units are also protected. Second, the property must be located in a designated commercial corridor. Third, the redevelopment project for which the property is being acquired must not use more than three acres of land. This measure limits the potential for big-box retailers to assemble sufficient land through eminent domain, therefore keeping business ventures and other large development projects at a scale that
Figure 10. Eminent Domain in the West Oakland Redevelopment Area

would not “destroy the existing mixed-use character of the West Oakland neighborhoods” and “prevent ‘block-busting’ developments often associated with eminent domain actions of the past” (Oakland Planning Commission 2003.) Properties not occupied by their owners may be taken through eminent domain procedures outside of the designated commercial corridors under certain conditions. The most contentious aspect of this provision is the ability of the Oakland City Council to declare properties “blighted” in accordance with established health, safety, and fire codes. If a property presents an “immediate danger to health and safety, has or is a source of environmental contamination, or has been used for illegal activities for a period of over a year” it can be taken by the city for redevelopment purposes (ORA 2003: 8.) However, to date there have been no eminent domain or blight-related property acquisitions (Simon 2007.) Some of the properties along Mandela Parkway that have remained idle for several years are in the subarea that allows for limited eminent domain takings. There is the possibility that these properties could be purchased by the city to enable appropriate projects to take hold there. The controversial nature of property takings through use of eminent domain, along with the city’s lack of funds makes this scenario unlikely, however (MacDonald 2008.)

Displacement from government-directed development in some ways characterizes West Oakland’s history, from the slum clearance of the 1950s to
Figure 11. Oakland Redevelopment Areas.

the construction of BART two decades later, and current redevelopment programs are similarly not free of suspicion and conflict. The political aspects of redevelopment are illustrated well by how the boundaries of development areas are drawn (see Figure 11.) One member of the WOPAC who is also a local planner described the exclusion of her neighborhood on the west side of Macarthur BART station from the Macarthur/Broadway redevelopment area, despite its proximity to the transit-oriented development project there. Community demands for inclusion in this redevelopment plan area were disregarded, and this was attributed to a historical divide that continues along Broadway Avenue in this area, where significant differences in land values and community demographics mark the boundaries of exclusion. On the other side of West Oakland, the Central Station project, although clearly situated in the Lower Bottoms area of West Oakland, was instead included in the Oakland Army Base redevelopment area. This has kept many West Oakland residents out of the official participatory process for this large development project (Horiuchi 2008, Simon 2008.)

Community residents have engaged with city government, largely through the WOPAC, to achieve what few mitigations of gentrification exist in 2008. However, the most effective measure taken to limit gentrification was arguably the passage of Oakland’s Just Cause eviction ordinance, which came about as the result of citywide political organizing and the introduction of a ballot initiative. The
WOPAC functions as a body of citizens whose powers to affect development and gentrification are limited. They are an advisory group that can only recommend their decisions to City Council about approving projects. While they have authority over millions of dollars in redevelopment funds, it is a relatively small amount to finance their generally shared vision of equitable development in West Oakland. Apart from directing redevelopment funds, the WOPAC acts as an advisory group rather than one that is able to make decisions about development in West Oakland. Their strength, however, lies in their connections to the neighborhood, and the potential to educate and bring their demands for community benefits and protections to city government and developers. The main weakness of a group like the WOPAC (and other community groups) is that it is too small to have any real impact upon the larger flows of investment capital that influence gentrification in the neighborhood. Therefore, the impact of community groups in altering gentrification to any significant degree in West Oakland has been important but very constrained. Without their participation in the redevelopment process the course of development in West Oakland would be less responsive to the wishes of its current residents, and particularly to its many low-income residents. This is true particularly regarding Oakland’s housing policies and is discussed in the following section.
2. Housing Policy in the WERP

California redevelopment law requires that at least thirty percent of all new or rehabilitated housing developed by the Redevelopment Agency itself be affordable, and that fifty percent of these units be for very low income households. Projects in the Redevelopment Area developed by the private sector are required to have at least fifteen percent affordable units. Twenty five percent of all tax revenues accrued through redevelopment financing mechanisms must be used to create affordable housing throughout the city.

Yet, despite requirements under California redevelopment law that direct local revenues from redevelopment areas to be used in the area from which they were obtained, the opposite has happened. By claiming that affordable housing is beneficial to Oaklanders no matter where it is constructed, the ORA has redirected a “significant portion of the funds earmarked for ‘low-income’ housing in downtown and West Oakland […] to the south and the east of the city’s central business district” (Kirkpatrick 2007: 338.) While Oakland produces a large supply of affordable housing, the spatial distribution of affordability is another issue affecting gentrification in West Oakland. Although deconcentrating poverty might be beneficial to existing low-income residents, others see the shifting of affordable units out of West Oakland as a contributing factor to the loss of social cohesion in the community, and the further displacement of low-income, mainly
African-American residents (Goetz 2003, Kirkpatrick 2007.)

It is useful to look at the Association of Bay Area Governments’ (ABAG) 1999-2006 Regional Housing Needs Determination (ABAG 2001b), which showed Oakland in need of 7733 total housing units. Of these, 2238 units were needed for very low-income households (up to fifty percent of county median income), 969 units for low-income households (between fifty and eighty percent of county median income), and 1959 units for moderate-income households (between eighty and one hundred twenty percent of county median income).

Of the 7733 total units needed, 3207 units, or almost half of these, would need to be in the affordable range for households whose income falls below eighty percent of the county median income (see Table 5.) This projection of housing needs is based on ABAG’s regional adjustment methodology, rather than simply projecting housing unit numbers based on current distribution of income. In their model, Oakland, which had thirty-six percent in the very low-income category (in 2001), is required to create housing units relative to the regional percentage of households in this category as a way of more evenly distributing regional income levels. Oakland’s total share of very low income housing needs determined by ABAG under this formula was therefore significantly lower than actual needs.
Table 5. Median Household Income.

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Between 1999 and March 2007, 15,598 total housing units were built in Oakland. Of these, 4398 were affordable units with almost ninety percent affordable to very low and low-income households. In West Oakland during this same period 1806 housing units were built. Nearly half of these, or 880 units, were designated as affordable units: 239 for very low-income households, 614 for low-income, and 27 in the moderate category (City of Oakland 2007a.) The trend in West Oakland appears to be developing mostly market-rate units however.

Fourteen development projects were designated as either completed or underway as of September 2003 in the West Oakland Redevelopment Project Area. These projects contained a combined total of 482 units, with 50(10%) for
very low-income households, 108(22%) for low-income, and 10(2%) for moderate income. Two development projects account for 149 out of the 168 total affordable units completed or underway in the Project Area.

There are also, as of March 2007, a total of 3281 units planned for future construction in the West Oakland Project Area in twenty-seven separate development projects. No affordable housing is currently required or planned for any of these pipeline projects; they are only “anticipated” for some (City of Oakland 2007b.) It is important to note that developers are not required to pay for affordable units and so it falls on the city to use its redevelopment-generated tax-increment revenues to pay for these (Nadel 2008.)

These numbers suggest a considerable degree of affordable housing being built in West Oakland, and throughout the entire city. However, because affordability is a term that changes according to household income, public agencies, politicians, and developers use it to denote a wide range of housing options (Kirkpatrick 2007.) The city of Oakland uses Housing and Urban Development (HUD) figures for its Area Median Income (AMI) measurement, which was in 2006 $74,500 for Alameda County, higher than the 2006 Census Bureau estimate of $64,126. The median household size in West Oakland is 2.6 persons in 2007, so the income limits for a family of three are used here. Income limits for qualifying for City/Redevelopment Agency Housing Development Program are $37,700 for very low income, $59,600 for low income, up to $90,500
for moderate-income households (CEDA 2006.) The ORA does not include a category for extremely low-income households, those whose income is thirty percent of the AMI. In 2006 this was $22,650 for a family of three; at that time at least 43.5 percent of West Oakland’s population lived below that. Market-rate housing is not within reach of the vast majority of West Oakland’s residents. Yet, much of what is labeled affordable housing in the neighborhood is virtually unavailable to almost fifty percent of the population, the same residents most in need of preventative measures to displacement like a satisfactory supply of affordable units. Affordable housing production in West Oakland appears to be targeted at household income levels incompatible with the needs of many of its residents, a factor that may hasten many residents’ departure from the area.

West Oakland is considered “saturated” with subsidized housing, with twenty-one percent of all subsidized units in the city in 2000 (Nadel 2008.) This accounted at the time for about sixteen percent of West Oakland’s total housing supply, leaving much of its population vulnerable to economic displacement pressures. With the creation of mostly market-rate and higher-income housing, and Oakland’s first-time homebuyers programs that are equally skewed toward higher-income households, many West Oakland residents need policies that will ensure their ability to remain in the neighborhood as it transforms (Pacific Institute 2002, CEDA 2006, Kirkpatrick 2007.) The WOPAC as a result supports developing opportunities for low-income homeownership, rather than low-income
rentals to ameliorate this, partly through using redevelopment funds to buy
dilapidated units in the neighborhood to fix up and sell to residents (Rice 2008.)

Simultaneously, the WOPAC maintains a strategy to disperse low-income rentals
throughout Oakland by limiting the number of these units built in the
neighborhood. Many neighborhood people feel that integrating incomes in
residential areas and balancing out the demographic makeup is important to
reverse West Oakland’s historical use as a warehouse for the poor, and that it
brings better overall results in schools and throughout the community. This is
happening at only one of the new developments in the neighborhood, the 1500-
plus unit Central Station project surrounding the old Wood Street train station
(Nadel 2008.) The benefits of mixed income neighborhoods may be widely
accepted, but the threat of displacement posed by a rapid introduction of higher
income residents and home values can further polarize a neighborhood. As
Newman and Wyly (2006) noted in their research, affordability protections are
necessary to maintain this mix. For cities to reap the benefits of mixed income
areas, low and moderate-income households must be assisted as their
neighborhoods change; the market bears no responsibility for this.

Creating a neighborhood of integrated incomes without pushing people out is
difficult, though, and this vision is controversial among some community
members who see the potential for displacement of low-income households not
able to find housing within West Oakland anymore (Macdonald 2008.) Many
residents see the neighborhood through two lenses. While serious concerns about crime, landlords' neglect of properties, and other problems affect their immediate quality of life, there is simultaneously an awareness that these social ills are rooted in larger structural inequalities that cannot be addressed adequately through redevelopment alone. Nevertheless, involvement in the WOPAC represents to them an important way for neighborhood residents to make small positive changes in West Oakland, and potentially initiate a vision for the neighborhood that improves the quality of life for everyone. An important aspect of their work then has to do with ensuring that redevelopment does not translate into displacement of vulnerable residents. The following section looks further into their role in managing the gentrification of the neighborhood along with other avenues that residents have taken to be engaged in this process.

f. Community Influence in West Oakland Land Use/Gentrification

Prior to the late 1990s dot-com economic boom, West Oakland residents had already been involved in promoting a community-based vision for revitalizing the area. In 1994 the Center For West Oakland Revitalization (CWOR) created a set of community-based neighborhood policy recommendations in a process that involved over 350 individuals from West Oakland. This document expressed the
central importance of avoiding the displacement of both residents and businesses in the development process (CWOR 1994.) Increasing fears of gentrification later in the decade led community members, with support from local foundations, to develop a planning model for the neighborhood. In 1998 community members engaged in community vision meetings with the local 7th Street/McClymonds Initiative to develop an equitable development plan for West Oakland (The San Francisco Foundation 1999.) Three years later, “securing housing and preventing displacement” became especially important in their follow-up report on the neighborhood (Rongerude 2002, Kennedy and Leonard 2001a.) Early community involvement in land use issues, and particularly an ongoing community-based engagement in formulating redevelopment policy, is considered to be an important factor in mitigating against the negative impacts of gentrification in the area over the last several years, by developing cohesion among community members that made some developers carefully enter into negotiations with the community and deterred others from building in the neighborhood (Getz 2008, Kennedy 2008.) Community organizing in West Oakland extends beyond redevelopment to confront issues of health and environment in ways that overlap with concerns about gentrification.

Community residents in West Oakland recognized they were severely affected by environmental pollution, and began working with health experts to assess their levels of exposure through community-based health research. The
West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP), an organization composed primarily of West Oakland residents, began to discuss ways to measure these problems in 2000 through a collaboration between the 7th Street/McClymonds Initiative and the Pacific Institute, an Oakland policy and research institute that focuses on equitable economic development. The resulting 2002 study, *Neighborhood Knowledge For Change*, focused on broad indicators of community health, including air quality, civic engagement, gentrification and displacement, bus and bicycle access, exposure to toxics, illegal garbage dumping, and industrial/residential land use conflicts. The intent of their study was to create a body of research that would allow community members to communicate information back to other residents and media outlets, to assist community organizing efforts and legal struggles, and to develop empirical data in order to implement land use and transportation policy changes (Pacific Institute 2002.)

West Oakland is a neighborhood covering almost six square miles, and yet it is referred to as “tightly knit” with strong “informal networks” that foster community activism and a “geographical identity” that brings together people of different backgrounds (Rodriguez 1999, Macdonald 2008.) Although there is no one viewpoint on gentrification to be found among West Oaklanders, and the area is home to a wide socioeconomic range of people, social networks among residents develop and to some degree constitute an important voice in local
development politics (Nadel 2008.) At the same time, the WOPAC’s October 2007 forum on gentrification drew few people. Although flyers were distributed and other forms of outreach were conducted throughout the neighborhood, the impression of one WOPAC member was that most people didn’t seem interested or worried, except for those residents who are already activists (Rice 2008.) The strong informal networks mentioned by some residents may not directly translate into political organization. While West Oakland residents voted overwhelmingly to protect tenants under the Just Cause eviction ordinance in 2002, political engagement over gentrification has not generated as much momentum.

Promoting equitable development and fighting gentrification may concern relatively few members of the community most of the time, while larger numbers of people may become involved or express themselves publicly during more intense periods of political controversy, such as the wide popular appeal of the movement to control evictions in Oakland in the years leading up to 2003. Although it did not originate in West Oakland, most residents supported the 2003 eviction control measure known as Just Cause, described as the “toughest in the country” by a representative of the Rental Housing Association of Northern California (Edrington 2008.)

Community groups are also engaged in negotiating agreements with individual developers to derive benefits from projects. The Central Station development is one such example where community members have interacted
with the developer. In this case, developer Rick Holliday met with community members in the late 1990s before purchasing thirty acres of land around the abandoned train station, of which about fifteen acres were sold to several developers. Design elements and restrictions for all developments took into account the wishes of neighbors who had participated in this dialogue. By 2005, community organizations such as Just Cause Oakland and the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization began to demand more extensive benefits from the developers, and the project came to include local hiring requirements, affordable housing built adjacent to market-rate units, first right of purchase on new units, no new connections to the freeway, and low-income home buying assistance. A common wish among community members led to plans for a Sleeping Car Porters’ Museum and cultural center in the old train station (Burt 2006b, Payton 2005, Getz 2008, Kennedy 2008.) The emergence of Community Benefits Agreements (CBA) as a tool for managing gentrification in Oakland comes in part because community demands to halt gentrification have been ignored by most City Council members (Nadel 2008.) CBAs are legally enforceable agreements between community groups and developers that can be an important strategy for neighborhood residents seeking to ensure their demands for local hiring and living wage policies during and after construction takes place, the inclusion of affordable housing, recreational space, and other amenities. These agreements, developed in California cities over the past decade, bring neighborhood groups in
direct contact with developers in ways that local planning and other governmental bodies have proven unwilling or unable to (Gross et al 2005.) They are also perceived as potential obstacles to development by some city officials, who suggest initiating a standardized system of benefit packages that may be applied to development projects (Lane 2008.)
VII. Discussion

1. The First Cycle of Gentrification in West Oakland

“The jury’s still out” on the extent of gentrification in West Oakland, remarked one WOPAC member, and West Oakland is in 2008 still beset with the poverty, violent crime, and other social problems it faced in 1998 (McKinley 2007, Rice 2008, Horiuchi 2008.) The decade between 1998 and 2008 was one in which a slow process of gentrification began in the neighborhood, and that window is closing as the real estate market and other economic indicators decline throughout the U.S. Despite the inflation of real estate market values across the Bay Area, the process was spatially uneven within West Oakland, as some areas became sites for new development or home remodeling while others changed very little. Those parts of the neighborhood still immediately bring to mind the pattern of disinvestment that characterized West Oakland since the postwar era, and hasn’t changed very much since then (Horiuchi 2008, see Figure 12.) Economic development that did occur left most of the neighborhood unimproved. Overall, West Oakland became less affordable as the housing market throughout the U.S. inflated, magnified by the tremendous housing pressures of the Bay Area. Yet in 2008, most of the major development projects planned and
approved for construction (and doubtless the vast majority of smaller scale projects) are postponed due to financial uncertainty.

Larry Rice, chair of the WOPAC, and a resident of West Oakland near Macarthur BART for twenty years, noted that in his neighborhood not much had changed, and that it was possibly even more run down in 2008 than in 1998. He described the dot-com era as one that lifted other boats, but did not have much impact on West Oakland’s population (Rice 2008.) Another resident from the same area described her neighborhood as “under the radar” and therefore in less danger of being seriously disrupted by development (Horiuchi 2008.) However, the neighborhood did shift to a more affluent base of residents, and other changes occurred that are clear indicators of gentrification, which leads one to believe that the perception of gentrification is a subjective one as much as it is quantifiable. While residents who are displaced will obviously feel the consequences of gentrification directly and intensely, their neighbors may deemphasize these experiences and instead look at overall changes to the neighborhood as minimal. Problems experienced in lower-income neighborhoods may not appear to be offset in any noticeable way by the arrival of some more affluent residents, particularly when the commercial and retail aspects go unchanged. Conditions for future gentrification were set by these changes, as parts of West Oakland were opened up to new development projects. However, the cycle of gentrification that began in 1998 appears to be
Figure 12. West Oakland Household Median Income Percentage Change 1990-2000 By Census Block Group.
ending in 2008. As the housing market collapses, West Oakland is becoming a neighborhood in which the displacement of residents is caused by foreclosures rather than by rising rents.

West Oakland appears as though it will remain one of the last places in the immediate Bay Area for investment capital to settle. Conversely, it is one of the first neighborhoods to experience disinvestment. As one local developer noted, “money dries up first in neighborhoods where lenders were skeptical to begin with” (Getz 2008.) Under current economic conditions, a trend of degentrification may be a more appropriate characterization of the neighborhood’s trajectory. As the housing market disappears, investments in the area and home values are declining considerably; rents may soon follow this trend. Speculation in the housing market will not be as advantageous as land values decline, eliminating the perception of housing as wildly profitable investments. Job losses reverse the trend of attracting people to the Bay Area, driving demand down further. Any improvement in affordability, however, will likely go hand in hand with declining wages and lost jobs in the neighborhood. Foreclosures are disproportionately concentrated in this and other troubled Bay Area neighborhoods, although West Oakland ranks lower than many other East Bay neighborhoods in foreclosures (see Table 5.)

Many respondents spoke of recently cancelled development projects, as the
potential for profits becomes less assured and construction costs rise.

Throughout the area, residents and city officials have seen a decline in development proposals to the WOPAC. Most projects already approved by the Planning Department, with the exception of the Wood Street Train Station developments, have been derailed as financing troubles and home purchases decline, forcing developers to back off from their original plans (Getz 2008, Rice2008, Lederer-Prado 2008, Nadel 2008, Simon 2008.) Similarly, according


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Source: DataQuick Information Systems 2008.
to several respondents there has been a marked reduction in requests for projects in the West Oakland Redevelopment Area in the past year, and West Oakland is now experiencing sales of property to less upscale projects (Nadel 2008, Rice 2008, Simon 2008.)

The departure of investment from West Oakland does not only signal the end of this phase of gentrification and speculation in the neighborhood’s housing market, but potentially as well a return to previous decades of economic neglect and stagnation. It reveals the ultimate limits of all local factors in market-based urban revitalization too, as global market fluctuations devalue housing and halt the stream of capital to urban neighborhoods, revealing the constraints under which low-income neighborhoods attempt to revitalize. These neighborhoods are often unable to mitigate against, let alone halt, the effects of gentrification. Meanwhile, a faltering economy hits hardest in places like West Oakland, a tenuous place for capital to settle even in the best of times. Already high unemployment levels will undoubtedly be exacerbated there more than in other neighborhoods.

West Oakland’s housing turnover rate was low relative to total housing turnover in Oakland over the ten-year period. Despite its attractive characteristics, West Oakland was still among the last choices for homebuyers and developers during the dot-com frenzy. Despite its relative advantages, the factors that may have encouraged more investment, the neighborhood had many
qualities that kept investors away, including high crime rates and environmental pollution. Compounding this was the continued legacy of illegal redlining alluded to by several respondents, where banks are still hesitant to offer loans in West Oakland and some of those who do end up requiring larger down payments on homes in low-income neighborhoods (Horiuchi 2008, Kennedy 2008, Macdonald 2008, Rice 2008, Simon 2008.) Lenders continue to engage in these practices in 2008 in order to reduce their financial risk, and the more cash put down initially by investors, the greater chance of having a loan backed by investors. Many of these investors still do not consider West Oakland to be a safe place for investment, limiting the choices of smaller developers in the area, whether they are building market rate or more affordable housing (Getz 2008, McIlveen 2008.)

Economic factors such as the relatively cheap homes and land in West Oakland, although they may promise greater investment returns, may not override these concerns. Gentrification is driven by many other factors besides a wide rent gap in lower-income neighborhoods; there is no one factor that definitively drives or impedes gentrification in West Oakland. While urban communities can exert some influence over local development, their vision for the neighborhood is more concerned with the benefits to the community, and not solely with maximized profits for developers. This conflict does not fall into easy categories of pro- or anti-development; the community members interviewed for this research all explicitly state the need for development that will help correct
some of the pressing social problems in West Oakland. Meanwhile, gentrification ebbs and flows with economic cycles that take place at much greater geographic scales than the neighborhood or city.

Just as a flood of investment alarmed many about gentrification in the late 1990s, renewed disinvestment in West Oakland will present new problems for its residents, as seen in the already high number of foreclosures throughout the neighborhood. Oakland is sixteenth among cities in foreclosures nationally, and lower-income areas like East and West Oakland are disproportionately represented in these numbers (Kennedy 2008, Rooney 2008.) Likewise, renters are affected by foreclosures as landlords lose their properties to foreclosure (Anthony 2008.) Regardless of present conditions in the housing market, a number of creative ideas to protect Oakland residents from gentrification are being discussed at present and there appear to be policy shifts underway in Oakland that could influence land use and deter gentrification in West Oakland in the future.

2. Shaping Land Use and Housing Policy for the Future

A number of measures put into place in the city’s housing and land use policies deterred the displacement caused by gentrification, and other measures
are proposed by community activists to ensure greater protections in the future. These measures are aimed at both regulating the excesses of real estate speculation as well as encouraging a development path that improves the well being of current residents and decreases their vulnerability to displacement. Concerned residents want to ensure that these preventative measures and proactive development programs are built into land use policy and housing policies before the next speculative cycle in the Bay Area. As with the Just Cause eviction ordinance, these policies are often met with resistance by City Council members.

Two policies that have generated conflict in Oakland, despite the relatively small amount of housing affected, are inclusionary zoning and condominium conversion. Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is one way that cities can ensure affordable housing construction in new development projects by requiring a minimum percentage of affordable units in new projects. It is a tool used in many Bay Area cities to help minimize economic displacement associated with gentrification. Oakland is one of the few cities in the region lacking inclusionary zoning, although it has been a central issue for affordable housing advocates since at least the late 1990s (Nadel 2006.) An IZ proposal brought to the Oakland City Council in 2000 failed to be incorporated into city policy, derided by city officials, including Mayor Brown, as a deterrent to developers building housing of any kind and a potential drag on the local economy (Heredia 2006, Allen-Taylor 2007a,
Tate 2006.) In October 2006 the Oakland City Council was split over a vote to require fifteen to twenty percent of newly built units to be affordable to those in very low to moderate-income levels (Heredia 2006.) Mayor Brown cast the deciding vote that created a committee to study affordable housing policies instead of instituting an IZ baseline for Oakland.

Equally contentious within Oakland housing politics is the regulation of condominium conversions from older apartments, in which multiple-unit buildings are transferred from sole ownership of an entire building to individually owned properties. The defeat by the City Council in December 2006 of a measure restricting condominium-conversion measure was seen as a victory for anti-displacement advocates. In other cities, such measures have led to a rise in evictions and decreased the supply of rental units. The majority of Oakland’s renters, roughly 88,000 people, cannot afford the sale prices for condominiums; only ten percent of city’s renters are estimated to be in a position to purchase units (Burt 2006a.)

In February 2008, the City Council began considering a set of wide-ranging affordable housing policies put forth by the Mayor’s Housing Task Force, a separate Blue Ribbon Commission established under Jerry Brown’s administration, the Oakland People’s Housing Coalition, and others. These proposals cover condominium conversions, inclusionary zoning, rent adjustment
policies, homeownership programs, homelessness programs, land trust creation, and foreclosure policies. A letter from the Mayor’s Office to the City Council presenting these proposals suggests that creating an atmosphere of predictable community benefits from developers will ensure ongoing private investment that protects “against displacement of existing residents and ensure[s] that people who currently live in Oakland share in the benefits of new development” (Matrix 2008.) The City Council failed to bring affordable housing to a vote in February 2008; inclusionary zoning, condo conversions, and other elements of an affordable housing plan for the city remain undecided in 2009.

Frances McIlveen, project manager for the Northern California Land Trust (NCLT), a nonprofit developer in the East Bay with two affordable housing projects in West Oakland, commented that in order to reverse gentrification trends, much deeper subsidies for land trust and other affordable housing developers are needed. Most subsidies are now available to homebuyers, and developers still find projects financially unfeasible, even with the support of city subsidies. The ultimate obstacle is the marketability of affordable, high quality, non-rental housing units, as opposed to market rate units that offer far greater investment returns. Nonprofit developers like the NCLT encounter more difficulty funding their projects, and loan interest rates from banks can be a full point higher to community land trusts (McIlveen 2008.)
Other creative ways have been suggested as avenues to homeownership among West Oakland residents, including allowing Section 8 rental subsidies to be used as mortgage payments, encouraging tenancy in common agreements among low-income homebuyers, and creating city subsidized individual development accounts for low-income residents who would receive matching funds for their savings. At the same time, the flipping of properties may be regulated through restrictions in the amount of time required between sales turnovers (Macdonald 2008, Nadel 2008.) But most of these strategies do not address the root causes of chronic poverty in urban neighborhoods like West Oakland that make residents vulnerable to displacement. Residents are aware of this and those engaged with development policy there wrestle with the limitations of redevelopment and other programs in the context of pervasive joblessness, lack of educational opportunities, and other problems faced by many West Oakland residents.

The question is how to avoid the negative impacts of gentrification and still improve a community like West Oakland, where the cumulative effects of fifty years of disinvestment on residents and the neighborhood itself continues. It is a dilemma for many urban neighborhoods throughout the US, one that involves a rethinking of economic development. As the market implodes in 2009, and previously planned development projects unravel, innovative ideas that mobilize community resources will become more important than large inflows of capital.
Producing green-collar jobs, and a more locally and regionally self-reliant economy in general, could be the way ahead for West Oakland and other neighborhoods in the Bay Area. The City Council’s protection of industrial zoned land along Mandela Parkway’s northern half provides an opportunity for the development of production, distribution, and repair based industries that can generate many local jobs.

The drying up of private investment in West Oakland leaves redevelopment as the major engine of development there for now. The WOPAC is therefore potentially a much more influential actor in West Oakland development politics, and without the unchecked speculation and exorbitant housing development projects breaking ground there, the focus of investment may be more on projects and goals that benefit and ensure the permanence of existing residents, particularly those of lower incomes. There was no coherent movement to stop gentrification as such in West Oakland (or anywhere in Oakland), as there was in San Francisco, although Oakland voters approved the Just Cause eviction ordinance in 2003, placing far more limits on landlords’ ability to remove tenants.

Yet some neighborhoods in San Francisco gentrified far more than West Oakland because the demand for housing was greater and began earlier there. Home values took off throughout the Bay Area, but transformations in land uses were uneven. Oakland did not undergo the same visible change in commercial uses as many neighborhoods in San Francisco. It was not at the epicenter of
gentrification in the Bay Area between 1998 and 2008, and the problems that plague the neighborhood seem to be as entrenched as they were before the Bay Area economy took off. And the chronic lack of economic opportunities for many West Oakland residents who were not touched by the booms still translate into a neighborhood of whom a large portion of its residents are vulnerable to displacement in the future. The cycle of gentrification in West Oakland may have come to a close in 2008, but the protections and incentives described above must be in place before the next wave of real estate speculation begins. The city of Oakland currently allocates a mere $680,000 annually to address poverty for the whole city, and increasingly tight economic conditions may constrain this amount even further (Nadel 2008.) Thus the question of community influence over gentrification is subsumed by forces beyond the locality in question, often beyond the scale of city programs.

3. Theoretical Implications and Further Research

Recent theories of gentrification waves articulated by Hackworth and others only partially describe the process as it has occurred in West Oakland. Incipient gentrification of the neighborhood did represent a broadening of the process to include previously overlooked areas within the Bay Area region. The abundance of investment capital during the dot-com era eventually spilled into West Oakland
after other, more attractive places (like San Francisco’ SOMA district) were subject to development restrictions and zoning protections. Homeowners, speculators, and developers moved into parts of the neighborhood, contributing to striking shifts in the demographics of the area.

Developers in West Oakland were generally not the larger, more consolidated firms that “third-wave” theorists point to, but were almost entirely smaller developers, and many were not even classifiable as developers, but were merely individuals rehabilitating small buildings for resale (Simon 2008.) The only corporate developer, Pulte Homes, built one of the projects at the Central Station site; one local developer noted that larger, corporate firms are typically slower to move into neighborhoods like West Oakland because they are unaware of the local political climate and therefore less willing to take risks (Getz 2008.) In contrast, several larger, more consolidated developers built projects in and around downtown (Simon 2008). The largest project of the 10k Plan is being developed by Forest City Enterprise, a publicly traded real estate conglomerate with assets totaling almost $9 billion (Forest City 2007.)

Local government took a more active role promoting the 10k Plan, as city government took on development strategies dominated by neoliberal market-based principles; West Oakland was made into a redevelopment area at the request of the community. According to one resident, disinvestment on the part of the local state hasn’t changed (Horiuchi 2008.) West Oakland residents are
able to influence the course of development to a greater degree than perhaps at any time in Oakland's past, due in part to the institutionalization, rather than the weakening, of community activism. Citywide, Oakland residents have been effective at bringing some community benefits through negotiating with developers, while the success of the Just Cause eviction ordinance indicates a large reservoir of support for tenants' rights and resistance to gentrification.

The WOPAC is an agency with very limited powers, yet it does have a hand in shaping the redevelopment of West Oakland, providing an outline for economic growth with some protections for current residents. Housing and land use policy in Oakland is being dramatically remade at present to provide more affordable housing opportunities for typical Oakland residents. If this cycle of gentrification represented the “third wave” as theorized by Hackworth and others, it pertained more to Brown’s 10k Plan than to what occurred in West Oakland. The first cycle of gentrification there more closely resembled the earlier post-urban renewal “second wave” gentrification that Hackworth and others have described, in which private capital invests in previously neglected areas of the city primarily without the assistance of local government. It is not enough to say that third wave gentrification includes the expansion into these once overlooked areas such as West Oakland when the investment sources remain different for different parts of the city. Gentrification occurring in West Oakland seems to have lagged behind neighboring areas and is therefore not adequately described by third wave
criteria. It is more accurate to say that gentrification continues to be a highly uneven process within cities, that different investment patterns characterize this unevenness, and that local land use policy is an important aspect of these struggles over space.

Kate Shaw’s research into the limiting factors of gentrification is generally supported by the case of West Oakland. First, the supply of inexpensive and attractive older housing stock in West Oakland may have been influential to some moving into the neighborhood, however people moved into many newer buildings during this period. Developers were able to build on the vast amounts of vacant land in the neighborhood as well, making existing housing stock less relevant in the real estate market. Second, although the high proportion of renters left many vulnerable to displacement in the past decade, there are fairly strong community organizations that act on a number of fronts to improve the neighborhood for the benefit of its current residents. Despite divisions within the community, West Oakland residents are able to insert themselves into political dialogue over housing, redevelopment, and land use issues in ways that directly influence policy. These policies, and the ongoing involvement of residents shaping them, can become limiting factors to gentrification.

Finally, the political leadership of the WOPAC and city politicians is an important factor in West Oakland, but is severely limited by the City Council. Nancy Nadel’s work as City Council member expresses a strong political
commitment to fighting gentrification while revitalizing West Oakland. Likewise, Mayor Ron Dellums is promoting a different approach to developing Oakland than Jerry Brown, and his administration’s influence can be witnessed already in its commitment to creating an affordable housing policy for the city. The potential for an alternative to gentrification in West Oakland exists, and the collapse of the housing market in 2009 may provide the breathing room to make sure protections are in place for current residents to remain there in the future. The debates persist in Oakland over how much the market should dictate housing needs, and these are at the heart of the struggle for an affordable housing plan. Without a larger citywide grassroots response to the housing affordability crisis, the political leadership of the WOPAC and of some Council members will have a difficult time keeping the next round of gentrification from displacing more residents.

The question remains whether West Oakland will, despite the vulnerability of many of its residents to displacement, continue to be the place of last resort for investors, an area perpetually “undiscovered” by capital. To better answer this, further research is necessary into these neighborhoods that lie in the heart of economically vibrant urban regions yet stagnate in a lack of real opportunities for their lower-income residents and a simultaneous wariness on the part of city government and private investors to engineer gentrification. Are there other places like West Oakland that are identifiable in this way? What characteristics
do they share, and what can this tell us about the limits of gentrification?
Perhaps by looking at other areas neighborhoods that continue to be overlooked
by capital, even in the best of economic times, we can find models of community-
based development that are better suited for residents of these areas and
promote their vision for the city.

The Tenderloin neighborhood in downtown San Francisco provides the closest
example in the Bay Area of a low-income neighborhood that eluded gentrification
to a large degree during the decade between 1998 and 2008. Its history of anti-
gentrification activism, and the city’s use of the Tenderloin as a neighborhood
with large amounts of subsidized housing have kept gentrification from deeply
croaching. Although their histories diverge, both West Oakland and the
Tenderloin have functioned as warehouses for poor residents. The concentration
of subsidized housing in each neighborhood most likely Further research
comparing these and other neighborhoods may bring insights regarding the
functions of urban spaces and how these historic functions affect the likelihood of
their being gentrified.
VIII. Conclusion

Gentrification is characterized by the restructuring of urban space for the purposes of capital accumulation, and requires a substantial shift in the class position of those living in a particular place. This is a complex process in which many forces are set in motion in the built environment; it is often difficult to discern whether certain land uses and investment choices will bring about an exclusionary pattern of class recomposition or whether particular development will benefit the disadvantaged communities in which these changes occur. As Kennedy and Leonard (2001b) have stated, gentrification can take place as a consequence of urban revitalization, and this is certainly true for West Oakland. Parks and landscaping improvements, rehabilitating blighted and vacant properties, and controlling pollution are all undeniably beneficial to current residents. These transformations, while part of an equitable development strategy, bring about a more stable and attractive atmosphere for gentrification-producing investment. This contradiction is one that deserves further examination in order to more precisely understand the gentrification process, and therefore develop more effective urban revitalization policy.

Gentrification functions through the decisions of a variety of individuals, including developers, realtors, city officials, homebuyers, and others; employment patterns, housing market speculation, and other structural
influences condition the decisions of these individuals. Together their actions result in a transformation of land uses to those with higher income levels, as class power reshapes the urban landscape. It is a defining feature of cities that will likely increase in scope as metropolitan economies expand, cosmopolitan lifestyles are sought, and economic pressures make urban housing more attractive. This process is also indicative of the larger social inequalities that go unresolved in urban planning, as market-based strategies monopolize public debate and urban space is transformed not by the people living within it but by the movements of capital. Rather than approaching gentrification as solely an issue of protecting the housing of residents, it must be seen as part of a struggle on a wider social terrain for a "right to the city."

In West Oakland, community members have been able to guide, encourage, or even restrict certain types of highly localized development projects and land uses, but their ability to halt gentrification is severely limited by the scale at which they function. The uneven pattern of gentrification throughout the Bay Area is reflected in how the process unfolded in West Oakland. Some areas were selected for market-rate development projects in an inflated real estate market while adjacent sections of the neighborhood are, according to many residents, unchanged. Portions of West Oakland with large amounts of subsidized housing are, ironically, more resistant to gentrification even though its residents are economically more vulnerable than other renters. These areas may be those
avoided most by individual homebuyers coming into West Oakland as well as developers, who sought larger swaths of land on which to build or tended toward the edges of the neighborhood. There is a limited amount of capital available to be invested in the physical landscape even during the boom times, and poor neighborhoods like West Oakland are still places of last resort. Further research into the choices that developers and homebuyers make when deciding to move into lower-income neighborhoods would be useful.

While the WOPAC and other community members are able to manage the formulation and implementation of development policy in West Oakland to some degree, the real estate market swings wildly, realigning property values with regional and national economic trends. The end of the first cycle of gentrification in West Oakland may mean less investment capital to be used for revitalizing the neighborhood, but it may also allow for strategies that rely less on a booming real estate market and more on local solutions to the community’s pressing needs. Perhaps most importantly, local actors from the West Oakland community may become more powerful once larger pools of capital dry up there. The WOPAC is, despite the economic meltdown of 2008, able to put redevelopment money into tenant and low-income homeowner improvements, greening of critical transportation corridors, and other projects that directly benefit the neighborhood’s residents. The potential exists to create policy that protects residents from dislocation before the next wave of speculation occurs in the area,
and to establish programs that revitalize and make the neighborhood less vulnerable to the shifts of the market. The decline of the housing market and the cooling of new development, while tied to other economic troubles for the residents of West Oakland, may also allow for a longer view of changes in the neighborhood and the opportunity to establish housing and growth policies that will help its residents remain in place in the future.
IX. Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Subjects

Steve Edrington, Director, Rental Housing Association of Northern Alameda County
Andy Getz, HFH Ltd., developer of 159 housing units at Central Station Project
Lynne Horiuchi, WOPAC member, Hoover/West MacArthur subarea
Maureen Kennedy, researcher, Public Policy Institute
Patrick Lane, Redevelopment Manager, Oakland Redevelopment Agency
Margot Lederer-Prado, Industrial Development, Oakland CEDA
Karin MacDonald, WOPAC member, Prescott/South Prescott subarea
Frances McIlveen, Project Manager, Northern California Land Trust
Nancy Nadel, West Oakland City Council representative
Larry Rice, WOPAC chair, Hoover/West MacArthur subarea
Wendy Simon, Project Manager, Oakland Redevelopment Agency

Appendix 2. Interview Questions

General Questions (for all interview subjects):

1. How does gentrification differ from revitalization of a neighborhood?
2. Did gentrification occur in West Oakland during the dot-com era of 1997-2000? If so, what would you point to as indicators of this process?
3. Is gentrification occurring today in West Oakland and, if so, has the nature of gentrification in West Oakland changed from the dot-com economic boom to the present?
4. What factors do you believe limit the extent of gentrification in West Oakland (land use policy, neighborhood perceptions, etc.)?
5. What factors influenced developers' and homebuyers' decisions to invest within Oakland during the dot-com boom and have those factors changed in regard to West Oakland?
6. How has the role of city government changed as a facilitator of investment in West Oakland, and what role does the city play in the gentrification of the neighborhood versus its revitalization?

7. Has the process of gentrification in West Oakland been affected by adjacent neighborhoods’ or cities’ experience with this process?

8. What measures are being taken to minimize the displacement of current residents that may result from new investment in West Oakland?

9. What further measures could be taken to ensure the revitalization of West Oakland without displacement?

Additional questions for planners, developers:
1. What factors influenced developers’ investment locations within Oakland during the dot-com boom and have those factors changed in regard to West Oakland?
2. Has the availability of financing changed in West Oakland for developers, homeowners, and buyers? How does the legacy of redlining there contribute to contemporary development practices?
3. Are you aware of cancelled projects in West Oakland? What is your sense of future development potential there as the housing market subsides?

Additional questions for community residents/activists:

1. How has community activism or residents’ involvement with development in West Oakland shaped the way that gentrification has occurred? Has community involvement in influencing gentrification in West Oakland been unique from other Bay Area neighborhoods?
2. Have community members been effective at minimizing gentrification in West Oakland while still supporting revitalization efforts?
3. What can you say about the history of grassroots community activism in West Oakland as it relates to community engagement with gentrification today?
4. Is this an issue that causes much debate among West Oakland residents and are there varying opinions about gentrification here?
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