

# Wyvernwood Garden Apartments

## A Case Study in Preventing Gentrification and Displacement

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Figure 1: Preservationist of Wyvernwood; photo from Homes For All

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**ABSTRACT:**

This research paper examines planning tools and policies aimed at mitigating gentrification and displacement as well as affordable housing creation and preservation through a case study of Wyvernwood Garden Apartments in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. It also aims to understand the impacts of the redevelopment of Wyvernwood on the community of Boyle Heights. Semi-structured interviews with urban planners, members of community-based organizations, and community members were conducted to gain feedback on several policies and planning tools to evaluate the potential next steps for the tenants at Wyvernwood, the community of Boyle Heights, and the City of Los Angeles. Recommendations are provided for the coalition fighting to preserve Wyvernwood, the City of Los Angeles, community organizers, and for future research.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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# Table of Contents

<b>KEY TERMS, PEOPLE, &amp; ORGANIZATIONS:</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION:</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY:</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW:</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Part I: Background and Context</b>	<b>12</b>
The Housing Crisis: Nationally and Locally	13
The importance of affordable housing	15
Back to the City Movement	17
Gentrification and Displacement	19
<b>Part II: Policy and Planning Approaches and Tools</b>	<b>24</b>
Community Benefits Agreements	24
Community Land Trusts	28
Inclusionary Zoning	31
<b>BACKGROUND ON BOYLE HEIGHTS:</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>THE PROPOSAL TO REDEVELOP WYVERNWOOD:</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>The Redevelopment Plan</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Arguments for Redevelopment of Wyvernwood</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Arguments Against Redevelopment of Wyvernwood</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>FINDINGS:</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Housing Crisis and Concerns Regarding Affordable Housing</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Project-Specific Tools:</b>	<b>49</b>
Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs)	49
Community Land Trusts:	55
Historic Preservation	58
<b>Neighborhood-Specific Policies and Tools:</b>	<b>61</b>
Community Plans	61
<b>Citywide Policies and Tools:</b>	<b>63</b>
Inclusionary Zoning	63

<b>Ideal Policies &amp; Ideal Cities</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Miscellaneous Policies and Tools:</b>	<b>68</b>
Rent-Stabilization Ordinance Enforcement	68
Tenants Rights	69
No-Net Loss	69
Investment in Current Housing Stock	70
Market Analysis for New Development	70
<b>ANALYSIS &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Project-Specific Tools Analysis</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Wyvernwood-specific recommendations</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Citywide and Neighborhood Interventions Analysis</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Citywide Recommendations</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Recommendations for Organizers</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Recommendations for Future Research</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>CONCLUSION:</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>86</b>

**KEY TERMS, PEOPLE, & ORGANIZATIONS:**

**Wyvernwood Garden Apartments:** A rent-stabilized development of approximately 1200 units in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles; built in 1939.

**FACE (Frente de Apoyo al Comité de la Esperanza):** The coalition fighting to preserve the community and existing structures at Wyvernwood. The coalition members include: East L.A. Community Corporation, El Comité de la Esperanza, Healthy Homes Collaborative, the L.A. Conservancy, and Elena Popp (the lawyer for the tenants at Wyvernwood).

**El Comité de la Esperanza:** The tenants' organization at Wyvernwood Garden Apartments. The organization holds cultural events for the tenants and has taken a strong stance in opposition to the redevelopment project.

**ELACC (East L.A. Community Corporation):** A community development corporation in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. The organization develops affordable housing in Boyle Heights and East L.A and also has a community organizing department that works on several campaigns, including the campaign to preserve Wyvernwood.

**Fifteen Group:** Miami-based developer and current owner Wyvernwood Garden Apartments. They have proposed the massive redevelopment of Wyvernwood, almost quadrupling the number of units at the property.

**José Huizar:** Councilmember for Council District 14, the district where Wyvernwood is located.

## INTRODUCTION:

Housing affordability, gentrification, and displacement are prevalent among the many pressing issues cities in the United States currently face. These complex and interrelated issues become increasingly important as rents continue to rise, the wealth gap continues to widen, and our city centers continue to be redeveloped and revitalized. As these concerns of housing costs and wage gaps grow in America's cities, so does the inequality of its cities. Urban scholars, activists, and politicians have studied and suggested many tools and policies to minimize the social impacts of these progressively prevalent issues, but often, best practices vary by the individual case. This research paper examines themes of urban redevelopment, gentrification, and displacement as well as potential policy solutions through a focus on Wyvernwood Garden Apartments.

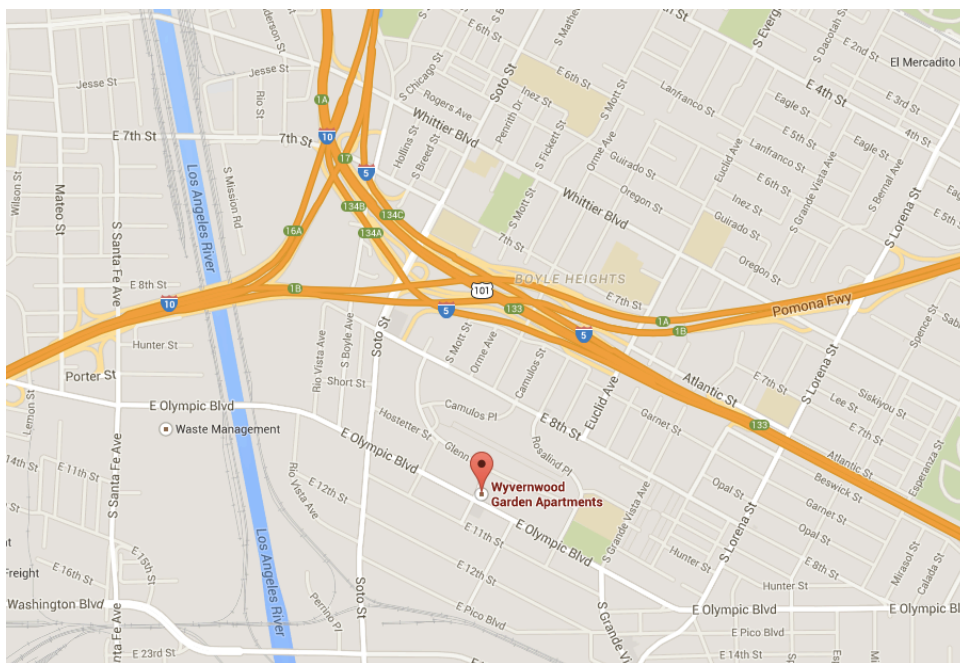


Figure 2: Map showing location of Wyvernwood; image from Google Maps



Figure 3: Map of Wyvernwood situated in Boyle Heights and surrounding area; photo from Wyvernwood.com

Wyvernwood Garden Apartments is a rent-stabilized apartment complex located in Boyle Heights that is under threat of redevelopment, potentially displacing up to 6,000 low-income residents. Wyvernwood's supply of approximately 1200 units of rent-controlled housing is a valuable resource for Los Angeles. Wyvernwood is a rare, open-space community that sits on the outskirts of a bustling and revitalized Downtown Los Angeles in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Home to Wyvernwood since 1939, Boyle Heights is a working-class, Latino neighborhood adjacent to Downtown Los Angeles. As a rent-stabilized apartment complex, Wyvernwood provides housing at affordable rates for many working-class and rent-burdened residents. In a city that has a shortage of affordable housing and a large rent-burden incidence, developments like Wyvernwood where so many tenants can benefit from the rent control are uncommon yet vital to the city's housing supply.



In 1998, a Miami-based developer, The Fifteen Group Land and Development, LLC, purchased Wyvernwood Garden Apartments. Ten years later, in 2008, the new owner proposed a \$2 billion redevelopment of Wyvernwood.<sup>1</sup> This redevelopment would replace the existing structures with high-rise apartment buildings, retail stores, and office space. Originally, the plan involved 4,400 residential units, 300,000 square feet of office space, and additional civic space. However, in 2014, the Fifteen Group reduced the number of residential units to 4,125, increased the amount of publically available open space to 11 acres, and included 325,000 square feet of commercial and retail space in updated plans.<sup>2</sup> Despite these changes, the proposed development would cut the amount of green space down to about a third of what currently exists and nearly quadruple the number of residential units. While this new development could create new jobs and promote economic development, it also has an array of potential negative effects.<sup>3</sup> The redevelopment, completed as proposed, would create higher rents, displacement of up to 6,000 residents, a demographic shift, and gentrification in the surrounding area. Thus, the Wyvernwood Garden Apartments complex serves as a case study for the urban trends and policies discussed in this paper that perpetuate and exacerbate inequality in Los Angeles and cities throughout the nation.

I became involved in this research for multiple reasons. While at Oxy, one of my favorite classes was “Housing Problems and Policy” taught by Professor Joan Ling. This course sparked my interest in housing policy, and fostered a much deeper understanding of the housing crisis in the United States. My relationship to Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles Community

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<sup>1</sup> “Wvernwood Garden Aparments,” *The Los Angeles Conservancy*, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Neal Broverman, “Preservationists and Boyle Heights Activists Fighting Huge Wyvernwood

<sup>2</sup> Neal Broverman, “Preservationists and Boyle Heights Activists Fighting Huge Wyvernwood Redevelopment,” *LA Curbed*, April 30, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> “Overview,” Wyvernwood Apartments.

Corporation (ELACC) came a semester later. In the fall of 2013, I became an intern for their Community Organizing Department, and I worked on their Legalize Street Vending Campaign. Through this internship, I gained exposure to the neighborhood changes occurring in Boyle Heights. I was inspired by the efforts of East L.A. Community Corporation to involve the community in urban planning efforts and advocate for responsible and equitable urban development in Boyle Heights and East L.A. Researching Wyvernwood Garden Apartments presented the perfect opportunity for me to combine two of my favorite experiences at Occidental College and contribute to a dialogue about a pressing issue that Los Angeles is currently facing.

To examine potential solutions to gentrification, displacement, and the destruction of low cost housing through the lens of a current event in Los Angeles, my research questions include one primary research question and several secondary questions. My primary question is: What are the options for the city of Los Angeles, the developer, tenants, and community groups to prevent or minimize displacement and gentrification in Wyvernwood and Boyle Heights? My secondary questions are: What are the causes and effects of gentrification and displacement? Why is it important to maintain housing affordability? What policies have worked best in the past to prevent gentrification and displacement in similar redevelopments? What lessons can be learned from previous successes or failures at preserving low-cost housing? Does the current proposal for Wyvernwood intensify gentrification, and can benefits and mitigation strategies outweigh or offset the negative aspects of gentrification? From a review of the existing literature, there are a variety of policy tools that can be used to minimize the negative effects of the redevelopment on the community. The ones highlighted in this paper include: Community Benefits Agreements, Community Land Trusts, Inclusionary Zoning, and other miscellaneous

tools and policies mentioned by interviewees. My primary research evaluated feasibility and effectiveness of these tools through feedback from urban planners, community based organizations, and affordable housing advocates to evaluate the best approaches for members of the community in Boyle Heights to take in prevention efforts against gentrification and displacement.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

To answer these research questions, I used a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative methods. Firstly, to contextualize Wyvernwood and analyze best practices, I reviewed existing literature examining urban renewal, gentrification, and policy solutions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a variety of participants, such as urban planners, politicians, community members, and members of community based organizations. Interviews with leaders involved with preservation or loss of affordable/low-cost housing in Los Angeles and displacement prevention efforts in Los Angeles were a valuable source of qualitative information. The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that participants discussed the same themes but had flexibility to share their personal stories and experiences. The interviews focused on policies and tools to prevent gentrification and displacement in Los Angeles as well as the most critical areas for housing need in the city.

This research also examined three case studies: Rolland-Curtis apartments, Pico-Aliso apartments, and the Los Angeles Staples Center Community Benefits Agreement. These three case studies present examples of organizing efforts to preserve affordable/low-cost housing in Los Angeles, and the successes or failures of such attempts. Some information for these case studies was collected through existing literature (journal articles, newspaper articles), and the

remaining analysis regarding these case studies was synthesized through interviews and focus groups. Rolland-Curtis Apartments is a development located in South Los Angeles near the University of Southern California, and is a recent example of a Community Land Trust as a tool to preserve low-cost housing. Pico-Aliso apartments were located in Boyle Heights, near what is now the Pico-Aliso Gold Line Station, and present an example of the loss of low-cost housing. The Staples Center Agreement is an example of the use of a Community Benefits Agreement to make new development more equitable.

I analyzed demographic information for Wyvernwood and for each of the three case studies. The demographic analysis demonstrates the current population and how the population has changed over time. For the case study of Pico-Aliso and the Staples Center, the demographic analysis also demonstrates the effect that redevelopment had on the population in terms of diversity, income, and housing costs. Demographic analysis includes examining American Community Survey census data and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) User Income Limits, Fair Market Rent, and Area Median Income.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **Part I: Background and Context**

In order to understand the problems of housing affordability, gentrification, and displacement that a redevelopment of Wyvernwood poses, it is important to examine literature regarding these themes to contextualize the redevelopment. While Wyvernwood presents an individual case, these issues have been witnessed and studied in cities throughout the world. Redevelopment, reinvestment in city centers, and a loss of affordable housing are larger issues that are all exemplified through the potential redevelopment of Wyvernwood.

***The Housing Crisis: Nationally and Locally***

At a national level and at a local level here in Los Angeles, an overwhelming number of individuals and families are spending a large portion of their income on rent. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that individuals/families spend no more than thirty-percent of their income on housing costs, whether that be rent or mortgage payments. If a household is spending more than the recommended thirty-percent of their income on rent, then they are considered rent-burdened or housing-cost-burdened.<sup>4</sup> This thirty-percent threshold is used as a baseline to measure housing unaffordability. If a large number of households exceed that thirty-percent threshold in a given area, this indicates that housing is unaffordable in this area. The entire country currently faces high proportions of rent-burden and housing cost-burden. The situation is particularly bad for renters. According to Tracy Kaufman, the “reason for the current situation is simple: the incomes of many renter families have not kept up with, or ever caught up with, rents.”<sup>5</sup>

The City of Los Angeles is no exception to this national housing crisis. In fact, based on a study at University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles has been named the most unaffordable city in the entire country.<sup>6</sup> According to the Harvard Center for Joint Housing Studies, 58.3% of renters in Los Angeles are spending more than the recommended maximum of thirty-percent of income on housing. Including homeowners, the rate of burden is still strikingly

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<sup>4</sup> Alex Schwartz, *Housing Policy in the United States*, New York and London: Routledge, 2010, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Tracy Kaufman, “Out of Reach: The unaffordability of rental housing,” *Journal of Housing & Community Development* 54, no. 6 (November 1997): 25.

<sup>6</sup> “UCLA study identifies L.A. as most unaffordable rental market in the nation,” *UCLA Newsroom* (2014).

high among Angelenos; approximately 49.8% of all households in the City have cost burdens.<sup>7</sup> The annual “Out of Reach” report by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition presents an alternative indicator of housing unaffordability by measuring the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment in geographic areas across the country.<sup>8</sup> For California, the housing wage, assuming 40 hours of work per week, 52 weeks per year, is a whopping \$26.04. This is more than three times the state’s minimum wage. In Los Angeles, that wage increases slightly to \$26.88.<sup>9</sup> However, the number of jobs available at those wages is not enough to meet the demand; due to this, housing without a rent burden remains impossible for many renters.

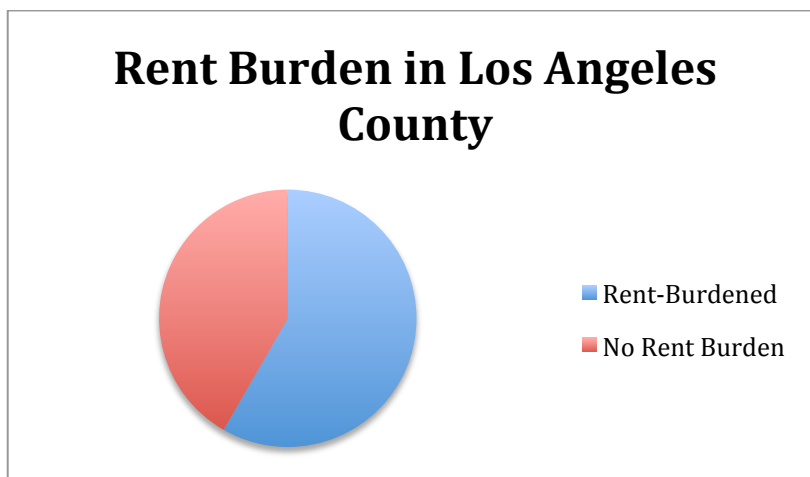


Figure 4: Chart of Rent Burden in L.A. County; data obtained from the Harvard Center for Joint Housing Studies

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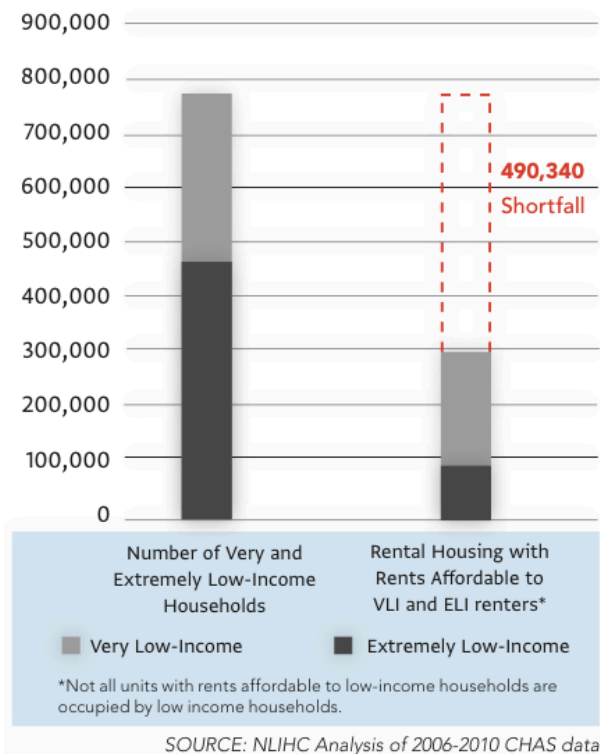
<sup>7</sup> “Millions of Americans Spend Over 30 Percent of Income on Housing,” Harvard Center for Joint Housing Studies.

<sup>8</sup> “Out of Reach 2014: Twenty-Five Years Later, The Affordable Housing Crisis Continues,” National Low Income Housing Coalition (2014): 31.

<sup>9</sup> Out of Reach, 32.

### ***The importance of affordable housing***

Why is preserving and creating additional low-cost/affordable housing important? As affordable housing scholar Alex Schwartz states, “affordability is not exclusively a housing problem.”<sup>10</sup> Some scholars argue that housing is also public health issue. With the rising cost of housing, there has been an increase food insecurity of renters who had to pay an increasing amount of their income on rent rather than food.<sup>11</sup> Inadequate or crowded housing has also been shown to have negative effects on one’s mental health.<sup>12</sup> Affordable housing, however, can aid in these issues. In a report for the Center for Housing Policy, Rebecca Cohen argues “affordable housing may improve health outcomes by freeing up family resources for nutritious food and health expenditures.”<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the stability that affordable housing can provide and the ability to afford rent can reduce stress and anxiety among renters, thus improving mental health.<sup>14</sup> Affordable housing is also likely to have better living conditions than apartments that low-income renters may be able to afford at unsubsidized rates;



**Figure 5: Gap between supply and demand for affordable housing in L.A.; obtained from California Housing Partnership Corporation**

<sup>10</sup> Schwartz, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Jason Fletcher, Tatiana Andreyeva, Susan Busch, “Assessing the effect of changes in housing quality on food insecurity,” 86.

<sup>12</sup> Schwartz, 2.

<sup>13</sup>Rebecca Cohen, "The Impacts of Housing Unaffordability on Health: A Research Summary," *The Center for Housing Policy* (May 2011):1, [http://www.nhc.org/media/files/Insights\\_HousingAndHealthBrief.pdf](http://www.nhc.org/media/files/Insights_HousingAndHealthBrief.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Cohen, 2.

substandard conditions in unsubsidized apartments or homes may include lead paint, mold/mildew, asbestos, etc.<sup>15</sup> Thus, affordable housing goes beyond the scope of simply providing low-cost housing, but also protects the health and well being of the population.

The high cost of housing is a central issue that affects many different aspects of one's life. Oftentimes, housing is associated with the resources available to an individual or family due to the neighborhood where the housing is located. In order to afford housing, one may have to negotiate other sacrifices, such as quality of school, quality of neighborhood, and quality of life. One example of a discrepancy related to quality of life is the segregation that often occurs as a result of a limited availability of low-cost housing in the area;<sup>16</sup> this can lead to concentrated poverty and concentrated crime. Another example is the long commute to work that lower-income residents often must make in order to be able to afford an apartment.<sup>17</sup> The time from the commute not only leaves less time for other important activities, like exercise, but it also can create higher levels of stress and presents an additional cost. Affordable housing can provide low-income families with access to, "better schools, good transportation networks, recreational facilities, and other community services enables families to improve their quality of life and provide greater opportunities for their children," but these are all resources that individuals and families lose without a sufficient supply of low-cost housing.<sup>18</sup> Urban planning scholar Lance Freeman comments that due to the fact that, "housing is the single largest expenditure for most households, housing affordability has the potential to affect all domains of life that are subject to

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<sup>15</sup> Howard I. Campbell, and Joan R. McFadden, "Healthy Living: Housing Affordability and Its Impact on Family Health," *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* 98, no. 4 (November 2006): 49.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Martin, *Residential Segregation Patterns of Latino in the United States* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007): 70.

<sup>17</sup> Schwartz, 3.

<sup>18</sup> "Housing Assistance Matters Initiative." *Urban Institute* (2014).



cost constraints.”<sup>19</sup> Higher-income citizens are not only able to afford the high cost of housing, but they have access to better resources and a higher quality of life in general. Additionally, if one cannot afford housing at all, homelessness results.<sup>20</sup> The inability to pay rent has been cited as the leading cause of homelessness, and homelessness deprives many of a safe and comfortable home.

### ***Back to the City Movement***

Throughout urban history, cities have experienced population shifts. After the industrial revolution, cities began to experience “white flight.” White people began to move from city centers to suburban outskirts of the city, especially after World War II.<sup>21</sup> This “cumulative redistribution of white residences and jobs out of city centers has led to a lower quality of life for the minorities and poor left stranded in the core.”<sup>22</sup> While white flight had its own negative effects on urban city centers, the Back to the City movement and urban renewal followed white flight with its respective consequences as well. However, contrary to what the name implies, the literature discusses that the Back to the City movement is not so much a migration from the suburbs to the city, but rather a “symbolic return to an interest in city living” and migrations within city boundaries.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the Back to the City movement is reinvestment into central city neighborhoods by middle-class residents from other areas of the city. In fact, in a case study of a

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<sup>19</sup> Lance Freeman, “America’s Affordable Housing Crisis: A Contract Unfulfilled,” *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no.5 (2002): 710.

<sup>20</sup> Melissa J. Doak, “The Housing Problem,” *Social Welfare: Fighting Poverty and Homelessness* (2010).

<sup>21</sup> Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, *Gentrification*, 2008 (New York: Taylor & Francis Group), 22.

<sup>22</sup> William H. Frey, “Central City White Flight: Racial and Nonracial Causes,” *American Sociological Review* 44, no. 3 (June 1, 1979): 425.

<sup>23</sup> Shirley Bradway Laska, and Daphne Spain, Introduction to *Back to the City: Issues in Neighborhood Renovation*, ed. Shirley Bradway Laska and Daphne Spain, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980): xiii-xiv.

revitalized neighborhood in Philadelphia, approximately three-quarters of the new residents that migrated to the area had migrated within city boundaries as opposed to migration from the suburbs.<sup>24</sup> Hence, rather than literally moving from the suburbs back to the cities, citizens have increased their hopes in urban life and their idealization of cities as places to live and work, causing greater investment in city centers by residents of other areas of the city.<sup>25</sup> This urban renewal began in the 1950s and 1960s, but truly strengthened during the 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

This increased investment and interest in city living has had its share of negative effects on inner-city populations. Laska and Spain, who have studied the Back to the City movement and neighborhood renovation, state, “like earlier American achievements from which the terms ‘homesteading’ and ‘pioneering’ were borrowed, the successes [of urban renewal] are not without conflicts or victims.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, urban renewal’s victims have been, and continue to be, inner city residents who are displaced by the reinvestments that often result in higher rents and unaffordability. In addition to residential displacement, Derek Hyra also argues that the Back to the City movement has resulted in cultural and political displacement of long-term residents in an area.<sup>28</sup> Political displacement refers to the fact that long-term residents experience decreased political power as a result of becoming out-numbered by the new residents in an area.<sup>29</sup> Cultural displacement refers to the fact that the neighborhood will reflect the cultural practices and desires

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<sup>24</sup> Neil Smith, “Toward a Theory of Gentrification A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45, no. 4 (October 1, 1979): 540.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Clay, "The Rediscovery of City Neighborhoods: Reinvestment by Long-time Residents and Newcomers," In *Back to the City: Issues in Neighborhood Renovation*, ed. Shirley Bradway Laska and Daphne Spain, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980): 14.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 538.

<sup>27</sup> Laska and Spain, xv.

<sup>28</sup> Derek Hyra, "The back-to-the-city movement: Neighbourhood redevelopment and processes of political and cultural displacement," *Urban Studies Journal* (2014): 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

of the new population rather than the long-term residents.<sup>30</sup> The effects of this reinvestment are further explored in the discussion on gentrification.

### ***Gentrification and Displacement***

Gentrification is a complex concept that has various definitions, causes, and effects. While exact definitions of gentrification vary depending on the scholar, it is generally defined as neighborhood change with increased investment in the neighborhood resulting in an influx of higher income residents, and oftentimes displacement of lower income residents. One definition of gentrification that sums up the general literature on gentrification comes from the Brookings Institution and defines gentrification as, “the process by which higher income residents displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood.”<sup>31</sup> However, it is important to note that gentrification is not occurring everywhere in cities throughout the country; rather, cities with tight housing markets such as Los Angeles are the ones experiencing gentrification.<sup>32</sup> While gentrification occurs on a neighborhood level, it is influenced by citywide housing and development trends. With increased investment in city centers, the process of gentrification and displacement are likely to follow.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Maureen Kennedy and Paul Leonard, “Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Changes,” *The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy* (2001): 5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 1.

<b>Definitions of Gentrification</b>	
Karen Chapple 2009 p.2	“process of neighborhood change that encompasses economic change in the form of increases in both real estate investment and household income, as well as demographic change in the form of increases in educational attainment.”
Maureen Kennedy and Paul Leonard (2001) p. 5	“the process by which higher income residents displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood.”
Lees et al. (2007) p. 53	“new development undermines older investments, and ongoing depreciation forces owners to consider carefully before sinking more capital into aging land uses”
Oxford Learner’s Dictionary	“to change an area, a person, etc. so that they are suitable for, or can mix with, people of a higher social class than before.”
Sharon Zukin (1987) p.129	“the conversion of socially marginal and working class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use, reflects a movement, that began in the 1960s, of private-market investment capital into downtown districts of major urban centers.”
Lance Freeman (2005) p.463	“the process by which decline and disinvestments in inner-city neighborhoods are reversed...attracting middle-class residents and spurring investment.”
PBS Flag Wars (2003)	“Gentrification is a general term for the arrival of wealthier people in an existing urban district, a related increase in rents and property values, and changes in the district's character and culture. The term is often used negatively, suggesting the displacement of poor communities by rich outsiders. But the effects of gentrification are complex and contradictory, and its real impact varies.”

Various causes for gentrification exist as well as an array of indicators that reflect whether gentrification is occurring in an area. Gentrification scholar Kalima Rose identifies the following factors as potential actors for displacement and gentrification: “a high proportion of renters, easy access to job centers...location in a region with increasing levels of metropolitan congestion, and comparatively low housing cost values.”<sup>33</sup> Other factors include availability of amenities and access to public transportation.<sup>34</sup> Income can also be a determinant in whether or

<sup>33</sup> Kalima Rose, "Beyond Gentrification: Tools for Equitable Development," *Shelterforce Online* (2001), <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/117/Rose.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Karen Chapple, "Mapping Susceptibility to Gentrification: The Early Warning Toolkit," *University of California Center for Community Innovation* (August 2009): 5.

not a neighborhood is susceptible to gentrification. The greatest income related factor is income diversity.<sup>35</sup> A neighborhood where a large percentage of the renters are paying above 35% of their income on rent is also likely to be a neighborhood susceptible to gentrification. One of the most prominent causes of gentrification, however, is rising land values and rising rents of an area. This relates to the economic theories of gentrification, suggesting that at the core of gentrification is an opportunity for economic gain.

Neil Smith, who believes that gentrification is a movement of capital more than it is a movement of people, pioneered one of the most prominent, economic-driven gentrification theories. Neil Smith uses the rent-gap hypothesis to explain the occurrence of gentrification. In this theory, Smith defines the rent-gap as “the disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use.”<sup>36</sup> The potential ground rent level is the maximum value the property could have if redeveloped, and the ground rent capitalized is the current ground rent. Thus, a property is likely to undergo redevelopment and gentrification if there is a “rent gap” between these two rent values, as a large rent gap presents an opportunity for profit.<sup>37</sup> Neil Smith’s theory of gentrification demonstrates that housing is subject to market forces; housing is not a right, but rather a commodity that is used as investment strategy.

Indications of neighborhood change may also be indications of gentrification. The Brookings Institution identifies several indicators that suggest gentrification. For example, a “shift from rental tenure to homeownership, an influx of households or individuals interested in specifically urban amenities and cultural niches, and an influx of amenities” are all indicators of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, 545.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

gentrification.<sup>38</sup> An increase in educational attainment above the overall rate of increase in educational attainment is an additional indicator.<sup>39</sup> Kalima Rose notes that gentrification occurs in three stages.<sup>40</sup> In the first stage, there is public or nonprofit redevelopment as well as the process of flipping vacant units. In the second stage, the neighborhood gains publicity for its relatively low-cost housing, and newcomers begin to move into the neighborhood. In the third and final stage, rehabilitation occurs at full force and housing costs rise rapidly. With the progress of each stage comes increasing displacement.

The effects of gentrification are as diverse as its causes, and many scholars have debated whether or not gentrification is a positive or a negative phenomenon. For example, while gentrification may lead to displacement of long-term residents, it may also lead to a greater mix of incomes and races. This increased socioeconomic and demographic diversity is often viewed as a positive development that mitigates segregation in these neighborhoods.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, residents “will benefit from the new services attracted by the rising neighborhood income.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, some literature frames gentrification as a positive change in a community that leads to the decentralization of poverty and greater diversity. While some might assume that the higher income residents that displace lower incomes are white, studies have shown that the higher income residents that displace lower incomes are diverse racially, not always white.<sup>43</sup>

Displacement has been viewed as the most severe and negative effect of gentrification. The debate over displacement’s prevalence is thematic throughout the literature. Displacement

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<sup>38</sup> Kennedy and Leonard, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Chapple, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Rose.

<sup>41</sup> Jana Kasperkevic, “Study of poverty-ridden neighborhoods shows gentrification is not ruining enough of America,” *The Guardian*, December 10, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Chapple, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Kennedy and Leonard, 2.

occurs when “current residents are forced to move out because they can no longer afford to reside in the gentrifying neighborhood.”<sup>44</sup> Displacement can also occur as a result of “housing demolition, ownership conversion of rental units...landlord harassment and evictions.”<sup>45</sup> Karen Chapple notes that measuring displacement is an extremely difficult task that is challenging to do with accuracy.<sup>46</sup> While some scholars, such as Freeman, assert there is only a small association with gentrification and displacement, others refute that claim.<sup>47</sup> In a study examining local moves in New York City, Newman and Wyly found that 6.2% to 9.9% of all moves are due to displacement.<sup>48</sup> Correspondingly, certain neighborhoods or populations have been identified as more likely to undergo displacement. Neighborhoods with high renter occupancy and high rates of rent burden are most likely to experience displacement as a result of gentrification.<sup>49</sup> This is because renters have less control over their housing costs than homeowners; rents may rise as a result of increased demand from gentrification, but homeowners would continue to pay the same mortgage payments.

As an example of the gentrification process, the Park Slope neighborhood in Brooklyn foreshadows the potential effects of gentrification in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. The Park Slope neighborhood became a mostly minority community as a result of white flight in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the neighborhood experienced high-levels of disinvestment.<sup>50</sup> Lees, Slater, and Wyly found that in, “1950, Park Slope was 99 percent white; by 1990, it was 52 percent

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<sup>44</sup> Lance Freeman, “Displacement or Succession? Residential Mobility in Gentrifying Neighborhoods,” *Urban Affairs Review* 40, no. 5 (March 2005): 463.

<sup>45</sup> Kathe Newman and Elvin K. Wyly, “The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City,” *Urban Studies* 43, no.1 (January 2006): 27.

<sup>46</sup> Chapple, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Freeman, “Displacement or Succession?” 480.

<sup>48</sup> Newman and Wyly, 29.

<sup>49</sup> Chapple, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Lees et al., 22.

white.”<sup>51</sup> “Pioneer gentrifiers,” or middle-class and upper-middle class residents, began to move into the Park Slope neighborhood to make a profit off of the relatively cheap real estate. As a result, active displacement occurred for long-term residents, as rents rose and long-term residents could no longer afford the rents.<sup>52</sup> Examples of neighborhoods such as Park Slope serve as alerts for caution and equitable development in Los Angeles as neighborhood transformations occur.

## **Part II: Policy and Planning Approaches and Tools**

In an effort to combat the negative effects of gentrification and displacement on the community and make cities a more equitable place for all to live, community organizations, non-profits, and local governments have constructed various policies and planning tools. Three of these tools are discussed in this section: Community Benefits Agreements, Community Land Trusts, and Inclusionary Zoning.

### ***Community Benefits Agreements***

Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs), a tool that has emerged and grown in popularity in the last twenty years, present an opportunity for community groups to negotiate certain benefits out of development in effort to minimize the development’s negative impacts on the community.<sup>53</sup> CBAs are “a legally enforceable contract, signed by community groups and by a developer, setting forth a range of community benefits that the developer agrees to provide as part of a development project.”<sup>54</sup> CBAs are also an organizing tool for both the community

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Lees et al., 30.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas A. Musil, “Developer/Community Contracts: The Emergence of Community Benefit Agreements in Real Estate Development,” *Real Estate Finance* (Aspen Publishers Inc.) 30, no. 5 (2014): 32.

<sup>54</sup> Julian Gross, Greg, LeRoy, and Madeline Janis-Aparicio, “Community Benefits Agreements: Making project Developments Accountable, published by *Good Jobs First* and the *California Partnership for Working Families* (2005): 9.



members and the developers. While the community organizes members to fight for certain benefits, it is also a way for the developer to negotiate with the community and advance projects. As community benefits agreements have become increasingly popular policy tools, they have presented more opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of the tool in preserving communities and preventing gentrification and displacement. A variety of community benefits have been associated with CBAs. One of the most common benefits of a Community Benefits Agreement is the creation of affordable housing.<sup>55</sup> Other community benefit demands could include local hiring, noise control, green spaces, and sustainability.

Community Benefits Agreements produce an array of positive effects that have garnered large support from the community. For example, Community Benefits Agreements increase public participation in the development process, as community groups often gain input from community members about benefits that they would like to see. Therefore, the development not only reflects the desires of the developer, it reflects the desires of the community that currently lives there<sup>56</sup>. Community Benefits Agreements have also been viewed as a way to way to make up for previous injustices to the community.<sup>57</sup> In addition to support from community members, some developers support CBAs in order to acquire community support for a project.<sup>58</sup> Community Benefits Agreements have also been praised for the array of benefits that it can provide; they have “versatility for addressing a range of community needs.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Musil, 37.

<sup>56</sup>Vicki Been, "Community Benefits Agreements: A New Local Government Tool or Another Variation on the Exactions Theme?" *The University of Chicago Law Review* 77, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 15.

<sup>57</sup> Emma T. Lucas-Darby, "Community Benefits Agreements: A Case Study in Addressing Environmental and Economic Injustices," *The Journal of African American History* 97, no.1-2 (Winter-Spring 2012): 102.

<sup>58</sup> Been, 110.

<sup>59</sup> Sandy Gerber, "Community benefits agreements: A tool for more equitable development?," *Community Dividend* (November 2007), 4.

Despite these benefits, the existing literature also questions the effectiveness of CBAs and their ability to truly protect neighborhoods from gentrification and displacement. Some scholars question community benefits agreements' enforceability. It is important that a CBA provide a timeline for the benefits to be implemented as well as someone who has a designated role to ensure that the benefits are implemented.<sup>60</sup> Another concern is whether or not the community that negotiates the CBA is truly representative of the entire community. Laura Wolf-Powers states that in some CBAs, the "activists themselves, rather than the disadvantaged community residents, were typically the beneficiaries of CBAs because they used it as a platform to promote policies such as living wage ordinance."<sup>61</sup> The literature also debates whether these neighborhood solutions would be better tackled by citywide policies that would benefit the city as a whole.<sup>62</sup>

In conclusion, Community Benefits Agreement can present a promising way for community groups and residents to negotiate benefits out of what would normally be an unjust development process. However, precautions must be taken to ensure their effectiveness and enforceability. It is important that someone holds the developer accountable to the benefits, and that the entire community is involved in the process.

*Case Study: Staples Center/L.A. Live Community Benefits Agreement*

As an example of a successful CBA, this research examines a case study of the Staples Center/ L.A. Live Community Benefits Agreement. In 2001, the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice (FCCEJ) negotiated the Staples Center Agreement or the L.A. Live

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<sup>60</sup> Been, 30.

<sup>61</sup> Laura Wolf-Powers, "Community Benefits Agreements and Local Government: A Review of Recent Evidence," *American Planning Association. Journal of the American Planning Association* 76, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 143.

<sup>62</sup> Been, 25.

Agreement, one of the first landmark Community Benefits Agreements.<sup>63</sup> The Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice includes “unions, religious groups, community-based organizations, citywide organizations, environmentalists, students, health groups, block groups, and workers centers.”<sup>64</sup> This group joined together in response to a proposal by the Anschutz Entertainment Group in 2000 to build a new convention center that would displace 200 households and bring traffic and pollution to the community.<sup>65</sup> Benefits of the CBA included \$1 million for parks and recreation in the neighborhood, a residential parking program, 70% of permanent jobs to pay a living wage, a local hiring program, 20% of new units reserved as affordable units for a minimum of a 30 year period, and \$650,000 to an affordable housing trust fund.<sup>66</sup> The agreement was “incorporated into the development and disposition agreement between AEG and the CRA,” or the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles.<sup>67</sup> The coalition has continued to see that the developer and local government carry out the agreement.<sup>68</sup>

This case study presents an example of a CBA used in a low-income Los Angeles community to mitigate displacement of residents in the area. This CBA has been recognized all over the country as one of the most successful CBAs in the history of the tool, and has also been viewed as beginning a movement of Community Benefits Agreements across the country.<sup>69</sup> The

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<sup>63</sup> Jacqueline Leavitt, "Linking Housing to Community Economic Development with Community Benefits Agreements: The Case of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice," In *Jobs and Economic Development in Minority Communities*, ed. Paul Ong and Anastasia Loukaitou Sideris, Philadelphia: Temple University Press (2006): 258.

<sup>64</sup> Leavitt, 258.

<sup>65</sup> Wolf-Powers, 147.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>68</sup> Strategic Actions for a Just Economy, "Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice."

<sup>69</sup> Leland Saito and Jonathon Truong, "The L.A. Live Community Benefits Agreement: Evaluating the Agreement Results and Shifting the Political Power in the City," *Urban Affairs Review* 51, no.2 (2015): 263.

robust benefits negotiated out of the tool speak to the potential benefits a CBA could provide to the community in Boyle Heights and Wyvernwood.

### **Community Land Trusts**

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) present another recent and growing trend aimed at neighborhood stabilization and gentrification prevention. To accomplish these goals, “community land trusts remove the cost of land from the housing price by separating ownership of the land from that of the house and other improvements.”<sup>70</sup> In terms of structure, “a CLT is a non profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to the preservation of land for the benefit of the community and for its use as low-income housing.”<sup>71</sup> The first Community Land Trust was established as a result of the Civil Rights Movement in efforts to secure land for African Americans,<sup>72</sup> but Community Land Trusts began to emerge as a policy tool in the world of affordable housing in the 1980s, and since then have become an increasingly popular tool for neighborhood stabilization.<sup>73</sup> Essentially, the community land trust model provides members with more rights than they would have as renters, but more restricted rights than homeowners in order to ensure maintained affordability.<sup>74</sup>

Community Land Trusts present several advantages as a tool for maintaining affordability. Firstly, because the land is owned by non-profit and community members, CLTs create permanent affordability, unlike other forms of affordability where the affordability requirement expires, or rent control, in which the rent can be raised if a tenant moves out of the

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<sup>70</sup> Rosalind Greenstein and Sungu Eryilmaz, “Community Land Trusts: A Solution for Permanently Affordable Housing,” Lincoln Institute of Land Policy (January 2007): 9.

<sup>71</sup> Julie Farrell Curtin, and Lance Bocarsly, “CLTs: A Growing Trend in Affordable Home Ownership,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. 4 (July 1, 2008): 370.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 370.

<sup>73</sup> Greenstein and Sungu-Eryilmaz, 9.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

apartment. Additionally, CLTs present flexibility, as the housing can either be homes available for ownership or rental housing.<sup>75</sup> Due to the fact that CLTs can have community members, CLTs can be responsive to the needs and desires of the community.<sup>76</sup> The long-term affordability of CLTs and the community participation in the process has allowed them to be a tool in preventing gentrification and displacement in neighborhoods.<sup>77</sup> Despite the numerous advantages to CLTs, there are also some disadvantages to the process. Perhaps the largest disadvantage for CLTs is the cost of land. With expensive real estate markets, it can be difficult for non-profits to have the resources to purchase the land, especially in gentrifying neighborhoods where speculation is high and land value increases rapidly.<sup>78</sup>

CLTs must also be used in combination with other tools in order to maximize effectiveness. Scholars Karen Gray and Mugdha Galande point out the gap in the literature surrounding community organizing and community land trusts; while community organizing is a vital part of land trusts, there is little literature that attests to the role of community organizing in Community Land Trusts. These authors attempt to fill that gap through their case study in Durham, North Carolina that examined the importance of community organizing to achieving the goals of a community land trust. The authors found that community organizing was “helpful if not necessary for community building...in the CLT.”<sup>79</sup> The case study of Rolland-Curtis Apartments also presents an example of the importance of community organizing to the success and efficacy community land trusts.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Karen A. Gray and Mugdha Galande, “Keeping ‘Community’ in a Community Land Trust,” *Social Work Research* 35, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 241.

<sup>77</sup> Rhea Serna, “Tenants Plus Land Trust Beat Gentrification,” *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 15, no. 1 (April 1, 2008): 36.

<sup>78</sup> Curtin and Bocarsly, 376.

<sup>79</sup> Gray and Galande, 241.

*Case Study: Rolland Curtis Apartments*

Rolland-Curtis Apartments in South Los Angeles are an example of a Community Land Trust model used to create long-term affordability and foster community participation in the planning process. Rolland-Curtis Apartments was an affordable housing development with an affordability mandate that was about to expire in January of 2011.<sup>80</sup> The owner of the apartment wanted to sell the apartments and rent them out at market rate to students at the neighboring university, University of Southern California. However, T.R.U.S.T. (Tenemos que Reclamar y Unidos Salvar la Tierra) South L.A. joined forces with Abode Communities to purchase the property and transform it into a community land trust.<sup>81</sup> Residents and other community members have the opportunity to contribute to the conversation and envision a new property together.<sup>82</sup> The land trust is being developed as a transit-oriented development zone in the city of Los Angeles.

Rolland-Curtis Apartments are an important case study to evaluate for this research paper not only due to its example of a Community Land Trust, but also as an example of community organizing. T.R.U.S.T. South L.A. organized the tenants and the community in order to convince the owners to sell the development. They have also continued to organize tenants and community members in efforts to involve them in the planning process for the new development. Another interesting aspect of the case study is the fact that the redevelopment is still in progress, so interviews from this case study have been reflective of the process rather than the end results.

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<sup>80</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, Sandra McNeill, Rene Rodriguez, and Noel Toro, "A Guide to Community-Driven Transit Oriented Development Planning," T.R.U.S.T. South L.A. and Abode Communities, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Pasciuto et al., 13.

### ***Inclusionary Zoning***

An additional policy solution that aims to increase and maintain the supply of low-cost housing is inclusionary zoning. Compared to the other policies discussed in this literature review, inclusionary zoning is a policy that would be implemented by a local government rather than on a case-by-case basis by non-profits or community groups. The policy of inclusionary zoning “requires or encourages developers to designate a portion of the housing they produce for low- or moderate-income households.”<sup>83</sup> There are two types of inclusionary zoning policies: voluntary and mandatory policies. In a voluntary inclusionary zoning ordinance, the city provides incentives for the developer if they develop a certain percentage of the new development as affordable units.<sup>84</sup> A mandatory inclusionary zoning policy would require that for all developments at or above a certain size, a portion of the units must be affordable. In some cities, Inclusionary Up-Zoning has been implemented so that if density increases, a certain number of those have to be affordable units.<sup>85</sup> An overwhelming majority (95%) of inclusionary requirements range from 10% to above 20% of all units.<sup>86</sup>

Inclusionary zoning has been promoted as a policy tool by affordable housing advocates for its numerous benefits. Inclusionary zoning influences the supply side of affordable housing and has the potential to “promote economic diversity within affluent communities-enabling lower income households to reside in areas with very little affordable housing.”<sup>87</sup> This increase in diversity ideally would lead to a deconcentration of poverty; this deconcentration would be

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<sup>83</sup> Schwartz, 224.

<sup>84</sup> Brian R, Lerman, “Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning--the Answer to the Affordable Housing Problem,” *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review* 33, no. 2 (March 2006): 389.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Hickey, "Inclusionary Upzoning: Tying Growth to Affordability," *The Center for Housing Policy* (July 2014): 1-20.

<sup>86</sup> "Inclusionary Zoning: The California Experience," *National Housing Conference* 3, no.1 (2004): 14.

<sup>87</sup> Schwartz, 224.

beneficial due to the negative effects of concentrated poverty, such as lower school performance and higher rates of crime.<sup>88</sup> Another advantage of inclusionary zoning is that the public does not bear the financial burden; instead, the developer pays the cost of increasing the supply of low-cost housing.<sup>89</sup> In a study examining inclusionary zoning practices in Orange and Los Angeles Counties, scholars found that the key to a successful inclusionary zoning program is through high in-lieu fees; if a developer can easily pay its way out of the affordability requirement, then the supply of affordable housing will not be significantly affected.<sup>90</sup>

However, inclusionary zoning is not without its criticism and opposition. A divide in the literature persists as to whether or not inclusionary zoning creates an increase in housing prices where inclusionary zoning ordinances exist. Some scholars find that inclusionary zoning programs have no adverse effect on the housing costs<sup>91</sup> and that jurisdictions with inclusionary zoning programs have experienced increased housing production compared to jurisdictions with no inclusionary zoning requirements.<sup>92</sup> However, several economists and developers assert that inclusionary zoning raises the cost of housing and real estate development.<sup>93</sup> Constantine Kontokosta attributes this divide in the literature to “the absence of common policy structure and effective implementation strategies”<sup>94</sup> Inclusionary zoning ordinances differ depending on the city, thus evaluating the policy from a broader perspective is difficult to accomplish; the

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<sup>88</sup> Constantine Kontokosta, "Mixed-Income Housing and Neighborhood Integration: Evidence from Inclusionary Zoning Programs," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no.4 (2013): 716.

<sup>89</sup> Lerman, 391.

<sup>90</sup> Vinit Mukhija, Lara Regus, Sara Slovin, and Ashok Das, “Can Inclusionary Zoning Be an Effective and Efficient Housing Policy? Evidence from Los Angeles and Orange Counties,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 32, no. 2 (May 2010): 237.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “Inclusionary Zoning,” 26.

<sup>93</sup> Jenny Scheutz, Rachel Meltzer, and Vicki Been, “Silver Bullet or Trojan Horse? The Effects of Inclusionary Zoning on Local Housing Markets in the United States,” *Urban Studies* 48, no. 2 (2010): 298.

<sup>94</sup> Constantine Kontokosta, 717.



effectiveness of the policy varies case by case. Developers comprise the largest opposition to inclusionary zoning; they view it as an “additional government intrusion in their affairs.”<sup>95</sup> Additionally, developers argue that inclusionary zoning cannot be economically feasible, and that constructing the affordable units creates an additional cost burden that is only transferred to the future tenants. To address this, programs offer incentives to offset the cost of the creation of low-cost housing.

Lastly, inclusionary zoning’s legal status in California cannot be ignored. Due to state appellate court ruling in the *Palmer v. Los Angeles* decision, municipalities in California cannot legally mandate a certain percentage of affordable units; mandatory inclusionary zoning is currently illegal in the state.<sup>96</sup> In this court case, inclusionary zoning was viewed as a form of rent control and therefore did not comply with the Costa-Hawkins act.<sup>97</sup> A bill was proposed in the California State Assembly last year that attempted to clarify that the Costa-Hawkins Act does not prohibit inclusionary zoning.<sup>98</sup> While the bill made it through the Assembly and the Senate, Governor Brown vetoed the bill possibly due to concerns of backlash from the real estate industry and developers. That being said, there are many incentive-based options for inclusionary zoning that are not affected by this court case, such as density bonuses, tax credits, zoning changes, and height increases.

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<sup>95</sup> “Inclusionary Zoning,” 7.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Shigley, “Court Rules L.A. Inclusionary Housing Mandate Violates State Law,” *California Planning and Development Report*, August 20, 2009.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> “Recap: Governor Signs Majority of Housing Bills But Not AB 1229,” *Southern California Association of Non-profit Housing*.

## BACKGROUND ON BOYLE HEIGHTS:

In order to investigate the effect that this redevelopment will have on Boyle Heights and the actions that should be taken to prevent displacement of the community, it is important to provide a background of the neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Boyle Heights is a neighborhood located in East Los Angeles, close to the neighborhoods of Little Tokyo, Downtown L.A., Vernon, Lincoln Heights, and El Sereno.<sup>102</sup> Boyle Heights is a working class neighborhood whose median family income is about half of the county's median income at \$32,500.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, Boyle Heights is a predominantly Latino community; 93% of the population in the neighborhood is Latino.<sup>104</sup> Boyle Heights is also home to many small businesses, dense rental housing, and a vibrant community.

Boyle Heights has gone through many changes in recent years, largely due to government processes and planning in the neighborhood. One of the biggest transformations the neighborhood underwent was the construction of the interchanges for I-5, I-10, US-101, and CA-60 freeways; this construction of the freeway exchange has divided up the neighborhood, led to a loss of housing, and has caused extensive air pollution due to all of the traffic from the freeways.<sup>105</sup> In addition, the development of the Metro Gold Line through Boyle Heights has been a large investment in the neighborhood, and could potentially attract new residents.<sup>106</sup> There are still parcels of land that Metro purchased in Boyle Heights for rail construction that could potentially be developed in ways that do not address the needs of the community, and could potentially lead to gentrification in the surrounding neighborhood. For this reason, East

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<sup>102</sup> "El Plan del Pueblo," *East L.A. Community Corporation*, 8.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

LA Community Corporation has a campaign to fight for equitable development on the Metro parcels.<sup>107</sup>

Additionally, Boyle Heights has experienced a shrinking supply of affordable housing, while the demand for the affordable housing has only increased. To contextualize the redevelopment of Wyvernwood within the history of the loss of affordable housing and tenant organizing in Los Angeles, this research examines a case study of Pico-Aliso Apartments.

*Case Study: Pico-Aliso Apartments*

Pico-Aliso apartments present an example of displacement and a loss of low-cost housing in Boyle Heights, the same neighborhood where Wyvernwood is located. Pico Aliso apartments were demolished and rebuilt in 1999 under the Hope VI program sponsored by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD intended to redevelop dilapidated public housing through the Hope VI program.<sup>108</sup> The federally funded program covered the demolition of housing and the redevelopment of housing. While some welcomed the changes to the development, which was seen as run-down and in need of major improvements, others opposed the redevelopment.<sup>109</sup> The opposition was grounded in the fact that the creation of new units was not enough to house all of the residents. The number of affordable units was decreased from 685 units to 469, thus removing about a third of the total units.<sup>110</sup> Thus, the “creation” of new affordable units was still a destruction of affordable units, and resulted in displacement of many residents. To address this, tenants organized themselves, and “community members

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<sup>107</sup> “Metro Campaign,” East L.A. Community Corporation.

<sup>108</sup> Schwartz, 143.

<sup>109</sup> Hector Becerra, “Aliso Village Residents Divided Over Demolition Plan; Housing: Group Opposing the Replacement of Aging Units with New Structures Has Drawn Criticism from Some Tenants and City Officials.: [Home Edition],” *Los Angeles Times*. August 7, 1998, sec. Metro; PART-B; Metro Desk.

<sup>110</sup> Jack Burnett-Stuart, “The New Aliso Village and the Ideology of the Fresh Start.,” *Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design*.

actually refused to move, and some of them even stayed in their building as other buildings were being demolished around them. And As a result of that, they won the right to stay on site during some of the reconstruction...and then they got a guarantee to get a new house.”<sup>111</sup>

This case study is important in contextualizing the history of the depletion of low-cost housing in Boyle Heights. It also demonstrates the history of tenant and community organizing efforts in Boyle Heights. Similar to Wyvernwood, the Pico-Aliso community was divided about which side to take regarding the redevelopment. From studying this case study and interviewing those involved with the fight against the redevelopment, important lessons about the strengths and weaknesses of the tenant organizing can be learned and applied to tenant organizing strategies at Wyvernwood. The proposal to redevelop Wyvernwood would present yet another case where affordable housing in Boyle Heights was lost, and the neighborhood underwent major changes that led to displacement.

## **THE PROPOSAL TO REDEVELOP WYVERNWOOD:**

### **The Redevelopment Plan**

The redevelopment plan proposed by the Fifteen Group Land and Development, LLC, involves total demolition of all existing structures of Wyvernwood.<sup>112</sup> The structures would be replaced with higher-density and higher-cost apartments. In the original plans, most of the new buildings would range between two and seven stories, however, up to three of the buildings would be as tall as eighteen stories and an additional three would be as tall as twenty-four

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<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth Blaney (Unión de Vecinos) interview by author over phone, March 18, 2015.

<sup>112</sup> “Homes, Shopping, and Offices,” Wyvernwood Apartments.

stories.<sup>113</sup> After criticism, the corporation has recently revised their plans to more evenly distribute the heights of the buildings. In order to reduce density, plans have been modified to include 4,125 rental units, 11 acres of open space, and 325,000 square feet of commercial and retail space.<sup>114</sup> Currently, Wyvernwood has an estimated 36 acres of open space and no commercial space. This means that the new plan involves quadrupling the number of units while cutting the green space down to a third of what currently exists. As the result of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on their redevelopment proposal, there have been several proposed alternatives to the project. The EIR found potential impacts to the environment in the form of air quality, noise, housing, and traffic.<sup>115</sup> The alternatives are as follows:

- A) No Project/ No Build, which would involve no demolition or new construction
- B) No Project/Site Rehabilitation, which would involve rehabilitation of the site but no new construction
- C) Partial Preservation, which would involve preserving a portion of the development and allowing the remainder to be redeveloped while preserving the site's eligibility for the California Register of Historic Resources,
- D) West End Preservation, which would involve preservation of a smaller section of the development and allowing the remainder to be redeveloped
- E) Reduced Intensity, which would be a reduced density version of the redevelopment plan, totaling 2,709 residential units

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<sup>113</sup> "Appendix D: Historic Resources Report," Prepared by Historic Resources Group, LLC, June 2011.

<sup>115</sup> "Final Environmental Impact Report: Executive Summary," Los Angeles Department of City Planning, December 2012.

- F) Reduced Height Alternative, which would involve reducing the height of the highest buildings in the development.<sup>116</sup>

These alternatives to the original project attempt to address some of the concerns regarding impacts of the development to the environment socially, economically, and physically.<sup>117</sup> The developer will most likely try to demonstrate that these alternatives are not feasible and convince others that the best option for the development plan would be to carry out the development as originally intended.

Under the proposed redevelopment of Wyvernwood, there would be no net-loss in rental housing, but there would be an addition of many condominiums available for ownership. Fifteen percent of the new units, amounting to a total of approximately 660 rental units, would, according to the Fifteen Group's Resident Retention Plan, be designated as affordable housing for low-income and very low-income residents.<sup>118</sup> If the current residents choose not to remain in Wyvernwood, they will be provided \$18,300 per unit as a relocation stipend to find a new place to live. This is the maximum required by the City of Los Angeles, and the Fifteen Group is promising to pay this maximum payment for all tenants who choose to leave. Considering that the median rent is \$822/month in the Wyvernwood census tract and the Fair Market Rent is \$1,398/month for a two-bedroom apartment in the City of Los Angeles, on average tenants could pay about \$600 more per month for housing. The relocation stipend would only help the tenants get through about 30 months of a higher rent, or approximately 2.5 years. Considering that

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<sup>116</sup> "Final Environmental Impact Report."

<sup>117</sup> "Definition and Explanation of Environmental Impact Report," California Department of Transportation, December 19, 2013.

<sup>118</sup> "Understanding the Resident Retention Plan at Wyvernwood Garden Apartments," Wyvernwood Apartments.

housing costs will likely continue to rise, the relocation assistance is not a permanent solution for the tenants at Wyvernwood Garden Apartments.



Figure 6: Wyvernwood today; photo from [laeastside.com](http://laeastside.com)

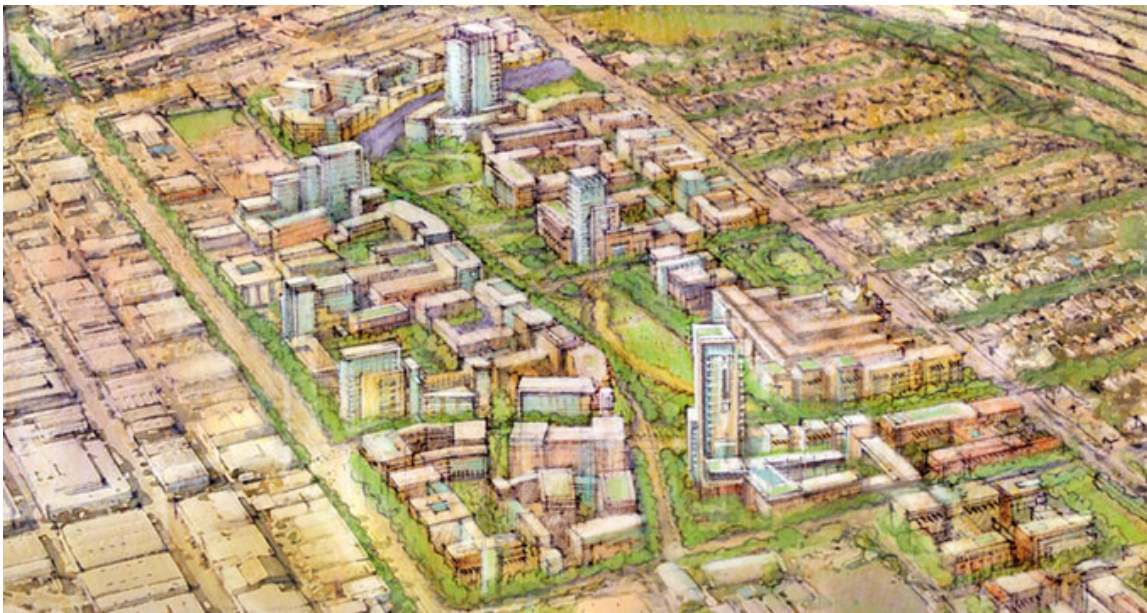


Figure 7: Proposed New Wyvernwood, photo from [Wyvernwood.com](http://Wyvernwood.com)

## Arguments for the Redevelopment of Wyvernwood

The Fifteen Group portrays the project as a positive addition to the community for several reasons. According to the developer, the New Wyvernwood would include more environmentally efficient buildings, many LEED-certified, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.<sup>119</sup> It would also create 10,000 construction jobs and 2,800 permanent jobs in a struggling economy, in addition to a \$3.6 billion boost to the Los Angeles economy.<sup>120</sup> Because of the high demand for jobs, the redevelopment project has won the support of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor.<sup>121</sup> Other benefits highlighted by the developer include \$25 million in revenues to the City of Los Angeles annually. The Boyle Heights Job Collaborative is a local hiring program created by the Fifteen Group.<sup>122</sup> The program would aim to give 30% of the new construction jobs to local residents, with 10% reserved for at-risk workers. “Special emphasis” will also be placed on hiring current Wyvernwood residents. In addition to the economic and environmental benefits that the development boasts, the Fifteen Group highlights the large areas of open space that the project will include in comparison to the smaller areas of open space that the developer claims currently “don’t get used.”<sup>123</sup> Although the project will include higher densities, the developer claims that its close proximity to transit will limit the effects on traffic.<sup>124</sup> Another goal of the developer is to increase the number of quality affordable housing options in Boyle Heights through the Resident Retention Plan.<sup>125</sup> However, while they are technically creating new affordable housing units through new construction, there will still be

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<sup>119</sup> “A Green Environment,” Wyvernwood Apartments.

<sup>120</sup> “An Economic Engine,” Wyvernwood Apartments.

<sup>121</sup> Gloria Angelina Castillo, “Wyvernwood Protests Pick Up, Push Anti-Profit Message,” EGP News, 2013.

<sup>122</sup> “Significant Local Hiring,” Wyvernwood Apartments.

<sup>123</sup> “A Green Environment.”

<sup>124</sup> “A Transportation Hub,” Wyvernwood Apartments.

<sup>125</sup> “Preserving Community Ties,” Wyvernwood Apartments.



a net loss of about 600 low-cost units with the demolition of about 1,200 rent-controlled units that exist in Wyvernwood currently.

While all of these benefits seem appealing, the developer fails to discuss the plethora potential negative impacts on the neighborhood and current residents. Among these negative impacts is the loss of a historically and architecturally significant community, the loss of a cultural hotbed, loss of affordable housing, gentrification, and a demographic shift in the development and surrounding community.

### **Arguments Against the Redevelopment of Wyvernwood**

One of the greatest losses to the community that will result from the redevelopment of Wyvernwood is the loss of affordable housing. As a rent-stabilized development, Wyvernwood has provided rents at affordable rates to generations of families. Although the Resident Retention Plan would reserve 15% of the new units as affordable units, that would only result in a total of 600 units, equivalent to half of the current existing units.<sup>126</sup> Thus, there would still be a net loss of approximately 600 rent-stabilized units. Although relocation assistance of \$18,300 would be provided to those who do not stay in the development, it would likely be insufficient to cover the long-term costs of losing their rent-controlled housing.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, new investments in the area could likely raise housing costs in the surrounding area, thereby making it more difficult for Wyvernwood residents to find other housing in the surrounding area as well making housing in the surrounding area unaffordable for current residents through the gentrification process. The chart below shows the demographics of Wyvernwood in comparison to the City of Los Angeles and Boyle Heights, and demonstrates that the incomes and rents in

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<sup>126</sup> “Resident Retention Plan,” Wyvernwood Apartments.

<sup>127</sup> “Resident Retention.”

Wyvernwood are lower than Boyle Heights, and much lower than the city. This raises the question of: where will the tenants go?

**Figure 8: Demographics of Wyvernwood, Boyle Heights, L.A., and L.A. County**

	<b>Wyverwood Garden Apartments (Census Tract)</b>	<b>Boyle Heights (90033 zip code)</b>	<b>Los Angeles (City)</b>	<b>Los Angeles County</b>
<b>Median Household Income<sup>128</sup></b>	\$25, 873	\$45, 903	\$49, 745	\$56, 241
<b>Median Rent<sup>129</sup></b>	\$822	\$972	\$1,156	\$1,187
<b>Percentage Hispanic or Latino<sup>130</sup></b>	95.0%	96.3%	48.4%	47.7%

Although the Fifteen Group would like to deny that the new development is likely to cause gentrification on a large scale, many of the signs of gentrification are present within the scope of the redevelopment. With Boyle Heights' location adjacent to downtown, access to the Gold Line, and respectively low cost of housing, it is at risk of gentrification and has already demonstrated some signs of gentrification. For example, the neighborhood is beginning to see chain stores and restaurants, such as Starbucks,<sup>131</sup> and other higher cost venues infiltrate the neighborhood.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, the nearby Sears Tower redevelopment project will include "stores, lofts, restaurants, and creative spaces."<sup>133</sup> There has been an "infusion of money" into

<sup>128</sup> American Community Survey Estimates 2008-2012, Table DP03

<sup>129</sup> American Community Survey Estimates 2008-2012, Table DP04

<sup>130</sup> American Community Survey Estimates 2008-2012, Table DP05

<sup>131</sup> Bianca Barragan, "Boyle Heights Getting First Starbucks in Gentrification Hot Zone," *LA Curbed*, April 16, 2014.

<sup>132</sup> Jennifer Medina, "Los Angeles Neighborhood Tries to Change, but Avoid the Pitfalls," *The New York Times*, August 17, 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Adrian Glick Kudler, "Boyle Heights Sears to Become Huge Multiuse Community," *Curbed LA*, December 2, 2013.

the neighborhood and real estate costs have been on the rise.<sup>134</sup> The redevelopment is likely to escalate the process of gentrification in Boyle Heights. This is likely to not only displace the residents currently living in Wyvernwood, but it may increase housing costs in the surrounding area by increasing demand for real estate in the neighborhood, thus having a ripple effect into the surrounding area if residents can no longer afford their higher rents. Renting an apartment in the new development would require a yearly salary of approximately \$90,000, when the median income of Boyle Heights is approximately a third of that.<sup>135</sup> Thus, the current demographic that calls Wyvernwood home may no longer be able to do so. With this income shift is likely a demographic shift.<sup>136</sup> Considering the fact that Wyvernwood's tenant association, El Comité de la Esperanza organizes several cultural events for the tenants, this demographic shift could also likely lead to a loss of cultural celebration.

The redevelopment of Wyvernwood will also have an assortment of negative environmental effects. Due to the destruction of the current structures and their replacement with new structures, the construction process is expected to produce eleven tons of construction debris every day for a period of ten to fifteen years.<sup>137</sup> Not only will this produce waste, it will also create air and noise pollution for the surrounding residents. Additionally, the increased density will require over five times more than the existing parking spaces in the Wyvernwood structure, and if the developer does not receive an exemption from the city regarding parking spaces, that number could increase even more.<sup>138</sup> Currently, the development has 1,799 parking spaces, but this could increase to between 10,903 and 11,003 spaces total. This increased traffic

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<sup>134</sup> Jennifer Medina.

<sup>135</sup> Neal Broverman.

<sup>136</sup> Lees et. al

<sup>137</sup> Jesus Hermsillo, "Saving Wyvernwood is the Environmental Choice," *StreetsBlog LA*, April 4, 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

will certainly lead to increased air pollution, in a neighborhood that already suffers from disproportionately high rates of asthma.<sup>139</sup> In correlation with this increase in parking, the increase in income levels in this area will likely lead to an increase in residential car ownership and driving, as working-class families are much more likely to use public transit.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, the amount of green space will greatly be reduced. The new and updated project will provide approximately eleven acres of open space, while the total amount of open space estimated to be on the current Wyvernwood property is about 36.43 acres.<sup>141</sup>

## **FINDINGS:**

To evaluate potential effectiveness of policies and planning tools for low-income housing preservation at Wyvernwood, I interviewed members of the L.A. City Planning Department, members of community-based organizations, and other community leaders involved in community-driven urban planning. The interviews and policy options discussed were directed towards low-income housing preservation options in Los Angeles, but not all policy options discussed were specifically geared towards Wyvernwood. While preservation actions specific to Wyvernwood are important, it is also useful to evaluate policies on a broader level as this knowledge could help to assuage displacement and encourage preservation and creation of other affordable housing developments in the future. Interviewees were asked about their opinion of the housing crisis in Los Angeles and their experiences with the various policies and tools analyzed in this paper; they were not asked to state an opinion on whether or not they are in

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Adrian Scott Fine, "Draft EIR for the Boyle Heights Mixed Use Community Project," email to Sergio Ibarra, January 18, 2012.

support of or opposed to the redevelopment of Wyvernwood Garden Apartments, and their statement should not be construed as such. It is important to note that the responses analyzed in this paper do not reflect the opinions of the interviewees in regards to the redevelopment of Wyvernwood.

This section also includes demographic and economic data from the American Community Survey for Wyvernwood and case studies. The data is displayed in several charts and graphs that aid the assessment of community needs for Wyvernwood and provide a comparison of Wyvernwood to the other case studies of redevelopment.

### **Housing Crisis and Concerns Regarding Affordable Housing**

The results of my interviews with community leaders reflected much of the literature on the housing crisis in Los Angeles; there is simply not enough affordable housing to meet the high demand. Two prominent issues arose in interviews: “we’re not building enough affordable housing,” and we have a “loss of existing affordable units, displacement, and demolition.”<sup>142</sup> It became clear through my interviews that these community leaders also feel that the city is not doing enough to address this crisis. Almost all interviewees stressed the need for a more comprehensive housing policy nationally and locally in Los Angeles. When discussing tools and policies used to create or preserve housing affordability, interviewees often referred to other cities that are leading the forefront, such as San Francisco or Boston. Los Angeles has not been a model of affordable housing creation and preservation, but it has the potential to change through a combination of innovative policies and planning tools.

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<sup>142</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015.

In addition to a lack of affordable housing at present, there were many concerns that the supply of affordable housing will continue to shrink. With gentrification, traditionally low-cost neighborhoods are becoming more costly for long-term residents. One interviewee from a public interest law firm that has dedicated itself to issues of social justice expressed that one of the main barriers to affordable housing and one of the main causes for the increasing cost of housing in Los Angeles is land speculation and speculative investment. The attorney stated:

What we are seeing in neighborhoods... around the city, and I think that Boyle Heights is certainly one of these neighborhoods...is that communities for many, many years were very disinvested...the city was ignoring these areas, there was a history of redlining...and a lot of different factors that resulted in a segregated, isolated, and disinvested community...But now there is a shifting dynamic...as these communities now become attractive to investors because of a combination of new public investment like transit and this history of disinvestment that had made the land relatively cheap. And so what happens is, real estate developers or real estate speculators, can purchase land for a lower price and then just sort of sit on it and wait until all the gentrification forces come together and the prices go up...It's a speculation strategy to follow public investment to buy cheaper early and sell high as gentrification accelerates.<sup>143</sup>

Because of demand, the housing market in Los Angeles is not conducive to creating a stable supply of affordable housing, and the prominence of speculative investment and gentrification allows costs in neighborhoods to continue to rise. Many organizations that I spoke with echoed these concerns with speculative investment in L.A. that is perpetuating the gentrification and displacement process. A community organizer expressed the same concern with speculative investment in regards to a new Los Angeles zoning code that is in the process of being created. The new zoning code is creating “packages” for different areas, and these packages will make it easier for a project to be approved if it meets the pre-packaged guidelines.<sup>144</sup> Thus, speculative

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<sup>143</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

<sup>144</sup> Anonymous community organizer, interview by author, February 19, 2015.

investment could potentially increase with the new zoning code by making it easier for large redevelopment projects to occur.

As an additional threat to housing affordability, several interviewees brought up concerns regarding the Master Planned Development Ordinance. This law was recently approved by the Los Angeles City Planning Commission and is being reviewed by the Los Angeles City Council. The ordinance would allow large developments (above 3 acres) to go through a different zoning process. This would basically allow for master developments to get approved more quickly and gain the necessary entitlements because they would go through a separate and expedited process. Many interviewees expressed concern that this ordinance, if passed by City Council, would promote even more loss of affordable housing and serve as a catalyst for gentrification by expediting the process for large developments. These large developments can tear down older housing that might be protected under the Rent-Stabilization Ordinance, or can attract gentrifiers and lead to an increase in surrounding rents in the area.

Elizabeth Blaney of Unión de Vecinos, a community organizing organization in Boyle Heights, expressed her concerns not only regarding the high cost of housing and the increasing speculative investment, but also expressed in the way that new affordable housing is being constructed in Boyle Heights and Los Angeles as a whole. She explained that most affordable housing developers in Boyle Heights, and in Los Angeles, use the Area Median Income (AMI) of Los Angeles County to determine the rents of the units. However, many of the neighborhoods that have the greatest need for affordable housing have median incomes that are less than half of that of the County. For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) states that the AMI for Los Angeles County for a family of four is

\$63,000.<sup>145</sup> In Boyle Heights, the median income is approximately \$33,000. Another issue with affordable housing development is that if a non-profit developer receives federal funds for the development, the developer is legally forbidden from prioritizing residents of a certain neighborhood. For example, if affordable units were to be built in Boyle Heights, the developer would not be able to prioritize residents of Boyle Heights who may be facing displacement; anyone nationwide could apply for the housing, “so it doesn’t address the overcrowding or the need for Boyle Heights residents [or residents in any other neighborhood where this occurs] because they are competing with everyone else for the building.”<sup>146</sup>

Lisa Payne from the Southern California Association of Non-profit Housing voiced that the greatest barrier to affordable housing from the development perspective is funding. Funds for affordable housing in Los Angeles have been cut by about one-half billion per year since 2007.<sup>147</sup> The loss of \$250 million resulted from the dissolution of the California Redevelopment Agencies, and \$230 million was lost because the majority of the California state bonds were spent. The remaining loss of funding has been due to a loss of funds on a federal level. With this loss of funds for affordable housing, housing policy approaches must include a component that raises funds for affordable housing development.

A need for a comprehensive approach to combat the high cost of housing and a lack of affordable housing were repeatedly stressed in interviews. A comprehensive approach would involve a combination of policies and efforts of community-based organizations to both preserve current affordable units and create new affordable units. As a professional in public interest law stated, “We can’t just build new units if we are also losing affordable units at a faster rate. And

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<sup>145</sup> FY 2015 User Income Limits Los Angeles County, HUDUser.org.

<sup>146</sup> Elizabeth Blaney (Unión de Vecinos) interview by author over phone, March 18, 2015.

<sup>147</sup> Lisa Payne (Southern California Association of Non-profit Housing), interview by author over phone, February 17, 2015.



vice versa – we can't address the critical need if all we are doing is preserving affordable units.”<sup>148</sup> All of the policies and tools mentioned in this paper individually are “one of the many tools needed to ensure affordability,” but it is the combination of these tools, used in relevant scenarios, that creates an effective and sustainable approach to increase the supply of affordable housing and preserve current affordable units. The tools and policies discussed here are aimed at specific projects, and others are policies or tools enacted in neighborhoods or citywide.

### **Project-Specific Tools:**

The tools and policies discussed in this section represent strategies that have been used to prevent gentrification and displacement or to preserve affordable housing at specific project sites. All of these tools could be potential strategies for the community at Wyvernwood Garden Apartments.

### ***Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs)***

A Community Benefits Agreement is the tool that received the most mixed feedback in my interviews. Part of the reason for this mixed feedback is that CBAs truly must be evaluated on a “project by project” basis.<sup>149</sup> A blanket analysis of CBAs would not be an accurate evaluation of the tool; CBAs are more appropriate in some cases than others, and also more effective in some cases than others. I asked community leaders to discuss certain concerns about CBAs, as well as the reasons why they view CBAs as a useful and empowering tool for urban communities. The concerns I asked the community leaders to discuss were the same concerns that arose from my literature review as well as from conversations with members at community-

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<sup>148</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

<sup>149</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29, 2015.

based organizations. The interviewees were asked to address the following concerns: the drain of resources on community-based organizations required to enforce CBAs, the potential for a community benefits agreement to not truly represent the “community,” and the support the organization must give to the developer in exchange for the CBA.

A common praise of CBAs is the ability to expand the planning process to include more people than just the developer and the city government. It is a “powerful model to bring populations that may be historically excluded from the planning process into the process in a more meaningful way.”<sup>150</sup> CBAs were also cited as having “value in the coalition process itself.” Often, it is a coalition of organizations that come together to create a CBA rather than one individual organization. The coalition process can have benefits that last beyond the CBA through the relationship building and connections that are fostered between organizations. For example, the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice was founded to negotiate the Staples Center CBA. However, the coalition remains even after the C.B.A., and has helped lead to the Figueroa Corridor Community Land Trust, now known as T.R.U.S.T. South L.A.

The importance of evaluation was a key theme mentioned in interviews regarding CBAs. Evaluation refers to whether or not a CBA is the best strategy for an organization or a coalition, and how successful that CBA may be in achieving the goals of the organization or coalition. Several interviewees mentioned that it is essential to evaluate the political leverage that the community based organization or coalition has. While in many cases community-based organizations would prefer that no development occur, they recognize that they do not have the political leverage to completely stop the development. It is important to evaluate “whether a [development] project with benefits is better than no project, especially considering the

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<sup>150</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

possibility of a different project down the line. And what is the organizations' ability to engage meaningfully with the developer?"<sup>151</sup> In other words, the community must evaluate whether or not a CBA is the right tool for that specific development and if the goals of the organization or coalition would be better achieved in another form. This step of evaluation was repeatedly mentioned in interviews as a vital step in the CBA process. Another interviewee described a similar process, "At a certain point there has to be decisions that the community coalition makes about...is this, quote on quote, good enough? Does it address significantly enough the issues that have been raised by community residents? And further, do we have the political power to do anything more than this?"<sup>153</sup> It is important for the coalition or community-based organizations to evaluate if they have the political leverage to negotiate something beyond the CBA, and if not, how much can be negotiated out of a CBA.

Interviewees also provided insight regarding the enforcement and implementation process for CBAs. While Community Benefits Agreements are certainly legally enforceable, having the resources to implement the CBA is a whole other challenge. Even though a CBA is legally enforceable, "that doesn't mean that the community or the organizations or the non-profits necessarily have the capacity...that's a consideration that is very important if the community is considering a CBA approach." To address implementation, some coalitions have "created a program oversight committee, which includes community residents and community organizational representatives who are tasked with the implementation and enforcement of the agreement from [the community] side, and then we work with a legal team to help us with any of

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<sup>151</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

<sup>153</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015.

the legal issues around the agreement.”<sup>154</sup> Due to the financial drain that implementation can have on a community coalition, the people I interviewed highlighted the value of incorporating a funding source into a CBA. One person stated, “If there’s a best practices on these agreements [incorporating funding for implementation into the agreement] would be one of them.”<sup>155</sup> Often, it is the developer that agrees to pay into these funds. To make implementation easier, it is important to “build in a clear process in the CBA itself so that it is really clear down the line what roles and responsibilities organizations have to make sure the developer is living up to what they agreed to.”<sup>156</sup> One interviewee from a community based organization in Los Angeles cautioned that to make implementation smoother, a CBA “has to be really legally tight, because if there is anything that is vague in there that could cause a problem later. It could be something that you would never imagine as vague, and someone could still construe it as vague.”<sup>157</sup> Thus, a great deal of the success of a CBA is determined by the process leading up to the CBA; the coalition must make sure that the agreement provides the infrastructure and funds for successful implementation and enforcement.

In response to the concern about the potential for Community Benefits Agreements to be unrepresentative of the community, interviewees agreed that the potential for that to happen exists, but it can easily be avoided with strategic organizing. Interviewees expressed that a community can be “defined in infinite ways,”<sup>158</sup> but that the goal of certain community based-

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<sup>154</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

<sup>155</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

<sup>156</sup> Anonymous source from a community based organization, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>157</sup> Anonymous source from a community based organization, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>158</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

organizations, such as Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE) is to organize the community that is typically exploited in the development process. SAJE aims to organize, “members of the community that have been disenfranchised, who are of lowest income, communities of color...that’s where the priority is because those are the ones that are the most vulnerable to development pressures and displacement.”<sup>159</sup> With careful organizing and outreach, coalitions created to negotiate CBAs can be sure to include these communities. Community based organizations have “to take seriously the role of gathering community input...and doing as much as possible to really sort of build a base and...to get a robust understanding of community priorities before going to the table and negotiating with the developer.”<sup>160</sup> Communities might want different things; affordable housing may be important to one community, while green space may be the priority of another community. Thus, it is important that community-based organizations do not assume the priorities of a community and that they do conduct comprehensive outreach to the community. In other words, “if it is going to be a real community benefits agreement, it has to reflect what the community wants and not what other people decide it wants.”<sup>161</sup> Community-based organizations must be careful to not make assumptions about the desires of the community and gain input from the community members about their priorities in the benefits.

The Staples Center/L.A. Live Agreement serves as a case study of a CBA that has been deemed one of the most successful CBAs. One of the reasons that the Staples Center CBA has been successfully implemented is the way it was designed. Joe Donlin from Strategic Actions

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<sup>159</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

<sup>160</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

<sup>161</sup> Anonymous source from community based organization, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

for a Just Economy stated that, “Staples is one thing because there is actually some enforceability by the city because it was built into the Development Agreement.” Basically, the “CBA was inserted into the Development agreement,” which is “kind of like copying and pasting the private agreement into the public agreement” so that the city is also partially responsible for the enforcement and implementation of the benefits negotiated in the CBA.<sup>162</sup> This could be one tactic taken by the coalition fighting to preserve Wyvernwood if they decided to pursue a Community Benefits Agreement.

The following chart (Figure 9) presents demographic information for the census tract where Staples Center is located before and after the CBA was negotiated and Staples Center and L.A. Live were constructed. As demonstrated by this information, there was definitely a demographic shift after the development took place. While this information cannot tell us whether or not people were displaced, it does show that the area became a higher-income area and a demographic shift occurred.

**Figure 9: Demographics in the Census Tract Where Staples Center is Located**

	<b>Before Development</b>	<b>After Development/CBA</b>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$11, 442 <sup>163</sup>	\$54, 858 <sup>164</sup>
<b>Percent Population Latino</b>	45.1 % <sup>165</sup>	10.9% <sup>166</sup>
<b>Percent Population Black</b>	9.5% <sup>167</sup>	9.5% <sup>168</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

<sup>163</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics 2000 Census Summary File, Table DP-3 2077.10, *American FactFinder*.

<sup>164</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Selected Economic Characteristics 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. Table DP03 2051.20. *American FactFinder*.

<sup>165</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP05 2077.10, *American FactFinder*.

<sup>166</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP05 2077.10, *American FactFinder*.

<sup>167</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics 2000 Census Summary File, Table DP-1 2077.10, *American FactFinder*.

<sup>168</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics 2000 Census Summary File, Table DP-1 2077.10, *American FactFinder*.

***Community Land Trusts:***

Many employees of community-based organizations that I interviewed were intrigued by community land trusts as a tool that alters the power dynamic in cities by bringing power back to the communities through ownership. Based upon reactions to the tool, Community Land Trusts seem to be increasing in popularity as an approach taken by community-based organizations to prevent gentrification and displacement. Many interviewees who have not had experience with community land trusts expressed interest in the tool and a desire to learn more about it.

The main benefit of community land trusts is the permanent affordability that is created through the tool. Unlike most affordable housing, which has covenants that expire, Community Land Trusts remain affordable forever. It is an “exciting model to put ownership back in the hands of local communities.”<sup>169</sup> Additionally, Community Land Trusts provide strong protection against displacement if redevelopment occurs. It is “easier to prevent displacement... when the community has an ownership stake.”<sup>170</sup> Thus, Community Land Trusts seemed to be praised for their durability against inequitable development.

However, interviewees expressed that despite all of the strong aspects of this tool, drawbacks included the cost of land and the financing structure. In addition to financing the land, finding a parcel of land to purchase is also a challenge for community based organizations and coalitions. With rising real estate values, a “big barrier [to CLTs] is the cost of land.”<sup>171</sup> Although the land is costly, Community Land Trusts are not necessarily any more expensive than an affordable housing development, but the benefits of the high cost last longer than a

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<sup>169</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

<sup>170</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

<sup>171</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

traditional affordable housing development due to the fact that they remain permanently affordable.<sup>172</sup> Another aspect of financing that has attracted criticism for CLTs is the financial structure because “by definition [Community Land Trusts]... are limited equity.”<sup>173</sup> The “major challenge is this concept of...private gain versus public benefits. There is tension and a dichotomy there.”<sup>174</sup> While CLTs present an ownership model, they do not allow the owners to make a return on their investment to the same extent as a market-rate homeowner.

Rolland-Curtis Apartments are serving as a case study for Community Land Trusts in this paper. In interviews regarding CLTs and Rolland-Curtis, interviewees spoke of the importance of community organizing and the unique properties of the Rolland-Curtis land trust. While the Rolland-Curtis case study interviews presented many positive reasons to pursue a CLT, it also did not resolve any concerns about the feasibility of a CLT for Wyvernwood or Boyle Heights in terms of cost.

To provide more background on Rolland-Curtis, the apartment complex “had an affordability covenant on it through the Section-8 subsidy program that expired. The building was sold to a private developer who was going to move out current tenants through rent increases in order to house more affluent students in the area.”<sup>175</sup> The apartment complex is located in a low-income community of color (see Figure 10). TRUST South L.A. responded to community concerns about the potential displacement of residents at Rolland-Curtis who would no longer be able to afford the rents at market rate. As one former employee of TRUST South L.A. recalled:

A Rolland Curtis tenant approached UNIDAD— a coalition of community based organizations working to stop the displacement of families and to promote responsible, community-serving development—and told the staff they were

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<sup>172</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>173</sup> Joan Ling (Professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29, 2015.

<sup>174</sup> Joan Ling (Professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29, 2015.

<sup>175</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.



getting evicted. TRUST and their sister organizations in the area mobilized and started organizing tenants to put pressure on the landlord to sell the property to TRUST and to Abode.<sup>176</sup>

Due to the fact that the landlord was not willing to sell the apartment complex, TRUST South L.A. had to carefully strategize in order to convince the landlord to sell. One of their most successful tactics was calling in the Housing Department, who found hundreds of Housing Code violations. After this, they were able to convince the landlord to sell. However, TRUST South L.A. and Abode had to buy the complex at market price, which made it “a challenging property to develop as affordable housing because it was so expensive to buy.”<sup>177</sup>

**Figure 10: Demographic Information in Census Tract where Rolland-Curtis is Located**

<b>Median Household Income:</b>	\$16, 296 <sup>178</sup>
<b>Percent Population Latino</b>	70.5% <sup>179</sup>
<b>Percent Population Black</b>	4.7% <sup>180</sup>

People spoke to the uniqueness of Rolland-Curtis within the land trust model. One way that the development is unique is the fact that it is a rental property, when the majority of Community Land Trusts are under a home ownership model. Rolland-Curtis is also unique in terms of the intimate involvement of tenants in the development process. T.R.U.S.T. South L.A. and Abode Communities led a community-driven design process for the site, and the final community design was “very different from the architects’ first rendering.” The strong involvement of the tenants is due largely to the efforts of the organizations to make it that way;

<sup>176</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>177</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>178</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Selected Economic Characteristics 2009-2013 American Community Survey Estimates, Table DP03 2094.03, American *FactFinder*.

<sup>179</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates 2009-2013 American Community Survey Estimates, Table DP05 2094.03, American *FactFinder*.

<sup>180</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates 2009-2013 American Community Survey Estimates, Table DP05 2094.03, American *FactFinder*.

TRUST South LA “is very intentional about having a horizontal leadership structure...[Rolland-Curtis] was always going to be a participatory process.”<sup>182</sup>

Through feedback on Community Land Trusts and the case study of Rolland-Curtis, it is evident that CLTs are a promising tool for communities aiming to prevent gentrification and displacement. The collaboration between TRUST South L.A. and Abode Communities suggests that a partnership between non-profit developers might help address the cost issue for Community Land Trusts. Additionally, community organizing is valuable to the Community Land Trust process.

### ***Historic Preservation***

Due to the fact that Wyvernwood is a historic resource and is on the California Registrar of Historic Resources, the historic preservation argument has been used in the fight to preserve Wyvernwood thus far. I asked interviewees from the Office of Historic Resources and from community-based organizations to provide input regarding historic preservation as a tool to prevent displacement and preserve affordable housing. In my interviews, I found that Wyvernwood would not qualify as a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) due to the size of the development.<sup>183</sup> Usually, Historic Preservation Overlay Zone is used to preserve a collection of single houses or buildings under multiple ownerships, and not to preserve a large apartment complex that is under singular ownership. While Wyvernwood would not be eligible to become a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, Wyvernwood would be eligible to become a Historic-Cultural Monument, which is another historic preservation tool.

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<sup>182</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>183</sup> Ken Bernstein (Office of Historic Resources), interview by author over phone, January 16, 2015.

In previous years, Historic Preservation Overlay Zones were talked about in the urban planning community as a potential method to preserve affordable housing. However, many interviewees have commented that they have not seen HPOZ successfully used to preserve affordable housing in the past; there has never been a “clear nexus”<sup>184</sup> between preservation and affordable housing, meaning that historic preservation cannot be directly used to preserve affordable housing. The Office of Historic Resources explained to me that Historic Preservation Overlay Zone is only used to preserve a building, and has not been expanded to preserve anything more than that, such as affordability or cultural resources. Several interviewees also mentioned that HPOZ may have served as a catalyst of gentrification in the past. It has often brought new attention to a neighborhood, and the historical buildings with interesting architecture have attracted gentrifiers. While HPOZ is a positive tool in many ways, its goals and its effects do not necessarily align with the goal of resident retention and gentrification prevention at Wyvernwood.

As mentioned earlier, one potential historic preservation tool that could possibly aid the historic preservation argument for preventing demolition of Wyvernwood would be designating Wyvernwood as a Historic-Cultural Monument. While Wyvernwood is currently on the State Registrar of Historic Resources, it does not mean that it cannot be demolished. Designating the development as a Historic-Cultural Monument would give it some additional protection from demolition, but would also not completely protect it from demolition. In order for Wyvernwood to become a landmark, someone would have to fill out a landmark application and it would need to be approved by the Heritage Commission. However, interviewees also pointed out the risk in taking this step: if Wyvernwood does not get approved as a city landmark, the historic

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<sup>184</sup> Edgar Garcia (Office of Historic Resources), interview by author over phone, January 13, 2015.

preservation leg of the argument to preserve Wyvernwood loses a lot of its power. In other words, if Wyvernwood is not granted landmark designation, then the argument that Wyvernwood should be saved due to its historic significance could potentially be viewed as an invalid argument. Considering the fact that some changes have been made to Wyvernwood since 1939, this is definitely a risk. For example, the windows were removed and replaced in order to remove lead from the buildings, which “ruined the historical character of the property.”<sup>185</sup> Wyvernwood could have extra protection for Wyvernwood via Monument designation, but if Monument designation is not granted, then one argument for the preservation of Wyvernwood could lose some of its strength..

One potential benefit of Wyvernwood becoming a city landmark is the potential eligibility for the Mills-Act Tax Abatement Program. The Mills-Act allows for a tax reduction because maintaining a city landmark and a historic building is more expensive than maintaining a regular building.<sup>186</sup> Landlords or residents, depending on whether or not the property is ownership-based or renter-based, receive this tax abatement. There are examples of other garden apartment complexes that receive tax-breaks from the Mills-Act and have been designated as city landmarks. For example, Village Green has been designated as a city landmark and preservation has been aided through tax-breaks from the Mills-Act. The Mills-Act could aid in making preservation or partial preservation of Wyvernwood more feasible.

Multiple interviewees also brought up the theme of preserving Wyvernwood not only for the history of the building, but also for the community and culture that thrives at Wyvernwood. There has been a discussion among those involved in preserving Wyvernwood about the

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<sup>185</sup> Linda Kite (Healthy Homes Collaborative), interview by author over phone, February 24, 2015.

<sup>186</sup> Ken Bernstein (Office of Historic Resources), interview by author over phone, January 16, 2015.

possibility of proposing a new type of preservation ordinance or zone that would preserve the cultural and community aspects of the complex. A preservation ordinance such as this would say, “it’s not the building that’s unique, but it’s the culture that’s there.”<sup>187</sup> This is an interesting concept that gets at the larger question: what does preservation mean? Can preservation be extended to preserve more than just the buildings themselves?

### **Neighborhood-Specific Policies and Tools:**

Neighborhood-specific policies and tools target specific neighborhoods, and can be used in efforts to prevent displacement and gentrification on a neighborhood level. In this paper, Community Plans are discussed as a neighborhood-specific tool.

#### ***Community Plans***

Community plans represent an additional planning tool within the domain of the Los Angeles City Planning Department that has the potential to account for community needs and priorities when considering development plans. Several people felt that updated community plans would address several issues that other approaches like Community Benefits Agreements aim to address. One interviewee from a community based organization stated, “the community plans have been stalled. If we had community plans in place that required developments to have some of the features that we are asking for in CBAs, we wouldn’t need to ask for CBAs.”<sup>188</sup> In addition, interviewees commented that updated Community Plans present “an opportunity to rethink the land use” and an “opportunity for the community to come together...to articulate a

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<sup>187</sup> Linda Kite (Healthy Homes Collaborative), interview by author over phone, February 24, 2015.

<sup>188</sup> Anonymous source at a community based organization, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

vision.”<sup>189</sup> In summary, interviewees highlighted that it is a shame that the Community Plan process has been stalled due to budget cuts, and they view the updating process as a way to address outdated zoning and more adequately address the needs of specific communities, including affordable housing.

However, Community Plans themselves do not have the teeth to mandate any type of development or zoning. Instead, the Community Plan serves as a set of recommendations. While a development is more likely to become approved if the plan meets the recommendations outlined in the Community Plan, it does not mean that the development will not occur as originally intended by the developer. Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zones (CPIOs), on the other hand, have more “teeth.”<sup>190</sup> CPIOs provide the planning department and the City Council with the power to select parcels of land and to change the zoning; “when you incorporate these zoning tools, the CPIOs, now you’re talking about real policy-making power, because that then becomes a part of the City’s municipal code and then developers are required to abide by all of them.”<sup>191</sup> These zoning codes might have density limits that prohibit high rise buildings like the proposed plan for the redevelopment of Wyvernwood.

To address the outdated Community Plan process East L.A. Community Corporation has been working on a campaign to articulate the priorities of their members and the needs of the Boyle Heights community. The organization has asked for input from community members regarding their concerns and the priorities that they would like to see addressed in a Community Plan. ELACC’s Community Plan, called “El Plan del Pueblo” or “Plan of the People,”

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<sup>189</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

<sup>190</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

<sup>191</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015.

prioritizes affordable housing, responsible economic development that supports small, local businesses, environmental justice, and cultural preservation.<sup>192</sup> Specific to Wyvernwood, the Plan del Pueblo suggests that Wyvernwood become a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone and that the original structure of the development is maintained.

### **Citywide Policies and Tools:**

Citywide policies and tools encourage the production and preservation of affordable housing and discourage displacement throughout a city. Inclusionary zoning is discussed as a citywide policy that promotes the production of new affordable units.

### ***Inclusionary Zoning***

Inclusionary zoning differs from the other tools discussed in that it can be implemented on a citywide or regional level rather than on a case-by case basis or on a neighborhood basis. It is a policy that would be set in place by the city or state. Interviewees agreed that inclusionary zoning has strong potential, and that it “is the top...land use control that you can implement” that would lead to affordable housing creation.<sup>193</sup> Affordable housing advocates interviewed stated that “if we were able to do inclusionary zoning in the very basic sense, we would have a much better ability to meet some of the demand for affordable housing in the city.”<sup>194</sup> A few major themes arose in my interviews regarding inclusionary zoning. The first of these themes is that even though inclusionary zoning in Los Angeles is currently illegal, the city could be doing more to incentivize similar land-use policies through incentives such as density bonuses. The second

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<sup>192</sup> José Fernández, East L.A. Community Corporation, interview by author, February 20, 2015.

<sup>193</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>194</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

repeating theme is that inclusionary zoning has tremendous potential for affordable housing creation depending on where it is located, as it is highly dependent on the real estate market.

To address the latter theme, inclusionary zoning works best in geographic areas that are experiencing a surge of development, as developers will want to build in these areas regardless of whether or not they are required to build affordable units. As Joan Ling, a professor of housing policy, noted, “inclusionary zoning works really well when you have a hot market and people want to build anyway.”<sup>195</sup> In addition to the increased desire to build in hot markets, “there is more give in the cost and revenue side to absorb the...reduction in rents for some of the units. And that’s why inclusionary housing is better when it’s coupled with extra density.”<sup>196</sup> Some speculate that Boyle Heights is gentrifying and thus is a hot market, and others are unconvinced that Boyle Heights is gentrifying. Regardless of these differing opinions, if developments like Wyvernwood continue to be redeveloped, the increase in investment could turn Boyle Heights into a “hot market.”

While some argue that inclusionary zoning doesn’t create as much affordable housing as is being destroyed, this does not always have to be the case depending on the strength of the ordinance. Inclusionary zoning ordinances could potentially replace all of the existing affordable units. Joan Ling commented that, “If they’re...going to build 4,000 new units [at Wyvernwood], and inclusionary zoning in LA requires 30% affordable units, that’s 1200 units, so...you’ve just been made whole,” meaning that the inclusionary ordinance could have the potential to replace all of the affordable units at Wyvernwood.<sup>197</sup> The success of the ordinance depends on the strength and requirements of the ordinance. If the percentage of affordable units is high enough,

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<sup>195</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29,2015.

<sup>196</sup> Lisa Payne (Southern California Association of Non-profit Housing), interview by author over phone, February 17, 2015.

<sup>197</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29,2015.



then there is definite potential to replace all or the majority of affordable units demolished. Additionally, inclusionary zoning can also create affordable units in areas that do not currently have affordable units.

Interviewees seemed to be unanimous about the devastating impact of the Palmer decision to inclusionary zoning and to other similar land use policies. Affordable housing advocates expressed frustration that the decision not only stopped progress made on an inclusionary policy, but also seemed to prevent progress on other affordable housing policy measures that weren't strictly inclusionary. The effect is particularly strong in Los Angeles and interviewees noted that, "because of the court case...especially since the Palmer case happened in LA...I don't think that LA city would risk attaching just a straight inclusionary ordinance."<sup>199</sup> As mentioned earlier, however, many interviewees felt that despite the legal barriers to implementing a mandatory inclusionary ordinance in Los Angeles, the city could and should be doing much more surrounding voluntary inclusionary zoning and incentives to promote affordable units. There are several "missed opportunities... to enact policies that are not mandatory inclusionary zoning but encourage the production of new affordable units."<sup>200</sup>

One such land-use policy similar to inclusionary zoning is voluntary inclusionary upzoning. Lisa Payne from the Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing, highlighted the strong potential for value capture strategies to create and preserve affordable housing in areas close to transit stops. This is referred to as "voluntary upzoning...so that developers [who want to] build more densely...can do so (and thus increase the value of the property) if they voluntary agree to provide some affordable [units] on site so that the public

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<sup>199</sup> Lisa Payne (Southern California Association of Non-profit Housing), interview by author over phone, February 17, 2015.

<sup>200</sup> Anonymous source from a public interest law firm, interview by author over phone, January 20, 2015

captures some of the added value.” In other words, developers can receive density bonuses and height bonuses around transit stops if they provide affordable units in exchange for these zoning changes. Currently, affordable housing advocates are fighting for these incentives to be within a half-mile of transit stations, as that is where the incentives are likely to be the most attractive to developers. Often times, it is difficult for the incentives to create an attractive offer for the developers; the savings from the incentives might not offset the cost of the affordable units. However, around transit stations, where developers are trying to build bigger and investment is burgeoning, these voluntary incentives are the most likely to work. Another variation on upzoning in exchange for affordable units that was mentioned in interviews was a fee for an affordable housing fund in exchange for upzoning within a half mile of transit stops. The issue with this variation is that it is not keeping the units in the neighborhood affordable. Because of this, interviewees suggested limitations on this fee in order to prevent displacement. For example, the money from the fee would “still be spent [on affordable housing creation] within a half mile of transit.”<sup>201</sup> In addition to mitigating displacement, keeping the affordable housing creation and preservation within a half mile of transit also allows the population that is most dependent upon public transit to live closest to transit.

### **Ideal Policies & Ideal Cities**

In interviews, community leaders and advocates for affordable housing discussed several “ideal policies” that would be implemented in an “ideal city.” Many interviewees expressed that the policies and tools discussed earlier on in this paper are not ideal, but they are the community’s way of working with the tools that they do have in order to advocate for

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<sup>201</sup> Lisa Payne (Southern California Association of Non-profit Housing), interview by author over phone, February 17, 2015.

community benefits and responsible development. This section will briefly discuss some of the ideal policies mentioned by interviewees.

One ideal policy would have local government donate land for the benefit of the community. One interviewee suggested, “If there is a way for cities to partner with those types of [affordable housing] developers by doing public land donations or selling it really cheaply...for affordable housing developments” then that would be an ideal policy.<sup>202</sup> Additionally, if there is a property owned by the city that the city decides they don’t need anymore, ideally the City would give priority for that property to be a location for affordable housing development. This policy would represent the City prioritizing affordable housing but also taking on a more active role in providing community protections and community needs.

An additional ideal policy would require developers to incorporate community benefits and affordable housing into their development from the start. “Ideally you would have policies in place that would support development that was always community-serving,”<sup>203</sup> and thus community-based organizations would not have to experience the drain of implementing tools such as CBAs and would be able to focus on other community priorities. This statement was echoed by another employee of a community-based organization, who stated:

It’s definitely not the ideal....we’re not in the business to strike community benefits agreements...sometimes that tactic is taken because that is the best opportunity we have at that moment. Much better would be very very strong public policies that are in place that already require developers to do certain things. And in lieu of those policies, CBAs are a way for the community to say ‘if the public agencies aren’t going to require this, then we are going to require this.’<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Giulia Pasciuto, interview by author over phone, January 22, 2015.

<sup>203</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

<sup>204</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

Community-based organizations and coalitions that are negotiating CBAs view it as their role to fill the gap between public agencies and private developers, but feel that the gap shouldn't exist; the government should advocate for the community's best interests in public policies that require responsible development from private developers. In this ideal policy, the government would mandate a certain affordability requirement or a certain green space requirement, etc., from all major developments in the city.

### **Miscellaneous Policies and Tools:**

This section will briefly address the miscellaneous policies and tools suggested by the people I interviewed. Some of these are specific to Wyvernwood, and some of these other policies aim to address the larger themes of affordable housing and displacement in Los Angeles.

#### ***Rent-Stabilization Ordinance Enforcement***

According to those I interviewed, a stronger Rent-stabilization Ordinance, and stronger enforcement of the ordinance, would definitely aid those who are struggling to afford housing in Los Angeles. Many people who reside in developments protected under the Rent-Stabilization Ordinance have been evicted illegally to free up the apartment or house for renting at a higher market rate. However, "If the city truly enforces rent control, it would go a long way to...prevent people from getting kicked out illegally."<sup>205</sup> When asked how enforcing rent control better would look like, Joan Ling stated that "first, [the city] should collect rent information. Second, they should have proactive outreach and community organizing to inform the rights of the tenants and to provide assistance or at least referral to legal assistance."<sup>206</sup> An example of a city that does provide assistance to tenants getting evicted is Santa Monica, where

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<sup>205</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29,2015.

<sup>206</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29,2015.

“if you’re a tenant and you feel you are being harassed, there is a hotline you can call...that type of networking is completely absent in L.A.”<sup>207</sup>

### ***Tenants Rights***

On a similar note, interviewees also highlighted the potential for improved tenants rights laws to have an impact on the housing cost crisis by allowing tenants to remain in buildings that are affordable to them. A community organizer stated that “tenants rights law is very critical in preventing displacement because those are the rights for tenants to remain” in their homes and in their neighborhoods.<sup>208</sup> As mentioned in regards to tenants rights in rent-controlled developments, this would involve informing tenants of their rights, encouraging them to speak out if they feel they are being treated unfairly, and making them aware of the resources that are available to them. If awareness and efficacy around tenants’ rights is increased, then tenants themselves will be empowered to address some aspects of displacement pressures.

### ***No-Net Loss***

No-net loss policy is a fairly new policy that was mentioned in several of my interviews. The policy of “No Net Loss” is a policy that is “a way of measuring” the creation and destruction of affordable housing in a city or neighborhood.<sup>209</sup> This measurement, “as a policy, it basically says that if there is a net loss, that [certain] things should happen...these things can be...a lot of things. It could be that [if there is a net loss]...there is no condo conversion...no building permits issued...the city must make up the loss by creating affordable housing and until then no

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<sup>207</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29, 2015.

<sup>208</sup> Joe Donlin (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy), interview by author over phone, January 27, 2015

<sup>209</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29, 2015.

development project can proceed.”<sup>210</sup> Thus, the corrective actions and steps taken for a no-net loss policy can vary and can be at the discretion of a specific city or neighborhood. While this policy can be enacted on a neighborhood level or on a citywide level, it is “more appropriate on a neighborhood level, because you are trying to prevent displacement on a neighborhood level.”<sup>211</sup> A neighborhood like Boyle Heights might have its own no-net loss policy that would outline corrective steps that would best serve the neighborhood and community.

### ***Investment in Current Housing Stock***

An additional way for the city and for organizations to target these issues is through investment in the neighborhood’s current housing stock. Elizabeth Blaney of Unión de Vecinos spoke about the potential positive impact that investment in the current housing units could have in Boyle Heights. She stated, “we [Boyle Heights] have a lot of units. It’s a pretty dense community, one of the densest in Los Angeles, and we have a lot of rent-controlled housing... so why not instead of trying to build these units that don’t meet community needs, invest in rehabilitating and remodeling the units that currently exist?” Elizabeth suggested tackling this through a policy that would provide funds for landlords to rehabilitate their units, or provide funds for non-profit developers to rehabilitate units. Additionally, the city could change the Standard of Repairs so that landlords are required to better maintain their properties and make it more livable for residents.

### ***Market Analysis for New Development***

An additional suggestion for responsible urban development is the requirement of a market analysis to prove that there is a market for the new development that is being proposed.

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<sup>210</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29, 2015.

<sup>211</sup> Joan Ling (professor at Occidental College), interview by author, January 29, 2015.

In Los Angeles, “there is currently a glut of luxury units in LA, and they often sit there vacant...[the proposed redevelopment of Wyvernwood] is the luxury high-end of the housing.”<sup>212</sup> The market for housing in Los Angeles lies mainly in the moderate to low-income groups, so why do so many luxury developments continue to be built if the population eligible to fill those developments is not there? As Linda Kite from Healthy Homes Collaborative questioned, “where is the market analysis that should have been done to show that this project is irrelevant to this community and to L.A. as a whole?” If developers are required to prove that there is a market for the housing that is being built, it is possible that less luxury housing and more moderate-income housing will be built.

## **ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Project-Specific Tools Analysis**

Overall, I conclude that project-specific tools, such as Community Benefits Agreements, Community Land Trusts, and Historic Preservation are not the ideal policies or tools for preventing gentrification and displacement or for affordable housing creation from the perspective of community based organizations and affordable housing advocates. Many employees of community-based organizations and affordable housing advocates would much rather see strong, citywide wide policies that have a more expansive reach and also require the

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<sup>212</sup> Linda Kite (Healthy Homes Collaborative), interview by author over phone, February 24, 2015.

government to take more responsibility regarding these economic and social justice issues.

However, I feel that a common thread exists for the reason that these project-specific tools are viewed as less desirable: they create a drain on community-based organizations that are already spread thin, both funding-wise and staff-wise. Additionally, these project-specific tools are seen as less desirable because their impact is not as widespread as citywide or neighborhood specific tools may be. Lastly, these tools are a compromise, but often still lead to a net loss of affordable housing for the current community.

Despite the fact that these project-specific tools are not ideal, they are also a necessity for marginalized communities that often bear the brunt of the negative consequences of development. Project-specific tools should definitely be considered; they are sometimes the best and only options for community-based organizations trying to fill the gap between the government and the private sector to advocate for responsible development. Project-specific tools also allow organizations to target a specific community. If sufficient resources were not an issue, then these project-specific tools could have the potential to promote stabilization for specific projects, or even on a neighborhood-wide level. For example, Community Land Trusts are a project-specific tool whose positive effects can spillover into the neighborhood overall because the community itself has ownership of the land, and can help to stabilize the development in the neighborhood. Additionally, a project-specific tool like a Community Benefits Agreement might include a negotiated benefit in the form of a living wage for the employees at the new development, thereby helping community members to secure higher wages in the area.

In general, project-specific tools are useful for preventing limited damage to a community, but they are not proactive tools; they do not provide built-in protections for future



developments. This is why citywide and policies and tools are necessary in addition to project-specific tools in order to truly tackle these issues on a larger scale.

### **Wyvernwood-specific recommendations**

While project-specific tools may not always be viewed as preferable, they are sometimes the only option for preventing displacement of a specific community or preventing the loss of affordable housing at a specific site. For Wyvernwood, a project-specific tool must be used to address the immediate issue of displacement for all of the current residents at Wyvernwood; a citywide policy or tool might not be implemented in time to save Wyvernwood, or may not be targeted specifically at Wyvernwood. Considering that the goal of the coalition fighting against the redevelopment includes complete preservation of the current structure of Wyvernwood and resident retention, I recommend that multiple non-profit developers join together to purchase Wyvernwood and co-develop the site as an affordable housing development. This is the only site-specific tool that would accomplish the goals of the coalition fighting to preserve Wyvernwood. However, I anticipate many challenges with this approach, such as the cost of acquiring the land and the political barriers to acquiring the land, which leads me to the following recommendations.

One of the biggest challenges of this approach is being able to acquire the land from the Fifteen Group. Based on similar redevelopment projects, it is clear that the next step for the Fifteen Group would be to receive entitlements and a zoning change from the City of Los Angeles in order to follow through with their development plan. Once such entitlements were attained, even if the Fifteen Group sold the property as is, they would gain a profit based on speculation of its value. Any future developer who would purchase the land would pay more for it due to the increased height and density zoning that would allow for profit through the sale and

rental of the dense property. Thus, selling Wyvernwood to nonprofit developers at less than the market rate would not allow them to follow through with their business plan and gain their anticipated profit; they would be unable to cash in on their density and height bonuses to build more units. For these reasons, the non-profit developers may have to bear the cost of purchasing the development at a price that accounts for the potential gain in profit that the developer would have received had the project proceeded as originally planned. This potential to pay a large amount for the property and account for the profits the developer would have made is similar to the barriers that TRUST South L.A. and Abode Communities faced in the case study of Rolland-Curtis Apartments, in which these two organizations had to purchase the development at market price. For-profit developers are not apt to readily sell their developments, and definitely not at a cost that is readily available to non-profit developers. Linda Kite from Healthy Homes Collaborative summed up these difficulties when she stated, “what would it cost to get [the Fifteen Group] to walk away? Do we offer them \$150 million?...and then where do we find \$150 million to be able to then convert it into a land trust so that [the tenants] can become owners themselves?”<sup>213</sup> Convincing the developer to sell at all, convincing the developer to sell at an affordable price, and finding the money to purchase the development are the three largest barriers for non-profit developers who are interested in purchasing the property.

Even accounting for the potential profit from the entitlements in the purchase price, which could mean a purchase price of about \$150 million, the Fifteen Group may still be unwilling to sell the property. In this case, careful organizing would need to be executed to ensure that the project does not get passed through, or to ensure that it does not get passed through as originally intended by the Fifteen Group in hopes that the Fifteen Group would be

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<sup>213</sup> Linda Kite (Healthy Homes Collaborative), interview by author over phone, February 24, 2015.

more willing to sell the property after encountering such resistance. For organizing, the most important target is Councilmember José Huizar; José Huizar arguably is the individual that holds the most power as the Councilmember for Boyle Heights. As a city councilmember, he has the power to say no to a project like Wyvernwood when it comes to City Council voting, but he also has the ability to influence the other councilmembers. Since Wyvernwood is in Huizar's district, it is likely that other councilmembers will not take a vocal stance on Wyvernwood if it is in opposition to Huizar's stance.

In terms of the sheer cost to purchase the development, Wyvernwood would likely be too costly for one non-profit developer to purchase on their own, which is why I recommend a coalition of non-profit developers to form together to purchase Wyvernwood. Similarly to the relationship between T.R.U.S.T. South L.A. and Abode Communities, East L.A. Community Corporation might be able to join forces with one or more non-profit developers who have an interest in preserving Wyvernwood to prevent displacement and preserve affordable units. In addition to non-profit developers, lenders such as Genesis L.A. also work to package money for non-profit development and help to finance loans. A combination of non-profit developers, community-based organizations, and lenders such as Genesis LA could band together to finance a development as large as Wyvernwood.

If a non-profit developer or group of non-profit developers can acquire the property, there is still the issue of funding for the preservation of Wyvernwood and the rehabilitation of the units. Preserving Wyvernwood would be costly, as the units are in great need of updates and rehabilitation. The preservation alternative of the EIR (Environmental Impact Report), in fact, finds that preservation of the original structures at Wyvernwood would not be a financially feasible option. This, however, does not take into account the tax credits that would be received

from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit due to the preservation of Wyvernwood. Taking the LIHTC into account, Joan Ling has deemed that preservation of Wyvernwood could be affordable. Another tax credit that might aid in preservation of Wyvernwood is the Mills Act, as discussed in the Historic Preservation section. Members of F.A.C.E. should apply for Wyvernwood to receive tax credits through the Mills Act. The Mills Act provides tax credits to help offset the cost of preserving historic buildings. This tax credit, in combination with the LIHTC, would help to reduce the price of preserving and rehabbing Wyvernwood. I recommend that the coalition (F.A.C.E.) explore the possibility of a Mills Act Tax Credit and apply to the program in order to provide additional financial support for preservation of the buildings at Wyvernwood.

If Wyvernwood is purchased and rehabbed by non-profit developers, a Community-Land Trust would be the preferable model to develop Wyvernwood based on the examples and best practices identified in the literature and based on feedback from members of community-based organizations. This model would not be any more costly than developing Wyvernwood as regular affordable units, but would lead to permanent affordability and community ownership. The non-profit developers that would own Wyvernwood should be sure to gather community input with regards to what would be desired out of the rehabilitation process and the Community Land Trust in general. Modeled off of TRUST South L.A.'s attempts to maintain a horizontal leadership, tenants should have leadership roles in this process to ensure that their voices are heard in the development plan.

If the financing cannot be found to purchase Wyvernwood, or if Fifteen Group is not willing to sell, then the next step for the coalition (F.A.C.E.) would be to evaluate the next steps of the campaign and the political leverage of the coalition. A Community Benefits Agreement,

as discussed in my findings section, is not an ideal tool for the goal of resident retention, and can be difficult for community groups to implement; therefore, the coalition must evaluate what is the most important to them and what could potentially be achieved without opting for a Community Benefits Agreement. As laid out in the findings section, one of the most important first steps for the CBA process is to evaluate the political leverage of the coalition to determine whether or not goals can be achieved without a CBA. Councilmember José Huizar has repeatedly expressed his stance against the redevelopment of Wyvernwood, which is promising in terms of the political leverage of the campaign.

There are key protections under a CBA that the coalition must recognize. First, the CBA must be legally enforceable. It is important to note, as one of my interviewees brought up, that the benefits included in the current Resident Retention Plan are technically not legally enforceable. Although these benefits are written in the Fifteen Group's Development Agreement, the affordable units could technically be brought to court under the Costa Hawkins Act as a form of rent control. However, a Community Benefits Agreement should be legally enforceable, and it is likely that the community would be able to secure more benefits out of a CBA than what is currently outlined in the Development Agreement and Resident Retention Plan.

In conclusion, a CBA would not be an ideal first choice, but if purchasing Wyvernwood and developing it as a land trust proves to be impossible due to cost and political difficulties in securing the land, a Community Benefits Agreement should be considered by the coalition as a way of maximizing the benefits out of the redevelopment and to secure the most benefits possible for the community. Additionally, it would ensure greater legal enforceability than a Development Agreement on its own for the benefits negotiated out of a CBA.

## Citywide and Neighborhood Interventions Analysis

Citywide policies and tools received the most positive feedback in interviews; these were often seen as the most desirable of the three categories that I examined. I feel that this positive feedback is largely attributed to the fact that many interviewees expressed a desire for the city government to take larger responsibility in the development process on behalf of low-income and marginalized groups. Citywide policies also represent the most proactive approach to gentrification, displacement, and affordable housing loss by providing protections for communities and requiring certain community benefits.

However, citywide policies also come with their various impediments, such as political obstacles and lack of funding for government policies and programs. Citywide policies must be passed through city government, which can be a long and difficult process. City government may also not have the budget or staff to implement these policies. Additionally, citywide policies would likely face opposition from the real estate industry and developers, both of which have lobbying power in local government. These obstacles are most likely the reason there is a lack of citywide policy as well as a lack of policy enforcement. Likewise, they are the same reason that site-specific tools are often the course of action that community organizations have to take. Despite these obstacles, citywide policies and tools are desired by community based organizations and affordable housing advocates due to their proactive approach to issues of displacement and lack of affordable housing, but citywide policies and tools can be even more effective through variations.

Neighborhood-specific tools can be a variation on citywide tools and policies that are targeted at certain neighborhoods. For example, a policy may be citywide, but have variations according to specific neighborhoods or be implemented on a neighborhood level.

Neighborhood-specific tools may be more effective than citywide tools because of their ability to prevent gentrification and displacement on a neighborhood level. While project specific tools' effects may be too narrow because the effects may only be limited to the specific project, citywide policies may also not be as effective at preventing displacement as desirable because a citywide policy that creates affordable units may not create affordable units in the neighborhoods that have the greatest need and are in danger of experiencing displacement. Thus, neighborhood specific tools may often create a happy medium. They are more proactive than project-specific tools by building in future protections, yet they are still able to target specific areas through a neighborhood focus and adapt to the needs of different neighborhoods.

Existing neighborhood-specific tools would include Community Plans, which would provide recommendations for specific neighborhoods regarding zoning, affordable housing creation, and displacement protections. Based on my interviews, community leaders and advocates of social-justice oriented urban planning would like to see more neighborhood-specific tools implemented in Los Angeles, and the updated Community Plan process is a priority for many affordable housing and economic justice advocates. However, there are several challenges to Community Plans. For example, Community Plans are more of recommendations than policies, and do not always have enforceability. Additionally, the Community Plan process has suffered from a lack of funding for many years.

Due to the positive feedback for citywide policies and tools, combined with the feedback on the need for neighborhood approaches as well as the literature detailing neighborhood change, my citywide recommendations aim to recommend policies and tools for the city of Los Angeles that vary by neighborhood and are implemented at the neighborhood level.

## Citywide Recommendations

The need for a comprehensive approach to address housing, gentrification, and displacement has been a repeated theme throughout this paper. A comprehensive approach means a variety of policies that tackle different aspects of the struggle for affordable housing creation and preservation, and prevention of gentrification and displacement. These aspects include policies that are aimed at tenants' rights, policies aimed at affordable housing creation and preservation, and policies that provide funding. As discussed in my analysis, it seems that neighborhood-specific tools may be the most effective at preventing gentrification and displacement because the policies aim to address those issues on a neighborhood level. Therefore, I recommend multiple citywide recommendations for Los Angeles that are implemented on a citywide level, but enforced and regulated at a neighborhood level. There are several examples of policies where I feel that this would be the best approach based on feedback from interviews.

Inclusionary zoning would have to be implemented as an incentive-based, citywide policy for Los Angeles due to the legal barriers to a mandatory policy as previously discussed. Rather than having the incentives be the same across the board, however, the policy would be more effective if the incentives to construct affordable units vary by the neighborhood; height increases may be more desirable in some neighborhoods than others, and catering the incentives to the desires of developers in the specific neighborhoods might maximize cooperation and an overall gain of affordable units in each neighborhood. Additionally, if the developer chooses to pay a fee in lieu of building affordable units, then the fee should be spent within a certain radius of the development so that the in-lieu money remains local to the area. Variations on



inclusionary zoning such as these will help to prevent displacement and gentrification on a neighborhood level, even though the policy would be citywide.

An additional citywide policy that would be more effective if it were neighborhood-specific is a No Net Loss Policy or Replacement Obligations Policy. The city should implement this policy to measure the net of affordable units annually in the city to ensure that the city is not losing affordable units. However, I suggest that the No Net Loss Policy be implemented in the various Community Plan Areas. By keeping the No-Net Loss policy at a neighborhood level through the designated Community Plan Areas, the policy will be more effective at preventing displacement across the city. For example, if units in a specific Boyle Heights development were lost, but the No Net Loss policy was implemented on a citywide level, new affordable units may be built across the city on the west side, far from the original area of affordable housing loss. The tenants from Boyle Heights, if they benefited from the creation of new units, would be displaced from their neighborhood. If the policy were kept local at the neighborhood level, however, then the tenants who would lose their units to redevelopment would be less likely to have to leave their neighborhood; they could aim to relocate to new affordable units within Boyle Heights.

The last citywide policy that I would recommend be a priority for the City of Los Angeles is greater enforcement of the Rent-Stabilization Ordinance. Tenants throughout the city are being unfairly evicted from their rent-controlled housing so that developers can convert their units into market-rate units. The City of Los Angeles should have staff that is in charge of collecting rent information throughout the city, with special attention to rent-stabilized units to ensure that rents are not being raised illegally or tenants are not being kicked out illegally. An

additional component of this tactic would be organizing efforts to inform tenants of their rights, which community organizers could also work to do.

These strong citywide policies, enforced at a neighborhood level, would address major aspects of the struggles that many tenants and communities face in Los Angeles as housing costs rise and the affordable housing stock shrinks. By customizing these policies at the neighborhood level, the city can more adequately address community needs and the effects of the policies and tools will be maximized.

### **Recommendations for Organizers**

These recommendations for organizers focus on recommendations for organizers both citywide and recommendations for organizers working to preserve Wyvernwood. Considering that one of the most repeated themes in my interviews was the need for tenants' rights education and services, organizers in Los Angeles should make an effort to prioritize tenants in their programs and to educate community members of their rights as tenants. This recommendation is for organizers citywide, but the approach the organizers take should vary by the neighborhood. Community based organizations should host information sessions regarding tenants' rights in each Community Plan Area, and attempt to cater the information sessions to be as specific to the areas as possible. Tenants in different neighborhoods may face very different challenges, and thus catering the information sessions to the areas may prove to be more effective. For example, one neighborhood may face a lot of evictions due to gentrification, while another area may have a lot of buildings that do not comply with the housing code. Thus, if community-organizing organizations can cater the tenant outreach to the neighborhood's specific problems, then the outreach to tenants would be more effective. Ideally, these organizations would also provide a tenants' hotline where tenants can call to inquire whether or not certain behavior is legal, and

therefore know whether or not they are justified in taking action against their landlord. These organizers should also provide referrals to non-profit lawyers or legal institutions that would be able to help the tenants fighting to save their homes.

Additionally, organizers should advocate for the citywide policies and tools outlined in this paper. Community-based organizations and non-profit developers in Los Angeles should form a coalition, select their top priority policies or tools, and create a campaign to advocate for these policies and tools at City Hall. These organizations can organize tenants, affordable housing advocates, and members of each organization in this campaign. It is important that support for these policies is vocalized and mobilized, and that pressure is placed on City Council to pass some of these policies and tools. With community organizing to garner support for these citywide policies and tools, organizations and the City of Los Angeles can work towards a comprehensive approach that is proactive through citywide policies, but also targets specific sites or projects through project-specific tools.

For organizers working to preserve Wyvernwood, in addition to the suggestions mentioned above, the coalition should begin bringing additional attention to the issue and placing pressure on political officials. This could involve op-eds to the Los Angeles Times, community meetings, or protests. With additional public attention to the potential displacement of the residents, hopefully more support will be garnered for the preservation of Wyvernwood. Once support additional support is garnered, organizers should use the support to intensify influence on political officials and other decision makers. Increased public attention could also attract funding in the form of donations and services for the improvement and preservation of Wyvernwood.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Taking all of this research into consideration, there are a few areas for potential future research. One topic that could be researched further is the financial feasibility of purchasing Wyvernwood. Research could focus on a financial analysis of a coalition of interested non-profit developers that could determine the feasibility of purchasing Wyvernwood and rehabilitating the units. This financial analysis could be a crucial step in the campaign, because if the funds can be found to purchase Wyvernwood, the coalition would have a new, tangible goal to reach through its organizing tactics: purchasing Wyvernwood. Currently, it is unclear if that is even a financially feasible option, but the financial analysis would answer that question and would allow the coalition to know what its options may or may not be.

An additional topic of future research is the connection between historic preservation and affordable housing. Has the Mills Act Tax Credit ever been used to help offset the cost of preserving affordable housing? Have preservation tactics ever been used to preserve affordable housing? Research that answers these questions could provide insight into the effectiveness of using historic preservation as one of the main arguments to preserve Wyvernwood Garden Apartments. It would also provide further insight as to whether historic preservation can preserve more than just a structure, but also affordability, culture, and community. Additionally, it would aid the financial analysis by determining whether or not the Mills Act Tax Credit could help offset the cost of rehabilitating the units at Wyvernwood.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Wyvernwood Garden Apartments' potential redevelopment embodies many urban trends that are worsening inequality in America's cities. Gentrification, displacement, loss of

affordable housing, and urban renewal are nationwide trends that can be seen in the proposal to redevelop of Wyvernwood. With the goals of creating and advocating for just cities, many government officials, community-based organizations, scholars, and others have created and implemented policies and planning tools that address some of the negative aspects of these trends. Policies aimed at creating or preserving affordable housing, securing benefits in the area of redevelopment, or encouraging responsible development have all been created in attempt to address the negative effects of these urban trends. This research aimed to explore the importance of affordable housing, the causes of gentrification, and displacement, and to contextualize Wyvernwood within these larger urban trends. It also aimed to evaluate urban policies and planning tools that could potentially prevent gentrification and displacement, both specific to Wyvernwood and on a citywide level.

In conclusion, a combination of tools and policies are necessary in order to comprehensively address these issues. These policies and tools must be targeted at specific projects and address issues at the neighborhood-level and citywide level. Redevelopments like Wyvernwood should signal a “call to action” for the city to provide greater support for tenants, affordable housing, and those experiencing gentrification and displacement.

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## Images:

**Figure 1:** [http://homesforall.org/pressroom\\_post/preservationists-and-boyle-heights-activists-fighting-huge-wyvernwood-redevelopment/](http://homesforall.org/pressroom_post/preservationists-and-boyle-heights-activists-fighting-huge-wyvernwood-redevelopment/)

**Figure 2:**  
<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Wyvernwood+Garden+Apartments/@34.022631,-118.215293,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x80c2c8b1a350dd83:0xb3891d9f6918c2eb>

**Figure 3:** <http://www.wyvernwood.com/Map--Directions>

**Figure 5:** [http://www.chpc.net/dnld/Housing\\_Need\\_LA\\_Final\\_060414.pdf](http://www.chpc.net/dnld/Housing_Need_LA_Final_060414.pdf)

**Figure 6:** <http://laeastside.com/2008/08/the-fight-for-wyvernwood-part-i/>

**Figure 7:** <http://www.wyvernwood.com/Renderings>