Increasing Community Participation in Planning to Prevent Housing
Displacement: Case Study of Stockton Boulevard Community, South Sacramento

By

YULIA BALTUSOVA LAMOUREAUX
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Approved:

_____
Noli Brazil, Chair

_____
Bernadette Austin

_____
Robert Wiener

Committee in Charge

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Abstract

In this project, I evaluate the participation of community residents, who are potentially at risk of displacement, in planning for their neighborhood and investigate strategies to increase that participation to achieve more equitable outcomes. Historically, low-income community voices have been overlooked in the process of implementing city government strategies, and even when those groups participate, there is no guarantee that their voices will be heard (Lasker & Guidry, 2009; Arnstein, 1969). Based on the findings from twenty semi-structured interviews with community residents and stakeholders in the Stockton Boulevard area of South Sacramento, the residents have keen interest to participate in planning. However, resident participation in planning is obstructed by low awareness of the ongoing projects in the community as a result of limited access to the internet and other information resources. One of the ways to increase engagement is by improving communication between planners and community members. To address the communication issue between planners and the community, in this thesis, I developed a model of Meaningful Community Engagement that implies prompt and transparent communication between planners and community residents and stakeholders at all stages of the planning process. This model will increase transparency of the planning process, which in turn will improve trust among community residents towards planners, and will lead to more equitable planning outcomes.

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Introduction

"The United States metropolitan areas' ever-changing economies, demographics, and morphologies have fostered opportunity for some and hardship for others."(Zuk 2015)

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the level of community involvement in planning in the Stockton Boulevard area of South Sacramento, and to explore ways to increase community participation in planning to achieve more equitable outcomes. Many residents and community stakeholders have expressed concerns about potential housing displacement as a result of new economic development projects in the neighborhood vicinity that are likely to attract higher-income workers to the area and drive housing costs up. Resident participation in planning their neighborhood is an effective way to protect current residents from potential displacement. Participation in planning is one way for residents to be involved in housing priorities and the future landscape of their neighborhood.

Through twenty semi-structured interviews with community residents and stakeholders, I gauged the level of community awareness of the upcoming economic development projects in the neighborhood vicinity (such as the UC Davis Aggie Square) and assessed community involvement in planning in anticipation of those projects. Aggie Square is promoted as a state of the art research and development project by UC Davis and the City of Sacramento, that promises to bring together entrepreneurs, companies and workers for effective and inclusive collaboration (Aggie Square website, 2021). Built mainly on the UC Davis campus in the close proximity to low-income neighborhoods of South Sacramento, Aggie Square proposes to provide employment opportunities and workforce development for the local residents and to ensure inclusive design with accessible entry points (Aggie Square website, 2021).

This thesis answers the following research question: what are ways to increase community participation in planning to protect low-income residents from potential housing displacement? In the Discussion section, I provide several recommendations for increasing community participation in planning by examining the strategies that can be implemented at the municipal level, the intermediaries' level (neighborhood associations, community based organizations, etc.), and the citizen level. Community engagement is an instrumental part of equitable planning to avoid displacement in the communities undergoing economic development. Therefore, this re-

search demonstrates that collaborative planning between planners and communities provides greater neighborhood satisfaction, which in turn increases the "emotional health and spiritual wellbeing of the community" (Pfeiffer & Cloutier, 2016). To ensure equitable community engagement, I stress the importance of a participatory approach in planning where community members are the active consultants and co-creators of the neighborhood design and priorities, and the needs of low-income residents are highly regarded by neighborhood planners and developers.

1. Literature Review

This thesis investigates the level of community engagement in planning in a low-income neighborhood of South Sacramento in anticipation of a major economic development project UC Davis Aggie Square. It also looks into ways to increase community participation in planning in order to achieve equitable outcomes and ensure marginalized community members have access to the benefits of economic development. Research points at the negative impacts of economic development on the disadvantaged communities such as increased housing costs and uneven distribution of economic opportunities. Furthermore, many academic studies point to the need of bringing attention back to low-income residents and increasing their potential to participate in planning in their neighborhood. Although, admittedly, low-income residents play an instrumental role in framing the future of their neighborhood, several obstacles impede on their ability to participate in planning such as family and job responsibilities, limited access to the internet and other information resources, language barriers, and other limitations.

This literature review looks at the process of participatory planning in low-income neighborhoods using the *social equity* lens. I explain the *social equity* concept and show some examples of integrating social equity approaches to planning in different localities nationwide. I start by describing the concept of traditional approaches to planning and its limitations, and explain the logical shift towards a more equitable approach —participatory planning— while describing some shortcomings of this method in its practical applications. Furthermore, I review such consequences of the lack of community engagement in the planning process as the loss of

trust in planners and complete withdrawal from the planning efforts. Finally, I synthesize some effective methods of community engagement and ways all stakeholders involved in the planning process can work together to plan equitably and collaboratively.

1.1 Planning Approaches

Planning practice has significantly advanced in the last sixty years from the "traditional technocratic top-down approach" (Wilmsen, 2008) in creating urban spaces towards participatory planning that implies collaboration between professionals and the public through the process of "mutual learning" (Warren, 1977; Sandercock, 1998, as cited in Wilmsen, 2008). Although urban planning is a relatively young field (Weber and Crane, 2012), it has come a long way from the *management of systems* (Chadwick, 1971) which abandoned the social aspect of planning to *participatory planning,* which makes that social aspect a cornerstone of the very planning process.

1.1.1 Systems Approach to Planning

Systems approach, which prevailed in the 1960's to the early 1970's, viewed the process of planning through the theory of general systems and the related science of cybernetics (McDougal, 1972) which studies systems that are "intrinsically extremely complex" (Ashby, 1969, as cited in McDougal, 1972). *Systems approach* to planning leans on the mathematical models and neglects the human aspect in the process of planning. The critics of this approach allude to the fallacy of the pure and applied science models to explain human behavior and confide in the social science methods which specialize in human interaction. Perhaps, the historical lack of community participation in planning can be attributed to the over-reliance on the pure and applied science models in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although both Chadwick in his *A Systems View of Planning* (1971) and McLoughlin in the *Urban and Regional Planning (*1969) understood the importance of seeing the systems through the social prism, they both failed to do so because they separated the ecosystem from its social context (McDougall, 1973). One of the biggest shortfalls of the *systems approach* to planning is its failure to look at the process of spatial distribution of physical objects as a social

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process because it omits the human aspect of planning. It is important to consider the limitations of the *systems approach* to planning which undermines the human aspect by trying to optimize the processes using solely mathematical models. It is also instrumental to recognize potential social repercussions of limited or absent community engagement in the neighborhood development plans. Most importantly, because planning is concerned with the spatial distribution of the physical object based on the social decisions, the consequences of these decisions are essentially social (McDougall, 1973).

In order to improve the planning process, it is important to recognize the interdisciplinarity of this young field (Weber, Crane, 2012) and to embrace its political nature. Although social scientists have attempted to place planning in a vacuum by separating it from the social systems that it is intimately intertwined with (McDougall, 1973) and from the political context, planning needs to include all of the above in order to achieve equitable goals of community engagement.

1.1.2 Institutions and Planning

In attempting to understand the role of community participation in the planning process and how different institutional planning models differ in the ways of incorporating community input, it is important to understand the interconnection between planning and institutions. The process of planning is closely intertwined with the concept of institutions, and institutional change is core to planning (Kim, 2012). In other words, planning as an "interdisciplinary enterprise" has been about adapting to the institutional changes along the way.

Planning as an "enterprise" is framed in dualities - state versus market, top-down versus bottom-up approaches. The challenge in planning, however, is not in making the "right" choice between "public/private" or "state/market" but rather, figuring out the ways for those contradicting sides to work together (Kim, 2012). In other words, all stakeholders involved in the planning process have different interests and motivations (Figure 1); developers pursue a goal of profit maximization, communities strive to preserve limited resources such as housing, historical buildings, community land, and the public sector tries to protect disadvantaged residents from potential negative impacts of economic development while reaping the rewards of said development. These stakeholders face the challenges of meeting their goals, while collaborating with other par-

ties (Kim, 2012). These goals can be achieved through building trust among stakeholders and through open communication between all parties.

Figure 1.
Finding Compromise

Public:
motivation to protect residents from displacement

Developer:
profit motivation

Community:
motivation to preserve minimal resources

"The challenge in planning is not the making the right choice between public/private, state/market but rather how they work together." (Kim, 2012)
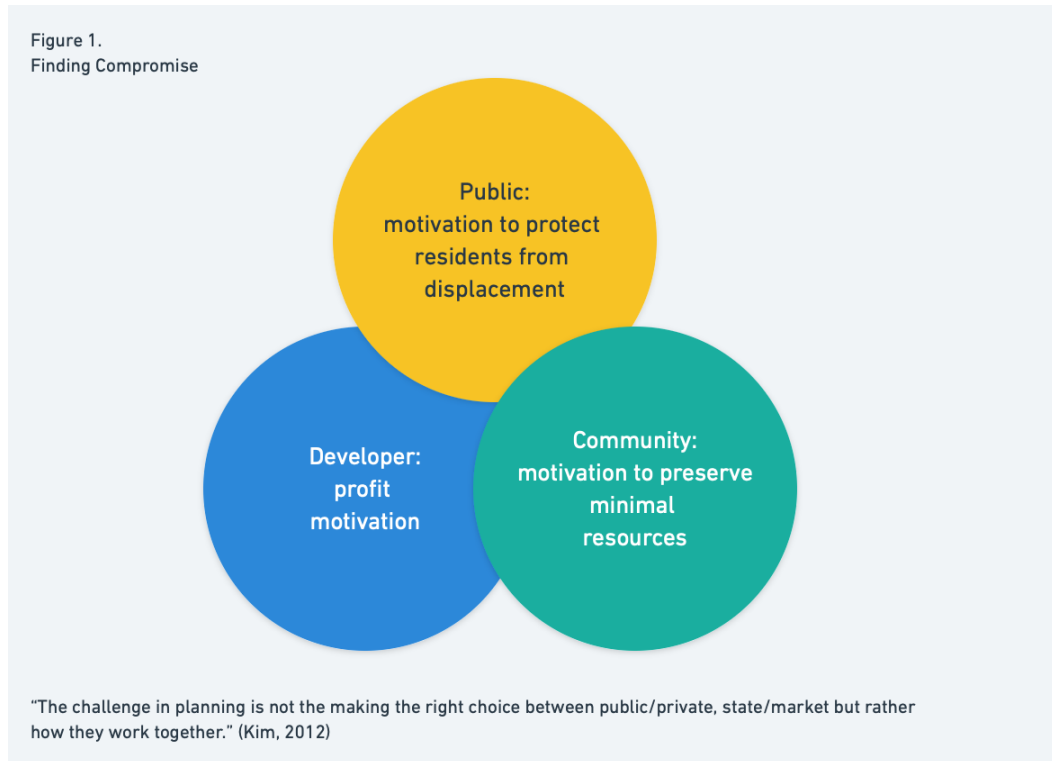
Figure 1. Finding Compromise

1.1.3 Critique of Institutions Approach

The era of rapid development put many pressures to expand without regard to potential negative consequences of the expansion on some areas and residents. The critique of the institutional approach to planning is its focus on the "disembodied process and language rather than on people," which "obfuscates agency and responsibility" (Mandelbaum, 1985; Markusen, 1999, as cited in Kim, 2012). Overall, by focusing on the objects and processes of planning rather than on the people that will bear the consequences of spatial planning in the form of racial and ethnic divisions (Kim, 2012), this planning theory presents a limited view to planning in general, let alone community engagement in the planning process. By bringing the community closer to planning, planners can address the issue of impersonalization and abstraction of the planning process. If we are able to bring focus in planning back to the community, the agency and responsibility of

community residents will naturally improve. In other words, when community members are part and parcel of the planning process, they trust that their opinion matters and their input in the planning efforts is counted and respected.

Another critique of institutionalism is that it overlooks the role of power that is concentrated in the hands of "elites" that dominate the systems (Jessop, 2001; MacLeod, 2001, as cited in Kim, 2012). Overlooking the role of power in the institutions (Kim, p.73) is likely the biggest blindspot in the mainstream institutional narrative. In community engagement and planning as a whole, it is critical to examine the power dynamics (Kim, 2012) in order to avoid domination of "elites" over the rest of the community.

1.1.4 Participatory Planning

Community participation in planning significantly increased in the last thirty years and was influenced by the "global restructuring of capitalism and the emergence of neoliberal models of governance," which meant the distribution of social responsibility from the state to its citizens, as well as to private and civic organizations (Miraftab, 2012). Traditionally, the state played a leading role in planning but as the role of citizens and their civic participation increased, so did their role in planning (Miraftab, 2012). Participatory planning implies active engagement and coordination between government institutions and the public in the planning process. The public mainly engages in participatory planning by connecting with professional planners who are equipped with the formalized methods to engage the community in the planning process (Miraftab, 2012). Another form of planning is "insurgent" planning which is a more oppositional method for citizens to "constitute and claim urban spaces" (Miraftab, 2012). In other words, there are two different ways community members typically participate in planning: one way is a formal participation through the official channels, such as city planning departments, and another way is through partaking in the informal activities to influence the outcomes of projects being implemented. While some citizens who engage in ad hoc planning "outside the formal participatory planning channels" try to alter proposed projects, others try to stop projects altogether (Legacy, 2017).

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1.2 Consequences of not Engaging with the Community

In community development work, it is crucial to keep a close eye on the long-established processes of capital distribution while performing economic development tasks. As low-income neighborhoods gentrify through the process of revitalization, many residents of those neighborhoods get displaced, while the cities and large financial institutions benefit from the new neighborhood profitability (Smith, 1979, as cited in Chapple, 2017). While cities and developers are naturally engaged in those neighborhoods as part of their professional activity, residents have day-to-day responsibilities beyond the participation in the planning endeavors in their neighborhood. This contradiction between professional vigor to develop the neighborhood and the informal and often limited presence of low-income communities in planning due to working multiple jobs and having a limited time, presents an argument in favor of vulnerable low-income populations. As such, the power imbalance among key stakeholders — cities, developers/financial institutions, and low-income residents — needs to be further examined. Additionally, the links between the lack of community engagement and consequent displacement need to be investigated. Although research on the causes of displacement due to gentrification is extensive (Zuk, 2016; Chapple 2017; Marcuse, 2013), there is a gap in the literature on the connection between low-income community participation in planning and displacement.

1.2.1 Displacement of Residents

Historically, people of color and ethnic minorities bore the brunt of economic consequences caused by inequalities. Those individuals were legally excluded from the opportunities to purchase homes and to accumulate wealth by building equity. Recent research emphasizes the significance of homeownership as the main vehicle of wealth accumulation perpetuating and increasing racial and ethnic inequality (Alba and Logan 1992; Winger 1995; Conley 1999, as cited in Flippen 2005). Homeownership also creates financial stability for families throughout generations and prevents residents from displacement due to increased rents. Homeowners benefit from increased property values as a result of neighborhood development, while residents of color who were excluded from opportunities to purchase homes continue to be at risk of displacement. In

other words, while many White families were able to advance economically through accessing mortgages and homeownership, Black residents and other ethnic minorities continue to be on the cusp of displacement as a result of historical bias. Particularly low-income families and persons of color have been affected by this unequal access to wealth accumulation and are currently continuing to be on the cusp of displacement.

The historic patterns of racial and ethnic inequalities that prevented non-White and minority ethnic groups from gaining access to wealth building through home-buying, while allowing the rest of the populations to accumulate wealth by access to real estate and benefiting from lucrative opportunities of California's housing market, put the vulnerable populations in a frightening position at continued risk of housing displacement. As Miriam Zuk put it (2015), the ever-changing American economy has provided opportunities for some and hardship for others. That is why it is critical to use the urban displacement analytical lens when working with low-income and displaced residents of the community. Hernandez (2009) described mortgage redlining practices in which non-White community residents were disqualified from residing in Sacramento. Zuk (2016) investigated the nature of displacement and gentrification and how more equitable economic development can be supported through policy interventions. One example of such intervention is "investing in people through place" (Chapple, 2005, as cited in Giloth, 2007) through the following strategies: endogenous development (from within) targeting businesses and individuals, revitalizing neighborhoods, and organizing the community. Chapple notes that despite the existence of prolific literature on the effectiveness of community economic development (CED), the efficient implementation of CED leaves much to be desired (Chapple, 2012). Part of the reason for this is the challenging nature of economic development practitioners' work which requires the combination of risks specific to the private sector and the "fishbowl" scrutiny of the public sector topped by the lack of control that CED practitioners have over many factors (Rubin, 1988).

Although the literature on economic development and displacement is prolific, all authors grapple with the way to have communities self-organize and govern. One reason could be that low-income residents do not have time to organize and plan in their communities due to demand-

ing daily life commitments. This research adds to the literature on the methods of low-income community participation in the planning and decision-making process.

1.2.2 Interrelation between Gentrification and Displacement

Gentrification is a form of urban neighborhood change that occurs when higher-income groups move into low-income neighborhoods, altering the cultural and financial landscape of the original neighborhood (Brazil, 2020). Displacement is a process of dispossession and forced eviction at a diverse range of scales (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2019), or in other words, the process of un-homing. Although, admittedly gentrification and displacement are closely tied together, two contrasting opinions exist on the cause-and-effect relationship of gentrification and displacement. Freeman et al. (2015) compared mobility and displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods of England and Wales with the neighborhoods that did not undergo gentrification. The findings indicated that displacement and mobility had minimal impact on gentrifying neighborhoods. While quasi-experimental methods used in this research were helpful for examining gentrification and displacement on a broad scale, they lacked the nuanced understanding of the "people, places, and processes involved" (Freeman et al., 2015).

Other studies point at the direct cause and effect relationship between gentrification and displacement. Unfortunately, diverse scales and temporalities of displacement are yet to be better understood (Elliott-Cooper et al, 2019), but the process of learning about the negative effects of displacement is crucial to understand so those negative effects can be better documented and resisted. Indeed, if the negative effects of displacement are traceable and proven, it is possible to protect the low-income residents at the edge of being displaced. Marcuse (2013) concludes that gentrification displaces low-income people by increasing pressures on housing and rents. He traces the vicious cycle in which the poor are continuously under pressure of displacement and the wealthy continuously seek to wall themselves within gentrifying neighborhoods (Marcuse, 2013). Bates (2013) focuses on the consequences of gentrification and displacement as it pertains to the housing market. Her research builds upon the earlier studies of displacement and considers a broader interpretation of the term as a loss of one's dwelling due to the conditions that affect

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the dwelling on one hand, and as an overall change in the neighborhood as a whole on the other hand (Bates, 2013). Bates proposes to use a *market-conscious approach to displacement, inquiring* special attention to the tendencies of the public investment to influence the private market. Furthermore, she describes the *inclusive development* paradigm *with a racial/ethnic equity lens* (Bates, 2013). This thesis attempts to analyze gentrification through racial and ethnic lenses as well as investigate the relationship between the public and private investment, and possible impacts on the housing affordability in gentrifying neighborhoods.

1.2.3 Crisis in Participatory Planning

In the history of planning, some urban projects were planned and executed with little to no input from the community, which led to feelings of distrust and disconnect on the community side. The consequences of not engaging with the community or engaging not in a genuine way are a loss of trust in local governing entities and lack of motivation on the community side to participate in the future planning. It seems that in the transition from the *command and control* planning model in the first part of the twentieth century towards a *"negotiated model of decision making"* where stakeholders are engaged in the process and have influence on the land use allocation, communities still remained left out of the participatory planning process. Considering the increasing power of such key stakeholders in the economic development process as large developers and the high competition among municipalities to "secure revenue-producing development," it comes as no surprise that community residents have little to no leverage in this powerful dynamic to influence that development (Beaumont and Tucker, 2002, as cited in Camacho, 2005). This mutually beneficial relationship between the developers and local governments described as *bilateral deal-making* has become a fairly popular way to execute development projects throughout the country (Rose, 1983, as cited in Camacho, 2005). However, as shown in Figure 2, this process hinders community input in the project design and impacts (Camacho, 2005) leaving the community residents in an unfortunate position, far from one that can be described as participatory planning.

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Figure 2.
Bilateral deal-making* limiting public input

Developer

City

Community

*Bilateral negotiated land use regulation for development and annexation agreements in 15 s tatesincluding CA, FL, AZ, MD (Camacho, 2005)
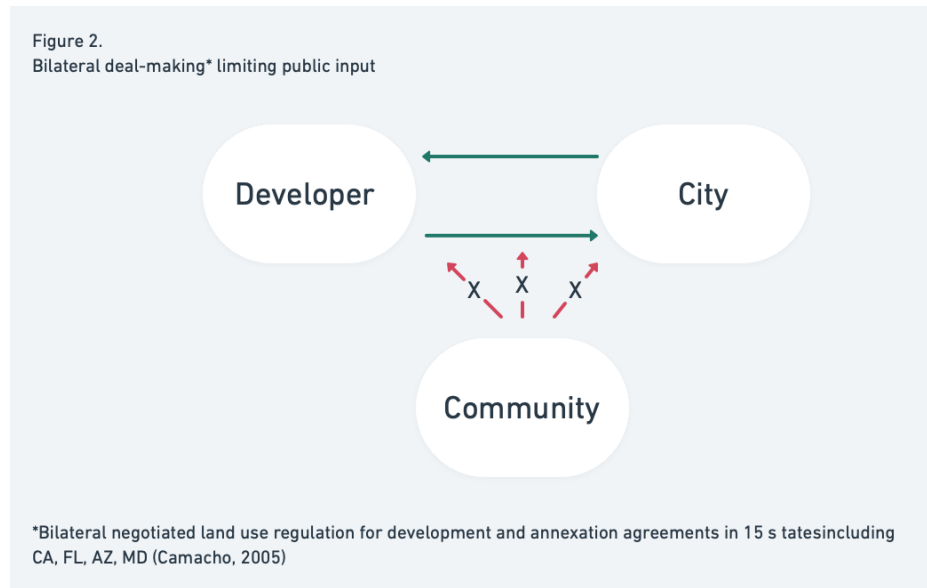
Figure 2. Bilateral deal-making limiting public input

1.2.4 Loss of Trust and Withdrawal from Participation in Planning

The consequences of not engaging community residents in planning are the *loss of trust* towards planners and the government entities (Legacy, 2017) on the community side and, in some cases, complete *loss of interest to participate* in the planning endeavors (Alinsky, 1972). It is important to look at the problem of lack of community participation at different levels; as such, understanding the context and the history of the specific locality at the micro level, and tracing the societal dynamics that prevail in the communities nationally and worldwide at the macro level. This section investigates academic literature on both levels to understand how community participation in planning and the lack of thereof can be traced and explained.

First and foremost, participation in planning is political (Legacy, 2017) and it always exists in the context of the local dynamics and interests. Therefore, it is instrumental to understand power politics in trying to investigate the level of public engagement in planning (Monno, Khakee, 2012). Some researchers believe that there is a set of "good practice" participatory techniques through engaging community in town-hall meetings (Hartz-Karp, 2005, as cited in Legacy, 2017), through media channels (Kleinhans et al, as cited in Legacy 2017), and even via citizen juries (Legacy et al, 2014, as cited in Legacy, 2017). However, those channels of participa-

tion are sometimes "designed in" by planning administration as an act of "due diligence" on the part of planning administration to appear as engaging with community-based groups (Maginn, 2007, as cited in Legacy, 2017). Indeed, those channels exist, but they exist as vehicles to capture the community input as a formality rather than to engage that very community in the decision-making process and change the ways the decisions about planning are made (Maginn, 2007, as cited in Legacy, 2017). As a result, when participatory activities exist for the government's "due diligence", then the community does not actually have a voice, therefore trust in planners and institutions decreases.

Another instance of a loss of interest to engage the planning endeavors is when community members attempt to participate but experience "successive frustration," and as a result, lose the will to participate in any subsequent planned projects (Alinsky, 1972). On the macro level, some researchers ascribe the crisis of trust in the society as a whole to the burgeoning and proliferation of pluralistic society and advanced liberalism (Swain, Tait, 2007). To be more specific, the rise of "systems of pluralistic society" and advanced liberalism made that crisis of trust possible. In some instances planning even took a "pejorative term among the public" (ODPM, 2004, as cited in Swain, Tait, 2007). As a result, communities are less likely to trust their local planning entities when the level of trust on the broad societal scale is low.

1.3 Social Equity Lens

As described in the Displacement section of this Literature Review (2.1), many mistakes were made in planning that led to the displacement (Hernandez, 2009) of low-income and marginalized groups of society, both intentionally and unintentionally, due to a lack of awareness. The ability of ordinary residents to participate in shaping the future of their neighborhoods as it pertains to housing, is an important aspect of an equitable society. While there is an abundance of literature on the role of government and nonprofits in planning for housing (Bratt, 2017; Cullingworth and Caves, 2013; Macedo, 2008), the role of community residents in planning is not explicit. Moreover, there is some confusion as to what *community participation* means exactly (Sheng, 1990); it can have "different meaning for different people and even a different meaning for the same people according to the situation" (Sanoff, 2000). This confusion could be one

of the reasons why there is a lack of literature on the community participation, a lack of clarity, and no protocol to follow when it comes to engaging community residents in the planning process. In this section, I review the problem of community participation in planning for affordable housing through a social equity lens. This approach is unique because it is guided by the principle of bringing the voices of "all members of the society, especially the most disadvantaged" (Rawls, 1971, as cited in Deakin 1999) to the center of the planning process.

Two levels of community participation (Deshler and Sock, 1985, as cited in Sanoff 2000) are *pseudoparticipation* and *genuine participation*. The first level only allows the very members of society most impacted by the development projects to "listen to what is being planned *for them*" (Sanoff, 2000), and the latter one empowers the residents to "control the action taken." With all the intricacies and the vagueness of the definition of the term *community participation*, one thing is clear - there is a need to engage disadvantaged community residents most impacted by the planned projects in a *genuine* way, allowing them to take action and actually impact the future housing landscape of their neighborhood. The answer to how that could be achieved is through the social *equity* approach in planning.

Social equity approach to planning implies acknowledging the history of planning that had disparate impact on some communities and "actively working with affected residents to create better communities for all"[1] (American Planning Association, 2021). Political philosopher John Rawls defined two main principles of equity (Rawls, 1971, as cited in Deakin 1999): the first principle is "equality in the assignment of roles and duties," and the second principle states that "social and economic inequalities are just only if they result in compensating benefits for everyone, and in particular for the least advantaged members of society." Deakin points out the potency of the idea to "examine the distribution of gains and losses" and to take "compensatory action" (1999). Indeed, the idea of recognizing inequity and taking action from the place of acknowledgement rather than ignorance are the important steps on the path to genuine participatory community engagement. Furthermore, the democratization of the decision making process as well as planning is an important condition to achieve social justice in planning (Deakin, 1999). That democratization could be achieved through improving the "capacity to participate, to identi-

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[1] https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/equity/

fy and communicate one's own interests, and on developing sufficient mutual trust" (Deakin, 1999).

There are a few studies that analyze social equity approaches in planning for transportation (Manaugh et al., 2015), building resilient cities (Meerow et al,, 2019) and others. This study attempts to fill the gap in the literature by examining how social equity lens can be applied to planning for affordable housing. As mentioned earlier, the important component of equitable community engagement is genuine participation of all members of the community, especially those most disadvantaged. This could be achieved by increasing their capacity to participate (Innes, 1992, 1998, as cited in Deakin 1999) and by improving mutual trust (Ostrom 1990, as cited in Deakin 1999).

1.3.1 Examples using Social Equity Lens

In the past few years, cities have been striving to incorporate resilience in their plans to improve their ability to respond to "shocks, stresses, and uncertainties"(Meerow, Pajouhesh, Miller, 2019). The *Social Equity in Urban Resilience* study (2019) reveals that among 100 cities, some of them are better than others at focusing on the issues of equity. Without taking social equity concerns into account, cities run the risk of reinforcing the neoliberal and conservative agenda which hampers the opportunities for "systemic transformations" (Meerow, Pajouhesh, Miller, 2019). In other words, social equity plays an instrumental role in planning for resilient cities.

1.3.2 Missing out on Equity Internationally

The team of researchers in Australia analyzed the extent to which social equity was considered in the creation of the Regional Development Australia's Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Regional Roadmap. They examined the two aspects of equity (Rawls, 1973, McConnell, 1981, Martin, 2008, as cited in Harwood, Prideaux, Schmellegger, 2011): "equity that is concerned with social inclusion in decision making" and economic equality as it pertains to property ownership and means of production. The study stresses that the opinions of the least

advantaged and indigenous persons were not considered in the planning process for this project. The authors of this report argued for an immediate change in the planning approach by incorporating the opinions of the disadvantaged and indigenous people in the regional plans. They insisted that it is the only way to avoid increasing existing disparities (Harwood, Prideaux, Schmellegger, 2011) with the subsequent exacerbation of inequalities through planning and development. In conclusion, the authors urge planners to revisit the approach to regional planning. They focus on the Rawlsian theory of distributive justice and question the very purpose of regional planning if it is not capable of improving the disparities among those affected by planned initiatives.

1.4 Community Participation in Planning

There are a multitude of examples when low-income community residents withdraw from the opportunities to participate in planning or simply do not know of those opportunities due to the lack of internet resources, time and other obstacles. This section explores yet some positive outcomes of participatory planning, and the ways communities can engage in planning in a meaningful way despite the economic challenges that get in the way of their ability to participate. Also, this section highlights the key elements of participatory planning along with some practical examples of how low-income community residents can learn about the opportunities to communicate their priorities to planners and about the importance of their role as members of the community in visualizing and co-creating their neighborhoods along with the other stakeholders. It is crucial for the communities to engage in planning in order to feel connected to their neighborhood, to experience the sense of belonging to their community, and, finally, their ability to benefit from the projects along the same way other stakeholders benefit from it.

1.4.1 Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) stems from Action Research (AR) which was originated by Kurt Lewin in 1948 in the industrial democracy movement (Wimsen et al. 2007). Lewin defined the social and technological systems as "interlinked and interdependent" (Wimsen et al.

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2007). He insisted that knowledge is produced through action, and argued that the workers play the central role in the "knowledge of production practices due to their intimate involvement with them on the factory floor" (p.7).

Having emerged from the educational and social movements in the Global South and the U.K. (Rios, C. 2019), Participatory Action Research (PAR) stresses the importance of engaging "those affected by the issue being studied" (Green et al., 1995) into a collaborative process of systematic investigation. Israel et al. (2013) in *Methods in Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* investigate how to engage community members in community-based participatory research. Most importantly, the community should be viewed as a *partner* and not a *setting*, and this could be achieved by ensuring that all involved parties view the community as a social unit. Although scientists studying the community as outsiders, also referred to as *professional strangers* (Merton, 1970), are sometimes viewed negatively by the communities, they can introduce a fresh new perspective with communities. Namely, they are able to look at each community more objectively as they are not weighed down by the membership in the community or the social ties with the community participants.

1.4.1.1 Participatory Action Research in Community Development

Although many Participatory Action Research (PAR) researchers agree on the importance of engaging disadvantaged community members in the planning and decision-making process, none of them have a clear toolset on sustaining the practice of community engagement and self-governance (cite). For example, while explaining how PAR could be used for *Building Healthy Communities,* Minkler concludes that there is no "cookbook or recipe" to follow. Because PAR is "*not a particular research method* but rather a *research orientation* that is community-driven, and oriented toward community and social change" (p.192, Minkler), it might be difficult to have established guidelines and expectations for the community as to what they can expect as a reciprocation for their effort to participate.

1.4.1.2 Critique of Participatory Action Research

Although Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been recognized as an effective and equitable method of community engagement, this method has been criticized for being inattentive to gender by using the term "the oppressed" which contradicts the inclusionary values of PAR (Minkler, 2000). Feminist PAR, on the other hand, carefully considers gender composition of the research team and along with class, race, and culture (Maguire, 1987); it would also "purposefully review and track *all* participatory research projects with gender in mind" (p.113).

Despite unquestionable benefits of PAR, researchers and practitioners need to be cognizant of the power dynamics that PAR methods bring along with the benefit. Indeed, PAR naturally brings "unequal players to an uneven table to participate in difficult predetermined decision making" (Roe et al., 1997, as cited in Minkler, 2000).

1.4.1.3 Challenges of Participatory Action Research

Challenges arising in the process of conducting Participatory Action Research (PAR), as described by Maguire, include bringing the researcher's agenda to the group and balancing different roles: "No one in the group asked to explore structural aliases of racism, sexism, or classism," and "I had a great difficulty juggling the demands of participatory researcher roles of researches, educator, and organizer" (p. 201). Maguire goes on describing the conflicting feelings of wanting to motivate the women as an organizer in a project she conducted to attend the meetings, and, at the same time, wanting to step back as a researcher to see what would happen when she "did not play the motivator role" (p.201). Another significant challenge in meeting participatory action research goals of "empowerment, conscientization, and long term change" is time constraints. Maguire points out the "competing time commitments for paid employment, child care, household maintenance," and "educational pursuits" that the project participants faced (p.207). Potential solutions to such challenges could be a more structured meeting format to make a better use of the group time (Maguire, 1987).

1.4.2 Equitable Community Engagement

Some localities lean on the principle of equitable community engagement to ensure just access and opportunity for all residents to participate in planning in their neighborhoods. Equitable community engagement is the approach of using several strategies to provide opportunities for all residents to participate in planning and decision-taking with the goal of achieving equitable planning outcomes[2]. For example, in using the method of *equitable community engagement* in developing the Brooklyn Park[3] project, planners relied on the importance of asking questions (among city planners and of the community residents) to ensure that equitable engagement takes place. In this guide, planners followed five steps to ensure equitable community engagement. First, they determined whether the community needs to be engaged in the planning process by asking such questions as, "*Would this project have environmental, economic, safety impacts on the community? Have community members voiced any concerns about this project?*" Second, planners are urged to identify their own level of knowledge about their project — "*What does the project seek to do for the community? What are the possible consequences of not engaging with the community? What is still unknown about the project?*" Third, planners identified which community residents need to be engaged by:

a) determining a relationship between the current level of community engagement and the level of impact they would experience from the project and

b) determining a relationship between the current level of community engagement and the influence certain community members might have on the project outcome.

This step stands out as a very important way to ensure planners' awareness of the overwhelming presence of potentially biased community members and the members who frequent participatory meetings as opposed to other residents, thereby creating a distorted image of the community while not necessarily being representative of the whole population (demographically, economically etcetera). In this step, planners investigate "*Which groups are already engaged and*

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[2] https://bphc.org/aboutus/community-engagement/Documents/Boston%20Public%20Health%20Commission%27s%20Community%20Engagement%20Plan.Final.pdf

[3] https://sustainablect.org/fileadmin/Random_PDF_Files/Equity_Action_PDFs/CommunityEngagement-PlanningGuide.pdf

which are currently disengaged? Which groups have high influence on the project outcomes and which groups need to be empowered to have more influence?" and other questions. Fourth, planners attempted to choose the right strategies by investigating potential barriers to community engagement such as "transportation, language, technological, institutional and physical barriers" that decrease the opportunity to access information (Girma, 2017). Also, planners needed to manage the expectations of community residents regarding their degree of influence on the project while providing input and voicing their opinions. This step speaks to the previously mentioned issue of trust when community residents lose trust in planners and disengage from participation. Finally, planners determined what outcome they are aiming at through this engagement by asking the following: *What does successful outreach for this project look like? What are the specific outreach goals?*

Authentic community engagement is meant to elevate underrepresented voices and include them into the decision making process.[4] If done purposefully and authentically, it leads to better outcomes for everyone, increased trust in the system, strong and healthy relationships in the community. Trust is the key element of authentic community engagement. The key steps to build trust within the community are being sincere, wanting to learn about it, and going to the community instead of asking the community to come to you. Ask the community first, how they would like to be engaged and second, how the organization can be of service to them (City of Seattle, 2020). Some barriers to community engagement might include time, atmosphere (do community residents feel welcome at the event?), and language barriers.

1.4.3 Connection to Place

Research points at the direct connection between a community's attachment to place and its level of participation in the planning process. Although some influential figures in planning started connecting how people's experience of places impacts planning (Jacobs, 1961; Gans, 1968, as cited in Manzo, Perkins, 2006), the level of influence of that relationship with place on planning remains largely unexplored (Manzo, Perkins, 2006). Despite the abundance of research

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[4] https://www.seattle.gov/opcd/ongoing-initiatives/equitable-development-initiative

about relationship to place among geographers and environmental psychologists, (Tuan, 1974; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Atman and Low, 1993 as cited in Manzo and Perkins, 2006) as well as studies about social capital and citizen participation in civic processes among sociologists and community psychologists (Flora and Flora, 1996; Perkins and Long, 2002, as cited in Manzo and Perkins, 2006), there is a "lack of cross-pollination" among those studies (Manzo, Perkins, 2006). This disconnect points at a significant problem that planners face —despite having access to knowledge in different disciplines, there is a lack of connection between disciplines, and, therefore, lost opportunities to discover how this knowledge could serve the community. Indeed, a "combination of these perspectives can provide a richer understanding" (Manzo, Perkins, 2006) of how community connection to place impacts their participation in planning.

1.4.4 Role of Public-private Partnerships in Planning

Public-private partnerships play an important role in planning in neighborhoods, and are especially activated in the times of crises (Berman, West, 1995). Indeed, crises and other local conditions associated with community hardship promote partnerships among organizations from different sectors to work together in order to develop collective strategies geared towards solving those difficulties in an efficient and timely manner. As such, local governments and nonprofit organizations rely more and more on the strategies of collaborative leadership (Berman, West, 1995). For example, in anticipation of a rapid economic development project that is likely going to impact the neighborhood, leaders from the local public and private sectors can come together and identify local needs and plan for satisfying those needs by leveraging a few tools in the process of community-based strategic planning (Berman, West,1995). One such tool is called *stakeholder analysis* - the process of "identifying and assessing the interests of key individuals, groups and organizations". Another tool is to attract the public's attention to an issue via the use of *media relations strategies* (Berman, West, 1995). These tools are efficient in creating strong alliances among local public-private organizations.

Nonprofit organizations play an important role in planning in the neighborhoods: they are known to react faster to the local crisis than the government organizations and they have a track record of providing effective services to the community members in need (Berman, West 1995). First and foremost, local organizations involved in planning need to identify the role they play in a certain project prior to shaping local economic development. Having a definitive role helps to "shape planning in all stages" and helps identify the tools organizations can use.

There are four "courses of action" or, in other words, four different roles that organizations can play in planning for local economic development: *entrepreneur, coordinator, facilitator,* and *stimulator* (Blakely & Leigh, 2013). Entrepreneurial role implies ownership and means that the organization takes on a leading role in planning and coordinating the project. For example, government entities usually have a lot of power to retain commercial land or to pass it on to the local community based organizations for management. An organization - usually local government or a community based organization - can take on a coordinator role in order to establish a policy or propose a strategy that will help the disadvantaged neighborhood in the process of an unfolding economic development project. The facilitator role is especially important in planning for local economic development because it focuses on improving an "attitudinal environment" in the community. Usually carried out by local government or community groups, facilitators try to focus on coordinating the existing resources in trying to achieve equitable planning outcomes. Finally, the stimulator role, by definition, promotes a certain action in the area. For example, local governments can stimulate business creation by providing a building for the private sector use or other ways to stimulate economic development in the area. It is crucial for all organizations involved in the public-private partnerships to have a clear role in planning for a specific economic development. Defining the role and then identifying the tools to use are the two significant steps to make planning in the community well-coordinated and thoughtful.

1.4.5 Community Benefits Agreement

Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is one of a few very effective ways to deter displacement as a result of an economic development project because it implies a clearly stated list

of benefits that community gains in return for an opportunity that developer has in bringing the project to the community. Historically, urban conflicts arise due to the contradicting interests between developers of the projects who "view place in terms of commodity in the pursuit of the profits " and the community residents "who view place in terms of use values, or, quality of life issues" (Logan and Molotch, 2007, as cited in Saito and Truong, 2015). Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is an effective way to protect the residents from displacement and the "destruction of [their] neighborhoods" as a consequence of large development projects (Saito and Truong, 2015). CBAs are a fundamentally new way to protect low-income neighborhoods from displacement caused by developments. The relationship between community coalitions and developers is based on mutual benefit; rather than stopping developments from happening, coalitions recognize such benefits to the community as tax revenues and jobs. Developers, on the other hand, benefit from the relationships with those coalitions because "opposition to projects in the form of lawsuits or lobbying city officials can result in the reduction of profits or termination of projects because of rising costs due to litigation or delays" (Wolf-Powers, 2010, as cited in Saito and Truong, 2015).

The Staples Center CBA signed by the developer Anschutz Entertainment Group in 2001 "catalyzed a national movement" (Agern et al., 2010, as cited in Saito and Truong) in striving to protect the residents "directly affected by the large projects" (Saito and Truong, 2015). Success of the Staples Center CBA is explained by the strong support of community organizations, unions and establishment of political power by the demographically prevailing Latinos group (49.% of Los Angeles population by 2010 Census).

1.5 Summary

The literature I reviewed in this section points to the complexity of the participatory planning process despite significant advancements in planning practice in the recent decades from the top-down traditional approach towards participatory planning practice. The current planning model remains inadequate as it lacks effective community engagement in planning to achieve equitable planning outcomes. Furthermore, a number of structural, economic and cultur-

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al barriers impede community residents' ability to take part in shaping the future of their neigh-borhoods. I describe those barriers in the Results chapter. Planners can take several steps to bring positive change towards more equitable planning outcomes, such as increasing their own aware-ness of the existing obstacles to community engagement, and carrying out subsequent little shifts to help community members overcome those obstacles (Head, 2007). Making participation in planning easy for community residents and ensuring transparency at each stage of the planning process, can increase overall community engagement in planning and can increase equitable out-comes. I describe those strategies in the Discussion section.

2. Case Study: Stockton Boulevard Community, South Sacramento California

My motivation to investigate community engagement in planning stemmed from a class project in which I investigated strategies to solve the homelessness crisis along Stockton Boulevard in South Sacramento. To acquaint myself with the community, I attended local neighborhood association meetings and did neighborhood walks. I also interviewed residents and community stakeholders about homelessness issues and potential strategies to revitalize the area. From interviews and secondary data, I inferred that in the past few decades the community had undergone a significant economic decline. Some residents explained that the loss of jobs and the overall disinvestment in the neighborhood were linked to the relocation of the State Fair from the neighborhood to another area in the late 1960-ies, after which many businesses left and the economic vibrancy of the neighborhood was lost for the years to come. Currently, many residents of the studied neighborhood are low-wealth and low-income, while the incoming residents are anticipated to be higher income, which explains the fears of the current residents to lose their homes as result of economic development.

While the residents I interviewed appeared knowledgeable and passionate about the neighborhood issues, they were perplexed about the ways they could participate in planning at the institutional level to improve economic conditions in the neighborhood. Additionally, many locals felt threatened by upcoming economic development projects that have the potential to improve the lives of low-income residents through provision of new job opportunities or to exacerbate the existing problems and cause further displacement. In particular, community stakeholders expressed concern over Aggie Square, a recent economic development project that promises to bring together business, research and innovation partners and community-based programs (Abrams et al., 2019) while creating lucrative economic opportunities for the Sacramento residents (May, 2019). Having learned the unique history of this neighborhood and its volatile position compared to other areas of Sacramento, I decided to look into ways to prevent potential displacement by increasing community participation in planning at the institutional level.

For the purpose of this research, I refer to the studied community as the Stockton Boulevard community (Figure 3). It comprises West Tahoe Park, Colonial Heights, Tahoe Park South, Fruitridge Manor, Tallac Village and a few other neighborhoods. Stockton Boulevard community is made of ten census tracts (Appendix B), both within incorporated territory of south Sacramento and within Sacramento County. It is located south of Highway 50 and the UC Davis Medical Center, and is bounded by Broadway in the north, 65th Street Expressway in the east, Florin Road in the south, and South Sacramento Freeway in the west. Stockton Boulevard functions as the main thoroughfare connecting the major employment center in downtown Sacramento with other predominantly residential areas, including other neighborhoods in South Sacramento and the City of Elk Grove. The Boulevard is characterized by frequent traffic accidents due to high vehicle speeds, dangerous pedestrian crossings and narrow walkways. Despite the area being rather widespread, most of the interviewed residents are familiar with their neighbors and feel connected to their community overall.
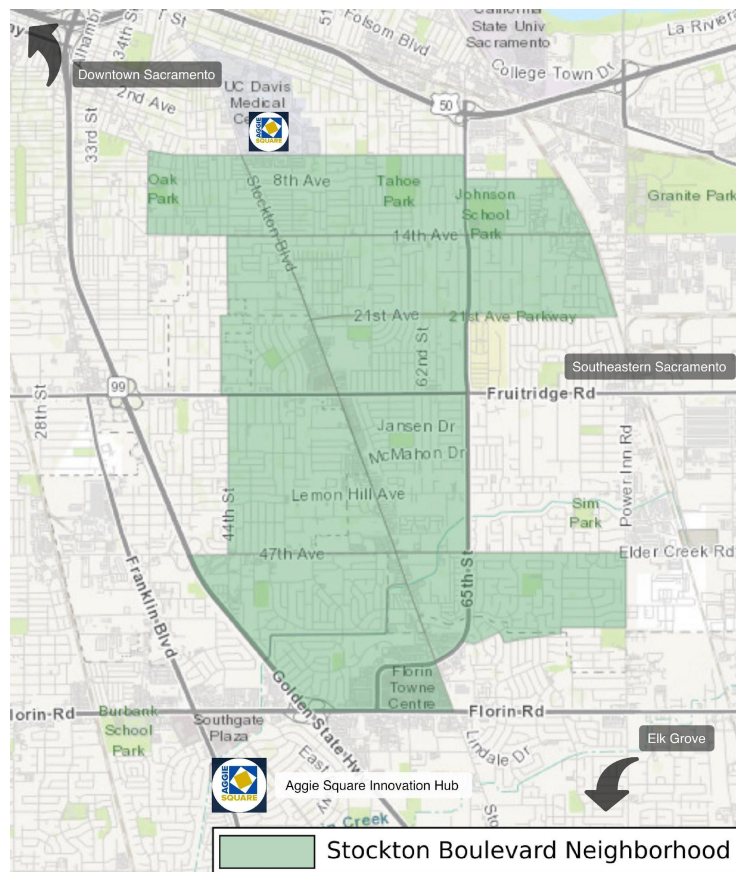

Figure 3. Stockton Boulevard community map. Source: R Studio

2.1 History of the Stockton Boulevard Community

Stockton Boulevard community used to be a vibrant middle-class community which attracted a lot of visitors during the annual California State Fair. However, ever since the State Fair moved to another area in 1968, this neighborhood started experiencing decline. As one resident stated: "But later businesses left and it [the area] never came back to its former vibrancy." (Interview, 2019). Additionally, the predatory lending practices that targeted non-White communities nationwide (Hernandez, 2009), negatively impacted the economic resilience of the lower-income residents and communities of color in the studied neighborhood. Furthermore, this neighborhood experienced the highest mortgage default and foreclosure rates during the housing crisis in the late 2000s (Hernandez, 2009) which further exacerbated the ability of the Stockton Boulevard community residents to stay in the area. Presently, the area is characterized by many as prone to crime, prostitution, traffic accidents (this area has two of the most dangerous intersections in the city), low employment opportunities, homelessness and other issues (Yee, Lamoureaux, 2019) which are as needed improvement. Despite the described challenges, Stockton Boulevard community is unique due to the abundance of the community-based organizations serving the diverse neighborhood populations, a plethora of authentic multicultural grocery stores and restaurants, and strong neighbor connections within the neighborhoods. In the following section, I compare demographic, economic and housing conditions of the Stockton Boulevard community to Sacramento County which I chose as the point of comparison because it encompasses both urban and suburban areas of Sacramento.

2.2 Place Analysis

Demographic Conditions

Stockton Boulevard community has 50,674 residents as of 2019, compared to 1.52 million residents in Sacramento County (Table 1). The neighborhood is more diverse than the county, with 43.5% White residents, compared to 57.3% for the county. Black residents make up 13.5%, compared to 9.8% for the county. Asian residents 18.4%, compared to 15.7% for the county, and Hispanics 34%, compared to 23.2% for the county. In terms of age, residents of

Stockton Boulevard who are under 18 are 24.8%, compared to 23.8% for the county, and residents of 65 years and older are at 13.2% for the neighborhood and 13.8% for the county. Both the neighborhood and the county have slightly more female residents, 51.4% and 51.1% respectively. Finally, there are many more non-English speaking residents in the Stockton Boulevard community than in the county, 21.6% as opposed to 13.1% respectively.

Table 1. Demographic conditions

	Stockton Boulevard community		Sacramento County
Year	2010-2014	2015-2019	2015-2019
Total Population	48,075	50,674	1,524,553
Race/Ethnicity			
White (%)	47.6	43.2	57.3
Black (%)	12.8	13.5	9.8
Asian (%)	17.7	18.4	15.7
Hispanic (%)	39.4	34.0	23.2
Age			
Population under 18 (%)	27.3	24.8	23.8
Population 65 and over (%)	10.8	13.2	13.8
Gender			
Male (%)	48.0	48.7	48.9
Female (%)	52.0	51.4	51.1
Language			
Non-English speaking (%)	24.8	21.6	13.1

Source: PolicyMap

Economic Conditions

The poverty rate for the residents of the neighborhood is much higher than for county residents, at 24.8% compared to 14.7% respectively (Table 2). Only 10.1% of the neighborhood residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher as opposed to 20.4% for the county. In the neighborhood, 79.4% of working families receive food stamps, which is slightly lower than in the county, 82.2%. In terms of computer access, 87.1% of residents of the neighborhood have access to a computer compared to 94.2% for the county. Finally, although median income slightly increased from 2014 to 2019 in the neighborhood, it is still significantly lower than in the county, $21,552 as opposed to $32,751. These economic characteristics are pointing at the need to improve economic conditions in the Stockton Boulevard community.

Table 2. Economic conditions

	Stockton Boulevard community		Sacramento County
Year	2010-2014	2015-2019	2015-2019
Poverty (%)	32.2	24.8	14.7
Bachelor's degree or higher (%)	9.2	10.1	20.4
Working families receiving food stamp/SNAP benefits (%)	71.8	79.4	82.2
Computer access per household (%)	n/a	87.0	94.2
Area median income ($)	18,320	21,552	32,751

Source: Policy Map

Housing Characteristics

More residents in the Stockton Boulevard community are renters (52.8%) compared to Sacramento County (43.6%). Median housing value of homes in the neighborhood is $228,070

compared to $351,900 for Sacramento County homes (Table 3). Twenty seven percent of home-owner residents in both the neighborhood and the county are paying more than 30% of their income for housing expenses.

While rent in the Stockton Boulevard community is slightly lower than in the county, $1,156 as opposed to $1,252 respectively, the housing stock in the neighborhood is older than in the county, with the median year the housing unit was built in the community being 1960 and in the county - 1979. Due to the older age of the homes, residents of the neighborhood are likely to have higher expenses to repair their rented or owned homes. Finally, the vacancy rate in the neighborhood as of 2019 was 3.4% as opposed to 2.1% in the county.

The Stockton Boulevard community is directly adjacent to higher income areas, such as Elmhurst, the Fabulous Forties, and Land Park. This proximity puts low-income residents at higher risk of housing displacement because incoming higher income households attracted to the area who are not able to afford to live in the nearby affluent neighborhoods will move into Stockton to take advantage of the lower housing costs. This pattern is consistent with other low-income neighborhoods that experienced displacement and were adjacent to higher income areas such as Brooklyn in New York City and the Mission District in San Francisco.

Table 3. Housing conditions

Year	Stockton Boulevard community		Sacramento County
	2010-2014	2015-2019	2015-2019
Median home value ($)	137,460	228,070	351,900
Median gross rent ($)	994	1,156	1,252
Cost burdened homeowners (%)	35.6	26.8	26.8
Rent occupancy (%)	52.9	52.8	43.6
Vacancy (%)	3.9	3.4	2.1
Median year housing unit was built	1960	1960	1979

Source: Policy Map

3. Methodology

In this research project, I used the method of qualitative semi-structured interviews to collect data. Qualitative data allows the opportunity to tell the story about the community and makes research more humanized (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I conducted twenty semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders in the Stockton Boulevard community of South Sacramento through the lens of Grounded Theory and Participatory Action Research. Furthermore, I analyzed the collected data by means of Structural Coding and In Vivo Coding data analysis methods to cull data that demonstrated the importance of community engagement in the light of economic development projects happening in the neighborhood.

3.1 Sampling Methods

I used snowball and purposive sampling in recruiting the participants. I reached most of the resident-participants using the snowball sampling method by leveraging a connection with a person I was referred to by one of my thesis committee members. Namely, through contact with the school principals of a few schools that were located in the Stockton Boulevard community, I got in touch with the residents of the area who were interested in participating in the interviews. I selected most of the other stakeholders in the neighborhood by using purposeful (nonprobability) sampling. Because qualitative research is an in-depth analysis of a relatively small sample, purposive sampling is often used in this kind of research (Patton, 2007). In other words, the very idea behind qualitative research as the opportunity to "purposefully select participants" (Creswell, 2007) who will help the researcher understand the "complex social phenomena" (Marshall, 1996), validates the choice of using purposive sampling.

3.2 Interviews

This research was approved as exempt by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of California-Davis. The study is grounded in qualitative data from twenty semi-structured interviews that I conducted from July through September 2020. The total number of participants was twenty two (with one of the interviewees having their child translate the session

for them), and the demographic composition of the participants was as follows: ten White partic-
ipants, five Hispanic or Latino, five Black or African American, and two Asian participants.
Twelve of my participants were female and ten were male. For the purpose of this research, I tar-
geted a mixture of residents and various community stakeholders. The resident interviewees of
the Stockton Boulevard community were both homeowners and renters. As for the stakeholder
participants, I interviewed non-profit organizations' leaders, professionals in the affordable hous-
ing development sector, members of a few neighborhood associations in the neighborhood, and
affordable housing advocates. I decided to incorporate the voices of the community stakeholders
because the studied neighborhood has a very active body of activists. Many of the interviewees
had overlapping roles: eight of the interviewees were both residents and stakeholders in the stud-
ied community, five residents were solely residents, and nine interviewees were solely stake-
holders without having any residential affiliation in the Stockton Boulevard community.

By leveraging the Interview Protocol (Appendix A), I evaluated the extent to which the
residents of the Stockton Boulevard community are engaged in the planning process, and
whether community residents experience any obstacles to engagement in planning. I assessed the
level of knowledge about the upcoming Aggie Square development project and the expectations
the community had about that project. Participants shared what they saw as strengths of the
Stockton Boulevard community and what areas needed improvement. Finally, they shared their
views on how the Aggie Square project will impact the economic situation in the area, their per-
ception of the housing situation in the neighborhood, what types of housing the neighborhood
needed, and other questions. The interview protocol consisted of five sections, with the last sec-
tion designed specifically for the resident participants. Resident participants were compensated
for their time and participation with a twenty-five dollar gift card to a local department store. Al-
though I anticipated having half of my interviewees as residents and half as professionals, the
findings will reveal the roles of participants were not as straightforward as originally expected.

3.3 Grounded Theory Lens in Conducting Interviews

In order to stay neutral during the interviews, I leaned on the principles of Grounded Theory because when working with low-income and displaced communities, it is important to set aside any presumed knowledge and the impulse to test hypotheses by using deductive reasoning. In other words, when entering the community as a researcher or a policymaker, it is important to bring in a "clean slate" view of the community. Grounded theory presumes the construction of new theories through methodological gathering and analysis of data (Yancey, P., Turner, B 1986). In her practical guide on *Constructing Grounded Theory*, Charmaz (2006) described how the role of qualitative research methods that rely on grounded theory approaches have been challenged by the proponents of quantitative research which leans on the methods of deductive reasoning. Authors of the *General Guidance for Developing Qualitative Research* (NSF, 2004), warned about many downsides of qualitative methods (to which grounded theory belongs) such as lack of set standards, no clear data collection plan, funding challenges due to lack of clarity on milestones and expected outcomes; "where you go next depends on what you uncover" (NSF, 2004). Glaser and Straus combined Columbia University positivism with Chicago School pragmatism in their approach to constructing theory through grounded theory methods. The idea of constructing theory inductively, after data collection - was harshly criticized by proponents of the traditional schools of thought that presumed the existence of objective scientific knowledge (Charmaz, 2006). Perhaps the methods of grounded theory were too challenging due to the political environment of the time, when set hypotheses were tested and knowledge was constructed by privileged groups of people.

3.4 Data Analysis

In analyzing the transcripts, I used In Vivo and Structural coding methods. In Vivo coding, also referred to as "verbatim coding" (Saldana, 2013) is well suited for qualitative studies that "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldana, 2013). In other words, it is very helpful to use quotes to relay participants' voice and mood. Structural coding method of qualitative data analysis is appropriate for "semi-structured data-gathering protocols…or exploratory inves-

tigations to gather topics lists..of major categories or themes" (Saldana, 2016). Structural coding is convenient because it codes and categorizes data simultaneously, granting a researcher the opportunity to identify "commonalities, differences, and relationships" (Saldana, 2016).

I used verbatim transcriptions in analyzing participant interviews because this method brings the researcher closer to their data (Halcomb et al., 2006). Although creating verbatim transcriptions was time-consuming, they allowed the opportunity to capture the nuances, such as the participants' mood, complex attitude towards some issues identified through the Interview Protocol questions, hesitation to answer certain questions, and others. Overall, through verbatim transcriptions, I got an intimate nuanced connection with the data. The main benefit of this method was the ability to revisit any part of any given interview to deepen my understanding of the participants' answers.

3.5 Positionality

As a White female entering the community as researcher from the University of California Davis to work on this project, I understood that my role as an outsider in this community impacts my perception of it. During the community outreach and data collection, I experienced less barriers in communication and less resistance to gain answers for the Interview Protocol than I had expected. Perhaps, as an immigrant and a first generation American, I was likely perceived as a person from a similar background. During my communication with the participants, some of them expressed empathy due to the necessity to do thesis research during the uncertain time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.6 COVID-19 research impact

Due to social-distancing restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to shift from the original plan to conduct in person interviews to virtual sessions instead. Because I had interacted with this community in person for a previous class project, I was comfortable performing virtual outreach. Prior to the field work stage, I had attended several meetings; at Fruitridge Manor and George Sims Community Center, an open-house meeting with the Aggie Square de-

veloper in the UC Davis Medical Center, a virtual meeting with Wexford Science and Technology, the developer company, and the Stockton Boulevard Partnership, several meetings hosted by the Sacramento Investment Without Displacement group, and other events. The meetings took place between February 2019 and September 2020. They provided the opportunity to learn about this community, some community-based organizations, and the overall landscape of the neighborhood. Overall, establishing the connection with this community prior to the COVID-19 pandemic provided a smooth transition to conducting this research remotely.

I conducted twenty interviews using the Zoom conferencing application and via phone. Sixteen interviews were recorded via Zoom. Four interviews were conducted and audiotaped over the phone. Although the experience was far from the desired format of live interviews, Zoom video conferencing allowed me the opportunity to observe participants' facial expressions and their body language. Among the four interviews conducted by phone, two were conducted in such format due to the poor internet bandwidth on my end. The other two participants requested phone calls as a preferred method: one of the participants expressed discomfort and privacy concerns in response to the idea of being videotaped. Another participant shared that they did not use Zoom, instead they used the phone as their main means of communication. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, their identities were concealed in transcripts and video files. The interviews were transcribed verbatim between mid-September and mid-November 2020. I transcribed thirteen interviews personally while the remaining seven interviewees were transcribed by a third-party agency, {Rev}, due to time limitations. I took notes during the interviews and during the process of transcribing. I reviewed the most salient themes that emerged in the process of transcription at the data analysis stage.

4. Findings

Qualitative analysis of the data from the interviews with residents and stakeholders resulted in a set of curious findings. Although most interviewed residents had not engaged in planning activity in recent years, they were interested in participating and learning about upcoming economic development projects that are likely to influence the housing conditions in their neighborhood. Although many resident-interviewees were not aware or poorly informed about the economic development projects, such as Aggie Square, in the area, they expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts of the project on their ability to pay rent and stay in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, the interviewed stakeholders were well-informed about the forthcoming economic development projects in the area, but they struggled to identify strategies to keep all community residents equally informed and engaged in planning. For other community stakeholders, there is a need to improve communication channels between those stakeholders and other residents, and to make planning more streamlined and accessible for both groups.

In this chapter, I outline the main barriers to community participation identified in the interviews with residents and community stakeholders. The barriers to community participation in planning identified by the resident interviewees of the studied neighborhood, can be categorized into three groups: structural, economic, and cultural (Table 4). Structural barriers are obstacles that disproportionately impact a certain group of people and perpetuate inequalities (Simms et al., 2015). Economic barriers are related to work conditions and the overall financial welfare that hinders residents' ability to attend planning meetings and participate in planning initiatives. Cultural barriers are obstacles related to the immigrant status and the overall difference in mentality that prevent community residents from participation in planning. The examples I provide below cut across all three outlined categories and are not mutually exclusive of one another.

The top structural challenge identified in the interviews was the COVID-19 pandemic because it exacerbated existing issues around the digital divide and economic insecurity in the studied neighborhood (as described in 4.1 and 4.2). Additional structural challenges were lack of internet and computer resources (11), the location to hold the planning meetings (location/where meetings are held) (1), having wrong people reach out to residents [regarding planning efforts]

(1), transportation (1), outdated databases (1). Economic barriers were time constraints (8), character obstacles (2), or inability to partake in planning due to the financial hardship and continuous efforts to provide for families. Finally, cultural barriers to community participation in planning were language barriers (10), lack of commitment/motivations from residents (6), lack of trust (5), lack of knowledge (4), age as a limiting factor for the residents to learn the internet skills (1). Loss of trust is a critical barrier to community participation in planning because it can lead to a complete loss of interest on the residents' side to participate in the planning endeavors (Alinsky, 1972), as described on page 13 of the Literature Review section. In the discussion section, I draw from interview responses and the theories of community engaged planning described in the background literature to propose several strategies that address the identified barriers.

Table 4. Obstacles to community engagement

Obstacles to community engagement	Response frequency	Type of barrier
COVID-19 pandemic	13	Structural
Lack of internet and computer resources	11	Structural
Language barriers	10	Cultural
Time constraints	8	Economic
Lack of commitment or motivation from residents	6	Cultural
Lack of trust	5	Cultural
Lack of knowledge about upcoming projects	4	Cultural
Economic barriers, character obstacles	2	Economic
Location of meetings	1	Structural
Age as a limiting factor to learn internet skills	1	Cultural
Wrong people are reaching out to residents	1	Structural
Transportation	1	Structural
Outdated databases	1	Structural

Source: Participant Interviews, 2020

4.1 Structural Barriers to Community Participation in Planning

Structural barriers to community participation in planning are aspects of the built environment that hinder the residents ability to engage in planning (Table 4). Because the interview stage of this research project was conducted in the summer of 2020, during the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic, the neighborhood residents had to quickly adjust to the new reality of the virtual communication due to the social distancing limitations, all while undergoing the fear of the economic and social hardship induced by the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 was identified as the main barrier to community engagement by 13 out of 22 interview participants. For instance, participant #20 stated: *"With COVID-19, it's harder because we can not meet in-person. Because of COVID-19, we run the risk of people not knowing what's going on."* Participant #22 expressed: *"People are fatigued of using Zoom/internet for engagement."* Participant #14 shared: *"What happens is people are under so much stress because of COVID because they have lost their jobs or their salaries got reduced that they can't even…they're just living in survival mode."* Participant #4 stated: *"A lot of people are bogged down by the news of COVID (additional layer of worry for them and more urgent) and it's hard to think of something 10 years down the road [planning]."*

Lack of internet or computer resources was identified as the important barrier to community engagement by 11 interviewees. As identified in table 2, residents of the studied neighborhood had lower rates of computer access than those in Sacramento County. As stated above, the COVID-19 pandemic forced all residents into virtual planning, while many residents were left behind due to the absence of computer resources. As participant #1 shared: "*It's a big one [lack of internet resources]. If they advertise [government/planners], they do it through social media, email but people don't have the internet."* Participant #3 stated: "*We have a big digital divide here in our community and we're struggling with it."* Participant #8 said: "*My neighbors did not have TV or internet (…). A lot of people did not have internet in their houses."*

In addition to COVID-19 and internet resources, other structural barriers impeded community engagement in planning. For example, the location to hold planning meetings was identified as a potential obstacle to community engagement as the planning and engagement events

were typically held in places not located in or near the community. As participant #3 stated*: "Location really matters. Just as in business, location, location, location. This is the same too, with the community."* Additionally, having the wrong people reach out to residents was identified as a barrier to community participation because residents might be more likely to respond to the invitation to participate by the trusted organizations that they already have a relationship with. As participant #13 stated: *"So you need to connect the people with the financial resources with the people and institutions who are on the ground. But why isn't that done? Well, because clearly they have two different interests, right? The people on the ground want to protect the people that they're reaching out to, the people with the resources want to plow ahead and do their development without having to take care of the people. So that's the problem."*

Additional structural barriers to community participation were limited access to transportation and outdated databases. On one hand, people who had access to reliable transportation to arrive at the destinations where planning meetings were held, were in an advantageous position compared to the residents without access to transport. Participant #17 shared:*"People that have the mental bandwidth, transportation, resources to get to areas where planning and decisions can be influenced (…).Yeah, barriers, I don't know. Transportation is kind of the concrete one."* Finally, outdated databases were one of the main barriers to community participation: when the city planning department uses outdated contact information for the residents outreach, they miss the opportunity to inform residents about upcoming community engagement events. Participant #21 expressed: *"So when somebody like me (…) or another neighborhood advocate comes to a meeting and says "Hey, so and so does not…isn't in the Oak Park Neighborhood Association anymore, here's who you need to contact (…), here's his phone number, you need to write that down. And you need to permanently delete your bad information (…). The lists are outdated, the database is outdated."*

4.2 Economic Barriers to Community Participation in Planning

Economic barriers are the scarce time and economic resources that prevent community residents from participating in planning efforts. Many residents in the studied neighborhood did

not have time to partake in the neighborhood planning activities due to the work responsibilities (some of them working several jobs), family obligations, and commuting to work on a daily basis. As participant #1 stated: "*I mean, people don't have time. (…) People go to work (…), especially, you know, this neighborhood..a lot of us have, a lot of us have certain..a lot of us have certain [responsibilities], you know, just like, Okay, I go to work, I come home. I cook. I have a family, you know.*" Respondent #19 shared: "*It's a wild amount of time to invest. And (…) they're not fun events. Nobody wants to spend two hours looking at a PowerPoint presentation on their weeknight like even if they're not working, even if there is child care, even if somebody did buy 50 pizzas.*" Additionally, many residents were not in the position to learn about the projects due to having more urgent priorities, such as providing for their families in the time of COVID-19 crisis. Participant #3 shared: "*And it's difficult to see (…) when you are living basically on the edge and you are most interested in getting food to your household (…). We try to get them to engage in those dialogues and those discussions because we do believe that it's important for them to hear from folks like ours. But, hey, you know, how do we get them in the room? And I get it. I mean, it's just like..What's in it for them today?*"

4.3 Cultural Barriers to Community Participation in Planning

Cultural barriers to community participation in planning are related to the lack of lived experience in the country due to the immigrant status and the lack of knowledge about their rights as the residents of this neighborhood. While the Stockton Boulevard community prides itself in its cultural and ethnic diversity, that abundance creates barriers to community participation in planning. Many residents expressed the need to access the information in their native language. Participant #15 stated,"*There's so many different languages.*" Participant #5 shared, "*I was told at one time, there's 18 different languages spoken. How many of those are English as a second language? A lot of them, English is not even a second language because they have no English at all.*" Many interview participants identified the strong need in disseminating the information about the projects and the ways to participate in planning in all the spoken languages in the community.

Another cultural barrier in community participation in planning was the lack of knowledge about the planned projects in the studied neighborhood, due to the lack of communication between the government officials and the residents. The interview participants felt neglected and isolated from the news about the upcoming development. Participant #15 shared: "*We feel neglected here. We really do..It seems like we are forgotten over here."*

Some residents expressed the need for more clear and consistent communication on the part of the city planning office about the upcoming economic development projects and the ways those projects can economically benefit or potentially harm those residents. As participant #9 stated: "*I think the city can certainly do a better job of (...) using different avenues to get the word out, especially if you have projects that significantly can impact neighborhoods [Aggie Square]. (...) This is an opportunity to do it right and to have all the different stakeholders, would it be our community, private sector, public sector, everybody coming together wanting to make this project, you know, the best...the best and lessen the impact that, you know, it will have on some of the surrounding neighborhoods."* Additionally, some participants identified age as an obstacle to community engagement and the need for older residents to receive printed visuals. As participant #1 shared: "*These older people..they don't know nothing about internet. Like my mom, and [she] is eighty five and even even before that, you know. They like to look at things in the mail. They like to see things."*

4.4 Lack of Trust as an Obstacle to Community Participation in Planning

The cross-cutting theme in the participants' descriptions of the structural, economic, and cultural factors that act as barriers to engagement is their general lack of trust in the planners intentions to help all community residents, particularly those that are low-income. Participants identified the lack of communication of the planning steps in economic development projects as a primary factor for this lack of trust. For example, participant #1 stated: *"I don't trust them [planners] at all because they just do what they want to do."* Participant #11 stated: *"When it's a low-income neighborhood, I don't trust that the end result will meet the needs of the community. It's different for higher income neighborhoods."* Participant #13 shared: *"I don't [trust planners]*

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because they side with for-profit developers, they are not working for poor people..They [plan-ners] are not interacting with poor people and seeing the challenges they face and what their policies have done to them [to poor people]." Additionally, participant #19 stated: *"There have been so many plans on Stockton Boulevard, at this point it seems fundamentally insulting to keep going to the same community. People express their opinions but nothing changes so they stop showing up."*

The planners inability to make personal connections with community members also fo-mented suspicion of planners. Participant #3 shared: *"As a resident, I don't have connections with them [planners]. I don't even know what they do, so I don't really trust them. They plan on behalf of somebody without even asking them what they [residents] want to see."*

Planners also provided little feedback to community members. Participant #4 stated: *"We are not sure if the residents' ideas are given much consideration. Feedback is needed!"* Partici-pant #12 stated: *"Transparency [of the planning process is needed], availability to connect, [make sure that] every voice is heard; that voices are heard before decisions are made instead of after, that residents are considered, it's [the process] inclusive."*

Although interviewees were overwhelmingly negative towards planners, some expressed hope that the relationship between the community and planners can change for the better. For example, participant #7 shared: *"I do not know how planners do everything but [I] would trust them if I knew how they do everything."* Participant #11 stated: *"There is still a fear that the gov-ernment will not consider the health and quality of life in the low-income neighborhoods; but will think of functionality and the price only; there is a lack of trust but also there is hope."* Par-ticipant #15 expressed: *"I want to trust them but I have been let down by them in the past, when I would express my opinion but it would not be counted. It [the opinion] went into a black hole and disappeared. Also [there are] so many private meetings where things are decided without certain people at the table. I still have hope that trust could be improved."* Neighborhood resi-dents and other stakeholders want to see the genuine interest on the planners' side to help im-prove the living conditions for the community. Another interviewee stated: *"Not just being invit-ed to take part in [the] planning process but actually having a seat at the table and having plan-ners pay attention and seriously consider community members' ideas and concerns."* In other

words, if community residents trust that planners and government entities are on board with the community in trying to improve housing accessibility and protect disadvantaged residents, they are more likely to engage in the planning endeavors.

Overall, the interview quotes above demonstrated that community members have a distrust of planners due to the lack of communication of the planning steps of the economic development projects, the lack of the personal connection with planners, the absence of feedback from the planners, and uncertainty that the planners mean well for the low-income residents. The transparency at all stages of the community economic development projects and clear understanding of how community residents can partake in planning to influence the projects' design and outcomes, can help alleviate the condition of distrust. In the Discussion chapter, I offer several recommendations to increase transparency of the planning process to ensure clear communication between planners and the community residents at all stages of the planning process.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, I described the main obstacles to community participation in planning identified in the interviews with the residents and community stakeholders in the Stockton Boulevard community of Sacramento. Lack of trust towards government officials and planning entities, lack of time to participate in planning due to work commitments, difficulties related to limited access to the information, and disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the low-income residents of the neighborhood were the main obstacles to community participation in planning. In the next chapter, I outline the strategies to overcome those barriers and propose the model of meaningful community engagement in planning that is centered around transparent communication of each stage of planning between planning entities and community residents.

5. Discussion

This thesis investigated the level of community engagement in the planning process of economic development projects in a low-income neighborhood of South Sacramento, and explored ways to increase community participation in planning to achieve equitable planning outcomes and avoid displacement of low-income residents. Although the planning practice has come a long way in the past decades from a top-down planning method to participatory planning using a social equity lens, there are a number of steps that can be taken on the planners' side to fully embrace the equitable planning practice. As I laid out in the Literature Review section, there is an abundance of academic literature on the evolution of planning approaches that stress the importance of community engagement to achieve equitable outcomes, but there is a lack of clarity on the specific roles of the community in the planning process and no clear guidelines for the planners to engage community in the most equitable and effective ways, let alone the complexity and high demands of the planners profession. Considering the gaps I identified in the literature on the role and extent of community engagement and the community residents ideas' drawn from the virtual semi-structured interviews with twenty residents and community stakeholders, I propose a set of recommendations that can help address the structural, economic and cultural obstacles to community engagement described in the Results section, and improve equitable outcomes in the process of planning for large economic development projects. In the latter parts of this chapter, I propose the model of Meaningful Community Engagement that I developed in collaboration with one of my committee members, and explain the benefits of that model to increase equitable planning outcomes.

The findings in this thesis provide important evidence that the role of community in the planning process and the specific guidelines for planners to engage communities in equitable ways, remain unclear despite the advancements of the planning practice in the past decades from a top-down planning approach to the community participation in planning. As I shared in the Results chapter, the focus group findings revealed that residents were not aware of the upcoming economic development project, UC Davis Aggie Square, in the neighborhood area and expressed concerns about the potential displacement of residents due to increasing property values. The in-

terviewed stakeholders were more knowledgeable about the upcoming project but they were uncertain about the ways to increase community participation in planning in equitable ways. Also, a set of structural, economic and cultural barriers hindered the ability of community residents to participate in planning. In the following section, I present several recommendations that can help address the identified barriers to community participation in planning. Also, I describe the use of the Meaningful Community Engagement model to increase community engagement and to help overcome the existing barriers.

5.1 Recommendations: Meaningful Community Engagement model

As described in the Results sections, many residents withdrew from participating in planning due to the damaged trust towards planners: residents had shared their opinions in the past but did not feel that their voices were genuinely heard and incorporated into the planning agenda. Additionally, residents did not trust planners because they did not receive the desired feedback on the ideas that they had shared regarding the previous planning initiatives. This led the residents to believe that planners and government entities either did not hear their voices due to the issues in communication or dismissed their opinions deeming them insignificant. Based on these findings, I propose several recommendations to help increase community participation in planning. Each recommendation is situated under the model of Meaningful Community Engagement that is focused on transparent communication between planners and residents at each stage of the planning process and on the opportunity for residents' input and feedback at every stage of the planning process.

In this section, I demonstrate how each party involved in planning can take steps to address the issue of decreased community participation described in the Findings chapter: residents can partake in the residential-level strategies, city planning offices can participate in the municipal-level strategies, and neighborhood associations and other trusted organizations can engage in the intermediary-level strategies to increase community participation in planning. Each of the proposed strategies fit into the model of the Meaningful Community Engagement described below.

Figure 4.
Meaningful Community
Engagement

Community

| Planning Stages | Conception of a Plan | → | Plan Draft | → | Needs Assessment | → | Project Implementa-tion | → | Project Launch |

Public input
Feedback
Opportunity to revisit each stage based on feedback
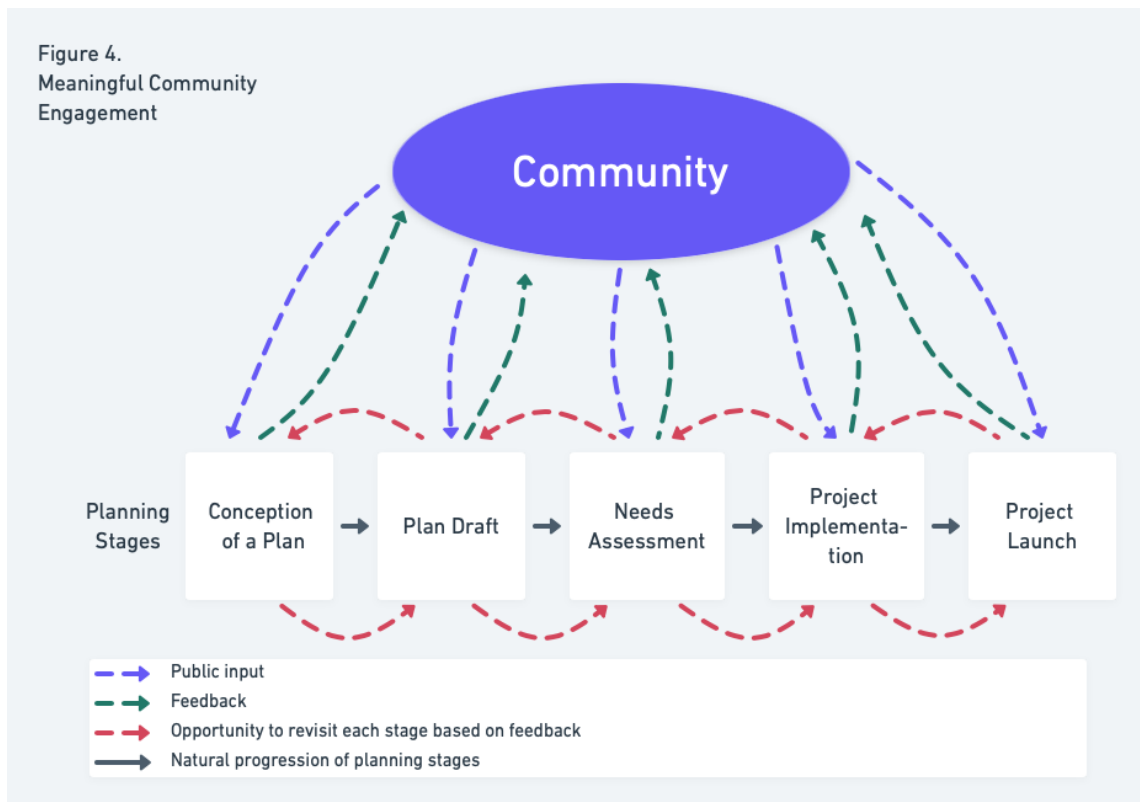Natural progression of planning stages

Figure 4. Meaningful Community Engagement model

The goal of increased transparency in communication between planners and the community can be achieved by using the model of Meaningful Community Engagement in planning. This model can help address the gaps in the literature on equitable engagement of disadvantaged communities in the planning process. Moreover, the model of Meaningful Community Engagement provides examples of intentional community engagement (Giloth 2006, as cited in Chapple 2012), when all residents understand their authority in all stages of the planning process and when they feel empowered to provide their input regarding the design and outcomes of the planned economic development projects. To construct this model, I drew on the literature on participatory planning, social equity approach to planning, participatory action research and other sources referenced in the literature review section. Most importantly, the Meaningful Community Engagement model helps clarify the role of community residents in planning and elicits the process of *community participation*, which has been confusing (Sheng, 1990).

Meaningful Community Engagement model (Fig. 4) implies thorough community input in all five stages of planning, starting from the conception of a plan, plan draft, community needs assessment, project implementation, and launch of the project. Community residents can provide input and receive feedback on their input at every stage of the project. This two-way circulation of input and feedback ensures transparent communication between planners and the community, and provides clarity at all stages of the planning process. Furthermore, feedback loops between each planning stage allow residents to revisit any previous steps in the planning process, an environment conducive to frequent neighborhood feedback. Overall, providing regular feedback to the community during planning is critical as it helps building trust among all involved entities and motivates community members to participate in planning.

5.1.1 Outreach to Residents Through Community-based Organizations

Due to the damaged trust towards planners among residents of the studied neighborhood, it can be beneficial to leverage the help of trusted community messengers to do the planning outreach in the community; this is an intermediary-level strategy. For example, neighborhood associations who have a strong presence in the studied neighborhood, can take on the role of communicating planning agenda and collecting residents' input in the planning process. Neighborhood associations are nongovernmental organizations that play the role of improving the quality of life of the community residents and connecting them with each other to build social capital (Ruef & Kwon, 2016). The Stockton Boulevard community has several neighborhood associations: Tahoe Park neighborhood association, Fruitridge Manor neighborhood association, Colonial Heights neighborhood association, South Oak Park Community Association, Elmhurst neighborhood association and others. Those neighborhood associations, in addition to highly active community-based organizations in the neighborhood, play an active role in engaging the Stockton Boulevard community in the planning process.

On one level, neighborhood associations can improve ties with the residents that they serve, on another level, they can strengthen the connection with other neighborhood associations and the established community groups which will make the community ties more cohesive and

integrated. Strengthening connections among local neighborhood associations is important because it prevents fragmentation of the community, which can be detrimental for low-income residents. Furthermore, making communities more cohesive is important because it leads to increased community involvement in planning (Dassopoulos, Monnat, 2011). There is evidence in the literature on the positive connection between the engagement of the residents with the neighborhood associations and the likelihood that those residents will contact the public officials regarding the community matters (Olsen et al. 1989).

Based on the interview findings, the majority of residents of the Stockton Boulevard community learn about the projects in their community from their local neighborhood associations. Even the residents I interviewed who had not been involved with their neighborhood associations in recent years, identified those as the major source of information about the economic development projects and the main connection point with other residents and stakeholders outside their community. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that despite the abundance of the neighborhood associations in this neighborhood, they are not equally active within their respective neighborhoods: while some associations are very connected with other associations and residents, there are some that are not connected with either of those stakeholders. Some participants expressed the need for better coordination between the neighborhood associations, the trusted community groups and organizations who already have connections and established relationships with the residents of this community. As participant #13 stated: *So it's the fact that the groups that have the connections on the ground, they are not hired. So it's not their responsibility yet, but also the ones that are there on the ground and feel it is their responsibility, don't have sufficient resources to get the word out. So you need to connect the people with the financial resources with the people and institutions who are on the ground.*

Outreach through the trusted community organizations is also important due to the highly diverse ethnic profile of the studied neighborhood. Participant #16 shared: *[Residents learn about the economic development projects] through trusted messengers, like our organization here. A lot of our programs and resources are put out there in ethnic media and through word of mouth. We provide lots of different resources and services, and folks come through our doors here to ask about these questions, but more than anything, we also have access to ethnic media.*

And so we make sure that we cover all of the communities here when it comes to the various different languages." Finally, the neighborhood associations and community organizations can help alleviate the confusion related to the uneven administrative division of land which contributes to the estrangement of some county residents. Participant #1 shared: *"So first you got one part of [the] county and then you go along the way and it becomes [a] city. So it's very confusing to some youth, they don't understand why they can't apply for different jobs that they…that other people across the street can apply [for] because of how they did the separation. So that's a big thing to me."* Community organizations and neighborhood associations can play an important role in alleviating the confusion related to the administrative land division, by communicating the information to the neighborhood residents and providing them the resources and the information on the upcoming economic development projects and the opportunities to participate in planning.

5.1.2 Making Community Participation Convenient

If planners and developers understand what types of community participation are the most convenient for the Stockton Boulevard community residents, their initiatives are likely to be well-received by those residents. One municipal-level strategy that planners and developers can utilize for increasing community participation in planning is to make it easy for residents to learn about the economic development projects and to make it convenient for them to provide input. This could be achieved by taking proactive steps to inform the community about the upcoming projects, such as distributing mailers and flyers at the grocery stores and other places frequented by residents. Many participants pointed out that they would like to see some visuals. As one participant stated, *"A lot of people in this neighborhood are visual",* while another participant said, *"Put something out there so people can actually see it."* Additionally, planners can use it to physically go to the community to capture residents' feedback instead of asking residents to go outside their neighborhood in order to provide their input on the projects. Several study participants shared that it would be helpful for planners and developers to go where people are instead of trying to bring people in: go to baseball games, partner with local food stores and

put the information table out, engage in a door-to-door canvassing. For example, UC Davis as a developer of the Aggie Square project, can better *"tap into the community"* (Interview, 2020) if it goes to the community instead of asking the community to come to them. One participant shared: *"UC Davis is always asking the community to come to them, instead, they should go to the community."*

5.1.3 Increasing Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is a resident-level strategy of increasing community participation in planning by passing the knowledge to the newly immigrated community members on the ways to engage in participatory planning and on learning about their rights in shaping the future landscape of their neighborhood as residents. In other words, civic engagement is the way citizens can take proactive steps to improve the current conditions as well as the future of their community (Adler, Goggin, 2005). Most resident-participants expressed interest in the community matters but were not aware of the ways to participate in shaping the future of their neighborhood and of their rights as residents. As outlined in the Place Analysis section, nearly 22 percent of the residents in the Stockton Boulevard community are non-English speaking which adds a layer of complexity in navigating English-speaking meetings and websites. Some residents shared that they were not skilled in actively participating in planning and expressing their voices because they immigrated from countries with the top-down approach to planning.

Resident-participants indicated the need for education on the civic component in order to better understand their rights and to be able to share their opinions and provide feedback on the planned developments in their neighborhood. Residents also shared that understanding community matters and engaging in planning can help them hold politicians, planners, and developers accountable for the economic development projects. As one participant stated: *"Economic development and civic engagement go hand in hand. That is why the community needs to know who the politicians are and hold them accountable."*

Increasing community civic engagement is a long-term strategy because the process of education requires time and effort on the community side. As one participant shared: *"Residents*

need to be more present, more knowledgeable, understand the policies that are affecting us [residents], understand who is creating policies and who are our allies and who are against us. Be more vigilant, be more engaged in the civic components of our community." Some residents were not aware of ways they could participate in planning but were curious to learn, while others expressed confidence in understanding their role in planning. As a recent immigrant-participant stated, although they had interest in participating in neighborhood matters, they had no knowledge of how things worked in the neighborhood. At the same time, they wanted to organize with other neighbors *"so they can express what is important to them, and find the leader in the group."*

The goal of increasing community participation in planning can be achieved by the exchange of knowledge among residents and by encouragement of the more engaged residents. For instance, residents who communicate with each other during the regular neighborhood clean-up events can pass their knowledge on the projects and the ways to engage to other, less informed residents. As one resident stated: *"Anybody's voice can be heard because you have the right to talk and give opinions, especially if you live in that neighborhood. They [residents] have a right and nobody is going to stop them."* If residents understand that they play an important role in planning, they might engage more in the planning activities. As one participant shared: *"I don't think a lot of people understand just how influential they could potentially be if they are 'in the room where it happens'."* Furthermore, participant #8 shared: *"Anybody's voice could be heard when they go to meetings because you have the right to talk and give opinions, especially when you live in that neighborhood. They have a right [and] nobody is going to stop them."* Both of those quotes point to the central role residents play in planning for the community and to the tremendous value in their presence and participation in planning. Overall, civic engagement is instrumental for increasing community participation in planning because it strengthens the neighborhood from within, through its residents. Residents who understand civic processes and their role in planning, are more likely to be taken seriously by municipal stakeholders, and they can pass their knowledge on to the less knowledgeable residents creating a snowball effect.

5.1.4 Increasing Residents Sense of Control

Study interviews revealed that the Stockton Boulevard residents lack a sense of control over the planning matters in their neighborhood due to the distrust towards the government officials and due to the confusion around the administrative land boundaries which impact access to the community resources. Several municipal-level strategies can help residents regain their sense of control over the planning matters in their neighborhood which, in turn, can help protect the community from housing displacement.

First strategy to help residents reclaim their sense of control over planning matters in the long run is to increase residents' capacity for homeownership. Interview participants expressed concerns about the rising rents that might displace current residents from the study neighborhood. In fact, some of the interviewed residents have already been forced to relocate within the neighborhood due to the recent rent increase. Those residents were concerned about their ability to further stay in this neighborhood if the rents continue rising. Taking proactive steps on the community side to increase residents' capacity for homeownership can prevent the residential displacement resulting from rising property values and decreased affordability of the rented and owned homes. For instance, local community-based organizations can contribute by educating the community on the importance of building individual credit history to help residents improve their eligibility for homeownership or access to more affordable rents. As interviews with stakeholders indicated, a number of community-based organizations in the study area specialize in financial education of residents. Those organizations can conduct outreach programs to increase residents' awareness of the credit-building strategies and to guide residents in the home-buying process. For example, one participant stated: *"There should be programs that educate people on credit and how to have good credit early."*

As the rents in this neighborhood have been steadily increasing in the past years, the mortgage rates dropped during the pandemic to the historic lows of 2.72% in 2020 as the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic[5]. This convergence of rent and mortgage payments

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[5] https://www.federalreserve.gov/data.htm

led some community stakeholders to re-evaluate the position of many low-income residents as renters, and made the home buying among low-income residents seem more feasible. Another participant shared: *"People who are renting, if their rent gets increased, they can just afford a mortgage, especially with mortgage rates so low. So can we help those people get into a house?"* As I shared in the Literature Review section (p.10), increasing homeownership capacity of low-income residents and residents of color can help break the historic patterns of racial and ethnic inequities and help those residents build generational wealth. However, as interview data indicated, the majority of the Stockton Boulevard community residents are not in the position to buy a home due to the low credit score or complete absence of credit history. Those residents can still benefit from improving their credit scores as it will protect them from inadequately high rents. As another interviewee shared: *"Absentee owners take advantage of the families or community members who don't qualify [for rent] due to the low credit scores. So they don't have to go through income verification, credit check but they pay much more money."*

Overall, credit education is a powerful long-term strategy that will help protect residents from housing displacement and will help low-income residents and residents of color to get on track with building generational wealth through homeownership. Although credit building is a slow process, the outcome is worth the effort on all stakeholders' sides. The local community-based organizations in particular can play the crucial role in empowering residents to become homeowners through credit education programs and helping residents become more active and vested stakeholders in the study neighborhood.

Other municipal-level strategies that can help increase community participation in planning are those that consider resident diversity and cultural barriers. For example, planners can accommodate language access to the planning meetings for the linguistically diverse neighborhood population as well as translations of the brochures and other development projects materials to the multicultural groups of residents in this neighborhood. The Stockton Boulevard community is the most linguistically diverse area in Sacramento county, with 22% of the population identifying as non-native English speakers, compared to 13% in Sacramento County (2015-2019 ACS). As one participant stated, planners and developers need to *"make sure [that] information is distributed in all the spoken languages in the community."* Another participant suggested en-

gaging with the diverse community through the ethnic media, which broadcasts in different lan-
guages. Additionally, planners can leverage language expertise and community knowledge of
numerous community-based organizations in engaging diverse residents in the planning process.
Based on the interview findings, the organizations that have connections *"on the ground"* are not
hired (Participant Interview, 2020). In other words, planners and developers can increase com-
munity participation by engaging the trusted stakeholders in outreach and by providing language
access to the diverse communities of the Stockton Boulevard community.

5.1.5 Advocacy

Advocacy is a powerful intermediary-level strategy to promote interests of low-income
residents by leveraging one's professional connections in the community. Since multiple scenar-
ios for economic development are a standard process in contemporary planning, some entities
need to play the role of advocates of the vulnerable neighborhood populations (Davidoff, 2007).
Those entities are government officials, community-based organizations, neighborhood associa-
tions, and they can advocate for the low-income community residents by representing their inter-
ests during planning meetings and by educating community residents themselves about their
rights and protections. During the interviews with the community of the Stockton Boulevard
community, advocacy was described as a way government officials can be attentive to the com-
munity needs and receive genuine community support and participation in return. One resident
shared: *"If public officials are working to act as advocates and engage the community members,
it feeds on itself; more success in engagement engenders even greater potential and greater suc-
cess for future involvement."*

Other entities that can advocate for the low-income communities are community-based
organizations, which are non-profit organizations created specifically to work on improving the
well-being of the community. Most importantly, community-based organizations represent the
interests of low-income populations during the city planning meetings. One participant shared:
*"It is important for everybody to be involved in the process of envisioning Aggie Square (…).
Everybody coming together wanting to lessen the impact on some of the surrounding neighbor-*

hoods." Community-based organizations also play an important role of educating residents on the economic development projects occurring in the neighborhood and advocating for their interests during interactions with the key stakeholders, city planners, and developers. Interviews pointed out that the study neighborhood could benefit from more advocacy outreach. As one participant shared: *"We got to have more advocacy - going out to our communities and letting them know what's happening."*

The role of advocacy is particularly important for the study neighborhood due to the high rate of immigrant residents who have limited understanding of the participatory planning system and lack of language skills. Although many resident-participants expressed interest to engage in planning, they require assistance of local advocacy organizations in navigating the community planning process. As one participant shared, public officials can play the role of *"advocates for the constituents"* and they *"need to incite people and sustain their interest and their involvement."*

The strategies I described in this section can work best if used simultaneously by all parties. Although planners are known to be the key agents in the planning process and are often held accountable for the planning outcomes and the lack of engagement on the community side, they cannot singlehandedly increase community participation in planning due to the limitations of their job. Instead, the continuous commitment from all parties described in this thesis, and exemplified in the Meaningful Community Engagement model, is necessary to increase community engagement in the planning process to achieve equitable planning outcomes: neighborhood associations and trusted community organizations, city planners and government officials, developers and neighborhood residents themselves.

5.2 Limitations

Although the interview findings drew from the rich perspectives and experiences of twenty two participants, this research project is not designed to be representative of all residents and stakeholders of the Stockton Boulevard community. Similar to other qualitative studies, this research intends to highlight the in-depth experiences of individuals, which can be supported by

further qualitative or quantitative studies. Another limitation of this research lies in my researcher role in the studied neighborhood as an outsider "studying" the community. The literature points to the limited ability of outsider researchers to grasp the nuanced history and complexity of the communities, therefore they might propose solutions that are not culturally sensitive or appropriate (King, Cruickshank, 2010). Although I had an opportunity to acquaint myself with the community during the previous project by attending the neighborhood meetings with community residents, my perception of this community remained subjective and my knowledge was limited to the number of events I attended and to the opinions of a limited number of residents I spoke with. Another limitation of this project was the sample size: this research could benefit from an input from a larger number of participants to make the sample size more representative of the community. Although I strove to interview residents from each of the 10 census tracts that constitute the Stockton Boulevard community (Appendix B), the number of interviewees with the mixed roles (resident and community stakeholder) was higher than the number of interviewees who only identified themselves as residents, five and eight respectively with the remaining nine interviewees identified themselves as community stakeholders without residential affiliation.

5.3 Future Research

In the process of conducting this research, I identified several themes that deserve some attention and further exploration by community development researchers. Those themes are focused around fairly new strategies to prevent housing displacement of low-income residents in the neighborhoods undergoing rapid growth due to large economic development projects, and to make communities more cohesive and active in the planning matters in their neighborhoods. First is the role of community land trusts (CLT) in strengthening the community and increasing community participation in planning. CLT is a fairly new land ownership model, yet it has already proven effective in helping low-income communities obtain access to stable housing, increase community ownership and build financial capital. Furthermore, CLT promotes affordable homeownership and local control of land (Gray, 2008). On one level, community land trust re-

vokes speculative nature of housing and gives low-income residents the opportunity to stay in their neighborhood instead of being displaced by the wealthy newcomers, often pursuing the property as an investment rather than a primary home. Specifically, CLT significantly slows down residential mobility and instead encourages people to *"go for the long haul"* (Meehan, 2014). On another level, this model promotes social cohesiveness and positively impacts community participation in planning. Second is the use of Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act to protect residents from housing displacement. This act gives tenants the right to purchase the rented property when it goes for sale (Shankute, Rupani, 2020). First enacted in Washington, D.C. a few decades ago, this policy has been gaining momentum in the California Legislature in the form of Senate Bill 1079[6]. The strength of this strategy is in removing the speculative aspect of home sales in the volatile real estate market in Sacramento by preventing *"corporate speculators from snatching up the distressed properties in the aftermath of pandemic"* (Shakute, Rupani, 2020) by providing the opportunity to the current tenants to make the first offer on the foreclosed properties. Lastly, the role of Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) to protect residents from negative impacts of economic development needs to be further explored. CBA is a legal binding document between a developer and a community-based organization representing the interests of the vulnerable neighborhood residents in anticipation of a specific economic development project. As described in Section 4.5 of the Literature Review, this document is an effective way to request protections for the low-income community residents in return for the developer's opportunity to build the project in the neighbor- hood vicinity. CBA has not been implemented broadly despite its successful application in Los Angeles area, where it protected local residents from the potential displacement during the development of the Staples Center.

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[6] https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB1079

6. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to explore ways to increase community participation in planning in the low-income neighborhood of South Sacramento. Increased residents' participation in planning can prevent potential housing displacement resulting from large economic development projects such as the UC Davis Aggie Square project in South Sacramento. It turned out to be a challenging task to critically evaluate the lucrative project carried out by the university while being a graduate student in that institution due to the conflicting roles. During my interviews with the community stakeholders and residents, I learned that residents were passionate about their neighborhood and cared about its future. Also, they were interested in participating in planning but they felt discouraged due to the damaged trust towards planners and government entities. Drawing from community voices, I outlined several economic, structural and cultural barriers preventing residents from engaging in the planning process, and proposed a set of strategies to address these barriers. If used in concert, those strategies can lead to more equitable planning outcomes and ensure the low-income neighborhood residents benefit from the large economic development projects in the area and that their housing arrangement remains stable and does not get negatively impacted by the rising housing costs.

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Appendices

Appendix A, Interview Protocol

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Community Participation in Preventing Housing Displacement: case study of Stockton Boulevard community in Sacramento, CA

Date of interview: _____

Interview respondent name: _____

Interview respondent organization (if applicable): _____

    I, Yulia Lamoureaux, am a graduate student in the Community Development Graduate Group at UC Davis. I am gathering information on the opinions of the Stockton Boulevard community residents and professionals regarding the ways to protect the neighborhood from housing displacement caused by the Aggies Square and other economic development projects. This research is aiming at increasing the opportunity for the residents to participate in the neighborhood planning process. I would like to learn what you like about your community overall and what could be improved. Also, if possible, I would like to find out what the strengths and weaknesses of the Stockton Boulevard community are as it pertains to housing, and what solutions you see as capable of improving the situation in your neighborhood. What does your neighborhood have enough of in terms of housing and what is your neighborhood lacking in. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I really appreciate your input in this project.

    The information you provide during this interview will remain strictly confidential and will not be used by the third parties. The interview will take 45-60 minutes of your time and will consist of the set of questions. During the interview I will take notes/audiotape with your permission. You are welcome to interrupt at any time if you have any questions or if you happen to feel uncomfortable with any questions I ask. Also, if you prefer to abstain from answering any questions, you are welcome to express it to me at any time. Thank you once again for participating in this interview.

    Which of the following describes your role in the Stockton Boulevard community? a) Resident_____ b) Business owner_____ c) Other _____

Questions:

1. General questions about Stockton Boulevard community:

1) What is your involvement with this community?

2) Please tell me what you like about the Stockton Boulevard community? What makes it stand out from other neighborhoods?

3) Please tell me about the things that could be improved in your community.

2. Housing questions about Stockton Boulevard community:

1) How would you describe the housing situation in this neighborhood?

2) What are the strengths of this neighborhood as it pertains to housing?

3) What is your neighborhood lacking in terms of housing? (i.e. not enough affordable housing, etc.)

4) What types of housing would you like to see more of in this neighborhood?

3. Questions about economic development in the area:

1) What are your thoughts on the Aggie Square development project?

2) How will it influence the economic situation in your neighborhood (and as it pertains to housing)?

3) What would you like to see Aggie Square provide to your neighborhood (i.e. more jobs, housing, etc.)?

4. Community engagement in planning process:

1) How would you describe engagement of the Stockton Boulevard community in the planning process?

2) What are the ways that residents learn about the economic development projects in this neighborhood?

3) Could you think of any potential obstacles to community engagement (i.e. time constraints, lack of internet resources etc.)?

5. **Questions for residents of Stockton Boulevard:**

   1) How long have you lived in the Stockton Boulevard community?

   2) What is your household size?

   3) Are you a renter/owner?

   4) Has your rent gone up in the last 3 years?

   5) Have you seen an increase in rent in this neighborhood?

   6) How much of your income goes towards housing and utilities? (percentage, i.e. 30%)

   7) What would happen if your rent increases to 50% of your income?

   8) What are your housing options in the neighborhood?

   9) Would you prefer to leave or stay in the neighborhood if you had to move due to rent increase?

   10) In your opinion, what role should residents play in affordable housing planning?

11) What constitutes meaningful engagement in the planning process?

12) How do you feel your voices might be heard?

13) How much do you trust planners and institutions?

14) What are the ways to improve that trust?

Appendix B, Census tracts used in the study

- 06067002900

- 06067002800

- 06067003000

- 06067003102

- 06067003202

- 06067004401

- 06067004601

- 06067004701

- 06067004702

- 06067004801

Appendix C, Participant demographics

Participant №	Gender	Race and Hispanic Origin	Role in the Community
1	Female	Black or African American	Resident, professional
2	Male	White	Resident
3	Male	Hispanic or Latino	Resident, professional
4	Male	White	Resident, activist, professional
5	Female	White	Resident
6	Male	White	Resident
7	Female	Hispanic or Latino	Resident
8	Femal	Hispanic or Latino	Resident
9	Male	Asian	Professional
10	Male	White	Professional
11	Female	Black or African American	Resident, activist
12	Male	Black or African American	Resident, activist
13	Female	White	Activist
14	Female	Black or African American	Resident, activist
15	Female	White	Resident, activist
16	Female	Asian	Professional
17	Male	White	Professional
18	Female	Hispanic or Latino	Activist
19	Female	White	Professional
20	Female	Black or African American	Professional
21	Male	White	Resident, activist
22	Male	Hispanic or Latino	Professional
Total interviewees 22	Total Female 12, Male 10	Total White 10, Hispanic or Latino 5, Black or African American 5, Asian 2	Total residents 13, professionals 10, activists 8

Source: Interview Transcripts, 2020