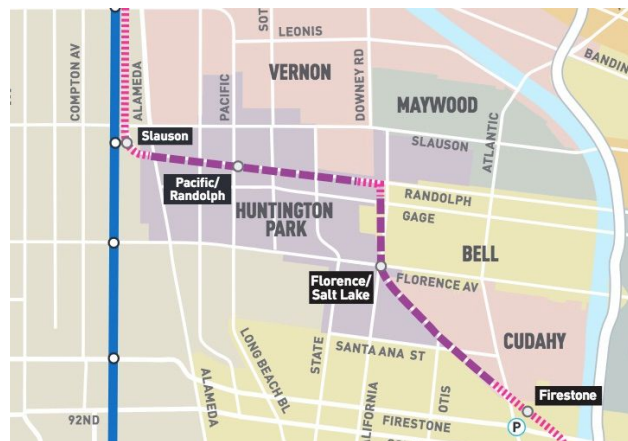


Risk of Displacement in the City of Huntington Park

Introduction

In my PPD 531: Transportation Studio, our project's purpose is to examine existing conditions of the transportation infrastructure surrounding two light rail transit stations proposed as part of the West Santa Ana Branch Transit Corridor (WSAB) project in Huntington Park, California. The proposed stations will be located at Pacific Boulevard/ Randolph Street and Florence Avenue/ Salt Lake Avenue respectively, as depicted in the Metro map below. This

transportation plan (Appendix B) aims to develop a transportation system that will accommodate the travel needs of the community in Huntington Park. The plan will incorporate various transportation modes and development opportunities that will complement the proposed transit



stations within the next decade. In completing this project I became interested in how current community members would be impacted by the new light rail transit and upcoming community development.

GIS assists in visually presenting the data, such as risk factor indicators, in a clear way that is easy to understand. Mapping this information can help community organizers determine the level of risk for potential displacement. Potentially, this information can also help planners, policymakers and nonprofit organizations know what neighborhoods need extra protection

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against displacement before they begin experiencing gentrification. Community development, job growth and expanded public transit are opportunities the present community should be able to enjoy.

Methodology

The variables I included in the map to indicate level of vulnerability to displacement were: senior population, renter population, rent burden, families with children and Latino residents. First, I imported a shapefile of the percentage of seniors (aged 65 years and older) for each census tract from SimplyAnalytics. Then, I exported the data from ArcMap into an Excel table by using “Table to Excel” tool under conversion tools in ArcToolbox. Next, I input the data for the other variables that corresponded to each census tract in Huntington Park. After I input data from the other variables, I assigned a score system to a separate column. Each census tract was given a score of 0-5 for each variable, based on the percentage of the population. Each census tract could then receive a score of 0-25. Points were given based on the following:

Percentage	0%	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
Score	0	1	2	3	4	5

Theoretically, a higher renter population makes the census tract more vulnerable to increased rents and potential displacement. Based on this, the higher the score, the higher the level of vulnerability. After each variable was given a score in Excel, I joined the table using the “spatial_id” column in the original Senior shapefile. Instead of displaying the “value” column from the attribute table of the Senior shapefile, I changed it to display my new vulnerability

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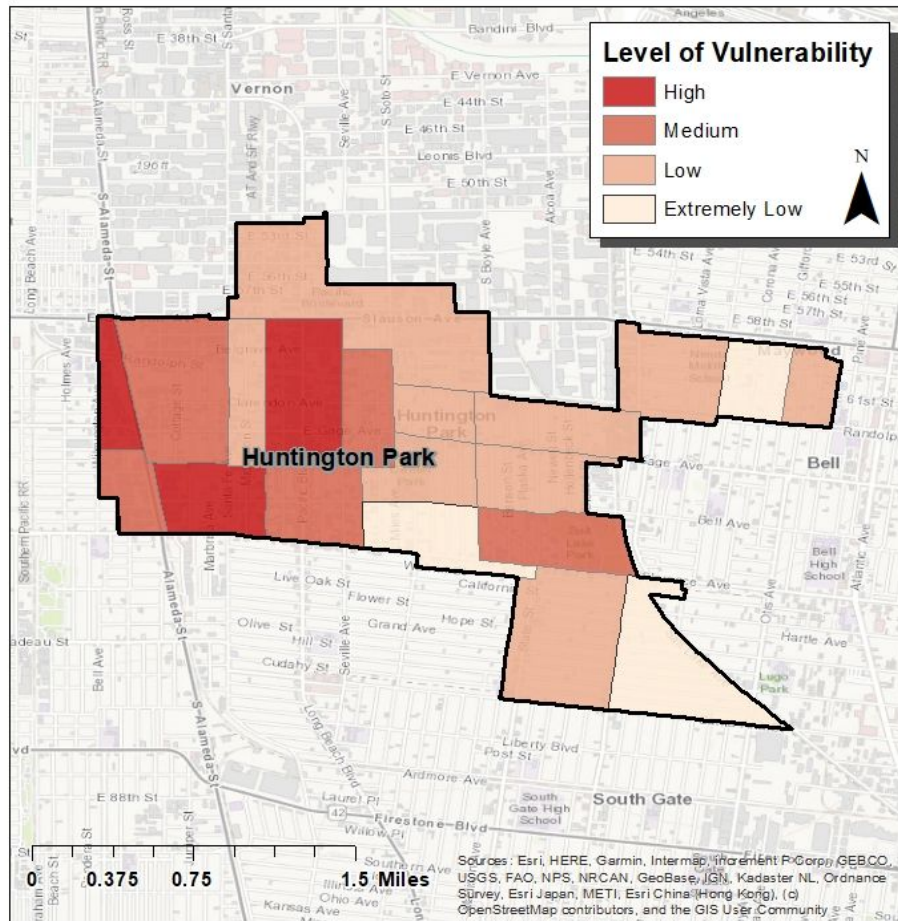
score. Initially everything was displayed as one color. I had to add graduated colors under the symbology tab to show the variance between different score levels. The darker shade of red suggested an increased level of vulnerability for that census tract. Alternatively, the lighter shade suggested less vulnerability.

Data

There are some populations that are more vulnerable to rising rents and displacement as a result of gentrification. Theoretically, communities with more of these populations are at an overall increased risk. These communities have the highest need for policies and protections to prevent displacement. Appendix A displays individual maps for each of the variables displayed below. Neighborhoods with a higher renter population and higher levels of rent burden are most sensitive to rent increases. Rent burden is defined as having to pay more than 30 percent of monthly income on rent and utilities (The USC Price Center for Social Innovation). The Los Angeles County Average for rent burdened renters was 54.2% in 2010 and 56.1% in 2017 (The USC Price Center for Social Innovation). Low-income households lack sufficient income and savings to protect themselves against rent increases, which makes them more likely to experience displacement as a result of impending gentrification. Low-income renters in general are vulnerable to displacement because landlords may want to replace them with wealthier tenants in response to local rent increases or gentrification. As a result of displacement, these community residents may lose vital social support and neighborhood connections (Dealing with Gentrification). Many senior citizens are living off fixed incomes, which makes them unable to afford rent increases. Many also have health or mobility issues, which creates a risk for social

isolation (Dealing with Gentrification). If households are experiencing rent burden, they have less income to spend on necessities and may be unable to build savings.

Displacement Vulnerability in Huntington Park



Huntington Park is a predominantly Latino community, at 96.7% (US Census, 2018). Historically, people of color have experienced inequalities and injustices that contribute to housing instability. Before the housing crisis, people of color received a disproportionate amount of subprime loans (Faber), which lead to a large amount of foreclosures. Mixed-status families are especially vulnerable because they may not qualify for public assistance or subsidized

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housing, and may not seek legal assistance (Dealing with Gentrification). Additionally, families with children are also more vulnerable because despite housing discrimination being illegal, landlords still discriminate against these families. Unfortunately, families with children are also evicted at higher rates (Dealing with Gentrification). If they are unable to relocate locally, these families and children can lose their community ties and support systems.

Limitations

It is important for research projects to have sufficient context. If there were no resource or time constraints, I would have collected additional research regarding census tracts outside of the city boundaries, in addition to neighborhoods near the WSAB tracks and proposed stations. While, these particular stations of focus will be located in the City of Huntington Park, the overall WSAB will still impact surrounding neighborhoods and cities.

An important clarification in the maps I created is the inclusion of two partial census tract images. I cut the polygons for two census tracts that stretched from Huntington Park into Florence-Graham. I used the complete data for those census tracts, but the map only displays the part of the tract that is south of Alameda St. and within the city boundaries.

To develop my score system, I calculated each measure equally. This is a limitation because all of these factors do not have the same effect on one's vulnerability. It is also possible that this vulnerability varies from household to household. Due to these complexities, I decided not to assign arbitrary weights that would not be supported by research. Instead, I weighed each factor equally. In the future, without any constraints, I would have developed a more complex scoring system with weighted values. Of the variables included, rent burden (40%) would have the highest weight to reflect the highest impact on vulnerability. The score weights will proceed

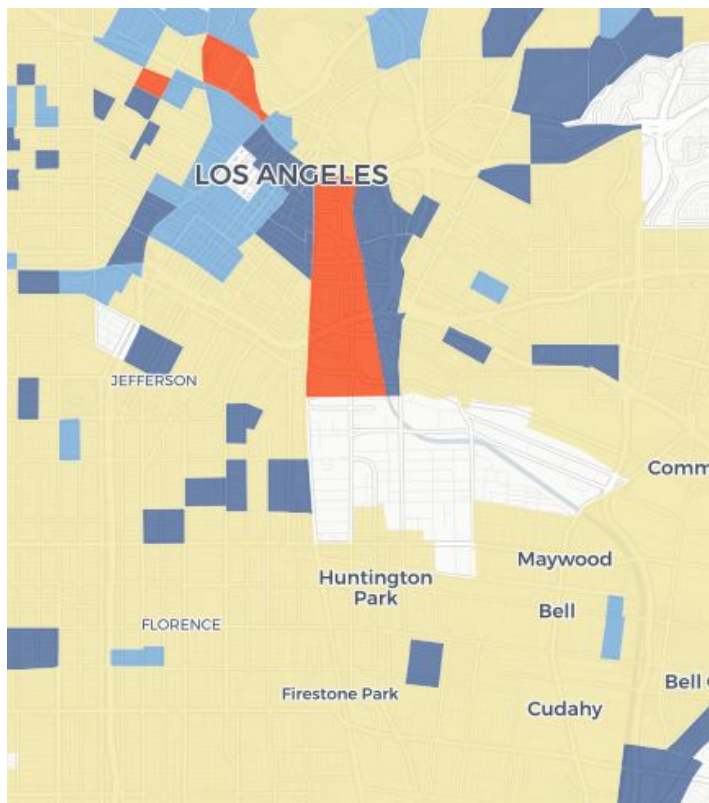
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with: rental population (25%), senior population (15%), families with children (10%) and lastly the Latino population (10%). Weighted scores would provide a more accurate analysis for the complexities of vulnerability factors. To further this research, an additional research project can focus on what amenities and strengths the city has that makes the community more resilient.

Additionally, it would have been helpful to compare this current analysis to communities that are presently in some stage of gentrification and what vulnerability factors they had prior to experiencing gentrification. Researching what renter protections or community resources could have preserved their community and prevent displacement would also help communities moving forward.

Analysis

The map below was created as part of the Urban Displacement project. As of 2015, Huntington Park was considered “Disadvantaged” but not gentrified. This is important because



these census tracts are susceptible to being gentrified (Urban Displacement Project). Fortunately, there is still time to protect Huntington park against displacement and gentrification.

Gentrification is the process of economic and demographic change in a neighborhood (Urban Displacement Project). Additional community protections could allow the city to grow without resulting in displacement. Gentrification is a complicated concept with many important factors to consider (Urban Displacement Project). These factors include current and historical policies and practices that make gentrification possible, the resulting relationship between community disinvestment and investment patterns and the way communities are impacted by gentrification (Urban Displacement Project).

Based on the vulnerability factors represented in the map, the census tracts located on the west side of Huntington Park are the most vulnerable. This may suggest that this area of the city would benefit most from additional protections and resources to prevent possible displacement. While there are three census tracts that only have an “extremely low” risk, they would still benefit from renter protections or community empowerment. If current residents are empowered and supported, they may be able to maintain their community connections and grow with their community without fear of displacement. An increased priority for affordable housing near Transit-Oriented Developments can increase income-mixing (Dawkins & Moeckel) and overall housing stability. The additional affordability constraints can also minimize “the average distance between transit and low-income households’ residential locations” (Dawkins & Moeckel). Transit developments that are community-driven can allow these neighborhoods to develop into sustainable, equitable communities with affordable, stable housing.

Conclusion

The Displacement Vulnerability map and the Urban Displacement Project map both show that the City of Huntington Park has a need for resources and protections to help this community become more resilient against gentrification and displacement. This information can help planners, policymakers, nonprofit organizations and community organizers know what neighborhoods need extra protection against displacement before they begin experiencing gentrification. Based on my initial knowledge of the city, I had expected the city would exhibit risk in the areas I studied. I was surprised that the Senior population was so low. However, I expected the Latino and renter populations to be high. Since Huntington Park is located in Los Angeles County, I also expected the percentage of households experiencing rent burden to be high. Additional research should be done to determine additional risk factors and best practices to preserve the cultural identity of these communities. Healthy, sustainable communities should be accessible to everyone, regardless of age, income or race. Community connections, economic development, job growth and expanded public transit are assets the current residents should be able to enjoy.

This paper was proofread by Meagan Elizondo.

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Appendix A: Individual Variable Maps

