

## **Mapping Los Angeles Ellis Act Evictions**

### **History of the Ellis Act**

The Ellis Act is a California state law adopted in 1985. The act allows landlords to evict all tenants in a building to allow the landlord to leave the landlord businesses. “Ellising” a property involves evicting all tenants and removing the building from the rental market. In Los Angeles landlords who conducted an Ellis Act eviction cannot re-lease the units they evicted unless the units have been removed from the rental markets for over two years (City of Los Angeles 2017).

### **Defining an Issue**

The Ellis Act was passed to allow California landlord to perform owner move-ins and to allow landlords to leave the landlord business if they so desire. However, in competitive rental markets the Ellis Act is sometimes used to evict tenants in rent controlled buildings allowing landlords to re-lease the same property to different tenants at a higher rate or to capitalize on increasing real estate values by selling individual units as condominiums. About 85% of rental units in Los Angeles are rent controlled (LA Curbed 2017) meaning Ellis Act evictions often remove rent controlled housing from the rental market. Flagrant misuse of the Ellis Act has been well document in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP)

has gathered Ellis Act eviction data throughout the Bay Area which when correlated with ownership data illustrated several serial Ellis Act evictors (Anti Eviction Mapping Project 2017).

Misuse of the Ellis Act is well document in Northern California. However, there is little publicly available information about extent of the Ellis Act's impact in Los Angeles. As a graduate student interest in affordable housing and a recent transplant from the Bay Area I became curious about the Ellis Act's impact in Los Angeles after moving to Southern California last year. Specifically, I was interested in the extent of Ellis Act evictions in Los Angeles, if specific income brackets are disproportionately impacted by Ellis Act evictions, and if Ellis Act evictions have increased over the last ten years along with the rising cost of Los Angeles real estate.

### **Using Eviction and Income Data**

The eviction data I used was gathered by the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project in collaboration with the Coalition for Economic Justice. The Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ) obtained the bulk of the eviction data through a connection at the Los Angeles Rent Board. CEJ also conducted additional research after receiving the data from the Rent Board because they felt that the data set was incomplete. As it stands there some aspects of the eviction data that indicate that the data set is still incomplete. Certain years like 2005 include over 500 unique Ellis Act evictions. However, other years in the data set include dramatically fewer evictions. For example, the data I received indicated that there were only 15 Ellis Act eviction in Los Angeles in 2009 indicating that the data may be incomplete. However, it is possible that the data is complete and that the dramatic changes in Ellis Act evictions are due to the recession.

While I may be missing some evictions for several of the years in my data set mapping the data still informative. I mapped the eviction data on top of median household income by census tract from 2015. I chose census tract data because it maps median income in smaller regions than any of the other shapefiles I looked at that document income patterns in Los Angeles. The relatively small size of census tracts provides a more nuanced and detailed look at the median household incomes of residents. The census tract data is especially useful when looking at areas of Los Angeles where high income census tracts butt up against lower income census tracts. Instead of a clear delineation or smooth transition between high and low income regions, the census tract data illustrates that in areas like Downtown, West Los Angeles, and the San Fernando Valley income levels often shift abruptly between areas. The additional information about abrupt income changes is especially relevant to my map because it provides detailed insight into the income levels of individuals displaced by Ellis Act evictions.

I used median household income data from 2015 because it was the most recent income data available. While I considered using older income data for the maps I created the with that map eviction data prior to 2015 it would have led to a certain amount of inconsistency. When reviewing the income data from other years I also realized that there have not been dramatic changes income levels by census tract between 2015 and the other data sets I found. To promote consistency in my maps I used income data from 2015 in all the maps I created.

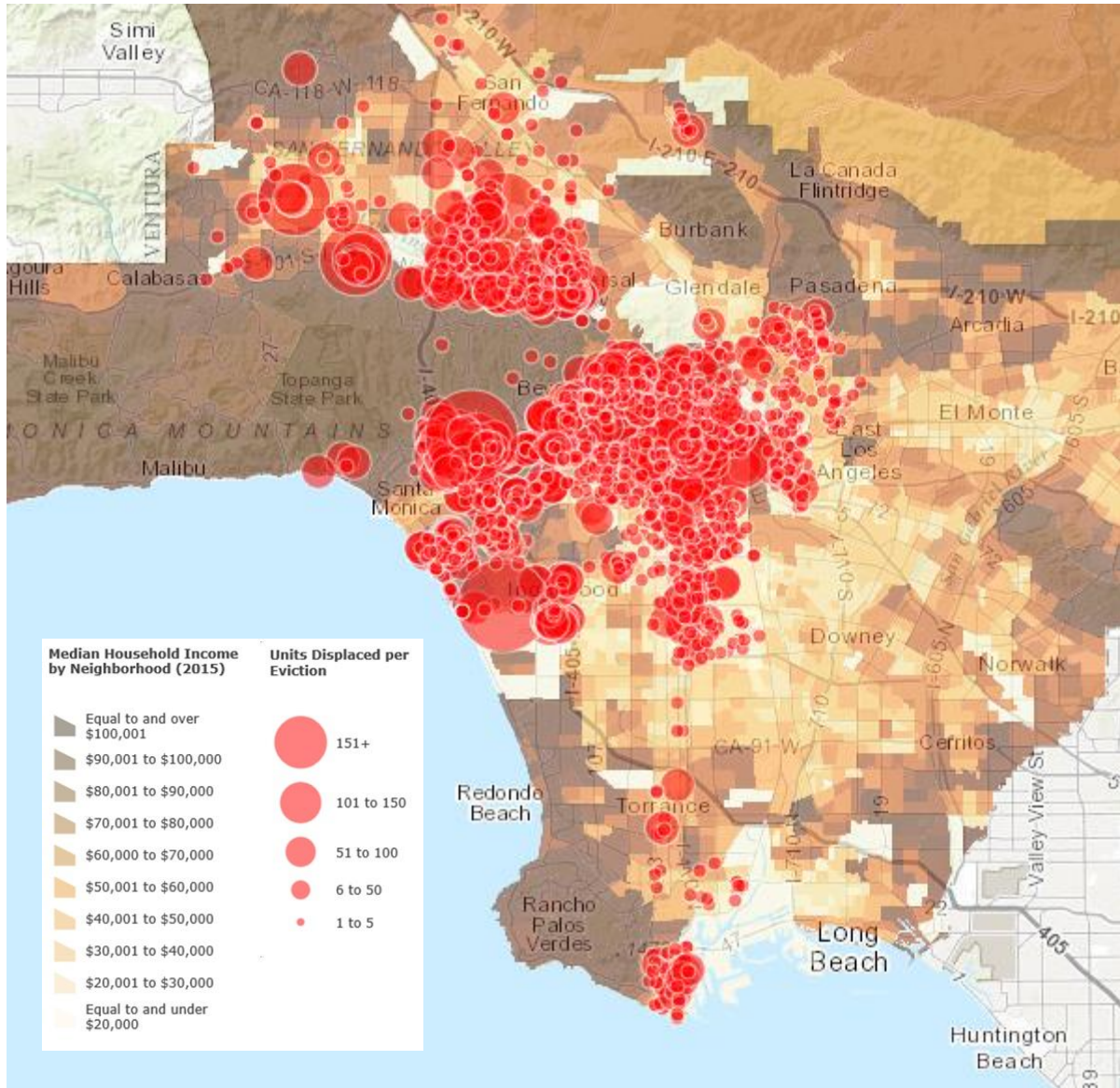
## Mapping Ellis Act Evictions

I created a series of maps because I wanted to illustrate how Ellis Act evictions have been used in Los Angeles over the past fifteen years. I decided to create a Story Map because it has interactive capabilities that I plan to use as I continue to work on the Story Map. The other design aspects of mapping were relatively clear cut. I used five different sized dots in increasing sizes to represent the number of units displaced by each Ellis Act eviction. The bright red color I used increase the visibility and is clearly legible against the neutral tones of the income data. I made all the circular points transparent so that the median household income map was visible beneath the points. Additionally, the partial transparency allows the viewer to see when extent of evictions when they are clustered near one another. While an opaque dot would have obscured other data points the transparency allows the viewer to see exactly where one eviction is in relation to another nearby.

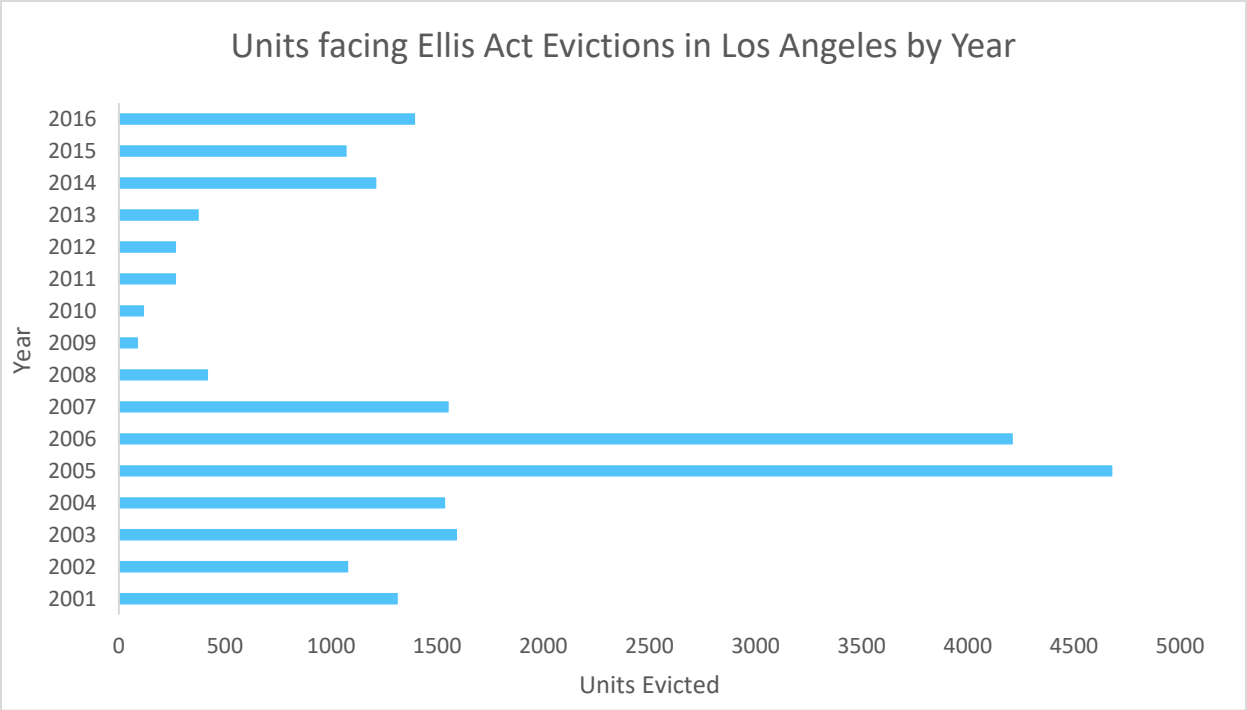
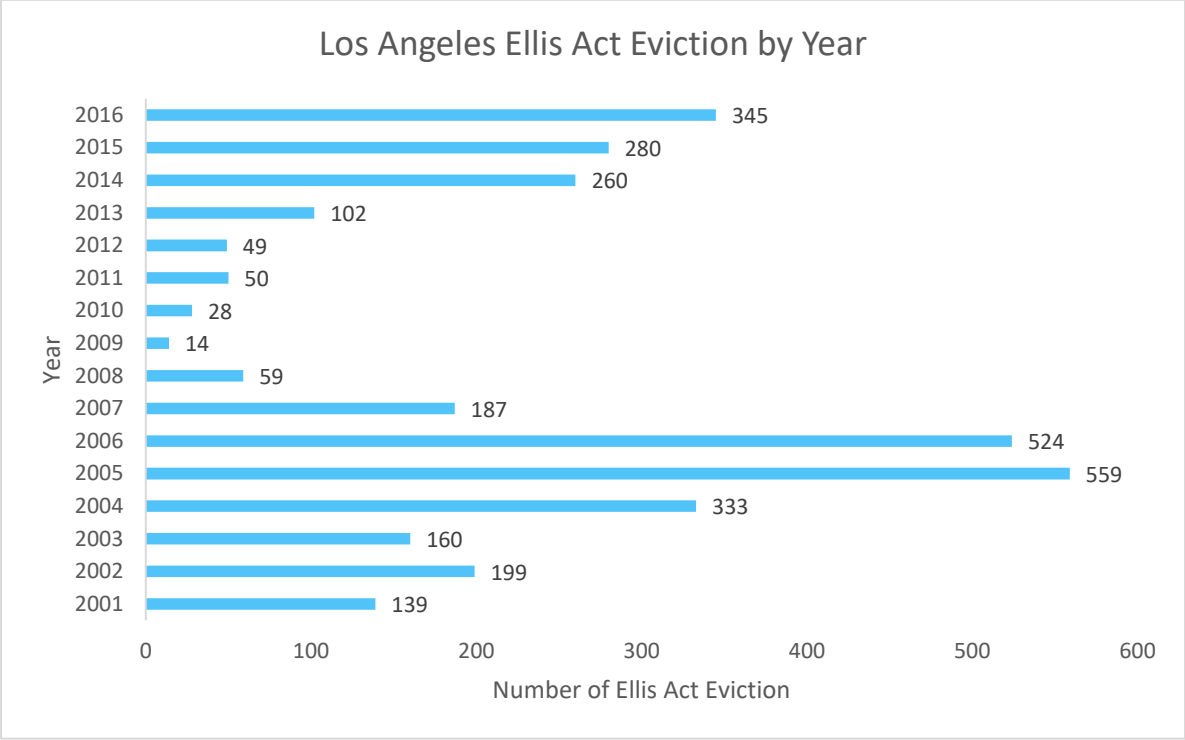
The smallest size point represents evictions that displaced 1 to 5 units. The other data points represent a larger range of units displaced. However, the smallest dot only represents a range of 5 units because there was such a high number of 1 to 5 unit evictions proportional to the larger evictions. By using a single data point for this smaller range the viewer can see the extent of smaller building and single family home Ellis Act evictions in Los Angeles.

In addition to creating a Story Map I also created a cluster map which shows the extent of all Ellis Act evictions between 2001 and 2016, and a series of bar charts which show the number of Ellis Act evictions and the number of individual units that faced Ellis Act evictions by year.

## Los Angeles Ellis Act Eviction (2001 – 2016)



Data from the County of Los Angeles, Bureau of Land Management and the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project in collaboration with the Coalition for Economic Justice



## **Data Analysis**

The maps I created clearly illustrate several patterns in Los Angeles Ellis Act evictions. There were many Ellis Act evictions in Los Angeles through the early and middle 2000s. Ellis Act evictions decreased in the late 2000s and remained slightly lower in the early 2010's before experiencing a steady increase between 2013 and 2016. These shifts correlate with the recession and the slow but steady economic growth that which followed the recession.

The Ellis Act eviction maps also indicate a pattern in eviction size and location. Smaller evictions of 1 to 6 units seem dispersed throughout Los Angeles while larger evictions are often located in areas where low income and high income regions are pushing up against one another. Additionally, larger evictions tend to cluster together. The clustering of larger evictions may represent owners of large and possibly multiple properties who have the means to quickly respond to shifts in the real estate market. As one neighborhood becomes trendier or as property values rise owners of larger buildings may be more inclined to evict residents so they can capitalize on rising property values. It is unlikely that the clusters of large evictions in shifting neighborhoods between 2001 and 2016 in Los Angeles represent regional groupings of landlords deciding to leave the landlord business. Instead, it is much more likely that the Ellis Act evictions are being performed so the units can be re-rented for a higher profit. If this is the case, the information conveyed through the Story Map I created illustrates a need for additional limitation on or oversight of Ellis Act evictions in Los Angeles.

## **Future Mapping Plans**

I plan to continue working on the Story Map and eventually publish it on the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project's website. I recently joined AEMP and am helping create a Los Angeles based chapter. Now that I am more familiar with the data set AEMP is using I plan on working with the Coalition for Economic Justice to see if it possible to get more complete data from the Rent Board. In addition to supplementing the current data set, I am planning on working with AEMP to conduct oral history interviews of tenants who have been displaced by Ellis Act evictions. I will connect video or audio recordings of interviews with displaced tenants to the location from which the individuals were evicted using pop-up functionality in ArcGIS Story Maps. AEMP has conducted oral history interviews with evicted tenants in the Bay Area which have helped humanize the impact displacement has on individuals living in competitive rental markets. By combining oral history interviews with the Story Map I hope to illustrate the sweeping extent of Ellis Act eviction in Los Angeles while also centering the lived experiences of displaced residents.



## Works Cited

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