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Racialized Space: Historical, Economic, and Social Factors Contributing to the Gentrification of North & Northeast Portland's Albina Neighborhoods

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Racialized Space

Historical, Economic, and Social Factors
Contributing to the Gentrification of North &
Northeast Portland's Albina Neighborhoods

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2021 Honors Thesis

Abstract

Portland, Oregon has long held the reputation of being a quirky, artistic, mid-size American city for the ecologically friendly and progressively minded. What is less well-known is that Portland has a long history of segregation, racial violence, and public policy that is often viewed as hostile by the Black residents, especially the Albina neighborhoods of North and inner-Northeast Portland. Since Dr. Gibson published *Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment* in 2007, terms such as gentrification, redlining and restrictive racial covenants have become more common in academic and social parlance concerning Portland. In this thesis, we will explore how gentrification theory helps to explain the racialization of space in Portland's Albina neighborhoods.

I. Introduction

The spatial arrangements of population demographics throughout the history of the city of Portland, Oregon can be a map to the economic, racial, and political changes of the city. Over the past 50 years, since the Civil Rights movement and growth of political enfranchisement among its African American citizens, the city of Portland has pursued various strategies to revitalize, uplift and/or gentrify low-income communities and neighborhoods. One notable region in Portland is Albina, a collection of mostly turn-of-the-century neighborhoods located near Portland's downtown commercial district. For much of the twentieth century, the Albina neighborhoods contained the highest population of African American residents in the city of Portland (Burke, 2016). These neighborhoods have been influenced consistently over the years by both economic and political pressures. Racially segregated social engineering of the 1950's was eventually replaced with infrastructure improvements and environmental mitigation which

in turn led to shifting economic and racial demographics in the formerly segregated and economically marginalized neighborhoods, a process known as gentrification (Goodling 2016).

Gentrification is an economic, social, cultural, political, and institutional phenomenon involving the class upgrading of a neighborhood (Lees et al. 2008; Smith 1996). It involves not only the remaking of the residential landscape, but also the transformation of neighborhood commercial corridors into consumption landscapes geared towards the middle and upper classes. (Walker, 2019, pp. 105)

The economic and social pressures to be discussed in this thesis have led to a higher-income demographic of residents in the Albina neighborhoods than was to be found throughout much of the 20th century. Unfortunately for the former residents, the rise in median income has led to a displacement of lower-income residents more often than it has led to a rise in the median income of long-term residents of these formerly inner-city neighborhoods. In this thesis, we will explore the racialization of space through the lens of gentrification theory as applied to Portland's Albina neighborhoods and answering the following questions. *What is gentrification and how does it fit within classical urban models? How has the racialization of space in Portland influenced the gentrification cycle of the Albina neighborhoods? In what way have structural factors and governmental actions created an environment conducive to gentrification?*

Over the course of the last few decades, there has been a growing body of scholarship in the field of urban studies and political economics, as well as an expanded view of intersectional power dynamics within established sociology departments. I will focus on scholarship dealing with the discourse communities of Urban Studies, Ethnic and African American Studies, and historians of Portland, Oregon. These three analysis groups frame the spatial, social, and temporal context of the ongoing demographic shifts in the Albina neighborhood.

While personal preferences vary, for the purposes of this thesis the terms Black and African American will be used interchangeably for the applicable population group. Additionally, modern names of locations (such as King neighborhood) will be used, sometimes anachronistically, rather than risk confusing the reader by changing names as historically appropriate.

II. Gentrification

CHART I—URBAN ZONES IN THE GROWTH OF THE CITY
(According to the principle of radial expansion)

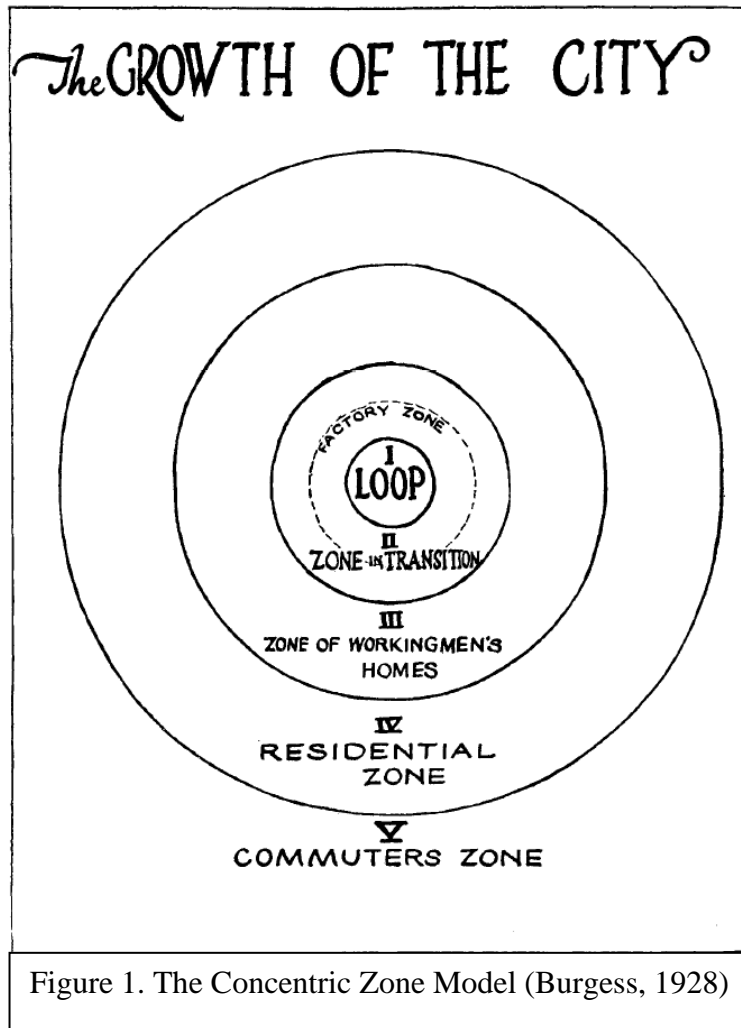


Figure 1. The Concentric Zone Model (Burgess, 1928)

1. Early Urban models

Before exploring gentrification theory as it applies to Portland, it is important to situate the discussion within the larger context of urban models. Since the early 20th century, sociologists, geographers, and urban planners have been discussing and debating different models of urban growth. One of the earliest modern urban models was given by sociologist Ernest Burgess in 1928, see Figure 1. Labeled the Concentric Zone Model it envisioned the city as a series of concentric rings, like

ripples on a pond. The five areas that comprise the city in the Concentric Zone Model are:

I The Central Business District Zone.

II The Zone in Transition.

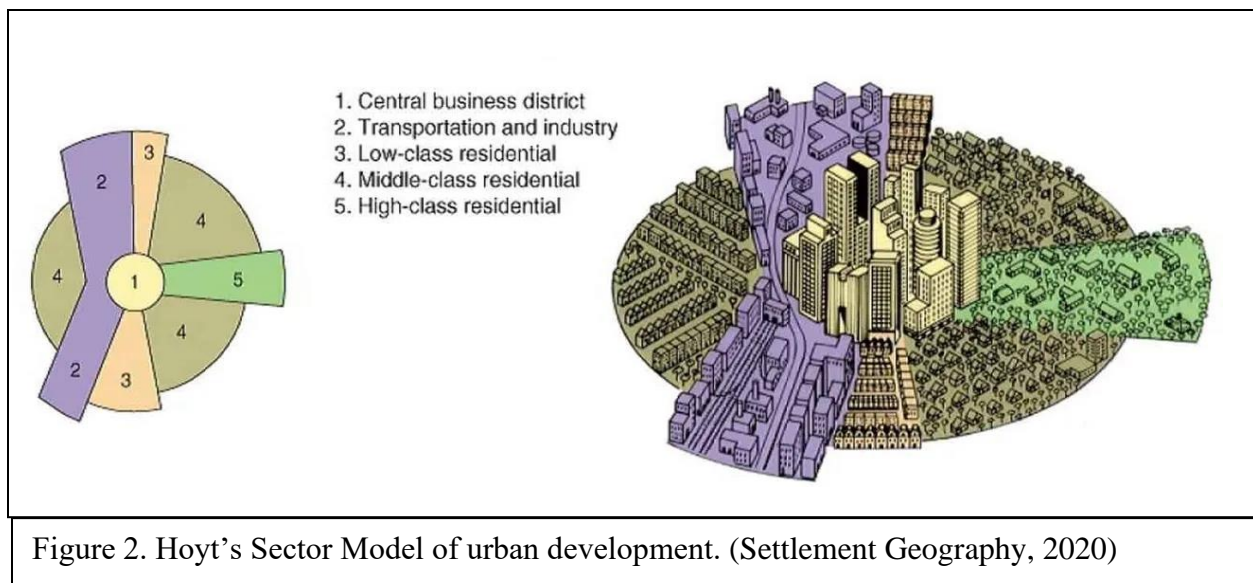
III The Zone of Workingmen's Homes.

IV The Residential Zone.

V The Commuters' Zone. (Burgess, 1928, pp. 107)

The central area in the Concentric Zone Model is classified as Zone 1 and is envisioned primarily as a high-density financial hub where business transactions and a service economy keep land prices high and housing density low. Zone 2 is outlined by Burgess as a low-income, high-density industrialized neighborhood most often inhabited by “incoming racial and immigrant groups” (Burgess, 1928, pp. 106). Zones 3 and 4 form a middle income and middle density location for (racially white) blue and white-collar workers respectively to live within a distance amiable to an efficient daily commute to work. The outermost ring of the Burgess’ Model is Zone 5 which forms a peripheral suburban area with low-density housing and upper-income residents.

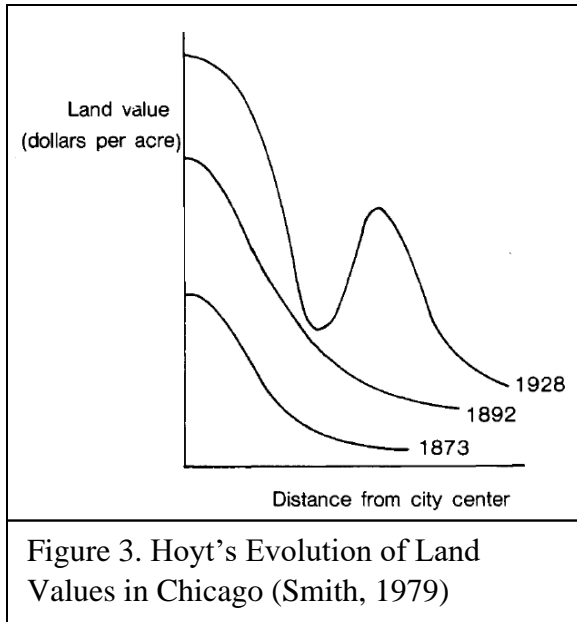
Hoyt’s 1936 Sector Model added nuance to Burgess’s model while modernizing its underlying concepts, such as transportation corridors (See Figure 2.). Both the Concentric Zone Model and Sector Model recognize an intermediate zone between the high priced, centralized, commercial district (CD) and residential neighborhoods of the middle class. In Hoyt’s model, distance to transportation networks, such as highways, trains, and bus lines, factor more highly into ground use than direct distance from the CD (Hoyt, 1964). Unlike Burgess’s concentric models wherein neighborhood types radiate out in perfect symmetry, the Hoyt model displays



less radial symmetry. Because of its complexity, the Hoyt model takes more time to visually and mentally parse, which may explain why the Burgess model is still commonly seen in visual graphics introducing urban models. Hoyt's model is especially useful in that it recognized suburbanization of industry as a part of his urban model. In his article *Recent Distortions*, Hoyt notes

In 1939 I pointed out tendencies of heavy industry to move away from close-in locations in the "transition zone" Since that time heavy manufacturing has tended more and more to seek suburban locations or rural areas, as nearly all workers now come in their own automobiles and for the most part live in the suburban areas themselves. (Hoyt, 1964, pp. 206)

Thus, in addition to a more nuanced model more in line with 20th century infrastructure shift away from passenger trains to highways and automobiles, Hoyt also gives us an urban development model that shows ground rent as an effect of distance from the city center as a bi-modal curve, see Figure 3. The curving lines in the figure show the decreasing price of land as



one moves farther from the CD. The second hump of the upper curve represents middle and upper-income residential neighborhoods farther away from the urban core. The low point between the humps represents Zone 2 of Burgess' model, which has the same demographic as Zone 3 of Hoyt's model. It shows the decreased value of land close to the central district caused by the unpleasantness and unhealthiness of living close

to industry and manufacturing (Schell, 2020). It is within this lower-income residential zone that these and other systemic factors discussed below push down value of real estate lower than comparably properties in the higher-income zones. When the systemic factors are removed or resolved, then the value of the land rises in the urban process known as gentrification.

While discussing urban models it is important to recognize that the definition of urban in Burgess' and Hoyt's context refers not only to municipal lines of incorporation, but also encapsulates an expansive network of economic and legal interdependence that extends beyond the city limits (Smith, 1982). Urban areas interconnect with their surrounding environmental, rural, and suburban regions and participate in the "relationship of interdependence" (Park, 1936). Just as farmers in rural areas ultimately depend on the demand of urban residents to sell their food, so too do many of those urban residents depend on fresh water from sources found well past the border of incorporated municipalities. Portland's water supply, for example, comes from the 102 square mile Bull Run watershed, located over 20 miles east of the urban region it serves (RWPC, 2021).

In the 21st century, this economic web of interdependence means that urban centers who plan for automobile traffic are at least partially dependent upon the international markets, such as petroleum. For the purposes of the following discussion, however, this thesis will treat all urban models as if they have spatial boundaries that can be measured in some material way.

One last note on the Burgess model; as automobiles reach near-total market saturation in the late 20th century and urban areas such as Los Angeles and Dallas-Fort Worth are ringed in highways, we may begin to see a return to a more Burgess-like model with distance from the city center, rather than access to high-speed infrastructure, regain its status as the primary factor in ground rent value (Smith, 1982).

2. Human Ecology of Demographic Changes

Chicago-school sociologist Robert Park put forward the idea in 1936 that human environments, much like biological ecosystems, display an ongoing dynamic shift of demographics within their communities. Park identified a community as having three essential characteristics, regardless of whether the members of the community are plants, human or non-human animals. These shared elements are:

(1) a population, territorially organized, (2) more or less completely rooted in the soil it occupies, (3) its individual units living in a relationship of mutual interdependence that is symbiotic rather than societal. (Park, 1936, pp. 85)

Park also makes the point that ecological succession, defined as an “orderly sequence of changes through which a biotic community passes in the course of its development”, is not merely a matter of random changes across a group of individual plants and animals, but also a measurably directional change of the character of the community as a whole. The nature of this

community change can be categorized in what Park refers to as “a series of more or less clearly defined stages” (Park, 1936, pp. 88). Such ecological systems mature until they achieve a climax state of complex equilibrium. The balance of this equilibrium can be localized spatially or temporally, but is not infinite in either, thus in any given location such complex equilibrium is temporary. Likewise, shifts in neighborhood demographics are common and Burgess suggests that residents of the outer rings are “constantly being recruited from those making their escape from the zone of transition, but at the same time are being depleted by those who are seeking more desirable residences in the zone beyond” (Burgess, 1928, pp. 106)

Since Park, other urban scholars have explored how changes in human use patterns and social values can lead to spatial changes in different areas of an urban environment.

Perpetual change and an ever-shifting mosaic of environmentally and socio-culturally distinct urban ecologies - varying from the manufactured and manicured landscaped gardens of gated communities and high-technology campuses to the ecological warzones of depressed neighbourhoods with lead-painted walls and asbestos covered ceilings, waste dumps and pollutant-infested areas – still shape the choreography of a capitalist urbanization process. (Heynen et al., 2006, pp. 9)

Long-lasting urban areas go through changes in the built environment such as development from agricultural to industrial use, or devaluation of high-cost housing into affordable residential neighborhoods for working-class families, a process known as “filtering” (Smith, 1982). The habit of economically marginal areas to shift through different zones of urban space shows a form of continuous accumulation (Harvey, 1985). Real estate developers and banking

investments attempt to continuously buy and sell the same pieces of property and thus prevent the devaluation of capital, explored below.

Ongoing changes within the urban landscape can lead to a spatial patchwork of demographics that often fails to perfectly reflect either the Concentric Zone or Sector Models. It is important to apply the principles of each model to a given space to see which aspects of that space fit into one or both models and which may be unique to that specific region. One example of how a location might not fit into either model is if it has been affected by a human or natural disaster. Just as a flood or long term environmental toxification might depreciate the value of a residential neighborhood, so too can government policies such as redlining or restrictive racial covenants that segregate residential housing. Given the history of segregation in Portland, the nuance of Hoyt's Sector Model makes it a better fit for viewing Portland's racialization of space.

3. The Racialization of Space

Not all locations experience development at the same rate or in the same ways. The first separator of ground use is public zoning. The second is by the social stratification of residential land "according to class, and race" (Smith, 1982). Class segregation can usually be enforced by restricting economic access via the ground rent structure, such as the high-cost of luxury housing, but racial segregation is harder to ensure exclusively through economic access, leading to a mix of top-down legal codes and policies that enforce segregation, with bottom-up mob violence perpetrated against minorities by those white residents that perceive the existence of Black citizens as a threat to themselves. Starting with the inclusion of "Burnett's lash law" as an 1844 amendment to the constitution, the Oregon government oversaw the segregation of Black citizens (Nokes, 2020). This top-down trend continued on through Portland's 20th century with

first the segregation of Black residents into and then the redlining of Albina neighborhoods (Gibson, 2007).

In 1919, the Portland Realty Board (PRB) “adopted a rule declaring it unethical for an agent to sell property to either Negro or Chinese people in a White neighborhood” (Gibson, 2007, pp. 6). This is similar to the system of restrictive racial covenants seen elsewhere across the twentieth-century United States. “Covenants were embedded in property deeds all over the country to keep people who were not white from buying or even occupying land” (University of Minnesota, 2020).

When official declarations by industry groups such as the PRB were not enough to keep Black people from buying houses in white neighborhoods, criminal actions by white-residents were employed against Black residents of neighborhoods outside of Albina. In 1930, Dr. Unthank had his life threatened and his house repeatedly vandalized and in 1960 another young couple, Rowan and Parthina Wiley, had their house on NE 140th Ave destroyed by a gasoline bomb (McElderry, 2001).

Such legal codes and illegal actions directly affect the development of the urban landscape and complicate the spatial arrangements of the zonal models discussed above. By creating the segregated area of Albina, the PRB created artificial incentives within those neighborhoods that drove the devalorization cycle towards the devaluation of capital that causes neighbor filtering. Simply put, it became more profitable to rent buildings to Black residents who had restricted housing options, rather than upkeeping the real estate at a level of repair and maintenance typical to owner occupancy.

4. The Devalorization Cycle

The *valorization of capital* is a term for investments made in pursuit of profit (Smith, 1982). The *devalorization of capital* is the measurement of how much of the initial investment has so far seen returns through use. Return on investment may take many forms including the rent paid to a landlord of a building, stockholder dividends, or tolls charged for road and bridge access. Once the initial value of capital that was valorized has been totally devalorized then it has completed its first cycle of use and the initial investment has been fully realized. Further income past this point that is accrued to the investor from sale or future use is profit, or surplus value.

Due to physical factors, it is assumed that time and use cause material deterioration of the capital that was initially valorized. While the capital investment is devalorizing, there is an economic incentive to maintain rather than replace the built property (Smith, 1982). To invest new capital in replacing infrastructure that has not fully devalorized means one fails to collect full returns on the initial valorization of capital. Investors waiting for a full devalorization of their initial investments is a strong driver in the time it takes to replace infrastructure and the lack of liquidity in the capital investments in the built environment.

The devalorization of capital is not an inherently bad thing for property, things that have been built ought to be used. *Capital devaluation* is different from the devalorization of capital in that the devalorization of capital refers to the using up and replacement of the built environment through use and natural decay. As such, the devalorization of capital is the inextricable mirror of the valorization of capital (Smith, 1982). Unlike devalorization, the devaluation cycle can be delayed or prevented entirely by periodic maintenance, upgrades, and repairs of deteriorating materials. If landowners in a neighborhood reinvest in their built property, then over time the property can complete the devalorization-cycle without capital devaluation (Smith, 1982).

The devalorization cycle tracks between poles of capital valorization and devalorization (Smith, 1982). Within the valorization-devalorization model, fluctuation in the value of ground rent in different areas is a result of ongoing capital investments. Capital investment in the build economy is less liquid than other forms of investment, such as the stock market. Individuals will own houses for years, corporations may run factories for decades between major upgrades, and public ownership of the means of social reproduction such as bridges and roads often stretch to a century or more.

Due to steadily improving science and technology, overtime there is a slow but constant pressure to replace old building materials with new ones (Smith, 1979). This pressure operates as a check, ensuring little of the built environment from the past is maintained forever without upgrades or replacements. An exception to this pattern is when a building or other infrastructure is recognized as having historical or cultural value that justifies its maintenance, such as government monuments. As buildings and the neighborhoods they are located in age, they often become more expensive to maintain and a landlord is likely to only continue to invest in maintenance if it assures a higher return than selling and investing in a newer neighborhood (Smith, 1982).

Capital revaluation, colloquially known as gentrification, is the opposite of capital devaluation and the neighborhood filtering process (Smith, 1982). Once that the capital in lower-income areas is fully devalorized, the often-dilapidated infrastructure can be torn down and replaced thus initiating a new first-cycle of use (Smith, 1979). The difference between gentrification and filtering is that while gentrification increases actual ground rent, neighborhood filtering lowers it (LeGates and Hartman, 1981).

5. Neighborhood Filtering

Neighborhood Filtering is when the demographic shift in the economic character of an area tends towards a decrease in value (Smith, 1979). For example, a formerly new, luxurious mid-rise in the Central District might slowly overtime take on a middle-class character as young professionals interested in upkeep appearances slowly replace wealthier residents who move on to new housing which, like our hypothetical property when they arrived, is in a first-use cycle, before its full capital devalorization.

Landlords have less incentive to upkeep property than resident homeowners so neighborhoods with higher tenancy rates are more likely to face capital devaluation compared to those with higher home-ownership rates (Smith, 1982). As properties undergoing capital devaluation are sold, landlords are most likely to buy them. This is due to the fact that resident property-owners realize their investment through the sale price, while landlords realize their investment primarily through collecting rent (Smith, 1979). Even if the ground rent is decreasing due to neighborhood filtering, a landlord with tenants can still realize a profit. Thus, banks see financing home loans for landlords buying property in neighborhoods undergoing filtering as making a safer investment than mortgaging the same home to a resident landowner, and also why such banks are likely to offer more favorable interest rates to landlords than resident homeowners in filtering neighborhoods (Smith, 1982).

Even when landowners in neighborhoods which are undergoing filtering keep their properties in a state of good repair, such properties may still experience capital devaluation due to systemic factors, such as the lowering of the assessed property values in an area due to increased tenant residency of the same (Smith, 1982). One systemic factor specific to Albina neighborhood's historical devaluation of capital is the result of the redlining policy of the PRB.

6. Redlining

Redlining was the practice of delineating neighborhoods on a map for the purpose of restricting, or profiteering from, access to home loans by Black citizens (Gibson, 2007). Redline maps show neighborhoods divided into four categories: blue, green, yellow, and red. Blue and green neighborhoods were designated as “Best” and “Desirable” and were viewed as economically safe investments while red was designated as “Hazardous” for financial investments and yellow areas were designated as “Declining” and at-risk of filtering into redline neighborhoods (Mitchell, 2018). Designation of redline neighborhoods was done across the country, mostly along racial lines, with a 1938 federal policy for banks stating that: “A change in the social or racial occupancy generally contributes to the instability and decline in [real estate] values” (Medoff & Sklar, 1994).

Redlining financially reinforced the segregation of Black people in the Albina neighborhoods (McElderry, 2001). While the 1919 policy from the PRB already forbade real estate agents, banks, and property owners from selling property outside of the Albina Neighborhoods to Black people, redlining additionally ensured that residents of Albina were denied access to the same mortgages and home loans as residents of other neighborhoods in Portland (Gibson, 2007). Redlining as a process was usually managed by collaborating private interests, not unlike a cartel, rather than as a matter of official government policy. In the case of the Albina neighborhoods, it was the Portland Realty Board, a corporate rather than governmental body, which restricted Black homeownership in white-designated neighborhoods (McElderry, 2001).

Segregation was not only privately enforced, the federal, state, and local governments also passed laws, amendments and policies that targeted Black people (Nokes, 2020). While the

1919 PRB policy of segregation predated a 1938 federal government policy for banks by almost two decades, the ideology of white supremacy that supported them both was the same.

Desegregation was seen as dangerous and any shift from white to non-white neighborhoods would also be accompanied by an economic filtering and decline in real estate value.

Redlining had multiple negative effects on the neighborhoods to which it was applied (Gibson, 2007). Redlining devalued the ground rent, which decreased the sale price of the housing and led to capital devaluation of the real estate overall, which in turn created a rent gap and made it more difficult to realize a profit from investments on such a property, outside of its use as a rental unit (Smith 1979). The landlord of housing inside of a redlined neighborhood has little financial incentive to upkeep the property since systemic factors will lower its realized ground rent regardless (Smith 1982). Additionally, the segregated status of the Black residents of Albina meant that they were unable to choose to live in nicer neighborhoods, even in cases where they could afford to live outside of Albina area, such as Dr. Unthank and the Wileys (McElderry, 2001). This created another systemic pressure on Albina housing because the more a housing market is affected by limiting pressures, the more ground rent a landlord can charge for housing units, regardless of the state of disrepair or maintenance (Smith, 1982).

7. Ground Rent

In the modern capitalist era, property rights can be held by individuals or corporations. Property rights are generally recognized to confer upon the owner the legal power to effect material changes upon the property (Smith, 1979). If the owner so wishes, they may charge other individuals or corporations to access the property or its material benefits. The cost charged for

access to the property itself, devoid of infrastructural or material improvements, is called ground rent (Harvey 1982).

Ground rent does not reflect the entire cost of the property, only that of the real estate, that is the land itself. One can raise the total value of the property overall by adding more value in the form of infrastructure improvement, but this does not affect the ground rent value. Likewise, if there is a disaster and the improvements on a property are lost, the ground rent value remains. Ground rent is the price of a piece of land that “does not reflect the quality of labor power applied to it” (Smith, 1979). Put simply, this means that two otherwise identical houses in different neighborhoods will likely have different sale or rent costs, due to a difference in the ground rent.

Ground rent can be improved under certain conditions. The ability of ground rent to be improved is referred to as *potential ground rent*. Portland is one of many cities that uses the nationally recognized definition of the “highest and best use” which is that the use must be “legally permissible, physically possible, financially feasible and maximally productive” (Appraisal Institute, 2008).

If the economic value of the ground rent is appreciating, then the owner is likely to upkeep the structure enough to maintain tenancy and allow for a return on their investment. On the other hand, if the demographic of a given neighborhood filters from resident landowners to landlords with tenants. When neighborhood filtering happens, there becomes less economic incentive for the landowner to carry out repairs beyond what is necessary to collect rent (Lowry, 1960). Thus, neighborhood filtering in turn leads to a further material decline in the localized built environment, creating a cyclical pattern of capital devaluation (Smith, 1979).

8. Rent gap

The rent gap is the economic difference between *actual ground rent*, that value amount financially realized on the property at a given time, and the *potential ground rent* if the same property were rebuilt or replaced with infrastructure of the highest and best use (Smith, 1987). The rent gap comes from the effects of capital devaluation cycle and the filtering that results, which in turn lays the foundation for the systemic depreciation of land value. Without the rent gap, there is not enough profit to be made from redevelopment to incentivize capital revaluation, colloquially known as gentrification (Smith, 1979). Over-time it is the rent gap itself that creates the economic conditions for future reinvestments and new developments.

When, and only when, this rent gap between actual and potential ground rent becomes sufficiently large, redevelopment and rehabilitation into new land uses becomes a profitable prospect, and capital begins to flow back into the inner-city market. To summarize, the investment of capital in the central and inner city caused a physical and economic barrier to further investment in that space. The movement of capital into suburban development led to a systematic devalorization of inner and central city capital, and this, in turn, with the development of the rent gap, led to the creation of new investment opportunities in the inner city precisely because an effective barrier to new investment had previously operated there.

(Smith, 1982, pp. 149)

The rent gap is a product of private and public investments, government policy and other historical factors that influence the built environment. Gentrification is the rational response to the economic pressure caused by the rent gap.

The whole point of the rent gap theory is not that gentrification occurs in some deterministic fashion where housing costs are lowest, as Ley is proposing, but that it is most likely to occur in areas experiencing a sufficiently large gap between actual and potential land values. This is a fundamental distinction. Areas such as the central and inner city where the rent gap may be greatest may also experience very high land values and housing costs despite disinvestment from the built environment and the consequent rent gap. (Smith, 1987, pp. 464)

Just because a neighborhood experiences the rent gap phenomenon does not mean that it will immediately begin to gentrify. Many factors go into determining large-scale construction and development plans in urban areas (Harvey, 1982). Albina faced a significant rent-gap throughout the late 20th century as an effect of racial capitalism in the form of redlining, racial segregation, and suburbanization (Gibson, 2007). As these systemic factors were slowly removed, redevelopment and capital investments returned to the area (Smith, 1987).

III. Racial Capitalism

1. Divide and Conquer

Racism is not new to the United States. The successful growth of capitalism in this country was in large part a product of colonial projects managed by white settlers who bought and sold enslaved Black people and forced them to build wealth for a property-owning minority on land ethnically cleansed of its native inhabitants (Zinn, 2003). Many early white settlers in Oregon came from southern slave states and wanted to keep Oregon as a white-only territory (Nokes, 2020). Throughout 20th century, a large factor in suburbanization and the development of the rent gap was ongoing discrimination against Black citizens of America (Smith, 1987;

McElderry, 2001; Gibson, 2007). While some claim falsely that racial segregation is a product of individual feelings of racial animus, history shows that capitalism spread in via trade wars and colonization which institutionalized dividing people according to differences of race, religion and geography (Zinn, 2003).

Capitalism *is* racial capitalism. Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups... These antinomies of accumulation- require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires.

(Melamed, 2015, pp. 77)

By dividing Black neighborhoods from white one, multiple new forms of economic exploitation were able to be developed in Portland. Firstly, higher rental prices be realized by landlords whose tenants were restricted from looking for housing elsewhere as discussed above (Smith, 1982). Additionally, unscrupulous investors were able to create new tactics such as block-busting to profiteer from the neighborhood filtering. Block-busting was a collection of unethical practices by which real estate agents and bank representatives encourage white families to move out of a neighborhood with threats of decreasing property values, interracial relationships between young people, and sexual assaults of white women by the new Black residents (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). By inciting fear of Black people moving to white neighborhoods, unscrupulous developers and real estate agents could make a tidy profit by buying houses at deflated prices from scared white residents fleeing to the suburbs while charging inflated prices to the Black residents moving in who, due to the PRB's policy of segregation, had no other choices for housing outside of Albina neighborhoods (Smith, 1979).

2. Suburbanization

Suburbanization is in part a result of the material changes available with increased technological development of infrastructure in the late 19th through the mid-20th century (Smith, 1979). With the expansion first of rail and then of highway infrastructure, middle-class and wealthy white consumers could choose to pay more for a residence farther away from the spatial location of their place of work than was available previously (Hoyt, 1936). In 1934 the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was created to operate as a sort of federal insurance program to encourage lenders to offer more mortgages and in doing so create more demand for construction (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). From the beginning, segregation was built into FHA policy, with one 1938 federal regulation for banks reading “Areas surrounding a location are [to be] investigated to determine whether incompatible racial and social groups are present” (Medoff & Sklar, 1994).

In 1944, the “G.I. Bill” allowed returning veterans to access federally subsidized Veteran’s Affairs (VA) loans. This federally subsidized development of suburban infrastructure expanded the bi-modal urban development curve that Hoyt had observed in Chicago to urban areas all across the country (Smith, 1979). The majority of these loans were made to white veterans buying residences in suburban areas where housing was restricted by racial covenants embedded in the deeds of sale (University of Minnesota, 2020). Commuting between new suburban neighborhoods was often made economically feasible by new roads built as part of the federally funded highway system. Additionally, much of the new highway infrastructure built in this time had its locations planned for blighted areas and slum clearance, including Interstate-5 that was built through the economically productive heart of the Albina neighborhoods (Gibson, 2007).

3. Urban Blight and Slum Clearance

The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 is a specific example of how capitalist urbanization allows for the restructuring of spaces, power, and social relations of production (Mahmoudi, 2019). That year, when the federal funding for both Highway 99 and Interstate-5 was approved, the city used eminent domain laws to build the highway directly through the heart of the Albina district, demolishing thousands of residential units to do so (Gibson, 2007). Through federal laws and policies, city planners used the power of local government to create the conditions within sections of Albina neighborhoods for housing that would later be labeled by fellow city officials as “blighted” and in need of “slum clearance” (McElderry, 2001; Burke, 2016).

In the early 1970’s, planned expansions of the Immanuel Hospital led to the razing of 76-acres of residential and commercial buildings including the Fred Hampton’s People’s Free Health Clinic (Burke, 2016). Started in 1970 by the Portland Black Panthers, the Fred Hampton Clinic, with the help of white doctors from the Oregon Health and Science University, provided residents of the Albina Neighborhoods with free medical treatment. Despite strong community support and a negotiated settlement, the Portland Development commission secretly filed a notice of immediate eviction, leading local law enforcement officers and city officials to enter the medical clinic without warning on the morning of May 1st, 1973 (Burke, 2016). According to clinic staff “they had broken in and forcibly removed medical supplies, files, and equipment. In the process they had ruined more than \$1000 worth of vaccines and other medicines that required refrigeration” (Burke, 2016). Eventually the health clinic would be relocated to the same

building that already housed the first and possibly only Black Panthers dental clinic, the Malcolm X People's Dental Clinic.

Despite being labeled as blighted, many of the buildings in Albina that were demolished during the highway construction, and later under the auspices of slum clearance, were economically thriving businesses including the “Main Street” of Albina at the corner of Williams and Russell (Gibson, 2007). During this period, the city demolished residential housing in the Elliott area for the Portland Public School District office and a city water bureau building. With no new housing developments and racial barriers to leaving the Albina Neighborhoods, Black residents of Portland faced a shrinking housing supply.

4. Consumer Choice in Housing

Since housing is necessary for social reproduction, the housing market displays aspects of capital production with goals set by developers and absentee property owners such as landlords, rather than being primarily driven by consumer choice (Smith, 1979; Harvey, 1982). One driver of change is the capital production goals expressed by the price of real estate. In modern urban environments, many of the potential uses of the land for capital production are constrained by zoning (Harvey, 1989). This usually means that the potential options for use are constrained in spatial block groups by type such as light and heavy industrial, residential, commercial, or mixed commercial and residential. Changes in top-down constraints on development types is what often gives rise to development opportunities discussed in both rent gap and gentrification theory, but the economic factors driving the change are systemic with the factors stemming from top-down driven realities rather than from individual choices (Smith, 1979; Harvey, 1982). Albina neighborhood's history shows again and again how governmental policy, institutional segregation and redlining, and individual acts of crime and violence against Black people and

Black owned property superseded individual consumer choices of Black residents of Portland (McElderry, 2001; Gibson, 2007).

In addition to the structural factors that guide large development strategies, consumer choice has been found to be malleable. From well-funded PR-campaigns to unethical block-busting tactics, there are many methods by which economic institutions work to shape consumer choices (Medoff & Sklar, 1994; Stauber, 2004). It follows therefore that the influence of individualized consumer choices on residential changes at an urban scale are limited at best (Smith, 1982).

The modern economic form in the United States, with a mix of free-market and control-capitalism systems, ensures that the tax-base that supports the working of the state is maintained (Harvey, 1982). Historically, this has meant that public funds, be they raised by federal, city or municipal governments will rehabilitate, at the public expense, privately-owned spaces that privately-owned corporations have reduced in value, whether environmentally or economically (Smith, 1979). Superfund sites are an example of the former, urban renewal of the latter.

Since locations selected to be improved or degraded typically happens via government zoning regulations, the nominally small-government focus advocated for by financial institutions and professional groups in regard to business-led policy at the local-level is in fact a process of socially engineering the economy to fit the interests of private corporate institutions (Harvey, 1989). This can be seen in Albina history by the PRB's ability to create, and for decades enforce, housing regulations such as redlining with little governmental influence or interference (Gibson, 2007)

IV. HISTORICAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GENTRIFICATION

1. Early 20th Century: Segregation in Oregon

Fear of racial integration and economic competition led to wide-spread segregation throughout Oregon, starting in the 19th century (McElderry, 2001; Burke, 2016). Many of Portland's founding fathers were formerly non-slave owning southern farmers who spoke about making Oregon into a white-only region to prevent economic competition with slave owners (Nokes, 2020). While African American citizens bore the brunt of the racial violence, law segregating Chinese people and other minorities were also in effect, giving rise to ethnic enclaves, such as Portland's westside Chinatown (Gibson, 2007).

In 1843, the white settlers of Oregon had voted to prohibit slavery in Oregon Territory, inserting language from the 1787 Northwest Ordinance that read: "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted" (Nokes, 2020). Less than one year later, the law was amended by the Oregon provisional government's legislature, led by Peter Burnett of Missouri, a former slave owner and later governor of California. In amending the law, slave owners were given additional time before having to "remove" slaves from the territory or face having the people they owned emancipated. The effect of this time extension was that full, statewide emancipation was delayed by three years. This amendment, which was referred to darkly at the time as "Peter Burnett's lash law", also forbade free Black people from residing in Oregon under penalty of public flogging. No one is thought to have been punished under the "lash law". It was considered overly cruel even by the standards of the day and was rescinded by the public in 1845. While in effect, "Burnett's lash law" is known to have encouraged some Black immigrants to Oregon to settle north of the Columbia River, in an area controlled at the

time by the British Empire and thus outside the reach of the Oregon government's racist policy (Nokes, 2020).

Although enforcement is thought to have been lax, the Black exclusion laws set a precedence of white separatism for the Oregon Territory and Portland maintained a tiny Black population prior to the turn of the century (Gibson, 2007). During this time, Portland's Black population was mostly men with employment in the service sector, such as porters on the Pullman railroad cars (Burke, 2016). These Black citizens tended to live on the westside, close to the Union Station adjacent to Chinatown in an area now known as Old Town (McElderry, 2001).

During the 1910-1940 "ghetto-building" period, Portland's Black residents, a population numbering approximately 1,900 souls, were penned into a two-mile-long by one-mile-wide area of Lower Albina now in the Elliot census block (McElderry, 2001). In 1913, with the opening of the Broadway Bridge, Black residents of Portland began to move into what was later known as Lower Albina. Expanding Streetcar service was creating a growth of suburban housing in Portland east of the Willamette River and by 1919 the Portland Realty Board (PRB) "adopted a rule declaring it unethical for an agent to sell property to either Negro or Chinese people in a White neighborhood" (Gibson, 2007). Over the years, when multiple African American families attempted to live outside of the Albina neighborhoods in direct disregard to the PRB rule, they were subject to repeated harassment and violent attacks (McElderry, 2001). In 1930, Dr. Unthank, a pioneering medical inventor, practicing physician, and later co-founder of the Portland branch of the Urban League, had his life threatened and his house repeatedly vandalized after refusing a signed petition demanding his eviction from the neighborhood. In 1960, Rowan and Parthina Wiley's house located on NE 140th Ave was

destroyed by a gasoline bomb after they won a lengthy legal battle to build it and live there (McElderry, 2001).

Despite a lack of legal enforcement of segregationist policy, the wide scale collaboration of white homeowners and real estate agents with the PRB gave rise to three periods of “ghetto-building” in Portland (McElderry, 2001). The first occurred between 1910-1940, the second in the 1940s during the wartime industry boom. The third period of intentional, publicly planned segregation came in the 1950s, mostly in response to a flood wiping out much of the previous segregated housing (Gibson, 2007).

In the 1942, due to the growing population of Black workers moving to Portland following shipbuilding jobs tied to the war effort, and facing the inability to build more housing in the already overcrowded Albina neighborhoods due to the racist backlash of Portland’s white civic leadership, such as the president of the Central East Portland Community Club who suggested that Black workers were criminals by default and thus should be restricted to areas outside of city limits, the Kaiser Shipyards built a public housing complex that would become known as Vanport on a narrow strip of the Columbia River floodplain north of city limits (Skovgaard, 2007, Burke, 2016). Sited between the Columbian river on the north and the industrially polluted Columbia slough on the south, by 1943 Vanport was home to over 25,000 people of which 2,156 or just under 10 percent, were African American. In 1944, the population of Vanport was almost 15 percent and in 1945, the last year Vanport had a census, the number had increased again to more than 20 percent (Burke, 2016). Vanport’s segregated housing ceased on the afternoon of Sunday May 30th, 1948, when the dike failed and a 10-foot wall of water flooded through town (PSU, 2001). Rather than a preemptive evacuation in response to the days

of heavy rain and rising river level, the Housing Authority of Portland had distributed flyers that morning at a local church reading;

DIKES ARE SAFE AT PRESENT
YOU WILL BE WARNED IF NECESSARY
YOU WILL HAVE TIME TO LEAVE
DON'T GET EXCITED
(Skovgaard, 2007, pp. 97)

Within two hours of the breach, the entire town of Vanport was underwater and over 18,000 residents were permanently displaced, including approximately 6,000 African Americans (McElderry, 2001).

The growth in Portland's Black district could be measured not only in persons, but also in space. Even after the flooding of Vanport, PRB policy required African American move into the neighborhoods around Williams Avenue. In the 1950's, Humboldt, King, Woodlawn, Vernon, Sabin, Irvington and the Lloyd District, neighborhoods to the north and west of Eliot and Boise (see Figure 4 below), were added to the area in which the Black citizens of Portland were permitted to live (Gibson, 2007). It was during this time that Portland's Black district began to be known as the Albina neighborhoods, rather than Williams Avenue. Those neighborhoods south of Fremont Street (Eliot, Irvington, and Lloyd) became known as Lower Albina, while the neighborhoods to the north of Fremont came to be referred to as Upper Albina (McElderry, 2001).

Despite already high rates of population density, the city of Portland chose to take formal actions in the following decades that would lessen, rather than expand, livable housing for the Black community in the area (Gibson, 2007). Examples of city and federal policies that lessened the amount of housing available in the Albina area included tearing down residential buildings designated as blighted and demolishing economically productive commercial zones to use the locations for new infrastructure such as highways and sports stadiums (McElderry, 2001).

2. Late 20th Century: Blight and Clearance

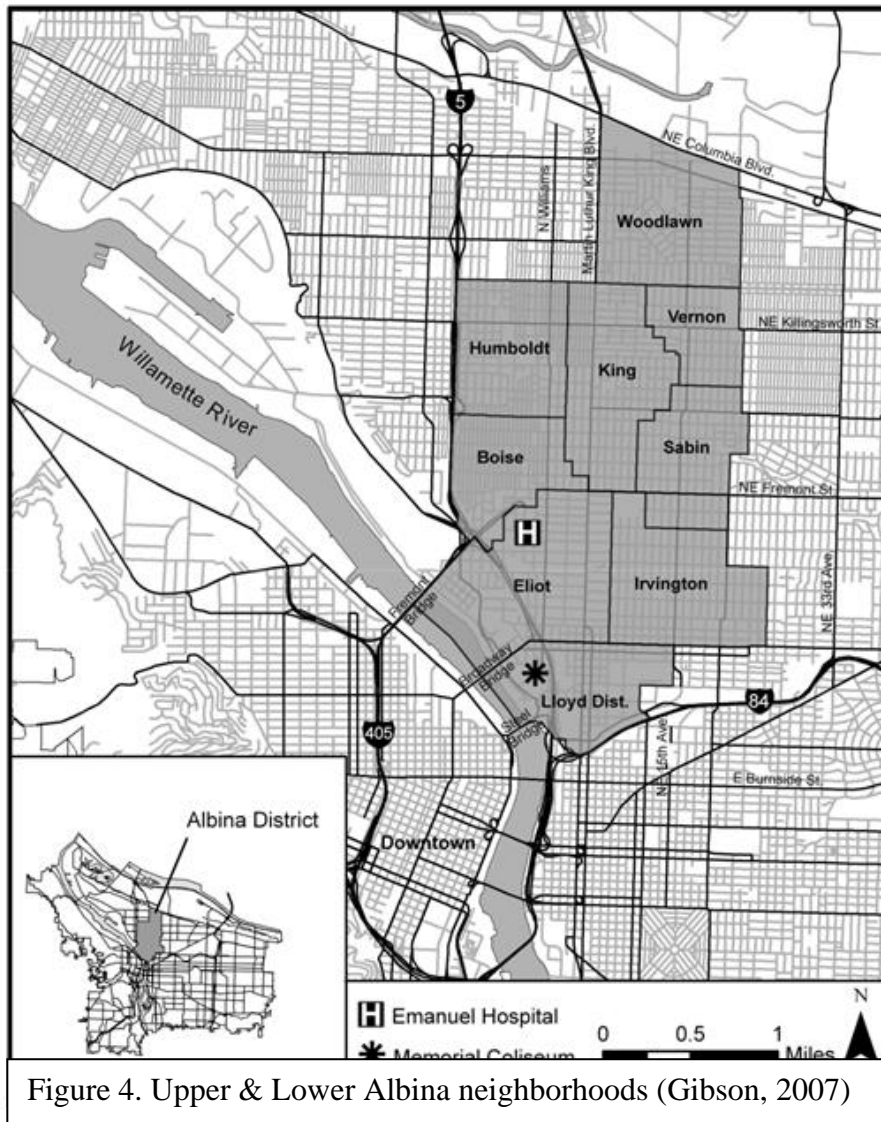


Figure 4. Upper & Lower Albina neighborhoods (Gibson, 2007)

In 1956, the city government decided to locate the Memorial Coliseum in Lower Albina, which included the removal of over 450 residential homes and additional commercial space, approximately half of which was lived in by Black citizens of Portland (McElderry, 2001). In response, the city built forty new housing units but refused to use city funds

to help pay for rehousing residents displaced by the city's use of eminent domain. Likewise, when the Federal Highway Act of 1956 provided federal funding for both Highway 99 and Interstate-5, Portland's city leadership used eminent domain to build the highway directly through the heart of the Albina district, demolishing thousands of residential units to do so (Gibson, 2007).

By 1960, 80% of Black residents of Portland lived in the 4.2 square mile region known as Albina (Gibson, 2007). One of the major conflicts between the city of Portland and the residents of Albina neighborhoods was the redevelopment policies, often referred to by the city as removal of "urban blight" and "slum clearance" (Burke, 2016).

Throughout the 1960s, the city of Portland's government condemned large swathes of the Albina, both residential housing and thriving business districts, in the name of removing neighborhood blight (Gibson, 2007). This included buildings demolished as part of a planned expansion of the Immanuel Hospital, located on Williams Avenue. Although there was some support early on by the Black community for the renovations, by the late 1960's the mood of the neighborhood had soured on the project and some Albina residents had organized the Portland Black Panthers Party to oppose the hospital expansion. According to one report presented to the city of Portland in 1971 stated that "Many people, particularly the elderly, want to remain" (Burke, 2016). Despite the organized resistance from both elderly citizens and militant youth residents of the neighborhood, the city continued to raze hundreds of buildings in the Elliot Neighborhood of Lower Albina to make way for the planned 76-acre expansion. After the residents had been removed and the buildings pulled down, due to the nature of large project funding, the Immanuel Hospital expansions were only built on a small fraction of the land cleared. Many of the residential lots would lay empty for the decades prior to gentrification and

the Boise and Elliot neighborhoods around Williams Ave became known in the 1980's and 1990's as a locus for drug sales, solicitation, and other gang-tied activities (Hosford, 2009).

It was also during this time that the city razed residential housing in the Elliott neighborhood for a school district office building and a water bureau building. Despite promises of relocation funding and reimbursements from the PDC, the city of Portland “undercompensated or simply denied benefits to save city and federal funds, which further inflamed tensions between the city governments and the northeast [Albina] neighborhoods” (Burke, 2016).

According to the law of supply and demand, raising the demand for housing in turn raises the value of the ground rent and helps alleviate the devaluation cycle without necessitating the infrastructure upgrades generally necessary to offset capital devaluation. Thus, landlords of properties in the Albina neighborhoods, often white residents of white-only neighborhoods, were financially aided by state and federal policies at the expense of the residents of the Albina neighborhoods.

Additionally, the labeling of large sections of Albina as blight in need of slum clearance created the conditions of capital devaluation shown in Hoyt's bi-modal model (see Figure 3 above). Lower property values close to the commercial district create a rent gap with potential profit to be realized when the rent gap closes due to capital revaluation.

The movement of capital into suburban development led to a systematic devalorization of inner and central city capital, and this, in turn, with the development of the rent gap, led to the creation of new investment opportunities in the inner city precisely because an effective barrier to new investment had previously operated there. (Smith, 1982, pp. 149)

Despite the ending of redlining and other segregationist policies, Albina continued to face new and ongoing challenges including high rates of non-resident home ownership, high tenancy, and high vacancy rates (Gibson, 2007). King and Boise neighborhoods alone, only about 1% of the total geographic area of Portland, contained more than a quarter of the abandoned housing units in the city. Empty lots not only increased the sense of urban blight that downtown labeled the area with, but also belied the land speculation wherein in addition to residential housing for rent, higher-income communities of Portland owned empty businesses and lots within the Albina neighborhoods, paying reduced taxes due to the blight label while waiting for property values to increase (Hosford, 2009). Due to these structural factors, the value of land in Albina was much lower than equivalently maintained structures in other neighborhoods (Gibson, 2007). This rent gap encouraged new residents to move into the Albina neighborhoods and by 1990, Irvington, King-Sabin, Humboldt, and Boise neighborhoods all experienced severe decline in the Black population, from 49% to 38%, see Figure 5 below.

			Percent Black			
	Census Tracts	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Lower Albina						
Eliot	22.01	69	50	35	38	58
	22.02	72	54	43	41	25
	23.01	65	77	62	58	41

Irvington	24.01	14	43	38	33	23
Lloyd	23.02	54	45	28	25	20
Upper Albina						
Boise	34.02	67	84	73	70	50
Humbolt	34.01	40	65	69	69	52
King	33.01	21	61	63	63	54
King-Sabin	33.02	31	62	64	58	43
Woodlawn	36.01	12	36	49	62	51

Figure 5. Black demographics of Albina neighborhoods by decade. (Gibson, 2007)

At the same time, white residency in Albina went from up to 61% by the end of the 1990’s, predominantly with white homeowners replacing Black renters (Gibson, 2007). This is in line with predictions from gentrification theory. As the rent gap grows larger due to decrease of ground rent, there is more financial incentive to invest in the property in expectation of future public pressure to mitigate the factors that create the rent gap.

When, and only when, this rent gap between actual and potential ground rent becomes sufficiently large, redevelopment and rehabilitation into new land uses becomes a profitable prospect, and capital begins to flow back into the inner-city market. (Smith, 1982, pp. 149)

During the 1990s, the city of Portland began reinvesting in the Albina neighborhood. One form this revitalization took was through enforcement of city building codes to crack down on dilapidated and abandoned housing (Hosford, 2009). The city also made use of federal

opportunities such as Community Development Block Grants and Community Development Corporations and by the end of the decade property values in Albina were on par with the rest of the city (Gibson, 2007). These public investments allow property owners to realize more actual value of the potential ground rent, closing the rent gap and causing a revaluation of capital, i.e. gentrification. within the Albina neighborhoods (Smith, 1987).

3. 21st Century Economic Displacement

By the year 2000, Black Portlanders made up less than one-third of the residents of the Albina neighborhoods (Gibson, 2007). Additionally, there were no other Portland neighborhoods in which African Americans made up a majority of the population (Sullivan & Shaw, 2011).

It was during this time that several commercial districts in the Albina area began to grow again but catering to a new demographic of consumers (Sullivan & Shaw, 2011). Most notably on Mississippi Avenue, Williams Avenue and Alberta Street, where Black-owned bars, inexpensive taquerias and locally owned grocery stores once flourished, now art galleries, boutique gift shops and trendy restaurants began to spring up (Walker, 2019). Not only did the storefronts change, but where in the 1990's only convenience stores and outreach churches broke up the dozens of acres of empty lots left over from the Immanuel Hospital expansion project, by 2010 development of mid-rise condominiums up and down Williams had changed the social demographics of the neighborhood (Sullivan & Shaw, 2011). Where once Williams Avenue had been viewed as a dangerous area, it was quickly becoming an area on the short list to become one of several locations to be chosen for the opening of a new corporate health food store (Drew, 2011; Oregonian/OregonLive, 2014)

While some long-time residents of Albina express that they feel safer in their neighborhood now than they did in the 1980s and early 1990s, others express feelings of alienation within their own neighborhoods due to cultural differences with newer residents (Drew, 2011). Many long-time residents note a proliferation of businesses taking advantage of financial and tax incentives for situating inside of a redevelopment area while gearing their products and their retail experience towards the tastes of higher-income residents of other neighborhoods (Sullivan & Shaw, 2011). Despite promises that social improvements would be felt by all, many of the former residents of Albina now live east of 82nd Avenue, in former white-flight suburbs built around the same time as Albina's ghetto-building period (Walker, 2019). These neighborhoods often have even less public investment in infrastructure than Albina did pre-gentrification, most notable the lack of safe walking options, traffic flow management, & public transportation (Howland, 2020). This shows that the gentrification of Albina neighborhoods has displaced rather than materially benefited or improved in a demonstrable way the living conditions of Albina's former residents.

V. Conclusion

Gentrification is a systemic function of capitalist processes within the urban ecology of the built environment. Gentrification fits well within Hoyt's 1936 Sector Model of urban development and the rent gap described in gentrification theory can be seen in Hoyt's bi-modal line graph, the Evolution of Land Values (see Figure 3 above). The rent gap is a failure to realize the full potential ground rent of the property given its location and it is created by the political

economy of economically stratified neighborhoods wherein those with more money and social power can afford to live further away from urban core (Smith, 1979). This creates a spatial gap with property of lower ground rent value spatially located in the zone between the high-value financial and industrial commercial core of the urban area and the peripheral suburban housing developments of the “Residential” and “Commuter” zones (Burgess, 1928).

Increases in the rent gap are most often an effect of neighborhood filtering, a change in zoning regulations, or institutional block-busting, rather than as a product of capital devaluation through lack of materially upkeeping individual buildings during the devalorization-cycle (Smith, 1982). As we have seen in the history of Portland’s Albina neighborhoods, the segregationist policies of the PRB turned previously middle-income residential housing into urban blight through the redlining of Albina neighborhoods, followed by decades of inner-city “ghetto-building” and restrictive racial covenants in white-only suburbs to “cancel the intentions of those planning to house Negroes and other undesirable persons in all districts in which we have our homes” (McElderry, 2001).

This lowering of potential ground rent and the increase in the rent gap within the Albina neighborhood was also exacerbated by the Portland city leadership’s choice to locate federally funded highway construction through previously economically vibrant neighborhoods such as Albina’s “Main Street” (Gibson, 2007). Both state laws and federal administrative policies purposefully denied Black citizens equal access to high-quality suburban housing and instead isolated Black people into Albina’s segregated neighborhoods where the city refused to invest in capital maintenance and public infrastructure (McElderry, 2001). Unfortunately, a de-facto policy of racialized space continues into the present with modern infrastructure improvements targeting gentrified neighborhoods like Albina, rather than the infrastructure-light outer boroughs

to which the economically displaced residents of Albina have relocated (Goodling, 2015; Howland, 2020).

Given the last 50's years of economic and racial history in Portland, it is hard to imagine a return to a racially heterogeneous, working class and mixed-income demographics in the Albina neighborhoods for the foreseeable future. While the 20th century infrastructure investment focused on expansive automobile highways and suburban growth, movement in the 21st century has swung back to investments in transitional neighborhoods close to the urban core (Goodling, 2015). From green-focused energy reduction, to increased interest in retro architecture and a desire for nearness to the urban core, the effects of urban renewal and the attempt to remove so-called urban blight has led neighborhoods that were formerly ethnic enclaves with a reputation for criminal activities to be reinvented into places that are considered appropriate for tourists to visit to sample the culture and nightlife.

While there is little question that for the foreseeable future the Albina neighborhoods will continue to house a higher-income demographic than it had in the early 20th century. It is up to the city's current citizens to grapple with the economic displacement of its lower-income residents. It will be seen in the coming years if the current political upheaval, with its increased frequency of street protests and calls for racial justice, will affect a change in the perceived legitimacy of individuals and communities' access to space with Portland, Oregon. Who is legitimately entitled to the streets and homes of Woodlawn, King, and Elliot neighborhoods? It seems unlikely that future calls for economic reparations will fare any better than previous calls throughout recent history, but much depends on the votes and cultural values of Portland's newest residents, a community that is far less demographically homogeneous than those who have been economically displaced from Portland's Albina's neighborhoods.

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