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Environmental Gentrification in Chicago: Perceptions, Dilemmas and Paths Forward

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Environmental Gentrification in Chicago: Perceptions, Dilemmas and Paths Forward

Colette Copic, Tania Schusler and Amy Krings

September 2020

Institute of Environmental Sustainability and School of Social Work

Loyola University Chicago

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Executive Summary

Purpose

Access to greenspace, clean air, water, food, and safe, affordable, and stable housing are all important to good health. Yet, low income and communities of color endure disproportionate pollution burdens that negatively affect health. While cleaning up contamination or implementing "green" improvements like parks, playgrounds, bike trails, and other greenspaces can reduce health disparities, these environmental improvements sometimes contribute to rising rents and property values, which can displace the very residents intended to benefit from these amenities. This has been called "environmental gentrification." This research sheds light on perceptions of environmental gentrification in Chicago. It also identifies policies and practices that hold potential to promote environmentally healthy neighborhoods and equitable development without displacement.

Methods

The research involved interviewing 27 individuals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds who possess deep knowledge related to land use through their professional or lived experience in community development, environmental justice, housing justice, industrial development, public health, real estate finance, and/or urban planning. We also reviewed related documents.

Findings 1: Gentrification *and* Disinvestment Can Displace Working Class Residents

- The higher cost of living associated with gentrification can harm neighborhoods by displacing residents and businesses, as well as disrupting social networks and community culture. In many cases, people of color are pushed out by an influx of wealthier and white residents. However, gentrification can also benefit some legacy residents through, for example, increased home equity.
- As land uses change on the North side of Chicago, polluting industries are migrating to the city's South side, further consolidating pollution and worsening health inequity.
- Disinvestment resulting in poor access to employment, education, transit, healthy foods, retail outlets, and other public and private services not only detrimentally affects health but can lead some families to seek improved living conditions elsewhere.
- Disinvestment can be a precursor to future gentrification.

Findings 2: Drivers of Disinvestment and Gentrification

- Structural racism, market forces, piecemeal policies, and power disparities among actors are factors that drive land use decisions with inequitable outcomes.
- Without proactive effort to redress racial inequities, seemingly neutral development decisions in actuality reinforce existing disparities.
- Reactive policy responses to the forces driving displacement -- and policies that in some instances contribute to displacement -- place the burden of fighting for affordability on legacy residents.

Findings 3: Environmental Gentrification in Chicago

- Concern about environmental gentrification varies. Interviewees from gentrifying neighborhoods worried that investments in environmental improvements will accelerate gentrification already occurring, whereas those from disinvested neighborhoods often sought investment, particularly in people themselves through education, training, and capacity-building.
- A paradox exists in that immigrants, legacy, and working class residents who improve their neighborhoods through business development, community gardens, and the arts not only make the neighborhood more appealing for themselves but also to gentrifiers.
- Respondents voiced concerns about who ultimately benefits from environmental improvements in regard to several projects in Chicago, including but not limited to the 606 Trail, *El Paseo* Trail, redevelopment of the South Works U.S. Steel Manufacturing Plant, and Big Marsh Bike Park.
- Recognizing that decisions about environmental cleanup, parks, trails, or other green amenities are not politically neutral, some interviewees called specifically on environmental organizations to incorporate a wider range of issues that affect local communities into their traditionally siloed work.

Findings 4: Development without Displacement

- Myriad policy interventions and other strategies (Tables 2a-2e) hold potential to help encourage access to green amenities and their associated health benefits without displacement. No single intervention will be sufficient; rather, multi-faceted solutions are needed that promote affordable housing, generate jobs, improve health and safety, advance sustainable development, and build wealth in communities of color.
- Many policies and practices noted in this research may reduce harm caused by disinvestment, gentrification, displacement, and racialized exclusion. Yet, because structural racism exists, communities of color will more likely suffer from land use decisions whether through disinvestment or investment. This highlights the need for policy interventions that go beyond reducing harm to redistribute material and decision-making resources toward communities of color. To do so will require redressing existing power disparities and authentically engaging communities of color in land use decision processes.

Findings 5: Community Engagement Toward Co-Governance

- Many respondents called for deepening relationships among government agencies, technical experts, and community-based groups so that residents' local expertise would inform land use decisions to improve neighborhoods and the lives of people living there.
- Adopting a "co-governance" model increases the likelihood that the communities most often excluded from planning processes and harmed by land use decisions can influence how investments are made in their neighborhoods in order to benefit from them. Co-governance involves shared decision-making between local communities and other stakeholders in land use decisions; generates collective understanding and action by drawing from everyone's

unique strengths, vantage points, and capacities; and prioritizes governmental transparency and accountability to the communities affected by development decisions.

- Many organizers, activists, and community development practitioners are building long term relationships with residents, forming collaborations across issues and neighborhoods, and working toward equitable development. The City can learn from and scale up these approaches.
- Because privileges associated with socio-economic status and racial identity can greatly influence an individual's ability to participate in civic engagement, it is critical that the City and other conveners allocate sufficient funds to ensure accessibility in community engagement processes.
- Social equity assessments offer a tool for giving explicit consideration to impacts related to economic, racial, and environmental justice in land use decisions.

Resumen Ejecutivo

Propósito

El acceso a espacios verdes, aire limpio, agua, alimentos y viviendas seguras, accesibles y estables son importantes para la buena salud. Sin embargo, las comunidades de bajos ingresos y de color soportan cargas de contaminación desproporcionadas que afectan negativamente la salud. Si bien reducir la contaminación o implementar mejoras "ecológicas" como parques, áreas de juego, senderos para bicicletas y otros espacios verdes pueden reducir las disparidades en la salud, estas mejoras ambientales a veces contribuyen a aumentar las rentas y el valor de las propiedades, lo que puede desplazar a los mismos residentes que se pretenden beneficiar de estos servicios. A esto se le ha llamado "gentrificación ambiental". Esta investigación esclarece las percepciones de la gentrificación ambiental en Chicago. También identifica políticas y prácticas que tienen potencial para promover vecindarios ambientalmente saludables y un desarrollo equitativo sin desplazamiento.

Métodos

La investigación involucró entrevistar a 27 personas de diversos orígenes raciales y étnicos que poseen un conocimiento profundo relacionado con el uso del suelo a través de su experiencia profesional o vivida en desarrollo comunitario, justicia ambiental, justicia habitacional, desarrollo industrial, salud pública, finanzas inmobiliarias y/o planificación urbana. También revisamos documentos relacionados.

Hallazgos 1: La Gentrificación y la Desinversión Pueden Desplazar a los Residentes de la Clase Trabajadora

- El mayor costo de vida asociado con la gentrificación puede dañar los vecindarios al desplazar a los residentes y las empresas, además de alterar las redes sociales y la cultura comunitaria. En muchos casos, las personas de color son expulsadas por la afluencia de residentes blancos y más ricos. Sin embargo, la gentrificación también puede beneficiar a algunos residentes tradicionales a través, por ejemplo, de un aumento del valor neto de la vivienda.
- A medida que cambian los usos del suelo en el lado Norte de Chicago, las industrias contaminantes están migrando hacia el lado Sur de la ciudad, consolidando aún más la contaminación y empeorando la inequidad en materia de salud.
- La desinversión que da como resultado un acceso deficiente al empleo, la educación, el tránsito, los alimentos saludables, los puntos de venta y otros servicios públicos y privados no solo afecta negativamente la salud, sino que puede llevar a algunas familias a buscar mejores condiciones de vida en otros lugares.
- La desinversión puede ser un precursor de la gentrificación futura.

Hallazgos 2: Impulsores de la Desinversión y la Gentrificación

- ❖ El racismo estructural, las fuerzas del mercado, las políticas fragmentadas y las disparidades de poder entre los actores son factores que impulsan las decisiones sobre el uso del suelo con resultados no equitativos.
- ❖ Sin un esfuerzo proactivo para corregir las desigualdades raciales, las decisiones de desarrollo aparentemente neutrales en realidad refuerzan las disparidades existentes.
- ❖ Las respuestas políticas reactivas a las fuerzas que impulsan el desplazamiento, y las políticas que en algunos casos contribuyen al desplazamiento, colocan la responsabilidad de luchar por la accesibilidad en los residentes tradicionales.

Hallazgos 3: Gentrificación Ambiental en Chicago

- ❖ La preocupación por la gentrificación ambiental varía. A los entrevistados de vecindarios en proceso de gentrificación les preocupaba que las inversiones en mejoras ambientales aceleren el proceso de gentrificación que ya se está produciendo, mientras que los de vecindarios sin inversión a menudo buscaron inversiones, especialmente en las personas mismas a través de la educación, la formación y el desarrollo de capacidades.
- ❖ Existe una paradoja en que los inmigrantes, los tradicionales y los residentes de la clase trabajadora que mejoran sus vecindarios a través del desarrollo empresarial, los jardines comunitarios y las artes, no solo hacen que el vecindario sea más atractivo para ellos, sino también para los aburguesados.
- ❖ Los encuestados expresaron su preocupación sobre quién se beneficia en última instancia de las mejoras ambientales con respecto a varios proyectos en Chicago, que incluyen, entre otros, el Sendero 606, el Sendero El Paseo, la remodelación de la Planta de Fabricación de Acero South Works U.S. y el Parque de Bicicletas Big Marsh.
- ❖ Reconociendo que las decisiones sobre limpieza ambiental, parques, senderos u otros servicios verdes no son políticamente neutrales, algunos entrevistados pidieron específicamente a las organizaciones ambientales que incorporen una gama más amplia de temas que afectan a las comunidades locales en su trabajo tradicionalmente aislado.

Hallazgos 4: Desarrollo sin Desplazamiento

- ❖ Una miríada de intervenciones de política y otras estrategias (Tablas 2a-2e) tienen potencial para ayudar a fomentar el acceso a servicios ecológicos y sus beneficios para la salud asociados sin desplazamiento. Ninguna intervención única será suficiente; más bien, se necesitan soluciones multifacéticas que promuevan viviendas accesibles, generen empleos, mejoren la salud y la seguridad, promuevan el desarrollo sostenible y generen riqueza en las comunidades de color.
- ❖ Muchas políticas y prácticas señaladas en esta investigación pueden reducir el daño causado por la desinversión, gentrificación, desplazamiento y exclusión racial. Sin embargo, debido a que existe el racismo estructural, es más probable que las comunidades de color se vean afectadas por las decisiones sobre el uso del suelo, ya sea por desinversión o inversión. Esto resalta la necesidad de intervenciones de políticas que vayan más allá de la reducción de daños para redistribuir materiales y recursos para la toma de decisiones hacia las

comunidades de color. Para hacerlo, será necesario corregir las disparidades de poder existentes e involucrar auténticamente a las comunidades de color en los procesos de decisión del uso del suelo.

Hallazgos 5: Compromiso de la Comunidad Hacia la Cogobernanza

- Muchos de los encuestados pidieron profundizar las relaciones entre las agencias gubernamentales, los expertos técnicos y los grupos comunitarios para que la experiencia local de los residentes informara las decisiones de uso del suelo para mejorar los vecindarios y las vidas de las personas que viven allí.
- La adopción de un modelo de "cogobernanza" aumenta la probabilidad de que las comunidades más a menudo excluidas de los procesos de planificación y perjudicadas por las decisiones de uso del suelo puedan influir en la forma en que se realizan las inversiones en sus vecindarios para beneficiarse de ellas. La cogobernanza implica la toma de decisiones compartida entre las comunidades locales y otros interesados en las decisiones sobre el uso del suelo; genera comprensión y acción colectivas al aprovechar las fortalezas, puntos de vista y capacidades únicos de todos; y prioriza la transparencia gubernamental y la rendición de cuentas a las comunidades afectadas por las decisiones de desarrollo.
- Muchos organizadores, activistas y profesionales del desarrollo comunitario están construyendo relaciones a largo plazo con los residentes, formando colaboraciones a través de asuntos y vecindarios, y trabajando hacia un desarrollo equitativo. La Ciudad puede aprender de estos enfoques y ampliarlos.
- Debido a que los privilegios asociados con el estatus socioeconómico y la identidad racial pueden influir en gran medida en la capacidad de un individuo para participar en la participación cívica, es fundamental que la Ciudad y otros convocantes asignen fondos suficientes para garantizar la accesibilidad en los procesos de participación comunitaria.
- Las evaluaciones de equidad social ofrecen una herramienta para considerar directamente los impactos relacionados con la justicia económica, racial y ambiental en las decisiones de uso del suelo.

Introduction

This research explored the relationship between neighborhood development and health equity in Chicago. As documented, low-income communities and communities of color are more likely to be exposed to environmental pollution and have less access to environmental amenities than neighborhoods that house more affluent or White residents. Consequently, low-income and communities of color are more likely to experience deleterious environmental health impacts.[1] This concern is pertinent in Chicago (Figures 1 and 2) due to the City's legacy of redlining,[2] persisting racial and economic segregation, and environmental racism.[3] Indeed, "the Chicago region has been recognized as one of the nation's most segregated and inequitable metropolitan areas, the result of a century of racially motivated investment, disinvestment and wealth extraction, and intentional separation of communities."[4]

For these reasons, many residents, activists, and scholars call for *environmental justice*, which "will be achieved when everyone enjoys: the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work."[5] Resisting economic exploitation and systemic racism, grassroots environmental justice movements occupy the frontlines of holding industries and government agencies accountable for addressing the pollution in their neighborhoods. Environmental justice advocates in Chicago and their allies have organized for green improvements like better access to clean air,[6] water,[7] food,[8] and greenspace.[9] This work has improved the lives of many residents, but the struggle for health equity -- the idea that everyone should have fair opportunity to attain their highest level of health and no one should be disadvantaged by their social, economic, demographic, or geographical status from achieving this potential[10] -- among Chicago populations continues.

In the context of a neo-liberal free market with power disparities and piecemeal environmental and housing regulations, cleaning up environmentally contaminated sites or constructing green amenities like parks and trails can potentially contribute to higher rents and property taxes, which might then lead to displacing working class residents and the local businesses

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[1] Zimring, *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States.*
[2] Greer, "Historic Home Mortgage Redlining in Chicago."
[3] Pellow, Garbage wars: The struggle for environmental justice in Chicago; Washington, *Packing Them In: An Archaeology of Environmental Racism in Chicago 1865-1954.*
[4] Elevated Chicago, "The Elevated Chicago Workplan 2018."
[5] EPA, "Environmental Justice."
[6] Peña, "Environmental Groups Call on City to Regulate Polluters"; Natural Resource Defense Council, "Press Release: Chicago Residents Hardest Hit by Pollution Call on City."
[7] Hawthorne and Matuszak, "As other cities dig up pipes made of toxic lead, Chicago resists."
[8] Lukach et al., "Activists and farmers tackle food deserts on Chicago's South Side."
[9] Henderson, "How Chicago's South Side is Creating the 'Un' High Line"; Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, "Reclaiming green space- A youth led struggle."
[10] World Health Organization, "Health Equity."

serving them. This phenomenon has been called *environmental gentrification,*[11] highlighting that environmental improvements sometimes accelerate broader gentrifying processes.

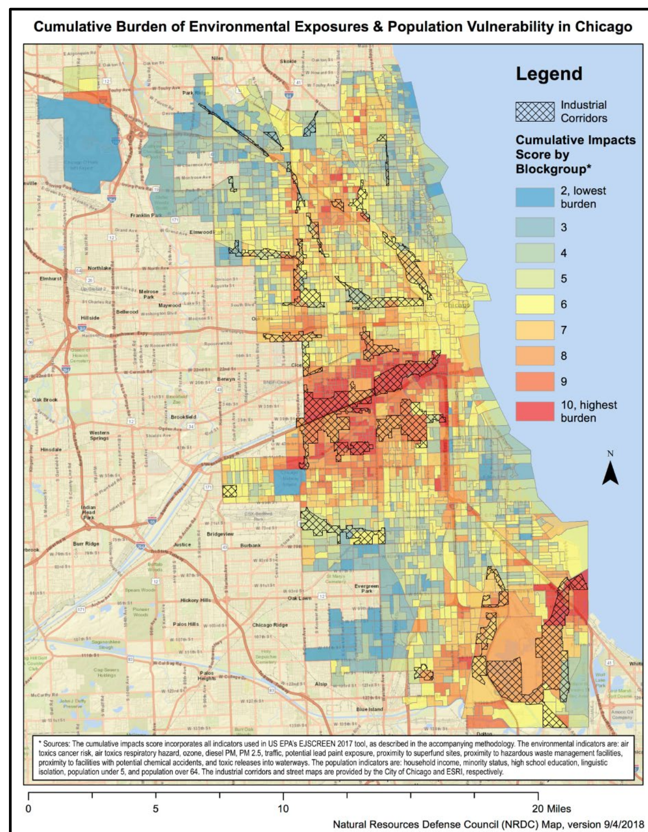

Figure 1. Map identifying Chicago neighborhoods most at risk from environmental pollution in 2018.[12] From Natural Resources Defense Council: https://www.nrdc.org/experts/meleah-geertsma/new-map-shows-chicago-needs-environmental-justice-reforms

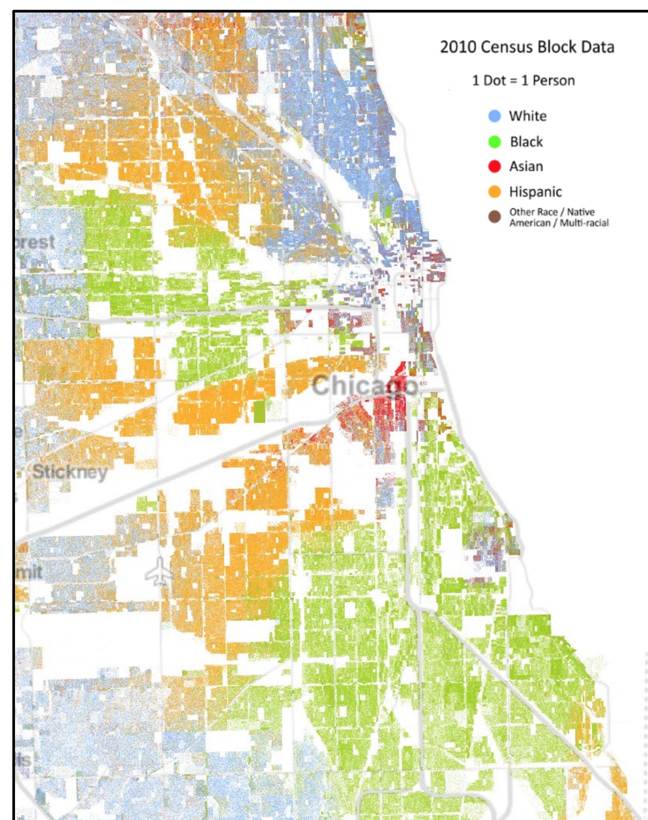

Figure 2. Map of racial distribution by household in Chicago from 2010 Census Data demonstrates that Chicago is highly segregated.[13] From University of Virginia: https://demographics.coopercenter.org/racial-dot-map

Gentrification, an evolving process with multiple stages and speeds, is distinguished by four key characteristics: "(1) reinvestment of capital, (2) increase in high-income demographics, (3) landscape change, and (4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups."[14] Some people view gentrification as a positive force that improves housing stock, increases property values, and catalyzes economic development. Some researchers also argue that gentrification affords blanket

[11] Checker, "Wiped out by the Greenwave: Environmental Gentrification and the Paradoxical Politics"; Curran and Hamilton, "Just Green Enough: Contesting Environmental Gentrification"; Essoka, "The Gentrifying Effects of Brownfields Redevelopment"; Schusler and Krings, "Addressing environmental gentrification: Improving environmental health for children and youth without displacement"; Krings and Schusler, "Equity in sustainable development: Community responses to environmental gentrification."

[12] Geertsma, "New Map Shows Chicago Needs Environmental Justice Reform."

[13] University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, "The Racial Dot Map."

[14] Davidson and Lees, "New-build 'gentrification' and London's riverside renaissance." As cited in Thurber, Krings, Martinez, Ohmer, "Resisting gentrification," 2.

health benefits to long term residents who remain in the neighborhood by boosting their access to health care networks.[15] However, legacy residents may experience a higher cost of living, disruptions in their community's culture and social networks, and heightened police activity[16] -- all of which can impair mental health.[17] The negative impacts of gentrification are most likely to affect people of color, because -- although gentrifying neighborhoods are not solely inhabited by people of color and new residents are not always White -- people of color are more likely to live in places vulnerable to gentrification.[18]

In the case of environmental gentrification, reduced contamination and/or improved access to greenspaces can benefit existing residents' physical and mental health.[19] Cleaning up contaminated sites can reduce health risks for nearby residents by improving air, soil, or water quality. Access to greenspace can improve cognitive attention, reduce stress, and foster social interaction.[20] Yet, these benefits will not be realized if they contribute to a higher cost of living that displaces working class residents.[21] Indeed, those displaced may move to more contaminated environments[22] where they face greater health risks. Furthermore, in some instances, even if not displaced, working-class residents do not benefit from greenspace, although benefits accrue to residents of gentrifying neighborhoods at large.[23] In this way, although improving environmental quality enhances the health of humans living in proximate areas, these health benefits are not always evenly distributed and hold the potential to ultimately reproduce environmental injustices.

Thus, with the goal of contributing to environmental justice and health equity, we sought to:

1) understand perceptions of land use practices, including environmental gentrification and displacement, in Chicago, and
2) identify policies and practices that can promote healthy and affordable communities.

To begin exploring these issues, we interviewed (Appendix A) 27 individuals who possess deep knowledge related to land use through their professional or lived experience in one or more of these areas: community development, environmental justice, housing justice, industrial development, public health, real estate finance, and urban planning. We were careful to interview people representing diverse standpoints including: living or working in geographical areas throughout Chicago (Figure 3), identifying with a diverse group of racial and ethnic backgrounds (Table 1), and representing public, private, and community-based organizations. Interviews occurred between October 20, 2019 and April 6, 2020. We analyzed transcripts of these interviews and identified the

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[15] Kennedy and Leonard, "Dealing with neighborhood change"; Sullivan, "From Food Desert to Food Mirage: Race, Social Class, and Food Shopping."
[16] Hyra, et al., "A Method for Making a Just City: Housing, Gentrification, and Health."
[17] Mehdipanah, et al. "Urban renewal, gentrification and health equity: a realist perspective."
[18] Thurber, Krings, Martinez, Ohmer. "Resisting gentrification: The theoretical and practice contributions of social work."
[19] Lim, et al., "Impact of residential displacement on healthcare access and mental health."
[20] Bratman, et al., "Nature and Mental Health: An Ecosystem Service Perspective."
[21] Essoka, "The Gentrifying Effects of Brownfields Redevelopment."
[22] Dale and Newman. "Sustainable Development for Some: Green Urban Development and Affordability."
[23] Cole, et al., "Determining the Health Effects of Green Space: Does Gentrification Matter?"

most important themes across respondents. We supplemented these interviews by reviewing related documents, such as news articles, websites, and reports.

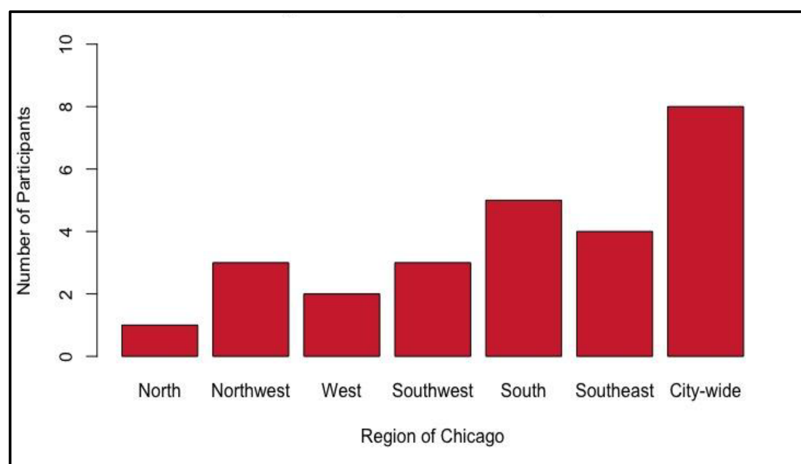

Figure 3. Interview participants lived or worked in varied regions in Chicago.

Table 1. Self-identified demographics of interview participants with respect to race or ethnicity, gender identity, and residency in Chicago.

Self Identified Demographic	*Number of Participants*
White	7
Latinx	5
Mexican	4
Black	2
Hispanic	2
Mixed	2
Mexican American	1
African American	1
Ugandan American	1
Indian-American	1
Asian	1
Total	27
She/her/hers	18
He/him/his	9
Total	27
Lifelong Resident of Chicago	16
11-20 years of Chicago Residency	7
2-10 years of Chicago Residency	4
Total	27

The participants interviewed possessed a wide array of knowledge and experience across multiple Chicago neighborhoods. We learned substantially from the wisdom that they graciously shared. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that many other people also could have contributed valuable insights about neighborhoods experiencing health disparities, environmental injustices, and gentrification. Although we could not fully capture the complex nuances of specific issues or neighborhoods, we report within general themes that we invite the reader to reflect upon and further explore. Our hope is that this research will contribute to conversation, reflection, and action to advance environmental justice in land use and community planning in Chicago.

In the following sections, we present our findings, beginning with perceptions of how gentrification and disinvestment drive displacement of working-class residents and people of color from Chicago (Findings 1: Gentrification and Disinvestment). Here we also discuss how this impacts neighborhood identity and quality of life for legacy residents. From there, we unpack the mechanisms driving disinvestment and gentrification, including structural racism, market forces, and reactive policies that attempt to mitigate harm rather than address root causes. We also shed light on power disparities among residents, developers, and decision-makers that perpetuate inequitable planning outcomes (Findings 2: Drivers). Specific concerns about environmental gentrification in Chicago are then described (Findings 3: Environmental Gentrification). Finally, we report policies and other strategies related to planning, housing, employment, public participation, and health that have the potential to promote healthy and affordable communities (Findings 4: Development without Displacement). We conclude by describing community engagement approaches that can foster environmental justice in the planning process (Findings 5: Co-governance).

Findings 1
Gentrification *and* Disinvestment Can Displace Working Class Residents

Our interviews revealed that gentrification and disinvestment can impact legacy residents in a variety of ways. While the issue of environmental gentrification catalyzed this research, we quickly learned that **displacement in the City of Chicago is driven not only by gentrification but also by disinvestment in communities of color**. Below, we describe impacts of gentrification identified by interviewees followed by impacts of disinvestment.

1.1. Impacts of Gentrification

"a lot of people are being displaced and moving out" - Paula Acevedo, Community Leader

Interviewees who lived or worked in gentrifying neighborhoods described the impacts of displacement on these communities. Noting some benefits to legacy residents like community beautification or increased home equity, they mostly described negative impacts. **Key among these was the loss of naturally occurring (or unsubsidized) affordable housing, as property values, property taxes, and rents rose -- a critical factor displacing working class residents.**

Rising rents and property taxes can also drive displacement of local businesses. "There's fewer and fewer and fewer legacy businesses that have survived in Logan Square that are more representative of the Latinx community that was there before," observed policy specialist Juan Sebastian Arias. In Albany Park, a community with one of the highest percentages of Latinx, Middle Eastern and Asian immigrants in the city,[24] a community organizer noted, "There's been a ton of new restaurants and bars [that] have replaced a lot of longtime restaurants, family-owned restaurants."

Gentrification can also tear a community's social fabric. "Sometimes in gentrification, you focus on the housing, but at the same time, you have to also preserve social fabric, too. But it's not as easy to quantify as [housing] units and how much they cost," reflected community-based developer Michael Burton. Referencing Logan Square, a Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican enclave, he explained:

> We're seeing less social services for low-income people, because the neighborhood has been changing. . . . So you start to lose the fabric of the community that people count on, as well as the more informal fabric, your neighbors that you've lived next to . . . we've seen renters forced out that have been there for years, we've seen homeowners who've sold and the people that are moving in, they tend to be a lot whiter and a lot richer.

[24] CMAP, "Community Data Snapshot Albany Park, Chicago Community Area."

Even when not displaced, legacy residents can begin feeling like outsiders in their own community. For instance, "youth of color were already starting to feel particularly targeted or policed heavier," reported Sebastian Arias in reference to Logan Square.

On the other hand, **under some conditions, legacy residents, namely homeowners, can benefit from increased wealth caused by rising property values associated with gentrification.** Some homeowners might choose to sell in order to invest in their business or fund their retirement, for example. Rising home values also can offer homeowners the opportunity for equity loans, which enable people to invest in anything from educational opportunities to businesses or home improvements, potentially increasing the health and safety of their home.[25] This is important to acknowledge because historical and contemporary policies and business practices have largely excluded communities of color from accessing loans or building wealth through homeownership.[26]

The impacts of gentrification extend beyond the gentrifying neighborhood. **A spillover effect with important implications for health equity is the displacement of polluting facilities from areas gentrifying to other parts of the city**, particularly the southeast side of Chicago, which has been referred to as an "environmental sacrifice zone." For example, community organizer Ogla shared, ". . . in the Lincoln Yards area, the planned manufacturing district has been shrunken, and it's pushing out industry and it's moving to my neighborhood." As urban planner Eve Gibson Pytel explained, this "toxic curtain" involves:

> the North River Industrial Corridor's former heavier industrial uses . . . migrating to cheaper land in the South and the Southeast. . . . and so we're getting more higher end commercial office and residential [on the North side] and we're getting stinkier, more dangerous, more polluting, more risky industrial development in the South and the West.

1.2. Impacts of Disinvestment

> ". . . to be totally ignored and not invested in. I really think that's the worst scenario." - Peggy Salazar, environmental justice educator and advocate

In some places, gentrification is not an immediate concern; rather, residents experience negative impacts from years of disinvestment in their neighborhoods. Community development specialist Quiwana Bell provided an example from Austin: "We've been fighting for a high school for years . . . we don't have a comprehensive public high school . . . I think we have a while until it comes to a gentrification-type issue of people feeling forced out. People will welcome the investment at this point." Interviewees reported that disinvestment affects not only educational opportunities but also the availability of jobs, transit, grocery stores, retail outlets, restaurants, and more. Referencing Southeast Chicago, resident and former community health liaison Herminia Vanna reflected:

[25] Scheu et al., "Why Equity Matters: Energy Use and Health Disparities by Neighborhood: Stories (and Data) from Families Living in Chicago's Bungalow Belt."
[26] Lutton and Fan, "Where Banks Don't Lend."

> If you ever wanna talk about deserts, we have all kinds of deserts. We have a transportation desert, we have a job desert – you name it. We need jobs here, desperately, we need a training center. Once the steel mills were dried up and they finally left, everything went with them. Businesses just couldn't survive, because the people did not have the money to invest or to buy or to purchase. . . . It impacts people's lives in every way. If there isn't a job, you have that constant stress of how are you gonna make it . . . you're looking to see where the next food pantry is, so you can pick up some more food for your kids or for yourself . . . looking for social services that are quickly evaporating, what little we have left. . . . it impacts families, it impacts children.

Yet, when businesses locate in these areas, healthy, safe jobs that pay a living wage typically do not accompany them. Calling for revitalization of Southeast Chicago through clean industries, community organizer Gina Ramirez observed that employers coming into the neighborhood often provide only low wage jobs while increasing the community's pollution burden.

According to census data, 181,000 Black residents left the City of Chicago between 2000 and 2010, with numbers accelerating into the recent decade.[27] **Poor access to employment, education, transit, healthy foods, retail outlets, and other public and private services not only detrimentally affects health but can lead some families to seek improved living conditions elsewhere.** Explained community justice advocate Bweza Itaagi:

> . . . the driver [of displacement] that many people think of is not being able to afford an area. Sure, that's a huge piece but in the case of Englewood, we also have a lot of schools that have shut down and so in that case if your child has to travel X amount of miles to get to the closest open school and if you have the means, maybe you can relocate. . . . I think food is a huge piece, too. If you aren't able to access quality food or sustain yourself or feed your family, then you have to make decisions. Maybe we can't stay in this area. I feel like the list goes on as far as factors that contribute to displacement . . . environment and jobs . . . so many things contribute . . .

While some residents move away from disinvested communities, some people cannot afford to leave, or the poor conditions in the physical and social environment become normalized. As resident and former community health liaison Herminia Vanna said, "You don't know what you're missing, if you've never had it." Many faced the challenge of countering long-standing narratives that people lack the power to improve their neighborhood. As community development specialist Quiwana Bell observed:

> They start to believe that they are powerless, that their vote and their voice does not matter . . . So that has allowed for very, very blatant, systemic failures to continue. It's become normalized to not have anything. To go to a school where there's no chemistry and there's

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[27] Eltagouri, "Black exodus accelerates in Cook County, census shows"; Scarborough et al., "Between the Great Migration and Growing Exodus: The Future of Black Chicago?"

> no gym and there's no swimming pool and there's urine stained carpets . . . You get used to the depravity.

Nonetheless, "You got people that's still fighting for a better quality of life," said community organizer Cheryl Johnson. **Although residents in disinvested neighborhoods can experience extreme hardships, their communities also possess many strengths and achieve important wins**, such as a new library, renovations to public housing, and remediation of environmental contaminants. Community organizers described how they built upon local assets to effect positive change (see Findings 5: Co-governance). Bell elaborated on consolidating assets of her community in Austin: ". . . each person has something to give. It's about . . . dispelling the myth of victimization [from] think[ing], 'Oh we live in a poor neighborhood. Everything is bad,' to 'We live in a great neighborhood. . . . we have much more than we know when we bring it all together." Thus, unlike neighborhoods experiencing gentrification where some interviewees worried upon hearing the term "investment" (see Findings 3: Environmental Gentrification), **interviewees from disinvested neighborhoods called for increased investment, particularly in people themselves through education, training, and capacity-building.**

Findings 2
Drivers of Disinvestment and Gentrification

> "Context is really important . . . displacement looks different over time [and place]" - Lynda Lopez, fair transportation advocate and writer

In this section, we report factors that interviewees identified as driving land use decisions in Chicago, particularly as land use relates to gentrification and disinvestment. Additionally, we examine how the two are related: disinvestment can serve as a precursor to gentrification. Multiple participants recognized that land use decisions occur within the context of structural racism. Thus, market forces affecting decisions about land uses typically reproduce racial inequities. Furthermore, piecemeal policy responses by local, state, and federal governments have proven insufficient to ensure affordable housing and protect environmental health. Respondents also discussed power disparities in politics as a key force contributing to land use decisions with inequitable outcomes.

2.1. Structural Racism

> ". . . there's definitely an intersection with segregation and structural racism that's underpinning [land use] in Chicago." – Marcella Bondie Keenan, environmental planner

Many respondents demonstrated how **contemporary injustices related to land use are rooted in racist policies and practices of the past that permeate the present**. Juan Sebastian Arias, a policy specialist, explained:

> One of the clearest [forces driving land use decisions in Chicago] is the history of structurally racist policy, or structural racism. Redlining, for example, the way that federal policy and local policy was structured to block investment in certain neighborhoods, which . . . artificially suppressed the property values or the market in those places and set them up to be places that were artificially cheap. And that creates the potential for displacement and gentrification . . .

Without action to redress racial inequities, seemingly neutral development decisions in actuality reinforce existing disparities. As community organizer Christian Diaz elucidated:

> Gentrification, as I see it, is a symptom of a much deeper problem in this country's history. . . . you could even argue that the way this country was created was gentrification because [White settlers] slaughtered the Native American people . . . forced them to leave . . . flipped their land[28] into a speculative housing market that through cycles [of] boom and bust continues to generate wealth, but only for the people who have the power to own the land in the first place, which for a long time in history was White men. And so, here we are, absolutely decimated as people of color by this train that's been going like 1,000 miles per

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[28] The term flipping refers to processes in which investors purchase and upgrade houses and buildings in order to obtain a higher profit through rent collection or re-selling the property.

> hour for like 500 years. And now, the way it manifests in my life in 2019, is that my neighborhood's being flipped and that I'm losing my sense of community and reliving this trauma. And so it's hard because we're talking about something that's happening today, but the roots of what we're experiencing today go back to the inception of this country.

Structural racism, including Chicago's high degree of residential segregation and discriminatory lending practices,[29] determines who reaps the benefits and who bears the costs of land use decisions. Thus, **achieving truly equitable outcomes will require policies and practices that dismantle structural racism** (see Findings 4: Development without Displacement, Findings 5: Co-governance).

2.2. Market Forces

At a surface level, gentrification arises from the interaction of supply and demand within real estate markets. Racial stereotypes, speculative investment, and proximity to other gentrifying neighborhoods can also affect the degree to which a neighborhood gentrifies. Here, we expand on these.

Interviewees described that **a variety of assets affect a neighborhood's desirability to renters and homebuyers, including access to transit, proximity to employers, health care providers, schools, and grocery stores.** Acknowledging increasing demand for city living, a housing organizer explained:

> In the '60s, there was white flight where folks moved to the suburbs, and that left a lot of people of color in the cities. And the cities were not well taken care of . . . White people want to live in the cities now, which is causing amenities to upgrade, and neighborhoods to be healthier and safer, and so it's seemingly positive for the neighborhood but sooner than later, folks that have been living there for a long time won't be able to afford living there anymore.

As developers cater to new market segments, changes in the available housing stock can signal a shift in the neighborhood's socioeconomic composition. The same housing organizer told us:

> There are a lot of two- to four-flats in the neighborhood, and. . . cash investors are buying them up, and converting them to single-family homes. . . there was a house that was $230,000 to $250,000. Someone bought it outright, cash, 2015. Right now, it's worth $750,000, and it's a single-family home. . . . the two- to four-flat is an iconic building in the neighborhood, and for them to be de-converted to single-family homes, and that was a lot of rental space for folks. . . . so that's causing a lot of displacement.

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[29] Lutton and Fan, "Where Banks Don't Lend."

Participants identified social stigma, which is often grounded in racial prejudice, as another factor affecting the perceived desirability of Chicago neighborhoods. As a planner explained, "Many people that come to the city are also told, 'Don't go here and don't go there.' And so I think there's a lot of this social infrastructure that does play a role in how communities are marketed . . ." Another interviewee offered one example: "Latinos are basically the buffer between White people and Black people. And so White people are just more hesitant to move into primarily Black neighborhoods. And so it feels safer to move into [Mexican and Mexican-American enclave] Little Village or whatever." These words illustrate that processes of gentrification may manifest differently in Black, Latinx, or other communities of color in part because of racial prejudices and social stigmas relating to each of these groups.[30]

Furthermore, respondents pointed out that **developers and city leaders can co-opt a neighborhood's cultural identity as a form of branding in order to attract tourism, wealthy residents, and outside investment**. Community leader Paula Acevedo discussed the marketing of Pilsen, another Mexican and Mexican-American enclave, that contributed to its gentrification, "Cultural preservation is really important . . . but at the same time, you see people advertising Pilsen on *Forbes Magazine* for one of the coolest neighborhoods because of the culture and the food and . . . the art." Some others who discussed the gentrification of Latinx communities also identified this paradox: immigrants improving their neighborhoods through business development, community gardens, and the arts not only make the neighborhood more appealing for themselves but also to gentrifiers.

On the supply side, some interviewees identified **global capital investment as a driver of land use, which raised concerns around ownership and speculative investment that limits community members' abilities to influence land uses affecting their neighborhoods**. Local community builder Mike Tomas gave a specific example referencing the mostly Black community of East Garfield Park:[31]

> We were hit hard by the foreclosure [crisis] . . . when the market crashed, the investors swooped in.… And I do a lot of research on the west side of the park as to who owns what properties, vacant and occupied, and some of the landlords are in Connecticut or New York. It's not like they live in Humboldt or North Austin. It's far away investors.

Similarly, community justice advocate Bweza Itaagi observed in Englewood, a predominantly Black neighborhood:[32]

> . . . a lot of the land that is vacant is owned by people who don't live in the community. . . The owners of the parcels of land are waiting for the neighborhood to become more economically viable and to be more profitable and then they'll do something with that piece or sell. So a lot of people are just sitting on their land that they own, which is frustrating

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[30] Anderson and Sternberg, "'Non-White' Gentrification in Chicago's Bronzeville and Pilsen."
[31] CMAP, "Community Data Snapshot East Garfield Park, Chicago Community Area."
[32] CMAP, "Community Data Snapshot Englewood."

> because they're not doing anything to improve the community or to contribute to the community.

Some discussed that **disinvestment can be a precursor to gentrification because cheap land values offer the opportunity for developers to "land bank" or buy swaths of land only to wait and flip the land once the neighborhood becomes a desirable real estate market.** Among interviewees working in disinvested communities many were not concerned about the neighborhood gentrifying in the near term but viewed it as probable over a longer timeframe.

The loss of legacy residents is not driven solely by external forces outside of residents' control. In some cases, long-term residents might choose to sell and take advantage of equity that they have built through increased property values. Ecologist and educator Mila Kellen Marshall illustrated tradeoffs that a homeowner might weigh:

> So if you owned a home and, yes, you really love the community and it has all the amenities, but the price of your home has now increased by 20 percent, what is it that you can do with that 20 percent? Are you going to take equity out on it? Are you like, 'Oh, I'm gonna stay here. I love this community. I'm rooted in Chicago.' Or are you going to say, 'You know what? I'm going to take this. I'm going to get a smaller house in the suburbs. I'm going to invest in my business.'

Similarly, small scale investors, including some within the community, might purchase and build upon vacant land or renovate and then sell a home as their own form of building wealth.

2.3. Piecemeal Policy Responses

> "I don't think we do a good job of planning in the city, when there is gentrification. The market forces go unchecked, for the most part." - Michael Burton, community-based developer

Many respondents voiced concern about the limitations of specific housing, employment, and environmental policies intended to mitigate harm caused by racial and economic inequities. Some felt that these policies fail to prevent inequities from continuing because they do not proactively address the root causes of these disparities. For example, multiple interviewees observed the rapid loss of naturally occurring affordable housing, which refers to units without public subsidy that can be rented at a low market rate. They observed that this decline far exceeds the construction of new affordable units, which presently receive more attention in affordable housing policy. As affordable housing specialist Alan Cravitz commented:

> As property gets more expensive, then you start to cut out certain developers who might be interested in maintaining buildings as affordable. So it just becomes more expensive to do . . . if you're trying to keep rents down, to keep places affordable, you can't do it. . . . and it

> doesn't seem to be a lot of government intervention to try and keep the existing housing at affordable rent levels.

Furthermore, city policy tends to focus on securing a percentage of affordable units in large-scale developments; yet, a substantial loss of affordable housing occurs lot-by-lot as developers convert existing buildings to single-family homes or luxury condos. In light of this, multiple interviewees called for housing policies that focus on preserving naturally occurring affordable housing.

While many observed that local, state, and federal governments need to develop more comprehensive policies addressing housing affordability, some interviewees also argued that current city policies favor high market rate residential development. For example, while property tax policy[33] can accelerate the displacement of legacy homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods, activist Howard Ehrman noted a conflict between housing affordability and revenue generation for the city: "[Former mayor] Emanuel . . . when he was asked the question, 'Why don't you do something about property taxes?' He said . . . 'Property taxes going up is a good thing because it's more money for the city.'" Similarly, some expressed concern that city officials view large scale developments as a panacea to solve socio-economic problems. As community organizer Christian Diaz remarked:

> The dogma is that development solves everything. The [former] Mayor Emanuel's argument would be if we give 1.4 billion of our tax dollars [to Sterling Bay] to build 5,000 luxury [housing] – just think about the tax base! Think about all the wealthy people who are going to move to Chicago and plant their roots here. But who does that help?

Ultimately, insufficient policy responses to the forces driving displacement -- and policies that in some instances contribute to displacement -- place the burden of relocating on legacy residents. Diaz continued:

> My other issue about gentrification is that the burden is on me and my family to fix this problem that I didn't create. That [others] benefit from. Okay, so while [developers are] making millions flipping land, gutting homes, we are forced to once again uproot our lives and move to neighborhoods that don't have the amenities that Logan Square has now, that we are now told we don't deserve.

Similar to residents' bearing the burden of holding polluters accountable to protect public health in environmental justice communities, some residents are organizing through various strategies to promote affordability in the absence of more effective government intervention[34] (see Findings 5: Co-governance). Others are doing the best they can to survive in changing neighborhoods by renting

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[33] In Chicago, property taxes are calculated using the property's 'assessed value,' among other variables. Read more at Cook County Assessor's Office, "Your Assessment Notice and Tax Bill."

[34] Ben-Amots, "Woodlawn residents share affordable housing concerns with officials"; Chicago Housing Initiative, "The OUR HOMES Chicago Ordinances"; Waldroup, "Residents of Humboldt Park apartment building fight for affordable housing."

out rooms, taking on extra work, cutting expenses or finding other ways to pay for housing. Others, like Diaz's family, move to more affordable units, if they can do so, or other neighborhoods.

While participants familiar with "strong" real estate markets called for more proactive housing policy to prevent displacement through gentrification, those familiar with "weaker" real estate markets desired policy responses that promote local entrepreneurial opportunities, which in turn can enable residents to support locally owned businesses that further enhance a neighborhood's economic vibrancy. Interviewees speaking about disinvested communities emphasized the need for employment opportunities but *not* at the cost of threatening residents' health with contamination. Particularly in Southeast Chicago, interviewees expressed grave concern about the further concentration of pollution in their communities. Here, as in some other parts of the city, interviewees reported a desire to retain the industrial character of their communities by attracting clean manufacturing that provides decent paying jobs with benefits (see Findings 4: Development without Displacement).

2.4. Power Disparities and Exclusion from Planning Decisions

> "I think the people who already have a voice or have a really strong say are able to drive the conversation." - Gloria Orozco, community organizer

Participants identified myriad actors whose actions and interactions influence land use decisions. These included, among others, land owners, Aldermen, the Mayor's office, city planners, investors, banks, anchor institutions like hospitals and universities, and local community members. As equitable development coalition leader Roberto Requejo explained:

> [These actors] are all driving land use. Some of them are tasked with the regulation and implementation, so at the end of the day, this turns into a planning and development department of the City, and they have their rules and they apply them. But they're not a group of people in a vacuum making decisions; they get influenced by all of these powers around them. And then when people organize, they can drive land use decisions, too. But the infrastructure for organizing people in Chicago is much weaker, and it's not as resourced as the platforms that these other players have.

Many participants shared the sentiment that **power disparities between actors often lead to land uses favoring profit over other priorities, such as public health or residents' right to place**. Several felt that the most powerful actors are developers and city officials who often championed decisions generating profit, and associated tax revenues, rather than creating long-term wealth for historically disinvested communities. At the neighborhood level, multiple respondents identified aldermanic prerogative (also known as aldermanic privilege), which refers to the alderman's power to initiate or block city government actions such as zoning decisions in their ward,[35] as a key way that elected officials may favor interests of large corporate developers. Mayor Lori Lightfoot signed an executive

[35] Chicago Historical Society, "Aldermanic Privilege."

order to end aldermanic prerogative in late 2019, but concerns persist regarding the order's impact because the practice is highly integrated into other existing municipal codes.[36] In some cases, power disparities among actors caused community groups to spend more time taking on defensive tactics against developments rather than proactively creating community-based, long-term visions for land use.

A community organizer explained, ". . . land use happens through people being heard, which is power, and their influence over other people, and their influence on the city and those decision-makers." Yet, in the political sphere of land use decisions, numerous interviewees believed that community voices were missing from the conversation. Often, **local residents were invited "to the table" too late in the decision-making process to have meaningful influence, asked to comment on proposed developments only to have their comments ignored, tokenized, or excluded from decision-making altogether**. Urban planner Eve Gibson Pytel described how this form of agenda-setting power plays out in planning processes:

> By the time [a large development] did public participation, how many millions of dollars had already been spent? They had already started buying property . . . Who cares about public participation if by the time you get to register a comment, it doesn't even matter? There's no way to turn that ship around.

Interviewees who experienced exclusion from planning processes expressed their frustration. "Somebody's having these conversations. Somebody's planning [these] developments that's going on, but it's not in sync with the people that's gonna be impacted," said Cheryl Johnson, a community organizer. Along these lines, some stakeholders raised concerns that independent planning bodies generate redevelopment proposals that gain substantial traction, including philanthropic and political support, before public deliberation occurs about the proposal's merits. Planners may produce creative ideas but, ultimately, risk failure if they do not account for the priorities and expertise of local community members (see Findings 5: Co-governance).

Many interviewees explained that **exclusion from planning processes in Chicago has fostered distrust of government, planning agencies, and large non-profit organizations**. Lynda Lopez, a fair transportation advocate and writer, elaborated:

> . . . to keep in mind as [the City] is trying to do work in these different neighborhoods: how do you overcome the fundamental distrust? . . . You need to address that fundamental distrust 'cause it exists and our city is based on causing a lot of pain to Black and Brown neighborhoods and so people are not gonna trust [the government] off the bat.

Others expressed feeling distrustful of community planning coalitions. For example, community organizer Gina Ramirez noted of some large non-governmental organizations:

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[36] Cherone, "Lightfoot's Effort to Scale Back Aldermanic Prerogative a Work in Progress."

> I don't think that they really care about the residents . . . I feel like these groups go halfway and they don't go all the way, which is what we need in an ally-ship. Because a lot of [community-based groups] don't have as much power, don't have as much funding, don't have as many connections. And to just go halfway is keeping the status quo. So we need strong, powerful ally-ships that make sure that community groups have a seat at the table, and that [larger organizations are] uplifting our plans, and our voices, and our vision for the community.

While myriad actors influence land use decisions, the City -- in particular its Department of Planning and Development -- is an obvious entity that could play an important role in reducing power disparities and building trust by ensuring that the review of proposed developments takes into consideration impacts on local communities, for example, with respect to racial equity (see Findings 5: Co-governance).

Findings 3
Environmental Gentrification in Chicago

One purpose of this research was to explore perceptions of *environmental gentrification* -- when environmental improvements contribute to rising real estate prices, accelerating the displacement of working-class residents and businesses -- in the City of Chicago. Environmental improvements, such as cleaning up contamination or creating green spaces, are but one of many factors that can contribute to gentrification (see Findings 2: Drivers). Our research suggests that **environmental gentrification is a concern, but more so in specific locations in Chicago**. Below we describe the paradox of environmental gentrification experienced by some respondents. We then report specific cases where participants worried that environmental improvements have or will accelerate the displacement of working class residents through gentrification.

3.1. The Dilemma of Environmental Gentrification

> "We understand that once you improve the quality of life for any community, all of a sudden, your community is attractive to everybody . . . But yet, if we don't make our community more livable, then we're left with a community that even we don't want to be in. So we're always in between a rock and a hard spot." - Peggy Salazar, environmental justice educator and advocate

Many respondents agreed that **access to clean greenspace can positively impact the health of residents**. "Having parks and green spaces is definitely one of those aspects that makes a neighborhood healthy and safe," a housing organizer told us. "If people are able to use the spaces, that helps a lot with emotional and mental health as well," reflected community organizer Gloria Orozco, referring to forest preserves. She added, "being able to have those spaces for families to be able to use and hang out . . . it's immensely important."

Yet, some residents may resist investments in their neighborhood for fear of making it more attractive to gentrifiers and wealthy developers. Christian Diaz, a housing organizer in the rapidly gentrifying Latinx community of Logan Square,[37] illustrated this dilemma by saying, "It's almost like these empty lots make me happy . . . I'm just afraid of improving my neighborhood even more, because of what comes with it." Paula Acevedo, a community leader from the quickly gentrifying Mexican and Mexican-American enclave of Pilsen,[38] described the predicament that stewardship volunteers experience in their attempts to improve the neighborhood through this community-managed green space:

> It makes us feel like we are part of the problem, because we're beautifying . . . we're making it more attractive for developers and investors . . . And we're completely aware of it, which is

[37] CMAP, "Community Data Snapshot Logan Square, Chicago Community Area."
[38] CMAP, "Pilsen- Little Village Land Use Plan: Existing Conditions."

> why we're trying to form this housing committee . . . because greenspace shouldn't be an amenity; it should be a right.

Questions about who benefits extend beyond a project's development to its ongoing use. Community organizer Gloria Orozco uplifted the importance of community members feeling welcome in greenspace in order to benefit from it:

> . . .you talk to certain people and they're like, 'We do want this [environmental improvement].' But then there is also this concern like, 'Am I going to feel welcome because the people who are currently using it are not from the community and they don't look like me?' It's also that. You need to be able to identify and feel like you belong there.

Despite the dilemmas posed by environmental gentrification and experienced by some interviewees, they and others build upon the strengths of their communities, especially the people, and creatively work to promote community development that reduces disparities related to environmental quality, health, housing affordability, and employment opportunities. Their efforts to improve the well-being of their communities offer models that could be scaled up citywide to engage communities toward equitable development (see Findings 5: Co-governance).

3.2. Cases Raising Concerns about Environmental Gentrification

Participants thought about environmental gentrification in various scales across time and space. For example, some conceived of environmental gentrification occurring citywide over a multi-decade timeframe. They pointed out that climate change will shift environmental stability drastically, especially in arid areas and coastal cities, and believed that Chicago will become a desirable location for wealthy people moving away from cities affected by water shortages, wildfires, or sea level rise. Most participants who worried about environmental gentrification in the near-term brought up specific developments associated with their concern. **Here, we describe four cases in communities of color that participants had reason to believe presently involve environmental gentrification or may be likely to in the future.** In addition to the specific cases below, conversations with interviewees around environmental gentrification also evoked concerns about the development of the Tiger Woods Golf Course in South Chicago, Obama Presidential Library in Jackson Park, the Chicago River Trail in Albany Park, and the Eco-orchard in Garfield Park.

3.2.1. The Bloomingdale / 606 Trail

The 606 Bike Trail is an elevated urban pathway that connects Bucktown, Humboldt Park, Logan Square and Wicker Park on Chicago's northwest side. The massive public investment has improved the walkability on Chicago's northwest side with 1.3 million people riding bikes and walking the former railway annually in a space free of traffic.[39] However, soon after the 606 broke ground in

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[39] Gobster, Sachdeva, and Lindsey, "Up on the 606."

2013, developers quickly purchased land along the trail and replaced modest and low-income housing on the trail's West side (areas distinguished as Puerto Rican and Latinx enclaves) with luxury apartments and trendy restaurants. A study from the DePaul Institute for Housing observed dramatic price increases in housing on the trail's west end, risk factors associated with decreased affordability and displacement. In Humboldt Park and Logan Square, housing values skyrocketed 52% and 27.5% over two years, respectively.[40] As Lynda Lopez, a fair transportation advocate and writer, said:

> We saw how housing prices went up along the trail. We've seen the number of Latinx families also decrease over time at Logan and Humboldt Park. I've heard stories about evictions and rent increases, so I think that's a really good example of new green spaces being ways to displace residents from their homes.

According to interviewees familiar with the project, the Bloomingdale Trail concept grew out of residents' recreational use of the former railroad line and included support from community-based organizations. However, some felt that the trail's narrative and planning process was eventually co-opted by city officials as part of a broader political and economic strategy rather than the benefit of residents living there.[41] For example, Michael Burton, a community-based developer, reflected:

> It's interesting, the naming of it, the 606. I think a lot of people in the community still call it the Bloomingdale Trail, and that's one of the official names. But I was at the big unveiling when the City and the high-powered marketing consultants said, 'We're gonna call it the 606,' and it sort of landed with a thud in this meeting, it felt, like, 'Oh, the real estate interest kinda took over on this one.'

Lopez also commented on the re-branding:

> Community residents have been advocating for more green space for a while, and before the 606 trail was there, people used the land where the 606 ended up being. They would go up there and run or walk, so people were using it anyway, even if it wasn't developed yet. They were using the space . . . I think this came from residents. I think over time, maybe it got co-opted by the City in terms of using it as a way to increase tourism and it's kind of the way [former mayor] Rahm Emanuel saw the 606. It became more of a citywide celebration rather than a local success for residents.

The case of the 606 has evoked much public attention because of its effects expediting gentrification. At the time of writing, a six-month moratorium on building and demolition permits for residential properties near the trail had been passed to slow the rate of gentrification. The intent was to provide time for developing policies to address the rapid loss of affordable housing along the trail.[42] Proposals also exist for rent freezes and other interventions to mitigate its impact.[43] Even

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[40] Smith, et al., "Measuring the Impact of the 606."
[41] Lubitow et al. "Plans for pavement or for people?"
[42] Rodkin, "Homebuilding halt near 606 clears City Council."
[43] Byrne, "Demolition moratorium around 606 trail gets Mayor Lori Lightfoot's Backing."

interviewees who did not live near the 606 mentioned it as contributing to fears of environmental gentrification in their own neighborhoods.

3.2.2. El Paseo Trail

In 2016, the City unveiled plans to develop *El Paseo* Trail, a four-mile urban multi-use path adapted from a decommissioned trainline, and planned to run through Pilsen and Little Village.[44] Noting lessons from the Bloomingdale-606 Trail, interviewees familiar with the *El Paseo* expressed concern that it will evoke similarly rapid gentrification in these Latinx enclaves. Some residents already see impacts from the trail since its public announcement. Paula Acevedo, a community leader and garden co-director, said:

> [*El Paseo*] clearly seemed like something that [former Mayor Emanuel] announced prematurely for developers to come in, and that's how the . . . community sees it. So, he did not have the community in mind . . . And there's already development and gentrification happening, but [the trail] definitely sparked a whole bunch of new stuff coming in . . . I see the City and other people in power, basically, exploiting community leaders and their efforts [in order to] to get developers to come in and invest.

Howard Ehrman, activist, added:

> I think at least a majority of the activists are very clear . . . to completely oppose *El Paseo*. We don't want any *El Paseo* in Little Village... [my organization] thinks that's a huge mistake because it will just accelerate gentrification.

Whereas some community members strongly oppose the trail because of gentrification concerns, others feel the best way forward is to collaborate with city officials and developers in order to ensure residents somehow benefit. One way that residents in Pilsen have responded is by organizing a multi-group housing steering committee that advocates for anti-displacement policies along the trail.[45] Paula Acevedo, a co-chair of the committee, said:

> Moving forward we're trying to bring the power back to the community versus this trail that's imposed on these communities . . . But the politics in the neighborhood are intense. And [other groups] are not happy that I'm over here talking to developers, they don't like that. But we've all agreed that there is a need for the work that we individually do through our organizations, and we're gonna respect that, and we're still gonna pursue and work together on this housing effort… And so, we are working with the developers, and basically holding them accountable.

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[44] Cooper, "Pilsen community split over who will benefit from Paseo Trail."
[45] El Paseo Trail Community Council, "Housing Committee."

3.2.3. South Works - U.S. Steel Manufacturing Plant

South Works is a site formerly occupied by U.S. Steel on the shore of Lake Michigan in South Chicago, a neighborhood with a mix of Black, Latinx, and White residents.[46] At its prime, it employed over 20,000 employees, which spurred nearby neighborhood development for workers around the mill. Since the plant's decommission in 1992, the area remains mostly vacant with traces of heavy metal pollution. The 415 acre lake-front property has seen two unsuccessful redevelopment proposals. Some speculate the plans fell through because of the expensive clean-up of its industrial contamination.[47] While pollution clean up would be costly, there is city-wide interest in using the site as a vessel to develop Chicago's commercial core and attract more residents.[48] Interviewees familiar with the site voiced concerns about plans for its future use and who will be involved in decision-making when it is redeveloped. Community organizer Gina Ramirez shared:

> I do worry that there's a lot of outside groups that don't really have a lot of roots and foundation in the community, but they seem very interested in that property. So if it does ever get cleaned up, they will be the first to be the stakeholders in that, when I really feel like it should really be planned out from the community, the vision for that land should be coming from the bottom up . . . And I think that [gentrification] would be a really big concern then. It would be totally an element of environmental gentrification if it ever gets repaired.

Because of these concerns, Ramirez uplifted the importance of engaging community members in the planning process now.

> I think we need to be proactive . . . Because once things start changing, it's really hard to backtrack and make sure the community is involved. And so I already feel that happening with U.S. Steel . . . it could be [redeveloped] 20 years from now, but I need to get on this now 'cause things can change so drastically overnight that you can lose your stake in that.

Indeed, development processes can occur quickly without incorporating community visions or input (see Findings 2: Drivers). The U.S. Steel site offers an opportunity for Chicago to be proactive in engaging residents, ensuring long-time residents benefit from the redevelopment of the property, and preventing unintended consequences such as gentrification and displacement.

3.2.4. Big Marsh Bike Park

Although gentrification was not an immediate concern for interviewees who discussed the Big Marsh Bike Park, this case also illustrates dilemmas posed by environmental improvements. Big Marsh Bike Park is a 297-acre park with bike tracks, bird watching, and hiking trails in Southeast Chicago. The Chicago Park District assumed ownership of the land and surrounding natural properties in 2011 after Acme Steel shut down. The re-development of this previously industrial site is

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[46] CMAP, "Community Data Snapshot South Chicago, Chicago Community Area."
[47]Koziarz "Developer bails on plan to bring 20,000 homes to U.S. Steel's South Works site."
[48]Chappell,, "South Works, the 415-acre "magnificent property," is Chicago's biggest development opportunity."

part of a larger initiative of the Chicago Park District to manage and revitalize natural spaces on the Southeast side.[49] Completed in late 2016, the bike park hosts visitors for recreation, many of whom travel from other parts of the region. Plans also exist to upgrade the park further by building campsites, more trails, and an environmental center.[50] Resident and environmental justice advocate Peggy Salazar explained why the park has been controversial for local residents:

> While we would like to embrace [urban greening projects], we're not trusting of them. So we're put in this difficult position. Right? Because surely we would love a bike park. We would love for the residents of our community to go outdoors and get exercise and things like that. Right? But at the same time, you're putting it in a community that doesn't normally practice that kind of outdoor activity and doesn't necessarily have the money to do so either.

Similarly, Eve, an urban planner, said, “But if nobody in that community is mountain biking, then it’s really not a big benefit to them. And then also if people are driving their mountain bikes in, and they’re not stopping and buying stuff, then there’s no financial benefit either.” This case illustrates that even when gentrification is not an immediate concern, critical questions arise about who will benefit from environmental improvements, particularly in disinvested communities where decades of neglect by governmental agencies have fostered distrust (see Findings 5: Co-governance).

[49] Friends of Big Marsh, “The Story of Big Marsh.”
[50] Wetli, “With $900K Grant, Big Improvements Coming to Big Marsh Park — Including City’s 1st Campground.”

Findings 4
Development without Displacement

> "You can't only invest in place, you can't only invest in infrastructure, you have to invest in people." – Peggy Salazar, environmental justice educator and advocate

Interviewees identified myriad policy interventions and other strategies to encourage access to green amenities and their associated health benefits without displacement. We present these in Tables 2a to 2e and categorize them by specific issue areas for ease of reading. However, participants emphasized the need for *holistic* solutions that incorporate interventions across multiple issues including, but not limited to, housing, employment, environmental quality, and health. Furthermore, while some of these policies and practices involve more dramatic structural changes than others, most are designed to reduce the harm inflicted by disinvestment or gentrification. Ultimately, these strategies will not solve the root causes of environmental injustice nor health inequities so long as structural racism persists. Thus, redressing the power disparities in decision-making processes about land use is one essential step toward equitable environmental and health outcomes (see Findings 2: Drivers and 5: Co-governance).

4.1. From Silos to Multi-faceted Solutions

> "Unless you cut across issues and you bring in the question of jobs, the question of housing, the question of education, into environment[al] justice, it's inevitable . . . that what you do can lead to gentrification." – Howard Ehrman, activist

Regardless of their field of expertise, most participants emphasized the need for solutions to be multi-faceted and holistic. Lynda Lopez, a fair transportation advocate and writer, pointed out, "One of the biggest challenges I see with this work is how siloed it is. I think people working on environmental issues don't always see how it relates to gentrification, don't always see how it translates to housing." **While people are needed who specialize in housing, health, development, employment, environment, transportation, and other related fields, it is also crucial to create spaces where they can interact and explore how these issues intersect.** As one interviewee reflected, "I would say the barriers would be traditional thinking . . . [it's] hard for people . . . to expand and think about how [issues] connect." Lopez similarly reflected: "There needs to be more tools or resources figuring out how we can bridge the gaps or more collective forums where people can genuinely come together to do the nuances of our work so it's not going to be siloed."

Recognizing that decisions about environmental cleanup, parks, trails, or other green amenities are not politically neutral, some interviewees called specifically on environmental organizations to incorporate a wider range of issues that affect local communities into their traditionally siloed work. Community organizer Gloria Orozco said, "This is why [environmental organizations] also need to be supporting these communities and not just asking for them to come out and use the [green] space as a volunteer, but for us . . . to not be impartial anymore [on other

issues]. . . . We need to be able to say, 'Okay, here's where we stand [on] certain things happening in the community and we support these community members."

Multiple interviewees observed that **silos characterize governmental structures**. "Chicago's government is set up to operate fairly independently without relationships across agencies," noted Niketa Brar, executive director of an organization focused on racial equity. She offered an example highlighting the challenges this poses for collaboration between agencies and with local communities:

> [The government agency's] response on many of the [community's] recommendations was, 'Well [affordable housing] is not our purview, that's not the department we lead and don't have the authority to do this'. . . So it really spoke to the siloing of bureaucratic systems in not knowing how to talk to each other to drive policy . . . It became this sort of conversation about saying, 'Well why can't you do that?' and 'What should you be challenging within the constructs that you're in to actually be proactively planning?'

Thus, **several participants called for proactive efforts to convene across government agencies and with local communities** (see Findings 5: Co-governance).

Non-governmental organizations can experience similar silos. **Some participants called for revising philanthropic funding structures, which can prevent non-profit organizations from taking an integrated and systemic approach to problem-solving.** "There are a lot of organizations that are only focused on one issue area," a housing organizer observed. "I also think funders would be a big change in that, of recognizing the interconnectedness, and not just funding toward an issue area." Some also noted that the timeframes allowed by grants need to shift in order to support systemic change. As environmental planner Marcella Bondie Keenan points out: "I see more shorter-term funding . . . development dollars need to be over a period of many more years than that, and it needs to cover the full cycle . . . And make a long-term investment in partnership with the communities, as opposed to sort of parachute in, make a flashy thing, and then leave." Without that long-term partnership, some participants warned that the attempts of outside groups, particularly larger non-profits, to address social inequities through specific programs simply reinforce inequitable power structures. As Quiwana Bell, a community development specialist, described:

> [Outside groups] get monies to do social programming, but their constituent is really not the people that they serve, their constituent is the foundation that they have to prove [to] that they're doing work . . . The impact that they're really making in the community is next to nothing . . . and I believe the programs help, but it's not the solution, it's the Band-Aid over a bullet wound.

One example of a multi-faceted strategy is Green Economic Industrial Corridors, which some participants identified as a way to generate jobs, improve health and safety, and promote sustainable development. **"The people in the neighborhood still want an economic driver in the community that is building community wealth,"** said Olga Bautista, environmental justice organizer.

"We have wanted to stay a manufacturing district, where we are making things that are necessary to combat climate change. So whether it is [a] solar panel manufacturing plant, or making wind turbines, [or] recycling water." Bautista and others also named home weatherization as a green industry that could "protect homeowners by having services that help make [their home] more energy efficient...And that's also a way to put people to work...to streamline this and get people from the same neighborhood retrofitting houses and fixing houses." **Some interviewees called for industries that are cooperatively owned and/or managed by community members.** For example, equitable access to new industries, such as cannabis and solar production, were named as opportunities to address economic and social inequities in disinvested communities through local entrepreneurship and environmental sustainability. Others spoke about the entrepreneurship opportunities of "modern urban manufacturing," which involves the small-scale, relatively low-technology manufacturing of food, beverage, apparel, or beauty products, for example. Economic development professional Steve DeBretto explained that these kinds of light industries:

> . . . have relatively low barriers to entry for the entrepreneur. People can start them with less money and less experience, without outside investment. They also . . . tend to create jobs that have higher multipliers. While you can start at minimum wage . . . with almost no experience, with training, you can then turn them into career ladder jobs.

Zoning and other policies that promote green industries and modern urban manufacturing not only can support rebuilding vibrant economies in disinvested communities but also might contribute to countering gentrification, as the ability to earn a robust livelihood can help offset rising housing costs.

Some organizations already use or are moving toward approaches that connect across issues. As an organizer in gentrifying Albany Park,[51] one of Chicago's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods, described, "We work on a number of different issue areas, but we're really prioritizing understanding how all of these issue areas connect. So that when we advocate for one, we're advocating for all of them." This intersectional approach is occurring not only within specific organizations but also in some cases through collaborations involving multiple groups (see Findings 5: Co-governance). As equitable development coalition leader Roberto Requejo stated, "It can no longer be, 'I'm a health institution. I'm gonna do health' [and] 'I'm a housing institution. I'm gonna do housing,' and 'maybe one day we'll find each other.' We tried that – it's not working. No, the future is collaborative."

4.2. A Call for Structural Change

> "[Society has] become really good at solving the surface level problems, or trying to, at the expense of addressing the root causes of gentrification. Because that's much more difficult."
> - Christian Diaz, community organizer

[51] CMAP, "Community Data Snapshot Analysis, Albany Park Chicago Community Area."

Participants also called for solutions that result in structural change. Some neighborhoods may be fighting for more resources and investment, others against environmental contamination, others to protect and preserve their cultural and social identities, and yet others to prevent displacement (see Findings 1: Gentrification and Disinvestment). Interviewees experiencing each of these situations described that **the burden typically falls upon community members to hold government and corporations accountable.** For example, in response to heavy pollution, community-based organizations have stepped in to hold industries accountable when governmental agencies have not upheld their responsibilities to enforce emission standards and regulations. As community organizer Gina Ramirez reported, "We're totally policing industry . . . And that's what [the City is] established to do, supposed to do, but they're not even citing facilities [or] bringing resources down to test [facilities]. So, it's hard." Rather than fighting pollution on a case by case basis, community organizers such as Olga Bautista are addressing these issues more systemically: "It's not enough to do these patchworks. People in the neighborhoods that are like mine, are just done with band-aides, you know? We're looking more at land use and permitting and how we can just change the whole system." **These efforts call for a more robust approach to environmental regulation and enforcement that addresses the root causes rather than symptoms of environmental and health inequities.**

Interviewees resisting gentrification often found themselves reacting to specific development proposals or promoting individual affordable housing projects that they deemed valuable yet insufficient to overcome the loss of affordable housing (see Findings 2: Drivers). In contrast to this project-by-project approach, **multiple interviewees called for systemically preventing displacement through comprehensive policies to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing[52] and/or dramatically re-envision and invest in public housing**. "I think the real solution for us is preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing," said Christian Diaz, a community organizer. Alan Cravitz, an affordable housing practitioner, emphasized that preservation strategies are more cost effective than incentivizing private developers to build new affordable units: "It's much more efficient and much less expensive, and maybe much more environmentally friendly, to just keep the affordable housing that we already have." In tandem with preserving naturally occurring affordable housing, some respondents argued for expanding governmental investment, particularly at the federal level, in public housing. "When somebody mentions [public housing] it probably seems like not the most desirable solution. But it really is a good solution if it's done properly," said Cravitz. He explained:

> [Incentives to private developers] have limited lifespans as affordable housing. If you [as a developer] do this, you need to maintain it as affordable for 15 years or 20 . . . 20 years goes quickly . . . so you don't have the long term affordability that [you do have] with public housing, because it's owned by some governmental agency and they can keep it that way.

[52] Naturally occurring affordable housing refers to unsubsidized rental units that are affordable because of low market values.

Relatedly, activist Howard Ehrman called for "the massive rebuilding of low-rise, quality, zero-energy, public housing" with tenants and local communities driving this process. Others also called upon policymakers to draw upon the valuable knowledge of public housing residents. As community organizer Cheryl Johnson reflected, "It's about the implicit bias. We got to talk about people's implicit bias, about the perception of people [in] public housing . . . people that live in low-income areas. [If] we could get beyond that, we could come up with a lot of solutions."

Although many participants called for systemic change, they also identified more incremental policies and practices (Tables 2a-2e) that might have the potential to reduce harm caused by disinvestment, gentrification, displacement, and racialized exclusion. Yet, because structural racism exists, communities of color will more likely suffer from land use decisions whether through disinvestment or investment (see Findings 2: Drivers). This highlights the **need for policy interventions and other strategies that go beyond reducing harm to redistribute material and decision-making resources toward communities of color.** To do so will require redressing existing power and resource disparities (see Findings 2: Drivers) and authentically engaging communities of color in land use decision processes (see Findings 5: Co-Governance).

Table 2a. Planning-related policies, practices, and strategies identified as potential solutions toward development without displacement.

Policies and Practices	Description
Tax Increment Financing (TIF) abolishment or reform	Public financing method used to subsidize development. Respondents suggested limiting the types of development that uses TIF funds, increasing public decision-making power, or abolishing this program.
Climate resiliency infrastructure	Investment in climate change infrastructure (e.g., retrofitting homes, green stormwater infrastructure); also could provide employment opportunities
Community Benefits Agreement	Project-specific agreement between developer and community coalition in which benefits, such as housing, employment, or environmental protections, are negotiated prior to the project's construction
Community Land Trust	Non-profit corporation that owns and manages land for community's benefit (e.g., affordable housing, community garden)
Demolition moratorium	Temporary pause on building demolitions
Social impact assessments	Processes for systematically considering social impacts, such as racial equity, of proposed development (see Findings 5)

Table 2b. Housing-related policies, practices, and strategies identified as potential solutions toward development without displacement.

Policies and Practices	Description
Affordable Requirements Ordinance reform	Requires some housing developments to reserve a percentage of affordable units. Respondents suggested providing stronger incentives for developers to create affordable units, eliminating disincentives and loopholes, and restructuring the definition of 'affordable' to reflect a larger market for low income renters.
Federal Housing Administration home loan program reform	Federally insured home loan programs have primarily benefited White communities.[53] Reform would involve prioritizing loans within communities of color.
Graduated Real Estate Transfer Tax	One time tax on property sales; revenue should be used to fund homelessness prevention and affordable housing
Housing cooperatives	Owners do not own units outright but rather are shareholders in collectively owned building, which makes the cost of home ownership more affordable
Preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing	Focusing policies toward safeguarding units that exist at a low market rate, without subsidies or vouchers
Project-based vouchers for housing	An increase in vouchers attached to a specific rental unit whose landlord contracts with public housing agency to rent unit to low-income families
Property tax reform	Base property tax on owner's income rather than property's value
Rent freeze	Temporary pause on tenant rent payments
Rent control	Government regulation of rent cost
Right of first refusal to non-profit organizations	Priority consideration to mission-oriented buyers when a property is sold
Single Room Occupancy preservation	Preservation of multi-tenant buildings where tenants share kitchens and bathrooms
Scale up public housing	An increase in housing units subsidized by federal, state or local governments

[53] Williams, "A Look at Housing Inequality and Racism in the US."

Table 2c. Employment-related policies, practices, and strategies identified as potential solutions toward development without displacement.

Policies and Practices	Description
Cannabis production	Production system in which community-based entity owns and operates cultivation and distribution of cannabis
Community farming	Community farms employ local residents for land management, food production, marketing, etc.
Community solar	Energy efficient solar production that offers opportunity for household savings, employment, and/or community ownership
Green Economic Industrial Corridor	Redevelopment of industrial sites for clean manufacturing, renewable energy production, environmental remediation, etc.
Small-scale manufacturing support	Business incubators that foster and support local entrepreneurs in modern urban manufacturing
Neighborhood based job training facility	Community center providing job training for local residents, including youth
Vacant lot clean up	Compensate residents to clean up vacant lots

Table 2d. Policies or practices identified as potential ways to strengthen public influence in development decisions.

Policies and Practices	Description
Participatory budgeting	Process where the public helps decide how to spend public monies
Policy framework that facilitates community generated land use plans	See Findings 5: Co-governance
Prioritizing locally-owned companies in City procurement processes	Selecting local developers and businesses rather than international engineering and development firms to design City projects
Publicly financed elections	Elections funded through public monies

Table 2e. Health-related policies, practices, and strategies identified as potential solutions toward healthy communities and environmental justice.

Policies and Practices	Description
Clean energy	Renewable energy production to decrease pollution; also could create jobs
Cumulative risk assessment	Considering pollution impacts from all industries in an area rather than an individual facility in permitting decisions
Home maintenance	Programs that assist low income homeowners with mold removal, ventilation, combustion appliance removal, etc.
Pollution remediation	Contaminant removal from soil, sediment, or water bodies
Stronger enforcement of existing public health inspections / monitoring	Bolster existing regulatory inspection efforts on polluting industries

Findings 5
Community Engagement Toward Co-governance

"The greatest power of a community lies within the people that live there. And so, having them be the drivers of our solutions . . . because they know [the] community best" -Housing organizer

Participants identified community engagement as integral to influencing land use decisions and related health equity outcomes in Chicago. Many interviewees worried that if the City does not actively amplify community-developed visions for urban planning, then market forces, structural racism, and piecemeal policy responses will continue to reinforce and perhaps even deepen existing inequities. While the interventions identified in Findings 4 hold potential to prevent displacement, interviewees, particularly community organizers, emphasized the need to address power disparities in land use decision-making processes in order to counter harms related to disinvestment and gentrification, including environmental gentrification. Most called for transforming planning processes to ground land use plans in community-based visions. **All participants expressed a desire for more inclusive land use planning and decision-making.** They described varied methods of collaboration; across these, we identified four common characteristics with potential to be scaled up in order to transform city decision-making processes. These included:

- Shift to co-governance in community planning
- Build community capacity, relationships, and resident power
- Fund engagement accessibility
- Embed equity criteria into land use decision-making processes

5.1. Shift to co-governance in community planning

To many interviewees, the existing neighborhood development process felt like a battleground that involved fighting for resources while also defending neighborhood identity and affordability. **Many respondents called for deepening relationships among government agencies, technical experts, and community-based groups so that resident expertise would inform land use decisions to improve neighborhoods and the lives of people living there.** Many respondents found success in community engagement processes that embraced non-hierarchical decision making structures. For example, in reference to a green stormwater infrastructure project throughout the city, a planner shared:

> That core work was really to engage community-level partners and residents and do it in a way where the infrastructure wasn't set up top-down. In fact, we were very intentional to make that be a circle . . . So thinking about structures where [residents] are being compensated and where they are at the table, at the same level of decision making power as other stakeholders. We, through that initiative, found that those are two key components

> that are really important to have consistent, valuable, and respectful engagement with residents and stakeholders.

Participants described hopeful examples suggesting models for **co-governance, or shared decision-making power between local communities and other stakeholders in land use decisions.[54] Co-governance generates collective understanding and action by drawing from everyone's unique strengths, vantage points, and capacities. It also prioritizes governmental transparency and accountability to the communities affected by development decisions.** Co-governance puts neighborhood voices at the forefront of the planning process at its earliest stages, uses residents' local expertise to create community development visions, and partners with elected officials and technical experts to make those visions reality. Thus, shifting to co-governance addresses barriers discussed earlier (see Findings 2: Drivers) by opening pathways for meaningful public participation and bridging local and technical expertise.

Adopting a co-governance model increases the likelihood that the communities most often excluded from planning processes and harmed by land use decisions can influence how investments are made in their neighborhoods in order to benefit from them. While the benefits can be many, such as clean air or affordable housing, a critical benefit to promote is community ownership. Equitable development coalition leader Roberto Requejo explained:

> If we want communities to stay in place, and we want communities to thrive when new investment comes to them, we know that we need to move all the way to the owning part, where this is not about just inviting [them] to a meeting and getting feedback and incorporating that feedback, but making sure that . . . they also have a stake.

He emphasized that community ownership goes beyond voicing input. If communities have control over their resources (such as through cooperatives or community land trusts), they have a financial stake that can help ensure the project benefits community members.

Co-governance incorporates knowledge from multiple sources. Despite concerns about planning processes driven by technical experts to the exclusion of community members (see Findings 2: Drivers), **several participants valued the contributions of 'technical experts,' those professionally trained in a certain field like financing or engineering, to inform and help execute development projects envisioned through collaborative initiatives.** For example, resident and former community health liaison Herminia Vanna explained, "I really would want an urban planner to come and look at this [community vision] and give us some ideas that are not like wishful thinking, that would really be doable." Others also acknowledged technical experts as important to assessing the feasibility, mechanics, and probable impacts of development, especially when informing elected officials. **A strong consensus among interviewees was the desire to consult 'local experts,' residents of a neighborhood that are directly affected by the decisions made.** Gina Ramirez, a community

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[54] Borrini-Feyerabend et al., "Sharing Power-Learning by Doing in Co Management of Natural Resources throughout the World."

organizer, explained the importance of not relying solely on technical experts but also consulting local experts:

> But it's 'out of sight, out of mind.' If you're not rooted and living in that community, and seeing it day to day, you might think [a project] is really helping the community. So that's why it's just so important to forge relationships and amplify the community's vision, because they are the experts of what's going on in their neighborhood, and they know what's best for the children that they're raising there.

Ramirez and others interviewed called for **a shift in community engagement processes to consult neighborhood residents as experts, not only because they are directly affected by development projects but also because they possess deep knowledge of if and how a specific project will work in their community.**

Communities are not homogenous. Rather local voices may compete with one another regarding the desired vision for neighborhood planning. While such conflict might create community tension, it also can prove a valuable learning opportunity. As equitable development coalition leader Roberto Requejo explained:

> Some folks think that conflict is a sign of failure . . . To me, when that happens, yeah, it is painful, nobody likes to be yelled at, nobody likes to be personally attacked, but sometimes that's just the way people communicate frustration . . . It really depends who you have leading those conversations and how committed your partners are to having long conversations . . . for the bigger purpose of advancing something that you truly believe in . . . affordable housing, a green infrastructure project, anything else. So, it's really about equipping people with the basics of inclusive leadership.

As Requejo emphasized, embracing conflict in an empathic and constructive way can enhance community-generated visions for land use. **This highlights the importance of consulting an inclusively representative group of voices, committing time necessary for collective mental and emotional processing, and employing impartial mediators for stakeholder engagement.**

5.2. Building relationships, community capacity and resident power

> "So what we have is really about relationships and identifying leadership on a block-by-block basis and giving power and a voice to people who are not accustomed to having power at all." - Quiwana Bell, community development specialist

Rather than adopting new models of public participation, the City can learn from grassroots groups already engaging with local residents in authentic ways. Community leaders described how they collectively build empathy, leadership, and power within their communities, thereby encouraging residents to engage in decisions affecting their neighborhood. Countering a sense of powerlessness that can result from ongoing disinvestment and exclusion (see Findings 1: Gentrification and Disinvestment), community development specialist Quiwana Bell described how her organization builds power: "It's really about connecting people and empowering them to know

that [they're] not a victim, that we all have something to give so that we can change the culture of the neighborhood, which then helps us to advocate for more. And once it comes, people feel like, this is not *for* me, this is *from* me." For Bell and other community organizers interviewed, **community engagement involves an ongoing relationship that builds trust, empowerment, and accountability over the long term.** It can also involve identifying key leaders in the community that will inspire others to sustain their involvement, which can perpetuate community connectedness. **It involves multi-directional learning that values local expertise**, as environmental justice organizer Olga Bautista emphasized:

> [We] come into a space knowing that [we] don't know everything, and that [we're] both a teacher and a student, and that everybody in that space is also. That we lift up lived experience and things that people are seeing every day . . . looking at everyday people as experts in their own lived experience. And not waiting for somebody else to come and validate their experiences. There's a lot of relationship building.

Others described their organizing approaches as adaptable and collaborative, including building coalitions across neighborhoods. For instance, Bell illustrated adaptation when she described how her organization works to build leadership among residents, "Our mission is to build capacity among ordinary citizens to build sustainable change . . . We are constantly thinking about how to refocus and how to redirect and how to get people engaged and empowered and connected." Community justice advocate Bweza Itaagi highlighted how flexibility contributes to building a collaborative urban farming network. She shared:

> We know that our work is not unique to us and the challenges Englewood faces aren't just unique to Englewood . . . And so with trying to bridge those gaps, we'll have the meetings at different locations every month. So sometimes we'll meet in Englewood. Sometimes we'll meet in Hyde Park. Sometimes we'll meet in Bridgeport . . . We're showing that we're mobile. We're not confined to one community. And then [our network is] more accessible.

5.3. Fund engagement accessibility

> "A lot of the processes that I see in engaging the community in the built environment . . . they are poorly funded from the get-go. If you don't have a minimum of resources to provide the right location, the right time of the day, daycare for people who have children, accessibility for folks who have disabilities, different communication styles for folks who prefer direct-indirect styles, all of that stuff, if you don't have that in place – and that costs money – then it's not gonna work." - Roberto Requejo, equitable development coalition leader

To enable co-governance requires ensuring sufficient resources to overcome the challenges of reaching people most often excluded in community engagement processes. Some respondents emphasized that communities consist of many diverse networks and individuals with different life experiences. Thus, only consulting a small, non-representative sample of neighborhood voices can

delegitimize the community engagement process. Some also named systemic social and political barriers preventing residents' involvement. For example, environmental justice advocate Peggy Salazar shared, "There are people who are too busy, in communities like ours, just trying to make ends meet. They don't have time to think about how their neighborhood could be better. They're just trying to think about how their life can be better." **Indeed, privileges associated with socio-economic status and racial identity can greatly influence an individual's ability to participate in civic engagement.** Participants noted that governmental and other planning organizations often do little if anything to address logistical barriers, such as inconvenient meeting times and locations, lack of child care, or no compensation to community members who volunteer their time (while professionals in the room are paid).

Thus, interviewees emphasized the need for **convenors of collaborative initiatives to be intentional about reducing obstacles related to language, time, financial constraints, and familial responsibilities, among others.** Some also cited using a variety of communication and participation methods as important to overcome the 'digital divide' that excludes people from decision-making processes when those processes rely on specific technologies. Examples offered for prioritizing accessibility in community planning processes included compensating residents for their involvement, hosting meetings within the neighborhood, ensuring the physical accessibility of meeting spaces, offering childcare, providing language translation, and using neutral facilitators. Resources in Chicago exist for guidance in improving accessibility, convening across stakeholders, and transforming the engagement process.[55]

5.4. Embed equity criteria into land use decision-making

> ". . . the planning process. We need to operationalize [equity] within the departments. So things like racial equity impact analyses, checklists, which are much more common in Portland and Seattle, and the UK, where they've been doing it for like 15 years, where at least people are forced to consider and walk through the steps . . ." – Marcella Bondie Keenan, environmental planner

Just as a proposed development project might require an environmental impact assessment, **some interviewees recommended that projects undergo equity impact assessments so that decision-makers understand the social consequences that a project might have on the surrounding community**. One example is an environmental justice assessment tool,[56] which considers social, environmental, health, and economic indicators to determine if environmental injustice is occurring in a community. Embedding similar equity criteria into development decision-making processes offers opportunities to overcome distrust (see Findings 2: Drivers) by building relationships between social actors. Another example referenced in multiple interviews is the Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA),[57] a tool that investigates social impacts of a proposal, operationalizes

[55] Chicago United for Equity, "Our Approach"; Elevated Chicago, "The Elevated Chicago Workplan 2018."
[56] Environmental Protection Agency, "Toolkit for Assessing Potential Allegations of Environmental Injustice."
[57] Chicago United for Equity, "What is an REIA?"

community concerns through a racial equity lens, and offers recommendations to mitigate or prevent disparate impacts. Niketa Brar, who trains Chicago leaders in the use of racial equity impact assessments, explained:

> Government has not been built to process in the language of everyday people . . . A racial equity impact assessment take[s] whatever people are saying and put[s] it into very clear and concrete language that . . . enumerate[s] harm and enumerate[s] benefits and burdens, but also is articulated into legal language . . . Racial equity impact assessments come from this idea that there needs to be a way to put whatever your folks are saying into a language that, frankly, our government and stakeholders can understand.

Interviewees shared important insights into paths forward toward more equitable land use decisions in Chicago. As many illustrated, **effective community engagement processes that reflect the interests and expertise of affected residents are possible, but will require sustained dedication on behalf of government agencies to operationalize.** Fostering collaboration between local communities and the City also requires patience. As Lynda Lopez, fair transportation advocate and writer, reflected, “If you really want equity, you're gonna have to be okay with just taking more time . . . There's this urgency mindset and sometimes better work takes time, even though you might not get a result for a while, and that's okay.” Indeed, it will take substantial time to overcome distrust fueled by generations of structural racism and systemic oppression in Chicago. However, participants highlighted re-distributing decision-making power, consulting residents as local experts, investing to make community engagement accessible, and embedding social impact assessments within decision-making processes as possibilities for increasing equity outcomes in land use decisions in Chicago.

Co-governance with local communities can help address health inequities arising from environmental injustices and threats of displacement through disinvestment or gentrification (including environmental gentrification) by fostering resident-driven development and multi-faceted policy solutions working toward structural change. We are thankful for the contributions of individuals who participated in this study. We hope that this research provides insights for transforming practices, programs, and policies toward greater environmental justice and health equity in Chicago.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

As you're probably aware, low-income communities and communities of color often experience disproportionate environmental pollution and associated health impacts. Research in other cities suggests that cleaning up environmental contamination, redeveloping brownfields, or bringing in green amenities like parks and trails sometimes contributes to increased housing costs, displacing the very residents intended to benefit from environmental improvements. This phenomenon is called environmental or green gentrification. We want to understand your perceptions of environmental gentrification in Chicago, whether you have observed it occurring, and solutions that promote environmentally clean, healthy, and affordable communities--without displacement.

Today we are focusing on the clean up of environmental contamination and the creation of environmental "goods" like parks, playgrounds, community gardens, or bike paths.

1. In your own experience, to what extent is environmental gentrification a concern in Chicago?
   [If a concern:]
   a. Describe the case of environmental gentrification in a Chicago neighborhood that you are most familiar with.
      i. In what neighborhood? Over what time period? What was the specific development or project? Who were the key stakeholders involved?
      ii. What do you think started the gentrification process in this neighborhood?
      iii. Would you say that the process was mostly because of forces within the neighborhood or mostly forces outside the neighborhood?
      iv. To your knowledge, how did the gentrification affect housing costs?
      v. How were concerns about displacement raised, if at all? What actions, if any, were taken towards preventing displacement?
      vi. What were the outcomes of the development or project with respect to the neighborhood's:
         1. environmental quality,
         2. public health,
         3. housing affordability,
         4. economic opportunities,
         5. culture, and / or
         6. demographics?
      vii. Who would you say benefitted from the environmental improvement? Who incurred costs (e.g., economic, social, psychological, cultural)?
   b. How do concerns about environmental gentrification influence your own work, if at all (e.g., choice of projects/campaigns)?

2. In your experience, in Chicago, what forces drive land use decisions that affect health equity, environmental quality, housing affordability, and/or employment opportunities?
   a. [Ask follow up questions for details and examples. Repeat as needed to ensure respondent speaks to all four aspects, if they feel able to do so.]
   b. Who has the most influence in these decisions?

3. From your perspective, what opportunities exist to improve environmental health in Chicago without displacing people? What policies, planning approaches, organizing strategies, or

other practices might support environmental cleanup, greenspace creation, and the concurrent health benefits without displacing existing residents?

   a. What has been tried in Chicago already?
      i. How did the program/policy/strategy work? Who initiated it? Whom did it affect?
      ii. To what extent was it effective? Why or why not?
   b. What potential solutions are you aware of from other cities?
      i. To your knowledge, how does the program/policy/strategy work?
      ii. To what extent might each be transferable to Chicago? Why or why not?

4. We understand from [organization's website or person who referred interviewee] that your work involves [snapshot summary]. Can you tell us more about your role in neighborhood planning and land use decisions as it relates to environmental quality, public health, housing, and/or economic development in Chicago?
   a. How long have you been engaged in this work?
   b. In what geographic areas of the city?
   c. With what specific populations?

5. What related dilemmas or questions are you facing in your own practice that you would recommend future research examine?

6. If it's okay with you, we would like to ask a few questions about your identity before we wrap up. [The purpose is so that we can describe in the research report the diversity of interviewees. All information will be reported in aggregate.]
   a. What is your gender identity?
   b. What is your race or ethnicity?
   c. Briefly describe your relationship with the city of Chicago with respect to how long you have lived here and in what specific neighborhoods.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?