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## **Gary, Indiana and the US Steel Corporation: An Examination of Race, Class, and Environmental Injustice in Early Twentieth Century Urban Planning**

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**Gary, Indiana and the US Steel Corporation: An Examination of Race, Class, and  
Environmental Injustice in Early Twentieth Century Urban Planning**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of History  
and the Department of Science, Technology and Environmental Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Laura Rose Allaben

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Gary, Indiana was widely regarded as one of the most successful and promising industrial American cities of its time.<sup>1</sup> Gary, Indiana was founded by the United States Steel Corporation to be a “model”<sup>2</sup> industrial city created by a private corporation. Gary is unique in that the city was conceptualized, planned, and constructed by a private entity, with little public or governmental input, for the purpose of serving the US Steel industry. As “groundbreaking” and “innovative” as the urban planning of Gary was supposed to be, conditions of segregation in the city caused by a divide between the premiere steel mills and a lack of scientifically planned housing subdivisions, proved to be an interesting catalyst for issues of class conflict, racial conflict, and severe environmental damage.

The rise, fall, and lasting effects of the creation and subsequent abandonment of Gary by the US Steel Corporation provides an interesting case study for observing issues of race, class, and environmental injustice caused by urban planning executed by a private entity. There are numerous complex issues at play regarding the decline of Gary, Indiana, including politics between the democratic city and the republican Indiana state government, larger trends of “white flight” seen nationally during the 1920s, and issues stemming from the “company town” model. While these issues deserve attention, I focus on the issues at play regarding the specific role US Steel played in the urban planning of the city that led to planned racial and class segregation of neighborhoods. These neighborhoods also demonstrate the role urban planning has played in creating environmental and public health issues for the people living in proximity to US Steel mills and factories.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve McShane, “The Magic City of Steel”, Pg. 1

<sup>2</sup> James B. Lane, *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*, Pg. 29

The rise and fall of Gary, Indiana exists within a larger context of “rust belt” cities and trends with United States manufacturing and industrialism. The term rust belt is itself an informal term used to describe a loosely defined geographic region, or specific cities, stretching from New York through the Midwest. These cities and regions were once dominated by the coal industry, steel production, and manufacturing, but have now begun to deteriorate and experience urban decay for a multitude of reasons including trade legislation, increase in overseas manufacturing, environmental regulations limiting coal use, etc.<sup>3</sup> While there are other cities that were impacted by the movement of steel production overseas, Gary is unique in that the city was specifically designed by US Steel to be a single industry town, to exist for the production of steel and the benefit of the private company. This dynamic left Gary in a particularly precarious position following the crash of the United States steel industry and the exit of US Steel from the city.

I argue that the story of Gary as a city is part of a larger trend of environmental and historical significance and is an example of how planned cities created environmental injustice through issues of race and class. The history of Gary and US Steel exhibit the role urban planning by a private entity has played in race based and class based segregation. In the case of Gary, US Steel sacrificed public health for the sake of the US Steel company. In this thesis, I argue that the United States Steel Corporation, as a private entity overseeing the urban planning of Gary, Indiana is culpable in the segregation and racism that occurred in early twentieth century Gary and in the environmental racism that occurred in the city due to US Steel having full control over the planning, construction, and the political-economic ethos over the city and its residents.

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Trubek, *Voices from the Rust Belt*, 2018, Pg. 1-5

Gary, Indiana provides a unique and meaningful case study of the pitfalls of industrial urban planning. The city that was designed by the United States Steel corporation to be “the City of the Century”<sup>4</sup> has now declined into a city known for urban decay, violence, a severe lack of jobs and opportunities, and a polluted wasteland<sup>5</sup>. Gary at its height was viewed<sup>6</sup> as the model city for implementing industrial urban planning to benefit a single industry, in this case the steel industry and the private interests of the US Steel Corporation. Gary was so renowned for its industrial prowess that the city was even used as a model by the Soviets in their attempt to rival and compete with United States steel production.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis examines Gary, Indiana as a prime example of a rust belt city, a city that has been faced with severe industrial decline, political and economic turmoil, and inner urban abandonment. Author of *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*, James B. Lane, highlights the issues at stake regarding Gary, Indiana as a planned industrial city,

“The industrial revolution caused dislocations in the fabric of society, however, and raised serious questions concerning the relationship between government and big business, the exploitation of the environment, the treatment of minorities, the upsetting of traditional moral values, and the preservation of individual freedom and economic opportunity. Conceived in a spirit of optimism and as a consequence of America’s economic expansion, Gary’s fate as a twentieth-century city depended on how these problems would be resolved.”<sup>8</sup>

Gary exists as a unique and important city to be understood and critiqued from the environmental-historical framework discussed above. Understanding the complexity of

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<sup>4</sup> James B. Lane, *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*

<sup>5</sup> S. Paul O’Hara, “*The Very Model of Modern Urban Decay*”: *Outsiders’ Narratives of Industry and Urban Decline in Gary, Indiana*

<sup>6</sup> Angelo Van Gorp, *Requiem for Gary: Cultivating Wasteland in and beyond the “Age of Steel*, page 227

<sup>7</sup> Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*

<sup>8</sup> James B. Lane, *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*, Pg. ix

these issues and the role of US Steel in the urban planning of the city is crucial to understanding the current despair of the city and the people who chose to remain after US Steel left.

These issues are intersectional, complex, and call for significant historical examination. I will not be able to address all of the forces at play or issues that have played a role in the decline of twentieth century Gary. However, I will focus on issues of race and class, as well as environmental injustice that all stem from the founding, planning, and running of the city by a private entity, the United States Steel. These three key issues have significant connection to the founding of Gary by US Steel and how the private interests of the corporation and its key stakeholders were prioritized above the needs of the city and its citizens.

Gary as a city is unique in that in the early twentieth-century when the city was founded, the role of city planning, setting up neighborhoods infrastructure, utilities, industry, etc. was all placed in the hands of a single private entity, US Steel. This dynamic defined the creation of the city, the urban planning that did and did not occur, how funds were allocated, how neighborhoods were created, you name it. Many of the roles of public entities and governmental roles were transferred and placed in the hands of the private corporation of US Steel. The role of US Steel in creating a city dominated by their corporate interest and the problems that arose from this dynamic, and remain to this day, are what is explored in this thesis.

To accomplish this analysis of Gary as a case study of urban planning, I have used a historiographical and environmental framework to examine these intersectional issues. A historical and environmental studies framework utilized together to inform one another and draw

insights from each other is advantageous. Using the environment in Gary to understand the past, notably the founding and construction of the city, helps to understand and critique the intersectional issues of urban planning and segregation. Other historians I cite in this thesis and who have informed my thinking about the usefulness of historiographical and environmental methodologies together are Angelo Van Gorp and Andrew Hurley. Van Gorp in his text, “Requiem for Gary: Cultivating Wasteland in and beyond the ‘Age of Steel’” utilizes an environmental studies and historiographical framework that informs his analysis of Gary’s decline in relation to industrialism and steel production. Another historian, Andrew Hurley, author of *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*, also utilizes an environmentally focused methodology to examine historically constructed issues of race, class, and industrialization in Gary. These two authors’ research and methodologies exemplify the usefulness of historiographical research informed by environmental studies framework and systematic thinking.

This type of historiographical and environmental studies framework informed my analysis of Gary as a case study in the history of urban planning. I used this type of historiographical and environmental studies analysis to critique the founding and urban planning of the city by the US Steel Corporation. I argue the involvement of US Steel in the creation of Gary as a “company town” created environmental injustice due to neighborhoods being segregated by class, and therefore race, and the prioritizing of the steel mills over the town itself. US Steel planned and designed Gary as a company town, reliant on a single industry which directly led to the segregation and the environmental pollution of the city. I have utilized archival materials such as primary source documents such as newspapers, urban planning documents, and more to shed light on the rise and decline of Gary, Indiana as a boom and bust industrial city.



While examining sources I have considered the content of each source in relation to the political-economic and environmental impacts upon Gary as a second-class city. I have viewed primary and secondary source texts through an environmental-historical perspective, similar to that of historians Van Gorp and Hurley, to engage with the issue of urban planning, industrial decay, and environmental injustice in “The City of a Century”.

The modern city of Gary, Indiana began as an experiment in urban planning designed by the United States Steel Corporation. This unique founding and experimentation of industrial urban planning in the early twentieth century makes Gary an interesting case study for understanding how urban planning executed by a private cooperation, like US Steel, guided the development, growth, and political-economy of the city. Gary was conceived as a model industrial city in the early twentieth century, but more recently has become the epitome of rust belt decay. According to historian and author James B. Lane, author of *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*:

The United States Steel Corporation founded Gary in 1906 as an experiment in industrial urban planning, but the city never fulfilled the hopes of its pioneer boosters. Rather it came to symbolize the plight of twentieth-century cities... in silhouette, the skyline of Gary, Indiana, could serve as a perfect emblem of America’s industrial might-or its industrial pollution.<sup>9</sup>

Considering Gary, Indiana as an early example of urban planning, Gary showcases what Lane calls “the plight” of twentieth-century cities, this plight being political-economic power struggles, segregation along lines of race and class, and environmental injustice.

Gary is a clear example of an industry-built town, even being described as “the Steel Company’s town, in 1909.”<sup>10</sup> Gary was transformed from an undeveloped tract of lands along

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<sup>9</sup> James B. Lane, *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*, Pg. ix

<sup>10</sup> Will H. Moore, “*If I had known*” about Gary in 1909, Pg. 14

Lake Michigan and twenty-five miles from Chicago's transportation network into a booming industrial second-class city by US Steel for US Steel. Andrew Hurley, of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, explains the formations of the "City of a Century": "From its origins as the site of U.S. Steel's behemoth manufacturing complex on the shores of Lake Michigan, Gary, Indiana, has operated largely as a company town where the dictates of steel production have determined the ebb and flow of daily life, the use of natural resources, and local economic fortunes."<sup>11</sup>

The concept and location selection of Gary emerged out of larger industrial trends in the Midwest, specifically Chicago. The location of Gary in the Calumet region of Northern Indiana was specifically selected to for US Steel to access Midwest Markets, for the proximity to Chicago as a connected industrial hub, and for the shipping opportunities on Lake Michigan.<sup>12</sup> United States Steel Corporation's mills, plants, and facilities were the main priority in the planning and construction of Gary. In terms of the "urban planning experiment" that was underway with the founding and construction of Gary as a "company town", strategies of urban planning and design for the actual town were not the priority. According to Lane:

"The company applied the most modern techniques in constructing its mill facilities but paid little heed to scientific methods of urban planning. For example, Gary's grid street pattern was less efficient for twentieth-century traffic needs than a diagonal or circular design would have been, and the town site was so close to the mills that they air was destined to be terribly polluted. Company officials admitted that their main concern was profitable steel production rather than the creation of a 'model' city."<sup>13</sup>

The dominant narrative about Gary and perception of the city is that its planning and design was a "model" example of the success of urban planning. However, this narrative is misleading due

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<sup>11</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Steel Shavings Vol. 37: Gary's First Hundred Years a Centennial History of Gary, Indiana, 1906-2006* by James B. Lane. *Indiana Magazine of History*, Pg. 370

<sup>12</sup> Steve McShane, "The Magic City of Steel", Pg. 1

<sup>13</sup> James B. Lane, *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*, Pg. 29

to the lack of thought and planning devoted to the city itself. As described above by Lane, the US Steel company's mills and factories were planned and constructed with substantial amounts of resources, state of the art industrial technologies, and in deliberately close proximity to transportation systems. Gary, as a Midwestern industrial hub, was ideally situated East of Chicago's extensive network of railroads and industrial manufacturing.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Gary was situated on the South shore of Lake Michigan and the Calumet River.<sup>15</sup> These three transportation systems made Gary an extremely well-connected industrial city.

In contrast, the planning of the city's actual roads, infrastructure, and neighborhoods was done with "little heed" of scientific and informed urban planning techniques. Steve McShane, Archivist and Curator, of the Calumet Regional Archives, discusses the vision of the US Steel Co. mills:

The Corporation had envisioned a massive mill complex, and it was not disappointed. Over twelve million cubic yards of sand were removed. Foundations for the mill structures required two million yards of concrete. The railroad yards could hold 15,000 cars. A mile-long harbor was built, twenty-five feet deep and 250 feet wide, between two parallel piers extending 2,360 feet into Lake Michigan; it included a turning basin 750 feet in diameter to accommodate the huge iron ore boats.<sup>16</sup>

A significant amount of thought, planning, funding, and vision was dedicated to the selection of the Calumet region along the shores of Lake Michigan to be the site of US Steel Corporation's Midwestern complex. Likewise, the planning of the mill complex, harbor, and transportation networks for the steel industry in Gary was given top priority and care<sup>17</sup>. For the amount of care

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<sup>14</sup> Cottingham, W. P., "Map of Gary, Indiana and vicinity 1929"

<sup>15</sup> Will H. Moore, *"If I had known" about Gary in 1909*, Pg. 16

<sup>16</sup> Steve McShane, "The Magic City of Steel", Pg. 1

<sup>17</sup> James B. Lane, *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana*, Pg. 29

given to the industrial components of the city there was a substantial disregard of the urban planning that needed to occur for the “public” parts of Gary, roads, schools, neighborhoods, etc.

The lack of priority that US Steel gave to the urban planning of lower income and more racially diverse sectors of the city is reflected in the organization of the city’s neighborhoods. This segregated organization and planning also reveals the effects of the city’s organization being conducted by a private organization, US Steel, who prioritized their economic success and the white, upper class employees and leaders of the company. Part of Gary’s design and conception as a model industrial planned city were neighborhoods that were divided by ones’ level of employment within the US Steel Corporation.<sup>18</sup> This divide between neighborhoods has been described by Dr. Sandra L. Barnes, Professor at Vanderbilt University-Peabody College in her documentary as “a tale of two cities”.<sup>19</sup> One of these cities is white, upper class, the leaders of US Steel. The other city, is predominately lower class, black, and composed of various communities of European immigrants that came to Gary in search of employment in the Steel mills.

From the beginning, Gary was built as a segregated city with the “First Subdivision” constructed as an ideal suburb, with sidewalks, utilities, trees, lawns, and the bustling downtown sector along Broadway Street. However according to McShane, “Only the very well-paid employees” could afford the lots and construction costs of this idyllic neighborhood.<sup>20</sup> McShane describes the planning and purpose of this first neighborhood:

Along with building a state of the art integrated steel mill, U.S. Steel officials sought to construct a model company town for the skilled workers, foremen, and supervisors. The corporation poured resources into the design and construction of

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<sup>18</sup> Will H. Moore, *“If I had known” about Gary in 1909*, Pg. 17

<sup>19</sup> Sandra L. Barnes, “Gary, Indiana: A Tale of Two Cities (2018)”, Documentary

<sup>20</sup> Steve McShane, “The Magic City of Steel”, Pg. 1

the Town of Gary, built simultaneously with the mill. U.S. Steel's First Subdivision... the Corporation desired a more subtle form of influence over town affairs, letting employees own their own homes while the company sold lots and provided mortgages. Although non-corporation businesses and homes flourished in the First Subdivision, the company dictated strict regulations on building and design.

This type of planning for regulated neighborhoods predominately served white, upper-class US Steel employees. The types of homes, fees, and land process that were dictated by a US Steel subsidiary company, the Gary Land Company, also barred certain types of people and employees from being able to live in these “First Subdivision” neighborhoods because of purchasing and building requirements. The regulations stipulated that, “Employees could purchase lots from the Land Company but had to adhere to strict building regulations, including erecting a building within eighteen months.”<sup>21</sup> These regulations created “two cities” out of Gary because of the segregation that occurred as a result of the specific requirements and prices for homes in this neighborhood. The image below, taken in 1915, is of a standard house in US Steel’s First Subdivision. The image depicts the quality of the homes in this neighborhood and the infrastructure surrounding them with other homes, power lines, and sidewalks.



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<sup>21</sup> Steve McShane, “The Magic City of Steel”, Pg. 1

<sup>22</sup> The Calumet Regional Archives, “House, 667 Van Buren Street, Style J, G.L. Co. #55”

Neighborhoods in Gary were set up for and made available to specific people and position levels within the US Steel Corporation. McShane demonstrates how neighborhoods became segregated by job title and income status:

Only the very well paid employees could meet this requirement, so the Gary Land Company began to build, sell, and/or rent houses for supervisors, foremen, and skilled workers. 506 houses in a variety of styles and price ranges were offered for sale or rent, depending on the income and status of the employee; most were rented at rates determined by the model and location in the First Subdivision.<sup>23</sup>

This form of urban planning as a means to control how neighborhoods were constructed and populated reflects the influence US Steel had over the segregation of the city. As quoted above, US Steel desired to exert a specific type of control over town affairs, housing, and the housing of their employees.

The situation on the South side of Gary could not have been more different. On this side of the city there was a substantial lack of investment and planning. The South side of Gary, was essentially ignored by the company despite the amount of US Steel workers that lived there and the reliance of the South side on US Steel. This south side slum became known as “the patch” and had a reputation for its unsanitary conditions, shacks, saloons, and boarding houses. “Living in the First Subdivision was out of the reach of the bulk of the Gary Works workforce, most of whom were foreign born laborers. By 1920, fifty-two nationalities made their home in Gary, along with a significant number of African-American migrants from the South and Mexican workers from south of the border.”<sup>24</sup> This demographic was in stark contrast to the “First Subdivision” neighborhood created by US Steel for their affluent and white employees. The

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<sup>23</sup> Steve McShane, “The Magic City of Steel”, Pg. 1

<sup>24</sup> Steve McShane, “The Magic City of Steel”, Pg. 1

image below was taken in 1907 and depicts the type of housing present in and the conditions of “the patch”. The environmental conditions of this neighborhood were abysmal and known to be dirty, dangerous, and unsanitary.<sup>25</sup> This image of “the patch”, taken just eight years before the image above showing the First Subdivision shows the stark contrast between the safety and infrastructure of these neighborhoods.



The South side of Gary, Indiana in the early twentieth century became a patchwork of slums. Gary, as a company town, and the largest ever of its kind, was completely reliant on and dominated by the US Steel Corporation. This issue of a lack of funding, investment, and planning into the non-white, lower-class parts of the city is reflective of the root issue of constructing single-industry company towns. Many US Steel employees who were of lower income, occupied lower levels of labor in the company, and who were also often people of color or immigrants were forced to live in the Southside slums of “the patch” due to a lack of planning and investment by US Steel in this side of town. This Southern part of the town, south of the

<sup>25</sup> Steve McShane, “The Magic City of Steel”, Pg. 1

<sup>26</sup> The Calumet Regional Archives, “Shacks Along River - View 1.”

First Subdivision was sold to speculators with led inconsistent, crowded, and unplanned housing slums.<sup>27</sup> Authors Raymond A. Mohl and Neil Beffen discuss these urban planning issues in their article, “The Failure of Industrial City Planning: Gary, Indiana, 1906-1910”:

High-priced housing forced low-paid immigrant workers into slum housing put up by private real estate developers and builders in Gary’s unplanned but growing “south side.” The Gary experience suggests some of the inherent contradictions in the planning process. Especially, it reveals the persistence of conflict between human needs and dominant cultural and entrepreneurial values-conflicts which have repeatedly compromised and undermined ostensible public interest goals and caused planning failures.<sup>28</sup>

Part of this quote that I want to highlight and be aware of is the idea of the Southside being developed by “private real-estate developers” possibly creating a sense that the North side in contrast was developed publicly. This is not the case as the North side and “First Subdivision” neighborhoods were developed, sold, and supplied utilities by a private entity as well. It was developed by a subsidiary of the US Steel Corporation, Gary Land Company. It is important to not misread the urban planning and development of these two neighborhoods as public versus private even though the US Steel Corporation did operate on such a large scale and with such control over the city it is easy, but a mistake, to think of the corporation as a public or governmental entity.

One of the main failures and limitations of US Steel’s Gary Land Company was a substantial delay in planning and constructing housing for lower income laborers and predominantly male migrant workers. Gary Land Company did construct housing of various

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<sup>27</sup> Robert A. Catlin, *Racial Politics and Urban Planning: Gary, Indiana, 1980-1989*, Pg. 20

<sup>28</sup> Raymond A. Mohl and Neil Beffen, “The Failure of Industrial City Planning: Gary, Indiana, 1906-1910”, Pg. 203



kinds in the First Subdivision that were available to rent, however prices were too expensive for the average US Steel employee. Gary Land Company rents were too high for common laborers, whose wages averaged 16.7 cents per hour in 1912.<sup>29</sup> The US Steel Corporation despite efforts to not repeat mistakes made by Pullman, such as paternalistic meddling in the personal, social, and moral lives of company town employees, ended up in the business on land lording and dealing with overcrowded and dirty slums. According to William H. Moore, author of *If Only I Had Known About Gary in 1909*, a book published in 1909 to publicize Gary and attract more residents US Steel specifically stated that “There is not, and will not be any paternalism”<sup>30</sup> from US Steel limiting peoples’ autonomy and freedom. This was in direct response to issues that arose in Pullman’s company town in Pullman, IL.

US Steel did try and construct housing for “the lowest paid, unskilled workers”, but even these housing units had rent prices and family home set-ups that were not conducive for immigrant laborers. Many immigrant laborers who moved to Gary individually were not able to afford the family-style housing units constructed in the First Subdivision. Since these individuals could not afford the housing on their own, situations of sub-leasing out rooms to individual tenants arose.<sup>31</sup> These housing units “quickly filled up with immigrant laborers, earning this section of the city the name “Hunkyville.” ...As the population of the confined area soared, “Hunkyville” soon became unsightly, unsanitary, garbage strewn, and run down.”<sup>32</sup> These

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<sup>29</sup> United States, Bureau of Labor Statistics (1914) *Wages and Hours in the Iron and Steel Industry in the United States, 1907-1912*, Bulletin no. 151

<sup>30</sup> Will H. Moore, *If I had known” about Gary in 1909*, Pg. 17

<sup>31</sup> Steve McShane, “The Magic City of Steel”, Pg. 1

<sup>32</sup> Raymond A. Mohl and Neil Beffen, “The Failure of Industrial City Planning: Gary, Indiana, 1906-1910”, Pg. 209

pitfalls and failures of US Steel's urban planning to serve their large workforce led to the emergence of the Southside slum "the patch".

Examining the pattern of urban planning in Gary that was executed by the US Steel Corporation shows clear flaws in execution and where the company's priorities were, in planning for middle to upper-class people and families, who were also often white. One of the ramifications of Gary Land Company's urban planning of housing, roads, and utilities to be strictly family style housing with strict building codes and high rent prices is the segregation of the city. The strategies of urban planning implemented in early twentieth-century Gary were based on the private economic interests of US Steel, not based on the most current urban planning technologies of the time. While US Steel was actively trying to build some housing units on the North side of the city that would be available for employees and laborers other than executives, these projects turned out to be unsuitable for a majority of their unskilled, migrant, and lower-class workforce. Unfortunately, this also led to race-based segregation of the city. Many immigrants from Europe and South of the United States, as well as black residents who moved North in search of jobs, ended up living in these lower income housing areas. Since many of the homes and neighborhoods on the North side were too expensive and also not planned or constructed with lower-income populations in mind, the majority of Gary's immigrants and citizens of color ended up living in squalor in "Hunkyville" or "the Patch".

This challenging situation regarding a lack of urban planning dedicated towards lower income residents, immigrants, and citizens of color was a direct result of the priorities of the US Steel Corporation. According to Mohl and Beffen:

Poorly built structures in “Hunkyville” and shoddy treatment of their original occupants seemed indicative of company attitudes toward unskilled immigrants. Most such workers were left totally unprovided for within the boundaries of the First Subdivision, forcing them to accept substandard housing in the rapidly developing section of slums and boarding houses south of steel company property called the “Patch.” The failure of company housing policy highlighted real shortcomings in the planning of Gary.

These shortcomings of urban planning in Gary resulted in discriminatory housing practices which left low income, immigrant, and black residents in low funded, poorly planned, and environmentally polluted neighborhoods.

Due to the private interests of US Steel being the priority and essentially the entire purpose of Gary, Indiana, the city was extremely vulnerable to exploitation by the company. Gary also proved to be problematic in how segregation based on race and class formally took place in the urban planning of the city beginning in 1906 through the end of the twentieth-century. Gary has been cited to be one of the most segregated cities in nation all the way until the civil rights movement, and even beyond.<sup>33</sup> This segregation has direct origins to the original planning and construction of the First Subdivision by US Steel. The subsequent selling and lack of planning or regulation of “the patch” neighborhood to the South of the corporation’s planned and pristine predominately upper-class and white neighborhood played a key role in the racial segregation of the city.

Controlling the development of Gary’s urban environment, neighborhoods, and access to cleaner, healthier places to live was heavily dictated by race, class, and position within the US Steel Corporation. Andrew Hurley, author of *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and*

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<sup>33</sup> Sandra L. Barnes, “Gary, Indiana: A Tale of Two Cities (2018)”, Documentary

*Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*, discusses the competition over governing the urban environment in the city:

Historically, the ability to control others, through the political process and through the dynamics of the capitalist marketplace, gave certain groups a decisive advantage in the struggle to organize and manipulate the urban landscape. In other words, one's place in the social and economic hierarchy proved a reliable predictor of one's ability to advance and secure a set of environmental objectives.<sup>34</sup>

This dynamic was specifically at play in Gary with the urban planning of the city, its neighborhoods, and business centers. Black citizens who moved to the city in search of jobs were often forced to live in urban slums like "the patch" or in overcrowded US Steel housing in the "Hunkyville" section of their planned First Subdivision neighborhood.

Another dimension of racial tensions within Gary were the splitting of political, social, and economic life along racial lines. Some of these types of conflicts were directly influenced by the role US Steel played in planning and controlling the political-economic sphere of Gary. As black citizens moved to Gary in patterns of migration from the South in search for jobs and an escape from Jim Crow, racial tensions in Gary's already precarious slums increased. Part of these tensions arose from racism that unfortunately already existed within society and within the people who had planned and populated Gary. Hurley describes these complex dynamics within the context of industrialism:

Industrial corporations deliberately pitted white workers against black workers- for example, by hiring African Americans as strikebreakers- in order to quash any incipient working-class solidarity. Although industrialization did not create

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<sup>34</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*, Pg. 3

racism, industrialists' hiring practices sustained and deepened it. The resulting racial animosities spilled over into community life... and political structures.<sup>35</sup>

As discussed above, while US Steel by no means invented racism or discrimination the urban planning patterns of the city contributed to racist segregation in the city. Their hiring practices and compensation of unskilled laborers also contributed to racial tensions in the city and demonstrated some of the ways people of color, immigrants, and lower-class individuals in Gary were discriminated against.

An additional aspect of segregation and discrimination in Gary that directly resulted from the industrial practices and priorities of US Steel are the environmental hazards residents of early twentieth-century had to deal with and were exposed to in their day to day lives. While pollution in Gary permeated nearly all levels of society and impacted all races and peoples in the city, it was disproportionately experienced by those living in neighborhoods directly adjacent to the steel mills, factories, coal fired plants, and various manufacturing plants of US Steel Co. The environmental pollution and degradation of Gary, Indiana was destined to occur and impact the citizens of Gary, IN due to the close proximity of the steel mills and industrial manufacturing centers to the rest of the city and residential areas.

This type of environmentally hazardous environment was pervasive in early twentieth-century Gary. The way pollution impacted Gary along lines of race and class is discussed by Hurley:

For those who lived and worked in Gary, pollution was inescapable... affiliations of class, race, and ethnicity conditioned individual' precise relationship to the environment, the social costs of industrial pollution impinged upon the entire

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<sup>35</sup> Andrew Hurley, author of *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*, Pg. 4

urban population... Yet despite the pervasiveness of industrial pollution, manufacturers encountered little popular resistance during the 1940s. A political order grounded in the pursuit of industrial growth effectively reconciled social objectives with patterns of natural resource exploitation, thereby allowing manufacturers to maintain their environmental hegemony.<sup>36</sup>

These patterns of resource exploitation and environmental pollution further show the ways in which Gary and the people of Gary in the early twentieth-century had their lives controlled and impacted in a multitude of ways by US Steel controlling the planning and industry of the entire city. The pollution and environmental injustice faced by the residents of Gary was experienced collectively, however it was experienced very differently depending on one's race and class dictating where one could live and afford to live.

Understanding the history of Gary, Indiana as a corporate town conceived, planned, and dominated by the United States Steel Corporation is crucial to understanding the issues Gary faced to present day. The city is still plagued by the results of segregated and unequally funded and planned neighborhoods, environmental pollution, and economic despair due to the singular reliance on US Steel as the city's main economic driver. Utilizing Gary, Indiana and the role played by US Steel as a case study for examining early twentieth-century industrial urban planning is useful to develop an understanding about the ways in which industrialism and capitalism shaped and changed society in Gary. Gary's origins as an industrial urban planning "experiment" had significant and meaningful impacts on the planning and construction of the city along lines of race and class.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*, Pg. 16

<sup>37</sup> Dolly Millender, *Yesterday in Gary: A Brief History of the Negro in Gary*

Divisions caused by decisions made by US Steel and their subsidiary companies in the planning experiments that occurred in early twentieth-century in Gary still continue to impact the city and its residents in present day. Understanding these origins and the ways in which the city itself and the institutions of the city were planned and constructed is important to conceptualizing the current decline and decay of Gary. What was once “the City of the Century” is now regarded as one of the most polluted, crime riddled, and desolate cities in the state of Indiana, if not the entire Midwest. Understanding the history of the city in relation to the United States Steel Corporation is crucial to understanding how the city was founded, designed, and planned. According to Angelo Van Gorp, author of *Requiem for Gary: Cultivating Wasteland in and Beyond the “Age of Steel*, the planning of Gary was doomed from the beginning:

While the First Subdivision was planned with generally good housing and sanitation and catered for business and professional people and skilled workers, the South Side developed rapidly and disorderly into an insanitary and overcrowded slum area with poor-quality housing for the unskilled immigrant workers. The concept of the model industrial city of Gary was ‘destroyed before it got off the ground’<sup>38</sup>

Notwithstanding, Gary originated as an industrial marvel and second-class city in the Midwest region. However, the priorities of US Steel in their planning of the city to serve the interest of the corporation caused significant problems regarding segregation based on lines of race and class and a lack of meaningful planning and investment into neighborhoods and parts of the city that did not serve or align with US Steel's private economic goals. The environmental exploitation and pollution of the city and its residents in the early twentieth-century can be viewed as a key example of the types of issues that are at play when private entities are given responsibilities that could be better executed by the public sector and governmental regulations.

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<sup>38</sup> Angelo Van Gorp, *Requiem for Gary: Cultivating Wasteland in and beyond the “Age of Steel*, page 227

Gary as a city was and is a unique place due to where, why, and how it was founded. The entire ethos of the city in the early twentieth-century until the late 1980s revolved around a single dominating industry and private entity. US Steel as a privately-owned corporation prioritized profits and industrial needs over those of the city itself and the people who came to live and work in Gary. US Steel structured Gary to be wholly dependent on the corporation and the steel industry. Everything from politics, economics, social life, environmental health, and neighborhood planning was in some way to varying degrees controlled by or reliant upon the US Steel Corporation.

Analyzing these issues in Gary as a case study for early urban planning reveals how planned segregation along lines of race and class emerged in the city and led to varying degrees of exposure to environmental health risks and pollutants. In the first half of the twentieth century Gary was regarded as one of the most segregated cities in America in part due to the urban planning strategy and execution by US Steel. The city was in many ways to be segregated due to housing policies and the amount of time and money that was allocated by US Steel and the local government they exerted influence over. These issues of racism and classism directly relate to the US Steel Corporation's environmental injustice and exploitation of the city and the people who lived and worked in Gary in the early twentieth-century.

Despite visions of Gary, Indiana becoming a model industrial city as a new experiment in "state of the art urban planning", most of the urban planning that occurred was for the purpose of the US Steel Corporation, not the city or its people. Urban planning techniques were applied to the construction of the mills, factories, and the corporation's subsidiary industries, with adequate funding and state of the art technologies. However, this care, funding, and attention did not extend to the city beyond the needs of US Steel's white, upper-class leadership and skilled



laborers. This failure of the Gary “experiment” can help us understand issues that arise when private entities are given tasks and responsibilities that should be overseen and managed publically. Gary, Indiana as a company town was conceived and planned as a single industry mill and factory town for the US Steel Corporation. Gary is a compelling case study and example of the root issues of company towns prioritizing profits over people and setting up a political-economic system that is dominated by a single private entity.

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