

Urban Renewal For Whom?
The Distribution of Environmental Amenities in 3
Portland Neighborhoods

Elijah Probst

Lewis & Clark College

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Introduction

Justice in the Urban Environment

As the world's urban populations are eclipsing the populations of rural areas (United Nations, 2011), much scholarship and professional effort has aimed to create livable communities for urban residents. Livability is a difficult term to define due to the wide variety of peoples and cultures that exist on the planet and the fact that many different disciplines use it in a flexible manner. Still at its heart, livability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment, and recreation possibilities (Partners for Livability, 2014). In this thesis I will focus on most of these factors, which I call, "environmental amenities." The traditional literature defines environmental amenities as being similar to other public goods that might be present in a neighborhood or large urban area. In this thesis, I expand upon the traditional definition, which revolves around environmental health and quality, to include a focus on social, cultural, and economic dimensions that stem from livability discourse. For practical reasons, I have situated my study of livability and environmental amenities in discipline as well as location.

This study will address the concepts of livability and distribution of environmental amenities through the lens of the urban planning discipline. Urban planning has existed in some form since the first settlements of civilization, ranging from ancient Mesopotamian societies to the cities of the Aztecs. While earlier forms of urban planning are important to consider as being potentially influential to contemporary planners, urban planning is by nature a location-based discipline, as the specifics of one location can be very different from another both materially and culturally (Campbell, 2012). To give a modern example, urban planning in the United States is going to be fundamentally different from that of urban planning in Germany or Japan or Nigeria.

The contemporary field of urban planning has arisen, in large part, to tackle the diverse range of issues faced by the rapidly urbanizing populations of the world as a result of the Industrial Revolution. These issues can be seen as a combination of

ecological issues due to humanity's impact on its surrounding environment as well as social justice issues that arise from inequalities in the standard of living achieved by human beings across the globe. It should be noted that many cities, especially in developing nations, are currently dealing with more fundamental issues such as establishing basic services and infrastructure than livability. At the same time, while many cities in developed nations provide basic services and more to residents, this does not necessarily mean that such cities are optimal places to live. To merely provide the bare minimum humans need to survive is an unacceptable state of affairs for any modern city, especially as urban populations make up a steadily growing majority of humanity. This study is concerned with the cities of developed nations, as they are in a privileged enough position to utilize urban planning in order to consider ecological, social justice, and human development issues over establishment of basic services and infrastructure. Because of its international reputation (deserved or not) for ecological sustainability, innovative planning, and attractive communities, I situate my study within the American city of Portland, Oregon, (Ozawa, 2004).

Incorporated in 1851, Portland has a fairly recent history as far as cities go, which makes a study of urban planning much more manageable. The city was founded post-Industrial Revolution so there is less inherited baggage in the form of small, pre-industrial streets in East Coast cities like Boston, and significantly less than that of European cities founded centuries ago. Over the past century, great strides have undoubtedly been made in increasing the quality of life for Portland residents through urban planning, as well as reducing the city's ecological footprint, but all have not equally enjoyed the benefits of these advances. For example, there are still many people who are homeless or living in poverty in Portland, and while residents are generally likely to find running water and electricity in their houses, many streets do not have sidewalks and/or are not paved at all (Pein, 2011). Some neighborhoods lack affordable grocery stores and access to amenities like financial and retail services, public and human services, and greenspaces (CLF, 2014). Communities of color, notably the African American community in Portland has experienced massive intentional displacement as well as the impacts from toxic sites located near their neighborhoods (Podobnik, 2005; Gibson, 2007).

A central component of urban planning, and one that has significantly affected residents in Portland as the city has shifted from an industrial economy to one that is increasingly headed towards post-industrial, is urban renewal. Loosely interpreted, urban renewal can be understood as the process by which urban planners go about creating change in places that already exist. It is one thing to plan a city on a completely clean slate of land, it is another to be a planner for one that is already home to thousands of people. The fact that Portland's infrastructure is largely established is what makes urban renewal so important. There are a few organizations devoted to urban planning around Portland, but the organization devoted specifically to urban renewal is the Portland Development Commission (PDC), a quasi-governmental organization created in 1958 (Gibson, 2004). The PDC currently claims to support the development of what can be considered environmental amenities, and has used urban renewal to change the face of many Portland neighborhoods. In this paper I will analyze three distinctly different neighborhood areas the organization has affected: The Pearl District, NE Albina, and Lents. I will argue that these areas represent an inequitable distribution of environmental amenities in Portland and that the city must pursue different renewal schemes if it wishes to solve issues social justice and ecological sustainability.

I will begin by looking at the larger urban planning perspective as well as urban renewal in the United States to give context for my work that is situated in Portland. I will then go into detail about one of urban planning's primary concepts, livability, and critique it from an equity and environmental justice perspective. This will lead me to a discussion of what I call "environmental amenities," which I claim can be seen as the opposite of the environmental burdens that communities of color and poor communities face. In this thesis I will study environmental amenities in the city of Portland. I will assess how they are defined, what organizations are in charge of their distribution, and then look at three unique neighborhood areas (Pearl, Albina, Lents) to discover whether environmental amenities are equitably distributed throughout the city.

Background

The Urban Planning Perspective

Formal urban planning as it is known in the United States has only existed for a little more than a century beginning in Chicago as part of the City Beautiful movement, most fully expressed when the city hosted the World's Fair of 1893 (Campbell, 2012; Hillyer, 2012). Cities by this time were centers of wealth and energy, but also incredibly inefficient and unhealthy places to live and work, let alone recreate. While one might conceive of urban planning as a means to build better, cleaner, more morally uplifting cities, it is undoubtedly true that many early urban planners were working to create beautiful places that excluded the poor and people of color (Erickson, 2012). Thus, urban planning in the United States since has seen decidedly mixed results because it has upheld a changing set of ideals and goals since its inception. While advances in human welfare have been undoubtedly been made throughout the 20th century, planners have led the way for many ecologically unsustainable development practices as well as practices that have negatively impacted communities of color and low-income families (Erickson, 2012). These include facilitating suburban sprawl, expanding freeway systems, bulldozing vibrant neighborhoods through urban renewal programs, and generally lacking the creativity to implement alternatives to traditional development procedures (Gibson, 2007; Wheeler, 2013).

Still, for at least a half century, planners have long been aware of their role in promoting safer streets and public areas for more than just the privileged (Jacobs, 1962), and they are now interested in creating built environments that are more accessible for many reasons. These include, but are not limited to, working to combat an inactive population (Fenton, 2005), creating communities that are more accessible to elderly and disabled residents who wish to maintain a high level of involvement in their communities (Ball, 2012), as well as fostering dynamic, culturally engaging, and environmentally sustainable destinations that will attract economic and personal investment from within and outside their boundaries (Kunstler, 1993; Wheeler, 2013). Innovative planning ideas are being sought from creative and desirable cities across the country and even internationally (Ozawa, 2004).

Urban Renewal

An important facet of United States urban planning through the second half of the 20th century, moving into the future is urban renewal. Urban renewal arose from similar reasons to the beginnings of urban planning in the United States. As inner-cities experienced slums and inefficient use of space due to changing economic and demographic patterns, the federal government sought a way to revitalize those areas. Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1949 provided federal subsidies for locally planned redevelopment projects. When subsidies were combined with powers of eminent domain delegate by state governments, local agencies were able to assemble, clear, and sell “blighted” parcels of land in urban areas for redevelopment (Collins & Shester, 2013). The aim was to ultimately foster the aforementioned goals of urban planners in general, but programs were and still can be highly controversial as they often involve displacement of poorer and less powerful residents.

Creating Livable Communities

Livability is the concept that pertains to how all these ideals function together. In this paper I aim to provide a working definition of livability. Partners for Livability, a national non-profit based in Washington, D.C. states that “livability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community’s quality of life-including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment, and recreation possibilities.” While this is likely not an exhaustive list, it provides an important starting point to deciphering what the concept really means. In contemporary media in the United States, there are many definitions of livability as well as rankings of cities by this meter. For example, according to Nick Underwood (2013) of Partners for Livability, *Forbes* magazine and *The Economist* have both published rankings of livability that are more concerned with cost of living and access to high-paying jobs, while a list published by *ArtSpace America* looks much different because cultural amenities and access to art are weighed much more heavily. In these cases, what seems like a judgment of livability comes down to an aggregation of preferences (Fraade, 2013). The point being that different people (even in America)

desire different things, depending on the time in their lives and that a diversity of options as opposed to a single standard is the best way to ensure livability.

As one might imagine, urban areas are focusing on creating livable communities to varying degrees of success. One of the primary issues this paper will focus on is the issue of equity. While contemporary media highlights communities that are purportedly highly livable, not all Americans live in these communities. Thus, the question of who does and why becomes very important. Offhand, one might assume that richer cities and neighborhoods would be the most “livable” because those residents would have the highest ability to pay for livability. This is not necessarily the case, however. While wealthy residents face fewer obstacles to achieving high quality lifestyles and are generally not the concern of livability advocates and urban planners focused on social justice, the neighborhoods that they reside in don’t necessarily meet all definitions of “livable” either. For example, a rich neighborhood might lack cultural amenities, and a city with high median incomes may have very high costs of living. These issues bring us closer to understanding the subjectivity of terms like livability. To ask “what makes a neighborhood livable,” one must also decide the answer to “livable for whom?” Different people prioritize different components of livability at different times in their life, and thus it is very hard to maintain a rigid definition.

Equity and Environmental Justice Considerations

While there are fluctuations in what defines livability, there are certain neighborhood qualities that are universally undesirable. Historically, people of color and poor communities have borne a disproportionate burden of these undesirable qualities including pollution from a host of different urban pollution facilities such as landfills, factory emissions, and garbage dumps (Bullard, Johnson & Torres, 2011). These communities have been sacrificed by planners and policy makers to make room for the less desirable urban necessities, in large part because of the lack of power that people of color and poor communities have had. The livability of these neighborhoods is a complex issue because they are often mixes of, for example: culturally rich spaces with walk-able grid-like street designs, located close to the city center that have

simultaneously received little city investment and that lack strong representation in city government.

Environmental justice is a term that represents a new framework with which to address these kinds of disparities that poor communities and communities of color experience. It utilizes an equity lens and is built around the principle that all Americans have a right to equal protection of the nation's environmental, health, housing, transportation, employment, and civil rights laws and regulations (Bullard, Johnson & Torres, 2011). It fills a critical niche, as issues of racial equity and social justice have been frequently omitted from contemporary environmentalism. Still, these issues have always been present, even if there wasn't a large social movement behind them. While Rachel Carson's 1962 landmark publication, *Silent Spring*, is often pointed to as inciting the modern environmental movement, just 6 years later Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was traveling to Memphis, Tennessee on an environmental and economic justice mission on behalf of striking black garbage workers. The larger movement, in fact originated over issues of landfills, pollutants, and dumping sites that were located next to largely black communities. A 1994 revision of a study called "Toxic Wastes and Race" showed that according to 1990 census data, people of color are 47% more likely to live next to a hazardous waste facility than white Americans.

While mainstream environmental literature often focuses on a distant, non-human nature as the environment, environment justice activists think differently. They often utilize a historical framework to explain the inequalities they perceive and often define the environment as including the physical, built (often urban) space where people live, work, play, eat and relax (Alkon, 2008; Moulton, 2014). Rather than focusing on a distant, non-human nature as, for example, the alternative food movement and mainstream environmentalism do—environmental justice activists, born from the civil rights movements, defines the environment as the physical built (often urban) space where people live, work, play, eat, and relax (Alkon, 2008). Environmental justice views social issues as inextricably linked to environmental issues (Alkon, 2008).

"Just sustainability" has been addressed to a certain extent in the environmental justice literature, but urban sustainability policy and practice remains oriented toward

typical environmental outcomes and eco-lifestyle projects (Lubitow & Miller, 2013). Perhaps a reason for the focus on a distant, non-human nature is that technological solutions, such as green buildings, are visible, easy to implement, and help promote economic development. Despite broad appeals by mainstream environmentalists, recent sustainability projects have been hotly contested in Portland. This shows that a simple definition of the environment as “distant and non-human” and as related to air and water pollution is not sufficient. According to Lubitow and Miller (2013), a “more socially robust, equitable, and political notion of sustainability,” is necessary. Needless to say this is true when it comes to framing what is an “environmental issue.”

Another potential issue is “whiteness” in conventional environmentalism as well as social policy and research. Valuing white identities over those of color is another way in which white privilege is reproduced (Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer, Maher & Meier, 2011). We must be especially conscious of this dimension of environmentalism and urban planning as Portland is historically a majority-white city. Processes and outcomes of systems, institutions, practices, behaviors, and discourses that differentially act on whites and people of color are acts of privilege and simultaneously acts of oppression, *even when not intended*.

Environmental Amenities

In this paper, I will consider the issue of environmental amenities, a central component of livability. Traditionally, environmental amenities have been seen as similar to other public goods that might be present in a neighborhood or larger urban area (Banzhaf, 2012). Thus, economic models can show us that they are part of the broader issue of distribution of income and wealth. Markets are not necessarily set up to insure equitable outcomes, market allocations of environmental amenities, like other goods means that some areas will inevitably enjoy more amenities than others. If the ultimate social goal is to improve the welfare of disadvantaged groups, then understanding the distributional effects of environmental policy is crucial (Banzhaf, 2012).

Environmental amenities may manifest themselves in many ways and may influence communities in an equal number of ways. There is potential for “broken

windows theory” to apply in the sense that Locally Undesirable Land Uses (LULUs from here on) such as brownfields. At the same time, residents in poorer communities often have the least willingness to pay for environmental amenities (Sieg, 2004). This might be attributed to a hierarchy of needs in which there are other more immediate needs that come before desires for environmental improvement. For example by choosing to live in more polluted but lower-cost areas, the poor are revealing that inexpensive housing is a higher priority than environmental amenities. Importantly as well, it shows that those in disadvantaged positions are competent in determining how to best improve their own welfare, given the limitations and opportunities present to them (Banzhaf & McCormick, 2008).

Going Beyond Pollution

In much of the current literature, defining environmental amenities revolves around the notion of environmental health or quality as involving toxic cleanup. There is, in fact, a chunk of literature on the subject of environmental cleanup with regard to Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) sites and Locally Undesirable Land Uses (LULUs). This study proposes that there are even more environmental amenities than those.

Clean air and water are certainly amenities present in city neighborhoods, but what about parks, community gardens, green-spaces, even manifestations of the built environment including public spaces and services? Yet, the literature so far does not link these with the term “environmental amenities.” In her book *The Ecological Other*, Sarah Jaquette Ray (2013) argues for the need to create less of a distinction between “ecological” environmental issues and “social justice”-based environmental issues. She states that an exclusionary notion of environmentalism can develop if issues of the built environment in the inner-city are not addressed. We ignore important aspects of environmentalism when we look for and address only conventional environmental themes.

Methods and Results

Questions

While there is significant evidence showing that communities of color and poor communities are subject to disproportionate burdens of negative environmental conditions, what about the other side of the coin? In this paper I claim that there are certain environmental *amenities* present in communities just like there can be negative environmental conditions. In particular I address the following three questions:

1. What are environmental amenities and how they are defined in Portland, Oregon?
2. What is/are the main organization(s) in charge of their distribution within Portland?
3. In the context of environmental justice theory, looking at the neighborhoods of the Pearl, NE Albina, and Lents in Portland: are environmental amenities are equitably distributed throughout the city?

Defining Environmental Amenities in Portland

While different people, organizations, and academics might define environmental amenities in different ways, there are certain amenities that this study will define as relevant to Portland. This is not meant to be an exhaustive and definitive discussion, but instead a means to show how these amenities might be perceived in a more case-specific way. The Coalition for a Livable Future is an alliance of a diverse array of organizations and individuals working to promote healthy, equitable and sustainable communities in the Portland-Vancouver region (CLF, 2014). It is a prominent non-profit in the region and released the newest version of what it calls the Regional Equity Atlas in 2013. According to CLF, “Using maps, policy analysis, community based research, and other tools, the Equity Atlas project assesses how well different populations across the four-county Portland-Vancouver metro region can access key resources necessary for meeting their basic needs and advancing their health and well-being.” The Atlas is a useful resource to glean insight into what one might consider “environmental amenities in Portland. CLF is also a well respected non-profit and the

Regional Equity Atlas can better show us what amenities are being considered on an organizational level in the city.

A close look at the “access to opportunity” category shows issues that can be considered environmental amenities. This chart lists some of the map themes we will consider to be environmental amenities.

- Proximity to Community Amenities
- Proximity to Social and Cultural Institutions
- Community Gardens
- Air Quality
- Proximity to Parks and Natural Areas
- Proximity to Greenspace and Outdoor Recreation
- Proximity to Public and Human Services
- Transit Access
- Walkability
- Bikability

The Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability is a branch of the Portland government and is an important source of information as far as defining “environmental amenities” in the city. The organization is currently amidst the process of updating the Portland Comprehensive Plan, a long range plan that helps the City implement the Portland Plan (another plan focused on advancing equity in Portland), prepare for and manage expected population and employment growth, and plan for and coordinate major public investments (BPS, 2014). In an effort to create a better way for the public to engage with the project, the BPS created the Comprehensive Plan Map App. The app is an interactive web tool that includes a series of maps that show the locations of various policy proposals. It contains 11 discussion layers as well as 29 background layers that allow viewers to plot specific information about the city over a map. The following lists features the map layers we will add to our list of environmental amenities and omits amenities that overlap with the Regional Equity Atlas.

- Tree Canopy
- Natural Resources

- Connectivity
- Bureau of Environmental Services Green Streets
- Portland Bike Plan 2030

These sources can be seen as a good indicator of what non-profits and government agencies are considering to be environmental amenities in Portland. There is much notable overlap between the two lists and much of the amenities fall under traditional notions of what the “environment” is. For example, access to parks and greenspace is a common theme in both lists, and the parks map layer even comes up twice on the BPS Map App (once as a discussion layer and once as a background layer). Also similar is a focus on different kinds of transportation access. Both resources were focused on pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit users. A notable difference is that the Regional Equity Atlas includes a focus on community centers, as well as social and cultural institutions e.g. arts and culture institutions, public libraries, and civic and community organizations. This focus will be important in this study as it places equal importance on the human environment.

Planning Agencies in Portland

Now that we have a sense of how environmental amenities are defined in Portland, it is important to establish what organizations are in control of their distribution throughout the city. Different organizations have different scales of power and focus, from the tri-county region (Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas), to the city (Portland municipal boundaries), to the urban renewal area (established by the Portland Development Commission), to the neighborhood. All organizations have the capacity to affect the distribution of environmental amenities in Portland, but some are more relevant than others. These organizations are discussed here from large-scale focus to small-scale focus and are as follows: Metro, Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS), Portland Development Commission (PDC), and Portland Neighborhood Associations.

Metro

Metro was established by a vote of the people in the late 1970s. The development of many long-term organizational and city-wide plans by the organization has proved to be incredibly influential in the Portland metropolitan area. Today Metro is primarily responsible for regional land use, growth management, and transportation planning on the Oregon side of the Columbia River in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. In addition, it is responsible for the management of the region's solid waste disposal system; regional convention, visitor, and performance spaces; management and further development of a regional greenspaces system; and ongoing maintenance of regional GIS data (Seltzer, 2004). While there is some overlap in how Metro's jurisdiction relates to that of other city organizations, there are some key differences. First and foremost, the all other organizations mentioned here are Portland-centric. Secondly, Metro is focused generally on larger projects—whereas the PDC interacts with residents on a very zoomed-in level (giving grants to businesses, looking at specific neighborhood streets). Part of Metro's work such as its role as the metropolitan planning organization and the siting of landfills and management of the solid waste and recycling collection system have impacts on environmental amenities in the neighborhoods this study will focus on, but it is not as direct of an impact when compared with the PDC.

Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

According to the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's most recent strategic plan (2013), its mission is to develop “creative and practical solutions to enhance Portland's livability, preserve distinct places and plan for a resilient future.” Also of note is their commitment to collaboration with community partners to provide “comprehensive land use, neighborhood, district, economic, historic and environmental planning, and urban design” (BPS, 2013). The Lower Albina neighborhood is considered part of the Central City in the BPS “Central City 2035” plan. The plan does commit to an equitable approach and focuses on East Portland (includes Lents) as a major area where it is necessary to catalyze improvements and advance equity. Again, while the BPS is has a narrower focus than Metro, it still winds up having a larger focus than the PDC which looks at neighborhoods and even small businesses.

Portland Development Commission

Since 1958, when Portland voters approved the formation of the quasi-independent development agency, the Portland Development Commission, it has been working on urban renewal projects in specific areas of the city, and on economic development for the city at large. The organization's focus is to invest in job creation, innovation, and economic opportunity and aims to make Portland one of the world's most desirable and equitable cities. The organization's board of commissioners are not directly elected by the city, but rather appointed by the mayor and approved by the Portland City Council.

While the PDC is traditionally seen as having been successful in the redevelopment of Portland's downtown/Pearl district areas, there has been a historic lack of focus on project for less advantaged citizens, such as public housing. The need for city governments to pursue private capital investment to increase tax revenues creates a bias toward developers, bankers, and large businesses (Gibson, 2004). Moving forward, the organization is focused on creating a sustainable economy in Portland, and has five stated goals in its most recent "strategic plan". These goals include:

- Strong Economic Growth and Competitiveness
- Social Equity
- Healthy Neighborhoods
- A Vibrant Central City
- Effective Stewardship over Resources and Operation, and Employee Investment

The organizations focus on urban renewal as well as healthy neighborhoods and social equity make it a key organization in charge of the distribution of environmental amenities in Portland.

Neighborhood Associations in Portland

In its recent past, Portland has maintained a proud history of commitment to citizen involvement through neighborhood associations (Witt, 2004). This level of grassroots activism has (often through conflict) led to more responsive public institutions, and more responsive institutions have in turn evoked more action (Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen 2003). The neighborhood association institution (NA from now on)

has evolved considerably since its beginnings in 1973 and has a significant power when it comes to access to resources (general fund tax dollars) and creation of work plans to be submitted to Portland's Office of Neighborhood involvement. Portland is notable for the level of autonomy that "district coalitions" have as opposed to traditional top-down (e.g. downtown) control (Witt, 2004). The district coalition board of directors are integral to the overall working of Portland's NA system.

While the neighborhood associations have waxed and waned in power since the 1970s, they have generally maintained a focus different than that of the PDC. While the PDC focuses on economic development and urban renewal, the NAs and their associated district coalitions have been concerned with smaller scale issues and do not have the heavy duty resources that the PDC has or the authority to take on large scale projects. In the 1980s the Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA), now the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) did find itself at the center of a dispute similar to what the PDC might experience (Witt, 2004). There was a heated neighborhood debate within the Central Northeast Neighbors DC over the sighting of a Fred Meyer Superstore, which ultimately led to an identity crisis. In recent years, however, it seems the PDC has largely taken up the mantle for these kind of projects.

It is certainly true that all of these city organizations have an affect on the distribution of environmental amenities in Portland, this paper will focus on the PDC as it is the primary urban renewal organization in Portland and has the greatest affect on environmental amenities in neighborhoods due to the scale of its focus, and the weight of the resources at its disposal.

Are Environmental Amenities Equitably Distributed in Portland?

As this study is situated in Portland, I have chosen to assess specific neighborhood areas as examples in an effort to narrow the analysis. I have intentionally chosen 3 of these areas as I think they will tell a particularly diverse and compelling story about how environmental amenities are defined by the Portland planning organizations versus city residents and how they are distributed throughout the city. Additionally, I will analyze the differences in how the organizations like the PDC promotes neighborhood change, how residents experience change, and how both parties

influence it. First, I look at the Pearl District neighborhood as an example of a neighborhood that has seen heavy investment from the PDC and has been marketed as one of the organization's crown jewels, or pearls as one might say, in terms of redevelopment. The Pearl was historically an industrial area and did not have a large residential community prior to intensive revitalization efforts in the 1980s. Second, I assess the PDC's involvement with the historically black area of Portland known as the Albina district. Albina directly contrasts the Pearl as it was a largely residential community filled with small businesses owned by African Americans that experienced years of disinvestment, racism, and neglect at the hands of Portland's city government, the PDC, and private firms. The economic boom of the 1990s spurred greater investment in the neighborhood by private entities as well as the PDC who expressed great interest in creating an "Alberta Arts District" much akin to the kind of development seen in the Pearl. Finally, I survey the community of Lents, historically a thriving working-class outpost with a vibrant main-street, which was annexed by the city in the beginning of the 20th century. Initially neglected by the city and hard-hit by the growing car-culture and suburbanization of the mid- to late-20th century, Lents presents an example of urban renewal, interactions between the PDC and residents further away from the center city, and a neighborhood that is experiencing fast growth and investment (by the PDC). In exploring the history, characteristics, and the interactions of citizens with government officials in these 3 areas of the city I hope to better understand the differences in how environmental amenities are defined by the PDC, the city, and its residents. I aim to uncover why money goes where it does, and who is intended to benefit from the flow of resources as it stands in the present.

A Shining "Pearl" for the World to See

The Pearl District is a relatively small area of Portland, located between I-405 on the West, Burnside St. on the South, Broadway St. on the East, and the Willamette River to the North. Today it is considered a thriving example of urban renewal and is home to many LEED certified buildings, as well as shopping, restaurants, and cultural amenities. Additionally, the area is marketable both on a national and international scale gaining Portland recognition and outside investment. This has led to much job growth and economic development for the city. Because it is an award-winning neighborhood, this

section will focus less on the distribution of environmental amenities within the Pearl, and more on how it became one of the most desirable inner-city neighborhoods in America and the implications of this from an equity perspective.

For most of the 20th century it was largely an industrial area full of railroad development with warehouses located adjacently for efficiency. Due to transportation patterns shifting from rail to the highways in the 1950s, the primary users relocated and the district was left increasingly vacant and marginalized (Portland District Business Association, 2014). There was a period of transition in the second half of the century where low rents and attracted a diverse range of tenants and start-ups but by the 1980s to the early 1990s, the area was still dominated by abandoned warehouses, long-forgotten industrial sites, and blue-collar cafes that were reminiscent of a different period of Portland's history. The Pearl saw a certain amount of private investment during that transitional time, namely from artists and real estate speculators who were attracted to the abundance of cheap lofts. Still, most of the redevelopment came even later, following the Portland Development Commission's 1998 River District Urban Renewal Plan of the neighborhood. This urban renewal that has led to the Pearl District seen today is a result of collaboration between the city and the private sector.

The Pearl first captured the interest of the Portland Development Commission in the early 1980s. According to the Pearl District Business Association:

The PDC sponsored an urban design study, followed by a 1988 Central City Plan, the 1992 River District Vision Plan and 1994 River District Development Plan. Those efforts culminated in the River District Urban Renewal Plan, which was adopted in 1998 and provided tax increment financing for improvements within the district. In 2000, a 26-member steering committee, comprised of city officials, developers, community leaders, planners, designers and others, representing a wide range of viewpoints, met monthly over the course of a year to discuss the future of the Pearl District, to re-evaluate current plans and policies, and to focus on the development priorities for the neighborhood. In addition to the steering committee, an executive committee met in between the steering committee meetings to provide advice on the planning process and to make initial recommendations to the steering committee. As a result, the ultimate vision for the Pearl was espoused in a 105-page document dubbed the "Pearl District Development Plan, A Future Vision for a Neighborhood in Transition", and the plan was adopted in October of 2001 by the City Council.

Thus, the revitalization of the Pearl was due in no small part to the heavy involvement of the Portland Development Commission along with affluent neighborhood stakeholders. Upper income housing projects and dense residential development mixed with the construction of three new city parks helped attract foot traffic and customers to the neighborhood. PDC subsidies went and continue to go to popular businesses to get them to move and stay in the neighborhood, with job creation and economic activity underfoot. The name “Pearl District” is attributed to Thomas Augustine, who came up with it while advertising a 1986 arts festival. He was attempting to express the notion that the dilapidated warehouses housed “pearls” within them, such as the art galleries (Gorsek, 2012). It has since conjured up many different images, notably a pearl rising from the ashes of urban decay.

Because much of the Pearl District development has occurred on industrial land that was empty or not being used, there has not been a whole lot of controversy surrounding the development of the neighborhood. Prior to the 1980s-90s revitalization, most of the people who occupied the area were either homeless, very low-income, or elderly so there was not much of a strong contest for space in the area. Even if there had been, in 2014 the area is so transformed and has gathered so much inertia that there is virtually no possibility for change in the near future. As long as Portland maintains a viable city economy, there will continue to be high demand for the Pearl District.

The Pearl remains (for now) limited by its neighborhood boundary and limited space to develop which drives up real estate within the boundary. Additional services will have to be constructed with infill development, and while the neighborhood could rise vertically, it would risk losing the aesthetic that the older industrial architecture has created. It is worth noting that the Pearl District population is roughly 1% of the city’s overall population (City of Portland, 2014). Affordability is not an explicit concern, as the neighborhood caters to elites and there is virtually no “original population” to contest this. For this reason, the Pearl District may serve as an expression of modern inner-city idealism, green-design, economic vitality, and a high concentration of environmental amenities, but it certainly cannot represent accessibility or equity.

The Case of “Bleeding” Albina

The Albina neighborhood has historically been the black center of Portland since the 1940’s shipyard boom saw the mass migration of African American’s for the first time to the overwhelmingly white state of Oregon (Gibson, 2007). Following the destruction of the Vanport City housing project in 1948 it became the absolute center of the African American population. In her frequently-cited article, “Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000,” Karen Gibson (2007) delves into the history of Portland’s black community and gives a historical context behind why the Albina neighborhood looks the way it does today. This context is important to my thesis because it can allow me to show inequitably distributed environmental amenities, regardless of intention. Gibson (2007) makes it increasingly clear that the city of Portland was by and large unconcerned about the status of housing in the Albina neighborhood, let alone the potential environmental amenities through the 1980s. To a certain extent, by 1988, things got so bad that politicians simply couldn’t ignore them any longer. Gibson writes about “economic stagnation, population loss, housing abandonment, crack cocaine, gang warfare, redlining, and speculation,” as categorizing Albina at that time. Under thinly veiled racist grounds, banks would not lend money on properties below \$40,000, which eliminated many Albina properties.

There have always been community activists representing the Albina community’s interest since its beginnings as a predominantly African American set of neighborhoods. They were, however, simply not heard until the 1988 mayoral campaign of Bud Clark. Until the late 1980s and early 1990s, the city did virtually nothing to take a stand against predatory lending firms that many neighborhood activists felt “had done more to hasten the deterioration of Albina than the crack dealers and gangbangers” (Gibson, 2007). City involvement in revitalizing the area finally came in the 1990s. A combination of a period of economic success attracting many young, single, and college educated people to center-city neighborhoods (Mayer & Provo, 2004) along with rising prices in other areas of the city led to an increase in the amount of white residents in Albina. At the same time, the revitalization came with significant downward shifts in the African American population and homeowner rate.

In addition, many African American businesses have suffered or closed down as the neighborhood has shifted from rock bottom to gentrifying. Realtors marketed the black business corridor of Alberta Street as the “Alberta Arts District” in honor of many of the art galleries popping up on the strip. The neighborhood has since seen a rapid influx of white residents. Joe’s Place, the last black-owned bar on Alberta, and one of the last remaining in Portland, closed its doors and can be seen as symbolic of the demographic transition in that neighborhood (Gibson, 2007). This has led to feelings of exclusion on the part of black residents of the neighborhood. In the study *Retail Gentrification and Race: The Case of Alberta Street in Portland, Oregon*, interviews with black residents show some residents as resentful of establishments that they feel uncomfortable in, or ones that don’t meet basic needs (Sullivan, 2011). While residents aren’t against growing businesses in the neighborhood, the timing of the new investment and the appropriateness of the services provided are problematic.

On the other hand, white residents interviewed see the development as positive. According to some, a “bad” neighborhood has been made into something more exciting and attractive because of the influx of new businesses. White residents interviewed typically didn’t explicitly consider race as much in their opinions about changes in the neighborhood. Still, Sullivan (2011) makes the assertion from interviews that white residents “associate their dissatisfaction with how the neighborhood used to be with Blackness and link their optimism with how the neighborhood is changing, including new residents, with Whiteness.”

Additionally, white residents have a very different idea about changes in the built environment than black residents do. Longtime white residents feel that new retail is “facilitating positive cultural changes in the neighborhood by creating social spaces for neighbors to interact and attracting desirable newcomers.” For generations, black churches have been a community space across the Albina area (Scott, 2012). As more and more white residents move into this area, they are creating community spaces that wind up meeting their own needs and furthering segregation. The fact that these places don’t always meet the needs of the black population and that black businesses are quickly shutting down certainly does not contribute to positive views of these newcomers. White residents confidence that any new business is an “amenity” to the

neighborhood is in stark contrast with black residents opinions (Sullivan, 2011). The fact that race can be a real issue even in neighborhoods with whites and blacks living next to each other is of huge importance in a city like Portland.

The city of Portland is largely seen as an environmentalist's mecca, and there is a hefty amount of research and discourse on what has been done successfully. Many projects that the city undertakes are framed in a way that suggests emphasis has been placed on their *demonstrative* nature. At the same time, Portland is a very different city demographically than most in America. It is frequently labeled "the whitest city in America," as it has one of the highest white populations in the country. There is even a documentary in the works that asks the question of whether or not the founders successfully created a "white homeland" (Smith, 2014). This is significant because of who Portland is marketing itself to. An environmentalist mecca exclusively for white people might represent momentary success, but in a country where populations of color are increasingly outpacing the growth of white populations, this success will no doubt be short lived as the rest of the country will search for models that better meet the needs of *all* residents, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Despite city officials, developers, new business owners, and members of the creative class embracing the principle of diversity and an ethos of progressivism, their actions privilege White "creative" place entrepreneurs and undermine racial diversity by excluding longtime Black residents (Sullivan, 2011).

Trader Joes Controversy

One of the more recent conflicts that has arisen in the Albina neighborhood is the issue surrounding a PDC-owned lot on the corner of NE Alberta and MLK St. The lot had been vacant for a considerable amount of time before the PDC had drafted plans to sell the land to a developer, Majestic Realty, who would then construct a Trader Joe's grocery store on the empty lot. While the lot was valued at 2.9 million, the PDC was going to sell the land to the developer for \$500,000 dollars. A common practice, according to them, but the low sales price certainly had many members of the community up in arms. Still, on as late as January 30th 2014, the PDC was celebrating

the success of the proposed project and was highlighting the selection of Colas Construction, a company focused on hiring minority-owned contractors.

Nonetheless, by February 3rd, Trader Joe's had pulled out of the deal officially in response to community protest against the PDC's plan for the area. It released an official statement saying: "If a neighborhood does not want a Trader Joe's, we understand and we will won't open the store in question." (Parks, 2014)

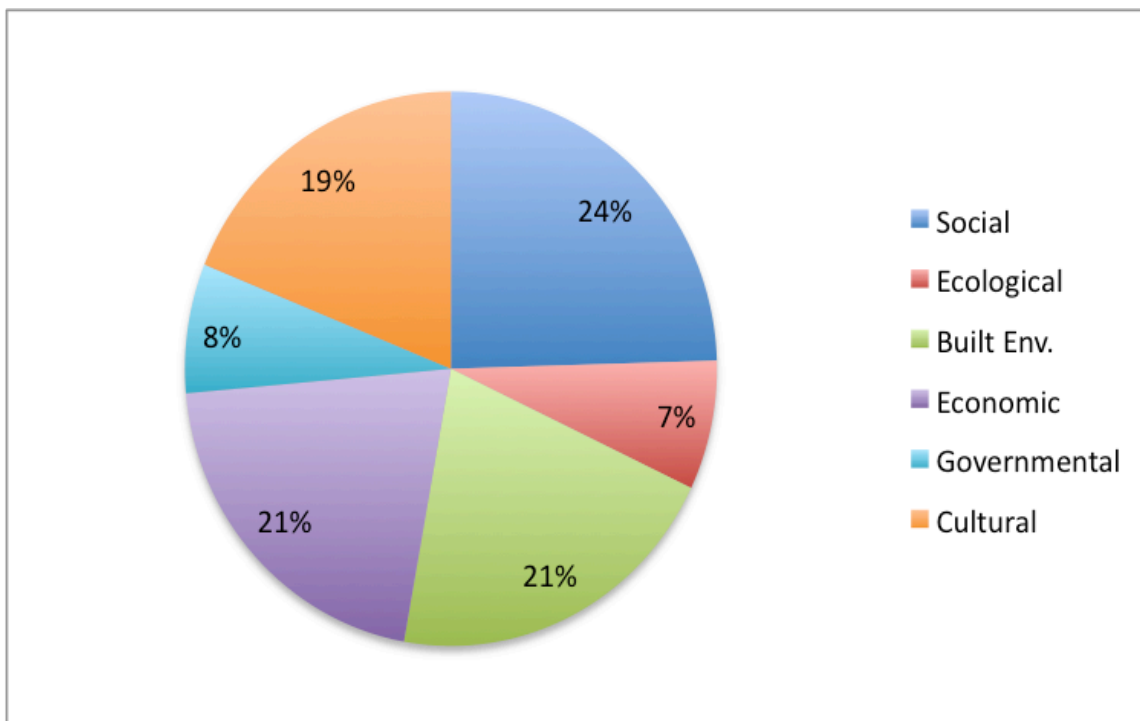
While local news outlets framed the issue in a number of ways and were certainly less than sympathetic to the Portland African American Leadership Forum (PAALF), in the words of director Cyreena Boston Ashby, the issue was never about "Trader Joes" specially. The popular media even caught onto the issue and framed it in a way that suggested that PAALF was against Trader Joe's because it would "attract too many white people." (Parks, 2014) Quite the contrary, when quoted directly (KOIN 6, 2014), PAALF leadership made it clear that they were fighting a battle against the PDC's method of business as specifically related to the Albina neighborhood. The development would not include any affordable housing, lacked a community benefit agreement, and was given for much less than the value of the lot.

Community Meeting regarding the Trader Joe's controversy

On February 25th, 2013, PAALF put together a meeting hosted by the N/NE Business Association Portland to bring community members together to learn about why PAALF was opposed to the PDC's Trader Joe's deal. The meeting was to set PAALF's story straight and to begin to create a community-approved plan for the site to eventually present to the mayor. PAALF representatives cleared up that the organization was not inherently opposed to Trader Joe's existing in the neighborhood, but that they were opposed to the way the deal was going forward.

The meeting facilitator started out by asking community members what they would like to see in the area. This question proved useful for me because I am interested in seeing what kind of development residents prefer for their neighborhoods, and how they might define "environmental amenities." The graph below shows the nature of the responses to this question.

**Preferences for Development of PDC-owned land on NE Alberta & MLK
(originally planned to be Trader Joe's): Community Meeting Responses**



The discussion during this meeting shifted from community members initially talking about what they wanted to see at the MLK/Alberta site into a broader discussion about issues the neighborhood is facing and relations with the PDC and local government. At the meeting PAALF was circulating a survey called the “Community Development Priorities Survey.” While the results of this survey will no doubt be very useful in assessing what residents consider to be “environmental amenities,” the document in and of itself is useful in the sense that it shows what non-profits like PAALF perceive to be the major issues in the neighborhood. After an initial section collecting demographic information and willingness to participate in the community development process, PAALF’s survey asks: “What is the most important issue facing your community. The possible answers are as follows:

- Housing
- Affordable Housing
- Access to Healthy and Affordable Food

- Retail
- Access to Services

More specifically, the survey asks community members to rank: “What services, activities, or programs do you think should be developed at the property on MLK/Alberta?” Examples of answers are as follows:

- Recreation and Sport
- Big Box Stores e.g. Home Depot or Target
- Retail and Commercial Services
- Community Center
- Housing

These answers suggest that residents immediate concerns reflect a hierarchy of needs where conventional environmental goals take a backseat. While there is an opportunity to check an “other” box, the input from the community meeting I attended suggested that PAALF has the right idea when it comes to development, at least at this specific location.

Another important point to take away from this list is residents concerns that their voices be heard in the planning process. There is a sentiment that the PDC and the city government is not working for the current residents of the neighborhood, but for future ones. There is a strong racial overtone to these concerns, which fits well into the broader conversation about race in one of America’s whitest cities. Without a meaningful community involvement process, it is clear that urban renewal will eviscerate such reactions. As with the strong backlash against that process of bike-lane creation on N Williams Ave (Goodyear, 2011), there is a clear need for members of the community to be heard when it comes to significant changes in their built environment.

Steps Forward?

On March 10th, 2014, an important update on the Trader Joe’s controversy came from the Willamette Week. Mayor Charlie Hales reportedly met with nearly 50 North and Northeast Portland business leaders as well as PAALF to discuss reviving the Trader Joe’s deal on the MLK/Alberta plot. Mayor Hales was pushing a revised plan for the

grocery store, this time with a pledge for affordable housing on another site. Hales spokesman, Dana Haynes, was quoted afterwards saying that one of the agreements that came out of the meeting was that the mayor would contact Trader Joe's to let the company know development was "wholeheartedly want[ed]." Haynes also said that PDC executive director Patrick Quinton has pledged to add \$20 million to the \$36 million in tax increment financing dedicated to affordable housing over the next five years in the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area (Mesh, 2014).

The Albina area, as defined by Karen Gibson is approximately 6 times larger in population than the Pearl District. It has also been a center for the black community in Portland, although the population of those who identify as black has significantly decreased in some neighborhoods over the past 4 decades. The large-scale displacement that has historically occurred in the neighborhood, along with the struggle to access appropriate environmental amenities shows the City of Portland's priorities when it comes to creating livable neighborhoods.

Unlucky Lents?

In the early twentieth century, Lents was a small thriving town on the eastern outskirts of Portland. In 1913 it was annexed by the city. Ever since, especially in the post-WWII years, it has faced many issues related to Portland's expansion and tensions between residents and city government have flared up in the past. Because of state environmental requirements, Lents residents had to pay for connection to a sewer system in the 1970s (Gibson, 2004). Rising suburbanization and the influence of car culture on the landscape have especially affected Lents. Growing suburban shopping complexes placed strains on its historic town center (Griffin, 2014). Perhaps the final blow came in 1983 when the Interstate 205 highway split Lents in two, straight down the middle. The neighborhood businesses transitioned from basic family services to strip clubs and sleazy bars, completely changing the character of the neighborhood.

In early 1996, the city council adopted the Outer Southeast Community Plan, which was developed as part of Portland's comprehensive planning process at the district level. This plan provides the specific policy framework for the Lents Town Center Urban Renewal Area (LTCURA) (Gibson, 2004). The 2040 Growth Concept

identified the interchange of I-205 and SE Foster Road as a “town center” because of its strategic location as a “regional multimodal” transportation node. Because the PDC deemed market forces not strong enough, the city decided to use tax increment financing, through urban renewal to spur physical development. This required heavy PDC engagement in the community planning process.

Public involvement to develop the urban renewal plan consisted of a series of meetings between the PDC and area stakeholders over an eight-month period from January to August 1998. More than half of the 17 origin members on the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee (URAC) had some sort of business interest. The group made clear goals to improve the physical capital of the neighborhood and counter its negative image. The vision was to create jobs, wealth, livability, and community. Key to that vision was a strong neighborhood residential environment surrounding a revitalized central town center business district that integrates the neighborhood into its purpose and function. The majority of community members perceived that there was already an ample amount of affordable housing because many poor whites and immigrants live in this area, thus no more is wanted (Gibson, 2004).

After learning about the nature of the PDC’s expenditures of \$96 million in the Lents Urban Renewal Area, one has to wonder what is really going on behind the scenes. While it is now 10 years old, Karen Gibson’s article on urban redevelopment in Portland begs the serious question: Who is this urban redevelopment really for, and how much has the PDC’s organizational culture really changed. She argues that the PDC has achieved a level of “placation” where it goes through the motions of organizing community input, but PDC officials ultimately retain power. A good example of this the relative lack of funding for welding-training programs for the manufacturing wage jobs desired by residents of the Lents neighborhood. With increased funding for light-rail projects made available, one has to wonder what the priorities are of city planning organizations, and for whom are these improvements are being made?

This is a significant issue because physical renewal projects primarily benefit those already well connected to markets, which perpetuates the cycles of poverty, gentrification, and displacement (Gibson, 2004). Low-income populations in Lents will

not experience livability unless they are included as partners in the decision-making process. “These findings have relevance for cities across the nation where fiscal pressures cause local governments to focus on physical development rather than human development” (Gibson, 2004) *Important for top of hourglass*. In the case of Lents, this is especially apparent in the city’s failure to restore the economic viability of the neighborhood. While a new MAX line flows through the area, and PDC money has spiffed up roads and sidewalks, there simply isn’t a main street where residents can access services such as a grocery store, laundry, or a clothing store.

The Portland Mercado

Portland has seen a significant increase in its Hispanic/Latino population over the past couple of decades. The history of this population is notably different from that of the African American/black population of Portland. Due to the relatively recent nature of Hispanic migration to the Portland area, there have been less shifts of Latino community centers due to gentrification, either because they have been established in the urban periphery or because they are currently forming (Pastor, 2012). One such community center, the Portland Mercado provides an interesting example of a community sponsored development that integrates several of the actors that have come up so far in this study.

The Portland Mercado is a Latino public market that will repurpose an existing, long-abandoned auto wholesale business on SE 72nd and Foster. According to a Portland Monthly article on the project, “The finished Mercado will boast an outdoor sitting and eating area, with space for up to eight food carts highlighting the diversity of Latin American cuisine. Inside the Mercado, visitors will find a bakery and cafe, a tortilleria and tienda, a taproom featuring beer and wine from all over Latin America, and other smaller vendors like a candy store and ice cream shop” (Tucker, 2013). The project was awarded a \$200,000 grant from the PDC’s “Community Livability Grant” initiative. The Portland Mercado is a significant case because it aims to be more than a food cart pod or a shopping mini-mall. Project coordinators are keen on ensuring that it is a space for cultural education as well. The Mercado will feature a diverse array of vendors from Latin America and plans to partner with local schools, include rotating art

installations, host musical performances, and even show World Cup and Timbers games.

This project seems to match up greatly with what community members envisioned for the MLK/Alberta site. One of the main differences is that the land in NE is *owned by the PDC*. Thus that organization has the final word on development. Part of what is making the Hacienda CDC project so desirable is the level of community input (Portland Mercado, 2014). While the PDC wishes to prescribe the kind of change needed in the NE area, it has a more indirect say in development surrounding the Hacienda CDC project. It has even awarded Hacienda with a *\$200,000 community development grant* specifically to move forward with the project.

The progress of the Portland Mercado was significantly boosted by the fact that on March, 12th, 2014, the PDC's board of directors approved the terms of its 5-year lease, with an option to renew for another 5 years. This officially granted the Mercado project full access to the site and the building, which will allow the project to stay on its projected timeline of opening in late 2014. According to the Hacienda CDC's website (2014), its partnership with the PDC has been the perfect example of community economic development. Not only does it work to uplift the Latino community through cross-sector, grassroots efforts, and by providing economic opportunity, but it also revitalizes the Foster corridor and the surrounding neighborhoods that were once a part of a thriving commercial area. This kind of collaboration between the PDC and Hacienda CDC fulfills social justice concerns, and has the potential to lead to more vibrant neighborhoods that provide opportunity to people of color and low-income residents and create platforms for cultural learning and exchange.

The sentiment at the board meeting where the PDC Board of Directors unanimously approved the lease terms for the Portland Mercado project was strikingly different than that of PAALF's community meeting to discuss gentrification in Albina in light of the Trader Joe's controversy. Instead of community members chastising the PDC for its negative influence, Hacienda's executive director and a Latina business owner gave testimonial along with written testimonials from the surrounding neighborhood associations as to the benefits of the Mercado project, which the PDC was

a step away from approving. Additionally, PDC's executive director, Patrick Quinton, was quoted saying "Projects like this happen because of community partnerships. It's fantastic to have a partner like Hacienda." While the PDC is reluctant to work with the interests of organizations like PAALF in Albina, it has shown that it is capable of happily working with other organizations such as Hacienda CDC to implement projects that benefit communities of color and low-income residents. The differences between these two scenarios is of key importance to the discussion of social justice in Portland.

According to the Portland Mercado's website while many Latino families in Portland have experience managing businesses and a strong entrepreneurial spirit, there are many barriers they face when starting businesses.

While there are many exciting new possibilities for Lents, it is clear that the neighborhood has a long way to go before access to a similar amount of environmental amenities in comparison to center-city neighborhoods is available. While securing outside investments will be crucial to the neighborhood's success, this will ultimately be mediated by the interactions of the PDC as well as the public. It is also crucial that this development be centered around neighborhood residents' needs and wants. If not for them, then who? Lents was originally a small town and since it has been annexed by Portland, the needs of residents have not been met in the same capacity as those who live closer to city hall. Development must also consider the changing nature of the Lents neighborhood as the city of Portland grows in population and density. A balance between its small town roots as well as growing metropolitan and cosmopolitan influence must be struck.

Conclusion and Implications

Put simply, environmental amenities aren't distributed evenly throughout the city of Portland. If the purpose of urban planning, and more specifically, urban renewal is to more evenly distribute such amenities, then a focus on what has been successful so far in achieving equitable distribution is necessary. It is also important that such a focus is framed in the realm of historically inequitable decision-making. What sorts of things get left out when we pursue urban renewal and how can we utilize it more successfully moving forward?

Environmental Amenities for Whom?

My results demonstrate that the less than 1% of Portland that lives in the Pearl District enjoys a disproportionate amount of public investment on their behalf. This is likely for a number of reasons that all work in conjunction together. The first of which is the proximity of the neighborhood to downtown lead to a higher incentive to create an area that will function as a center for tourism dollars as Portland transitions into a more post-industrial economy. If Portland wishes to grow, it must be able to attract national and international attention and investment. While the city government knows that most tourists and out-of-town visitors will not be visiting a neighborhood like Lents due to distance from downtown, an area like the Pearl which is directly adjacent to it is a much more pressing area to invest in, to make sure that tourists can spend their money on boutique items that reflect a new developing "Portland" aesthetic. Ultimately a combination of economic and social forces have decided that a neighborhood showcasing "urban renewal, culture, and LEED-certified buildings" (Pearl District Business Association, 2014) is more desirable than an area containing railroad yards and old warehouses. Due to the proximity to downtown, the high levels of social and economic capital employed by the residents of the neighborhood, and Portland's transition into becoming a more cosmopolitan, post-industrial city, the Pearl has enjoyed and will continue to enjoy high levels of investment on the behalf of the PDC and local government. Adding on to this investment is even more private sector investment in this neighborhood as more and more national and international companies are attracted to Portland.

In the case of the Albina area, changes in neighborhood demographics will continue to occur if equity concerns aren't addressed. Already the area has seen significant reductions in the population of African American's due to historic patterns of disinvestment, institutional racism, and displacement by PDC-sponsored urban renewal projects. While the area does not yet have the cosmopolitan feel of the Pearl District and does not entertain a similar amount of international investment, it has engaged the PDC, local government, and well as private domestic investment due to increased interest in the neighborhood on a national level as a bohemian or artistic destination representative of "Portland" ideals. The area is proving attractive to affluent and young urban professionals as well as those interested in bohemian lifestyles in the Alberta "Arts District" and while it is by no means one of the wealthiest areas of the country, costs of living are increasing enough to change the demographics of the area. While neighborhood advocates have been calling for an increase in environmental amenities in Albina ever since it became the center of African American Portland, such amenities have only come with the changing face of the area. While it is clear that the city and the PDC would like to use the area as a culture and arts district that appeals to a different subset of people than does the Pearl, it is as clear that neighborhood activists and concerned citizens will not be displaced without a fight.

It is unlikely that Lents will see the same kind of international private investment that the Pearl is able to acquire in the near future. It is also a ways away from garnering for itself a similar kind of bohemian appeal that attracts private investment from US companies as well. The neighborhood is too working class as of the moment for many "name-brand" companies to want to located there. Additionally, the neighborhood faces the problem of the PDC being one of the largest landowners within its boundaries, which means that development rests on the competency of an organization that has spent close to \$100 million on the neighborhood will little success to speak of. Ironically, one of the most promising success stories within the Lents Urban Renewal Area is linked to the PDC. The Portland Mercado represents an investment that is not only an economic resource for the neighborhood, but a social and cultural gathering spot it can be proud of and a way to attract interest from outside the neighborhood area. It is a way that local entrepreneurs can get their businesses started with relatively low

overhead costs and keep money flowing within the neighborhood. This style of development is ultimately what will give the residents of Lents an increasing amount of environmental amenities that the neighborhood arguably deserves as it has endured many destructive developments since its annexation by Portland a century ago.

Implications

The Portland Mercado project is a great example of a direction that the city might move in going forward. During a community meeting regarding gentrification in Albina and the plot of land on NE Alberta & MLK, community members suggested the development of a “Mercado-like” project on that plot of land. Such a project would prove beneficial to minority-businesses by attracting foot-traffic, providing a social gathering space, and would promote the culture of residents who may feel like it is being lost. Such an environmental amenity that addresses the needs of communities of color in Portland would be an important step in the direction of addressing past wrongdoings of city organizations such as the PDC.

To address ecological issues and social inequities is to progress as a society, and urban renewal can play a large part in that process. Portland can pursue that direction and can play a big role in ensuring that all of its neighborhoods can be places that enjoy significant amounts of environmental amenities. It is necessary to have an equity focus when it comes to development and investment. Without this, environmental amenities are doomed to be in adequate quantities exclusively for the rich or select populations. While the Pearl-style development strategy is on the one hand very successful, it doesn't represent equity in the city, and thus can become a divisive issue. While organizations like the PDC and even the greater city government have a negative reputation with communities that enjoy less environmental amenities, moving forward, projects like the Portland Mercado are a great way to address these inequities and put stakeholders on better terms with one another.

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