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Health Equity in a New Urbanist Environment:
Land Use Planning and Community Capacity Building in Fresno, CA

By

Miriam Zofith Zuk

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee members:

Professor Jason Corburn, Chair
Professor Karen Chapple
Professor Rachel Morello-Frosch

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Abstract

Health Equity in a New Urbanist Environment: Land Use Planning and Community Capacity Building in Fresno, CA

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in City and Regional Planning

University of California, Berkeley

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A tale of two cities. The Mason-Dixon line. The Berlin Wall. Fresnoans have evoked a variety of metaphors to describe the spatial divide between the rich, clean and white neighborhoods in the north and the southern areas housing the poor, polluting industries and communities of color that has characterized urban development in the city since its inception. The narrative explaining this spatial inequality has been remarkably consistent over time - sprawl fueled by aggressive developers, corrupt city councilmen and the market pushed the city limits ever farther northeast, abandoning the older neighborhoods to the south where the poor and immigrant communities settled and were too disorganized to counter the government's neglect.

The spatial concentration of the poor, people of color and unwanted land uses can be seen in cities around the country and is identified by public health scholars to be a key driver of the disparities in health between racial and socio-economic groups. City governments are increasingly returning to their core and investing in New Urbanist and Smart Growth strategies to transform these older, more densely developed neighborhoods as the drive for environmental sustainability, walkable neighborhoods, and the attraction of creative urban residents grows. The potential effects of such efforts on the health and wellbeing of the existing residents, however, remains under explored. This dissertation asks if and how the new planning paradigms that use public health as a goal and organizing principle significantly change planning practice and lead to the re-distribution of environmental risks and resources to reduce health disparities? I investigate this question through three case studies of in Fresno a) a downtown revitalization plan, b) the general plan update, and c) a foundation based community development effort to increase the power of South Fresno residents to engage in planning.

Following a year of fieldwork I find that everyone is talking about healthy neighborhoods, however for whom and how to achieve them appear to be quite different. While community groups seek to improve the living conditions of the poor residents of South Fresno and ensure their ability to stay in a revitalized downtown, planners are focusing on attracting wealthier residents and actively avoiding any talk about equity, affordable housing and public investment. Thus, although health seems to be providing a unifying framework in terms of a vision for the physical environment, it does not ultimately resolve the inherent tensions between community and economic development.

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Chapter 1. Healthy Planning: An Introduction

In a packed conference room at the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Kansas City, MO, in 2013, planners, activists, and researchers from around the country gathered to hear the story of “How Fresno is making the Turn towards Smart Growth.” Launching the session, associate Director of Planning in Fresno Keith Bergthold talked about the city’s history of sprawl as an addiction:

“To break our addiction, we first had to admit that we were powerless, but that there was a greater power; the power of community and the power of facts.”

On the panel to discuss Fresno’s land use planning transformations sat Reverend Sharon Stanley, the Executive Director of a community based organization¹ that works with Fresno’s low-income refugee populations. Stanley described the unprecedented efforts of the Building Healthy Communities initiative to engage residents from the city’s poor southern neighborhoods in planning as a means to achieve greater equity in the distribution of health and its determinants in the city. Also on the panel, Fresno City Councilmember Oliver Baines² said, “I can’t underscore enough the importance of community presence. Regular community interested in planning, it was remarkable!” Following the presentations, a member of the audience from the American Lung Association asked, “How do we keep health on the planning agenda?” to which Councilmember Baines responded:

“It’s now part of the fabric of the conversation: Planning and health impacts. People won’t talk about planning without talking about health impacts. It’s part of the culture. People understand about walkable neighborhoods, taking cars off the road, and improving air quality. We can’t not talk about it.” Oliver Baines, Fresno City Councilmember, 2/8/13

How did Fresno, a sprawling metropolis that suffers from tremendous poverty, segregation and pollution become a poster child for Smart Growth and community engagement? And how did public health become a central element in land use deliberations there? The answer to these questions lies, in part, in a nation-wide movement to reconnect the fields of Public Health and Planning to tackle issues of chronic diseases and health inequities. Public health agencies around the country are seeking place-based prevention strategies to address persistent modern day health issues such as obesity and asthma (NACCHO 2006). Planning, on the other side, has begun to use a health lens as a motivation and justification for many of its Smart Growth and urban design practices (Morris 2006). And community developers are looking to health as a new approach to fight poverty and its relationship to place (FRBSF 2012).

Fresno presents both an exemplary and a representative case to analyze the reconnected fields of Public Health and Planning. A city of contrasts, Fresno sits at the heart of the San Joaquin Valley – the most productive agricultural region in the country. Its prosperity, however, relies on a low-wage immigrant labor force, making Fresno a place of both wealth and extreme poverty; in 2011 over 26% of the population subsisted on incomes below the federal poverty level. Much like other urban areas around the country, the spatial distribution of people and pollution in Fresno is not uniform. The majority of the city’s poor and people of color reside in the southern

¹ Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries

² Councilmember for District 3 that encompasses a large swath of Fresno’s Downtown and Southern neighborhoods.

neighborhoods³ alongside the majority of industrial and other unwanted land uses, resulting in severe environmental and health disparities. In 2009, the rates of obesity, asthma hospitalizations⁴, and diabetes⁵ of residents in South Fresno were 19%, 34%, and 44% higher than North Fresno residents⁶, respectively. Such disparities are being unearthed in cities around the country in the growing recognition of the inextricable links between place, race, poverty, and health.

Fresno's efforts at urban transformations also are representative of strategies underway across the nation. In 2009, Fresno's city government began two comprehensive planning efforts to curb sprawl, re-center the city around the Downtown area, and reinvest in the Southern neighborhoods to make them "healthy, mixed-income, and desirable." The city is explicitly linking its actions to public health, and both comprehensive plans contain health elements to outline how urban development will promote community health. In addition to the government's actions, the California Endowment, a state-wide public health foundation, has made Fresno one of its Building Healthy Communities sites, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of South Fresno residents through place-based community capacity building and empowerment (The California Endowment 2009). These efforts represent two complementary Healthy Planning practices: ones that focus on the physical solutions to promote health with scant attention to the distributional impacts of planning and another that emphasizes an equity and inclusion approach to the reconnected fields.

This dissertation looks at the two separate but related practices of Healthy Planning – the spatial and built environment strategies as well as the social justice and health equity emphasis - to see if and how they are being reconciled in the field. A wealth of information exists on the importance and tactics of the reunification of health and planning (Dannenberg, Frumkin, and Jackson 2011; APA 2011; Hugh Barton and Grant 2012; Jackson 2011), yet little research has documented the practices of Healthy Planning to understand its implementation, political limitations, and factors of success. By observing these practices as they play out on the ground in the single case of Fresno, but situated in the larger context of Californian efforts as well as national movements, I hope to strengthen the field of Healthy Planning to show the opportunities and limitations of promoting health equity through planning practice. I specifically ask how the practices of Healthy Planning can further health equity by reducing environmental hazards and redistributing resources to help reduce the disproportionate burden of disease in South Fresno.

In this introductory Chapter, I first provide a context to the history, research, and practices of the reconnected fields of Public Health and Planning. Having established the practices and gaps in the literature, I then proceed in Section 1.2 to outline the specific research questions this dissertation seeks to answer. I provide detail about the social, spatial, environmental, and health inequalities in Fresno in Section 1.3, followed by the methods I employ to answer my research

³ For the purposes of this research I follow the North/South divide of the collective mental map of the city with a boundary at Shaw Avenue (see Figure 1.1). I use the term Southern neighborhoods to refer to the neighborhoods of the Downtown (central), Southeast and Southwest.

⁴ ⁴ For 2010 (Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, 2010)

⁵ For 2009 (CHIS 2007), diabetes prevalence

⁶ I classify zip codes: 93650, 93722, 93711, 93710, 93720 as North of Shaw Avenue, and the following zip codes as South of Shaw: 93721, 93706, 93725, 93701, 93702, 93703, 93727, 93728, 93704, 93705, 93726

questions in Section 1.5. Finally, I end the Introduction with an overview of the dissertation in Section 1.6.

1.1 The Foundations of Healthy Planning

After over a century apart, the fields of Public Health and City Planning are reuniting in diverse ways to both strengthen existing planning practices and to transform governance towards more equitable outcomes. Before exploring the origins, research, and practices of the field I first clarify my usage of the term Healthy Planning. In his book *Toward the Healthy City* Jason Corburn defines Healthy Planning as a new decision-making framework that “addresses the political conditions and institutional changes that must occur in order for Urban Planning and Public Health to reconnect to promote greater health equity”(Corburn 2009, p.2). Similarly, Hugh Barton and Catherine Tsourou, writing on the European experiences with Healthy Urban Planning⁷, emphasized equity when stating:

“Healthy urban planning implies a need to place values such as equity and collaboration (including intersectoral cooperation and community participation) at the centre of the decision-making process...Putting the principle of equity at the heart of urban planning practices reduces the imbalance in the urban fabric and problems associated with access to transport, air and noise pollution, and increases the quality of public spaces, social cohesion, healthy lifestyles, and employment opportunities” (Barton & Tsourou 2000, p.23).

Applying these concepts to practice, for the purposes of this dissertation I define Healthy Planning as the practices that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of urban populations, with a specific focus on practices that aim to reduce inequities in population health and its social and environmental determinants associated with place.

1.1.1 The Intersection of Public Health and Urban Planning: A Brief History

Despite their joint origins in the 19th century and their divergence for the better part of the 20th century, the fields of Public Health and Planning are reconnecting today in both research and practice to respond to the challenges of chronic diseases and growing health inequalities (Corburn 2007). In this section I review the relationship between public health theory, research, and planning practice by situating planning responses to disease and health within the dominant epidemiologic paradigm of the time. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to recount over a century of intersections between the two fields, and comprehensive accounts have been covered by other scholars (Corburn 2009; Corburn 2007; Lopez 2012; Frank et al. 2003). Instead I outline basic features of the relationship between the two fields, their respective repertoires of problem solving, and the role of place in understanding health inequities during four distinct eras: 1) miasma theory and the birth of urban planning, 2) germ theory and decongestion, 3) the biomedical model and professionalization, and 4) social epidemiology and the reconnection of Public Health and Planning.

The epidemics of deadly diseases such as cholera, influenza, yellow fever, and typhoid that swept through rapidly urbanizing industrial cities of 19th century Western Europe and the United States and the sanitary movements that emerged in response have been widely identified as the

⁷ As part of the World Health Organization’s Healthy Cities program. Healthy Urban Planning became a key theme during Phase IV of the World Health Organization’s Healthy Cities program (2003-2008)

launching points for the modern day fields of Urban Planning and Public Health (Hall 2002). The prevailing public health theories of the time believed that such epidemics were caused by poisonous air or miasma, produced by stagnant water, waste, moist soils, and wetlands (Rosen 1958). Miasmatic theory was used to explain the higher rates of disease and lower life expectancy of the poor who lived in un-drained, smelly, and dirty slums where miasmas were thought to be released. Simultaneously, supporters of contagion theory looked at transmission rather than causation, postulating that diseases would pass from sick individuals to healthy ones through invisible organisms. These theories largely explained the unequal distribution of disease across social and spatial groups, and many scholars attributed health disparities to the living and working conditions of the poor (Chadwick 1842). Theories of miasma and contagion prompted the sanitary movement and physical planning responses to limit the spread of disease through urban upgrades and infrastructure such as piped water, solid waste removal, urban parks, street cleaning, and sewage systems (Szczygiel and Hewitt 2000; Schultz and McShane 1978).

By the end of the 19th century, miasma theory had been largely replaced with germ theory, which stated that disease was caused by microorganisms that spread through contagious infectious agents (Susser and Susser 1996). The environment thereby lost its central role in disease causation and became the background upon which germs could reproduce or be transmitted (Diez-Roux 1998). The specificity of diseases implied by germ theory effectively reoriented public health responses to the identification and control of infectious agents and the interruption of transmission through such interventions as immunizations, the chlorination of drinking water, quarantines, and ultimately antibiotics (Susser and Susser 1996), taking Public Health out of the city and into the laboratory (Corburn 2009). The dominant explanations for the social inequalities in disease during this era looked to the inferior “constitution,” intellect, and morals of disadvantaged groups (N. Krieger 2001). Thus disparities in health between ethnic and racial groups could be explained through biology, and interventions were devised to segregate, sterilize, or exterminate the “degenerate” or “unfit” groups. W.E.B. DuBois and others challenged this scientific view that racial inferiority was to blame for health disparities, showing that differences in mortality rates between races were a consequence of poorer economic, social, and sanitary conditions rather than biologic inferiority (DuBois 2003).

The prevailing understanding that disease could be passed between people and that certain environments fostered the spread of disease was highly influential to the growing field of City Planning in the early 1900s. The dark, crowded, and poorly ventilated housing conditions of the tenements, where poor immigrant populations lived, were thought to encourage the spread of germs causing diseases such as tuberculosis (Wirka 1996). Housing reformers identified the crowding and the poor housing conditions of the tenements as the cause of inequitable distribution of poor health, leading them to advocate for physical solutions in the form of regulating the heights of buildings, lot coverage, and courtyards to ensure that adequate sunlight and air could enter homes.

The sanitary reforms of the late 19th century and the widespread application of vaccines of the early 20th century contributed to the dramatic reductions in infectious diseases in the U.S. and Western Europe by the end of World War II and the simultaneous rise in chronic, age-related disease such as heart disease, stroke, and cancer, known as the epidemiologic transition (Omram 2001). The uni-causal model of germ theory, where one specific bacteria causes one specific

disease, proved insufficient to explain these diseases of “civilization” (Susser 1985). With this, the biomedical model of disease emerged that attributes ill health to the combination of multiple individual risks factors⁸ as mediated by people’s lifestyles and genetic predisposition to disease (Schwartz, Susser et al. 1999). Notably absent from the biomedical model, however, is a discussion of the origin or causes of risk factors, resulting in what Nancy Krieger has described as the “spider-less web” of causation (Krieger 1994).

Risks under the biomedical paradigm are largely individualized, and unhealthy behaviors are regarded to be a matter of free choice and personal responsibility, disassociated from the social contexts that shape or constrain them. Thus social disparities in health came to be viewed as a result of poor effort and personal failings in a free society of fair institutions, ignoring the fundamental differences in life circumstance between socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Geronimus and Thompson 2004; N. Krieger 1994). As such, public health interventions came to focus on the individual “proximate” determinants of disease (e.g., biologic causes or lifestyle factors), which could be addressed through education or the medical interventions of the health care system. Environmental protection efforts that emerged during this era aimed to minimize risks from exposure to environmental media following a source-by-source and pollutant-by-pollutant paradigm of pollution control (Krieger 1994). Within the highly specialized Public Health field, environmental health research came to be defined as the study of discrete environmental exposures and their multiple effects, teasing apart the individual impacts of exposure to specific pollutants on health.

The emphasis on individual and proximate risk factors of the biomedical model resulted in a near disappearance of social determinants of health from the public health discourse as population patterns of disease were reduced to diseases of individuals. The biomedical model deemphasized the existence of health inequities, and the role of place and context all but disappeared from public health research (Macintyre, Ellaway et al. 2002). Nevertheless, the idea that poor urban neighborhoods were the source of social and physical pathology remained and justified the widespread use of slum clearance through midcentury (Corburn 2009). Public health professionals were complicit in the urban renewal movement, and the guidelines for inspecting housing and neighborhood health developed by the American Public Health Association were used widely to designate urban renewal areas, providing “scientific and impartial” justifications for determining blight (Lopez 2009). Nevertheless, this period is characterized by the specialization and subsequent separation of the fields of Public Health and Planning.

Towards the end of the 20th century, public health researchers began to challenge the field’s focus on individual risk factors and called for specific theories on the distribution of not just disease but also health⁹ (Krieger 2000). This call was reinforced by the growing environmental justice movement that criticized the inability of the biomedical model to account for the multitude of stressors facing communities of color and low socioeconomic status as well as the disregard for the role of power and oppression in the socio-spatial patterning of health risks and

⁸ The World Health Organization defines risk factor as any attribute, characteristic or exposure of an individual that increases the likelihood of developing a disease or injury. Under this definition, behaviors, such as smoking or drinking, can be categorized as a risk factor (WHO 2013).

⁹ According to the WHO, Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO 1946)

resources (Agyeman 2005). The field of social epidemiology that has resulted from responses to these calls has pushed the field to reconsider how social factors such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination become biologically embodied leading to inequitable distributions of health.

One of social epidemiology's most influential scholars, Nancy Krieger, describes the field of social epidemiology as having three main lines of inquiry: psychosocial, the political economy of health, and eco-social theory (Krieger 2001). The psychosocial framework of epidemiology posits that the stress of social inequality (e.g., discrimination, exclusion, powerlessness, etc.) is "embodied" by: a) altering the body's vulnerability to other stressors, b) becoming directly pathogenic by affecting biological systems or c) influencing health damaging behaviors (e.g., drug use). The second line of social epidemiology theorization and research, the political economy of health, invokes upstream versus downstream metaphors for the determinants of health and seeks to attribute the population patterns of health and disease to the social and economic organization of society (Krieger 2001). This body of research attributes the inequitable distribution of health to its "fundamental causes," or the social conditions that put people at "risk of risks," and seeks to identify the contemporary and historic institutions that create, enforce or perpetuate privilege and inequality in health (Link and Phelan 1995; Williams and Collins 2001). Finally the eco-social framework integrates the multiple dimensions through which social and environmental determinants can result in health inequalities, thereby incorporating both the psychosocial and political economy frameworks and explicitly dealing with issues of spatial, temporal and organizational scale (Galea, Freudenberg et al. 2005).

With the renewed interest in the distribution of health and its social determinants has emerged a new paradigm of public health practice for addressing both the inequalities in health outcomes and the social and structural conditions that cause them, largely recognized under the banner of health equity. Health equity is a term that has evoked wide debates within the field of Public Health as to what constitute inequities in health, be they health outcomes or its determinants and what is considered fair and avoidable (Braveman 2006). That debate is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I adopt the health equity definition put forth by Margaret Whitehead in the early 1990s as the practice of creating equal opportunities for health with the goal of bringing health differentials down to the lowest level possible (Whitehead 1991). Based on the values of the equitable distribution of advantages across society (e.g., collective goods, resources, power, and life opportunities), the growing practice of health equity seeks to minimize health inequities by promoting social and racial justice (Hofrichter 2010). The paradigm of health equity aims to move public health practice further "upstream" towards prevention rather than just treatment by addressing the breadth of social determinants of health (WHO Regional Office for Europe 2012; WHO 2003).

This move upstream has brought public health practitioners to identify a broad range of interventions from equalizing the environmental conditions that promote health to the redistribution of power in public decision-making (Iton 2006). Furthermore, health equity practice seeks to shift the narrative of health away from individual responsibility to more structural understandings that would subsequently shape actions (Alameda County Public Health Department 2008). The move upstream has also reinvigorated ecological understandings of the distribution of health and disease, resulting in a renewed interest and focus on place and an explosion of "place-based prevention" strategies that has increased the collaboration between

public health practitioners and urban planners in the evolving field of Healthy Planning. Prior to discussing the growing reconnected field of Public Health and Planning, I first review the research on place and health to understand the multiple dimensions of place that impact community health and the pathways through which they are thought to do so.

1.1.2 The Multiple Pathways between Place and Health Inequities

The renewed concern over social and contextual determinants of health has prompted an ever-growing field of inquiry that seeks to understand the impact of the multiple dimensions of place on population health. Whereas the environmental health field of the 20th century focused nearly exclusively on the role of pollutants in environmental media, the socio-ecological framework has expanded the notion of the environment to include not only the natural, but the built, social, institutional and economic environments as well (Macintyre, Ellaway, and Cummins 2002).

Place in public health research is studied as a type of contextual factor¹⁰ that is linked to geographic space. Sally Macintyre describes place as a type of opportunity structure that includes the features of the physical and social environment which may promote or damage health either directly or indirectly by constraining the possibilities they provide for people to live healthy lives (Macintyre, Ellaway et al. 2002). As such, place can be viewed as the location where macro-social structures (e.g., cultural, socioeconomic, etc.) impact on people's lives. However, places are not mere containers of people and resources. Instead, they are the location where the actions of individuals and groups interact with the environment or context of cultural, social and economic forces in which people exist (Popay, Williams et al. 1998). In contrast to space, which contains quantifiable social and physical features, place is studied with an eye for its meaning and experience (Kearns and Moon 2002). Seven Cummins and coauthors (2007) have noted, however, that research on place and health has fallen victim to the same risk factor thinking of the biomedical model trying to isolate the independent "contextual" influences of place from the "compositional" factors of the individuals living in specific places. These authors, in turn, challenge scholars to study the relational aspects of place to understand the complex, dynamic, and mutually reinforcing relationships between people and place (Cummins et al. 2007).

The literature on place and health can be roughly divided in two: 1) those that conceptualize place as a source of social and physical risks to health and 2) those that view place as a source of resources or opportunity structures (Fitzpatrick and LaGory 2000; Macintyre and Ellaway 2003; Bernard, Charafeddine et al. 2007)¹¹. Perhaps due to the predominance of risk-factor epidemiology in public health research, much of the place and health literature conceptualizes places as the geographic location or source of social and physical risks or stressors to health (Fitzpatrick and LaGory 2000; Macintyre and Ellaway 2003; Bernard, Charafeddine et al. 2007). Social and physical risks impact health through direct physical and psychosocial pathways as

¹⁰ Social epidemiologists explicitly look at contextual or group-level factors, which may impact individuals directly and also indirectly by constraining the choices people make (Diez-Roux 1998).

¹¹ While these categories provide a useful guide to managing the literature on the infinite links between places and health, it is important to note that these three dimensions of place are not mutually exclusive. Many of the factors presented in one category may just as easily fit into another. For instance, social capital¹¹ can be categorized as a risk and a resource, and is tied up in the meaning people give to certain places. Furthermore, factors in one category can influence those in another category

well as through indirect mechanisms by influencing neighborhood resources and people's behaviors and lifestyles.

Environmental justice researchers have produced over three decades of studies documenting the inequitable distribution of physical risks across urban areas (Evans and Kantrowitz 2002). Studies range in design from residential proximity to potentially polluting land uses (e.g., toxic waste facilities) to exposures to toxic pollutants (e.g., pesticides) and have demonstrated a consistent pattern of disproportionate exposures to hazardous risks in communities of low-income and color (Morello-Frosch and Lopez 2006). More recently, researchers have documented the inequitable distribution of a new set of hazards such as bars, liquor stores, and fast food restaurants as influencing unhealthy behaviors or attracting social risks such as neighborhood crime and violence (LaVeist and Wallace 2000; Kwate, Yau et al. 2009). Environmental justice activists have long argued that the field of environmental health consistently fails to address the multiple and potentially synergistic stressors impacting communities of color and low-income. In response, environmental health researchers and regulatory agencies are beginning to analyze the simultaneous and cumulative impacts of physical and social stressors in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Morello-Frosch et al. 2011; Evans and Marcynyszyn 2004).

Physical signs of neighborhood disorder (e.g., garbage, vandalism, loitering) have received a great deal of attention from sociologists and have been used as indicators of a breakdown of social control and heightened risk of crime and danger. The fear and stress associated with crime, powerlessness, and the perception that social disorder has been conceptualized as a local risk factor (Ross and Mirowsky 2001). Similarly, researchers have found that neighborhood reputation can act as a stressor affecting mental health and well-being (Sooman and Macintyre 1995). Challenging the assumption that the reputation of a place maps neatly onto objective and observable measures of neighborhood problems, Robert Sampson and Stephen Raudenbush hypothesize that racial stereotypes at the extra-local scale that associate dark skin with crime and disorder stigmatize not only people but also the places where they live (Sampson and Raudenbush 2004), which can additionally restrict social and economic opportunities (Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991). Finally, the large body of sociological literature on neighborhood effects has identified norms and peer influences as an important source of neighborhood level risks. Peer influences can lure people into criminal activity or normalize unhealthy behaviors such as drug use and smoking (Ellen, Mijanovich, and Dillman 2001; Frohlich et al. 2002).

Increasing attention is being paid to the shortage of neighborhood resources that either promote health (e.g., recreational facilities) or buffer risks (e.g., social support) as a way to understand the role of place in health inequities. This deficit approach looks at the unavailability or inaccessibility of health related social, physical, and institutional resources. The lack of health-promoting physical amenities such as parks and supermarkets in disadvantaged communities has been found to negatively impact health related behaviors such as diet and physical activity levels (Lovasi, Hutson et al. 2009) and subsequently weight and health outcomes (Gordon-Larsen, Nelson et al. 2006). Other aspects of the built environment that are thought to promote health, such as neighborhood walkability, have been found to be less predictive of physical activity or obesity in disadvantaged communities, indicating a complex relationship between physical

attributes and health behaviors, with safety emerging as a strong barrier to the use of health-promoting physical features (Lovasi, Hutson et al. 2009).

The relative scarcity of certain social capital measures within disadvantaged neighborhoods has also been viewed as an important mechanism for the reproduction of health inequities (Sampson 2003; Kawachi, Subramanian et al. 2008). Social capital, which refers to the resources produced from social interactions such as mutual trust, civic engagement, and informal social control, can promote health by supplying information and support and can result in collective action for mutual benefit (Sampson, Raudenbush et al. 1997). The concept of social capital, however, is widely contested, both on its definitions and its universal benefits. Some studies, for instance, point to the damaging effects of social capital when social ties place excessive demands or behavioral expectations on group members, down-level norms and aspirations, or make members less trusting of outsiders (Kawachi, Subramanian, and Kim 2008; Caughy, O'Campo, and Muntaner 2003).

Structural discrimination¹² in the form of residential segregation and neighborhood disinvestment have reduced the availability and quality of institutional resources that promote health (e.g., education, child care, and employment opportunities) in neighborhoods of low-income and communities of color (Williams and Collins 1995). Residential segregation and disinvestment have also been linked to social isolation and political powerlessness, resulting in a negative feedback loop and resulting in individual level powerlessness and lack of control over one's life circumstances, which has been strongly linked with health (Massey and Denton 1993; LaVeist 1992)

Finally, many physical, social, and institutional neighborhood resources can also be seen as buffers to health risks or stressors. Green space, for instance, has been found to buffer the effects of neighborhood stressors by providing a place for recreation and relaxation (Hartig, Evans et al. 2003; Pretty, Peacock et al. 2005; Maas, Verheij et al. 2006), and its absence can, therefore, contribute to health inequities. In terms of social buffers, many of the same features of social capital that promote health can also act to buffer the negative impacts of health risks or the scarcity of resources. Mutual trust and support, for instance, can buffer stress either by positively affecting people's assessment of their ability to cope or by supplying material or psychological support required to deal with the stress (Kawachi, Subramanian et al. 2008). Finally, institutional resources, such as health care facilities or transportation services can also buffer health risks by make health-promoting resources more accessible. Therefore, the scarcity of neighborhood level social, physical and institutional resources can be seen as playing a key role in the production and reproduction of health inequities by constraining health-promotion and removing some of the buffers of health stressors.

1.1.3 Healthy Planning Practice

Having briefly established its trajectory in research and practice and outlined the relevant literature connecting place and health, I now turn to practice and scholarship analyzing the reconnected field of Healthy Planning. I specifically highlight the planning paradigms that

¹² Structural discrimination refers to a system of social, economic and political structures that produces and legitimizes cumulative inequalities. policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions

Public Health is drawing upon for the reunited field, the critiques from scholars, and the unanswered questions for research.

It is important to note that Healthy Planning is not a singular practice, and other authors have captured the many permutations of Healthy Planning (Corburn 2009). For the purposes of this research, however, I primarily emphasize practices that relate to land use planning, as the built environment has become a critical lens for understanding health disparities (Barton and Grant 2012). I group Healthy Planning practices as they relate to land use under those that draw primarily from the spatial and built environment practices of Smart Growth and New Urbanism and those that align more closely with the social justice goals of contemporary movements of Regional Equity and Environmental Justice. This is not to say that there is a strict divide between these practices. For instance, much of the work on the built environment focuses on mobilizing community power to advocate for healthier environments in low-income communities (PolicyLink 2007). Therefore, I use these categories as a guide to understand the underlying planning paradigms, rather than to draw lines between Healthy Planning practices.

Built Environment, Spatial Strategies, and Health

Contemporary public health concerns about the obesity epidemic and its relationship with the built environment emerged in the 1990s and have come to dominate the scholarly and practice-oriented field of Healthy Planning. Beginning with concerns over sprawl, low-density suburban developments, and car dependency, the built environment frame of Healthy Planning has aligned itself with the Smart Growth and New Urbanist agendas to make places more walkable, accessible, and resource rich by focusing on the density, design, and diversity of development. What are the Smart Growth and New Urbanist strategies that Public Health practitioners have aligned with? And to what extent do these agendas seek to redistribute health promoting resources and reduce environmental risks in urban communities?

The physical strategies of Smart Growth and New Urbanism stem from a long history of urban planning ideals about the optimal layout, look and functioning of urban environments. Although concerns over sprawl and its impacts on the environment can be seen in planning history as early as the 1960s, the Smart Growth movement largely emerged in the 1990s (Fan et al. 2005). At that time a growing number of practitioners sought to capture the benefits of growth to strengthen urban communities, promote economic development, make urban services more efficient, and protect the environment by promoting infill development and dense, well connected urban environments (Chapin 2012). The fundamental principles of the Smart Growth planning movement that have emerged from government agencies and professional organization include:

- 1) create a range of housing opportunities and choices, 2) create walkable neighborhoods, 3) encourage community and stakeholder collaboration, 4) foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place, 5) make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective, 6) mixed land uses, 7) preserve open space, farmland natural beauty and critical environmental areas, 8) provide a variety of transportation choices, 9) strengthen and direct development toward existing communities, and 10) take advantage of compact building design. (US EPA 2012)

These principles of Smart Growth have been embraced for myriad reasons, including quality of life, environmental protection, poverty deconcentration, and economic development. For instance, environmentalists have been advocating for Smart Growth as a way to reduce

consumption of resources, vehicular travel, and pollution. Having associated poverty concentration with suburbanization, Smart Growth is also viewed as a means to deconcentrate poverty. In addition, researchers have found that Smart Growth development strategies reduce government expenditures and promotes economic growth by creating the conditions for innovation and the types of urban environments that knowledge workers seek (Muro and Puentes 2004). Finally, and largely in response to Environmental Justice and equity advocates (Robert Doyle Bullard 2007), Smart Growth advocates are increasingly looking at the equity implications of their work and seeking ways to ensure equitable access to urban resources (McConville 2013).

Notions about “good urban form,” economic development, and the environmental impacts of sprawl have similarly been the primary drivers of the urban design movement of New Urbanism. Emerging in the 1980s, New Urbanism draws on a legacy of planning and architectural thought about the optimal urban form, from the Garden Cities movement of the early 1900s to Clarence Perry’s Neighborhood Unit on the essential need around which to build a neighborhood, and Jane Jacob’s emphasis on the mixing of land uses in neighborhoods to enhance social interaction and control by keeping “eyes on the street” (Fishman 2012; Hall 2002).

Similar to Smart Growth, New Urbanist principles emphasize compact, walkable, mixed-use, and transit-friendly developments that contain a range of housing options. However, New Urbanists focus primarily on physical form, arguing them to be precursors to urban economic, social and environmental change (Knaap and Talen 2005). Although at first primarily focused on greenfield development, New Urbanism has been applied to inner cities as well, evidenced by its adoption by HUD for the HOPE VI program (Congress for the New Urbanism n.d.). The embrace of New Urbanist design for urban revitalization also rests on a long history of the theorization and action on the physical and social conditions of poor neighborhoods. Present day thought on the toxic nature of poor neighborhoods, or concentrated poverty as sociologists have coined it, has led to the proliferation of spatial strategies of poverty dispersal and deconcentration. These strategies include the revitalization of urban neighborhoods into mixed income developments (Edward Goetz 2003).

Public Health’s links to Smart Growth and New Urbanism

Healthy Planning has embraced Smart Growth and New Urbanist practices in their search to influence the physical activity and nutrition behaviors of urban populations. Researchers have linked the design, density and diversity of development to car usage, air pollution, neighborhood walkability, physical activity, access and use of health promoting resources, as well as social cohesion, among other linkages to health (Frank et al. 2006; Frumkin, Frank, and Jackson 2004; Northridge, Sclar, and Biswas 2003). The relationship between the built environment and health has been harnessed by public health practitioners to advocate for specific urban interventions as way to move “upstream” in disease and obesity prevention (CDC 2010). The extent to which Healthy Planning has transformed the practices of Smart Growth and New Urbanism remains unclear, however. There are some signs that Public Health is seen as an additional goal, motivation, or funding source to advance the Smart Growth and New Urbanist strategies. For instance, in 2006, the American Planning Association published the report “Integrating Planning and Public Health” stating:

“As Smart Growth efforts have grown increasingly politicized in the last decade, bringing health to the table adds a new, strong, credible voice to what communities have been working to implement.” (Morris 2006)

Similarly, Public Health has become a key ally in the New Urbanist movement, as perhaps best evidenced by the 2010 joint conference between the Congress for New Urbanism and the Center for Disease Control entitled *New Urbanism: Rx for Healthy Places*. Regardless of the intentions to transform or just reinforce the agendas of Smart Growth and New Urbanism, a plethora of projects and policies have emerged that are doing just that. While some focus on infrastructure development such as the addition of sidewalks, bike lanes, new parks, and transportation access, others take a more policy approach, and there has been a proliferation of comprehensive plans that make explicit the links between planning issues and health (APA 2011). The primary goals of the built environment strategies are to increase access to health promoting resources and to reduce the risks associated with development such as air pollution, crime (via social control through physical designs), and traffic (Frumkin et al. 2011; Dannenberg, Frumkin, and Jackson 2011; Jackson 2011).

But is it Equitable?

Although the vast majority of the literature on Smart Growth and New Urbanism consists of practice-oriented guidelines and best practices, a number of scholars have pointed to the limitations of these approaches to achieving equitable outcomes without the intervention of redistributive policies and programs. Environmental Justice scholars were early to critique the Smart Growth movement for failing to address social equity (Robert Doyle Bullard 2007), arguing that it has turned the spotlight back on many urban core neighborhoods, accelerating gentrification and displacement rather than leading to fair or equitable growth. Along these lines, a few scholars have noted that the sustainability and Smart Growth agendas are most often driven by environmental and economic goals, with equity efforts either left vague or with a nod to procedural and participatory justice (Raco 2005; Gunder 2006).

The urban design ideals and social goals of New Urbanism have similarly received numerous critiques from scholars for being overly environmentally deterministic and overstating the social and civic changes that design can bring about (Smith 2002; Fainstein 2000). Although one can find housing diversity among the principles in the Charter for New Urbanism, critics have argued that assuming the market will develop housing diversity without state intervention to be unrealistic. In addition, they argue that the urban upgrades that come along with such efforts can effectively price the poor out of New Urbanist neighborhoods (Fainstein 2000). In her study of the New Urbanist efforts to rebuild Southern Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina, for instance, Emily Talen concluded that the realization of the social mixing ideals required more than a physical plan or a reliance on private sector development (Talen 2008).

Perhaps the largest body of literature in this vein has been written by critical geographers who have attacked efforts at urban revitalization and infill development as a neoliberal strategy to colonize, sanitize or profit off of the inner city. These critics have documented how the discourse of concentrated poverty pathologizes place and legitimizes new forms of urban renewal, gentrification, and displacement (Steinberg 2010; Edward Goetz 2003). Research on the impacts of revitalization strategies have found the benefits to low-income residents to be uncertain at best (Newman and Ashton 2004). The literature evaluating mixed-income

communities and housing dispersal strategies have similarly shown ambiguous results in terms of the overall impacts on poor residents, arguing that the presumptive mechanism of social interaction between poor residents and the arrival of more affluent neighbors to be unfounded (Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007; E. Goetz and Chapple 2010). Even Richard Florida has acknowledged that using revitalization efforts to attract the creative class as a form of economic development does not necessarily provide economic benefits to low-income residents (Florida 2013), as it has been suggested with the “trickle down urbanism” hypothesis (Renn 2013).

Despite the rapid and widespread adoption of New Urbanist and Smart Growth strategies by Healthy Planners, there is little empirical research on the equity implications of this work. In his review of the policy implications of health and place research, Antony Chum (2011) argues that the field disregards the political contexts that produce inequalities in place such as municipal fragmentation, competition, and exclusionary politics. He warns that any discussion of poverty de-concentration for health purposes without addressing these issues runs the risk of redistributing urban health inequities rather than eliminating them. Nevertheless, research on the ways that Healthy Planners are getting involved in urban planning discussions and putting pressure on Cities to adopt Smart Growth and New Urbanism remains thin. I therefore seek to more closely analyze how Healthy Planning practitioners are entering into these debates and to what extent a health lens counters or reinforces the limitations of these movements.

Planning for Health Equity: Social Movement Framing and Community Engagement

Simultaneous to the proliferation of built environment practices for health has been a growing movement to ensure that the reconnection of health and planning is based on the fundamentals of social and environmental justice inclusion (Corburn 2007). These efforts run the gamut from assessment and analytical approaches to reveal the social justice implications of decisions through Health Impact Assessments, to community building and empowerment to enhance political power as a means to achieve change, to approaches that would reframe understandings of health to emphasize the structural rather than the individual determinants of health. For instance, in its 2008 guidance *Closing the Gap in a Generation* the World Health Organization elevated the importance of creating healthy places to reduce disparities, calling specifically for participatory urban governance to ensure “the equitable inclusion of all city dwellers in the processes by which urban policies are formed” (CSDOH 2008, p.63). Similarly, the Building Healthy Communities initiative of the California Endowment has sought to build local capacity to both advocate for healthier policies and to redistribute power by organizing communities and building their capacities to engage in decision-making. In many ways, the health equity dimension of Healthy Planning draws on the framing and strategies of the Environmental Justice and Regional Equity movements, to which I turn now.

The Environmental Justice movement¹³, with its roots in the Civil Rights movement, arose in the 1980s in response to a number of events and studies on the inequitable burden of toxic facilities

¹³ The USEPA defines Environmental Justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means that no population, due to policy or economic disempowerment, is forced to bear a disproportionate share of negative human health or environmental impacts.

on low-income communities of color (Brulle and Pellow 2006; Bullard 1994). With its framing of the inequitable distribution of hazards as “environmental racism,” the movement transformed the concept of the environment to encompass where people “live, work, play, and pray” (Laws and Rein 2003). The movement adopted a prognostic frame of “environmental justice” to focus explicitly on rights to clean and healthy environments, focusing on the fairness of treatment in the distribution of environmental risks, which was later expanded to environmental resources as well (Benford 2005). Environmental justice activists have challenged the basic foundations of the scientific method and positivist paradigm of research and decision-making, arguing for the rights to be “heard” and participate as equal partners in every level of decision making from problem definition to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of solutions (Pellow and Brulle 2005).

Overlapping with the Environmental Justice movement is that of Regional Equity, which seeks the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, while acting regionally to achieve these ends. Also in reaction to persistent discriminatory and unfair planning practices that have reinforced segregation and inequality in American society, the Regional Equity movement has sought to infuse the Smart Growth movement with measures that insure equitable access to opportunities such as good schools, affordable housing in attractive neighborhoods, living wage jobs, and proximity to transit that benefit both existing and future residents (Funder’s Network 2004). Through such strategies as community benefits agreements, local hire ordinances, regional tax sharing, inclusionary zoning, and development exactions, the Regional Equity movement seeks explicit ways to redistribute the benefits of development. Manuel Pastor and colleagues describe the field of regional equity as consisting of three separate but interrelated components: 1) community development regionalism, or using regional levers to promote revitalization of disinvested neighborhoods; 2) policy reform regionalism, where policy entrepreneurs attempt to shift government rules to better distribute resources through technical analyses, reframing, and advocacy; and 3) social movement regionalism, which aims to mobilize community, form coalitions, and build power to achieve collective action and create a progressive movement (Manuel Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2011).

Environmental Justice as Community Engagement

In its quest for self determination to “speak for ourselves,” the meaningful engagement of traditionally marginalized communities in the decision making processes that determine their health and wellbeing has become a pillar to the Environmental Justice Movement and is now being embraced by Health Equity and Healthy Planning practitioners alike. Here I briefly outline the Environmental Justice and Planning scholarship on the purposes, mechanisms and limitations of community engagement to achieve equitable outcomes.

Despite decades of experience in and research on community engagement in planning, it remains an “inherently contested concept” (Day 1997) utilized in different forms, by different groups and for different purposes. Although diverse actors agree on the need to increase community engagement in decision-making processes, the purposes for such engagement are in fact quite disparate. Perhaps the most well known and cited work on community engagement is that of Sherry Arnstein (1969), who equated the goals of participation with the redistribution of power (Arnstein 1969). However scholars studying the practice of community engagement have

uncovered myriad goals that the practice seeks to achieve. Bryson and coauthors (2013), for instance, identified nine goals of participation, albeit from the perspective of different actors:

- 1) Meet legal requirements; 2) Embody the ideals of democratic participation and inclusion;
- 3) Advance social justice; 4) Inform the public; 5) Enhance the understanding of public problems, explore and generate potential solutions; 6) Produce policies, plans and projects of higher quality in terms of their content; 7) Generate support for decisions and their implementation; 8) Manage uncertainty by building trust and minimizing the risk of unanticipated pressures from the public; 9) Create and sustain adaptive capacity for problem solving and resilience.

Bryson and coauthors suggest that the public process design should be matched to the goals of community engagement. Nevertheless, the intentions of participation are commonly under-specified yet highly influential on the design and outcomes of participation processes. For instance, both the New Urbanism¹⁴ and Smart Growth¹⁵ movements include community engagement in their charters; however, they do not specify how or why communities should be engaged.

Similar to the diversity of engagement goals, scholars have uncovered a wide range of participatory mechanisms to engage the public in decision-making processes from hearings and task forces, to boards, commissions, and surveys. Gene Rowe and Lynn Frewer (2005) divide public engagement strategies into three typologies: 1) communication, 2) consultation, and 3) participation based on the directionality of the flow of information. Kathryn Quick and Martha Feldman (2011) distinguish between community engagement strategies that are inclusive and participatory. To these authors participation entails efforts to increase public input, whereas inclusion involves the 1) engagement of multiple ways of knowing, 2) co-production of the process and content of decision-making, and 3) temporal openness. They note that only inclusive strategies can achieve greater satisfaction and approval of the community, whereas participation alone often leads to participation burnout and ill will.

In contrast to the above authors who analyze the types of engagement mechanisms, Judith Innes and other scholars are more concerned with the internal dynamics of these processes. They developed the theory of collaborative rationality, drawing on the notions of communicative rationality from Jurgen Habermas, that consensus and optimal solutions emerge from authentic dialogue (Innes and Booher 2010; Forester 1988; Healey 2012). To achieve collaborative rationality, they argue, all interested parties must be engaged in face-to-face dialogue, fully informed and able to express their views and be listened to, whether they are powerful or not. Other scholars such as Xavier Sousa Briggs, however, have shown these conditions to be mostly absent in community engagement efforts and revealed subtle communication codes that reproduced power relations and undermined the goals of engagement (Briggs 1998).

Theoretical critiques of the participatory tradition in planning argue that there is little evidence that procedural fixes are able to overcome deeply entrenched power imbalances (Fainstein 2000). Susan Fainstein, for instance, argues that even when relatively powerless groups may prevail in individual instances, the results are typically meager or symbolic. Power imbalances have been

¹⁴ The Charter for New Urbanism states “We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.” (CNU 1996)

¹⁵ The Smart Growth Principles put for by the Environmental Protection Agency includes “10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.” (US EPA 2012)

similarly highlighted by Environmental Justice scholars, who have found that despite laws and programs to ensure public participation, they:

“leave in place the underlying social relationships of its participants... Regardless of the type of participatory process employed, environmental decision-making processes replicate, and facilitate, the constraints imposed by others in the social structure” (Cole and Foster 2001, p.104)

Further, researchers have documented the many ways that participation as practiced by real life planners rarely meets the idealized goals of planning theorists, which can erode trust and fall short of the just outcomes sought by participants (Hibbard and Lurie 2000). For instance, in their study of Environmental Justice strategies adopted by California Environmental Agencies, Jonathan London and coauthors noted that participatory mechanisms “provided venues for the environmental justice advocates to ‘speak,’ though it is not clear to what degree these voices are being heard and incorporated in meaningful ways into agency practice” (London, Sze, and Lievanos 2008, p.271). Other scholars have highlighted the key constraints preventing full and meaningful engagement, including the lack of funding, lack of decision making authority, and subtle power disparities, as revealed by the prevalence of impenetrable technical information, in addition to the timing and openness of the process (Cole and Foster 2001). Furthermore, instead of co-producing the problems and solutions as espoused by scholars, it is well recognized that many planners enter into the public process with a priori commitments to certain outcomes. Because of these and other reasons, Environmental Justice Scholars have noted that:

“Many communities conclude that the public participation process is designed not to hear and address their concerns, but instead to manage, defuse and ultimately co-opt community opposition to projects” (Cole and Foster 2001, p.111).

As the field of Healthy Planning is beginning to mobilize a new contingency of actors to participate in city planning processes to ensure that “marginalized voices are heard” and that power is re-distributed (Iton 2006) research is needed to understand if these practices are suffering from the same limitations outlined above or if they are innovating and employing new techniques to meaningfully engage in decision-making processes.

Social Movement Framing

In their analysis of the Regional Equity movement, Manuel Pastor and coauthors study organizing activities through the lens of social movement framing to understand its potential to reignite progressive politics in the United States. They analyze how actors recast inequities using a regional lens to understand the problems, identify solutions, and build power, with both successful and unsuccessful outcomes (M. Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2009). Similarly, Environmental Justice has been analyzed as a collective action frame, in an attempt to understand how the movement may be shifting politics and policies towards more equitable outcomes (Benford 2005; Laws and Rein 2003; Taylor 2000).

According to Benford and Snow, a collective action frame refers to “an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there,’ conveying what is or is not important by grouping certain symbolic elements and keeping others out” (Benford and Snow 2000). The process of reframing involves negotiation and struggle to lead participants to view the issues and solutions in a new light. Robert Benford argues that the Environmental Justice frame may be suffering from stagnation as a result of a diffuse conceptualization, its wide umbrella that covers

too many issues, and its failure to embrace and articulate revolutionary solutions (Benford 2005). A narrow frame and agenda, for instance, have been found to achieve greater outcomes (Toffolon-Weiss 2005), whereas a broader frame may succeed at capturing the interests of a wider constituency and succeed at building a larger base (Laws and Rein 2003).

Despite the fact that Health Equity leaders have explicitly stated their intentions to reframe policies around population health, moving understandings from individual to structural determinants of health (Iton 2012), there is scant research analyzing this reframing process. Who is doing the reframing, what are the main principles and what are its strengths and weaknesses of the Healthy Planning frame, for instance? My research engages with the ways that land use planning is being reframed by unconventional actors into issues related to justice, health, and equity.

1.2 Research Questions

Despite the wealth of research on the links between place and health as well as scholarship studying planning related movements of Smart Growth, New Urbanism, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity, little research has been conducted on the practice and framing of healthy land use planning. While some scholars and practitioners argue that health provides a unifying outcome and a lens through which to bring equity into debates about urban services and decisions (J. Corburn 2009), others have claimed that it's simply another way to talk about equity planning and community development that has been around for generations (Bhatia 2012). With notable exceptions (Corburn 2009), there is little empirical evidence to understand the emerging practices and framing of Healthy Planning, especially as they pertain to efforts to reframe land use governance and attach equity goals to planning practice beyond statements of best practices. This dissertation seeks to fill the research gaps highlighted above by studying the practice of Healthy Planning in its multiple forms to understand its implementation, political limitations, and factors of success.

This dissertation studies a set of advocacy and planning practices in Fresno, CA, using a health equity lens and asks if and how the paradigm of Healthy Planning is shifting land use governance towards a more socially just future. To understand the potential of Healthy Planning to insert social justice goals into planning practice, I ask the following sub-questions:

1. What has been the role of planning in the production of socio-spatial inequalities in environmental health and its determinants? Answering these questions leads me to uncover the institutions and processes that shaped the socio-spatial patterning of people, risks, and resources and provides the context within which present planning practices are operating and trying to reform.
2. How is Healthy Planning being framed by social justice actors in Fresno? What were the precursors to this framing? Who is involved, around what issues are they focused, and why? Answering these questions will help to understand the specific factors contributing to the health equity movement, how it was framed around land use planning, and the specific institutions it seeks to transform.

3. How has health been incorporated into Fresno's planning efforts? To what extent do they embody the principles of Health Equity? By analyzing what is included and excluded from the City's land use plans, I seek to observe how planners frame health and the constraints in this framing. Given the observations and warning by critical scholars of the urban renewal and gentrification impacts of planning practice, I seek to understand if the addition of the health lens enables or disrupts these trends.
4. Finally, I look to the deliberative practice of planning and community engagement to understand if these practices shift power dynamics and change the narrative or plans towards greater health equity.

1.3 The Fresno Case

Fresno presents an interesting case in which to analyze the emerging field of Healthy Planning and its potential to transform land use governance and social and spatial inequalities for three reasons. First, Fresno is the site of extreme segregation, sprawl, poverty, environmental degradation and poor health, making it the type of place that planners and public health practitioners are continuously trying to intervene upon. Although it presents itself as an outlier for the depth of its problems, it is also representative of many of the inequalities facing metropolitan areas around the country. Therefore, it is important to better understand the processes that enable or limit the transformational potential of Healthy Planning practices to ensure that the field is evolving in a way to address challenges in cities like Fresno. Second, Fresno is currently experiencing a flurry of local, state, and national investments to improve the urban environment. The confluence of all of this activity allows me to observe many Healthy Planning practices simultaneously. Third, and unlike many progressive places that are selected to serve as best practices, Fresno sits in a politically conservative region, and many of the ideas about health equity and even Smart Growth are being introduced from outside. Therefore, many constraints and barriers arise that may prove to be incisive for the evolution and advancement of Healthy Planning practice elsewhere. In this Section I provide a broad overview of the social, environmental and health disparities that occur in Fresno, followed by a brief introduction to the Healthy Planning practices that my dissertation analyzes.

At the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, an agricultural belt stretching 300 miles through the center of California, sits the city of Fresno (Figure 1.1). The Valley is home to nearly four million people and contains some of the most agriculturally productive land in the country. Providing a constant demand for low skilled, agricultural work, the San Joaquin Valley is also known as one of the poorest regions in the Country, often called the Appalachia of the West (Cowan 2005).

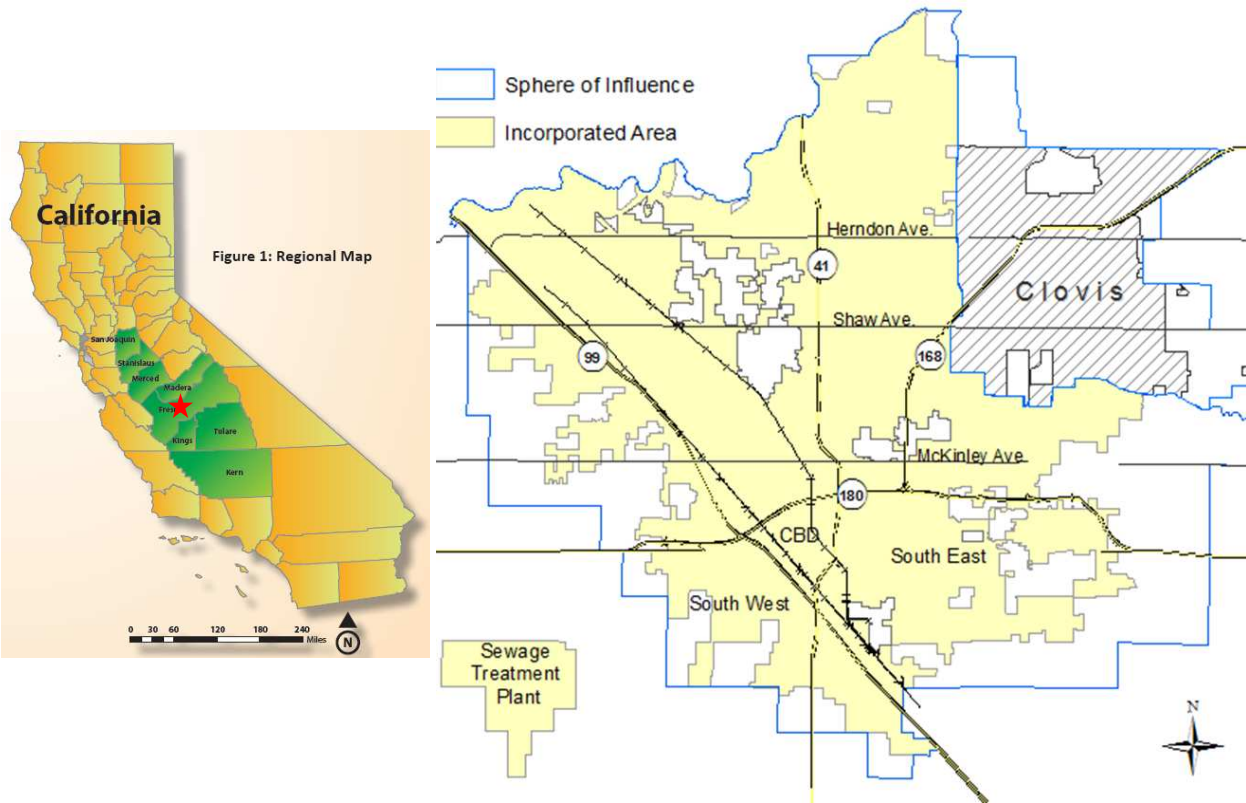


Figure 1.1 The City of Fresno (R) Sits at the Heart (red star) of the San Joaquin Valley (L)

In this predominantly agricultural area, sits the city of nearly a half a million people. Fresno suffers from high rates of unemployment, poverty, and low educational attainment. It is also home to a majority minority population with nearly 70% people of color. The social benefits of living in an urban environment are unevenly distributed by race/ethnicity and income (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Table 1.1 City of Fresno Population Characteristics, 2011

	Non-Hispanic				Total
	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	
% of Total Population	30.2	7.2	12.1	47.3	100
% over 25 high school graduate or higher	91.2	83.9	69.7	57.3	74.7
% Unemployed	7.4	11.2	9.1	11.8	10.0
% Poverty	13.0	40.0	25.5	34.9	27.3
<i>Households</i>					
% Renters	37.9	71.6	50.9	60.9	51.2
% Housing burdened* (renters)	55.8	71.0	50.5	62.0	60.2
% No Vehicle ownership	8.2	24.5	7.2	13.7	11.7

Source: American Community Survey 2009-2011 3-Year Estimates, Table S0201
 * Housing burdened is defined as householders paying more than 30% of their income on rent.

One factor contributing to Fresno’s social disparities are inequalities in place. Fresno has often been described as not one but two cities: an affluent, white, and clean city in the North and a poor, polluted community of color in the South. While the dividing line between the haves and have-nots has slowly migrated north, the narrative has stayed the same for the last 50 years. Today, the dividing line is considered Shaw Avenue, an east-west arterial approximately 6 miles north of the city center (Figure 1.1). The population north of Shaw Avenue is systematically whiter, more educated, and with higher incomes than the more socially disadvantaged population living south of Shaw (Table 1.1).

Table 1.2 Population Characteristics North and South of Shaw Avenue, 2011

	North of Shaw	South of Shaw
Population	180,452	428,256
% non Hispanic White	53.4	23.2
% non-Hispanic Black	4.9	7.5
% non-Hispanic Asian	10.0	12.8
% Hispanic	28.6	54.0
% High School Graduates	85.5	67.4
% Poverty (families)	11.1	28.9
% Very High Income (families)*	52.2	23.6
% Households Linguistically Isolated**	9.4	21.3
% Housing burdened (renters)***	48.3	57.9

Source: American Community Survey 2007-2011 5 year estimates, Tables DP05, S1501, DP03, B25070

* Following HUD definitions for income categories, I classify very high income as households with income >150% Area Median Income

** For 2005-2009, S1602, Defined as household as on in which no one 14 years old and over speaks only English or speaks a non-English language and speaks English "very well."

*** Defined as gross rent as 30% or more of household income

Shaw Avenue is not a simple dividing line between the “haves” and the “have nots,” however. The further north you go the wealthier, whiter, and more educated the population, whereas the further south you go the greater the number of immigrants, low-income residents and people of color reside. This is perhaps best illustrated by mapping a key indicator of socioeconomic status - educational attainment. Figure 1.2 also illustrates some of the internal contradiction in the general narrative about the North/South divide¹⁶. **Error! Reference source not found.**

¹⁶ There are internal contradictions in this narrative. For instance, the neighborhood (and former mill town) of Pinedale sits North of Shaw, but is a historically Latino community that was annexed into the City only in 1979 (Planning Resource Associates, Inc. 2007). It continues to be a poor, Latino area despite its location in North Fresno. Similarly, the Sunnyside neighborhood in Southeast Fresno was built up around a golf course and country club for Fresno’s affluent residents. In 2011, the median household income in Sunnyside census tract was 57% higher than the median for the city. Despite these inherent inconsistencies, the dominant perception in Fresno is that the affluent live north and the poor live south of Shaw Avenue. Or, as many people from North Fresno have commented to me “no one goes South of Shaw.” These perceptions have very real material and behavioral consequences and I therefore choose to honor the cognitive map of Fresnans and use Shaw as the dividing line between the North and South.

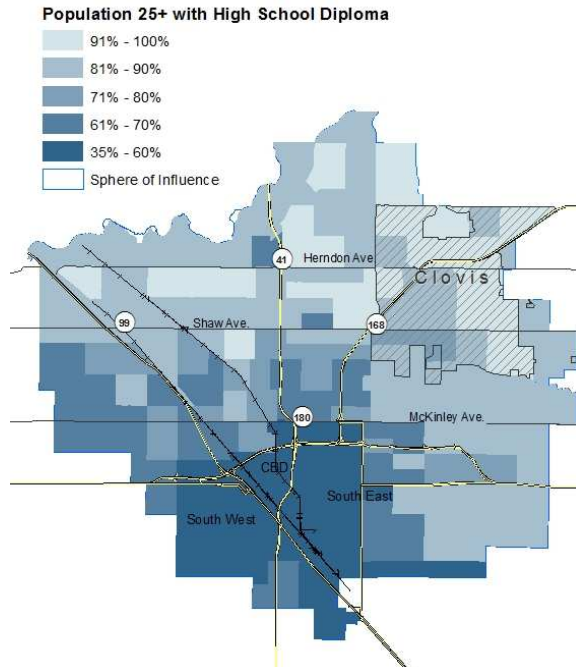


Figure 1.2 Educational Attainment by Census Tract, 2011
 Source: American Community Survey, 2007-2011, 5 year estimates, Table S1501

1.3.1 Environmental Inequalities

When the California Environmental Protection Agency published the results of its California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool in 2013, a tool developed to compare the combined environmental burden and vulnerabilities of populations across the state, communities in the San Joaquin Valley consistently ranked among the most burdened and vulnerable populations in California. Out of 1,769 zip codes analyzed, three of the top five were located in South Fresno, with Southwest Fresno's zip code 93706 ranking as the most environmentally burdened and vulnerable zip code in the entire state. The combined environmental burden and vulnerability scores of South Fresno were 43% higher than zip codes to the north of the city (OEHHA 2013). Having established some of the social vulnerability factors in the previous Section, here I describe the differences in the environmental conditions between North and South Fresno.

The social segregation of Fresno's population coincides with disparities in land uses, with the majority of the city's industrial and noxious facilities located to the South. In 2010, 89% of industrial land lay south of Shaw Avenue and three times as many tons of toxic chemicals were emitted in South Fresno in comparison to the North (EPA, 2010). The preponderance of industries in South Fresno can be related to elevated exposure to environmental hazards and subsequently heightened risks of negative health outcomes. In 2005, the lifetime cancer risk for people living in neighborhoods South of Shaw Avenue was 27% higher than those living North of Shaw, and people's exposures to respiratory hazards were five times higher than acceptable levels. The social segregation is not only related to risks, but to disparities in resources as well. In 2011, neighborhoods north of Shaw had nearly 3 times as many acres of parks per capita than neighborhoods south of Shaw. A wide range of indicators have been proposed and used to

characterize environmental health disparities from density of liquor stores to tree coverage and access to parks (Corburn and Cohen 2012; “HealthyCity.org” 2010). In Table 1.3 I illustrate some of the differences with a select number of environmental indicators to illustrate the general pattern of more risks and fewer resources in South Fresno in comparison to North Fresno¹⁷.

Table 1.3 Indicators of Select Risks and Resources North and South of Shaw Avenue

	North of Shaw	South of Shaw
Risks		
Pounds of chemicals released to air or water (per 1,000 residents)*	49	38,080
Solid and Hazardous Waste Facilities (per 10,000 residents)*	0.8	1.5
Impervious land coverage**	39.2%	46.1%
Resources		
Tree canopy land coverage**	2.3%	1.7%
Open space per 1,000 residents***	10.8	3.0
Full service grocery stores per 100,000 inhabitants****	9.3	4.7

* OEHHA, 2013, Data Related to the Second Public Review Draft of the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) available at: http://oehha.ca.gov/ej/pdf/CalEnviroScreenData_jan2013.xlsx

** National Land Cover Database (NLCD) 2001, compiled by Bill Jesdale, UC Berkeley (2012)

*** California Protected Areas Database by zip code (2009) downloaded from HealthyCity.org

**** CCNGIS.org (2011) for the SIC description “Supermarket, chain” of General Grocery

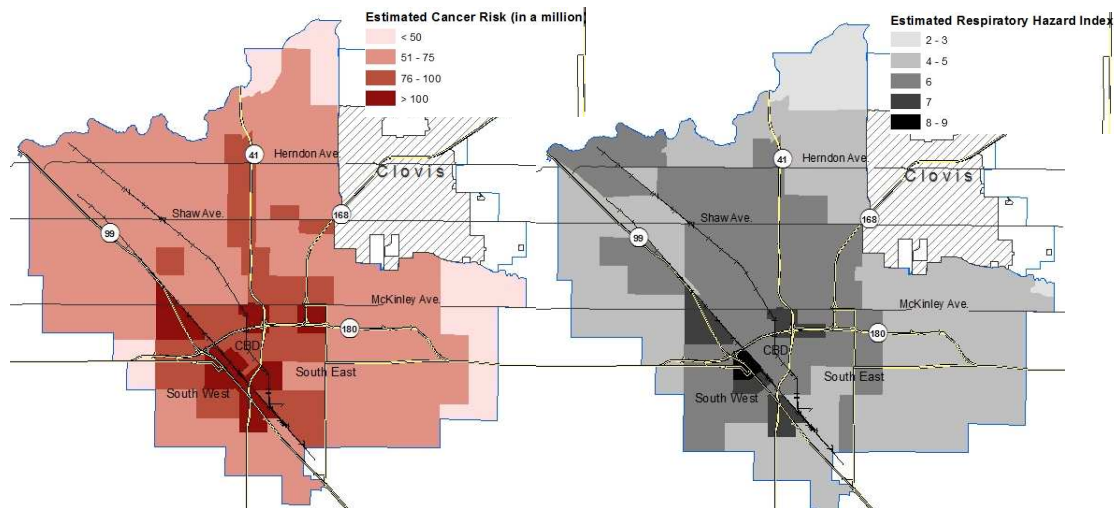


Figure 1.3 Gradient of Modeled Cancer Risks¹⁸ (L) and Respiratory Hazards (R), 2005

Source: National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment data by census tract for 2005.

¹⁷ These indicators were chosen based on their data availability and not because they represent the most adequate way to understand the distribution of risks and resources in the city of Fresno. I am unaware of an analysis that compares the relative risks between the various environmental factors contributing to community health. Such an analysis may not be feasible or informative given the countless interactions between factors. Instead I provide this list for purely illustrative purposes of a general pattern of different environments in North and South Fresno.

¹⁸ Respiratory Hazard Index – Total of the hazard quotients (HQ) for airborne toxic substances from point, non-point, on-road mobile, non-road mobile, background, and secondary formation sources. Hazard quotients are the ratio of exposure levels to a reference dose or safe exposure level. Cancer risk: Total Risk from Airborne Toxic Chemicals from all above sources.

The socio-spatial patterning of people, risks and resources has resulted in disparities in the environmental conditions of different social groups. In Table 1.4 I present population-weighted averages for several environmental indicators, including cancer and respiratory risks, tree coverage and impervious surfaces, finding that people of color and low-income consistently live in neighborhoods with higher levels of risks and less access to health resources (in this case represented by tree cover).

Table 1.4 Environmental Disparities by Race and Income in the City of Fresno

	Non-Hispanic			Hispanic	Income Level		Average
	White	Black	Asian		Below Poverty	High Income ^{***}	
Average Lifetime Cancer Risk* (per 10,000)	2.8	4.1	3.5	3.6	4.0	2.5	3.3
Average Respiratory Hazard Ratio*	4.4	5.1	4.8	4.9	5.0	4.2	4.6
Tree Canopy** (% of land area)	2.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.3	3.6	1.8
Impervious surface** (% of land area)	43.6	46.3	46.3	46.7	49.6	37.5	45.3

* National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment data by census tract for 2005

** National Land Cover Database (NLCD) 2001, compiled by Bill Jesdale, UC Berkeley (2012)

*** High income as households with income >150% Area Median Income

1.3.2 Fresno Health Disparities

Disparities in the social and physical environments are further reflected in the geographic differences of health outcomes in the city. In 2009, the rates of obesity, diabetes¹⁹, heart disease hospitalizations²⁰ and asthma hospitalizations²¹ of residents in South Fresno were 19%, 44%, 11% and 34% higher than North Fresno residents²², respectively. Furthermore, in 2011 the average life expectancy for those living south of Shaw Avenue was a full 2 years less than those living north of it. When comparing the richest zip code in North Fresno to the poor Downtown Fresno zip code, however, the difference in life expectancy was 12.1 years, and when compared to the community in the Southwest, the difference is 8.7 years²³. Many have argued that the spatial differences in health reflect population sorting, or the composition of those areas rather than the context of the areas. This context versus composition argument has been widespread, with health researchers explaining that the distinction may be a false one (Macintyre, Ellaway,

¹⁹ For 2009 (CHIS 2007), diabetes prevalence

²⁰ For 2010 (Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, 2010)

²¹ ²¹ For 2010 (Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, 2010)

²² I classify zip codes: 93650, 93722, 93711, 93710, 93720 as North of Shaw Avenue, and the following zip codes as South of Shaw: 93721, 93706, 93725, 93701, 93702, 93703, 93727, 93728, 93704, 93705, 93726

²³ Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (2012); “Life Expectancy Varies by ZIP Code in San Joaquin Valley” as reported and mapped by Yeung (2012)

and Cummins 2002). Given data limitations and the scope of my research, I do not separate out the contextual versus compositional influences on health outcomes in Fresno²⁴.

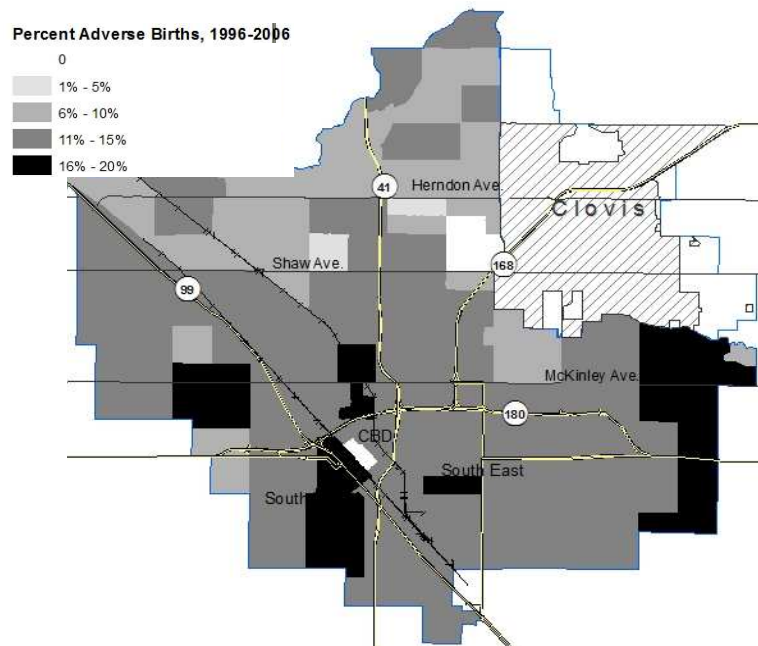


Figure 1.1.4 Percent of Births that are Adverse* by Census Tract, 1996-2006

* Adverse births include preterm births and low birth-weight births

Source: California Department of Public Health, compiled by Bill Jesdale, UC Berkeley, 2012

1.4.3 Healthy Land Use Planning in Fresno

Fresno is experimenting with a number of place-based interventions from both inside and outside of government and with both explicit and implicit health goals. Here I describe the three efforts that are the object of my study: The Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, The General Plan Update, and the Building Healthy Communities Initiative.

In 2009, the City of Fresno launched two major efforts to curb sprawl and spawn urban revitalization through its General Plan Update and Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan. Both will contain explicit wording about goals and actions to attain better health for city residents sprinkled throughout the plans and highlighted in the plans' respective health sections. The Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan was initiated as part of the Mayor's strategy to de-concentrate poverty in Downtown Fresno and to revitalize the surrounding neighborhoods through the implementation of a form based code and associated policies. This, along with streamlined development, is intended to entice developers to invest in the city's southern neighborhoods, increase the economic mix of the neighborhoods, and upgrade the infrastructure and amenities to create a more vibrant, mixed-income, walkable and healthy environment. The General Plan Update is Fresno's effort to reign in sprawl and instill Smart Growth principles in Fresno's development future with more accessible and amenity-rich neighborhoods. Through

²⁴ There is, however, an abundance of research that has shown that place has a significant and independent influence on health, even when controlling for population characteristics (e.g., race and income). For excellent reviews, see Kawachi and Berkman (2003) and Ellen, *et al.* (2001)

infill development and an overhaul of the City's zoning code, the City aims to create compact and diverse neighborhoods that are conducive to community health.

Simultaneous to the launch of these planning efforts, the California Endowment, a statewide health foundation that has been a key funder to many of the regions environmental health programs, began to fund community-based organizations to engage in the City's planning efforts as part of its Building Healthy Communities initiative. Through community capacity building and empowerment, the Building Healthy Communities Initiative seeks to reduce health disparities in South Fresno and change the "policies and systems" of land use to ensure a more equitable future. Together these three efforts represent a sea change in land use planning and politics in Fresno, where, and as quoted by the City Councilman at the beginning of this chapter, health is become key to all of the discussions.

1.5 Methodology

This research is based on over a year's worth of ethnographic fieldwork in Fresno in which I embedded myself in the planning activities around the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, the General Plan Update, and the Building Health Communities efforts. Although I spent 10 months from February to November of 2011 living in Fresno, my engagement did not start nor did it end during this period. My observations from afar and from periodic visits began in the spring of 2008, when I first became interested in Fresno and how different actors were framing the issues of asthma and air quality around land use planning. My engagement continued through pre-dissertation research in the spring of 2009 and continued through the writing of this dissertation, including visits to present the preliminary findings from my research to community groups and observing Fresnans' participation in professional conferences outside of Fresno²⁵.

While in Fresno, it was my goal to fully immerse myself into the social and professional lives of residents, activists and planners. I did this by living with Fresnans and frequenting local restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and recreational centers. More importantly, I embedded myself in public life by attending numerous meetings hosted by the local government agencies and community groups. For a period I attempted to more fully immerse myself into the City's bureaucracy by occupying a desk in the Planning Department and attending internal planning meetings with the Department of Downtown and Community Revitalization. It was challenging to maintain an air of objectivity while being physically located in a City department, however, especially when I realized that many people outside of government in fact believed I worked for the City of Fresno. Therefore, I remained without an organizational home for the rest of my research.

This research represents an extended case study design, in which the methods of in-depth interviews, content analysis, and participant observation were employed. Specifically, I used three data collection methods: 1) semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 35 key informants selected purposefully from different groups including planners and city staff, elected officials, community based organizations, foundation staff, real estate developers, religious leaders, and

²⁵ I attended and observed Fresnan's participation in the PolicyLink Equity conference in 2011 and the New Partners for Smart Growth conference in 2013.

residents; 2) content analysis of planning documents, newspaper articles, minutes from public meetings, as well as materials from community groups and other organizations; and 3) participant observation of the three planning processes, attending workshops, public hearings and internal meetings with planners. For the Building Healthy Communities initiative I was a participant observer of multiple organizing meetings, public events and research meetings between community groups and public officials. In addition to the formal interviews, I participated in countless informal conversations with key informants in relationship to the two local planning efforts and the Building Healthy Communities organizing efforts. All formal interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Observations from meetings and informal conversations were captured in field notes that I transcribed at the end of each day. All field materials were coded for key themes around issues of the environment, health, and equity and analyzed using the Atlas.ti software.

My research uses an interpretive policy analysis approach to make sense of the data collected. Through this method I build an interpretation of events from my own observations and from participants' own interpretations of what went on in different circumstances, paying particular attention to discrepancies between words and acts and to the silence or exclusion found in their rhetoric and actions (Argyis and Schon 1974).

1.6 Overview of the dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is structured around my four research questions outlined in Section 1.3 and proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2 I establish the institutional and organizational precursors that have shaped the present day social and spatial distribution of environmental risks, resources and power in Fresno, contributing to present day health inequities. Although there are many forces at play in the production of these inequities, I focus my analysis on the practices of planning and land use decision-making through the lens of racial, sociopolitical, and economic theories. I find evidence supporting all three sets of theories, especially the racialized land use practices of suburbanization and decentralization, which have reinforced segregation and inequality in the city. The City's organizational culture, which has privileged technological fixes and the elite interests of the growth machine while dismissing community concerns, has reinforced these inequalities. Finally I show that the location of noxious industries in neighborhoods of color and low-income did not result from the absence of an organized constituency or from unjust procedures, but rather due to the inequitable distribution of power that participation in planning procedures were incapable to counter.

In Chapter 3 I turn to the emerging Environmental Justice and Public Health movements of the 21st century that have attempted to reverse Fresno's trajectory of sprawl and inequality by framing environmental and health inequalities around land use planning. I then show how the Building Healthy Communities initiative seeks to provide a master frame around these and other social justice efforts to promote access to health resources and a reduction of risks in Fresno's southern neighborhoods. I show how the land use framing, although originating from Foundation funding the initiative, has served to transform primarily service providers into activists. The lack of land use expertise at the start of the initiative, which coincided with the launch of the City's land use planning efforts, however, led to a broad agenda that was framed largely within the Smart Growth and New Urbanist frames of the planners.

Chapter 4 outlines the Smart Growth and New Urbanist approaches to health as embodied by Fresno's Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan Update. In contrast to the Building Healthy Communities initiative, the Healthy Planning frame deployed by planners and city officials operates with a pre-defined repertoire of physical designs and interventions to create healthy places while avoiding issues of social justice. Despite efforts by consultants and the Building Healthy Communities initiative to incorporate policies to promote the reduction of risks and ensure access to resources for the poor, City leadership has avoided sticky social justice issues by limiting the scope of the plan to the built environment.

In Chapter 5 I analyze the distribution of power and the role that community engagement in land use planning can play in the achievement of substantive policy outcomes. I find a clear differentiation between the desire of community groups to re-distribute power and influence policy outcomes with that of planners who treat participation as more informative and constituency building practices. Although leadership matters greatly for the frequency and nature of these interactions, planners see their roles as policy entrepreneurs and advocates of specific planning technologies such as form based codes rather than advocating for equity. Consequently, community engagement is used by planners as a way to promote the Smart Growth Agenda, and when conflict arises over questions about who will have access to upgraded, healthy neighborhoods, concerns are dismissed and discounted, leading to further frustration on the part of community groups and planners alike.

In the concluding Chapter 6, I review the empirical findings of the dissertation and discuss their implications for both planning theory and practice. I end with a set of observations for the emerging field of Healthy Planning and also for the specific institutional and organizational context of Fresno and San Joaquin Valley communities.

Chapter 2 Planning and the Production of Race, Place and Environmental Health Inequities

On the evening of March 24th, 2011, I attended a meeting of the Concerned Citizens of Southwest Fresno. In an elementary school classroom, forty residents of Southwest Fresno gathered to discuss the City's proposal to enter into an abatement agreement with a meat rendering plant that had been the source of odor nuisances and environmental justice struggles since the 1950s. Environmental justice lawyers and activists explained the details of the proposed agreement to the Concerned Citizens, which stated that in exchange for the implementation of certain plant upgrades, the City would forego its enforcement duties of the land use regulations that the plant was violating.

An older African American man responded "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that the City is telling west-siders that the plant is above the law. This agreement doesn't speak to our concerns. The City has met with the plant over and over, but not us. The City just doesn't take us seriously. They think we're a bunch of complainers." Another resident interjected, "All of the undesirable things are here. We've become the dumping grounds. The stuff is already here, so they think they can just dump more. Our position is for us to get the plant to move. Why don't they move it to North Fresno?" One of the lawyers responded, "Yes, I agree, but you have to understand that poor neighborhoods have very little leveraging power. The city doesn't want them – they would be a service burden with almost no extra tax revenue whereas the Northern neighborhoods actually produce money for the city. Plus the City makes money from the plant. So they're never going to do that. Getting them to move the plant to North Fresno is not really an option."

I observed exchanges like these regularly during my year in Fresno. Residents, especially of Southwest Fresno, felt they had been unfairly burdened with the city's unwanted land uses. They felt powerless and believed the City was more concerned with balancing the budget than serving the needs of South Fresno residents. How did Fresno get this way?

In this Chapter I investigate the historical decisions and processes that produced the current landscape of social, spatial and environmental inequality in Fresno, which I reviewed in Chapter 1. I do this by exploring the historical moments that created and reinforced the segregated spaces, which have served to isolate the poor and people of color in polluted, industrial, and disinvested neighborhoods. In addition to the general patterns of growth and development, I study the specific deliberations around one of the city's most enduring and notorious environmental injustices: that of the meat rendering plant in Southwest Fresno.

What Explains the Production of Environmental Injustices?

Scholars have identified a wide range of practices that can fall under the wide umbrella of the field of planning²⁶, in the production of environmental injustices. Paul Mohai and coauthors

²⁶ It's important to acknowledge here that not all disparities in health outcomes result from planning or place. However, planning does play an important role in shaping the built and social environments, which have been shown to significantly contribute to health and its distribution as I discussed above. It is beyond the scope of this

(Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts 2009) grouped the arguments into three categories: economic, sociopolitical and racial explanations²⁷. Economic explanations refer to the argument that industries seek to maximize profits and reduce costs and thus site facilities where land and labor are cheap. The minority move-in hypothesis, which fits into this category, claims that depressed land prices around industrial facilities make housing cheaper and thus attract the poor (Been and Gupta 1997). Research, however, has found this hypothesis to be either untrue or not the dominant process influencing the co-location of industry and communities of color and low-income (Manuel Pastor, Sadd, and Hipp 2001). The urban growth machine concept, developed by Logan and Molotch (2007) in their book *Urban Fortunes*, describes the institution shared by government, industry and others that values unlimited growth as the answer to most of society's ills. Research on "urban growth machines" have found city regimes to privilege business interests at the expense of the public and environmental health in the search for raising city's tax base (Roberts and Toffolon-Weiss 2001). This, in addition to the concept of fiscalized land use, in which public decision-making on the use of land is made on its potential to generate government revenue (Lewis 2001), help to explain both the direction of the City's growth and the abandonment and disinvestment in low-income neighborhoods.

Sociopolitical explanations of the production of environmental injustices include arguments that industry and government follow the path of least political resistance and thus choose to site noxious facilities in neighborhoods with least amounts of social capital, or highly educated, organized, networked and vocal residents that will actively resist such decisions. Finally, racial discrimination²⁸ emphasizes the discriminatory outcomes of seemingly race-neutral decisions, bringing the legacy of historical discriminatory actions into focus. Other scholars argue that contemporary racism in the form of white privilege allows people to move to more desirable neighborhoods (Tiebout 1956), thereby reducing their exposure to harmful environments and perpetuating racially unequal outcomes (Williams and Collins 2001; Pulido 2000).

Through this investigation into Fresno's planning history I find support for many of the economic, sociopolitical and racial theories explaining the production of environmental injustices, including the role of the growth machine as well as market dynamics that have depressed land values in South Fresno, making these neighborhoods more affordable to low-income populations. I specifically find similarities to Laura Pulido's study of environmental racism, where she found that white privilege through the processes of suburbanization and decentralization enabled affluent whites to distance themselves from both noxious land uses and low-income communities of color in Los Angeles (Pulido 2000). In addition, I find that the

dissertation to examine the myriad factors that influence health. Instead I focus on planning's contributions as a way to understand the systematic ways that unequal environments are created and maintained.

²⁷ As noted by the authors, Mohai et al. (2009) these explanations are not mutually exclusive, due to the interSectionality of the various factors. Therefore, they state "Despite the difficulties of sorting out and pinning down the factors that may result in racial and socioeconomic disparities in the distribution of environmental hazards, the above explanations, at the very least, help identify the range of possible factors that may account for disparate outcomes" (p.416)

²⁸ Scholars have differentiated between four types of racial discrimination: internalized, interpersonal, institutional and structural. Internalized refers to individual beliefs such as stereotypes, interpersonal refers to implicit bias between individuals, institutional gets at the bias in policies and practices in a school, government agency, etc. and structural racism refers to the dynamic, cumulative racism among institutions that makes it durable (powell, Cagampang Heller, and Bundalli 2011). For the purposes of this research, looking at land use planning institutions, I mostly focus on structural and institutional forms of racism.

City's organizational culture that privileged technological solutions and dismissed public concern and input in decision-making processes has led to the current landscape of environmental health injustices and community distrust of government.

This Chapter is divided into three Sections. In Section 2.1, I explore the early beginnings of the city that established the blueprint for racial/ethnic segregation and forever marked Southwest Fresno as the site of poverty and pollution. I outline the zoning practices used to create and maintain this segregation and the early establishment of the norms rationalizing the co-location of poor people and industry. Finally, I show that the location of noxious industries in neighborhoods of color and low-income did not result from the absence of an organized constituency, but rather the lack of power to influence decision-making processes.

In Section 2.2 I explore the efforts to reform South Fresno and to even out the playing field with the sprawling Northern neighborhoods in the 1960s and 1970s with Urban Renewal, Model Cities and comprehensive land use planning. Despite good intentions, however, I show how government efforts ultimately reinforced rather than disrupted the social, spatial and environmental inequalities in the city. Furthermore, I show that despite current allegations that poor communities have never been organized enough to counter sprawl, Fresno has a rich history of public participation brought about by the Model Cities program in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, public participation was unable to halt the city's Northward sprawl due to the organizational culture of the city government that has consistently privileged growth and technical solutions over citizen concerns.

Finally, in Section 2.3 I track the modern face of social and spatial inequalities fuelled by undemocratic decision-making and deference to developer's speculative interests. Although numerous efforts and countless rhetoric have claimed to want to balance out the city's growth and revitalize the Southern neighborhoods, I show how the capitalist system of fiscalized land use has enabled further sprawl and distancing of the city's affluent and white population from the poor and polluted South, resulting in Fresno turning into the city with the highest concentration of poverty in 2005.

2.1 “The other side of the tracks”: Fresno’s Racial and Ethnic Segregation, 1880-1940

“H. G. Wells says that the most remarkable thing about the foreign born in America is that we do not know he is in our midst. This generalization does not hold so far as Fresno is concerned. A large number of these people live ‘across the tracks,’ in the so called ‘foreign quarter.’” --
Commission of Immigration and Housing of California (1918) *Report on Fresno’s Immigration Problem*, p.7

Fresno has always been a segregated city. Homesteaders and land speculators populated the town in the late 1800s soon after it was designated a stop for the Southern Pacific Railroad and settled on the eastern side of the tracks (Clough 1984). Chinese immigrants, who were leaving the defunct gold mining towns to build the railroad tracks and work in the farm colonies, joined the white settlers and were confined to the western side of the tracks. An article in Harper's Bazaar of 1886, describes the social isolation experienced by the Chinese:

“Separated from the main part of Fresno ... is the Chinese quarter. Its isolation tells the story of a peculiar people who tenant it and of the feeling of social ostracism entertained toward them on the one hand, and their own unconquerable clannishness on the other.”

Henry Bishop (1882) “*Southern California*” p.867

By 1918 it was estimated that nearly half of Fresno’s population was foreign born (State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California 1918). As the city grew and attracted Japanese, Mexicans, African Americans from the South²⁹, Italians, German-Russians, and Armenians, among many other nationalities, they too were confined to the Southwest corner of the city, or the “Westside” as it was often referred, where 40% of the population lived³⁰. According to the *Report on Fresno’s Immigration Problem* of 1918, the Westside was highly differentiated racially and ethnically:

“North of Chinatown are the Mexicans and still farther North the Negro quarter, while South and west are situated the German-Russians, Armenians, Italians and other European groups. The Southern Pacific tracks constitute the racial ‘Pale’ of the city. With few exceptions the Armenians are the only racial group, which has succeeded in breaking through this barrier and has established itself in the better residential Section of the city. The other nationalities seem to be content with their situation and in the cases of the Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Italians and Negroes have established quite compact communities with their own shops, restaurants and hotels and their own churches.”

State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California (1918), *Part I: The Armenians*, p. 1-2

Although described as natural phenomenon in historical accounts, the segregated city was actively maintained in Fresno’s early years by racialized violence and discriminatory real estate practices. In an article on the formation of Fresno’s racial segregation, Ramon Chacon reported on early agreements among White residents and real estate agents not to sell, rent or lease land east of tracks to the Chinese, that were later extended to the other “undesirable” racial and ethnic groups that were seen to contaminate “the good” neighborhoods on the east of the tracks (Chacon 1988). This pertained not only to residential uses, but to businesses as well. A letter to the editor of the *Fresno Republican* in 1889 told the account of a restaurant on the east side of the tracks that was sold to a Chinese owner:

“The transfer of the restaurant gives the Chinese an inroad on this side of the track, the very point our citizens have fought against from the beginning and in which they have been successful until the present transaction. The People are determined to keep the Chinamen on the west side of the track and if the law cannot restrain the Chinamen in their determination, the consequences may not be so pleasant.” (“Mongolian Usurpation: A Restaurant on Front Street Sold to Chinamen – White Neighbors Enraged.” 1889)

²⁹ Farmers at the time were vociferous about the relative benefits of Chinese, Japanese, Mexican and Black farm laborers, indicating both active recruitment of each and the racist beliefs behind views on their relative advantages. For instance, in an editorial on February 22, 1888, of the *Fresno Republican* titled “Mexican Labor Recommended,” the author stated that “The Mexican is a more contented being than the colored man, and more likely to remain in their employer’s service, whereas anyone who has had any experience with colored labor knows how uncertain and inefficient it is. Another important point is the wages question and the writer is sure that point is in favor of the Mexican who is satisfied, will work more steadily and for less remuneration than is his colored competitor.” Similar editorials and articles can be found in the late 1800s for Chinese and Japanese laborers as well (Marcussen 2009).

³⁰ According to the *Report on Fresno’s Immigration Problem*, in 1918 there were 5,000 Armenians³⁰, 5,000 Russians-Germans³⁰, 2,000 Italians, and 2,000 Mexicans, 1,000 Japanese.

Not all immigrants were consigned to live on the other side of the tracks, however. Northern Europeans, Danes, Swedes and Norwegian immigrants lived to the North and east of the tracks and as the Armenian community sold off their farms and became more affluent, they too occupied the other side of the tracks. It wasn't without active resistance from the White American residents, however, and the Commission on Immigration and Housing reported that Armenians who broke the "pale barrier" paid two to three times the market rate for houses in the "nicer" neighborhoods (State Commission of Immigration and Housing of California 1918).

2.1.1 Planning for Environmental Inequalities: The General Plan of 1918

As the city grew, it mainly did so away from the Westside, growing to the north and east in the direction of the neighboring town of Clovis. By the time of its first land use plan in 1918, this residential pattern was firmly established. The plan, which served to encode the existing conditions of the segregated city and protect land values, naturalized the industrial district of the city to the southeast of the Central Business District. This area (Figure 2.1, indicated in black) was deemed the most appropriate for industries due to prevailing winds from the northwest so that smoke, dust and odors could be blown away from the "natural" residential districts to the North (Cheney 1918). In addition, the industrial district's proximity to the railroad tracks, which ran from NW to SE, provided ideal trade accessibility.

Following the growing use of zoning and land use planning, the 1918 plan argued for the strict separation of uses, especially those of industrial land and "good residential" land. Although the plan called for the prohibition of housing in industrial areas, it noted that:

"the problem of congestion of population is closely related to the location of the trades and industries. Employees working long hours at low wages can neither afford the time nor the money to live far from work. Fresno wants no slums and cannot afford to put any hampering influences on industries; but this zone ordinance can provide adequate housing areas adjacent to the factory areas." (Cheney 1918)

Thus, not only were ethnic groups consigned to live in the Westside, but affordable housing for the working classes were, from the city's early beginnings, rationalized for the south and southeastern quadrants of the city. In addition to the congestion of population, the plan also noted the lack of urban amenities in the southern parts of the city:

"The existing park system is hardly effective or fair – at present there are no parks on South side of city where congested industrial populations reside. These are the people who most need a good park for breathing, recreation and relief from more sordid labor and surroundings." *Ibid*

This limited account gives a glimpse into the unequal environmental conditions experienced by residents in the southern, industrial and congested neighborhoods. On the one hand, such environments were explained by the need for low-income housing near work opportunities. On the other hand it was acknowledged that the lack of amenities in these neighborhoods negatively impacted the residents – a condition that continues today and is again being acknowledged by planners, as I will discuss in Chapter 4.

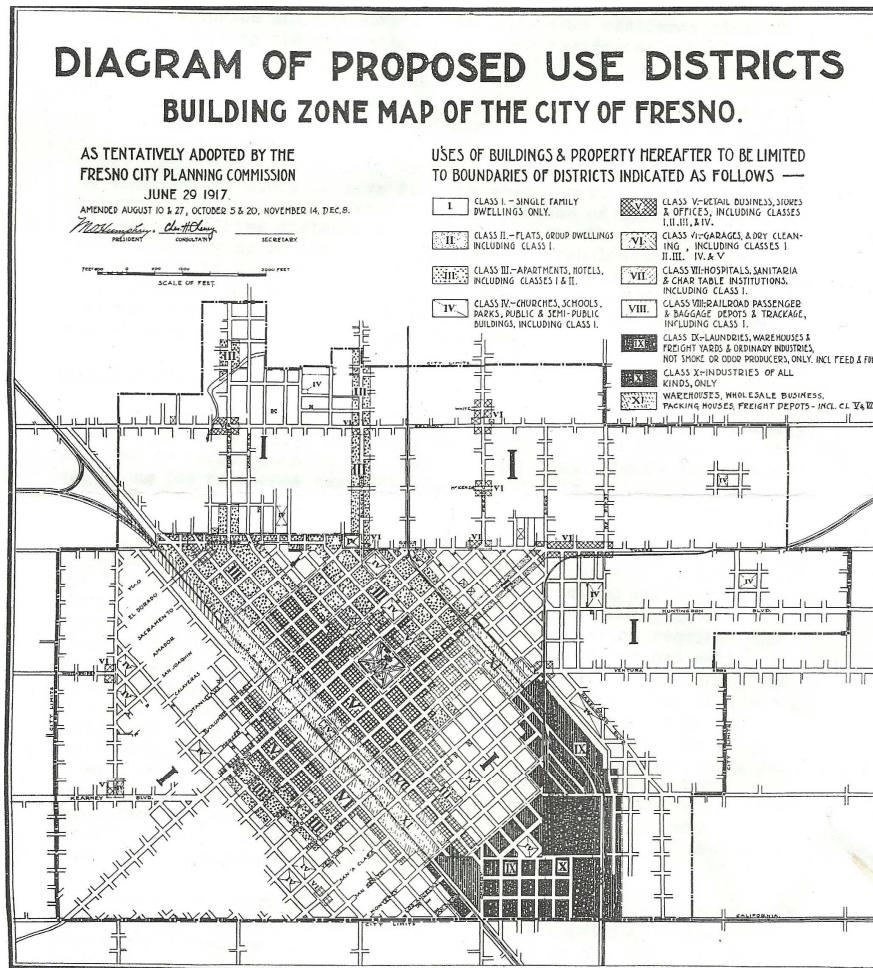


Figure 2.1 Fresno’s 1918 Land Use Map

Source: *General Report on Progress of a City Plan for Fresno to the Fresno City Planning Commission* (1918), p.X

Zoning Legend: Class I – Single Family Dwellings Only; Class II – Flats, Ground Dwellings including Class I; Class III – Apartments, Hotels, Including Class I&II; Class IV – Churches, Schools, Parks, Public and Semi-Public Buildings, Including Class I; Class V – Retail Business, Stores and Offices, Including Classes I-IV; Class VI – Garages & Dry Cleaning, Including Classes I-V; Class VII – Hospitals, Sanitaria & Charitable Institutions, including Class I; Class VIII – Railroad Passenger & Baggage Depots & Trackage including Class I; Class IX – Laundries, Warehouses & Freight Yards & Ordinary Industries, Not Smoke or Odor Producers, Only Including Feed & Fuel; Class X – Industries of All Kinds, Only; Class XI – Warehouses, Wholesale Business, Packing Houses, Freight Depots including Classes V & VII.

2.1.2 Redlining, exclusionary zoning, and the reinforcement of segregation

The survey and report for the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) of 1937 provides another detailed account of the degree of neighborhood segregation as well as the use of zoning and deed restrictions to preserve property values and exclude people of color and the poor. In 1937 the city was 90% White, with Native Americans and Mexicans comprising 5.4% of the population, Asians 3.6%, and African Americans 1.6%. Grading each neighborhood A, B, C or D, the redlining report outlined the financial attractiveness of each and noted that insurance companies restricted their loans to A or B rated neighborhoods. As it described,

“the Fourth grade or D, areas ... are characterized by detrimental influences in a pronounced degree, undesirable population or an infiltration of it. The properties are very cheap in construction, some of them likely to be shacks, usually old, and likely to be owned or tenanted by an undesirable and unstable population or the area is blighted by a specific detrimental influence

such as railroad yard, with their attendant industries, giving off unpleasant odor in the direction of this area, etc.”

James Helming (1936) *Report of a Survey in Fresno, California for the Division of Research and Statistics, Home Owners Loan Corporation*, p. Section I: Explanation

The report described neighborhoods D4 and D5, the “colored areas” on the Westside (Figure 2.2), inhabited by Japanese, Chinese, Negroes, uneducated Italians races, Mexicans, uneducated Germans, and Russians, as having little uniformity in its building, little pride of ownership, and no deed restrictions to protect properties. In addition to being inhabited by “undesirable” population, land values in the Southwest were further depressed by the downward slope of the land from North to South, and the continual risk of flooding.

Of particular concern to HOLC was the stabilization of A and B areas and methods to inhibit the spread of undesirable populations into them. The use of zoning and deed restrictions to keep out the “undesirables” in these areas was clearly delineated. In the desirable “Fig Garden” neighborhood just beyond the Northern edge of the redlining map, for instance, the homes on half or full acre lots were:

“sold under careful deed restrictions as to race, and there is a minimum cost requirement of \$5,000. All new structures must be single family residences, there may be no temporary building on the back of the lots, and each residence must have a set-back of at least 50 feet.”

Ibid, Section II: Security Area Description, p.5

Another newer subdivision, given a B rating, to the east was described approvingly as having “racial and set-back restrictions and also requires an average of 800 square feet for new structures” (*Ibid*, p.9).

Neighborhoods that did not contain deed restrictions or strict zoning standards were classified as C or D, indicating transitional or risky investments. For instance, adjacent to the industrial areas of the Southeast was an Armenian and working-class neighborhood inhabited primarily by fruit packers, laborers and few white-collar workers. The proximity to industry in addition to the absence of deed restrictions lowered the land value and was rated a C by HOLC.

Thus, Fresno’s early years were characterized by strict racial and ethnic social controls that discouraged the mixing of populations, which was reinforced with land use controls of deed restrictions and zoning regulations. Although the city’s first land use plan attempted to restrict incompatible uses, it simultaneously rationalized the adjacency of poor communities to these neighborhoods, a practice that would be repeated continuously throughout the city’s history.

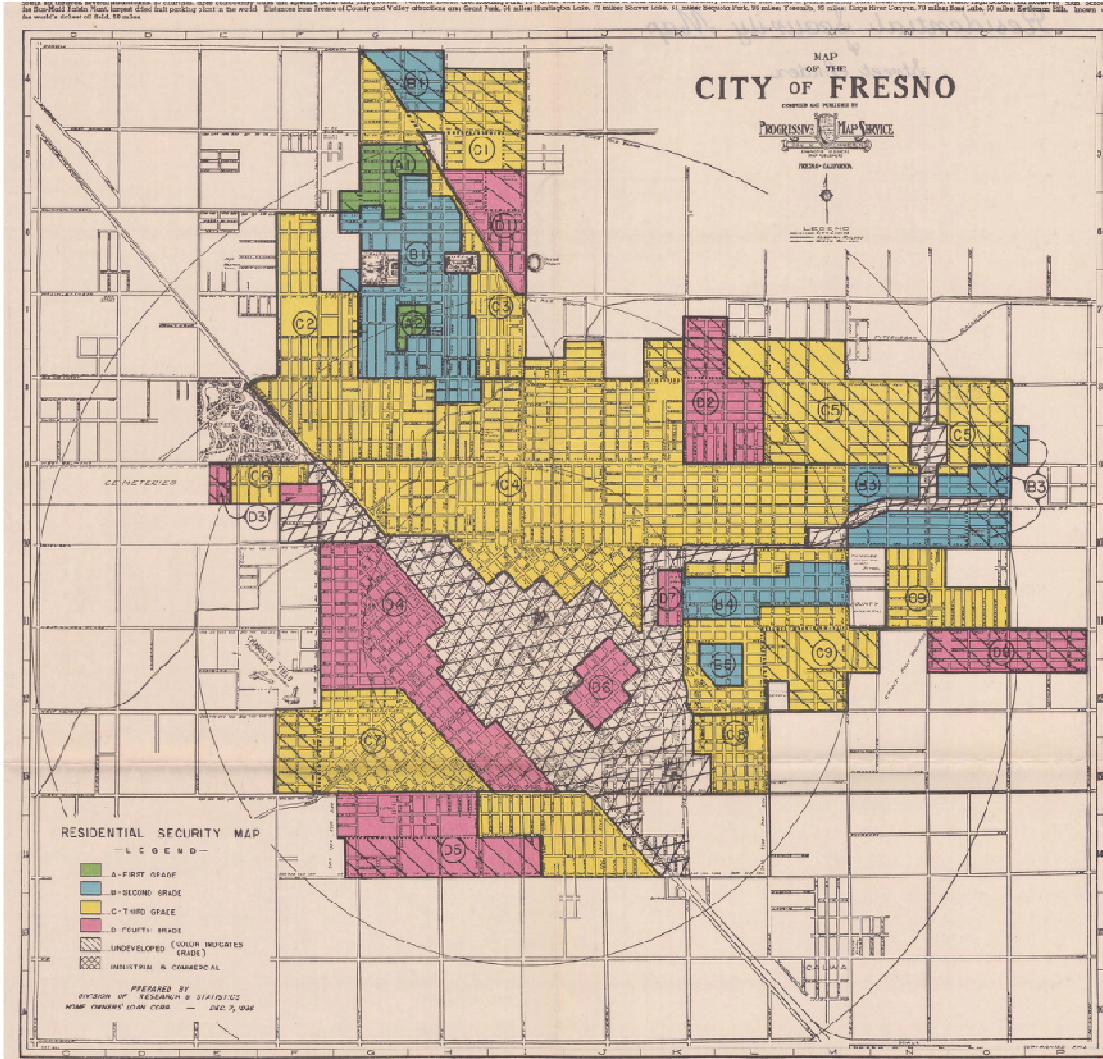


Figure 2.2 Redlining Map of Fresno, 1937

Source: James Helming (1936) *Report of a Survey in Fresno, California for the Division of Research and Statistics, Home Owners Loan Corporation*, p.1 Map Legend: Green –A– First Grade; Blue –B– Second Grade; Yellow –C– Third Grade; Red –D– Fourth Grade; Left Slash – Undeveloped; Cross-Hashed – Industrial and Commercial.

2.1.3 Siting of Noxious Industries: The Case of the Meat Rendering Plant

The above accounts, although providing a glimpse into the city’s land use decision-making rationalities, do not fully capture the extent to which Southwest Fresno and later Southeast were imagined as dumping grounds for the city’s undesirable land uses. To better understand this dimension, here I begin the description of one of Fresno’s most enduring environmental justice struggle – that of the meat rendering plant in the Fruit-Church industrial park on the Westside.

The Fruit-Church industrial area sits just south of the legend of the Redlining map, on the block between California Avenue to the North, South Fruit Avenue to the east, Church Avenue to the South and South Hughes Avenue to the west. Later to become known as the Fruit-Church redevelopment area, the area was mostly rural, undeveloped land in the County until the 1940s, surrounded by farms, a slaughterhouse, and the City Dump to the east. According to the 1940

Census, approximately 200 people lived within a one mile radius of the block, consisting of low-income White, Japanese, African American, Armenian, Italian, and Chinese farmer families (US Census Bureau 1940). In 1947, The Sierra Meat Company filed for a permit with the county to open a meat packing plant and slaughterhouse on the corner of Fruit and Church Avenues. The area was less than half a mile from the city limits, and included an adjacent elementary school and the Edison high school. The area was zoned for agriculture at the time, so Sierra Meat applied for a special use permit³¹ to begin operations.

Documentation from the public hearing reviewing the special use permit application on June 18th, 1947 revealed both the company's arguments of the sanitary nature of its proposed use as well as opposition from local residents. Of particular concern was the preponderance of existing noxious land uses in the area. Residents argued that the impacts of the plant needed to be considered together with the existence of the other local land uses, which were degrading the neighborhood. As one resident argued:

“I think the area should be cleaned up a little bit and made a respectable portion of Fresno. The question is whether you want to turn it into a dirty back yard of Fresno or clean it up and make it a suitable outskirts of Fresno.”

Minutes from the County Planning Commission Hearing, June 18th, 1947

The hearing minutes also revealed that resistance to the plant was not simply the complaints of a few residents concerned about the locally unwanted land uses in their backyard, but an organized community that sought to better their neighborhood conditions. As expressed by one landowner, “The citizens of West Fresno have formed a citizens’ organization to better their conditions and one of the things they want to do is get rid of the City Dump.”³²

In nearly complete dismissal of resident concerns and over-confidence of the ability of industry to self-regulate, the commission, in the end, agreed with the adequacy of the site for the slaughterhouse and in resolution #210, granted Sierra Meat the special use permit. In the minutes, the commission noted that despite the existence of locally opposed residents “most of the housing in the immediate area is of a low grade nature and was established despite the existence of the City dump and [another] Meat Company.”³³ Thus, the commission rationalized the location of the meat packing plant due to the low-grade quality of the nearby homes, and implicitly the people. According to Hal Tomakiam, who worked as a city planner for the County in the 1960s, it was unsurprising that such uses be located in the Westside. The practice of locating noxious industries in poor neighborhoods with minority residents was common practice and consistent with what he described to me as the Sector model of urban development:

“The auto wrecking yards, the meat packing plants, and all of that, push them to West Fresno where the minorities lived. That’s okay. That’s okay. Put the dump down there. Put everything nasty down there and everything else will go in the other direction.”

Hal Tomakiam (2011)

Fresno County Planner (1958-1968) and Fresno City Planning Commissioner (1969-1975)

One concession the commission did make, however, was to prohibit fat rendering activities on the site, perhaps as a way to limit the odor nuisances of the plant. However, in 1953 the

³¹ Similar to a Conditional Use Permit

³² Report of Public Hearing Held June 18, 1947 for Special Use Applications Number 8 and Number 9

³³ On June 20, 1947, the Fresno County Planning commission

Planning Commission approved variance 377 allowing the slaughterhouse to build and operate a fat rendering plant on the site. Community opposition re-emerged and when nearby residents argued about the additional hazards the rendering plant would pose, the owner responded that rendering would in fact reduce the hazards associated with the slaughterhouse wastes. When asked if the variance would be materially detrimental to the public welfare or to adjacent properties, the plant owner stated that it would not create any odors due to its modern technology (Sierra West Co. 1953). In response to residents' complaints during the commission hearing to consider the variance, the plant manager even argued, "We were there three years and these people came afterwards" (City of Fresno Planning Commission 1974), contradicting the accounts from the 1947 hearing minutes and the 1940 Census that residents already lived in the vicinity of the plant.

Thus, the initial siting controversy in the Fruit-Church industrial area highlights an early struggle between residents, the city and industry over environmental justice. Through the practice of privileging business interests over community concerns and the over-confidence in industry's ability to self-regulate, city planners were complicit in turning the area into an environmental hazard zone. The socio-political nature of the siting, however, is less clear as it appears that the community was organized and in opposition to the plant. However, business interests prevailed and the community clearly lacked the political power necessary to prevent the actions.

2.2 Postwar Sprawl, Redevelopment, and Community Organizing

Prior to WWII, the residential growth trend towards the north and away from the industrial, congested and poor Westside and Southeast had been firmly established. Nevertheless, growth had stalled following WWI and little development existed North of McKinley or Dakota Avenues, four miles North of Downtown. This quickly changed as returning servicemen, aided by the Federal Housing Administration mortgages and the Veterans Administration loan guarantees arrived on the housing market following WWII (Planning Resources Associates 2008). The first major subdivisions quickly cropped up in the County at the Mayfair development³⁴ to the north of the city. The trend for county suburbanization was fueled, according to former Fresno Planning Director, George Kerber, by builders who quickly realized that they could reduce costs by developing in the county which did not have a building code (Kerber 1986). Much of the development in North Fresno was in fact permitted in the county and later annexed into the city. Nevertheless, many developments, such as Mayfair, resisted annexation, and thus began Fresno's unique form of affluent isolation. Instead of the exclusionary practices of incorporation into separate cities like other suburbs across the country, affluent communities in Fresno have instead continued to be unincorporated, thereby creating county islands that are completely surrounded by the city (Figure 1.1) and inhabited by many of the area's most affluent residents³⁵.

³⁴ An FHA and VA housing development that included the City's first suburban shopping center located near an intersection

³⁵ In a 2007 report by PolicyLink and California Rural Legal Assistance (Rubin et al. 2007) it was estimated that there were 24 county islands in Fresno County, and 118 in the entire San Joaquin Valley. How many of these were actually affluent islands, however, was not identified as the report was focused on identifying poor unincorporated communities.

Postwar development also brought Fresno its first indoor shopping center in the Mayfair development, which quickly spelled the end for Downtown as the retail hub of the San Joaquin Valley (Rehart 2000). As developers were pressuring city hall to permit the construction of more shopping malls in the growing suburbs, downtown boosters fought to keep retail in the city center. Following the opening of Manchester Mall on Dakota and Blackstone Avenue³⁶ in the mid 1950s, in 1965 developers from Santa Barbara approached the City to rezone a parcel of land on Shaw Avenue for a regional shopping center (Wills 1968). The politics surrounding the rezone enabling the development of the Fashion Fair Shopping Mall foreshadowed the free market, elitist and exceptional decision-making that would come to dominate Fresno planning and development throughout the 20th century. When the rezone came to the planning commission, the Planning Department recommended that the city follow the general and community plans that called for residential land use in the area. In addition to opposition from local residents, downtown businesses, the League of Women Voters, and others, two groups from West Fresno also argued against the development based on the existing plans, the fact that it would serve only one segment of society and its potential impact on sprawl. The planning commission and then the city council, however, voted in favor of the developers. Arguing that good development standards were more important than rigid zoning, the Council decided against the restriction of free enterprise almost dismissing the purposes of zoning completely (Wills 1968).

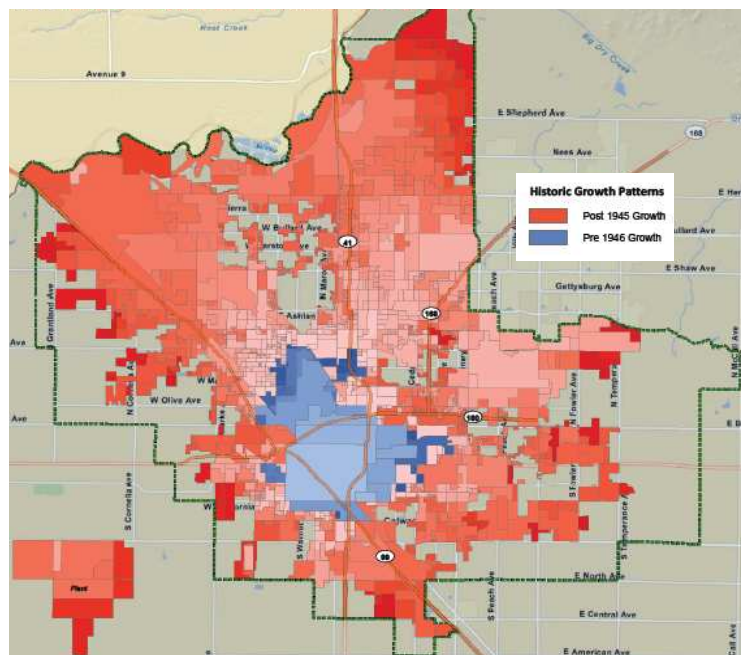


Figure 2.3 Expansion of Fresno’s Urban Area, Pre (blue) and Post (red) 1945
 Source: City of Fresno (2011c)

Retailers were not the only institutions to abandon Downtown Fresno for the North. In 1958 Fresno State College moved to Shaw Avenue. In 1973, following several rezone denials and the clear opposition from the City Planning Department, downtown interests and anti-sprawl groups, City Council approved the move of St. Agnes Hospital out to Herndon Avenue (Fresno City Council 1972). Growth to the North was further enabled by public investments in the Cornelia

³⁶ The city’s primary N-S retail corridor

sewer line extensions. In 1972 the \$10.8 million dollar project that included a sewer trunk line along Herndon Avenue (two miles North of Shaw Avenue) came to City Council for a rezone vote, which was first dismissed due to the lack of assessment on its growth impacts (Fresno City Council 1972). Representatives from the Public Works department, however, argued that the line was needed to service the Northern Latino communities of Highway City and Pinedale as well as neighboring Clovis. Citing the contradictions in developing North and guaranteeing services in the South, then Planning Director George Kerber stated that it was not possible to provide for both North of Herndon and South of McKinley (Fresno City Council 1973). Nevertheless, growth interests prevailed and the sewer line was built³⁷.

The post-war boom was not enjoyed by all however. Restrictive covenants, racial violence, and discriminatory real estate practices maintained the racial and ethnic mix of Southwest Fresno. In 1960, nearly 98% of Fresno's African American population lived in Southwest Fresno and 70% of the Latino and poor populations lived below McKinley Avenue. In addition to upwardly mobile families, the post-war population boom included numerous low-income migrants who were unable to afford the sprawling new developments to the North and thus settled into the older neighborhoods of central and South Fresno. In 1960, Southwest Fresno was the city's only racially integrated area, whereas Southeast was mixed between Latino residents and lower-income Whites (Figure 2.4). To the further south, near the meat rendering plant, was the predominantly Black slum called "Jericho" (seen in orange) which was later demolished through redevelopment.

To address the scarcity of affordable housing in the growing metropolis, the Housing Authority built over 800 units between 1942 and 1954, almost entirely in the Westside. In addition to its depressed land values, the Southwest did not experience the resistance to public housing as the rest of the city. One historian noted that despite the need for low-income housing, real estate and private housing groups pressured the City to slow public housing construction, as they saw public housing as "socialism, a violation of American free enterprise principles and competition with private housing" (Kerber 1986). Thus, by 1960, the neighborhoods to the south of McKinley Avenue, including Southwest, Southeast and Central Fresno were inhabited by predominantly low-income residents (Figure 2.4). To the north of McKinley were predominantly homogeneously middle-income neighborhoods, with pockets of affluence in the unincorporated Fig Garden neighborhoods to the north as well as the older Fresno High area.

³⁷ One key informant even argued that the City put in wider sewer lines than they reported as a way to accommodate future growth while pacifying detractors.

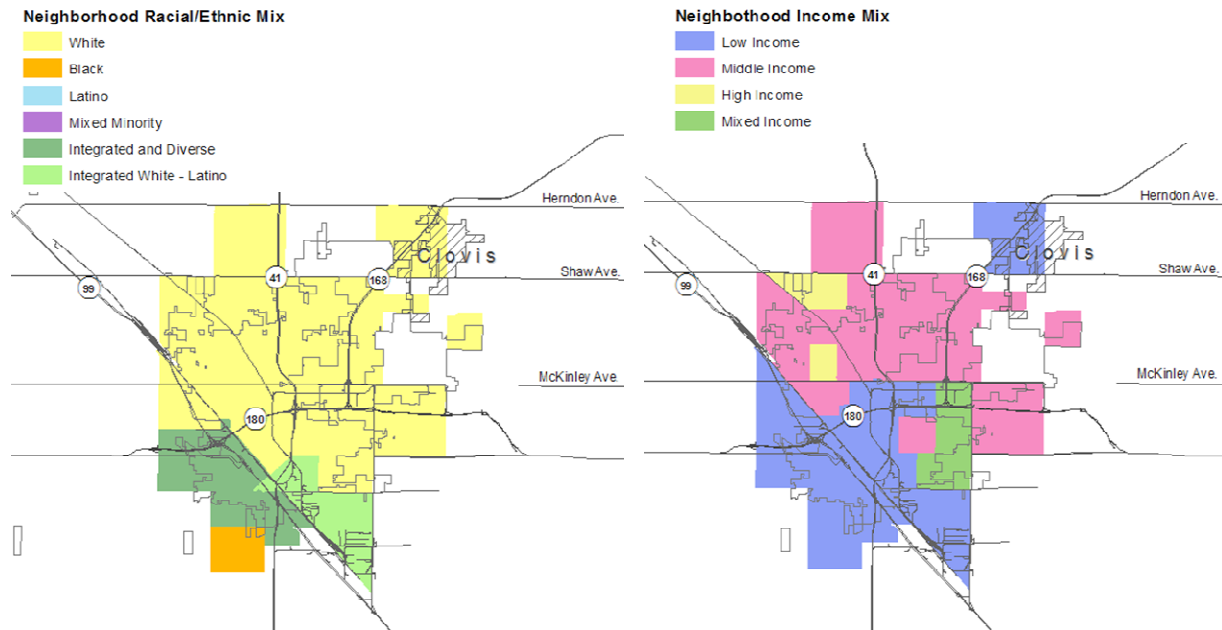


Figure 2.4 Census Tract Racial/Ethnic Mix³⁸ (L) and Family Income Mix³⁹ (R), 1960

Source: Author's calculations based on Census 1960 (File TRCT1960-comb, Tables NBT1, NBT5, NT35, NTSUP5) downloaded from SocialExplorer.com and Brown's Longitudinal Tract Database (Brown University 2012). Only census tracts with population density over 10 people/acre are colored.

In part due to the rapid suburbanization and white flight, the population in central and Southern Fresno became increasingly poor during the 1960s and 1970s. Although pockets of affluent neighborhoods existed within predominantly poor census tracts, in comparison to the rest of the city, the Southwest, Central and Southeast Fresno were considered poor neighborhoods. In 1970, the large concentration of poor families and migrant labor residing in east Fresno had prompted a study by the city and a call for public action. In a Fresno Bee article entitled *'Becoming a Ghetto: Councilman Urges Help to Solve Southeast Fresno's Problems'* the author noted the growing sentiment that Southeast was rapidly becoming another West Fresno (Anon 1971). As a key informant who lived in West Fresno in the 1960s and 1970s remarked to me, "East Fresno

³⁸ Following Rubin et al. (2007), I define integrated tracts as those having a significant White population as well as a significant population of one other race/ethnicity. Here I define significant as comprising 20% of the total population. To estimate the diversity of a tract, or the mix of race/ethnicities, I follow the methodology of Holloway, et al. (2012) and calculate each tract's entropy index. I define low diversity as those tracts where one group represents 70% or more of the population ($\epsilon \approx .95$), and high diversity if no group represents over 50% of the population and each group has at least 10% of the population ($\epsilon \approx 1.15$). Everything between these ranges I considered to be moderate diversity. Low diversity census tracts are categorized by the majority race of the population. For integrated, low diversity, I categorize the census tract as mixed white and the second largest racial/ethnic group. Finally, integrated and high diversity neighborhoods are categorized as integrated and diverse.

³⁹ I follow Galster and coauthors' (2008) methodology and combine HUD income classifications and the entropy index to categorize neighborhoods by their income mix. I first categorized families into six income groups: very low (<50% AMI), low (>50% and <80% AMI), moderate-low (>80% and <100% AMI), moderate-high (>100% and <120% AMI), high (>120% and <150% AMI), and very high income (>150% AMI). To capture the degree of income mix in a census tract I again use the entropy index to capture diversity. I define low diversity to be neighborhoods with an income mix lower than that of the city-wide income mix of that year, and high diversity as census tracts with an entropy index greater than the city-wide index. Low diversity census tracts were classified by the majority income category (collapsing the categories into 3 – low, medium and high).

was seen as the place to aspire to. North Fresno was not even on the radar. When you got out of West Fresno, and you wanted to get out, East is where you would go.” The poverty of East Fresno was seen to be advancing so quickly, that in 1973 a report came out called “Fresno’s Hidden Poverty” claiming that East Fresno had:

“been transformed through the passing of time, neglect and misuse, into an area where substantial concentrations of physical, social, economic and political problems are to be found. . .If we let East Fresno continue to decay, we can expect more burglaries, more drug abuse, and more tension between the haves and the have-nots.” (Inner City Community Action Center 1973)

Similar to the urban decline being experienced in cities around the country, the post-war period in Fresno represented a growing polarization between the upwardly mobile population to the North of the Downtown and the poor South; a phenomenon that was increasingly recognized and acted upon by policymakers around the country through the urban renewal programs and later the Model Cities programs that sought to address the urban crisis, albeit through different means. Next I trace Fresno’s experience with these Federal programs, the types of solutions that emerged to remedy the city’s socio-spatial inequality, and some of the barriers limiting change.

2.2.1 Renewing the Core

In an effort to take advantage of Federal Urban Renewal funding and to address the problems of “slum and blight” in the inner city, the City of Fresno created a Redevelopment Agency in 1956. Supported by the strong Downtown business interests, the Agency hired the architectural firm Victor Gruen and Associates to develop a plan for modernizing and revitalizing the city’s commercial heart (Rehart, Schyler 1984). The plan was centered on the creation of a pedestrian-oriented superblock, anchored by the commercial Fulton Corridor (Figure 2.5, #2), to lure shoppers back downtown. To reduce automobile congestion in the downtown area and increase the downtown accessibility to suburban residents, the Gruen plan called for a ring of highways around the downtown, thereby establishing the blueprint for highway 41 to the North, 168 to the Northeast and the east-west 180.

In 1961, Gruen also participated in the Redevelopment Agency’s next ventures – reforming the parts of West Fresno in the immediate vicinity of downtown. Thus west Fresno projects 1, 2 and 3 (Figure 2.5, #s 4, 5, and 6) and the Chinatown redevelopment project (# 11), were conceived. The projects determined that the blighting due to the proximity to railroads, freeways, encroaching industry and heavy traffic required the complete removal of single-family residences. The solution was to expand the industrial areas and rehabilitate retail commercial areas (Fresno Redevelopment Agency 1961). The projects were seen by the Redevelopment Agency to be largely successes, increasing the tax base by a factor of 2.5 in project one and 14 times in project two. Over 92% of the demolitions under Urban Renewal were single-family homes and 56% of new construction was multi-family for low or moderate-income groups. The reduction of single-family units, however, was later believed to have displaced the middle income families of the Southwest to other parts of the city, creating further segregation in housing types and income groups in the city (City of Fresno 1984).

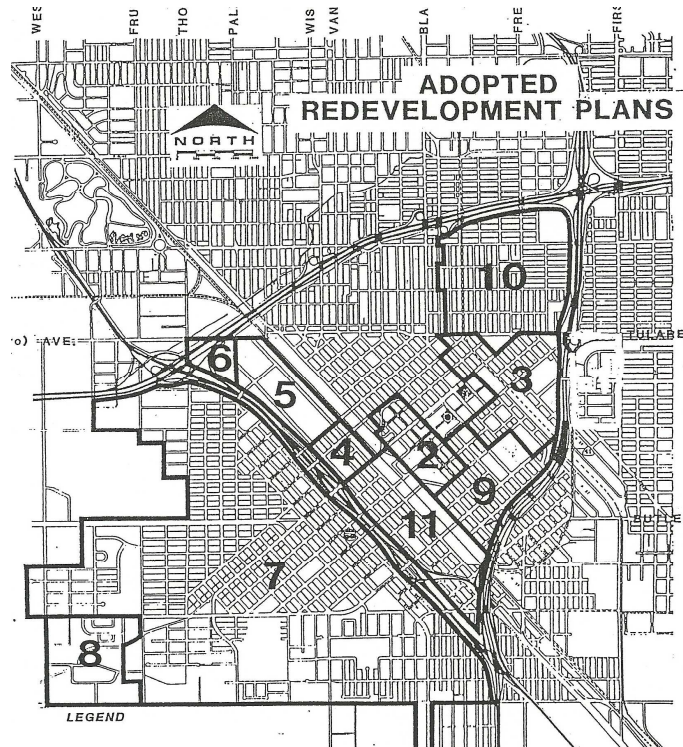


Figure 2.5 Redevelopment Areas

Legend: 2. Central Business District Project, 3. Mariposa Project, 4. West Fresno I Project, 5. West Fresno II Project, 6. West Fresno III Project, 7. Southwest Fresno GNRA, 8. Fruit-Church, 9. Convention Center Area, 10. Jefferson Area, 11. Chinatown Expanded, 12. Fresno Air Terminal Area

In 1967 the redevelopment agency began its study of the rest of Southwest Fresno (Figure 2.5, #7), which it later designated as the General Neighborhood Renewal Area (GNRA). It was declared that the area was in need of substantial investment to “reach a level of environment considered ‘desirable’ by members of the community.” The primary indicator of decline used in the redevelopment study was the concentration of the poor and minority populations, which was compounded by a deteriorating housing stock and infrastructure. The 1968 plan declared “the current socioeconomic conditions were a result of “racial concentration” (Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall 1968). However, the plan noted, it would be “unfair to link this neglect directly to the racial composition in the GNRA. A direct consequence of the racial composition, however, has clearly been a weakening of the “voice” of the GNRA when scarce community resources are distributed” (*ibid*). The containment of people of color was also attributed to the low stock of affordable housing elsewhere:

“To be quite frank, there is nowhere else for the GNRA residents to go... residential opportunities are quite limited for low and moderate income households.” *Ibid, p.2*

Although the decline of Downtown Fresno had previously been blamed on the sprawling suburban developments to the North, officials had yet to link sprawl to the living conditions found in Southwest Fresno. The GNRA plan was the first attempt to link the two, reporting that, “the GNRA has not been improved to the levels of the rest of the city because the strong growth trend to Northeast has forced a heavy commitment of public funds to these new neighborhoods for infrastructure and associated facilities. In addition, lower incomes in the GNRA have minimized the formation of local assessment districts for block improvements, alleys and local drainage.” *Ibid, p.2*

Of primary concern of the residents, however, were the continued environmental hazards from their industrial neighbors. Acknowledging the concern, the Redevelopment study included a subSection on the Fruit-Church industrial area where it declared:

“Immediately in the GNRA vicinity lies an existing heavy industrial zone. The uses operating in this area (consisting of animal product processors) have been called out by the GNRA community and local planners as an irritating and significant obstacle to area renewal. Meat processing plants are a source of odor and psychological rejection of the adjacent area by knowledgeable individuals. During the preparation of this plan, recommendations were made to remove the plants through urban redevelopment, however the costs were exorbitant. The community will continue, rightfully, to demand amelioration of the industrial intrusion into their residential and commercial neighborhoods.” *Ibid*, p.131

Thus, cost was cited as the reason for drawing the GNRA boundary to exclude the Fruit-Church area, despite community concerns (a scenario which will repeat itself in contemporary planning, as I will describe in Chapters 4 and 5). The plan did, however, recommend that the industrial uses in the area should be “frozen” and that buffers should be created between residential and industrial land uses. These actions, it was declared, “should result in at least partial alleviation of the problem and set the stage for long-run voluntary or mandatory abandonment of this area by the industrial operators” (*ibid*, p.131).

2.2.2 Unearthing Community Voice: Fresno Becomes a Model City

When the Federal Demonstration Cities Act (DCA) of 1968 came into effect, Fresno already recognized the poverty and inequality of the city, especially as represented by the conditions in West Fresno. Thus, when it applied to enter into the newly created Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Model Cities program, in 1967, it nominated West Fresno as its model neighborhood. West Fresno was identified as hosting the largest environmental deficiencies and land use conflicts in the city due to the high concentration of junk yards, slaughter houses and open ditches next door to residential neighborhoods (City of Fresno 1967). In its application, City leaders attributed West Fresno’s ills to the sprawling new subdivisions to the Northeast leaving a ring of urban problems around the central city, where Southwest was located.

The imbalanced growth of the city was one of the main concerns of the Model Cities application. As sprawl was blamed for the conditions of the Southwest, the Model Cities program would seek to mitigate these impacts by expanding the opportunities for mobility – both from the Model neighborhood outward through the metro area and the reverse. A related goal was to attract new development into the area in order to redirect and balance the metro pattern of urban growth, which was bypassing West Fresno. In addition to the spatial goals of the program, Fresno proposed to increase employment by training and hiring “para-professionals” and to increase services by decentralizing them into community centers to make them more accessible to the community (City of Fresno 1967).

A key component of the Model Cities program, and one that would have an enduring effect on Fresno’s governance structure was the “maximum feasible participation” of the community that the DCA mandated. In Fresno, this was achieved through the creation of a Neighborhood Council in the Southwest whose elected representatives sat on the Model Cities board, which

served as the decision-making body of the program. The Neighborhood Council was arranged into eight committees⁴⁰ that were staffed by a program developer and community aide. In addition, the Neighborhood Council received technical assistance from various city and County Agencies. Not only did the Neighborhood Council serve as the participatory organization for the Model Cities program, but it also functioned as the official citizen participation organization of the Redevelopment Agency, the Economic Opportunities Commission, and the Fresno Unified School District. Through this structure of capacity building and technical assistance, the program aimed to achieve a Model Neighborhood where residents could develop the experience and confidence to effectively analyze the problems of the neighborhood and to develop plans to solve them through a united front, which would ultimately lead the Model Neighborhood to become an “integral part, economically, politically, socially and physically of the entire Fresno community.”(City of Fresno 1969)

During the next phase, Model Cities Planned Variations (MCPV), the program was expanded to a second Model Neighborhood in Southeast Fresno and then to the rest of the city. To extend the MCPV program to the rest of the city, some geographical division of neighborhoods was needed. However, since the elimination of the Ward system in 1918, City Council had been elected at large and there was no system of districts or other geographical system to fall back on. Therefore, together with the Model Cities staff, the City analyzed socioeconomic and physical data indicators in search of community boundaries. The city was thus divided into six areas that were considered to be relatively homogeneous. What this analysis found confirmed commonly held beliefs on the division between the haves and the have-nots, and identified McKinley Avenue, two miles North of downtown, as the city’s “Mason Dixon” line (City of Fresno 1973).

Following the identification of the neighborhoods, an intricate system of neighborhood councils was developed and the Fresno Community Development Commission was established to act as the intermediary between the Neighborhood Councils and City Hall. Ultimately, the Commission played a key role in bringing neighborhood issues to City hall and deciding the allocation MCPV resources. When the MCPV program ended in June of 1974, the City decided to continue the citizen engagement structure established under the program. The Commission, however, was transformed into an advisory-only role. According to then Chief Administrative Officer Hanley,

“no longer would the citizens be predominantly involved in project development and allocation of funds. Rather, the activities would now focus on advising on program proposals made by the City and other agencies and analyzing community needs and developing problem solutions by working with the appropriate city departments and community agencies.”(City of Fresno 1974b)

Thus perhaps the biggest accomplishment of the Model Cities program in Fresno was the establishment of community participation as a key element in the City’s governance structure.

⁴⁰ Youth, seniors, crime and delinquency, recreation, education, employment, economic development, health and welfare, and housing and physical development. These committees correspond to 7 of the 10 elements of a comprehensive program as identified by HUD: a) rebuild and revitalize large slum and blighted areas; b) expand housing, c) expand job and income opportunities, d) reduce dependence on welfare payments, e) improve educational facilities and programs, f) combat disease and ill health, g) reduce the incidence of crime and delinquency, h) enhance recreational and cultural opportunities, i) better access between homes and jobs, and j) improve living conditions.

Nevertheless, the program was defunded in 1978⁴¹. Furthermore, the disbanding of the Neighborhood Councils and Community Development Commission in 1981 indicated a growing ambivalence if not adversarial relationship between City leadership and the citizenry, as I will further explore with the specific case of citizen participation in the 1974 General Plan update.

2.2.3 Sprawl and the 1974 General Plan

“The process of suburbanization has resulted in economic, racial, ethnic and social segregation throughout the metropolitan area, coupled with physical blight, high government costs and inequitable distribution of public wealth throughout the metropolitan area.”

Fresno's 1974 General Plan (p.2)

As part of its annual review in 1972 (Price 1972), regional HUD manager James H Price declared that the Fresno's multiple community, redevelopment and general plans were in conflict, lacking any vision or direction on growth and failing to coordinate with other agencies including the County in its plans and actions. Furthermore, Price found, the role of comprehensive planning or citizen participation were completely absent from its land use policies. In order to proceed with HUD funding of the City's multiple redevelopment, housing and MCPV activities, the City was required to rectify its planning deficiencies with a policy on urban growth and comprehensive planning with the public participation elements that, although present in the Model Cities program, were found to be absent in the City's other renewal or housing plans.

Thus, Fresno set out to update the 1964 General Plan in 1973. With the Neighborhood Council and Community Development Commission structures in place, the City was equipped with a trained and mobilized citizen organization to review and support the process. Thus, a 24 member General Plan Citizens Committee was formed in the summer of 1973 consisting of the Community Development Commission and additional members appointed from other citizens committees such as the Commission on Aging and the Youth Commission. By the fall of 1973, the Planning Department had developed the following four general plan alternatives:

Alternative 1: Limited growth/Dominant Center - reinforcing the city's commitment to downtown development through infilling the existing urbanized areas.

Alternative 2: Continuation of existing trends - the no action option, in this alternative growth would continue to occur to the North and neighborhoods would continue to develop as relatively homogeneous areas in terms of physical, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition.

Alternative 3: Suburban emphasis – the building industry alternative, which would accommodate all new growth in the Northern Fringe of the city and would eliminate zoning.

Alternative 4: Balanced Growth/Multiple Centers – this alternative was seen as the compromise between the philosophies of alternatives 1, 2 and 3.

While the planning staff was analyzing its alternatives, the citizen's committee was busy preparing its own alternative. On the committee was an architect who proposed the densification around the Blackstone Avenue – the major commercial corridor that ran from downtown to the Northern stretches of the city. The idea behind the citizen committee's plan was to increase access while containing development to the already urbanized areas. Following a vote, 12 of the committee members supported this option, while 5 selected among the original 4 alternatives.

⁴¹ One key informant argued that the de-funding of the program was due to the city's reduced budget with the onset of Proposition 13.

With the newly passed California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, general plans were now subject to environmental review. Equipped with State guidelines for its implementation (Sep 1973), the Planning Department prepared an environmental review. The review included an analysis of the physical and socioeconomic impacts of the plan using indicators such as ethnic separation or income segregation, educational achievement, and voter participation as a measure of alienation. Following the subjective scoring of the impacts of each alternative, the analysis found alternatives 1 and 5 to have the best impact on the physical and social environments of the city (City of Fresno 1974a).

At the start of the planning commission hearings that began in the New Year (1974), the Citizens Committee presented its analysis and preferred alternative. What followed, after a series of 5 meetings, was a consistent voice from members of the Citizens Committee and Neighborhood Councils supporting Alternatives 1 or the Committee's Alternative, numbered 5. For instance, Phillip Chin, former Neighborhood Council Chairman for Central Fresno, said Alternative 1 or 5 best fulfilled the concerns of their community and downtown area. He felt the population losses and deterioration of South Fresno could be halted by attention to infill of vacant parcels and a limit to fringe growth (City of Fresno Planning Commission 1974).

On April 9, 1974, the Planning Commission voted to support the staff's recommended plan Alternative #4. The citizen's committee and Neighborhood Council members expressed deep dissatisfaction with the Commission's dismissal of their Alternative and endorsement of the multiple centers plan, calling it a "direct affront to the entire process of citizen participation." This was further articulated in a letter sent to the City Council by the San Joaquin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, which read:

"Fresnans have a magnificent opportunity within their grasp to prepare and adopt a General Plan that truly responds to the physical, psychological, and social needs of all the people in the metropolitan area. The emphasis is on all, because we feel that the... alternative [endorsed by the planning commission] really serves best only that part of the community on the Northern fringe of the [City] (those who now live there, those who can afford to buy there, and those who will develop the new areas there) and that the residents on the older parts of the community ... will be the losers... The overwhelming citizen concern did not appear to be a consideration. The motion to recommend [the chosen] Alternative four did not even include any discussion of its merits. The heralded citizen participation seemed to be totally ignored. If we do not really want to solve the problems, let's be honest with ourselves, change our goals and go on in the same old Fresno fashion: low density and inefficient and unrestrained outward growth with no attention to the existing community." *San Joaquin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Memo submitted by to City Council, May 31, 1974*

Despite protest from the Citizens Committee, Neighborhood Council members and the general public, on June 6th, 1974, City Council voted 4-2 to support the Commission's ruling of Alternative 4, the Balanced Growth Alternative. In their dissent, Councilwoman Mack and Councilman Villa expressed disappointment in their fellow Councilmen and argued that Alternative 4 neglected the city's existing residents, provided little for the revitalization of downtown, and failed to address itself to the Southeast or Southwestern parts of the city. Thus the city continued down the path of northwardly sprawl.

2.2.4 Redevelopment of the Fruit-Church industrial area

Although housing, infrastructure and environmental quality of the Southern neighborhoods emerged on the agenda of the Model Cities program and during the debates surrounding the city's growth in the 1970s, the established pattern of industrial activity in the South was seldom debated. What did re-emerge on the agenda, however, was the issue of the noxious industries in Southwest Fresno, including the meat rendering plant, through advocacy on the Neighborhood Council as well as in the deliberations surrounding Redevelopment planning. As part of the Model Cities program, the Fresno West Development Corporation was created and set out to attract businesses and create jobs in the Westside. One of the Corporation's projects was to address the community's concerns surrounding the Fruit-Church Industrial Park, which it intended to clean up in order to attract new industrial users and create employment opportunities for area residents⁴².

By 1971 the Fruit-Church block was occupied by the slaughterhouse and meat processing facility, the rendering facility, two agricultural areas, an abandoned sand pit, junkyards, a dog food manufacturing facility, several "dilapidated residential structures," and a gasoline station. In the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) the population relevant to this project was that of the entire Southwest area. The EIR determined that there were 22,000 residents in Southwest Fresno, which had declined by 1000 people since the 1960 census. At that point 66 percent of the population in Southwest was African American and 25% were "Mexican-American." Half of the population rented their homes, and 40% had incomes before the Federal Poverty Level (EDA 1971).

In collaboration with the redevelopment agency, the MCPV program, and the private sector, the Fresno West Development Corporation prepared a plan to invest in land purchases, clearance and site improvements such as access roads, water lines, sewer lines, waste treatment facilities, lighting, curbs, gutters, and utilities. To cover the estimated \$800,000 cost, the team decided to designate the land a redevelopment area and use Tax Increment Finance monies once the land was annexed into the city⁴³. In order to make the project feasible for tax increment purposes, the Redevelopment agency decided that the Northern half of the block, part of which was owned by the Housing Authority containing over 100 public housing units, and the other Section owned by the School District, needed to be included in the plan. The developers and industrial users, however, were dissatisfied with this proposal, expressing their concern over the proximity between industrial and residential uses because of:

"the potential problems the high density residential land pose when placed in close proximity to heavy industrial uses. While we feel the industrial park can be cleaned up and made a desirable neighbor, there are some problems to residents which cannot be eliminated, i.e. truck traffic and around-the-clock operations."⁴⁴

Jaffra Richart from Lance Kashian Corporation to the city Controller dated April 22, 1971

⁴² The FWCD estimated that additional industrial tenants would result in 215 more jobs for the Model Neighborhood.

⁴³ Resolution 71-128. Resolution 71-331 – Notice of proposed annexation to city of uninhabited territory. Notice given that on Dec 2, 1971 council will hear written protests against annexations made by any person owning real property within said territory. The resolution declared that the desire to eventually annex the land was to facilitate "orderly and planned growth" of the city and to make municipal services available to the land.

⁴⁴ Letter from Jaffra Richart to James Williams, Sep 7, 1971

Thus the industrial users acknowledged that the redevelopment project would be incapable of fully eliminating the existing environmental hazards. City officials, on the other hand, were more optimistic and in subsequent environmental assessments completed for HUD⁴⁵ and the Economic Development Administration (EDA), they claimed the project would completely remediate the environmental hazards and would cause no known adverse environmental effects. At the time, in fact, the Environmental Impact Report stated “Because of the odors caused by their operations [the meat packing and rendering plants] were operating under cease and desist orders, which have inhibited expansion of the plant.” Furthermore, when analyzing project alternatives, the industrial park was portrayed as not only the best, but also the only option available. Without the redevelopment, the Redevelopment Agency argued, the blighted areas would continue and “the existing residents will continue to resent and reject the existing businesses and land owners.”⁴⁶

When the project came up for a vote by the City Council on September 30, 1971, it was the first public hearing on the plan. Minutes from the meeting reveal residents’ growing distrust of the City’s intentions and ability to control the nuisances:

“A resident of the area objected to the project, stating the proposal just expands the existing problem. He specifically referred to the odor problem in the area. Mayor Wills stated that the purpose of the proposal is to alleviate these problems. Mrs. Frank Whittle, area resident...stated that the present problems with the industries cannot be controlled and questioned how it will be possible to control additional problems... [the mayor] stated that the industry should not be allowed to leave the area because of the large number of people it employs... [and] all possible must be done to improve the area noting that the industries themselves are willing.”

The redevelopment project passed and in 1972 the Fruit-Church redevelopment area was created and annexed into the City. Nevertheless, community concerns continued and were a source of contention during a community planning process in 1977. Deliberations over the community plan indicated that the redevelopment project had not achieved its goal of removing the odors coming from the Fruit-Church area. A consulting firm hired to plan for the Northern half of the area in 1979, reported the following on the planning process:

“A major planning issue in the minds of residents is the degradation of the residential neighborhood environment caused by industrial uses – primarily odors, but visual and physical impacts as well. Feelings run high because of continued odor problems from existing industrial development and the knowledge that little improvement can be expected short of closing down the uses. The City’s commitment to expanding industrial use in [Fruit-Church area] has increased those concerns even though development standards aimed at preventing environmental degradation have been implemented.” *Land Systems “Fruit-Church Project Area: Recommended Land Use and Site Improvements for Vacant Land Remaining”* (p.31)

The continued odor, emanating primarily from the rendering plant, further complicated the issue of what to do with the northern half of the redevelopment area. In 1979 the above-mentioned consulting firm was contracted to explore the various residential and industrial land use options available for the land. Industrial users that felt the land needed to be developed for industrial or

⁴⁵ An environmental worksheet was required for the use of Model Cities funding (1/21/72).

⁴⁶ Draft Environmental Worksheet, prepared by Model Cities Deputy Director for the Department of HUD

commercial uses for supportive services like trucking, container manufacturing or warehouses. However, according to the consultant, this was not what residents had in mind:

“Residents of the surrounding area are opposed to further industrial zoning, fearing that new uses will further degrade the residential environment through additional traffic, noise, lighting and air quality problems. Arguments that new uses can be required to mitigate these environmental effects are regarded with suspicion. In addition ... odor generation cannot be further controlled.”

Ibid., p.13

When interviewing officials and industrial landowners and city officials, the consultant concluded that:

“There was an underlying sentiment that initial industrial growth in this area was inappropriate, but that commitments made to [the area] required that remaining vacant land be developed with compatible industrial uses... Property owners are well aware of the strong sentiment among area residents against further industrial development, but feel that well-designed industrial support operations will be acceptable to local [Southwest Fresno] residents.” *Ibid* (p.18)

The transformation of the Fruit-Church area into a redevelopment project thus did little to quell the concerns of the nearby community. Instead, the city’s approach to lay their trust in technological fixes and to prioritize the desires of industry despite organized opposition came to represent the type of relationship City leaders had with residents of the Southwest and less affluent citizens in general, supporting the socio-political theories of the production of environmental injustices outlined in Chapter 1.

2.3 Fresno’s Demographic Transition and Neoliberal Turn, 1980-2010

“If we had any doubts about how poorly we manage our resources and plan our city, they should be dispelled. Many areas on Fresno's South end are as segregated and impoverished as New Orleans' notorious lower Ninth Ward -- although if you live and work North of Herndon Avenue, you might go years without seeing them.” (McEwen 2005)

The period beginning at the end of the 1970s into the 21st century marked one of rapid social change for Fresno. Fresno today is a city with nearly three times the population and over 2.5 times the land area than it had in 1970 (Figure 2.6). The period also saw the dramatic shift in the racial and ethnic mix of the population, from a predominately White city (88%) in 1970, to a majority minority city (30% White) in 2010, spurred by the exponential growth of the Latino and Asian populations in the 1980s and 1990s. Simultaneously the city has seen a steep rise in poverty rates; in 1980 16% of the population was living below the poverty level, whereas in 2010 over a quarter of the city was living in poverty.

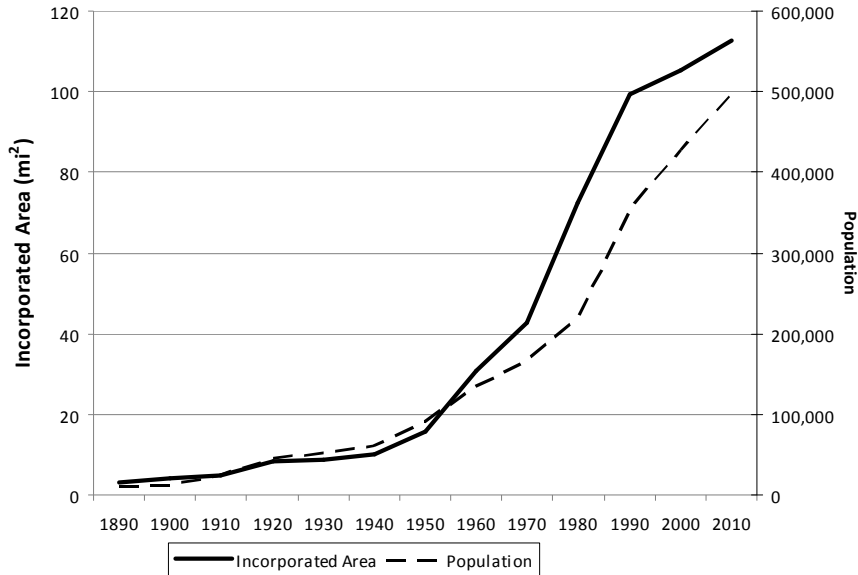


Figure 2.6 Growth of the Urbanized Area

Source: City of Fresno GIS data, “Annexation History”(City of Fresno 2010b)

This dramatic social shift in Fresno was accompanied by rapid physical changes as well, albeit ones that followed the well established pattern of Northward growth. White flight to the Northern reaches of the city, as well as east to the neighboring city of Clovis, accelerated in 1970s and again in the 1990s (Figure 2.7) and by the 2000 census many of the previously integrated neighborhoods of central Fresno were now either mixed minority or predominately Latino.

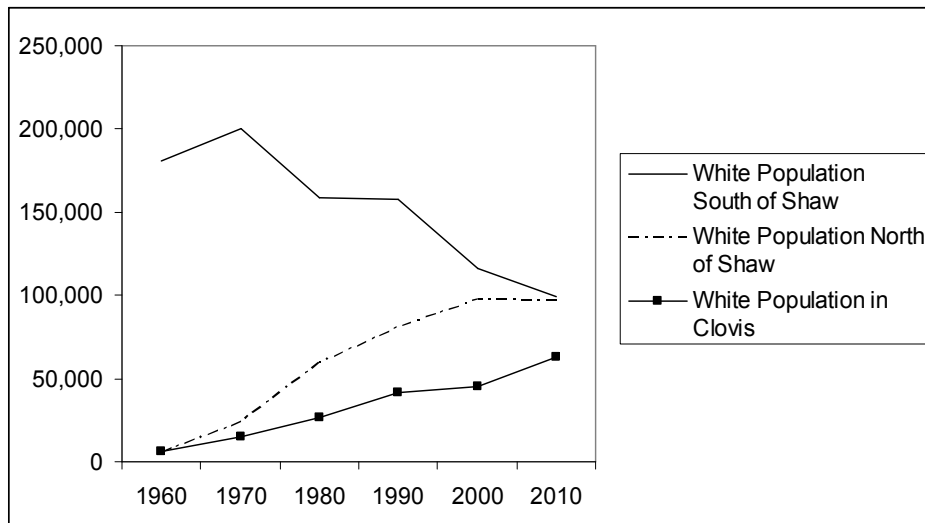


Figure 2.7 White Population South of Shaw, North of Shaw and in Clovis, 1960-2010

Source: US Census, 1960 – 2010 from SocialExplorer.com

Between 1960 and 2010, the neighborhoods South of Shaw Avenue lost 66,766 white residents (-40%), whereas North Fresno gained 33,660 white residents (+54%) and Clovis gained 23,983 (60% growth).

The flight northward was not isolated to the native-born White, affluent community however. Following the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 many White ethnic groups began to flee the Southwest, converting what were once racially integrated neighborhoods, into majority Black or mixed minority. As the Latino population began to grow, drawn to the Valley for its agricultural economy as well as existing social networks, African American Fresnoans began to move out of Southwest and into Southeast, Central and more Northern neighborhoods (e.g, Fresno High and Bullard). As a result, Latinos began to constitute a greater proportion of the populations of the Southwest. This pattern continued in the 1980s, when the refugee Hmong population began to arrive and populated Central and Southeastern neighborhoods converting them from biracial (White-Latino) to integrated and diverse (see footnote 38 for definitions) (Figure 2.8).

According to US Census in 2010, Fresno’s population was 47% Hispanic, 12% Asian, 8% Black and only 30% White. Consequently, most of the city’s neighborhoods have now become racially mixed. Nevertheless, in 2010 there were 10 census tracts, where 7% of the city’s population live, that have remained predominantly White, indicating continued segregation of White communities despite the vast desegregation of most of the city’s neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, including the unincorporated Fig Garden and Van Ness extension to the North and the more recent Woodward Park/Copper River developments to the Northeast, are considered some of the most exclusive neighborhoods in the city.

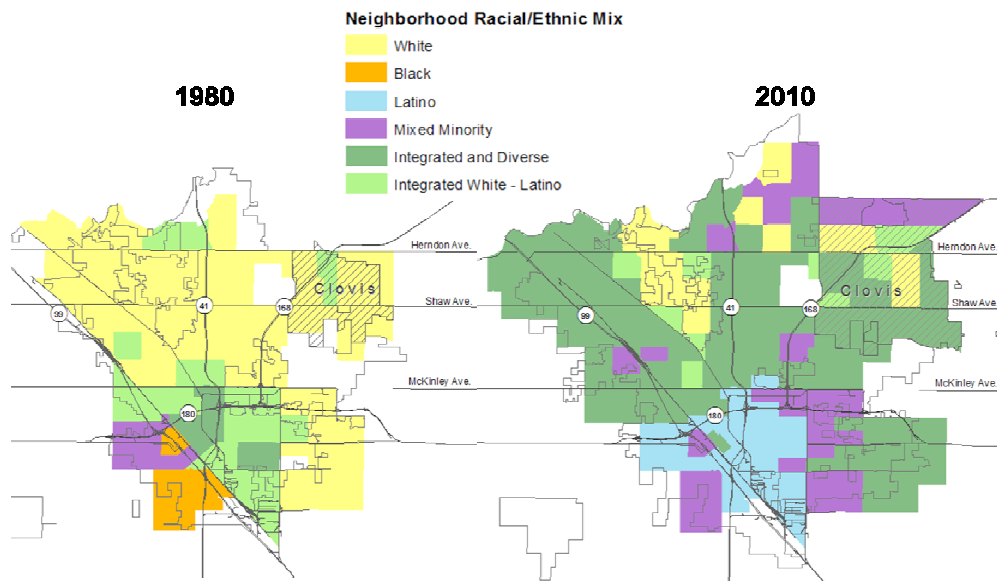


Figure 2.8 Fresno Racial/Ethnic Mix, 1980-2010

Source: Source: Author’s calculations based on Census 1980 (Table T13) and 2010 (Table P9) downloaded from SocialExplorer.com. See Footnote 38 for the definitions and calculations.

The rapid expansion of the city and abandonment of the Central and Southern neighborhoods by affluent Whites for areas north of Shaw and later Herndon Avenues in the 1970s and 1980s led to a threefold increase in the percent of affluent families living in majority affluent census tracts (Figure 2.9). Poverty during this era also became a growing problem and one with a spatial complexion. The growth in poverty rates in the 1980s corresponded to a simultaneous concentration of poor families in concentrated poverty neighborhoods (where 40% of the

population lives in poverty). By 2000 the spatial clustering of the city's poor population earned Fresno the inglorious reputation as the metropolitan area with the highest concentration of poverty in the United States based on the 2000 Census (Berube and Katz 2005).

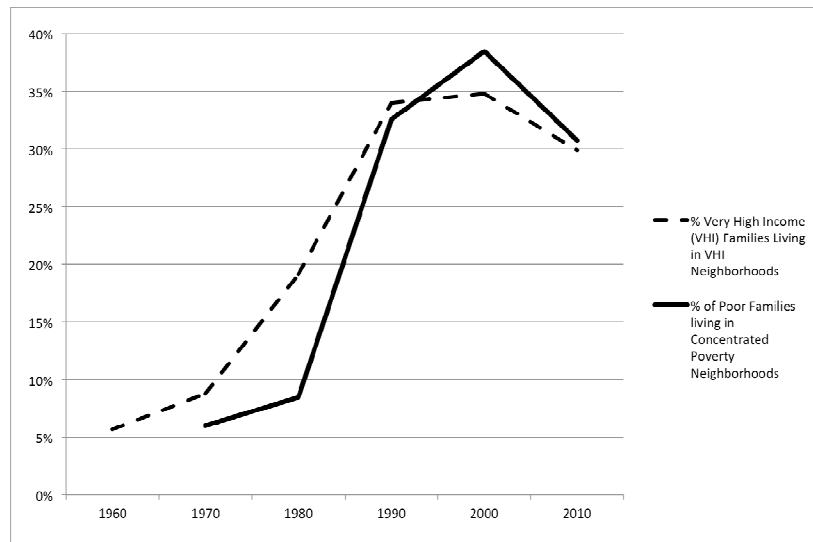


Figure 2.9 Neighborhood Income Segregation, 1960-2010

Source: Brown University's Longitudinal Tract Database (Brown University 2012) Very High Income is defined as 150% of AMI for families. Concentrated Poverty Neighborhoods are neighborhoods where over 40% of individuals have income below the Federal Poverty Level. It should be noted that the downward trend from 2000 to 2010 may be related to the smaller sample size and larger margin of error in 2010. This analysis did not take into account the margin of errors, I therefore make no claim about the statistical significance of the trend.

The large growth in the city's boundaries during the 1970s was in part due to efforts from the urban unification program to "square off the city" to provide more efficient services and annex the 23 unincorporated islands that were completely surrounded by the city. By 1984 46 square miles had been annexed (City of Fresno 1984) and by 2010 the "islands" represented less than 3% of its urbanized land and 14,000 people, albeit some of the city's most affluent residents. During a bid to annex the county islands in the late 1990s, residents were vociferous about their distrust of City politicians and distaste for higher taxes. According to one Fresno Bee reporter, "They fear that curbs, gutters and streetlights will be required. They claim city taxes are too high. They call the Fresno City Council a group of buffoons. They say developers run City Hall and will put up apartments or convenience stores next door" (Fontana 2001a).

Northward growth was further fueled by non-democratic decision-making and behind the scenes deals that led to the rapid conversion of farmland into residential subdivisions. The FBI's Operation Rezone, a 6½-year public corruption investigation, shed light into the inner workings of this system. The case was launched in 1994 when a real estate investor approached the FBI's Sacramento Office after a Clovis City councilman requested a campaign contribution in exchange for a positive vote on a rezone application. Upon investigation, the FBI uncovered a widespread practice of bribery and fraud that eased the path to rezone agricultural land uses to more lucrative residential zoning. One lobbyist became so skilled at the practice of setting up deals between officials and real estate interests that his car boastfully donned the personalized license plate "REZONE."

When it came time to decide the code name for the operation, the codes suggested by the Sacramento office, were 1) Rezone, 2) Pay Day and 3) Wild West, referring to a commonly held perception that Fresno still maintained “wide open” mentality when it came to governance (FBI Sacramento 1995). Ultimately Operation Rezone led to 16 convictions of City Councilmen, developers and lobbyists in Fresno and Clovis for fraud, racketeering, extortion, money laundering, mail fraud and income tax violations (Moore 1996; Nolte 1999; USDOJ 1998; Bier 2000).

Many claim the impact of Operation Rezone symbolic at best and the City maintained a culture of fluid land use planning marked by continual rezones. During the period 2003-2008, for instance, over 8,000 acres, or over 10% of the incorporated area, were rezoned, 80% of which went from rural residential or agricultural land uses to single or multi-family housing⁴⁷. In 2001 when then mayor Alan Autry tried to amend the city charter to require a super-majority to adopt, amend or repeal the city’s general plan, City councilmen were expectantly resistant and instead suggested that the City review the operations of the Planning Department (Fontana 2001b).

2.3.1 Setting the Stage for Revitalization and Smart Growth

Despite the planning controversies of the 1990s, when Mayor Alan Autry entered office in 2001 he began to target planning as a means to address the city’s consistent socio-spatial inequalities. He did this with efforts to revitalize Downtown Fresno and to “re-center” the city by implementing Smart Growth principles. Autry is well known in Fresno for his campaign slogan “A tale of two cities” when he called for a “city reunited” by raising the South to the same social and economic levels found in the North.⁴⁸ Autry’s main strategy for achieving a city reunited was to revitalize Downtown Fresno and upon entering City Hall he appointed a task force to assemble a vision. Among other projects, the task force articulated a vision of a revitalized Fulton mall with the reintroduction of limited traffic that would terminate in a 60 ft wide waterway with housing, entertainment and offices along a riverwalk that would “make the city beautiful” and attract wealthier residents back downtown (P. Lopez and Hostetter 2002). The vision, however, was never realized.

Another of Autry’s efforts to eliminate the “tale of two cities” was to reform the city’s land use plans, which had long been blamed for the city’s sprawl and uneven growth patterns. The City was already several iterations into a highly contested general plan update that had started in 1992 in which stakeholders debated the need to expand the urban boundary (Jim Wasserman 2000). In a 1997 draft, the plan envisioned a population of 922,200 by 2020 and an expanded boundary from 140 to 190 square miles. Although the debates about urban growth continued, it was the City’s inability to reach a tax-sharing agreement with Fresno County and the neighboring city of Clovis to the Northeast that ultimately thwarted the plan (“New Urbanism Comes To Fresno, But Regional Issues Remain” 2000).

What the general plan update process did, however, was to begin to attract the burgeoning Smart

⁴⁷ Calculation by Arnolando Rodriguez, Fresno City Planner

⁴⁸ Autry ran against Dan Whitehurst, former mayor from 1977-1985 who weathered the fiscal beating of Proposition 13 and dismantled the city’s neighborhood council system.

Growth agenda to the valley. A coalition called the Growth Alternatives Alliance⁴⁹ was formed in 1998 and presented the report “A Landscape of Choice: Strategies for Improving Patterns of Community Growth”⁵⁰. Echoing the Smart Growth mantra that was circulating the country, the Growth Alternatives Alliance advocated for more efficient use of land that would involve revitalizing the downtown and compact development.

After years of debate and study, in 2002, Fresno City Council passed the 2025 General Plan, which sought to reach a balance between the outward growth pressures and downtown revitalization. The plan directed 80% of growth inside of the city’s existing boundaries and the remaining 20% of population growth would be accommodated into the two expansions of the urban boundary – North to accommodate the upscale Copper River development and Southeast to a new town concept, that would be designed for higher densities and “green style” living, with the help of prominent Bay Area Smart Growth consultant Peter Calthorpe.

Autry’s revival of the discourse on socio-spatial inequality in Fresno was reinforced in 2005 by the Brookings Institution’s report on concentrated poverty in America’s 50 largest cities, ranking Fresno #1 for its concentration of poor people in poor neighborhoods. Building on the attention brought by the Brookings report, several local nonprofits⁵¹ convened a conference the following year titled “Worlds Apart, Futures Together.” Sponsored by the California Endowment, the event brought in several social equity leaders⁵² who laid out numerous actions to deconcentrate poverty such as workforce development, housing dispersal and inclusionary zoning. Absent from the presentations, however, were precisely the strategies the city was already engaged in: downtown revitalization, investing in neighborhood infrastructure and attracting higher income residents to South Fresno (St. John 2006).

The impact of the Brookings report on poverty discourse in Fresno, although subtle, was significant. The focus on narrowing the gap between the North and South as espoused by Autry shifted towards a concern over poverty deconcentration. And instead of shifting the policy directions of the City, Fresno’s leaders used the concentrated poverty trope to underline the pre-existing agenda of revitalizing the city’s inner core and reducing sprawl, which I will return to in Chapter 4.

2.3.2 The Fruit-Church industrial area in the 21st century

Despite Redevelopment attempts to reign in the nuisances created by the industries at the Fruit-Church Industrial Park through investments in sanitation and structural upgrades, community complaints continue into the 21st century, indicating a failure in a purely technical solution to the problem. Nevertheless, when facing continued pressure from the community, the City chose to enter into an abatement agreement and mandate more technical solutions. In this concluding Section on the Fruit-Church industrial area I show how the continued strength of the growth

⁴⁹ Composed of the Fresno Business Council, American Farmland Trust, Fresno Farm Bureau, Chamber of Commerce and the Building Industries Association

⁵⁰ With funding from the James Irvine Foundation

⁵¹ Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development, One by One Leadership and Fresno Center for New Americans

⁵² Manuel Pastor of the University of Southern California and Angela Glover Blackwell of Oakland-based PolicyLink

machine culture attempted to lift the plant outside of the law. Finally, I argue that complex administrative regulations and permitting processes have ultimately removed a layer of accountability from the municipal government in protecting its residents from environmental hazards.

As described previously, the rendering plant was permitted with a variance in 1953 to process 4,000 pounds of raw material daily. When the plant was annexed into the city and given an M-3 manufacturing zoning, it was not required to get a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), as dictated by the city's zoning⁵³. Through continued upgrades and expansions, by 1992 the plant was processing 850,000 pounds of raw material a day, and therefore its 1953 variance was no longer valid. However, when the plant sought to expand its operations, it did so through permits with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District⁵⁴. For instance, in 2003 the plant applied for a permit from the Air District to expand its operations from 850,000 pounds to 1,115,000 pounds. The request, however, was denied due to public opposition and odor concerns (Seaton 2012). When the District attempted to declare that an upgrade in 2005 would have no impact on the environment through a Mitigated Negative Declaration (SJVAPCD 2005), residents organized, writing letters to the Air District and attending hearings. The plant ultimately withdrew its application.

In 2007, the plant again applied for an expansion from 850,000 to 1,510,560 pounds per day with a Mitigated Negative Declaration, stating that "City of Fresno Planning Department Staff have determined that the proposed use is permitted within the zone and as such, no discretionary approval of the project is required" (SJVAPCD 2007). The district sent a letter to all residents within ¾ mile radius of the plant and received over 300 letters urging the District not to approve the project (Seaton 2012). The increased community pressure finally spurred the city to pull all of its historical records and found "no evidence that [the plant is] operating under authority of either a valid permit or under the City Code" (Yovino 2007). In fact, in a letter sent to the rendering plant, then Planning Director Nick Yovino, admitted to the City's previous complacency with regards to the plant:

"We must concede that historically the County and City treated your client and its predecessors as operating a lawfully existing business at the subject site. However, from what has been uncovered by both yourself and the City there is no record of your company advising of the true

⁵³ The letter from Yovino to the rendering plant stated: "The City's zoning ordinance requires a CUP for a rendering use in the subject's site M-3 zone district. Your client does not have a CUP. The only permit that the City can find and that you have offered which allows the rendering use is Variance No. 377... Under the City's nonconforming use provisions a use allowed in the County under a special permit or variance may continue but only so long as the use complies with the conditions of that permit. The County Variance is wholly inadequate to address the Public Health and safety issues that result from a rendering plan (a use which requires a CUP in the M-3 zone district) and would therefore, support actions under Section 12-405-E to revoke the permit for "good cause".

According to the City of Fresno's annexation ordinance (Municipal code 12-203) "whenever the county conditions and/or agreements are attached to property proposed for annexation...If the development is not consistent [with said agreements/conditions] it shall be considered nonconforming." The non conforming clause (12-317) states that such uses shall be discontinued five years after the date of the use becoming nonconforming. Or it may be continued but will be subject to the limitations of not being expanded or extended in any way either on the same or adjoining land and the use shall not be changed, except to a use which conforms to the regulations of the zone in which it is located.

⁵⁴ The District, which combined the 8 county level districts in 1989 to improve air quality in one of the country's most polluted air basins, regulates air pollution emissions and odors.

extent of operation and City staff ever inquiring as to what entitlements were held by your client ...and whether those entitlements authorized the ongoing operation at the subject site.”

Planning Director Nick Yovino in a letter to Darling International Inc., April 15, 2008.

In another letter sent to the Rendering plant, the City stated that the company needed to obtain a Conditional Use Permit to continue its operations. Rather than threatening sanctions or closure, however, the City offered that “within two weeks your client needs to provide additional proof that they are currently operating a legal use or they need to enter into an abatement agreement which can allow a temporary continuation of the existing uses while they diligently pursue a CUP for the current use and an additional CUP amendment for the proposed expanded use” (Yovino 2007). The draft abatement agreement, issued in early 2011 stated that in exchange for certain physical modifications such as adjusting the exhaust and ventilation systems and installing a notification system, the City:

“shall forego enforcement of its zoning and other land use laws, including the requirement of obtaining a conditional use permit” (City of Fresno 2011a)

To neighboring residents that had been applying pressure on the City and the Air District, the proposed agreement signified that the City was willing to forgive the plant for its unlawful uses and further protect them from future land use disputes in exchange for technical upgrades. Residents, who began to organize as the Concerned Citizens of West Fresno and seek legal advice (see Chapter 3), argued in a comment letter to the City that:

“The City’s inaction and plans to exempt [the plant] from zoning and land use has and will continue to have a discriminatory impact on protected classes in West Fresno in violation of State and federal fair housing and civil rights laws. (Seaton 2011)

In an area largely inhabited by communities of color and low-income, the City was unwilling to use its police powers to enforce its land use laws and instead chose to exempt the plant from such regulations. Therefore, the community began to frame the case of the rendering plant and unequal enforcement as a clear sign of environmental racism.

The enduring case of the Fruit-Church industrial area demonstrates both a lack of enforcement of land use regulations in a poor area, the complicities of government agencies in increasing nearby residents’ exposure to the hazards of the plant and at the same time privileging the plant’s rights to the land while dismissing the voice of residents. In the following Chapters I will begin to explore efforts on the part of community members to deal with the hazards of this plant both through land use planning efforts and legal action.

2.4 Conclusions

Instead of a smoking gun or single decision producing the social and environmental inequalities found in Fresno today, this Chapter showed the repeated and continual decision-making processes that have naturalized the location of noxious land uses next to poor neighborhoods and enabled the flight of white affluent residents to the far reaches of North Fresno away from industry, people of color and the poor. In fact, most of the economic, socio-political and racial explanations for environmental injustices described by Mohai and coauthors (2009) are present in Fresno’s history. However, the practices of white privilege and the City’s organizational culture that follows the speculative interests of developers are perhaps the most pervasive.

In her piece, “Rethinking Environmental Racism,” Laura Pulido argues that environmental justice scholars need to broaden conceptions of environmental racism outside of purely intentional practices such as power plant siting, to encompass the larger scale of urban development, including sprawl and white flight, in which whites and affluent residents have exploited the benefits of their whiteness. In this Chapter I showed how early practices of zoning and land use planning not only excluded the poor and people of color from cleaner more prestigious neighborhoods, but also rationalized the co-location of industries and poor communities. Furthermore, despite the City’s recognition of the relationship between sprawl and the (re)production of residential segregation in the 1970s, I showed how the City’s concern for growing the tax-base and private property rights ultimately influenced decision-makers to disregard the general and community plans in favor of developers’ requests for re-zones; a practice which was deepened by the private interests of City leaders.

Throughout this brief history I highlight the re-emerging resistance of local residents and community groups in the siting and expansion of the rendering plant in the Fruit-Church Industrial Park and the City’s continual dismissal of their concerns. Although this phenomenon also supports the argument that growth and the protection of property rights has been the City’s primary concern and one that is placed above residents’ quality of life and wellbeing, it also calls into question the commonly held argument that what is missing is an organized community to counter powerful interests. The lack of community engagement in land use planning is frequently blamed for inequitable distribution of risks and resources (PolicyLink 2012). However, despite well organized public participation in the form of a network of six Neighborhood Councils that engaged in the General Plan Update in 1974, engagement did not necessarily lead to equitable outcomes. Instead, unaccountable officials combined with a culture that devalued residents’ opinions in favor of growth and industry enabled Fresno to triple in space and population over the last four decades; a situation that has contributed to the further segregation of the poor and people of color.

Finally, in this Chapter I show the unjust consequences of good intentions with the example of the Redevelopment Agency and City’s efforts at containing the nuisances created by the rendering plant at the Fruit-Church Industrial Park. In this case, the decision to subsidize the upgrade of the rendering plant in the 1970s reinforced the association of the land with industry, which was continually deemed inappropriate by the community. Furthermore, it deepened the City’s interests to maintain the industrial zoning given its investments there, which have shaped its continual allegiance to the plant. Instead of eliminating the nuisance, the City’s investment in insufficient, technical solutions has only prolonged the resolution of the problem.

Chapter 3 Framing the Health Equity and Land Use Agenda

“Residents live in communities with health-promoting land use, transportation, and community development. Land use and zoning policies become more fair and result in a healthier community.” - Fresno’s Building Healthy Communities Logic Model (Blue Thistle Consulting 2010b)

“Healthy Neighborhoods for Everyone: The [Building Healthy Communities Land Use] Coalition has started work on a comprehensive campaign to change the dialogue around systems that support [South Fresno] but have not served its residents equitably over the years. Many of the mechanisms that funnel resources out of lower socioeconomic areas are... tied to more obvious planning and land use policy. These policy areas are the target of the coalition’s work.”
-Building Healthy Communities Land Use Coalition memo, 2011

When tasked to identify strategies for reducing health disparities in Fresno’s southern neighborhoods, diverse stakeholders from Fresno’s environmental, public health and social justice organizations came together in 2009 to identify land use planning as a key target for improving the living conditions and health outcomes of the city’s poor and communities of color. How did land use planning emerge as a dominant strategy for addressing health disparities in Fresno?

As I outlined in Chapter 1, the fields of Public Health and Planning are re-connecting in diverse ways to reduce health disparities and address a wide range of social determinants of health in urban communities. Based on the ideals of inclusion, redistribution of resources, reduction of risks and changing the narrative towards a more structural understanding of health, the health equity frame is shaping new collaborations across the country to define what healthy communities look like and how to achieve them. In Fresno, this movement is organizing around the California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative. However, a range of environmental, public health and social justice actors had identified land use planning as a means to achieving cleaner and healthier communities since the early 2000s.

By analyzing the formation of the Building Healthy Communities agenda along with its precursors in Fresno, I find that land use planning had been identified as both the cause and solution to a host of environmental and social justice issues, supported by local concerns as well as the framing coming from external policy entrepreneurs and funding sources. In Section 3.1 I trace the healthy land use agenda through contemporary air quality, environmental justice and public health campaigns and interventions. I find that environmentalists were early to identify land use and Smart Growth planning as a means to controlling the region’s air pollution problem. These activists shaped early claims about the relationship between land use, air quality and health with medical and scientific evidence along with legal strategies. Community developers and environmental justice activists from Southwest Fresno also began to highlight the unequal enforcement of land use policies that led to the inequitable distribution of health risks. Finally, concerns over obesity and diabetes disparities elevated the land use agenda and added the distribution of health-promoting resources and community capacity building to the Smart Growth agenda.

In Section two, I show how the Building Healthy Communities initiative has built on these three movements. Specifically, I find that the healthy land use agenda emerging from this initiative is based on a) inclusion and racial justice, b) the re-distribution of environmental resources and health opportunities, c) ensuring access to health resources, and d) addressing historic legacies of environmental injustices. This frame provides a platform from which to analyze the City's land use planning efforts, which I return to in Chapter 4.

3.1 Establishing the Land Use and Health Connection in Fresno

In Chapter 1 I described some of the forces pushing the fields of Planning and Public Health together, largely influenced by public health concerns over the obesity epidemic and sprawl. In Fresno, the land use and health connection was instigated by these claims and others, including air quality and environmental justice. In this Section I document how the land use and health frame emerged at the beginning of the 21st century from three separate movements in Fresno, each drawing on different actors, evidence bases and tactics to advance their claims. Together the trajectories of these three mobilizations created the policy environment to elevate concerns about health and equity and its links to land use that set the stage for the framing of the Building Healthy Communities initiative, which I present in the following section.

Before analyzing the precursor movements to the Building Healthy Communities initiative, however, it is important to explain why I begin this history in the 21st century. The San Joaquin Valley, at the heart of which sits Fresno, is a hotbed for grassroots organizing around diverse environmental justice issues from pesticides exposure and access to clean drinking water to contamination from industrial dairies and climate justice (London et al. 2013). The Valley has a long and rich history of social and environmental justice activism, stemming from the Civil Rights and Farm Worker movements of the 1960s (Pulido 1996). A mere hour from Kettleman City, which was instrumental in the rise of the environmental justice organizing in the 1980s and 1990s (Cole 1992; Cole and Foster 2001), I expected to find an equally rich history of environmental and social justice activism in Fresno, especially having studied the mobilization around the civil rights, Community Action, ethnic studies and the Model Cities programs of the 1960s and 1970s there. "What was the legacy of all of this?" I asked numerous key informants. I scoured the literature and archives for answers.

What I found was a scattered history of a number of racial/ethnic and labor organizations⁵⁵ that succeeded at getting representatives of color into both local and regional political leadership positions (e.g., city council, school board, senate, etc.) and created an ethnic studies program at Fresno State (Seib 1979), among other achievements. I also learned about several faith-based efforts to coordinate a broader social justice movement, through the Fresno Area Council of Churches and Fresno Area Migrant Ministry of the 1960s, the creation of Fresno Metro Ministry⁵⁶ in the 1970s, the Fresno Organizing Project in the 1980s, and Fresno Area

⁵⁵ e.g., the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) and the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), among others.

⁵⁶ It is important to recognize the pivotal role Fresno Metro Ministry has played in maintaining the continuity of the social and environmental justice movements in Fresno since its creation in 1974. Since its inception, the Ministry has been based on the ideals of community organizing and local community capacity building, creating the South

Congregations Together in the 1990s, among others. These efforts have tried to organize South Fresno communities around their perceived needs and have advocated for neighborhood improvements such as homework centers in Southeast, health clinics in Southwest, affordable housing, home improvement loans, employment, youth activities, and fixing sidewalks, sewers and streets, with limited success. But when I asked about the continuity and legacy of such efforts, one local advocate who had participated in Fresno Organizing Project told me:

“They ended why anything ends: Lack of money, too much work and too little resources. You get tired of volunteering all of your time.”

Another community activist from Southwest Fresno who had been involved in social services since the late 1960s reiterated this sentiment, telling me:

“People just get worn out. They burn out; they have other things going on. There are few of us who are crazy enough to stick around and have staying power.”

There is no doubt a goldmine of information about the social and environmental justice movements between the 1970s and 2000 in Fresno. However, I realized that unearthing these stories and reconstructing the history of social and environmental justice movements in Fresno was the task of an entire dissertation. I therefore begin where many of my key informants have begun, in the early 2000s. Finally, it is important to note that I restrict my study to environmental and social justice activism that pertains to land use and environmental health in Fresno, further limiting this history. Despite these limitations, I now turn to the impressive organizing and movement building that has created a fertile ground for local activism around the emerging frame of health and land use.

3.1.1 Air Quality Activism

Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley are notorious for their poor air quality. Once off the environmentalist map, national reports by the American Lung Association in the early 2000s began to reveal that air pollution in Valley cities was on par with neighboring Los Angeles (ALA 2013). Local news reporters also caught on and articles documenting the city’s poor air quality and high asthma rates tripled in 2002 (Altshuler and Zuk 2008). Marc Grossi, an environmental reporter from the Fresno Bee, observed the following about the period from 2001 to 2002:

“We were talking to people, hearing things out on the street. The soccer moms, people in the coffee shops, churches, you name it. Almost the first thing that people talked about was air quality, how bad it was, and how sick their kid was. Nobody knew how bad it was, how we ranked nationally, where it came from, nobody knew anything... It was one of those paradigm-shifting moments, where we talked about it, got deeper into it and realized what was there. I think health was at the bottom of all of this, mostly children’s health, but what triggered one or the other, I can’t say. It was more of a grassroots movement.” (Altshuler and Zuk 2008)

East Fresno Concerned Citizens program in the 1970s to assess neighborhood needs and organize neighbors to push policy makers for urban upgrades. In 1980 the Ministry launched the Fresno Organizing Project a coalition of 26 organizations including churches, labor organizations and community agencies to build a base for citywide multi-racial, multi-issue organization that would give a powerful voice to low and moderate income Fresnans. Among other activities, the Fresno Organizing Project attempted to pressure local banks to provide loans to low- and moderate- income neighborhoods in West Fresno and assist the Southeast Asian community in its need for safety and meaningful employment. They also lobbied the city to push for the use of Federal Community Development Block grants in low- income neighborhoods South of McKinley Avenue and for sewer and water mains for Kearney Boulevard residents. Source: Fresno Metro Ministry archives.

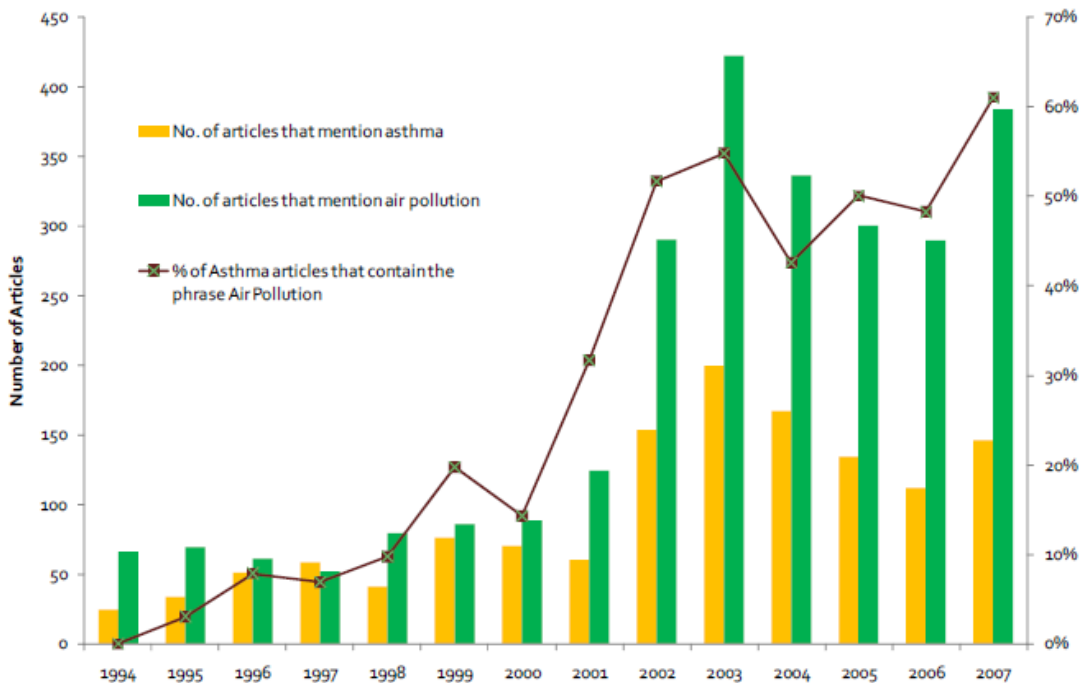


Figure 3.1 Frequency of Asthma and Air Pollution Articles in the Fresno Bee (1994-2007)
 Source: Altshuler and Zuk (2008)

Arguably, much of the air quality advocacy work happening at the local and regional level in the Valley has been motivated out of concern for the health and welfare for the region’s poor, Latino populations. For instance, the Latino Issues Forum opened a local office in Fresno in 2002 and built a partnership with existing groups such as Fresno Metro Ministry to form the Latino Environmental Health Project. With funding from the California Endowment, the groups began to hold “pláticas” or conversations in different communities across the Valley to ask people about their environments and how it impacted their health. What the groups learned was that:

“People saw air quality as not only a health issue but an economic issue as well. The stories that we would hear was that on a bad air day people would have to pick up their kids from school and miss a day of work because the kid feels sick. They’d have to take them to the doctor for a visit they couldn’t even pay for, or visit the emergency room, which is an even bigger economic burden. They’d get prescriptions for medication that they can’t afford. Plus the fear of going to the doctor for people who don’t have the right immigration documents is terrible. And so they saw it as an issue of family stress, of community losing productivity because of missed workdays and missed school days.” (Simunovic 2008)

Recognizing the regional nature of air quality, local organizations also began to collaborate with organizations from across the Valley to push for policy change. In 2003, the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition was formed among 70 community, medical, public health, environmental and environmental justice organizations to advocate for the full enforcement of federal and state clean air legislation in the Valley (CVAQ 2013). Working on a broad range of issues, they created campaigns to clean up confined animal facilities, to remove agricultural exemptions, to push for more aggressive compliance with Federal Air Quality standards, and to get medical representatives on the Air District board, among other campaigns (Bolaños 2008).

It was the work of local medical and air quality advocates in Fresno⁵⁷, however, that began to focus on the links between land use, air pollution and health in 2001. Forming the group Medical Advocates for Healthy Air, a number of health care practitioners began to observe the clustering of respiratory problems around the construction of the 180 freeway in Southeast Fresno. The Advocates studied clinic access data before, during, and after the construction of the freeway, finding an two and a half fold increase in respiratory problems that never returned to baseline levels following the construction (Hamilton 2008). Armed with local scientific evidence and drawing on the national literature on the links between transportation, land use, air quality and health, the Advocates began to meet with policy makers at the local, regional and state level, believing that increased knowledge would lead to more informed and better decisions. As Kevin Hamilton, director of programs at Clinica Sierra Vista and member of Medical Advocates, explained to me:

“We said, well, you know they are intelligent people. Intelligent people need good information -- you provide them with the right information and they will make better decisions. We met with the Director of the Development Department, we met with people from the Department of Agriculture, good people like that. They were all very nice to us, very cordial, but then they said ‘Sorry, I can’t do anything about that. We don't have the political will to do that.’ I mean I have been literally told by agency people ‘Please sue us. I need you to sue us so that I can do this.’”⁵⁸

And that is precisely what the Medical Advocates began to do. First came a case against a 710-acre residential development just North of the city’s boundary, Copper River Ranch (Grossi 2003a). The Advocates argued that the air quality impacts of such a large development on the fringe of the city would be deleterious to health, both of the development’s residents and the city as a whole. Citing medical evidence, the Advocates predicted that residents exposed to the heightened air pollution would experience adverse health effects, which was not adequately analyzed in the project’s Environmental Impact Report. Furthermore, the Advocates argued that:

“Within the last three years, as the public has grown increasingly anxious about contaminated air in the Valley, the real parties in interest have attempted to position the Copper River Ranch development as an environmentally-friendly project. They began to tout the project’s cosmetic amenities, such as bicycle trails and bike racks, as though they were a solution to the project’s major contributions to air quality deterioration... However, neither real parties nor respondents have been able to identify any measurable air quality benefit from any of these ‘air quality improvement’ proposals. Even if [they] give new homeowners little electric cars, the project will still generate 1,000 tons of air pollutants every year, and the area will continue to be hazardous to residents’ health as described, supra.” (Milrod 2003)

Knowing the unlikelihood to stop the development altogether, the Advocates settled out of court and worked with the developers on the site plan to minimize air pollution impacts. In addition, they had the developers commit to constructing a park and ride, using clean air trees, and to support Central Valley Air Quality coalition’s efforts to expand membership on the Air Quality District’s board. Simultaneously, the Advocates filed a case against the City’s General Plan Update in 2002 for its omission of a land use alternative that coordinated transportation and land use (Milrod 2002). The Advocates subsequently settled by requiring the City to implement a

⁵⁷ Who were also fundamental in the regional air quality movement and the formation of the Central Valley Air Quality coalition.

⁵⁸ Kevin Hamilton, Interview, 4/28/11

new modeling tool to study the impacts of land use and transportation decisions on air quality (Mark Grossi 2002).

Later, the Advocates brought a case against the 500-acre Fancher Creek development in Southeast Fresno. When the Environmental Impact Report was released in 2005, the Advocates argued on similar grounds to the Copper River case that it did not sufficiently analyze the traffic and air quality impacts of the development (Clemings 2005). Ultimately the group settled out of court with developer concessions to pay for the study of a Bus Rapid Transit system, invest in particulate matter traps for City busses, and to create a transit district (Milrod 2005). Through these three cases, air quality activists began to recognize the importance of land use planning and used it as a venue to advocate for better linkages between land use and transportation to reduce air quality impacts of development. Site planning and urban design (e.g., inclusion of trails and local amenities), were deemed by the Advocates as insufficient to curtail the significant air pollution impacts of development. Although they were unable to stop any of the projects, they came to frame the City's growth as a major perpetrator of air pollution and began to identify Smart Growth strategies, especially as they pertained to the linkages between land use and transportation, as a means to addressing local air quality problems.

The links between land use and air pollution were simultaneously being established at the regional and state level as well. In 2005, and as part of its Environmental Justice Policies and Actions effort (ARB 2001), the California's Air Resources Board⁵⁹ released the Air Quality and Land Use handbook that linked the pattern of development to auto usage, vehicle miles traveled and emissions of air pollutants (CARB 2005). That same year the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District released the Indirect Source Review Rule (9510) that requires developers to reduce air pollutants generated by their projects either through onsite mitigation or offset payments. The rule, although originally introduced in 1990 and subsequently defeated by homebuilders, was made possible when, in 2003, air quality activists appealed to the California legislature and got Senate bill 709 passed, which required the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to adopt a schedule of fees for the indirect sources of air pollution (Grossi 2003b).

Although not the primary focus of their work, local advocates were also beginning to think about the fair housing implications of development. For instance, one of the claims the Medical Advocates filed over the case of the Copper River development in 2003 was that:

“Contrary to the goals and policies in the General Plan, the project provides for far more lower wage jobs than housing units affordable to very low and low-income households, and thus a significant number of Copper River Ranch job holders will be forced to seek housing far outside of the new town. Antithetical to the General Plan, the implementation of the project will increase rather than decrease the need for affordable housing. (Milrod 2003)

The Advocates reached an agreement that the developers would rehabilitate or build 100 housing units for low-income residents. The location of the housing, however, would be in the downtown area, where the developers were already beginning to invest in infill development (Grossi 2003c). When asked how this would affect the existing segregation patterns, one of the

⁵⁹ As part of its Community Health program and in response to numerous environmental justice and other advocacy groups. In an interim meeting on 10/4/04, CARB chairman, Alan Loyd affirmed the handbook as “ARB’s commitment to continue to work on environmental justice (EJ) and air quality issues, including the interface of land-use siting and cumulative air pollution impacts.” <http://www.arb.ca.gov/ch/landuse.htm>

Advocates told me, “the reality is people who don't have good incomes could not afford to live in Copper River because the transportation costs would kill them.” In the settlement over the Fancher Creek development in 2005, however, the Advocates pressed for and the City agreed to conduct an “inclusionary zoning workshop” to “consider zoning and/or other mechanisms to require mixed income levels in new development, including affordable housing” (Milrod 2005). When it came time to ensure the City’s compliance with the agreement, however, the Advocates recognized that the City Council was too hostile to the idea to make it worthwhile.

The environmental concerns of local activists in the early 2000s brought a focus on the relationship between land use planning, auto dependence and regional air quality, beginning to lift up the Smart Growth agenda in Fresno. Although the advocates raised the issue of affordable housing, the overall impacts of development on the spatial distribution of the poverty and wealth were not the central concerns of the movement. The problem of development was focused primarily on its impacts to air quality and given the context of rapid urban development at the time. The agenda was also focused on new developments, rather than seeking changes to existing communities. Nevertheless, air quality advocacy in Fresno has been consistently linked to social and economic justice concerns, particularly for the immigrant Latino community.

3.1.2 Environmental Injustices in Southwest Fresno

Residents of Southwest Fresno are acutely aware of the disproportionate siting of unwanted land uses in their neighborhood, as was described through the case of the meat rendering plant in Chapter 2. Former planning director Nick Yovino described to me the commonly heard sentiment that Southwest Fresno was the city’s dumping ground when explaining:

“I grew up in an Italian-American community in Southwest Fresno. One of the reasons I got into planning was that Southwest Fresno was kind of like a dumping ground. Whenever you are through with something, you know, that’s where it went. The sewer plant was there, the garbage dump was there, the junkyards were there, the squatter houses, the meat-packing plants were there. And when you died, that’s where all the cemeteries were. That’s where they buried you, right? When you are all through with something, you took it to that part of town.” (Yovino 2011)

The health risks associated with unwanted land uses became highly visible in January of 2003 when a five acre dump of construction and 40 foot pile of wood, concrete, and green waste materials in West Fresno caught on fire and burned continuously for one month, polluting the air and making residents ill. The cleanup cost more than \$6.4 million. From a state audit released in December of 2003 (California State Auditor 2003), the public learned that the City had not enforced its own land use regulations on the dump. The site had received a conditional use permit from the County in 1980 to process concrete and asphalt, which had been grandfathered in by the City when it was annexed in 1983. In 1994 the City allowed the site to expand and reissued its permit, however since that time the site had been accumulating materials that violated the terms of the permit. The audit found that code enforcement inspectors only went to the site when they received complaints and on one such occasion in 2001, inspectors did not even enter the site to determine if its operations were in accordance with the zoning requirements, but instead peered in from outside (Fitzenberger 2003).

During the month-long fire, a task force was assembled to investigate the fire and health screenings were held at local community centers. Nevertheless, little action ensued to protect

vulnerable populations. As described to me by a local Environmental Justice activist and task force participant:

“Of course, not all of our recommendations were taken because you know, there was a lot of pollution and the only thing that they would talk about was the cost to turn it off rather than the urgency to get people out of there, providing them with resources, or health exams. During that time, two people died; two people that had respiratory illnesses or were vulnerable.”

Eight years later, when I arrived to Fresno, environmental justice activists continued to use the case of the fire as an example of government negligence and institutional racism. At a meeting on transportation, land use planning and environmental justice in 2011⁶⁰, one activist recapped what had happened and named it environmental racism:

“It was totally illegal. They didn’t even know what was there. It burned for a month; children were getting sick, spitting toxins. EPA went out, tested the air and said there’s no problem. There is a culture, institutionalized racism with all its inherent ugliness towards West, Southeast, and Central Fresno.”

Following the fire, residents of Southwest Fresno became more vocal in resisting the siting of new undesirable land uses, such as a green waste transfer station in 2005 and a drop-off center for hazardous household wastes in 2009 (Clemings 2009). Community organizers appealed to the unjust siting of unwanted land uses, as articulated by one resident “We don’t create that garbage. Why do we have it?” Thus, when the meat rendering plant in Southwest Fresno, discussed in Chapter 2, sought to expand its production in 2005 and 2007, residents were especially sensitive to the environmental injustices facing their community. Forming the Concerned Citizens of West Fresno, residents began to organize and petition the Air District and then City council to finally do something about the plant arguing that the City had neglected to enforce land use regulations. I will return to the environmental racism framing around the meat rendering plant below in Section 3.2.3.

Finally, a number of the Valley’s environmental justice organizations⁶¹, led by Fresno Metro Ministry, joined forces with the University of California, Davis, Center for Regional Change in 2008 to document the cumulative environmental burdens imposed on communities of color and low socioeconomic status across the Valley (London et al. 2013; London, Huang, and Zagofsky 2011). The participants envisioned using the research on cumulative impacts to educate officials so they would look at existing conditions and surrounding land uses when making decisions on such things like land use permits.

In Fresno, the team chose to focus their research in Southwest and worked with the Concerned Citizens of West Fresno to “ground truth” available environmental hazards data and overlay the information with data on race, ethnicity and income. The Concerned Citizens in collaboration

⁶⁰ “Setting Our Course: Creating a Region of Opportunity through Transportation and Land Use Planning,” held on October 6th, 2011 in Fresno was sponsored by PolicyLink, California Rural Legal Assistance, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, the UC Davis Center for Regional Change and ClimatePlan. The intention of the forum was to build equitable, healthy and prosperous San Joaquin Valley. This quote came from the session: “Learning from the Field: Equity Advocacy in a Regional Planning Context.”

⁶¹ Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment; Medical Advocates for Healthy Air; Greenaction for Health and the Environment; SJV Latino Environmental Advancement Policy; California Rural Legal Assistance; Prison Moratorium Project; Californians for Pesticide Reform; Central Valley Air Quality Coalition; Community Water Center.

with California Rural Legal Assistance and Fresno Metro Ministry, identified numerous local hazards in addition to those documented in publicly available databases (e.g., TRI) and used the maps to demonstrate the significant cumulative burden already facing communities of color and low-income in the Southwest (Figure 3.2). The group later used this information when fighting the city to enforce land use regulations in the case of the nuisances originating from the meat rendering plant, which I will return to below.

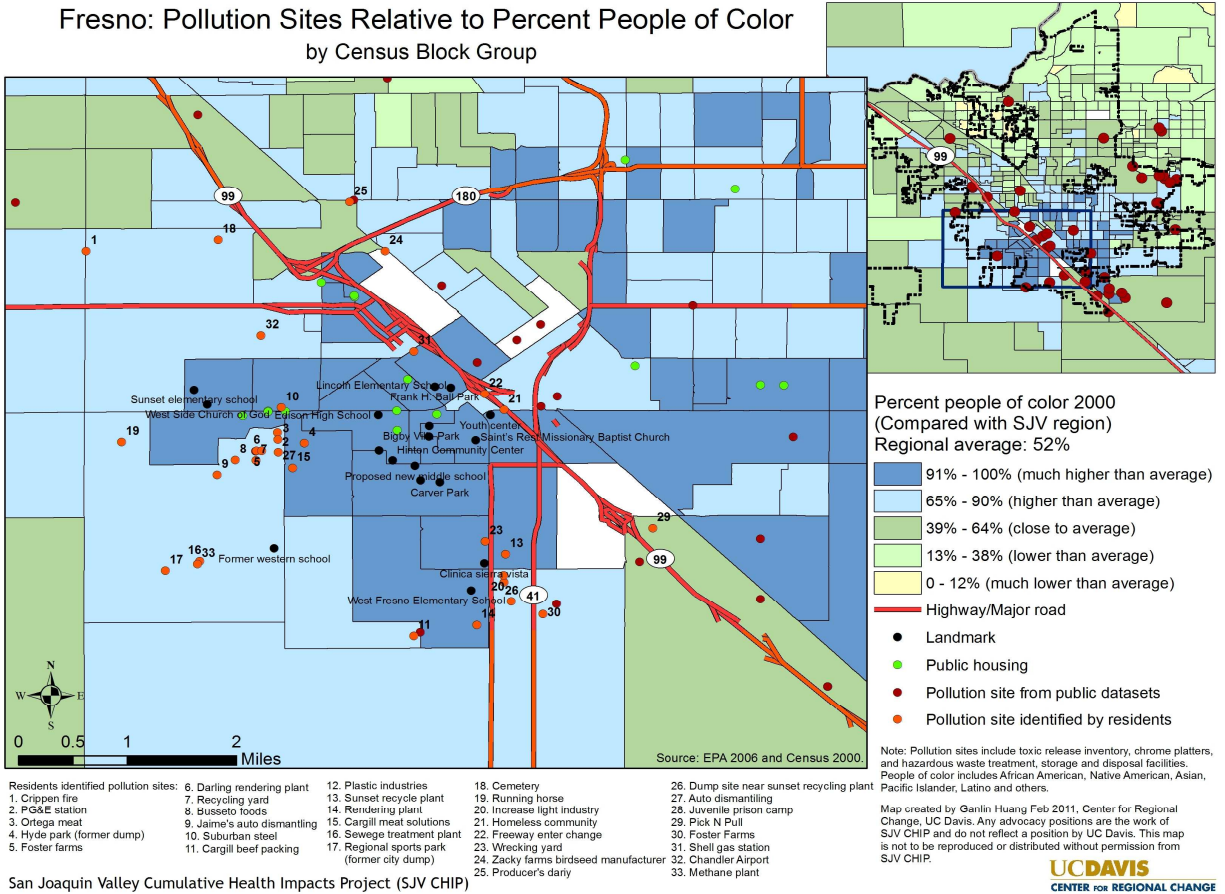


Figure 3.2 Cumulative Environmental Health Burden in Southwest Fresno
Source: UC Davis Center for Regional Change (2011)

Thus community organizations began to form and react to the disproportionate siting of unwanted land uses and environmental hazards in Southwest Fresno in the 21st century. Using the Environmental Justice framing of land use planning and enforcement as evidence of environmental racism, they sought to construct local data and armor campaigns to both prevent future nuisances and to remediate existing hazards.

3.1.3 Health Disparities, Obesity and the Built Environment

Following the national trend linking the built environment, physical activity and obesity (see Chapter 1) local and regional efforts emerged in the Valley that have sought to make places more conducive to healthy eating and active living by increasing access to health promoting resources.

Here I argue that the public health practitioners have reinforced the Smart Growth agenda emerging in the Valley, both due to local concerns over chronic diseases as well as framing from outside actors. This built environment and health frame has reinforced a growing Smart Growth agenda and has elevated questions about equitable access in policy decisions.

Similar to conditions nationwide, the field of Public Health in the San Joaquin Valley was mostly confined to discussions about health care access⁶² and delivery until only very recently. This began to change in the early 2000s when public health officers from the Valley's eight counties formed the Central California Public Health Partnership⁶³ to discuss the unique demographic, economic and health conditions and began to coordinate research under the newly created Central Valley Health Policy Institute⁶⁴ in 2004. Obesity had already been recognized as a national epidemic and the relationship between the built environment and health was gaining momentum with federal, state and foundation-led programs on access to healthy foods and physical activity spaces (Lee and Rubin 2007). These ideas were entering the San Joaquin Valley, as leaders sought solutions for its own obesity problem⁶⁵. Securing grants from the California Endowment and Kaiser Permanente, public health leaders launched the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program in 2005 to implement active living and healthy eating programs across the Valley. They were skeptical, however, that the models used in other places would work in the Valley. As described to me by the Executive Director of the Health Policy Institute, John Capitman:

“Experts were coming in from the Bay Area and Sacramento, and they felt they knew what the solutions were, what communities needed to do. But they were working in resourced environments. We didn't have the buy-in, political will or even civic capacity to back prevention and land use efforts. What we needed was to build local and regional capacity in addition to the model of Public Health and Planning partnerships.”

Thus, the Obesity Prevention Program was designed to build capacity among residents as well as public health practitioners by creating partnerships between Departments of Public Health and local organizations in each of the Valley's counties (Samuels and Associates 2010). In Fresno, the non-profit Fresno Metro Ministry joined forces with the County Department of Public Health and in 2007 began to work with parents at a low-income elementary school in Southeast Fresno⁶⁶. Using local data gathering tools such as walkability audits and analyzing zoning codes, the coalition was able to secure investments for street improvements, the installation of a bus shelter, and the implementation of traffic calming measures, among other achievements (Samuels and Associates 2009).

⁶² It should be noted, however, that there has been strong advocacy around health care access and equity concerns in Fresno, and groups like Fresno Metro Ministry began organizing around these issues, convening the Local Health Care Coalition since 1997 (Fresno Metro Ministry 2006). The Coalition met monthly through 2006 and was dedicated to ensure “healthcare access that is appropriate medically, geographically, linguistically, and culturally” with funding from the California Endowment and the California Wellness Foundation. These efforts, however, have not focused on physical access or issues associated with place and therefore I do not cover them here.

⁶³ Formed in 1999 and later renamed the San Joaquin Valley Public Health Consortium

⁶⁴ Funded with a 5 year grant from the California Endowment

⁶⁵ As documented in the Health in the Heartland Report, in 2001 one in five Valley children were considered obese (Diringer et al. 2004).

⁶⁶ With additional funding from Kaiser Permanente's Healthy Eating, Active Living grants

At the metropolitan level, the Department of Public Health also initiated the Building Healthy Neighborhoods⁶⁷ taskforce in 2005 as a collaborative between representatives from schools, community-based organizations, government agencies and residents to work on issues regarding physical activity environments and access to healthy foods. In a kickoff summit, regional technical assistance providers presented information on disparities in obesity, diabetes and chronic conditions and related them to the lack of healthy foods and physical activity resources in poor neighborhoods. In addition to identifying the problem, organizers sought solutions in the built environment and had experts from the Bay Area and Sacramento come in to present on Smart Growth solutions (FCDCH 2007).

By 2007 the Public Health Department's Division of Community Health identified Smart Growth as one of the department's key objectives as it was seen as a means to "improve air quality, water quality, the addition of green space, promote exercise, fresh food and healthy lifestyles" (FCDCH 2007). The key goals within this Smart Growth agenda were to collaborate with planners, educate them on the health impacts of sprawl, work on design and transportation options to reduce car dependency and advocate for safe parks. Thus Public Health became a key ally in the Smart Growth agenda. Later that year, the Department put on a workshop called "Urban Sprawl, What's Health got to do with it?" where Public Health, City and County Planning staff and other government officials gathered to determine how best to collaborate (FCDPH 2008).

As a prelude to the type of health language that the public health community would expect to see in the City's planning processes (which I explore in Chapter 4), in 2008 the Department submitted recommendations on incorporating health language into the County's General Plan. Drawing on research and guidance from the Bay Area non-profit Planning for Healthy Places (PHP 2009), the Department articulated a vision for healthy built environment as neighborhoods that are:

"Designed to encourage walking, biking and linked transit systems that decrease dependence on automobile travel; greater access to healthier food options, in particular fresh locally grown produce; sustainable community centers that provide access to employment, education, businesses and recreation within neighborhood and community boundaries." (FCDPH, et al. 2008)

The specific policies and strategies that public health practitioners sought to achieve this vision included improvements to existing communities (e.g., new parks or joint use agreements, bike and walking facilities, enhanced public transportation network, street calming, etc.) as well as new developments (e.g., encouraging mixed-use and in-fill developments, and siting schools and housing away from highways, etc.) (FCDPH, et al. 2008).

The built environment became a key site of intervention for public health practitioners in the 21st century as it was seen as a preventative strategy for tackling obesity as well as reducing air pollution and related respiratory issues. Although public health advocates began to get involved in local planning issues, they did not identify affordable housing or segregation in their agenda. Instead, public health advocates saw smart growth principles of infill development as ways to

⁶⁷ With funding from the Local Public Health Built Environment Network, which was formed in 2004 by the California Department of Public Health utilizing CDC Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funding in addition to Kaiser Permanente's Healthy Eating and Active Living grant.

redirect investment and lift up the living conditions in poor neighborhoods, rather than explicitly looking at redistributing city investments or populations.

Much like other issue areas and sectors, policy framing did not occur in a vacuum, but rather outside funding, policy entrepreneurs and networks significantly influenced the ways that local actors began to “see” the problem of obesity and disparities around land use. Much has been written on such practices including critiques (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996; Vettoretto 2009), and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage in policy transfer debates. However, it is important to note the influence of best practices and the built environment and health frame of outside actors in Fresno, especially through funding from state agencies and the California Endowment. The top down framing approach, however, is one that the California Endowment sought to modify in the Building Healthy Communities initiative, as I will describe below.

The three distinct yet interrelated frames that have tied health, environmental and social injustices to land use in Fresno are summarized in Table 3.1. Although they draw on different actors, evidence, and strategies, they all make similar claims as to the environmental health hazards and injustices produced from Fresno’s land use patterns and policies. In the following Section I analyze how these claims, actors and strategies are incorporated and transformed as part of the Building Healthy Communities initiative of the California Endowment.

Table 3.1 Actors, Claims, Evidence and Strategies of Fresno’s Land Use and Health Frames

	Regional Air Quality Activism	Public Health and Built Environment	Environmental Justice
Actors	- Regional coalition of non-profits - Medical advocates - Environmental justice groups - Funders	- Academics - Public health officials - Statewide advocates - Funders	- Community based organizations - State-wide non-profits - Academics - Funders
Claims	Sprawling development and separation of land uses leads to more driving, car dependency and air pollution	Sprawl and poorly designed developments lead to decreased physical activity and access to healthy foods leading to obesity	Discriminatory siting of unwanted land uses and lack of law enforcement has led to disproportionate exposure to environmental risks
Evidence used	Locally collected health data Analysis of land use plans Local expert knowledge	Academic research Regional expert knowledge Locally collected environmental data	Local knowledge Locally collected environmental data Academic research Community mapping
Strategies	Coalition building, advocacy, and legal action	Collaborations between public health agencies, residents and planners	Community organizing, media campaigns, advocacy

3.2 Unifying a Health Equity Frame: Building Healthy Communities

The links between land use planning and healthy communities in Fresno was reinforced in 2009 with the introduction of the Building Healthy Communities initiative of the California Endowment. This initiative both built on the existing frameworks and introduced new concepts and strategies for collaboration and movement building in Fresno to increase access to health

promoting resources and reduce exposure to health damaging risks in the city's southern neighborhoods. In this section I analyze the emergence of the healthy land use agenda of the Building Healthy Communities initiative to unearth the primary actors, frames and tactics that have come to influence land use planning in Fresno.

As indicated above, the California Endowment, a private foundation created in 1996 to improve the health of low-income communities across the state⁶⁸, has been a significant funder of local health and environmental advocacy as well as services in Fresno for the last decade. As described by its president, Robert Ross, the early years of the Endowment were spent “responding to requests” from hundreds of health organizations across the state. From 2002 to 2007 the Endowment strategically invested in three primary areas: health care access, cultural competency and community health/elimination of health disparities. Through this third area the Endowment began to fund programs that focused on environmental rather than individual factors, supporting community organizations to create opportunities for Healthy Eating and Active Communities as well as other environmental health approaches. It was within this strategic area of giving that the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program was created, as described above.

Following some internal reflection, in 2008 the Endowment declared that they had fallen short of their desired impact and began to re-strategize. In a presentation entitled “How we got to place” Dr. Ross explained:

“The most important thing we learned through 14 years of initiatives and the thousands of grants made to communities across the state is this: Our health doesn't begin in a doctor's office. Where we live, work, learn and play has a profound impact on our health. What surrounds us shapes us and if we are living in unhealthy surroundings, our health will reflect that.” (TCE 2010)

Therefore, in 2008 the Endowment announced to its partners that it was shifting its grant-making model from one based on issues (e.g., asthma, health care access, etc.) to one based on place. In presenting their new 10-year Building Healthy Communities initiative, Endowment leadership stated that they were focusing on the nexus of community, health, and poverty to advance a “prevention movement” through place-based initiatives (The California Endowment 2009).

Following the “upstream” logic of social epidemiology and health equity, the Endowment sought to shift its focus from treating symptoms to fixing systems. Rather than funding services, the new initiative would focus on building community capacity to identify needs and advocate for “systems and policy change.” Building on the experiences of previous place-based and community-driven initiatives, such as the Comprehensive Community Initiatives of the 1990s, the Endowment sought to provide guidance to achieve “systems and policy change” to its grantees and came up with a set of goals towards which each community would strive⁶⁹. The

⁶⁸ The California Endowment was created following the privatization of Blue Cross of California.

⁶⁹ In a document called Frequently Asked Questions found on its website, the final question was: “Other foundations have tried place-based community health improvement projects and failed. What makes your efforts different?” Their answer included the provision of a list of 10 outcomes, which would give communities a roadmap from which to work. “Other community change initiatives left it up to the communities to develop their goals during the planning process, which resulted in disagreements, stalls and ultimately, failure.” (TCE 2010)

new vision, which entailed the funding of 14 place-based communities⁷⁰ throughout California, was oriented around four primary goals: 1) provide a health home⁷¹ for all children, 2) reverse the childhood obesity epidemic, 3) increase school attendance, and 4) reduce youth violence. The Endowment also outlined 10 outcomes that would help communities achieve these goals⁷², which were focused on improving the social, economic and physical aspects of poor communities.

Based on the Endowment's previous work on the built environment through its Healthy Eating Active Communities program as well as other work, land use had emerged as an important venue for "systems and policy" change. In its framing documents, the Endowment identified land use as a system that increased exposure to risks (e.g., alcohol advertising and air toxics) and reduced access to health-promoting resources (e.g., parks) (Cantor and Mikkelsen 2010). Thus, among the 10 outcomes to guide community work was Outcome 4: Residents live in communities with health-promoting land use, transportation and community development. As such, intervening on the land use decision making process to create more healthful environments became one of the pillars of the Endowment's Building Healthy Communities strategy.

3.2.1 Fresno Becomes a Healthy Community

No official criteria were released for The California Endowment's selection of the 14 communities they would fund. In a letter sent to existing grantees in 2008, however, president Robert Ross explained that the Endowment would be weighing the severity of needs (e.g., concentration of poverty, health disparities, etc.) while also taking into consideration the established leadership, current and potential capacity for advocacy, geographic distribution, and existing investments (Ross 2008). Thus South Fresno's well recognized need, the California Endowment's history of previous investments there, and the range of existing community-based organizations contributed to its selection as one of the Endowment's 14 communities.

A team of local health and data experts was formed in 2009 to analyze census data and define the boundaries of "the place" where the initiative would be focused. From the data analysis and local knowledge about community resources and needs, a boundary was drawn around Southwest, Southeast and Central Fresno, where nearly 10,000 residents lived (Figure 3.3). Subsequent data analysis from the California Health Interview Survey, found that residents in "the place" were more likely to be Latino, African American, unemployed, low-income, uninsured, obese, and live in neighborhoods where there was little trust than the rest of Fresno County and the state (UCLA 2011).

⁷⁰ 1) Boyle Heights, 2) Santa Ana, 3) City Heights (San Diego), 4) Coachella Valley, 5) Del Norte County, 6) East Oakland, 7) East Salinas, 8) Long Beach, 9) Richmond, 10) Sacramento, 11) South Los Angeles, 12) South Kern, 13) Southwest Merced and East Merced County, and 14) Central/Southeast/Southwest Fresno.

⁷¹ A Health Home is a team approach to wellbeing organized around a particular patient's needs. Whether a school or a community clinic, a health home provides care that is integrated, coordinated and sustained.

⁷² 1) All children have health coverage, 2) Families have improved access to a "health home" that supports healthy behaviors, 3) Health and family-focused human services shift resources toward prevention, 4) Residents live in communities with health-promoting land use, transportation and community development, 5) Children and families are safe from violence in their homes and neighborhoods, 6) Communities support healthy youth development, 7) Neighborhood and school environments support improved health and healthy behaviors, 8) Community health improvements are linked to economic development, 9) Health gaps for boys and young men of color are narrowed, 10) California has a shared vision of community health

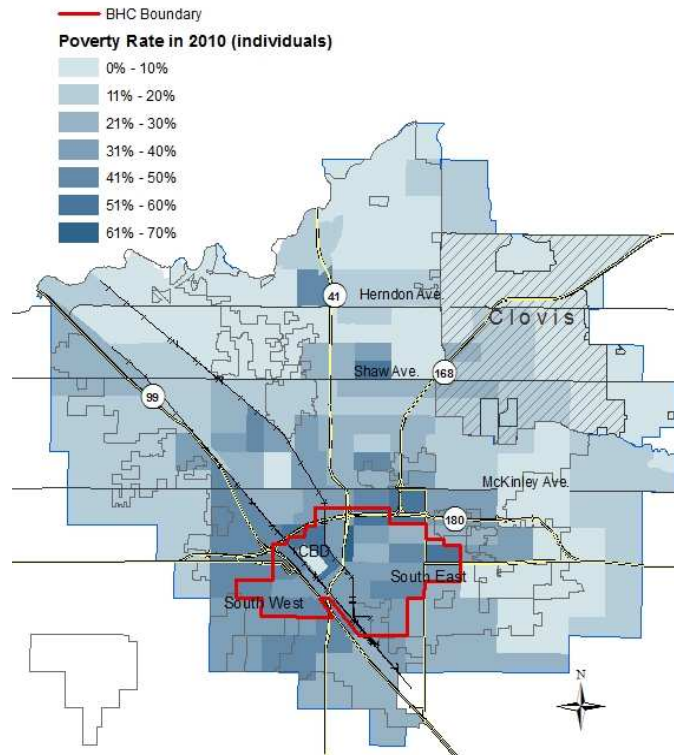


Figure 3.3 “The Place” Boundaries of Fresno’s Building Healthy Communities Initiative

The Building Healthy Communities initiative was created around the basic philosophy of community capacity building and bottom-up community planning. Therefore, rather than imposing a vision and strategy from above, the Endowment sought to work with local actors to build the agenda and strategy from local knowledge and expertise. The Endowment also sought to avoid the seemingly endless and directionless community planning and lackluster results of the Comprehensive Community Initiatives model (Kubisch et al. 2002; Brown and Fiester 2007). They therefore provided a basic framework for developing the goals, strategies and logic model that the initiative would use to guide its work.

Beginning in the fall of 2009 a group of representatives from local agencies, community-based organizations, and residents came together to articulate and analyze the community’s concerns and priorities through a variety of participatory strategies in diverse settings, including focus groups and community fairs. From the engagement efforts, participants learned that:

“The three most common concerns that emerged in conversations with the community were the impact of poverty, chronically high unemployment and street violence on The Place.” (Blue Thistle Consulting 2010b)

Despite these stated concerns, the planning teams were required to address the specific goals set out by the Endowment (see page 71) and to select among the 10 outcomes (see footnote 72) to determine strategies for how to reach those goals. During one planning meeting, the facilitators reminded participants that the goal was to focus on “policy and systems” changes around the outcomes. The facilitators attempted to demystify these terms by providing planning participants the following definitions:

“Policy – stated laws and rules that shape our community and how we live.

Systems – how agencies, orgs, and people work together to turn policies into action that shape our community – including financing and organizations.

Policies and systems change when communities:

- a) organize a shared voice and gain power through collaboration, and
- b) communicate a crisis and solutions with broad benefit” (Blue Thistle Consulting 2010a)

Nevertheless, confusion over what exactly the systems and policies were that the initiative sought to change and how to change them remained elusive. An internal evaluation of the planning process declared:

“Most interviewees mentioned that the following elements would be necessary to ensure success now and during implementation: leadership that can more efficiently advance the planning and implementation processes, education and tools to effectively understand and plan for policy and systems change, capacity building for a grassroots resident engagement process.” (Community Science 2010)

On the team tasked to work on the goal of “Reversing the childhood obesity epidemic⁷³” sat staff from the City’s Downtown and Community Revitalization Department, Fresno Metro Ministry, and the Department of Public Health, among others (Fresno BHC 2010). Participants argued that the time was ripe to work on land use and planning issues to capitalize on existing efforts described in Section 3.1 as well as the City’s upcoming downtown revitalization and general plans (Blue Thistle Consulting 2010b). The Department of Public Health had already identified land use and Smart Growth planning as key to their goals of promoting public health and Fresno Metro Ministry had been engaged in myriad air quality, nutrition and health activities targeting planning. Furthermore, the newly formed Downtown and Community Revitalization Department, which was ramping up its efforts to develop a plan for the downtown neighborhoods (see Chapter 4), saw this as an opportunity to enhance community engagement and garner support for their plans.

Perhaps due to their respective experiences working on planning-related issues, or the prevailing strategy and framing coming from the Endowment, the team organized around the goal of Reducing the Childhood Obesity Epidemic chose as the main strategy outcome #4: “Residents live in communities with health-promoting land use, transportation and community development”⁷⁴. Land use, as described above, was seen as a means to addressing existing inequalities in place, as described in the Building Healthy Communities plan:

“Residents expressed their concern that zoning and land-use policies in Fresno were not equitable as [the plan area] has fewer parks and bike paths, less infrastructure, an aging and unsafe housing stock, and bears an unfair burden of those businesses which contribute to poor air quality.”(Blue Thistle Consulting 2010b)

⁷³ Teams for each of the Endowments other three goals formulated strategies by selecting among the “10 outcomes” and it is important to note that strategies and coalitions were formed within each of these areas and across the Initiative. In its first year funding cycle, the Endowment funded over 40 Fresno organizations to engage in work on issues such as violence prevention, youth engagement, school discipline, and health coverage. Rather than analyzing the entire initiative, which is cohesive in its focus on a specific place, but rather broad in terms of the issues it engages with, I focus exclusively on its built environment and land use work.

⁷⁴ In the resource guide provided by the Endowment, they describe the need for health-promoting land use as follows: “Specific community factors — such as the availability of parks and walking trails, the presence of retail outlets with affordable high-quality produce and other healthy foods (and limited availability of unhealthy products such as alcohol), available and affordable public transit, well-maintained sidewalks, schools and housing that are constructed of high-quality materials and situated to encourage physical activity — appear to have a strong influence on the health status of community residents” (Cantor and Mikkelsen 2010).

This sentiment was reiterated to me repeatedly over the course of my stay in Fresno. Later, when explaining the land use efforts of the Building Healthy Communities initiative, the coordinator stated to me:

“Planning in the downtown, in Southeast Fresno and Southwest Fresno has long been neglected by the city. The city has—and they will come out and say it—looked at sprawl North, sprawl east, Northeast, Northwest sprawl. We haven't really concentrated on the urban core and making sure that we're attending to this part of town. So you have many areas in the “place” that have become blighted, that have fallen into disrepair.”

Thus, the Building Healthy Communities initiative was framed as a means to equalize neighborhood environments and ensuring that residents of poor neighborhoods had as many of the “good things” that the richer, North Fresno neighborhoods by targeting land use planning. Furthermore, and building on the framework coming from both the air quality and public health efforts that preexisted in Fresno, sprawl was identified as both evidence of poor planning and the cause of the environmental decline in the city's southern neighborhoods.

The means to achieving healthy land use as identified by the plan and the Endowment was through meaningful community engagement in planning. As articulated to me by one of the Endowment staff members:

“Our thought was we need to support non-traditional players in this planning field so that they have an influence and so that they have a voice and the City gains the perspective of folks that don't traditionally participate in these processes. So when you think about a theory of change, this is really about building the power of residents to take ownership of decisions that are made in their community by way of civic engagement.”

Therefore the initiative sought a primarily “outside” and collaborative strategy of building community pressure to influence land use change by lifting up the voice of marginalized communities and ensuring that their needs are considered in planning processes. The Endowment also had an “inside” strategy of working with local policymakers; however, this strategy was pursued by Endowment staff somewhat independently of Initiative participants. This research, therefore, is focused almost entirely on the “outside” strategy of the Initiative.

3.2.2 Setting the Healthy and Equitable Land Use Agenda in Fresno

When it came time to identify the organizations they would fund to work on land use planning, the Endowment staff chose groups that served the diverse communities of “the place,” as the strategy was to engage residents and build power to influence planning. They selected six groups that had participated in the Building Healthy Communities planning process, had previously been supported by the California Endowment, and represented the racial/ethnic diversity of South Fresno including groups serving the Hmong, Latino, Oaxacan, Black and faith-based communities to form a collaborative to address land use issues in Fresno. These organizations were:

1. *Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries*, a faith-based non-profit working primarily with Hmong and Southeast Asian communities on issues related to immigration, early childhood development, affordable housing advocacy, citizenship, education on lead poisoning, healthcare access and community gardens.
2. *Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indigena Oaxaqueno* supports the Mexican Mixteco community with translation services, aid in attaining social services, citizenship, health care and prevention.

3. *West Fresno Health Care Coalition* works with residents of West Fresno and the African American community, providing wellness and prevention training, social service enrollment, career development, community gardens, and provides in-home support for clients.
4. *Faith in Communities*, the local faith-based community organizing group that works on issues of health care reform, housing foreclosures, predatory lending, violence prevention and immigration reform among primarily Latinos residents.
5. *Centro la Familia* is a non-profit that works with the Latin American community providing a wide range of services on health and wellness issues including domestic violence prevention, parenting skills, mental health awareness, victim advocacy, and aid in enrollment in social services.
6. *Fresno Metro Ministry*, a group that has been a leader in Fresno's air quality and environmental justice advocacy work, also providing services and organizing communities around clean homes, nutrition and obesity issues. Through their work on nutrition and air quality, the Ministry had some experience in land use planning and one of its staff members was an active participant in both of the City's planning efforts.

When I began attending organizing meetings for the Building Healthy Communities land use collaborative, (healthy land use collaborative from here forward) in the spring of 2011, the participating organizations were frank about their lack of experience in land use and planning processes and the need for capacity building. Their goal was to use popular education and community organizing methods to ensure that the land use agenda they developed was community-based. As described in the work plan of Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries:

“FIRM will identify and train a multi-cultural group of leaders from the Fresno Place using culturally competent curriculum (the PICO organizing model) so residents can learn ways to become engaged in community development and policy change.” (FIRM 2010)

The six organizations began by educating themselves on the upcoming Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, around which they were contracted to build capacity and organize community. During one capacity building session, the healthy land use collaborative invited a City staff member from the Downtown and Community Revitalization Department to present on the progress of the Community Plan. To a group of over forty Hmong, Oaxacan, African American and Latino residents of South Fresno, City staff explained how it was seeking to replace its outdated zoning codes with a streamlined “form-based code” to transform the Southern neighborhoods. In its effort to build capacity on land use planning the healthy land use collaborative relied heavily on the expertise and framing of City staff, which as I will show in Chapter 4, was focused on the design of the built environment.

In the summer of 2011, and following the community organizing model that I will discuss in Chapter 5, the healthy land use collaborative began the process of identifying community concerns by asking residents what they wanted to see in their neighborhoods. Although they asked open-ended questions, the collaborative approached the needs assessment from within the planning lens, grouping responses by the categories identified in the City's Community Plan template (e.g., infrastructure, urban form, etc.). The collaborative compiled the results from meetings with over 800 residents, finding that “clean and safe streets” was the most common concern, followed by jobs, parks, housing, and opportunities for youth. Based on these responses and trying to merge the needs assessment with the City's planning framework, the team came up with a set of 9 priority areas, which they would later use as a basis from which to make comments on the City's land use planning efforts. These priority areas were:

1. Clean built environments with adequate infrastructure and affordable housing,

2. Workforce development,
3. Support for local jobs and homegrown businesses,
4. Increase in the number and safety of parks,
5. Local retail and recreational opportunities,
6. Address attitudes within government institutions, economic systems and law enforcement towards immigrant and ethnic minorities that perpetuates inequality,
7. Improved transportation systems that are tailored to vulnerable groups
8. Improve access to health care services, and
9. Improved public safety that supports community while reducing crime.⁷⁵

Learning from its experience commenting on the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan the collaborative continued its engagement in the General Plan Update in the fall of 2011. Observing the lack of discussion about how low-income communities will be able to access upgraded and new “complete” neighborhoods, the collaborative also became concerned with the possibility that the land use planning efforts could eventually lead to displacement of existing residents. Therefore the collaborative added an emphasis on affordable housing while also clarifying community needs around planning related terms and activities. During a meeting to strategize their involvement in the General Plan Update, the collaborative articulated the following values around which they planned to organize:

1. Affordable variety of housing options
2. Anti-displacement
3. Funding for infrastructure including deferred maintenance
4. Complete neighborhoods: good things for people here now
5. Healthy air and food
6. Parks in all neighborhoods with adequate funding for ongoing maintenance
7. Enhance public transportation and complete streets

Given their diverse backgrounds, desire to ground their work in the felt needs of the community, the framework of the Building Healthy Communities initiative, and lack of exposure to previous land use planning efforts, the collaborative generated a rather broad agenda in an effort to encompass the wide range of interests and needs. As the needs assessment was framed around the question of what residents would like to see in their neighborhoods, the priorities that emerged were largely structured around enhancing access to health promoting resources rather than reducing exposure to health damaging risks.

When I asked the collaborative members to explain how their initiative addressed racial and economic injustices, they responded that it was embedded in everything they do. As described by one participant:

“Just by working in South Fresno where the majority are poor and people of color, by working to improve their living conditions and helping them to advocate for their needs we’re advocating for justice.”

One concrete action was the collaborative’s emphasis on ensuring that any mention of job training and education explicitly address the needs of populations whose first language is not English. Furthermore, the collaborative worked to ensure that the City’s planning processes were as inclusionary as possible and provided translation in Hmong and Spanish. Organizers also translated planning ideas into everyday issues for community members.

⁷⁵ BHC Handout from Action meeting, 10/11/11

3.2.3 Tackling Environmental Racism in Southwest Fresno

In addition to the healthy land use collaborative, the California Endowment also chose to support the continued struggle over Fresno's most visible environmental injustice: the meat rendering plant in Southwest Fresno. Joining the Concerned Citizens of Southwest Fresno with the land use and environmental justice legal strategies of the California Rural Legal Assistance and the research and organizing efforts of Fresno Metro Ministry, the Concerned Citizens framed the meat rendering plant as evidence of environmental racism and engaged in the more traditional environmental justice tactics of protest and legal strategies to reduce exposure to environmental risks. This effort, however, was separate from the healthy land use collaborative described above, which would later lead to conflict and a weakened agenda when it pertained to affordable housing, as I will describe in the next section.

Beginning first with community meetings to analyze the abatement agreement the City had prepared for the meat rendering plant (see Section 2.3.2), California Rural Legal Assistance submitted formal comments to the City citing the illegal nature of the draft agreement. Gaining the support of the local City Councilman, they organized a Council hearing on April 14, 2011, where nearly 20 residents, property owners, activists, church leaders, and business owners testified as to the nuisances created by the plant. Concerned Citizen Chair Mary Curry launched the testimonies stating "This is not a fair treatment of our community. We would like the rendering plant to comply with the City's land use laws and apply for a Conditional Use Permit."⁷⁶ Sarah Sharpe of Fresno Metro Ministry submitted the map of cumulative environmental impacts (Figure 3.2) as evidence that Southwest was unfairly burdened with the City's unwanted land uses which corresponded with the concentration of people of color and low-income. Finally, a representative from California Rural Legal Assistance noted "The discriminatory impact this City has already had on the community by not enforcing its own laws has gone on for far too long. Continued inaction opens up to liability – in violation of fair housing and civil rights laws."

With the threat of a lawsuit on the horizon, the City hired an environmental justice consultant in the fall of 2011 to interview interested parties and review the facts of the case. Although the consultant's findings were not presented to the public, the outcome was that the City proposed to go into mediation with the plant and the Concerned Citizens, agreeing to a 90-day due diligence phase to identify alternative sites for the Plant and possible funding sources to support the move. The period ended in March of 2012 without a proposed relocation plan (Seaton 2012). Despite continued reassurance from the City that they were nearing a resolution, in the spring of 2012, California Rural Legal Assistance, representing the Concerned Citizens of Southwest Fresno, filed a lawsuit against the City and the rendering plant. Echoing the findings from the cumulative impacts project with UC Davis, in its petition, the Concerned Citizens argued that:

"West Fresno bears a disproportionate burden of the negative effects and various stressors compared to other neighborhoods in the City of Fresno. The community is over-saturated with industrial uses including meat packing and processing plants, waste disposal and recycling facilities, abandoned lots filled with garbage and an airport. West Fresno is economically depressed and is located within CA's 20th congressional district – the sixth poorest congressional

⁷⁶ City Council Hearing, 04/14/11, Fresno CA.

district in the country. This results in residents having less political power, less access to health care, lower incomes and less residential and occupational mobility.” (Seaton 2012, p.10)

On this basis, the Concerned Citizens claimed that the City’s lack of enforcement of its land use regulations was violating California government Code 11135⁷⁷, which protects against discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, color, or disability.

The Endowment’s support for organizing and legal struggle over the meat rendering plant revealed its incorporation of the environmental racism framing as part of the healthy land use agenda. Rather than transforming “systems and policies” however, in this case the initiative sought to enforce existing policies, representing a more traditional environmental justice struggle. Although the environmental racism frame was sufficient to garner local support for action on the plant, it was insufficient for City council to redirect investment or reverse the historic legacy of land use decisions that had created the disproportionate exposures that I described in Chapter 2. Following a Planning Commission meeting, for instance, one representative stated to me “We get it, they’re disproportionately impacted. But the City inherited these problems from the County. I’m just not sure there’s much that we can do about it anymore.”

3.2.4 Healthy Land Use and Affordable Housing

Although the various groups funded by the California Endowment to engage in land use planning and enforcement had similar understanding of inequitable distribution of risks and resources, there remained considerable divergence on certain issues such as affordable housing. Affordable housing is not an issue around which community groups in Fresno converge. Like most actors in Fresno, the Concerned Citizens of Southwest Fresno had adopted the concentrated poverty trope that had dominated discourse since 2005. Within their framing of Southwest as the dumping ground for all of the city’s unwanted land uses, the Concerned Citizens included affordable housing and the siting of subsidized and supportive housing as contributing to rather than countering concentrated poverty. Thus, members of the group protested the location of the HOPE VI housing development in Southwest (Cytron 2009) as well as the siting of a supportive housing complex for the homeless in Chinatown in 2011⁷⁸.

The perspectives of the Concerned Citizens complicated the Building Healthy Communities stance on affordable housing. For instance, when the healthy land use collaborative met with a

⁷⁷ § 11135 states “No person in the State of California shall, on the basis of race, national origin, ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, color, or disability, be unlawfully denied full and equal access to the benefits of, or be unlawfully subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity that is conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, is funded directly by the state, or receives any financial assistance from the state.”

⁷⁸ During a City Council meeting on 8/25/11, the Housing and Community Development Department and the Housing Authority sought authorization of \$1.5 HOME investment funds to build a 69 unit supportive housing complex for very low-income and homeless individuals called the Renaissance at Santa Clara (Nunez 2011). Community members, including some from the Concerned Citizens of West Fresno argued that it was not a healthy place to put such a complex. It would further blight Southwest Fresno and “How do you expect people to recover from addiction if they’re living around it?” Staff from the Downtown and Community Revitalization Department later expressed ambivalence on the issue, arguing that it was in “borderlands” – on the one hand the City needs these facilities, but on the other it isn’t in an optimal location. “Then again, it’s not in a neighborhood, so that makes it better.”

councilman from Southwest Fresno to discuss the City’s planning efforts⁷⁹ and brought up the issue of affordable housing, the Councilman relayed the perspectives of the Concerned Citizens when saying:

“We’re trying to battle so that not all affordable/low-income housing is in Southwest. Requiring a certain percentage of affordable housing can encourage concentrated poverty, and we want to encourage low-income developments throughout the city. My constituents want market rate housing, they want mixed-income communities like the rest of the city.”

Therefore, despite their combined focus on place and even environmental justice concerns, different factions of the Building Healthy Communities Initiative developed differing views on certain issues, especially those pertaining to affordable housing. Groups participating in the healthy land use collaborative, such as Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries, framed affordable housing as a resource, and one that would ensure that upgraded neighborhoods in South Fresno would remain accessible to low-income residents. The Concerned Citizens, however, focused on the toxic nature of concentrated poverty and framed affordable housing as a source of risk that would add crime and further stigmatize the neighborhood. The California Endowment was similarly ambiguous on its stance on affordable housing. In a Resource Guide it published for its grantees, the Endowment advocated for de-concentrating poverty while also preventing displacement through inclusionary zoning (Cantor and Mikkelsen 2010). Thus, the healthy land use frame was left underspecified as it pertained to affordable housing. Health, in this case was used as evidence both for and against affordable housing, illustrating the potential inconsistencies in the framing of Healthy Planning.

3.3 Conclusions

In this Chapter I showed how existing air quality, public health and environmental justice movements have shaped the Building Healthy Communities agenda in Fresno, each adding their own focus to the initiative. The air quality movement was one of the catalyzing forces to creating a Smart Growth agenda in Fresno, focusing mostly on the land use and transportation connection to limit the air quality impacts of growth. Public health practitioners widened this agenda to bring attention to the built environment limitations of existing poor neighborhoods while adding obesity and physical activity to justify the Smart Growth agenda. Finally the environmental justice movements highlighted the racial and social justice dimension to development and government neglect through the lack of enforcement of land use regulations. As summarized in Table 3.1, each of these efforts involved different actors and tactics, while commonly identifying land use planning as a key site of intervention to promote health. While the air quality coalitions relied mostly on policy advocacy and legal strategies, the public health and built environment agenda was focused around building partnerships and increasing community capacity for collaborative planning.

The Building Healthy Communities initiative built on these three movements and drew from the Endowment’s focus on land use as a key “system” in need of change. Although the healthy land use collaborative was framed mostly around increasing access to health promoting resources

⁷⁹ The meeting, held on March 7, 2012 was considered a “research meeting” (see Chapter 5) to recap on the “community wins” from deliberations over the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and to discuss the collaborative’s agenda with the General Plan Update.

through community engagement and capacity building, the Endowment simultaneously funded the Concerned Citizen’s organizing around the meat rendering plant to reduce exposure to health damaging risks through more traditional environmental justice legal strategies. Although diverging over certain issues such as affordable housing, the two main land use efforts of the Building Healthy Communities initiative explicitly defined what they considered to be a healthy and equitable place. In Table 3.2, I organize the various priorities of land use and environmental justice agendas into four categories to aid in the understanding of their formulation. It should be noted that these categories were not explicitly used by actors in the Building Healthy Communities collaborative, but rather my interpretation on how to group their various demands.

Table 3.2 Principles of Fresno’s Health Equity and Land Use Agenda

Reduce risks and address the legacy of environmental racism	Redistribute resources and opportunities	Ensure access to healthy environments	Inclusion and recognition of marginalized voices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clean environments - Control or close polluting plants - Safety - Enforce land use regulations evenly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate infrastructure - Workforce development - Local jobs - Increase the number of parks - Increase retail and recreation opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase affordable housing - Improve transportation - Prevent displacement - Complete neighborhoods - Access to healthy foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address attitudes of institutions that perpetuate inequality and discrimination - Include diverse voices in decision-making

The backgrounds of each of the collaborating organizations in the Building Healthy Communities land use collaborative and their mandate to engage in the planning processes constrained the scope of their agenda. While the priority setting process led to one agenda, it was still rather fragmented and broad, failing to deal with internal inconsistencies (e.g., affordable housing). Thus, contrary to findings from other social movements and environmental justice efforts indicating that single-focus agendas tend to be more successful at achieving results (Toffolon-Weiss 2005), the Endowment chose the more holistic approach similar to the Comprehensive Community Initiatives of the 1990s that resulted in a broad agenda. Other researchers have warned that the broadness of the Environmental Justice frame may be resulting in its decline. In following chapters I analyze the success of this broad agenda to engage in land use planning (Benford 2005). At the same time of funding a broad land use agenda, the Endowment also, however, supported the singly focused agenda of the Concerned Citizen’s efforts to remove the nuisances of the meat rendering plant, taking a multi-pronged approach to advancing health equity through land use planning.

In trying to cover the broad social justice efforts of South Fresno, the Endowment ultimately funded groups that had different interpretations of the importance of affordable housing. I show in the next Chapters how the lack of focus in the Building Healthy Communities frame as well as its construction in reaction to the City’s plans allowed the City’s healthy land use frame to be dominant. Although the selection of land use as a key strategy for achieving the Endowment’s goals was built around the policy window of the upcoming plans, the frame was also influenced by the Endowment’s previous investments and regional policy entrepreneurs around the issues of land use and health. Despite being community-driven in many respects, the Endowment played an important role in the naming and framing of the problems and solutions the Initiative sought to address.

Chapter 4 Incorporating Health into Fresno’s Comprehensive Plans

“The Healthy Communities Element of the General Plan presents Fresno’s overall approach to building a healthy community. Community health is a broad and comprehensive issue that ... includes household income ... and environmental health issues, such as air quality.”

Draft Healthy Communities Element, Fresno General Plan Update (2/1/13, p. 10-1)

“Obesity, concerns over the homeless population, neighborhood crime, and poor air quality (and its associated high levels of lung disease and asthma) are all reasons that Fresno’s decision makers have taken a renewed interest in promoting policies and programs that improve community health.”

Draft Health, Wellness and Community Development Element, Fresno Downtown Neighborhoods and Community Plan (p. 7:2)

In 2011 Fresno was entering a unique moment when the urban agenda was being reoriented from its historic trajectory of sprawl and disinvestment in the urban core to one of increased emphasis on infill development and downtown revitalization to improve the economic, social and physical environments of the city. As best exemplified by the City’s approach to its revitalization plan for the downtown and update of the general plan, City leaders have embraced the concepts of the New Urbanism and Smart Growth design and planning movements as the means to reduce concentrated poverty, stimulate the economy, protect the environment and improve community health.

Following state and national trends to address health in comprehensive plans (APA 2011; ChangeLab Solutions and BARHII 2012), Fresno’s downtown revitalization and general plans now contain health elements in which the City states its vision for healthy communities and outlines policies to achieve those visions, especially as they pertain to land use planning. In this Chapter I ask to what extent does the Healthy Planning frame of Fresno’s comprehensive and land use planning encompass the values of Health Equity as it does in the Building Healthy Communities initiative and what are the factors that enabled or inhibited its inclusion?

Health equity scholars argue that health is a way for policy makers to introduce equity concerns into decision-making, including land use planning, as it provides a less political and more unifying value that most can agree upon (Bhatia 2012; Iton 2006). However, through the analysis of the formulation of Healthy Planning frames for Fresno’s Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and its General Plan Update, I find that built environment policies grounded in New Urbanist and Smart Growth principles are sought to primarily promote economic development and environmental protection. Health-promotion is an add-on, as it is seen as a co-benefit of a predetermined agenda to enhance the City’s economic competitiveness and to comply with state-mandated environmental protection goals. Community health, however, is not pursued for its own right and does little to change the City’s approach to land use planning.

Although some of the Healthy Planning framing incorporated in the two plans can be traced to community input and interests, much of the community engagement in the two planning processes has been in reaction to rather than in the formulation of the plans. This is because of both the timing of the efforts (with the Building Healthy Communities initiative still formulating

its agenda at the time of the initiation of the two plans) and also the nature of the community engagement that the City set out to achieve, as I will describe in Chapter 5. I therefore focus this Chapter on the health framing coming from planners and consultants in the formulations of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan Update and save most of the community voice and engagement for the following Chapter on the public process. However, where there are clear linkages between the two plans and the framing of healthy land use as described in Chapter 4 and I make an effort to highlight them here.

This Chapter is divided in three. In Section 4.1 I trace the emergence of the New Urbanist downtown revitalization plan to City leadership's concerns about concentrated poverty and economic development. Relying on theories of the social benefits of mixed-income neighborhoods, revitalization leaders pursued a path of modernizing the physical environment to attract higher income residents and raise property values. Health goals are included when they support this agenda. Although the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan contains a Health and Wellness element, it was initiated by the equity interests of outside consultants rather than City leadership. Therefore, policies that the consultant included to address community concerns that were perceived to counter the poverty deconcentration and economic development goals of the City were subsequently removed from the plan before it is released to the public.

In Section 4.2 I trace the sustainability drivers that influenced the update of the General Plan with Smart Growth principles. Smart Growth leaders, who had a longer history of collaboration with public health practitioners, included language in the General Plan that implied an understanding of health disparities and its relationships to inequalities in social, economy and physical environments. Yet the emphasis of the General Plan's health element centered on citywide built environment measures rather than focusing on identifying and targeting communities in need.

Finally, in Section 4.3 I compare the health framing coming from the City's land use plans and evaluate them against the health equity parameters established by the Building Healthy Communities initiative (see Section 3.3): redistribution of health resources, reduction of health risks, inclusion, and addressing the legacy of environmental injustices. I find that the health framings of the City's plans are very similar insofar as they address access to resources, community participation, and reducing pollution levels related to vehicular travel, which is consistent with the underlying Smart Growth and New Urbanist logics that they are based on. However, where they differ is in their language on inequality, which I attribute to the different geographic scales they cover, leadership's history of collaboration with the public health practitioners, and the presence of organized equity constituencies at the time of their initiation.

Although advocates try to reframe planning around issues of equity (see Section 3.2), Fresno planners operate in a conservative institutional environment in which they feel that their primary goals of controlling sprawl and attracting investment in downtown are fragile. When policies that would redistribute investments, constrain development, rectify past injustices or impose additional cost on the government were introduced, they are removed or dismissed due to perceived conflicts with economic development, as well as the fiscal, political and regulatory constraints of planning. Therefore, I find that the inclusion of health goals in land use planning was insufficient to guarantee the adoption of equity measures into land use planning efforts.

4.1 Downtown Revitalization to Create Healthy Communities

“If you were the CEO and the city was a business, and you were to look out over your entire business and see that at its core there was a 7,000 acre area of concentrated poverty that consumes the vast majority of services and public resources, and yet it returns only a fraction of what it’s costing to provide those services. If you were a business owner, what would you do?”

Mayor Ashley Swearengin, State of Downtown, January 31st, 2012

The same concentrated poverty report of 2005 that reinvigorated the community development movement in Fresno, which I discussed in Chapter 2, has also been attributed with inspiring the City’s newfound efforts to revitalize its inner core. This is not the first time that Fresno has tried to revitalize its downtown. In fact, one could argue that the City has been trying to revitalize the downtown since its 1960s urban renewal plans that created the pedestrian Fulton Mall, rezoned swaths of downtown neighborhoods to high density and created the blueprint of the highway ring around the core – a plan that is now being blamed for the city’s decline. Others note that efforts have been disjointed, unfocused, counteracted by simultaneous sprawling investments or relied too heavily on misguided revitalization theories that centered on the investment in big catalyst projects such as a baseball stadium, convention center, and medical center (Hostetter 2012). While recounting the full details on Fresno’s efforts and failures at downtown revitalization is outside the scope of this Chapter, it’s important to recall from Chapter 2 that during the previous mayoral administration of Alan Autry (2001-2009) downtown revitalization had been cast as a means to reduce inequality in the City. Furthermore, the publication of the concentrated poverty report in 2005 reinvigorated downtown revitalization, which was seen as imperative to addressing concentrated poverty.

When Fresno’s current mayor, Ashley Swearengin, ran for office in 2008, she adopted the Autry Administration’s emphasis on downtown revitalization. The focus on downtown revitalization was furthered supported by the promise of economic development from the future High Speed Rail station. Swearengin ran on a platform of fiscal responsibility, efficiency, and the creation of “safe and quality neighborhoods to reverse the problems associated with concentrated poverty” (Swearengin 2008). Making downtown revitalization core to her vision for a prosperous Fresno, upon entering office in 2009 she transformed the Economic Development Department into the Department of Downtown and Community Revitalization [Revitalization Department from here forward], which had broad economic development and planning responsibilities focusing on the southern parts of the city. Following past revitalization efforts and recommendations (Urban Land Institute 1999; Downtown Improvement Group 2003), Swearengin also appointed a “downtown Czar” to lead the effort, naming Craig Scharton, former City Councilman and longtime downtown booster, to the position.

4.1.1 New Urbanism to Revitalize Downtown Fresno

During his tenure as City councilman in the late 1980s, Scharton was responsible for spearheading a community planning effort for the historic Tower District, just North of Downtown Fresno. The efforts resulted in a specific plan, design guidelines and preservation of historic properties to revitalize the neighborhood. Through the process, Scharton began to see the ways that “poor” land use planning can “destroy the fabric of a neighborhood” by inappropriately zoning parcels, resulting in reduced property values, disinvestment and the flight

of the middle class. Upon joining the Swearingin administration in 2009, Scharton built on the paradigm of New Urbanism (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2001; PAS 2004) that saw land use planning and “suburban rules”⁸⁰ as perpetuating sprawl and suburban development, and applied them to the inner city. For instance, in a report to Council the Revitalization Department attributed downtown disinvestment to “suburban rules”:

“Under City land use laws adopted over several decades, Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods have been subject to suburban rules that were adopted on a citywide basis, leading to Downtown developer frustration and disinvestment. These rules make it:

- Difficult to get projects approved because the laws are unclear, sometimes contradictory, and subject to interpretation.
- Hard to build well designed projects, but easy to build poorly designed projects that hurt property values in historic neighborhoods.
- Impossible to know the quality of future development Downtown or in surrounding neighborhoods, leading property owners to avoid making investments that would add value to the area over time.” (Quan 2010)

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, the Urban Renewal Plan of the 1960s rezoned large swaths of Downtown Fresno from single to multi-family, making many historic homes in the area non-conforming. Therefore, any additions or upgrades to the property would require a zoning amendment or variance that was tedious and costly. Furthermore, uncertainty remained as to how the rest of the neighborhood would develop given the zoning. Scharton later explained the relationship between the suburban rules and concentrated poverty to me when he stated:

“It just destroys the fabric of the neighborhood, and then you ask ‘how come these neighborhoods failed?’ Well, the neighborhood didn’t fail, the planning failed. So you lose your mixed income neighborhood because you drive away all the middle class and upper middle class people. It’s a real mess. So undoing all of that is the trick, and that’s what we’re doing in the plan.”

Following on this belief, when Scharton was brought in to spearhead the Revitalization Department, one of his primary strategies was to fix the land use planning problems that he saw as barriers to investment. Drawing on the New Urbanist logic that a dense, well-designed, mixed-use neighborhood would enhance the image, livability and land values of the neighborhood, the Department began a process in 2009 to transform the commercial/employment corridor of the downtown -the Fulton Mall- and the surrounding 7300 acres of downtown neighborhoods through the initiation of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the associated new form-based development code. The form-based code, which would serve to implement the plan, had been promoted by New Urbanists as a means to achieving more walkable, vibrant neighborhoods (PAS 2004). Proponents argue that form based codes allow for a more cohesive visual environment and land use mix by regulating the form of buildings, their interface with the street and allowing for a diversity of uses to occupy the land (e.g., retail, light manufacturing, residential). This “placemaking,” they argue, will result in neighborhoods that are more accessible, walkable, safe due to increased occupancy of the public sphere, and attractive, reactivating the community and social capital in the neighborhood (Talen 1999). Therefore, the strategy chosen by the Revitalization Department revealed their strong beliefs in planning as both the culprit for urban

⁸⁰ The types of suburban rules he saw as the culprit to disinvestment were things like landscape setbacks, traffic engineering standards that forced street widening, separation of land uses, the absence of design guidelines, and the like.

decline and the solution for renewal, putting urban form and the built environment at the center of efforts to rid the City of its reputation for concentrated poverty.

In its search for a consultant to prepare the plans, the Department sought a firm with experience in form based codes and downtown revitalization. Ultimately they selected Moule & Polyzoides, Architects and Urbanists. Moule & Polyzoides is the firm of Stefanos Polyzoides – a co-founder of the Congress for New Urbanism. Consequently, the plan draft encompassed many if not all of the principles of the New Urbanist movement described by its charter (see Section 1.1.2), such as its focus on mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods, walkability, enhancement of the public realm, community centers, multi-modal transit network, and historic preservation (CNU 1996; City of Fresno 2011b).

The design and physically deterministic philosophy of New Urbanism was consistently linked to economic and social development goals throughout the planning process. The underlying logic was that “better planning” that made development more predictable and invested in public infrastructure would encourage private investment and upgrade the built environment. This would revitalize the downtown economy by creating jobs and attracting the creative class who desire an urban lifestyle rich with amenities. The addition of wealthier residents to the downtown neighborhoods would in turn attract businesses and the creative class that would increase the city’s tax base allowing it to provide better services. When I asked how this would benefit the existing communities and poor residents living in the urban core, revitalization staff would invoke mixed-income theories and explain that new development and wealthier residents would bring better amenities, jobs and even role-modeling behaviors that would lift people out of poverty⁸¹. Following this logic, almost any investment in Downtown Fresno was framed as being socially just (Hostetter 2012).

4.1.2 Framing Health for the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan

When the six organizations participating in the Building Healthy Communities collaborative held a public event in the fall of 2011 to introduce their agenda for achieving healthier and more equitable communities (see Section 5.2.1), they asked the Mayor and select councilmen how they would represent the community’s priorities. To this question, the Mayor answered, “by implementing the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan”⁸².

Ideas about how the physical development of the downtown neighborhoods could improve community health had been established since the initiation of the revitalization plan. In fact, the mission of the Revitalization Department was to “restore the historic neighborhoods that encircle Downtown Fresno into healthy, mixed-income communities” (City of Fresno 2010a). What a healthy community meant, however, was not defined. In fact, in a later conversation with revitalization staff, I learned that they had yet to determine how to evaluate the health of a neighborhood or the success of revitalization. Would it be property values? Trees? Physical

⁸¹ Theories that have been discredited by a number of different scholars, as summarized recently by Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber (2007). In fact some researchers have found that living in a neighborhood with people of a higher income group increases stress, depression and undermines physical health, counteracting the potentially positive benefits hypothesized by sociologists (Luttmer 2005).

⁸² Building Healthy Communities Action, Fresno Convention Center, October 11th, 2011

health? School attendance? Test scores? Crime? How you define what a healthy community looks like determines what measures success, they explained. Thus the health of a community was left vague. Instead, and as specified in the Staff report to authorize the planning process, the Revitalization Department highlighted the expected outcomes of the plan in terms of its fiscal benefits to property owners and tax income to the City as a means to justify its cost:

“New legally adopted Plans in California frequently lead to an increase in property values upon adoption. In addition to putting value in the pockets of property owners and residents, the potential return to government from this increase in property values is significant...A 5% increase in property values resulting from the Plans would more than pay City government back for the cost of developing them.” (Quan 2010)

Despite its use of the word health in its goals and assurance that their work would lead to healthier neighborhoods, when the Revitalization Department put out its Request for Qualifications and Request for Proposals for a planning consultant, there was no mention of health or the relationship between the plan and the health of neighborhood residents (The City of Fresno 2009a; The City of Fresno 2010). Nevertheless, one of the 15 sub-consultants for the plan was Raimi + Associates, a firm based in Berkeley, CA that was building its practice in Healthy Planning⁸³. In its contract with the City of Fresno, Raimi + Associates included an optional task of conducting a Health Impact Assessment⁸⁴. By all accounts, City staff welcomed this, but they did not have the resources to fund such a task⁸⁵.

In 2010 Raimi+ Associates set out to collect data for a Health Impact Assessment, having independently secured funding from a professor at UC Berkeley that worked on Health Impact Assessments and the Local Government Commission, a Sacramento-based non-profit that had been actively involved in Smart Growth and Healthy Planning movements. Following a summer of data collection, including meetings with City planners, staff at the Department of Public Health, neighborhood stakeholder groups, as well as two workshops with participants of the Building Healthy Communities initiative, Raimi+Associates organized the Health Impact Assessment around issues related to 1) physical activity, 2) diet and nutrition, 3) environmental pollution, and 4) social/economic stability. The Health Impact Assessment found that issues related to neighborhood walkability and bikeability, access to goods and services (including healthy foods), improved public transportation and access to public spaces for physical activity were well incorporated into the New Urbanist blueprint for the plan (Raimi + Associates and Glaser 2011).

The assessment of the plan’s impacts on environmental hazards and socioeconomic stability were less promising however. For instance, the Health Impact Assessment found that the plan’s call for market rate housing would further burden and “likely result in permanent or temporary displacement” of low-income residents in the downtown areas. To address the equity implications of the plan, therefore, the Health Impact Assessment recommended measures to

⁸³ Matt Raimi, the firm’s principal explained to me “we always think about health in the work that we do.” In fact Raimi had already worked on a number of health elements (Raimi + Associates 2013) and co-wrote a toolkit on how to include health in city plans (Stair et al. 2012).

⁸⁴ A student from UC Berkeley Department of Public Health and City Planning, Meredith Glaser, was later hired to conduct the Health Impact Assessment. I provided her with feedback on several drafts of the Assessment.

⁸⁵ Raimi+Associates secured funding from UC Berkeley and the Local Government Commission to carry out the work.

ensure more affordable housing, support living wages, prevent residential and business displacement, and hire local residents (Raimi + Associates and Glaser 2011). This was in line with the growing sentiment of the organizations participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative (see Section 3.2.2), which were consulted for the Impact Assessment. Therefore, in many ways the inclusion of these recommendations emerged from the concerns of community based organizations and the Building Healthy Communities initiative.

In the process of preparing the Health Impact Assessment, Raimi + Associates began to develop a Health and Wellness Element for the Administrative Draft of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan. The consultants gathered the information from the workshops with community groups and the participatory charrette process (see Section 5.1.2) to formulate goals and policies for the Element that reflected community needs. Therefore, the first draft of the Health and Wellness Element included a number of goals, policies and actions to address the lack of opportunities and amenities in the City's Southern neighborhoods (Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists 2010). A key component of the Administrative Draft of the Health and Wellness Element was the redistribution of investments, programming and services. For instance, the goal to eliminate concentrated poverty was described as follows:

“To rectify current socioeconomic conditions and past injustices on the residents of downtown... through broad-based public and private initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of the problem - addressing the quality of education, access to government and equitable public spending.” (p. 3:27)

To carry this out, a policy was included to “require City programs and services are equitably distributed throughout the entire city” and to “ensure that programs and services meet the diverse needs in the community” (3:27). This policy indicated that the consultants were adopting the language and concerns of the community groups they consulted (as well as their previous experiences working on Health Elements in other communities), who viewed the disinvestment in the city's Southern neighborhoods as a sign of disinterest, neglect and injustice. The plan, therefore, would serve as a means to address such injustices.

To ensure that current residents would benefit from the future redevelopment of the plan area, the consultants also included policies to “achieve an equal access to opportunity for downtown residents” and “require employees ... be provided a living wage, health insurance and paid sick days” in the administrative draft. Responding to concerns about displacement, the consultants included the goal to “support the provision of new and retention of existing affordable housing in the Downtown Neighborhoods” and included policies to explore the creation of a rent control program and inclusionary zoning. Finally, in response to continued concerns about residential proximity to industrial land uses, the consultants included several measures to minimize exposures such as “using the precautionary principle, new industrial uses or significantly expanded operations, must prove there is no significant negative impact to the health or quality of life of residents” through the use of health impact checklists or assessments.

Many of the ideas included in the draft of the Health and Wellness Element could be directly traced to the stakeholder meetings and community workshops the consultants held to prepare for the plan (see Section 5.1.2). In particular, community development activists from Southwest Fresno talked about injustices in the distribution of infrastructure and service throughout the city (see Section 3.1.2). The community groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative expressed their desire for local jobs, affordable housing, equitable investments and anti-

displacement measures (see Section 3.2.2). Using the community input, as well as their pre-existing health and social justice frames, the consultants used the opportunity of the Health and Wellness Element as the place to address many of the health equity concerns of community groups and transform them into actionable goals and policies. Nevertheless, and as explained to me by one of the consultants, the “community often wants more programs and interventions than cities can or are willing to undertake.” Therefore, the administrative draft was seen as a way to introduce these ideas and push the edge of what the city might normally undertake.

4.1.3 Tensions between Revitalization and Health Equity

When the administrative draft of the revitalization plan was circulated to staff in October of 2010, it contained many policies to promote health equity in the Health and Wellness Element that were raised by stakeholders, but were not necessarily embraced by the City administration. In this Section I describe how staff responded to statements about inequality and redistribution that uncover the political and fiscal limitations constraining the incorporation of health equity into planning processes. Specifically, the administration was resistant to the inclusion of health equity in the plan because of 1) their aversion to perceived accusation of equity and justice language, 2) investment prioritization schemes based on use rather than needs, 3) a narrow understanding of the role of government and planning, 4) a reluctance to impose any additional costs on development, and 5) a desire to deconcentrate poverty.

The main issue that the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan sought to rectify was not inequality per se, but the downtown’s poor image and the “impacts of concentrated poverty.” Although City staff would openly state in public meetings that the conditions of South Fresno were a result of government neglect and even the “public subsidy” of North Fresno, City staff and some officials resisted any language that implied equity, redistribution or justice⁸⁶. For instance, in response to some of the language in the administrative draft about “rectifying past injustices” and ensuring “fair allocation of resources,” City staff commented, “what is meant by fair?” “the term injustices appears rather strong,” and “unnecessarily accusatory” (City of Fresno 2010c).

Resistance to ideas about the redistribution of resources was not limited to explicit language, but was also embedded in the City’s culture and how it did business. Although the intentions of the plan were to encourage investment in the downtown areas, the City has been in a constant state of fiscal crisis since the housing market crash in 2007. Therefore investment in Downtown Fresno was sought through Federal funding, encouraging private investment, or creating assessment districts, rather than using the dwindling General Fund. Where issues of redistributing the City’s General Fund dollars were mentioned, I observed active resistance by staff that felt constrained by the City’s public spending policies and norms. For instance, decisions about street investments were prioritized based on traffic volumes, therefore automatically biasing investment towards the city’s Northern neighborhoods. When discussing the lack of infrastructure investment in South Fresno with a staff member from the Department of Public Works, I was told, “you get what you pay for.”

⁸⁶ The Administrative Draft was circulated to all agencies in the City government. When I refer to comments by “City staff,” I do not specify departments so as not to identify specific people or agencies so as to protect the identity of my key informants.

City staff saw other elements of the administrative draft of the Health and Wellness Element as beyond the City's responsibility. For instance, in response to wording on increasing access to opportunities through living wage, health insurance and paid sick days (p. 3:28), planners commented:

“The City has a role in good design and planning not in delivering health or social services”

“Is this a planning document or a social document?”

“No social engineering”(City of Fresno 2010c)

Therefore, tensions over the precise role of government and specifically planning limited what the administration felt it could achieve with the plan. Contestation over the role of planning can be traced back to the origins of the field itself, not just in Fresno. A strong line of theorization and action has supported the role of social planning (e.g., equity planning, advocacy planning and community development). Staff, however, aligned with the more physical notion of planning, coinciding with the New Urbanist view of the world that centers on the physical environment.

Despite wanting “mixed-income” communities, City staff also resisted any affordable housing measures that might ensure the accessibility of such neighborhoods to lower income residents in the future. In response to suggestions about rent control and inclusionary zoning, staff argued for its removal and expressed anxiety that applying such policies to the downtown area would only reinforce concentrated poverty. For instance, in response to the inclusionary zoning action, one staff member commented, “How do we ensure [affordable housing] is in the General Plan and future community plans for other areas of the City, particularly Northwest and Northeast Fresno?” Staff of the Revitalization Department articulated this logic when explaining the plan to a local reporter:

“Allowing neighborhoods to deteriorate into centers of concentrated poverty drains public resources. We must rebuild these neighborhoods so that they are safe and desirable. Poor neighborhoods only attract more poverty.” (McEwen 2009)

When community groups, such as Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries used the Health Impact Assessment as evidence to support their request for affordable housing, City staff claimed to never have seen the report and discounted the research as coming from Berkeley liberals, despite the fact that the assessment was prepared by the same consulting firm that prepared the policies of the plan. Therefore expert knowledge that did not appear to align with the City's agenda to deconcentrate poverty was dismissed.

The preoccupation with concentrated poverty also motivated measure “7.11.1: Avoid concentrations of social services in any one subarea of the Downtown Neighborhoods.”⁸⁷ It's important to note that this sentiment against concentrated poverty and services was shared by many equity advocates, including some of the groups working on the Building Healthy Communities initiative (see Section 3.2.4). During public meetings a number of advocates congratulated the city in its fight against concentrated poverty and supported the Department's focus on the need for higher income housing. Others, such as Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries, however, believed that access to services needed to be enhanced in poor neighborhoods, not reduced.

⁸⁷ (Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists 2011) P. 7:7

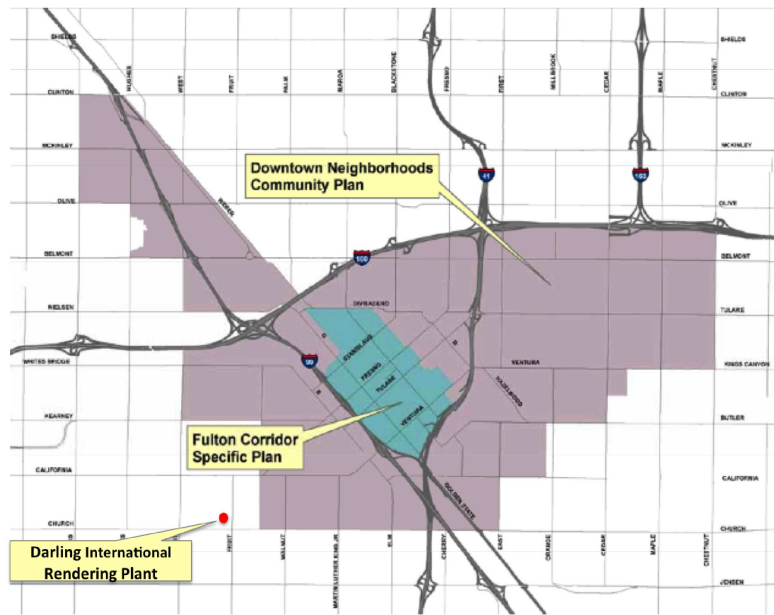


Figure 4.1 Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan Boundary

In addressing exposure to hazardous pollution, City staff resisted any actions that could deter investment or cost the City money. For instance, actions such as “Prepare a “Health Impact” checklist to review the impacts of proposed development was perceived to contradict the plan’s goals of streamlining the entitlement process and were contrary to budget proposals. Despite the widespread understanding that most industrial and unwanted land uses were located in South Fresno, the Plan boundary was carefully drawn to exclude the city’s most notorious environmental injustice: the meat rendering plant discussed in detail in Chapter 2 (Figure 4.1). When asked repeatedly by residents and activists from Southwest Fresno to extend the boundaries to include the plant, Revitalization Department staff justified their decisions to exclude the plant because of the budget, timing and the incompatibility of uses. Specifically, staff explained to me that extending the boundary would include larger lots and newer structures that did not fit with the physical agenda of the plan. In fact, when asked how they determined the plan boundaries, revitalization staff explained that the boundary was based on the age of the housing stock. They were building on the physical strength and historic character of the area, reinforcing the idea that it was the physical rather than a social plan.

4.1.4 The Public Draft of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan

In response to the staff concerns expressed above, the consultants adjusted the plan and presented the public draft during the summer of 2011. Much like the administrative draft, the emphasis was on creating walkable, mixed-use, and accessible neighborhoods. Thus, the draft plan stated that healthy communities consist of:

“Well-maintained sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and a pedestrian scaled walking environment ... The design of the Downtown Neighborhoods and Downtown Fresno support positive lifestyle choices and behaviors that support health, prevent disease and enhance longevity for current and future residents” (p. 7:3)

Particularly strong were the policies to support the production of and access to healthy foods

(e.g., permit community gardens, pursue new farmers markets, incentivize new grocery stores, etc.) as well as limiting the siting of unhealthy foods (e.g., drive-through fast food) and liquor stores. In addition, and as mentioned above, policies related to improving land use and transportation decisions that could increase physical activity and reduce air pollution were uncontroversial and preserved for the public draft. During public workshops and other planning meetings these same actions were justified in terms of their benefits for enhancing property values and economic development. For instance, in response to residents' concerns that the plan was becoming too focused on streets, revitalization staff told the audience that businesses care about streets and would be more likely to locate in neighborhoods that had an attractive public sphere. Therefore, it appeared that economic development was the key concern of the plan and to the extent that health goals coincided with economic development strategies they were supported.

Many of the controversial elements commented on in Section 4.1.3, however, were eliminated prior to the release of the public draft. For instance, the public draft contained no language on rent control, inclusionary zoning, living wages, justice or equity. The emphasis on the built environment was not, however, to the complete exclusion of "social elements" in the Health and Wellness Element. For instance, the issue of community engagement in decision-making was frequently raised during the planning process and seen as important to achieving healthy places. However, and as I will describe in Chapter 5, the intentions of this engagement did not necessarily align with the empowerment goals of the Building Healthy Communities collaborative. Other issue areas that were brought up from stakeholder input that made it into the public draft of the plan include:

- Identify funds to support institutions and non-profits dedicated to job creation, job retention and workforce training in downtown neighborhoods.
- Minimize residents' exposure to pesticides, toxic materials and other carcinogens.
- Support transit improvements that improve access to health care facilities.

When health equity goals did not conflict with the New Urbanist and revitalization logic of attracting wealthier residents, incentivizing development, and increasing property values, uncontroversial elements to promote health equity such as increasing neighborhood walkability and workforce development remained. Also relatively uncontroversial was the need for more community engagement in planning, which consistently emerged from both the concerns of community groups and City staff alike, which I will explore in greater detail in Chapter 5. However, when health equity goals appeared to conflict with economic development arguments, such as the idea of adding additional oversight to study the health impacts of developments, they were removed. Finally, anxieties about the City's reputation for concentrated poverty justified planners' efforts to keep out additional social services and affordable housing from the downtown neighborhoods, resulting in an exclusionary ethic.

4.2 Smart Growth Planning for Health

As discussed in Chapter 2, the City's efforts to revitalize its older neighborhoods have been consistently undermined by sprawling new developments to the North. Therefore, land use planning and the containment of sprawl have frequently emerged as a necessary component to revitalization as well as a solution to a wide range of other problems in Fresno, from an

unbalanced budget to farmland preservation and economic development. Despite rhetoric about the relationship between sprawl, poverty and city expenditures that emerged in the 1970s, development in Fresno continued on the outskirts through the following decades (Figure 2.3). Concerns about sprawl never disappeared from Fresno politics however, and even though debates about density and urban expansion frequently re-emerged, growth politics prevailed (Arax 1994).

This began to change in the 1990s with the influence of the Smart Growth movement and the emergence of a coalition of San Joaquin Valley business and agricultural interests⁸⁸, which began to advocate for more compact growth in Fresno (GAA 1998). Growth management efforts in Fresno have also been influenced by state and federal efforts to stimulate regional planning for sustainability purposes. In 2005, the California Department of Transportation funded the Regional Blueprint Planning program in the San Joaquin Valley to encourage land use and transportation decisions that would reduce air pollution and congestion (Barbour and Teitz 2006). The Blueprint, finalized in 2009, focused on the densities at which each county in the region should develop and included a set of Smart Growth principles to guide future planning. With the Blueprint in hand, San Joaquin Valley leaders searched for funds to implement Smart Growth planning in the Valley's urban areas. Awarded the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities grants in October 2010, a coalition of 14 cities in the San Joaquin Valley set out to update their plans with the Blueprint's vision⁸⁹. In Fresno, the Department of Development and Resource Management [Planning Department from here forward] decided to focus their sustainability efforts on updating the general plan and an overhaul of the zoning code with Smart Growth principles.

Fresno's General Plan Update and efforts to curb sprawl have been justified by City leadership with a number of interrelated goals including: 1) preservation of agricultural land and therefore the base of the local economy, 2) maintaining the fiscal solvency of the city, which has been continually drained by servicing the sprawling urban area, 3) curbing emissions of local air pollutants while helping to meet state wide goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and 4) reinvesting in existing communities to support the revitalization efforts that would address concentrated poverty while boosting the local economy (Swearengen 2012). In their Request for Proposals for consulting services, the Planning Department summarized the many goals of infusing sustainability and Smart Growth principles into the General Plan when stating:

“Our expectation ... is that if we systematically apply Smart Growth and Livability Principles...we and subsequent generations of Fresnans ...will ultimately reap substantial economic, environmental, social and fiscal sustainability rewards.” (The City of Fresno 2010)

The goal was to increase development densities and redirect growth to infill areas, while promoting “complete neighborhoods” that are walkable and accessible in new developments. The means to achieving this vision would be an update of the land use regulating map, an

⁸⁸ Called the Growth Alternatives Alliance (GAA) composed of the Fresno Business Council, American Farmland Trust, Fresno Farm Bureau, Chamber of Commerce and the Building Industries Association, and with funding from the James Irvine Foundation

⁸⁹ The Smart Valley Places program, formally launched in early 2011 would fund fourteen of the Valley's largest cities to implement plans that would advance sustainability and Smart Growth principles, including such activities as general plan updates, climate action plans, downtown revitalization, healthy communities and wellness plans, transit oriented development and high speed rail station plans, zoning updates, form based codes and design elements.

overhaul of the zoning code, and an associated set of policies. In a draft that was circulated in the summer of 2012, staff included 17 goals that would guide the policies of the plan. The first four goals were:

- 1) *Increase opportunity, economic development business and job creation.* Use urban form, land use and Development code policies to streamline permit approval, promote local excellence, increase business development, attract and retain talented people, create jobs and sustained economic growth, strategically locate employment lands and facilities, and avoid oversaturation of a single type of housing, retail or employment.
 - 2) *Support a successful and competitive downtown.* Emphasize infill development and a revitalized central core area as the primary activity center for Fresno by locating substantial growth near the Downtown core.
 - 3) *Emphasize conservation, successful adaptation to climate and changing resource conditions...required for the long term sustainability of Fresno.*
 - 4) *Emphasize achieving healthy air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.*
- (City of Fresno 2012, p. 29).

All of these goals required higher densities and more compact developments, which would become the main focus of the General Plan update during the first year of deliberation. In a concept paper on urban form, the Planning Department analyzed the future population growth of the city and the land needed to accommodate such growth. Fresno, the document stated, simply did not have enough land, even with the City's large sphere of influence (City of Fresno 2011d). To accommodate the future population, and to do so in a sustainable manner that would not exhaust resources, would support downtown and comply with the state of California's new climate change regulations, they would need to grow more densely. The key, therefore, would be to infill existing urban areas with housing and reduce the amount of farmland consumed by new developments. How would this relate to poverty, some stakeholders would ask? By restricting where growth could occur, planners argued, they would be creating more demand to develop in older, existing neighborhoods where poor people lived, upgrading neighborhoods and making them mixed-income. Furthermore, the Smart Growth strategy was seen as a way to reign in growing expenditures on services to the outlying neighborhoods, freeing up the General Fund to address issues in poorer neighborhoods. Finally, agriculture was the base of the economy. Therefore by protecting farmland they were protecting jobs. The Planning Department therefore relied on the alignment between a number of frames that converged around density, direction of growth and design of developments.

4.2.1 The Built Environment and Health Agenda of the General Plan

“Although the updated General Plan will be intended to cover the city's development through 2035, in the current context of a poor economy and public resistance to any more taxes, it may be difficult to call for new services or obligations to support community health programs. As a consequence, enhancements to community health that align with other objectives or simply require an adjustment to an existing policy or an expansion of an existing program may be the most efficient and easiest to implement as they will provide multiple benefits in the most cost-effective way.” Healthy Communities Working Paper (City of Fresno 2011e)

As described in Chapter 3, in 2007, public health practitioners in Fresno had identified Smart Growth planning as a priority in efforts to increase physical activity and had begun to engage local planners to consider health in their work. Assistant director of planning, Keith Bergthold

was among Fresno staff that participated in the Building Healthy Neighborhoods Task Force. In 2009 the City adopted a resolution⁹⁰ supporting the collaboration between the City and County to incorporate public health strategies into land use, transportation and community design planning (City of Fresno 2009). Therefore, when the Planning Department began the process to update the City's General Plan in 2011, an alliance between the public health and the Smart Growth agendas had already been established and the Planning Department included the development of a healthy communities element in its work plan with consultants (Dugan 2010).

The emphasis in deliberations and planning documents was on the co-benefits of the Smart Growth goals of the plan, which would increase the walkability of neighborhoods, access to health resources, and reduce driving and air pollution, thereby improving community health opportunities. As explained in the Healthy Communities Working Paper:

“Community design objectives that prioritize infill, revitalization of Downtown, preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods, and protection of surrounding agricultural land also are in harmony with healthy community priorities, such as increasing the ability to walk or bike for daily errands and improving perceptions of safety in all neighborhoods.” (City of Fresno 2011e)

The ancillary health benefits of the Smart Growth agenda was therefore focused on increasing access to health-promoting goods and services, designing developments to encourage physical activity and reducing air pollution. In this sense the health-framing coming from the General Plan Update was very much in line with that of the Health and Wellness Element of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan in terms of seeking health strategies that were aligned with economic development and environmental protection strategies.

Also similar to the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan was the emphasis on community engagement and partnerships to enhance community health. For instance, the first objective of the Healthy Communities Element draft was to work with residents and other stakeholders on community health initiatives. The first implementing policy to achieve this objective was:

“Promote the establishment of formal and self-sufficient ‘neighborhood associations’ of local residents, businesses and institutions who are committed to working together and with others in Fresno to achieve the health, safety, recreation, employment, business development, property maintenance and other goals of their neighborhoods.” (City of Fresno 2013)

Thus community engagement was identified as a central element to achieving healthy communities. This recognition fell in line with the viewpoint of community groups as well as the growing Healthy Planning paradigm which saw participation and partnerships as key to achieving greater equity. As I will describe in Chapter 5, Bergthold was also a strong supporter of such an approach. Having come from the faith-based community organizing field prior to his work in the Planning Department, Bergthold was actively trying engage residents, stakeholders and the Building Healthy Communities initiative in the planning process and saw community capacity building as being key to advancing the Smart Growth agenda in Fresno and across the valley.

4.2.2 Acknowledging Health Disparities

“Also critical to the justification of planning for healthy communities is an understanding of the impact of health disparities. Health disparities are differences in health outcomes (injury, illness,

⁹⁰ A strategy that was being promoted by policy entrepreneurs like Public Health Law and Policy out of Oakland, that had provided technical assistance to the Fresno Department of Public Health.

and death) between different groups of people. There is broad agreement in the literature that people who live in more socially and economically disadvantaged areas are in worse health than those living in more prosperous areas.” Healthy Communities Element (City of Fresno 2013)

Not only did the Healthy Communities working paper (and later Healthy Communities Element) of the General Plan discuss the more traditional links between the built environment and health deficiencies throughout the metropolitan areas, but it also mapped out the distribution of certain health determinants (e.g., health care facilities and parks) and related the disparities in environmental conditions to disparities in health. Through the analysis of access to medical services, educational attainment, poverty, access to parks and grocery stores, public transit and liquor stores, the planning team found a dearth of health-promoting resources and an overabundance of risks (e.g., liquor stores) in the southern, poorer parts of the city (Figure 4.2). This understanding of the relationship between deficiencies in the built environment with health disparities had been previously cultivated by the planners’ relationships with the public health practitioners. In comparison to the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, the General plan had to address the entire city rather than a single neighborhood or homogeneously poor region, lending itself to more comparative assessments. When asked about any resistance he might have faced when using language on disparities, Bergthold told me “We’re just telling the facts. You can’t argue with that.”

Although few of the policies developed for the Healthy Communities Element were targeted to specific geographies or social groups, some did identify the consideration of community needs when prioritizing investments and programming such as:

- Update property maintenance standards, which should be complemented by an improvement program in targeted neighborhood areas with high concentrations of substandard and poorly maintained rental properties (HC-4-c),
- Healthy grocery incentives and study suitable sites for grocery store development focusing on neighborhood areas with little or no access (HC-5-a),
- Continue safe routes to school programs, which should identify schools and neighborhoods where the program is most needed (HC-6-a),
- Prioritization system for park improvements based on public health, safety and recreation goals, prioritizing gaps in local park service areas (HC-7-a)
- Improve mobility for carless populations by connecting all neighborhoods to major destinations (HC-2-d).

Nevertheless, the Planning Department’s need to create a framework for the entire city resulted in the majority of policies being general in scope through city-wide standards. Thus, the constraints of the mandate of the general plan, to plan for the entire city, in many ways homogenized the policies and goals, treating all places as equal and the same, while at the same time acknowledging that they’re not. Although the department recognized the different needs and circumstances of places, it was reluctant to create specified policies or priorities due to its needs to cover the entire city, rendering the policies in the plan largely placeless and raceless.

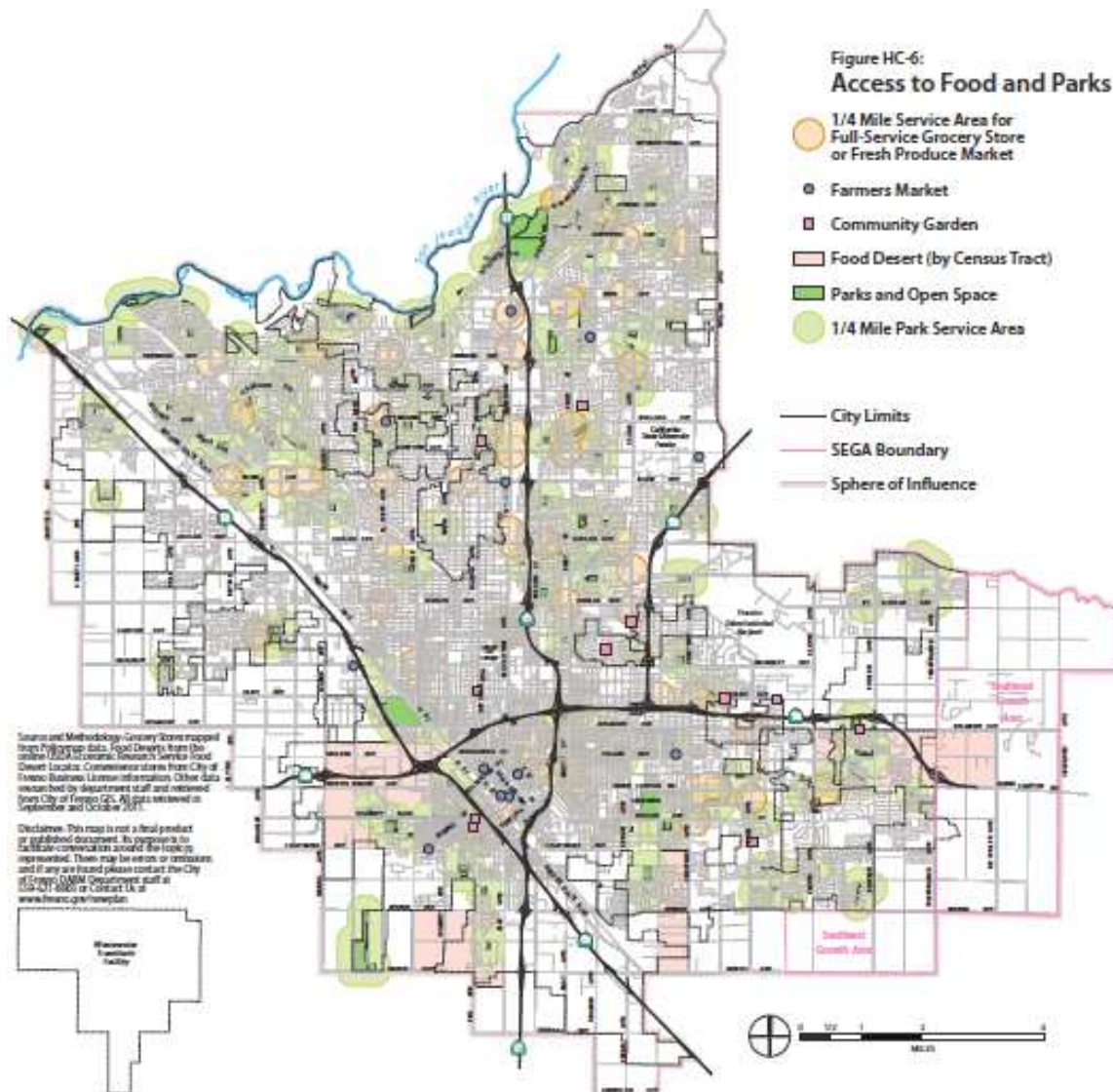


Figure 4.2 Spatial Distribution of Food and Parks Access

Source: Healthy Communities Element of the General Plan Update (City of Fresno 2013)

Planning staff was, however, responsive to the claims of the Building Healthy Communities collaborative and recognized the need to focus on existing communities. For instance, the original drafts of the plan goals included general statements about “complete neighborhoods” that alluded to the creation of standards for new developments:

“Goal 8: Develop ‘complete neighborhoods’ and districts with a compact and diverse mix of residential densities, building types and affordability which are designed to be healthy, attractive and centered by schools, parks, public and commercial services to provide a sense of place and that meet daily needs within walking distance.” (City of Fresno 2012, p.30)

Groups from the Building Healthy Communities initiative argued that the initial goals and policies focused exclusively on new developments. “What about existing neighborhoods?” an advocate from Fresno Interdenominational Ministries asked during a public workshop on the plan, “How do we ensure that those will become healthy as well?” In response, planning staff included a goal largely drawn from the Building Healthy Communities framing to improve the quality of life in existing communities (see Section 3.2.2):

“Goal 12: *Promote a city of healthy communities and improve quality of life in existing neighborhoods.* Emphasize supporting existing neighborhoods in Fresno with safe, well maintained, and accessible streets, public utilities, education and job training, proximity to jobs, retail services, and health care, affordable housing, youth development opportunities, open space and parks, transportation options, and opportunities for home grown businesses.”

(City of Fresno 2012b)

The groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative were also concerned that low-income residents would not have access to the newly built “complete neighborhoods.” Although the General Plan goal 8 referred to the need for a mix of affordability, there were no policies to ensure such a mix. Therefore, advocates urged for explicit wording on the location or provision of affordable housing. Planning staff, however, was resistant to include such wording given the political divisiveness over affordable housing. It would be difficult enough to get higher densities, Bergthold argued, which people often associate with multi-family lower cost housing. During one of the public workshops, for instance, former Planning Director Al Solis commented:

“This is all well and good, but then you have politics. The County Supervisors just said no to a 10 unit/acre development [in Southeast] even though it was supported by the general plan and they seemed for it. But neighbors didn’t want it. ‘We need missionary work.’”

Later in the conversation a planner explained to me that the underlying sentiment of the neighbors was that they didn’t want more poor people in their neighborhoods. Sure there was also the traffic issue, but more than anything else they were afraid of an increase in crime. The legacy of associating density and multifamily housing with poverty and crime, therefore, created a significant barrier to questions of density, which, as I described above, was seen to be the key to achieving many of the General Plan’s goals.

In an effort to pick their battles and push forward on the density debates, planning staff resisted requests for explicit policies on affordable housing. During a meeting with the Building Healthy Communities collaborative, advocates from Faith in Communities asked Bergthold directly why they didn’t include inclusionary zoning or other policies that would mandate affordable housing in different parts of the city. To this associate Director Bergthold replied:

“No, we’re not considering including inclusionary zoning. Suggest a mixture of product types that can accommodate different income types.”

Later when other groups from the Building Healthy Communities initiative, such as California Rural Legal Assistance again asked about affordable housing, staff explained that the plan was to create the blueprint for development, that is the densities and land uses needed to develop affordable housing, sticking to the language utilized by Smart Growth advocates and New Urbanists. The actual provision of affordable housing, Bergthold argued, should be covered in programming (e.g., Section 8 housing programs) and not in land use planning. Therefore, staff chose to avoid politically contentious issues of affordable housing by declaring it outside the realm of the land use planning efforts and suggested that advocates should focus their efforts elsewhere.

Because of their longer engagement with Smart Growth issues and public health practitioners, the planners responsible for the General Plan update were more open and eager to include public health goals and policies into their work. Despite using language on health disparities, however, planners were constrained by the need to plan for the entire city and therefore most of the

policies remained general and only loosely supported targeted approaches to investment. Advocates were able to redirect planners to more carefully articulate the need to create healthy environments in existing communities. However, the issue of affordable housing was sidelined as planners narrowly picked their battle around density and design, rather than access and affordability.

4.3 Convergence? Comparing the Built Environment and Health Equity Frames

Although the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan Update were led by two separate City departments with different goals, consultants, funding, and geographic coverage, the idea behind each of the plans emerged from similar philosophies that compact, accessible and well-designed communities would lead to higher rates of physical activity, greater access to resources and better health. The framing of these two plans also reveals the persistence of the underlying economic development goals of land use planning, which have been predominant in California since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. Fresno's dire economic conditions and reputation for concentrated poverty further motivated these economic development goals. When health equity policies or issues were introduced, either by outside consultants or by the advocates from the Building Healthy Communities initiative, that conflicted with the economic development goals, they were excluded from the plans.

When compared to the healthy equity frame coming from the Building Healthy Communities initiative, outlined in Chapter 3, I find alignment around the physical features of the built environment and the need for community engagement in land use decision-making, yet considerable divergence exists in terms of basic notions of distributive and environmental justice (Table 4.1). For instance, neither of the plans approached the issue of the legacy of environmental injustices in the Southwest, especially as they pertained to the meat rendering plant. Furthermore, there were little to no efforts to reduce existing environmental risks, but rather the plans sought to minimize the addition of new risks. The distinction, although subtle, is significant as many environmental justice struggles are complicated by the fact that planning is forward oriented, making it difficult to find the venue for intervention on present injustices created in the past. This dilemma calls into question the strategies being presented by the reunited field of Healthy Planning that are investing time and resources to affect future land use patterns while perhaps diverting attention from existing and historic patterns of injustice.

While the emphasis in both of the plans has been to increase access to resources, ensuring that such access is equitably distributed has been somewhat neglected. When policies that would redistribute investments, constrain development, or impose additional cost on the government were introduced in both the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan Update, health goals were deemed inappropriate or infeasible. Therefore, I find that the inclusion of health goals was insufficient to guarantee the adoption of equity measures into land use planning efforts. Furthermore, due to the broad agenda of the Building Healthy Communities collaborative, as I will show in the following Chapter, public participation was not an effective strategy to ensure that these priorities got onto the planning agenda.

Table 4.1 Summary of Fresno’s Healthy Planning Frames

<i>Health Equity Frame from the Building Healthy Communities Initiative</i>	Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan	General Plan Update
<i>Redistribute resources and opportunities</i>	Investment in downtown and the arrival of higher income residents will create more health amenities and job opportunities.	Targeting certain investments can help existing communities.
<i>Reduce risks and address legacy of environmental racism</i>	Buffer industrial land uses, restrict alcohol and fast food outlets, reduce emission of pollutants through reductions in VMT	Restrict the siting of residences and schools away from highways, restrict fast food and alcohol outlets, reduce emission of pollutants through reductions in VMT
<i>Inclusion and recognition of marginalized voices</i>	Enhance consultation, implementation of the plan and social control through neighborhood councils	Encourage neighborhood associations to set priorities and provide feedback to planners
<i>Ensure access to healthy environments</i>	N/A	N/A

It is also important to note the differences between the health framings coming from the two separate plans. In the case of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, City staff and officials did not necessarily share the social justice agenda introduced by the consultants in the Health and Wellness Element. Furthermore, the sole concern with the downtown area, which is perceived to be homogeneously poor, resulted in a frame that equated any investment in the downtown as an investment in equity. The territoriality of the plan area by staff members as well as anxieties over concentrated poverty justified the City’s resistance to encourage affordable housing or social services in the plan area.

In contrast, the planning staff leading the General Plan Update had been involved in efforts to link Public Health and Planning for a number of years. This perhaps made the ideas of health equity less controversial and led to the inclusion of language on health disparities in the plan. However, the plan was focused on issues of density and design, which served to sideline equity issues such as affordable housing or to limit it to a discussion of physical factors. When advocates would make requests for inclusionary zoning, for example, planning staff argued that the plan would enable affordable housing by providing the density and land use categories that could allow for affordable housing developments. This “if you zone for it, it will come” attitude was used to allay the anxieties of equity advocates about the accessibility of new and upgraded neighborhoods. Although both the Smart Growth and New Urbanist movements advocate for mixed-income neighborhoods and affordable housing, there is little focus on how to achieve the mix of incomes in neighborhoods. Therefore planners can claim that they are dealing with affordable housing through physical strategies, while avoiding any discussion on how to achieve those mixes.

The timing of the General Plan update, which began after the Building Healthy Communities agenda had been formed, resulted in stronger advocacy and therefore stronger wording on targeting existing communities for the General Plan update in comparison to the Downtown

Neighborhoods Community plan. However the co-incidence of the planning processes with the capacity building and agenda setting of the Building Healthy Communities collaborative resulted in a coalition that perhaps was not developed sufficiently to push back when equity policies were removed or sidelined by planners, an issue I will return to in Chapter 5. Therefore, the frameworks of New Urbanism and Smart Growth were dominant and the environment within which the Building Healthy Communities initiative was developed, thereby constraining activists to a mostly physical agenda. For instance, the issues of land trusts, living wage, health care benefits, and prisoner re-entry did not come up at all, even though this has been a common theme in Healthy Planning in other places, such as Richmond, CA.

In addition to the convergence on built environment concepts between the plans and the health equity concerns of the Building Healthy Communities initiative, both plans also included policies to encourage community participation in decision-making. Most people can agree on the democratic ideals of community participation. However the motivation and desired outcomes between the engagement envisioned by the health equity frame of the Building Healthy Communities initiative and that of City staff and officials can be quite different. In Chapter 5 I uncover these motivations as well as the conflicts that ensue when the two frames collide in participatory planning processes.

Chapter 5 Community Engagement to Achieve Health Equity

“These residents are really grabbing on to the fact that land use planning, while it’s not a particularly popular, well known or understood concept, that it really would drive the future success of their neighborhoods.”

- Mayor Ashley Swearengin, American Makeover, 2012

“Over the past couple of years I have seen all of these different people come together to take on this really challenging project that is the General Plan and how we’re going to grow in this city. Different ages, different backgrounds, different economic levels, different political affiliations, different ethnic groups come together and say, ‘You know what, *this* is what I want!’ and it is sustainable, it is the opposite of sprawl, it saves our farmland and it really cares about the health of this community.”

- Jaime Holt, Planning Commission Chair, American Makeover, 2012

When Fresno Metro Ministry prepared for the filming of a documentary about Fresno’s land use planning efforts, called American Makeover⁹¹, they emphasized the democratic process and the power of community engagement⁹² to create healthier communities. This choice reflected the Ministry’s active participation in the City’s two land-use planning processes - the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan update - as part of their involvement in the Building Healthy Communities initiative. The choice also reflected the convergence of interests on both the part of planners and community activists to push for greater community engagement as the primary means to effect change in the distribution of people, amenities and risks in Fresno.

In Chapter 1, I described how inclusion and community engagement have become pillars in the emerging practices of Healthy Planning. Returning to the overarching question driving this research: how can Healthy Planning shift land use planning towards a more socially just future, this Chapter explores the procedural dimension of Healthy Planning to understand how different types of community engagement have tried to influence health equity in Fresno. Through the analysis of interactions between the groups involved in the Building Healthy Communities initiative with City staff and officials, I find that there are inherent differences in the intentions of community engagement, which shapes the mechanisms utilized and their impacts.

I first present a brief description of the community organizing and engagement strategies employed by the Building Healthy Communities initiative and the two City departments leading the land use planning efforts. I highlight the stated and revealed intentions of these practices, finding that the community groups engaged in planning as a means to gain power and to advance health equity goals. In contrast, the City departments were concerned with meeting legal requirements, informing the public, gaining support for the plans, and fine-tuning the documents.

⁹¹ The documentary from which the above quotes were drawn.

⁹² A number of terms are used for essentially the same concept including public participation, citizen engagement and citizen participation. Given the contested nature of the term citizen, especially in a place like Fresno home to a large number of undocumented immigrants, I avoid the use of this term here. And although the terms public participation and community engagement are used in different ways in different contexts, I use them interchangeably here to refer to inclusive political decision-making.

In Section 5.2 I show how community engagement is used by City staff as a means to advance the Smart Growth agenda. Through engagement strategies, activists were made to feel that they co-constructed the plan and were convinced that the Smart Growth objectives of the City would benefit the communities of the city's southern neighborhoods. They therefore organized widespread participation and testimony and their engagement was considered instrumental in the passage of Smart Growth land use alternative. Finally, in Section 5.3, I look at episodes where these frames don't align and specifically call attention to conflicts around issues of access, affordable housing and community benefits to show the limitations of the participatory approach to advance equitable change in land use planning. I analyze the communicative acts that serve to dismiss and discount social justice concerns and reproduce the status quo of the planning process, which ultimately leads to frustration on both the parts of City staff and community groups.

5.1 The Diverse Goals of Community Engagement in Fresno's Land Use Planning

In Fresno, discourse on the importance of community engagement reaches back to the 1960s with the emergence of Model Cities program, as I described in Chapter 2. Despite the creation of neighborhood councils in the 1970s and later with the standardization of the engagement processes through the Local Planning and Procedures ordinance of 1987 (*Ordinance 87-59* 1987), land use planning in Fresno has largely been seen as an elite, closed-door activity between developers, staff and elected officials that has resulted in unbridled growth and abandonment of the urban core (Arax 2011). This perception was cemented by Operation Rezone, from which the city has not completely recovered. The initiation of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan update, however, were framed in direct juxtaposition to this perception. The staff leadership for the two plans declared that they were reigning in a new era of democratic planning that would actively involve community and not just developers. For instance, at a community meeting in Southwest, Keith Bergthold, Associate Director of Planning, told participants:

“This is all new folks. For the last General Plan Update the advisory committee was all appointed and they only talked amongst each other. They announced the meetings in the newspaper and when people didn't show up they said they that no one was interested. This time it'll be different and people will have to talk outside of the committee as well. With two or three big ideas we can change Fresno.” (7/6/11)

Similarly, prior to the planning charrettes for the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, Scharton told me that they were “trying something new.” From their research into other place-based initiatives, they learned that:

“Communities can articulate their own needs. They know what they want their communities to look like and it's the City's role to show them how to get there. You see, people living here assume that City knows and doesn't care about their problems. There's an antagonistic relationship between neighborhoods and the City. This department is trying to change that relationship.” (12/10/09)

At the same time, the groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative described in Chapter 3 were pushing the City government to be more inclusive in its planning processes. By analyzing the strategies employed by diverse actors, in this Section I uncover the fundamental differences in intentions between the community engagement espoused by activists and that supported by planners.

5.1.1 Building Community Power to Transform Planning

“[The goal is to] provide education and empowerment training to local residents and community based organizations to promote broad and deep participation in short-term and long-term policy development and implementation with the goal of longer-term community empowerment around zoning/general plan issues.”

Building Healthy Communities Logic Model Narrative (Blue Thistle Consulting 2010b)

When participants in the Building Healthy Communities initiative chose land use planning as one of the key sites of intervention to reduce childhood obesity (see Chapter 3) its primary mode of action was to build power by organizing community and cultivating advocacy skills of organizations that had been focused primarily on direct services. The theory of change was that by cultivating engagement and inclusion in land use planning, the City’s plans would create healthier and more equitable conditions across neighborhoods. The California Endowment had established an “inside-outside” approach to its theory of change. In addition to applying pressure on governments to make changes through power building of residents, it also worked on changing the “inside” of government, creating allies to promote their agenda from within (TCC group 2009). Here I focus on the “outside game” of community organizing to build power to engage with and influence land use planning.

Of the six groups the Endowment had chosen to engage community in land use planning (see Section 3.2.2), two of the faith-based organizations, Faith in Communities and Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries, had extensive experience in community organizing, adopting the congregation-community organizing model of the PICO Network⁹³. PICO, a network of faith-based community organizations established in 1972, provides trainings and resources to groups on relationship-based organizing. The PICO model of organizing is based on the development of relationships to build community leadership and power, identify needs, and organize for change by exerting pressure on public officials (PICO National Network 2009). Thus, when deciding how to engage residents in the planning process, the organizations of the Building Healthy Communities initiative funded to engage in land use planning adopted the PICO model and wrote community organizing into their work plan. The goal of the organizing was to “build the capacity and voice of residents through information and self-education” (FIRM 2010).

When explaining the importance of community organizing to me, Reverend Sharon Stanley of Fresno Interdenominational Ministries, which worked primarily with the Southeast Asian refugees, used the metaphor of a bamboo chicken trap:

“Chickens can see what’s going on in the world and can observe, but they can’t be connected to it. And that’s the haunting image of how so many of the refugee communities we work with have been feeling about living in the U.S. They see City Hall, but they’re not involved, they don’t know what’s in it. They feel like they can’t say anything, because heaven forbid if they say something about housing they would be evicted. So they just stay quiet, and they move in this

⁹³ Another one of the organizations – Fresno Metro Ministry had a history of community organizing in the 1970s and 1980s, however had shifted to more policy advocacy around issues of nutrition, air quality and health care, while providing several services. The other three other organizations, West Fresno Health Care Coalition, Centro Oaxaqueño and Centro La Familia provided more direct services, but also had some experience in community organizing as well.

little world that’s so small. So that’s why we’re so committed to community organizing because it doesn’t matter how many times we would help people and offer social services. Unless people are strengthened to be able to know that they have a voice, that it’s okay to use that voice in this country, that they can do it together, then there will be little change. Community organizing gives them a chance to do that, and to learn, and to figure out how to lift the trap and be able to run outside it.”

Not all of the groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative had community-organizing training, and since none of them had participated specifically in land use planning, the organizations set out to “self-educate” on both. First in a community organizing training, Tom Amato, of PICO-Stockton described the empowerment goals of community organizing as “making ‘little people’ without power, into big people that can influence change” (Amato 2011). He explained how four key activities of the PICO organizing model would achieve greater power for the community by building relationships, educating government officials, demanding action and developing human capital (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Key Activities and Principles of the PICO Community Organizing Model

Activity	Description	Principle
One-to-Ones	Face-to-face meetings with community members to build relationships, listen for concerns and invite participation.	“Power is a product of relationships.”
Research	Meeting with public officials where leaders identify possible solutions to issues identified, test their own public skills and develop relationships.	People cannot be responsible for what they do not understand.
Action	Large community meetings where community comes together to display political power and win commitments from public officials.	Power is taken, not given.
Evaluation	After every activity, leaders reflect on their work.	Empowerment is developmental.

Source: Amato, T. (2011): Community Organizing. Handout.

Adopting the basic strategies espoused by the PICO model, the organizations in the Building Healthy Communities initiative set out to create an agenda, build power and influence the planning process. As described in Chapter 3, they built a broad agenda using the information they gathered from the one-to-one meetings while also working directly with their respective constituencies. The collaborative also held several workshops where they brought in city staff to talk to them about the planning efforts, provided a glossary to residents on planning terms (e.g., infrastructure and urban form) and worked on assessing the needs of the various groups.

Prior to the beginning of public deliberations on the Downtown Revitalization Communities Plan, the organizations hosted an “Action” event, with three councilmen, the mayor, City staff and several hundred residents of South Fresno. At this event the collaborative presented their agenda (see Section 3.2.2) and asked the officials if they would represent the residents’ priorities in the planning efforts. Emphasizing the recognition the South Fresno groups sought, Reverend Sharon Stanley, kicked off the event by saying “It is an important time for residents of this community to make their voices heard.” Similarly, another organizer explained to me that her goal was to get the community’s voice taken into consideration. When I asked what that voice was, she explained that communities want to see “this side of Fresno taken into consideration since

everything goes North.” These quotes represented a common sentiment heard throughout organizing events that the collaborative sought to establish power and recognition of the felt needs of South Fresno. The needs were broad and in most cases reflected the sentiment of uneven development and community neglect.

Although the goal was to attain power, the tactics utilized by the collaborative would be different from the confrontational community organizing techniques of the 1960s. The emphasis was on capacity building and working in collaboration with City staff and officials to educate them about the needs of South Fresno and to reach consensus on a plan of action. As a leader of one of the organizations participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative explained to me:

“Learning to ask questions in a way that you're going to get a positive answer as opposed to going in and pounding your fist or saying, ‘Oh you're liars, you always say that! I've lived in this community 30 years and you haven't done anything.’ They're right, you've been in the community 30 years and maybe the City hasn't done anything, but that's not what's going to get you the answer or the information, or the work done.”

Although other organizations, including several from Southwest Fresno⁹⁴ did engage in more confrontational tactics, especially as they pertained to the meat rendering plant, this was not the approach of the groups working on land use planning for the Building Healthy Communities initiative. To them it was about education, persuasion and negotiation.

In many respects it appeared as though this strategy was working. After the groups participating in the Initiative established their presence and agenda during the Action meeting, they became involved in the public deliberations over the two plans, which I discuss in more detail below. The groups held workshops to prepare testimonies among residents, convened press conferences in front of City Hall, testified in hearings, and met with city staff and officials to discuss their agenda. Following one meeting with a City councilman, he exclaimed:

“I have tons of examples of where community comes in, totally disorganized and goes nowhere. But they were different. They came with a list of questions, they were educating me and asked specific things.”

The extent to which they were able to convince staff and officials about social justice issues, however, remained unclear. For instance, with this particular official, the collaborative advocated for more affordable housing in the Downtown neighborhoods, to which he responded that he was trying to reduce concentrated poverty rather than add to it.

To the healthy land use collaborative, the goal of the Building Healthy Communities initiative was not to make incremental changes, but rather to transform land use planning and governance. How to achieve this and what it would look like, however, was left rather vague. In one episode, when a planner came to talk to the groups about the best way to engage with City staff and officials, they were told to be specific with their requests and provide evidence, using a streetscape improvement project as an illustration. After the meeting, several participants argued that the planners didn't get it:

“It's not about a particular project. We know how to ask for streetlights at an intersection from our councilmen. We want to change the system! It's about the culture here. To play within the system and focus on individual little projects is like putting out fires. It's treating the symptom without dealing with the cause.”

⁹⁴ Whose leaders had been civil rights activists in the 1960s

This distinction was certainly one perpetuated by the California Endowment, which was trying to focus the Building Healthy Communities initiative around “systems and policy change” as I discussed in Section 3.2.1. When I asked what kinds of systems and policies they wanted to see changed, Endowment staff would point to the need to control sprawl, reinvest in the city’s older neighborhoods and make marginalized voices heard in the decision-making process. And yet specificities on how such actions would lead to greater health equity remained vague and contradictions, such as the affordable housing conundrum discussed in Chapter 3, were not discussed.

The ambiguity over the land use agenda of the Building Healthy Communities was further reinforced by the fact that the organizations involved were simultaneously learning about planning while they tried to organize community. Reflecting on their work, one of the organizers said to me, “We were new, so it was difficult to get our point across to engage community members and learn about the project.” Another organizer was unsure that land use planning was the right venue for organizing around neighborhood conditions when saying:

“It was too broad for community organizing. It left people behind to a certain extent. If the point was to get leaders to do something to improve their community, then the plans were the wrong way to go. It was such a learning curve that staff needed to dedicate so much time to it, as opposed to people. And if the goal was to create strong resident leaders, then why pick such a technical venue as planning.”

Thus, participants found land use planning to be a difficult venue around which to organize community. This was in fact predicted by the PICO trainer, Tom Amato, early on in the process, when he told the Building Healthy Communities participants:

“There needs to be two layers of listening. First listen to whatever they want to bring up and then ask what they know about the city planning process. You need to build into the plan, but probably not until they’ve built power. You need to build power around something that’s important to them.” (Amato 2011)

Nevertheless, and because of the timing of the two planning processes, the participating organizations were contracted by the Endowment to engage in the planning efforts that were unfolding simultaneously with their organizing efforts. The tension of needing to learn about planning, organize community and engage in the City’s processes did not go unrecognized by Endowment staff. For instance, one staff member stated to me:

“This is all new to them. The staff of these organizations don’t have experience in planning, but neither do any of the residents that we’re hoping to engage. What they do have is a solid relationship with those residents. So if we want to engage the people that have traditionally been marginalized in these processes, let’s go to the people who the residents trust and have a current relationship with so that they can play that brokering role in facilitating these processes.”

The difficulty of doing both at once, however, and as described in Section 3.2.2 meant that the agenda coming from the Building Healthy Communities initiative was left rather broad. With their limited experience in land use planning, the groups organizing around the plans tried to capture the diversity of concerns of their constituents and the 800 residents they interviewed, while also responding to the breadth of issues the plans addressed. Furthermore, there was little time to build the community power and achieve “little wins” that Amato had suggested⁹⁵. Therefore, when it came to inserting policies or measures to ensure a socially just future, the

⁹⁵ It should be noted that some “little wins” were achieved, such as traffic calming measures in front of a local elementary school.

community organizations participating in Building Healthy Communities had little power base to operate from and their lack of experience in land use planning resulted in an over-reliance on the framing and “expertise” of City officials and staff.

Thus, the multiple activities undertaken by the non-profits funded by the California Endowment to engage residents in land use planning were primarily pursued as a means to building power and identifying community needs. Since none of the organizations had expertise in land use planning, they conducted trainings and self-education to be able to relate everyday concerns of residents to the plans and communicate these issues to City staff and officials. The extent to which these tactics actually resulted in consensus or the advancement of the equity agenda will be analyzed in the following Sections where I look at episodes where the health equity frame aligned with the revitalization and Smart Growth frames of the City as well as those circumstances when it did not.

5.1.2 Educating Community on the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan

“The preferred plan ... must have broad community and stakeholder support.” - Request for Proposals for DNCP, August 18, 2009

“This process has lacked community involvement. It has been overwhelmed by City staff and their views.” Booker T. Lewis, member of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee, October 25, 2011

From the start, staff from the City’s Downtown Community Revitalization Department established that community engagement was an important component of the revitalization process. In their search for planning consultants, the Revitalization Department emphasized the need to solicit community input and achieve consensus on the community’s vision for the downtown neighborhoods (The City of Fresno 2009b). However, the Revitalization Department’s community engagement efforts embodied what Rowe (2005) would classify as communication and consultation, which ultimately led to frustration on the part of a community that expected to have a legitimate say and influence over the plan. Instead of seeing the community as co-producers of the plan, Revitalization staff saw the engagement process as an opportunity to legitimize the plan and to change the public discourse around planning to one centered on New Urbanist Principles.

Although staff from the Revitalization Department and consultants would frequently describe the plans as a community driven process, the request for proposals and staff reports to authorize the planning process revealed the department’s goals to create “healthy mixed-income communities” in the city’s core by replacing the conventional zoning code with a Form Based Code with accompanying design guidelines (see Chapter 4). Therefore the problem and solution was pre-defined by the Revitalization staff and community engagement was seen as a means to fine-tune the details of said vision through community input.

The primary method for engaging the community was to follow in the City’s tradition of: 1) conducting stakeholder meetings to gather ideas, 2) forming a Citizen’s Advisory Committee to act as a “microcosm” of the public, and 3) to hold public hearings to solicit feedback on drafts of the plan. In addition, and following the New Urbanist Design tradition, the Revitalization Department sought a consultant that had specific experience in holding charrettes, which would

constitute an integral part of the plan's process (The City of Fresno 2009b). Charrettes are intensive multi-day workshops that are frequently used in the design and planning fields to solicit community input and generate a shared vision for a neighborhood. The use of charrettes was seen as an innovative approach for Fresno, ushering in a new and modern era of planning and urban design. Prior to the charrettes, in fact, a revitalization staff member exclaimed to me "this is the first time Fresno is doing expert planning. In the past we've always done it in-house and you see where that's gotten us."

Stakeholder meetings began first in 2010 when staff and consultants met with numerous groups to gather ideas and to generate enthusiasm and buy-in for the plan. During a meeting with stakeholders from Southwest Fresno, residents voiced their concerns over the plan boundaries excluding the meat rendering plant (Figure 4.1). They also expressed the perceived injustice for the lack of investment in their neighborhoods and the need for job training and placement services. The consultant assured the participants that the plan would create new rules for the area and had the potential to totally transform the Southwest to meet their expectations. This was "their plan," the consultant told the Southwest stakeholders. Thus, from the start, the consultants and revitalization staff assured residents and stakeholders that this plan had the potential to fix the problems of their neighborhoods and would reflect their desires.

The atmosphere during the planning charrettes in May of 2010 shifted from a purely consultative process to include education as well. During five days the consultants gathered in a Downtown Fresno hotel conference room, poring over maps and engaging with city staff. During lunch, the consultants presented on concepts like form based code, historic preservation and economic development to the general public. In the evenings more interactive workshops were held. In one evening presentation, the lead consultant Stefanos Polyzoides presented a set of slides to educate the public on the difference between "good" and "bad" neighborhood design, highlighting the features that make a place walkable, safe and knowable. By the end, participants were yelling "eyes on the street," and "no sidewalks" as Polyzoides scrolled through the pictures to demonstrate their knowledge. This episode illustrates the communication nature of the community engagement approach that sought to convince participants of the suitability of the New Urbanist design standards as solutions to South Fresno's problems. It is also perhaps telling to note that most participating in the event were fully engaged and believed in the intuitive guidance of the experts brought in by City. The Building Healthy Communities collaborative that was engaging in land use planning, however, had yet to begin its organizing processes, so it is not possible to evaluate how they would have reacted to these workshops.

As introduced in Chapter 4, the idea of organizing neighborhoods to participate in planning was a common theme emerging from the planning process. When consultants drafting the policies for the plan, however, used the word "empowerment," City staff hesitated, "That's a tricky word. I want neighborhoods to take responsibility for bettering their environment and implementing the plan, but not revolt. How about neighborhood responsibility?" Partnership was the word that City staff and the consultants agreed upon, which would communicate joint responsibilities for implementing the plan, rather than creating it. Thus, residents were seen as imperative to implementing the plan, but not necessarily in creating it despite the fact that they were frequently being told that it was "their plan" and was a community-driven process.

Another indicator that empowerment was not the goal of the downtown revitalization planning process came from the fact that when a draft of the form based code was released, it included a measure to reduce noticing and community oversight in an effort to streamline development. The draft of the form-based code restricted the appeals process⁹⁶ to people who lived within 500 feet of the development area (Section 1.4C1.b). During the public hearings of the plan drafts in October of 2011, by which point the Building Healthy Communities land use collaborative had already been established, a representative from Faith in Community protested:

“These are changes that will affect the process and public oversight. We need to protect public oversight to make it reasonable and to respect needs that don’t come from industry.”

In response, a Revitalization staff member who supported the restriction of the appeals process to increase the certainty and streamline the development process, said “We don’t want anyone in the world appealing every single project. We want investment to occur. If we don’t agree with that principle, then we have other issues.”

From these episodes and the juxtaposition of consultant and staff comments expressing their value of community engagement versus their actions, it can be seen that the community engagement efforts were seen as a means to solicit input from the public, making them feel heard, and to educate them on New Urbanist strategy rather than to co-produce the problem and solutions. It is perhaps unfair to say that those were the intentions of the staff and it is possible that other constraints prevented a more meaningful participation process. For instance, when residents mentioned deficiencies in the process, staff explained that they were limited due to funding and the urgency to finish a draft of the plan on schedule⁹⁷.

5.1.3 Garnering Support for the General Plan Update

"The most positive part of the update process was that so many community members got involved and then supported a plan alternative that was backed by the council majority, with some slight variations. The public had its say, and the council listened. That doesn't always happen at City Hall." Mike Wells, Fresno Metro Ministry

Similar to the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, the planners’ organizing efforts to update the General Plan with Smart Growth principles saw community engagement as key to achieving their goals of a more sustainable Fresno. Although they used many similar community engagement mechanisms, the results of the process led residents and community groups to claim ownership of the plan. In this Section, I describe the attitude and tactics of the Planning Department, which encouraged residents to engage in the planning process and to feel that they had a significant role as co-producers of the plan, leading to heightened engagement and greater community satisfaction.

⁹⁶ The City’s municipal code currently gives standing to any interested person who wishes to appeal a planning decision, regardless of their place of residence.

⁹⁷ It should also be noted that simultaneously the staff of the Revitalization Department was engaging in a more intensive community engagement effort with residents of the downtown “Lowell neighborhood.” It was beyond the scope of this dissertation to include and analyze these efforts, that had an interesting racial and religious complexion to them. However, I mention the efforts here and again in the conclusions to highlight the multiple and conflicting efforts and attitudes of City staff towards community engagement.

Coming from a faith-based community organizing background⁹⁸, Assistant Planning Director Keith Bergthold envisioned the planning process for the General Plan update as unprecedented in its level of community participation. Months before officially beginning public deliberations of the plan components, Bergthold frequented community group meetings to encourage their involvement in the planning process and to spread the gospel of the transformative power of the plan. In a meeting with a group trying to organize in Southwest Fresno, the 93706 Council, Bergthold urged them to get organized and involved by saying, “I’d like to see Southwest get together and make a difference!” This kind of attention was not isolated to Southwest groups and later I will describe several other episodes where Bergthold would make personal appearances at community meetings to get people engaged.

Similar to the revitalization plan, the General Plan Update process started with a series of stakeholder meetings to gather input on the key issues that needed to be addressed in the plan. The Planning Department also created a citizen’s advisory committee to regularly deliberate on the plan. However, instead of using a charrette process to intensively gather input and educate the public on the plan, the Planning Department took a multi-pronged and more prolonged approach. First, as part of an educational effort, the Planning Department along with the support of the consultants prepared a series of concept papers on issues such economic development, urban form, and healthy communities and presented these papers to the public in a series of seven public workshops in the fall of 2011. It appeared, however, that even a longer, more deliberate process would not necessarily be sufficient to adequately engage with the public. Following a technical presentation during one such workshop, a Building Healthy Communities organizer asked, “How exactly can we provide input?” to which Bergthold responded, “We have specific policy proposals, so if you go into the Working Papers [500+ pages] available on our website, it would be great to get your feedback on that.” After another public workshop, a different organizer said to me “It’s more of the same. I feel like we’re being talked at and around. It’s more about community education, not engagement.” Thus, towards the beginning of the process it appeared that the focus was on communication, not necessarily participation and co-production.

Bergthold, however, was unrelenting in the personal attention he gave to community groups, including the Building Healthy Communities land use collaborative. He would check in regularly and offer to attend meetings to explain different aspects of the plan. In addition, Bergthold pointed out where ideas originating from the public and community groups were being incorporated in the plan. For instance, following the Action event of the Building Healthy Communities initiative Bergthold requested that the organizers send him the list of community priorities (see Section 3.2.2) and assured them that they would be incorporated into the plan. In fact, a section of the Healthy Communities concept paper prepared by the Planning Department was dedicated to explaining the Building Healthy Communities initiative, including its priority list. Later when the overarching goals of the plan were being drafted, staff included one that they called the “Building Healthy Communities goal,” which stated:

“Goal 9: Promote a city of healthy communities and improve quality of life in existing neighborhoods. Emphasize supporting existing neighborhoods in Fresno with safe, well maintained, and accessible streets, public utilities, education and job training, proximity to jobs,

⁹⁸ Bergthold was formerly affiliated with Fresno’s first PICO organization and prior to joining the City he had worked as a community organizer for a downtown neighborhood.

retail services, and health care, affordable housing, youth development opportunities, open space and parks, transportation options, and opportunities for home grown businesses.” (City of Fresno 2012b)

Due to the inviting attitude and attention from Bergthold, many residents and even some of the community groups were beginning to see Berthold as an ally. One community organizer explained to me “If community has questions, they feel comfortable asking Keith after presentations because he acknowledges them and is personable.” Others, however, were a little more skeptical, saying that it was unclear why he wanted community participation or how their ideas were being incorporated into the plan. Following a meeting with planning staff, for instance, another organizer expressed fatigue and disbelief about the impacts of their work, “It’s always the same; they’re just going to make the decisions they want to make anyway, so why bother.”

Perhaps due to the fact that the leader of the General Plan Update had a background in community organizing, the planning process transmitted a sense of inclusion to residents and community groups unlike what they had experienced before. Community groups were made to feel like they were co-producers of the plan and subsequently they became supporters of its approval. As I will explore in the following Section, the community support of the staff’s preferred land use alternative proved crucial in its advancement among City officials. The extent to which this plan, however, also embraced goals to advance equity did reach some road blocks and in the final Section I will explore some of the communicative breakdowns that occurred when the Smart Growth frame did not align with that of the equity groups.

5.2 When Frames Align: Leveraging Community Support for Smart Growth

“The community pressing us as policy makers on our knowledge of planning, Smart Growth, and infill policies was pivotal. I can’t begin to underscore enough the importance of community presence and how organized they were. I met with folks from the Building Industries Association, their voice has been overpowered by community groups and advocates.”

Fresno Councilmember Oliver Baines (2/8/2013)⁹⁹

“Organizations got themselves educated and started showing up at meetings. When you have a third of your city living in concentrated poverty, when you get them involved that can change everything. Grassroots advocates testifying on the same side of the issue as corporate agriculture plus general business interests, that’s powerful.” Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengen (2/8/13)¹⁰⁰

The above statements, made during the New Partners for Smart Growth conference in 2013, indicate the influence of community voice on policymakers’ decisions to advance Smart Growth planning in Fresno. Yet, and as I described in Chapter 4, Smart Growth principles had been embraced by Fresno’s planners and certain leadership for nearly a decade prior to the active participation of community groups in planning efforts. How much, then, did community engagement advance this agenda or ensure that it contained elements to advance health equity? In this Section I show that the engagement of community in the General Plan Update was a

⁹⁹ Speaking during at the New Partners for Smart Growth conference during the session entitled “Changing Course after Decades of Sprawl: How Fresno is Making the Turn toward Smart Growth.”

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

successful strategy used by planners to justify and advance an agenda in which the frames of various stakeholder groups already aligned. Because of the limited power and experience of the community groups of the Building Healthy Communities collaborative, however, the plan represented a mostly physical agenda and did not explicitly address many of the equity concerns perceived by community groups. Because they were relatively new to planning process and due to the City’s history of unbridled growth, the compact and denser land use map was perceived as a win for the City and South Fresno community groups alike.

One of the primary objectives of the General Plan update was to reduce sprawl and incent infill development. Although many policies were to be included in the plan, perhaps the most important lever to advancing this agenda was through the selection of a preferred land use alternative, which would dictate the location and density at which future growth in the city would occur. Deliberations over the land use alternatives began following months of community workshops and concept paper publications described in Section 5.1.3. In an activity reminiscent of the 1974 planning process (see Section 2.2.3), the Planning Department and consultants drafted three land use alternatives with varying assumptions on density and the direction of growth: Alternative A, or Boulevard Plan, intended to direct the majority of growth to infill parcels at a higher density than previous plans. Alternatives B and C focused growth in undeveloped land, although B would do so within the existing Sphere of Influence, whereas C would expand it. To planning staff, the winner was clear – Alternative A would discourage sprawl and reinvest in Fresno’s older neighborhoods.

The Citizens Committee was skeptical about the political feasibility of passing Alternative A. Former Planning Director now committee member, Nick Yovino, argued that while Alternative A was the clear winner, it was politically impossible given the city’s culture of sprawl. Thus, the committee agreed, a fourth alternative was needed – Alternative D, the Hybrid plan. This alternative called for more infill development than Alternatives B and C, but would also include an expansion of the city’s Sphere of Influence. After meetings between Bergthold and the Building Industries Association, in which builders expressed their concerns over the market demand for higher density living, Bergthold decided it was necessary to develop a fifth option; Alternative E, which called for lower densities and allocated more housing to the Northeast and West growth areas (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 General Plan Update Land Use Alternatives

	Alternative	Growth in Infill Areas	Growth in New Growth Areas	Average density of new growth (DU/acre)	Supporters
A	Boulevard Plan	51%	49%	9.4	Planning Commission, Smart Growth Advocates, Building Healthy Communities
B	Growth Areas Plan	33%	67%	7.5	
C	Expanded Sphere of Influence	33%	67%	5.3	
D	Hybrid Plan	40%	60%	6.7	Citizens Advisory Committee
E	BIA plan	35%	65%	<5.3	Building Industries Association
A2	Modified Alternative A	45%	55%	8.1	City Council

Source: (City of Fresno 2012a)

To the community groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative, at first there was no clear alternative winner. Although many of groups had been convinced by planners that infill was the answer to the city's problems (see Chapter 3), the scenarios were too complicated and the differences between the alternatives too nuanced, to decipher which would actually "serve their communities." During internal deliberations, participants of the initiative weighed the costs and benefits of the different land use alternatives; to some, Alternative C had the best parks, to others Alternative A would lead to more investment in the Southern neighborhoods. Some of the partners, believing the plans too complicated for them to dissect, wanted to trust respected leaders, like Nick Yovino, to support Alternative D. Poring over the maps as well as the consultants' rapid-fire impact analysis and fiscal impact analysis, the groups met with Bergthold to discuss the differences between the plans. When one participant expressed concern about gentrification and the potential for Alternative A to squeeze the poor out of the center of the city, Bergthold responded, "Do you want a plan that encourages infill or one that goes out on the edge? I think if you don't want infill, you'll have a lot of what you've had until now, so it's up to you to decide where you want to draw the line." When another participant expressed concern about the results of the rapid-fire assessment, which showed fewer parks in Alternative A than D, Bergthold assured them that those were just the consultants' opinions and did not necessarily reflect the plan. Therefore, using his own expertise and capitalizing on the trust he had built with the Building Healthy Communities collaborative, Bergthold highlighted the benefits of the infill option and allayed concerns.

When the land use alternatives came before council in the spring of 2012, the fate of the plan was up in the air. The Citizens committee had chosen the politically viable option D, whereas the Planning Commission, swayed by the fiscal impact report showing the budget savings from the infill option, supported alternative A. By this point the groups supporting the Building Healthy Communities initiative had converged to support Alternative A and had worked with their constituents to prepare testimony during the hearing. They also held a press conference in front of City hall the day before the vote where residents of South Fresno held up signs reading "Alternative A" and "Complete neighborhoods."

Thus, when the council convened on April 5, 2012, council chambers were filled with people previously deemed unlikely to participate in land use planning debates, fulfilling the California Endowment's goals. In the audience sat a diversity of Fresno residents including Hmong, Oaxacan, Latino, African American and White residents of South Fresno holding up signs with the letter A on them – the infill land use alternative. In addition to residents that the Building Healthy Communities initiative had brought, activists from wide range of issue areas were also there to testify on the benefits of Plan A including representatives from the League of Women Voters¹⁰¹, air quality activists, conservationists, agricultural interests and public health officials among others who all saw infill as key to tackling the problems they were each fighting. Of the 87 public comments that evening, 80 supported plan A and 30 of those comments were made by community leaders supported by the Building Healthy Communities initiative (Barker 2013). Nevertheless, the 7 dissents coming from developers, the building industries and the Chamber of Commerce, which deemed themselves the "ultimate consumers of the plan", had enough sway to encourage Council to postpone the vote, while closing the public comment period.

¹⁰¹ Who had consistently lobbied for Smart Growth and transparent government through the years

When city council returned a week later, one councilmember called on a developer whose company had begun to reinvest in the downtown to make the economic case for infill development. “There’s just no market for what we do. It doesn’t pencil out.” In response another councilmember presented a modified Alternative A that would have similarly high densities but would shift around development in the new growth areas. No one in the audience had seen this modified alternative; nevertheless the City Council chose to vote on it and passed the modified Alternative A land use map. The vote was deemed a win for all, and the Building Healthy Communities team later held a party to celebrate their success.

This episode, while evidencing the power of community, also demonstrates the continued strength of the building industries. Nevertheless, taking this story as an example of a “community win” it demonstrates the power of the infill concept to unify a wide constituency, whose voice was “heard” by the council. Furthermore, the choice between five options was discrete enough that community groups could communicate to their constituencies and organize around. This episode also shows that equity advocates can be strong supporters of the Smart Growth movement, especially around the ideas of infill development and investing in existing communities. Given the long history of disinvestment and the feeling of abandonment by residents of South Fresno, the theme of infill and reinvestment was able to capture their imagination and provide a platform around which community groups and residents could organize. In many ways this episode also displays the ability of planners to persuade community groups on the “best” option for them and to cultivate trust and encourage participation to support their agenda.

5.3 Communication and Conflicting Frames

Despite considerable convergence in the frames between the health equity advocates of the Building Healthy Communities collaborative and the Planning and Revitalization Departments, especially around the ideas of complete neighborhoods and access, ambiguity remained over how the land use agendas of the City would benefit the poor and who would be privileged enough to live in upgraded and new neighborhoods. Perhaps because the goals of the community engagement processes of the City was to educate the public and garner support for their physical agendas, the processes were not designed to achieve consensus building or resolve conflicts. I highlight the following three communicative acts that serve to reproduce the power dynamics and marginalize voices of community groups and residents: 1) discounting concerns, 2) reframing social issues with physical solutions, and 3) questioning the credibility of dissenting voices. I do not argue that these devices were used intentionally by City staff and officials, but rather they further reveal the underlying attitudes towards inclusion and expertise that limit the transformative potential of the Building Healthy Communities approach.

5.3.1 Discounting Concerns

In cities across the country, urban communities have interpreted revitalization and the attraction of higher income residents as synonymous to the process of gentrification and displacement of lower income residents. As described in Chapters 3 and 4, community groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative became concerned about the potential of the revitalization process to spur gentrification. As expressed by an organizer during their Action

meeting in the fall of 2011, “Over and over again during our 850 conversations with South Fresno residents, they told us that they like their neighborhoods. They want to stay living there! How are we going to make sure that is possible?” When these concerns were raised during public workshops, community meetings, and public comments on the draft of the plans, they were met with disbelief and denial by staff that a process like gentrification could happen in Fresno. For instance, at one public meeting, Revitalization staff responded to activists’ concern over gentrification by saying, “If you’re the worst in concentrated poverty, there’s a long way to go before you get gentrification. That’s at least 10 to 15 years off.” In written responses to these concerns, staff reiterated this position:

“It is not the City’s intention to gentrify neighborhoods. The goal of this Plan is to capitalize on the positive momentum for Downtown revitalization and put specific policies and actions into place to guide the rejuvenation of the Downtown neighborhoods that brings about lasting prosperity and improvements. Additionally, The City strives for healthy, vibrant mixed income neighborhoods through this planning effort.” (City of Fresno 2011f)¹⁰²

This experience was not unique to the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan or Revitalization staff. In fact, it was repeated by leaders of the General Plan update who similarly dismissed concerns raised by the Building Healthy Communities collaborative that Plan A would put pressure on the low-income residents of the inner city. “I don’t see that pressure,” commented a Planning staff member during a community meeting.

Concerns about displacement and access to the benefits of revitalization and planning efforts were predicted by City staff. For instance, in their comments on the administrative draft to the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, a planner noted:

“The unstated dichotomy...is that the plan is designed to create two cities; an enhanced community for those living in poverty there now and many new communities... for new residents and workers... It is equally clear that most of the current 70,000 residents cannot take advantage of the new housing, pedestrian streets or better transit access to new jobs, because they do not possess the requisite education and income. Nor will they provide the market support for new commercial development. Only new residents and consumers, or current residents with vastly improved incomes and educations, can provide the market support.” (City of Fresno 2010c)

Despite predicting the concerns over access and rather than dealing with them head-on by coming up with common language or proposing methods to analyze and address the community’s concerns, staff dismissed the issue of displacement as improbable and equated neighborhood turnover with healthy, infill developments that would benefit all. Rather than erasing the concerns, however, the communicative acts of denying or dismissing them reinforced the distrust many residents and activists already held towards government. For instance, after one hearing in which Revitalization staff dismissed the concerns about displacement and access, a community organizer commented to me, “I don’t really think they care about us.” Similarly, following a meeting with Planning staff, an activist commented “I don’t really care, they’ll just do what ever they want anyway. I don’t think they even listen to us.”

5.3.2 Reframing Social Issues with Physical Solutions

As described in Chapter 3, both the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan update, were largely constructed as physical plans. The tension between social issues and

¹⁰² This was a result of community advisory committee members arguing that they did not believe that the department would incorporate their comments.

physical solutions has replayed throughout the history of urban planning. Planners are often blamed for being too environmentally deterministic (Corburn 2009), and as I described in Chapter 4, there are certain jurisdictional limitations that reinforce these perceptions and realities, confining planners to a certain physical toolkit of solutions. Despite the fact that certain social measures were included in each of the plans (e.g., workforce development and promotion of health clinics), when issues arose that planners either perceived as being outside of their capacity to address or in conflict with other goals such as streamlining development, they confined their efforts to physical solutions and explained the social impacts of physical interventions. For instance, when social concerns emerged such as labor policies and housing affordability, City staff often recast the issues in physical terms to demonstrate that they were already covered in the plan. One example of this occurred when community groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative expressed their concern about gentrification and requested that the General Plan include policies and actions to increase affordable housing, planning staff responded:

“Frame it in terms of densities and products in all development areas. Multi-family and high density all over the city. Not occupancy.”

Physical reasoning was similarly used to explain the boundary selection for the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan that excluded some of the city’s poorest, most crime ridden neighborhoods to the South as well as the highly contested meat rendering plant in Southwest Fresno. Throughout the planning process, residents from Southwest Fresno would ask that the boundary be extended further south. When these concerns were vocalized during public meetings, however, Revitalization staff argued that including the area in South Fresno would capture huge lots and newer buildings that “wouldn’t make sense” with the historic preservation intentions of the plan. In fact, when asked how the boundaries were set, staff explained that they analyzed the age of the housing stock. Why didn’t they consider social factors, residents would ask, especially given the fact that the planners and consultants claimed the ability of the plan to completely transform South Fresno? In response staff argued that most social indicators in fact correlate to the age of the housing stock, so they were implicitly already taken into consideration.

Another example of this rationalization occurred during a community meeting in Southwest Fresno in the spring of 2011. Following a presentation by revitalization staff about the upcoming plan and form based code, a student from the local high school asked “What is the goal of all of this? It seems like a plan to fix streets, but that’s not our problem. We need businesses. We need jobs.” Staff from the Revitalization Department responded “Well, businesses actually do care about streets and we’re trying to get all pieces of the system working together.” Therefore, rather than engaging directly in the social concerns of residents, staff assured participants that their issues were being addressed through physical measures already included in the plan.

5.3.4 Questioning Credibility

Finally, the representativeness of certain community groups and the validity of their knowledge were called into question by City staff and officials when community perspectives countered the City’s agenda or their tactics were confrontational. This occurred most frequently when residents and community groups from Southwest Fresno would voice their complaints. In City Hall, I would frequently hear staff claim that Southwest groups were divisive and fragmented. “They can’t get anything done. They’re always fighting for control and recognition with each

other” one staff member remarked to me. It’s not that staff wouldn’t engage with groups or individuals from Southwest. Staff would respond to information requests and go to meetings, but later they would complain that there’s no one group they could turn to and they were totally disorganized. A quote from one staff member was representative of myriad comments I would hear about groups from Southwest Fresno:

“Southwest is an interesting place. The people you see at all the meetings and with their fingers in the face of the City, none of them actually live there. They’re advocating on a memory. What do they know about the neighborhood? It’s a different place now. How do they know about the needs of the existing community? They all come back on Sundays, but they don’t live there.”

Questioning the representativeness and expertise of residents and community groups was similarly repeated by City officials. For instance, during the public hearing on the General Plan, an elderly Hmong woman testified that she supported Plan A because she wanted to see more housing opportunities in her neighborhood. Questioning her knowledge about the plan or its impacts, a City councilmember later dismissed the authenticity of her testimony, as if she did not really know what she was advocating for. Also recall that when community groups from the Building Healthy Communities initiative used findings from a Health Impact Assessment to advocate for affordable housing, City staff dismissed the evidence as “Berkeley bologna” despite the fact that it was written by the same consultants that wrote the plan. The expertise of developers and representatives from the Building Industries Association, on the other hand, was not questioned when they testified that there was no demand for infill or high density housing during the General Plan Update hearings despite the fact that they showed no evidence for such claims.

These acts of dismissing, reframing and questioning the credibility of community concerns when they did not align with the physical agendas of the plans reinforced a sense of distrust of the intentions of City staff when it came to South Fresno, and especially Southwest. Following one revitalization plan meeting, for instance, one of the community organizers told me that many of her members felt like their voices weren’t being heard. “They don’t feel like they have an impact and feel discouraged,” she told me. Community advocates were not the only ones frustrated with the process. So too were planners, who felt the public didn’t understand the plans or the constraints that planners were operating under. One staff member told me, for instance, that the format of the public process was conducive to reactionary confrontation rather than constructive comments and consensus building.

5.4 Conclusions

The cases of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and the General Plan Update’s community engagement processes present very different landscapes of participation. Personalities matter when it comes to the role of City staff in shaping the community engagement processes and the two plans looked remarkably different. While the process of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan largely treated community engagement as a means to legitimize the plan and encouraging implementation, the leadership of Bergthold in the General Plan resulted in a process that appeared to value the co-production of plan. Subsequently, community groups were much more satisfied with the outcome of the General Plan update and believed they had a real role in its success.

Neither of the plans, however, had the empowerment goals of the Building Healthy Communities initiative. In fact both processes reproduced the power relations underlying land use decision-making in Fresno. For instance, in the case of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, the desire to incentivize development in the downtown neighborhoods led staff to attempt to reduce community input in future land use decisions.

When the health equity frame aligned with that of the Smart Growth and New Urbanist agendas of the City, community engagement techniques were effective at persuading officials to pass the infill-oriented land use alternative of the General plan. Thus, community engagement served to reinforce the goals of both the plans as they pertained to physical strategies such as compact development, walkability, and neighborhood accessibility to amenities such as parks and grocery stores. This suggests that the efforts emerging from the recent reunification of Public Health and Planning need to be redirected from a design focus towards strategies that may advance social measures that are not already on the agenda of planners, such as affordable housing, labor standards and workforce development. Nevertheless, the constraints of planners, as discussed in Chapter 4, also limit their capacity to address the issues that are of most concern for communities, perhaps pointing to a need to broaden the scope of the field.

Although the engagement strategies employed by the City were not particularly well suited for reaching consensus or resolving conflict (Innes 1996), they are the primary tools planners use in land use planning (ICMA 2009). Even with all its faults the participatory process did create the space for community members to both express their ideas and to insert these concerns into public debate, pushing staff and officials to become more accountable by requiring them to officially responding to comments. Nevertheless, given the limitations of the perceived physical role of planning and the prioritization of incentivizing development and economic development over redistribution, a number of communicative techniques emerged as tools to sideline these concerns.

Through this analysis, I find that community engagement is necessary but insufficient to achieve the kinds of outcomes hoped for from the health equity movement of redistributing health resources and reducing risks, because the physical interventions espoused by the Smart Growth and New Urbanist agendas are the focus of the planning rather than social justice goals. In order for community engagement to reach its potential in the path towards urban environmental justice and health equity, I argue that more effort needs to be placed on convincing planners and officials on the value of co-constructing both the problems and solutions encompassed in comprehensive planning.

Chapter 6 Healthy Fresno: An Unfinished Story

When I return to the main question motivating my research – does a Healthy Planning frame promote more equitable distribution of risks and resources in Fresno – the answer is unclear. This research has uncovered many of the promises and limitations to Healthy Planning practices and has also underlined that Healthy Planning is used in two ways. One is by planners to justify and advance Smart Growth and New Urbanist strategies to revitalize the city center and contain sprawl for mostly economic development purposes, and the second is as a frame adopted by social justice activists that seek to equalize environmental conditions, opportunity structures and build power. The uncertainty in answering my research question is not because of the different frames that I uncover in Fresno, however. Instead it is due to the fact that the processes I studied are still in their early stages. At the time of writing this dissertation, neither the City’s General Plan nor its Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan have been approved or even completed their environmental review process. Furthermore, the Building Healthy Communities initiative is only in its third year of a 10 year plan, and it is unclear where the land use agenda will go now that the planning processes have ended. Thus, the impacts of the Healthy Planning frame remain uncertain.

But this research never expected to observe concrete physical or social changes in Fresno. Instead, I aimed to uncover the strategies employed and the power dynamics at play as new stakeholder, such as the community based organizations serving the marginalized communities of South Fresno, enter into land use debates in an effort to reframe them as public health issues. I found through the analysis of the Building Healthy Communities initiative that diverse actors in Fresno are unifying under the frame of healthy land use. Although much of the land use frame originated from outside actors, and especially the financial support of the California Endowment, it appears that it was a useful exercise for community groups to engage in the planning and political process. However, given the infancy of the initiative, the extent to which the community groups were able to build power and advocate for more politically contentious issues such as affordable housing and local jobs was limited. This was in part predicted by seasoned community organizers, who argued that power needed to be built through little wins over issues that residents cared about before addressing the City’s land use planning processes. Nevertheless, the plans were seen as an opportunity to shape the future of Fresno’s land use policies that the Endowment deemed too important to miss. Therefore, due to the timing of the processes, the traditional community organizing approach of slowly building power was infeasible.

The Building Healthy Communities primary tactic to achieve “policy and systems” change was to build community capacity to participate in planning processes through a collaborative process. Although limited number of studies have analyzed the impacts of environmental justice movement tactics, such as the more confrontational and legal strategies versus more collaborative and participatory tactics (Toffolon-Weiss 2005), there is little conclusive evidence on the effectiveness of each. This research points to the fact that it is not an either-or decision, but rather a context-dependent one based on the political opportunities and power dynamics at play.

Community engagement was the primary tactic identified by the Building Healthy Communities initiative as the means toward achieving greater health equity. This decision falls in line with the

history of the Environmental Justice movement. Despite knowledge about the limitations of participatory techniques outlined in the introduction, there was not much innovation in terms of how participation occurred and thus many of the same limitations of participatory processes (e.g., impenetrable technical language, timing, lack of openness and decision making authority, etc.) played out in the case of Fresno's land use plans. Although community engagement is seen as a means to build power and secure change on the part of community groups, City staff approached community engagement as a means to gather input and support for their physical agendas. This was particularly effective in the case of the General Plan update, especially due to the personal attention planning staff gave to community groups. Yet, through the episodes of frame conflict, I show how little power was built on the part of community groups and that the City did not promote conflict resolution or consensus building through these processes. These findings confirm those of Kathryn Quick and Martha Feldman who argue that most engagement strategies employed by Cities are more participatory than inclusive. It further emphasizes their finding that purely participatory strategies can diminish the trust between community groups and government. Thus, I argue, that a concerted effort needs to be made to convince planners of the benefits and virtues of the co-production approach to community engagement.

My analysis of the Building Healthy Communities initiative also revealed that the agenda set by the healthy land use collaborative was very broad. The broadness of its agenda made it difficult to build power or momentum around any one claim, leading to a dominance of the City's Smart Growth and New Urbanist agendas. As found by social movement scholars, the breadth of this agenda was effective at building a constituency (Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2009), however, perhaps ineffective at achieving concrete and equitable outcomes. As described to me by many participants who felt overwhelmed by the frequency and technical detail of the City's planning meetings, the mobilization around the plans perhaps diverted attention from leveraging political power and mobilizing community around more equity focused agenda items such as community benefits agreements, affordable housing measures, and local jobs. It may be that comprehensive plans are not the optimal venue for community participation. Nevertheless, it is important to assure that community priorities and concerns are incorporated into planning practice. It is perhaps, therefore, most important to better establish the intermediary capacity of local organizations.

Through the analysis of its framing and engagement in planning issues, I also find that the Building Healthy Communities initiative was aligned with the New Urbanist and Smart Growth agendas that were already embraced by Fresno planners. This may not be the case in other areas, but Fresno was already benefiting from a number of regional and federal initiatives to promote Smart Growth practices. Planners were therefore already convinced about walkability and even growth control goals due to its purported economic and quality of life benefits. What they were not convinced about, however, was the prioritization of resources or ensuring access to improved neighborhood environments. In focusing on containing sprawl and promoting infill development, advocates perhaps missed the opportunity to focus more effort and attention on issues that the City was avoiding like affordable housing. However, it may also be seen as a failure on the part of the California Endowment, which similarly focused on the promotion of uncontroversial physical environment fixes in its training materials. While most Healthy Planning efforts claim to work towards health equity, the strategies to reach this goal are often left vague, making it hard to evaluate progress.

Planners in Fresno and around the country rely heavily on the theoretical benefits of mixed-income neighborhoods on poor households. Many of the mixed-income theories of social mixing, role modeling and networking, however, have been found to be either false or uncertain at best (Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007; Goetz and Chapple 2010). It is unclear the extent to which a Healthy Planning frame can clarify or realign the debates around mixed-income housing and concentrated poverty. For instance, poor health has been associated with concentrated poverty (Ellen, Mijanovich, and Dillman 2001; Krieger and Higgins 2002), while at the same time evidence from the housing dispersal experiment Moving to Opportunities has been inconclusive (de Souza Briggs, Popkin, and Goering 2010). The displacement that could potentially occur from upgrading the environments of poor neighborhoods and increasing property values and rents may significantly impact the health and wellbeing of the poor in the future (Keene and Geronimus 2011). Nevertheless, when community groups expressed anxieties about the potential of the plans to lead to displacement, these anxieties were universally dismissed by planners. The lack of political power and the frame conflict between several of the groups participating in the Building Healthy Communities initiative limited their ability to advance an affordable housing agenda. Affordable housing, in fact, was not an emphasis of the California Endowment and I argue that it is a missed opportunity and potential oversight of their approach to Healthy Planning. Given the uncertainties surrounding the potential impacts of community change, it is important to both extend research and advocacy on the displacement potential of Smart Growth and New Urbanism. If not, Healthy Planning runs the risk of simply reinforcing the primarily physical and economic agendas of planners without ensuring the equitable distribution of the benefits of growth.

It is also interesting to note that during my year of observations, while issues of equity, environmental justice, and power reemerged continuously, the issue of health did not. In conversations with staff from the California Endowment, I gathered that this might have been tactical. Health is mobilized when it constitutes a political opportunity, but it is not forced on the community groups participating in the initiative. On the other hand Health Equity leaders have emphasized the power of the health frame to advance social justice because a) people care about health, b) it can neutralize politically contentious issues, and c) the data and analysis used by Public Health practitioners have great power (Iton 2012). This latter claim did not seem to be the case during the instance when community groups used a health impact assessment to support their advocacy. Furthermore, the Planning department used data to illustrate the disparities in environmental risks, resources and health in the city, yet this proved insufficient to mobilize or priorities resources to rectify these inequalities. This is perhaps unsurprising, as scholars have found that people often interpret evidence from within their pre-existing frames and ignore data that counters their understandings of the problems and solutions (Schön and Rein 1994). These findings point to the need to enhance knowledge and communication of the social benefits of equity, as is currently being pursued by several equity advocates and researchers (Benner and Pastor 2012; PolicyLink and USC-PERE 2011). It will be important for local actors to utilize these findings and advance local research and data analysis in their advocacy efforts.

My research also points to the constraints within which planners operate that may be limiting the potential impact of the Healthy Planning agenda. One of the key strategies of Healthy Planning advocates is to remove silos and increase collaboration across sectors, as evidenced by the work of the Healthy Neighborhoods Task Force created by the Fresno Department of Public Health.

Nevertheless, the City is operating under a constrained fiscal and jurisdictional environment. As evidenced by the City's reaction to the administrative draft of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan, efforts that might require additional resources or increase costs to developers who are perceived to be the primary driver of the economy, were mostly rejected as countering the economic goals of the plan. Furthermore, planners deemed many of the Healthy Planning measures introduced by consultants or community groups as being outside their jurisdiction (e.g., health service, affordable housing). Fragmentation between City and County interests also plague the City and are currently threatening the Smart Growth agenda of planners as County officials are permitting large scale development outside the City's boundaries. While City-County consolidation and tax-sharing have been recommended by regional planners for decades, the political interests and actors have rarely aligned to achieve these outcomes (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004). This may point to the need to broaden the field of planning or create new incentives or directives for cross-sector collaboration and action.

The differing behavior of planners and health advocates is also reflective of the specific institutions within which they are located. Planning, since Proposition 13, has been overwhelmed by the need to raise City revenues, resulting in the fiscalization of land use planning described in Chapter 2. As such, and as once told to me by former Fresno Planning Director, Nick Yovino, planners get into the field because they're concerned about quality of life, and then they realize that it's all about raising revenue. "It's money planning," he told me. Furthermore, many planning departments, of which Fresno is not the exception, are enterprise departments, depending directly on the fees raised from permits for development. Public health, on the other hand, is mostly funded by State, Federal and foundation funding; therefore, it is unsurprising that these actors operate differently. This, perhaps, is one of the "systems" or institutions that funders like the California Endowment can be focusing on when trying to shift land use planning towards health equity goals.

Finally, the California Endowment has played a significant role in the framing of Healthy Planning and community capacity building. An emerging body literature on social movement philanthropy has looked at the impacts of the philanthropic sector on community organizing and policy advocacy (Suárez 2012; Delfin and Tang 2006; Silver 2004). My research has not engaged in this literature and it is therefore difficult for me to provide much insight into the role of funders here. Nevertheless, it is clear that despite efforts to make the Building Healthy Communities initiative "community-based," much of the framing and prioritization of efforts as they pertained to land use originated from the Endowment and its experiences in other parts of California. Further research is needed to evaluate the precise role of the endowment and its potential to advance the Health Equity agenda.

Framing Environmental Injustice Struggles: What happened to the meat rendering plant?

Throughout the dissertation I have used the case of the meat rendering plant in Southwest Fresno to highlight and the mobilization of the Environmental Injustice frame to advocate and litigate for change. It is yet to be seen if such claims will pass the legal muster of the State's court system in Fresno. In a first round, the Judge did not agree that the City had violated the Fair Housing Act due to a strict interpretation of how to demonstrate a lack of access to fair housing options. And although the California Government Code 11135 does not necessitate a

demonstration of intentionality, as have plagued the Title VI cases across the country, it is yet to be seen how the judge will rule on these claims. One thing is certain about the future of the plant, however. The City is unwilling to address the issue through its police powers. Instead, and reflecting the tight fiscal times, the City continues in its search for state and federal funds to solve its problems in Southwest Fresno. Hopefully, with the new findings from the California EPA that Southwest Fresno is the most environmentally burdened and vulnerable area in the state, it will find these funds.

What can the case of Fresno tell us about field of Healthy Planning?

It is clear from the case of Fresno and from evidence around the country, that planners are ready and willing to take up issues of community health as they pertain to the built environment that reinforce their pre-existing agenda (APA 2011). The extent to which a Healthy Planning frame can promote equity and justice, however, remains unclear. This may be in part because the equity piece of the agenda is under-articulated. Perhaps this is strategic, as I discussed above. Nevertheless, this research shows that without explicit efforts to redistribute resources and power, Healthy Planning runs the risk of contributing to rather than countering the displacement potential of urban revitalization and Smart Growth strategies. Rather than focusing on built environment strategies that are already embraced by planners, therefore, I argue that Healthy Planning practitioners align their agenda with the efforts coming from Regional Equity activists such as community benefit agreements, affordable housing strategies and local/minority hire efforts.

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