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## Red or Green? Gentrification in Albuquerque, New Mexico

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**Red or Green?**  
Gentrification in  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Honors Capstone by Michael Patterson  
Under advisement from Dr. Salazar

June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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## Introduction

During my past four years studying environmental policy, political science, and economics at Western Washington University, gentrification is a topic that has come up often in my classes. However, the subject became of increasing interest to me as I observed my hometown change. Although I have begun to make a new life for myself in Washington, I know that Albuquerque will always be a part of my life and continue to be home to so many of my loved ones. The title for my project comes from the New Mexico state question: Red or Green? Which is a question you get asked at many restaurants throughout the state. The question is asking whether you want red or green chile on your food, which felt fitting considering my project is on green gentrification and food justice.

My mother's family is of Spanish, Mexican, and Indigenous ancestry and has lived in New Mexico since the 1700s. My maternal grandparents, Porfirio and Lorraine Martinez have lived in the same house off of Rio Grande Boulevard since 1956, just two miles from Downtown Albuquerque. In my grandparents' lifetime, they have watched Albuquerque grow and change. Grandpa Porfirio grew up along the Rio Grande River in a small town just north of Albuquerque, called Corrales, in a two-bedroom house with his two parents, Esperdion and Josefita, and six brothers and sisters, with six of the seven Martinez children pictured below (Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* The Martinez Family. From top left, Esperdion, Porfirio, Rachel, Josefita, Samuel, Eli, Lydia, and Isaac. Not pictured: Pat, who passed away when he was 24 years old from a motorcycle accident.

From the time he was a boy, he felt a strong connection to the Rio Grande, and always planned on living in the area. Growing up, the kids at school would make fun of Grandpa Porfirio for his name, which they found difficult to pronounce, and they nicknamed him “Porky.” At first, my Grandpa hated the name, but eventually it ended up sticking and that’s how he is known to this day. In addition, he was teased for his difficulty with speaking English, as Spanish was his first language. As a result, he made the decision to not teach his children Spanish because he did not want them to endure the same trouble in school and life. This is just one example of how the

times were changing, illustrating the demographic shift in Albuquerque, where speaking Spanish was seen as a barrier to a decent life. Grandpa Porky dropped out of high school in the 10th grade and bought his first 18-wheeler at sixteen years old. Grandpa Porky, his father, and his four brothers were all truck drivers and would haul lumber, fruit, vegetables, and flour all across the southwest, from Texas to California. Grandpa Porky traveled that same route, from Texas to California every week for 68 years, until he finally decided to retire in 2018. In 1956, Grandpa Porky bought a house for \$7,500 off of Rio Grande Boulevard for him and Grandma to live in. The house consisted of two bedrooms and one bathroom on a dirt road, with no connection to the city water or sewer system, which required them to build their own well and septic tank, as well as transport their own trash to the city dump. Grandma Lorraine was also raised in a bilingual working-class family (Figure 2). She worked at various banks in the downtown area throughout her life and was a first-hand witness of the disinvestment in the downtown area that came as a result of the creation of the suburbs and shopping malls in the northeast part of Albuquerque.





*Figure 2. The Sanchez Family. From left, Lorraine, Leonard, Raymond, Ray Allen, and Connie.*

My grandparents were working class people who helped make Albuquerque what it is today. According to my grandparents, Downtown Albuquerque was the place to be prior to the 1960's. The streets were filled with people. There were many places to shop, eat, and hang out. However, the construction of Interstate-40, running from California to North Carolina, and Interstate-25, running from northern Wyoming to Las Cruces, New Mexico, just short of the Mexican border, were major driving forces of the disinvestment in the downtown area (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Map showing the distance of Interstate 25 and Interstate 40. Reprinted from Nolte, N. (2006a). Interstate 25. Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Interstate\\_25\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Interstate_25_map.png) and Nolte, N. (2006b). Interstate 40. Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Interstate\\_40\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Interstate_40_map.png)

Around this same time, companies like Intel, Sandia National Laboratories, and Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems (MITS), creator of the first personal computer, Altair 8800, began operation in Albuquerque and highlighted the city's potential to be a hub for innovation and technology (National Museum of American History, n.d.). In fact, Microsoft was founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen in Albuquerque in 1975, while Paul Allen was working for MITS (History.com Editors, 2015; Microsoft, 2008).

Since the 1960s, Albuquerque's downtown area has experienced major disinvestment (Boruff, n.d.), while inequality within the city and the state has continued to grow. In 1980, the gap between the median inflation-adjusted income for all New Mexicans and those in the top 25% was \$48,751 (Quigley, 2016). In 2014, the gap between the two groups was \$72,158.

Additionally, to compare inequality in Albuquerque to other cities, one can calculate the ratio of

the income of the top 5% of households to the income of those in the bottom 20%, with a higher number indicating worse income inequality. In 2014, Albuquerque's ratio was 9.9, while the ratio for the 100 largest cities in the country was 9.7, and the United States' ratio was 9.3.

This case study examines the ways in which Albuquerque, New Mexico is trying to bring economic growth to their Central Business District in the downtown area and how these policies are causing the area to become more gentrified. Gentrification is the process of renovating a neighborhood, district, or city and as a result, attracting more affluent residents and businesses, leading to the displacement of low-income residents. Chapple and Zuk (2016) describe gentrification as a spatial and social transformation that requires a simultaneous "influx of both capital (real estate investment) and higher-income or higher-educated residents" (p. 112). Policy Analyst John J. Betancur describes gentrification as a struggle between community and accumulation (Powell & Spencer, 2003), highlighting that

[T]here is an aspect of gentrification that mainstream definitions ignore.

Descriptions of gentrification as a market process allocating land to its best and most profitable use, or a process of replacing a lower for a higher income group, do not address the highly destructive processes of class, race, ethnicity, and alienation involved in gentrification ... [T]he right to community is a function of a group's economic and political power ... [T]he hidden hand is not so hidden in the process of gentrification and that in fact, it has a face – a set of forces manipulating factors such as class and race to determine a market outcome ....

The most traumatic aspect of this analysis is perhaps the destruction of the elaborate and complex community fabric that is crucial for low-income,

immigrant, and minority communities-without any compensation. (Betancur, 2002 as cited in Powell & Spencer, 2003, p. 436)

Gentrification destroys the community fabric and removes people from their homes, which is a new form of colonialism, as described by many gentrification scholars (Smith, 2002; Valoy, 2014) who acknowledge the “economic, societal, and public health repercussions for poor communities of color” (Valoy, 2014). According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another” (Kohn & Reddy, 2017). Colonialism has been practiced by empires like Ancient Rome and Greece, who dominated entire regions and expanded their empires by extracting resources from newly conquered areas in order to increase their power (Blakemore, 2019). Modern colonialism began during the Age of Discovery, when many European countries began to compete for control over the rest of the world. As Figure 4 shows, much of the world has been dominated by European colonists and Albuquerque is no exception. Currently, Downtown Albuquerque is being colonized by wealthy individuals, who with the help of the City of Albuquerque, aim to redesign the area so that it meets the wishes of the upper class.

# Countries that have been under European control

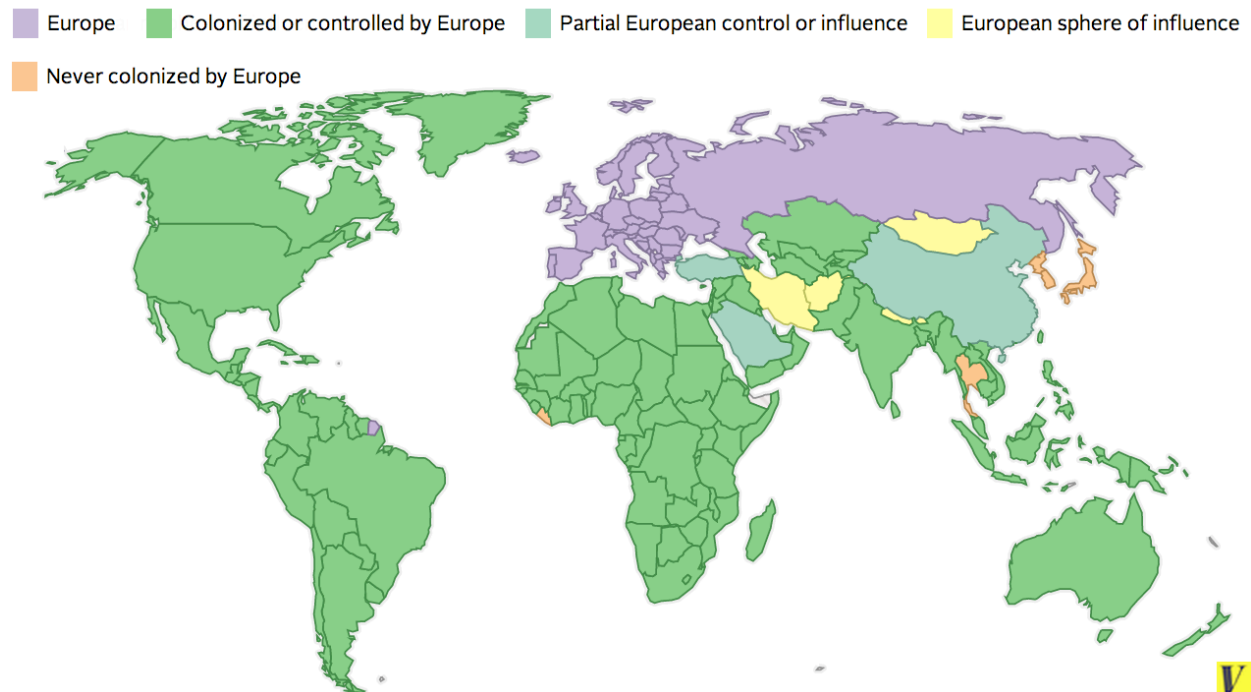


Figure 4. Map showing the extent of European colonialism. Reprinted from Fisher, M. (2014, June 24). Map: European colonialism conquered every country in the world but these&nbsp;five. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/2014/6/24/5835320/map-in-the-whole-world-only-these-five-countries-escaped-european>

In November 2013, former Mayor Richard Berry proposed a \$119 million rapid transit system along Central Avenue, which he stated was in great demand and would increase development along the Central Business District (Journal Staff, 2019; Arellano, 2019). Since the proposal, many Albuquerque residents have been outspoken about the negative effects that the construction of the rapid transit system would have on Central Avenue businesses (Arellano, 2019). Steve Schroeder, a local business owner along Central Avenue, has created a website, [savert66.org](http://savert66.org), that lists over 60 businesses that have closed or moved since construction on Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART) began in October 2016 (Save Route 66, 2020).

In spite of the major pushback from Albuquerque's working class, multiple lawsuits, precarious funding situations, and faulty electric buses, on November 30, 2019, the ART bus

was finally up and running (Reisen & Martinez, 2019). According to the University of New Mexico's Bureau of Business and Economic Research, the ART bus "route passes by 15 Census tracts that have income levels below Bernalillo County's median household income of \$48,390" (Paterson, 2016). The ART buses have been promoted as environmentally sustainable, due to their electric batteries. However, as Pearsall and Anguelovski (2016) point out, it is important to be weary of cities pushing for sustainability because

Despite the promise of sustainability to deliver the tripartite goal of economic growth, environmental quality, and social justice (Brundtland 1987), numerous studies have demonstrated that economic endeavors tend to dominate sustainability efforts, reinforce existing power relations, and deliver little to the marginalized and vulnerable populations who would benefit the most from a sustainable future - and who have long fought for increased access to environmental goods and services.

Gentrification is thus an issue of social and environmental justice due to its ability to increase inequality between races, economic classes, and the surrounding environment (Gould & Lewis, 2017).

For this case study, I will be looking at Downtown Albuquerque as a whole, however, when looking at government data, much of it is given on the census tract level, which is why I have chosen to focus on Census Tract 21, which is at the center of downtown. *Governing* identifies Downtown Albuquerque as an area that has become gentrified since 2000, based on recent census data that shows a significant increase in home values and residents with a bachelors' degree (Maciag, 2015). Census Tract 21, which is a ½ square mile of Albuquerque's

downtown core, is identified as having a 122% increase in median home value, from \$89,100 to \$276,600, between 2000 and 2013. In addition, the percentage of adults over 25 years old with a bachelors' degree or higher increased from 16.2% to 44.9% during this same time period.

Another example of the city's pursuit for economic development under the cloak of sustainability (Gray, 2002) was in April 2014, when the Albuquerque City Council adopted Resolution 14-46, which allowed the Planning Department to update the City's Comprehensive Plan (Project Introduction, n.d.). In 2017, the City Council adopted the changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan, now called the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO), which changed Albuquerque's downtown from clearly defined zoning districts to a mixed-use form-based code (Figure 5). This map shows the difference in zoning to the downtown area, with Census Tract 21 being outlined in blue. Census Tract 21 went from various uses such as commercial, industrial, residential, and governmental to mostly mixed-use. This allows developers the ability to create "live, work, play" neighborhoods, with multi-level shops and restaurants on the lower floors and residences on the upper levels, which supports higher-income lifestyles.

With the changes to Albuquerque's infrastructure and economy during the 20th century came the disinvestment of Downtown Albuquerque. Through disinvestment a rent gap was created, in which decreased property values gave investors the opportunity to profit off the disparity between current rent prices and potential rent prices. Gentrification causes an increase in inequality, as long-time low-income residents are forced to pay higher rents as wealthy residents move into the area, allowing landlords and developers to charge more.

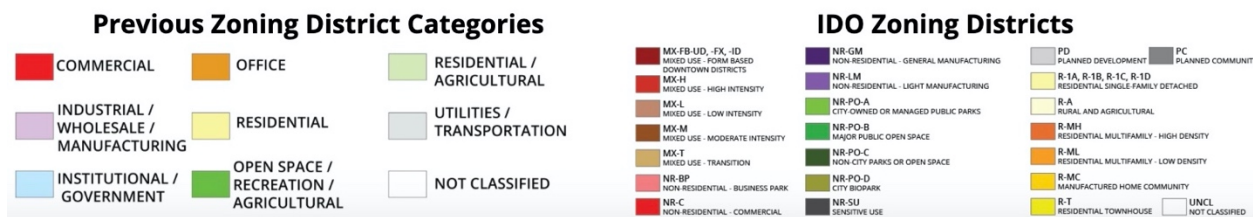
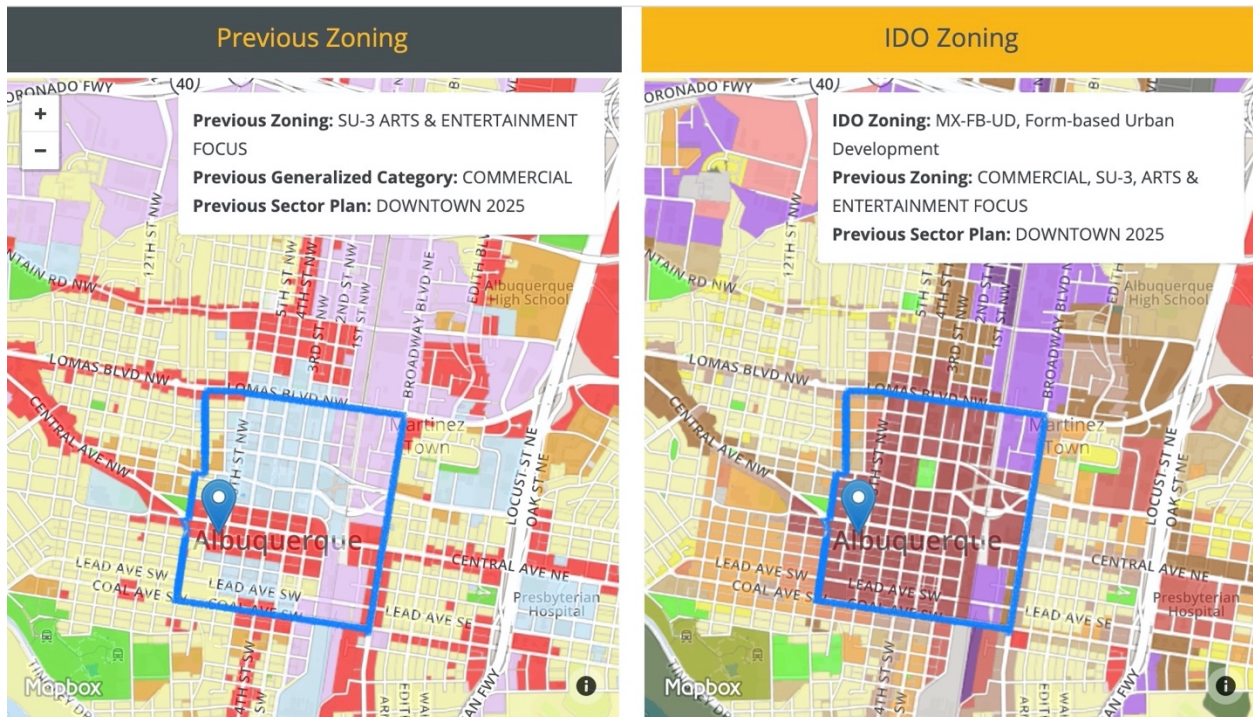


Figure 5. Map showing changes to Downtown Albuquerque's zoning districts. Census Tract 21 is highlighted in blue. Reprinted from City of Albuquerque. (2019, June 3). Phase 1 IDO Zoning Conversion Map. Retrieved from <https://abc-zone.com/phase-1-ido-zoning-conversion-map>

In 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted a study on the Albuquerque Housing Market Area (HMA), which is approximately 9,297 square miles with an estimated population of 909,300 and consists of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia counties (Figure 6) (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016). Within the Albuquerque HMA, it was reported that 60% of all rental housing being built was occurring in Downtown Albuquerque. These recent developments will undoubtedly change the



character of the downtown area as wealthier residents begin to gravitate to the area and change the social dynamics and expectations for those that currently live in the area.

## Housing Market Area

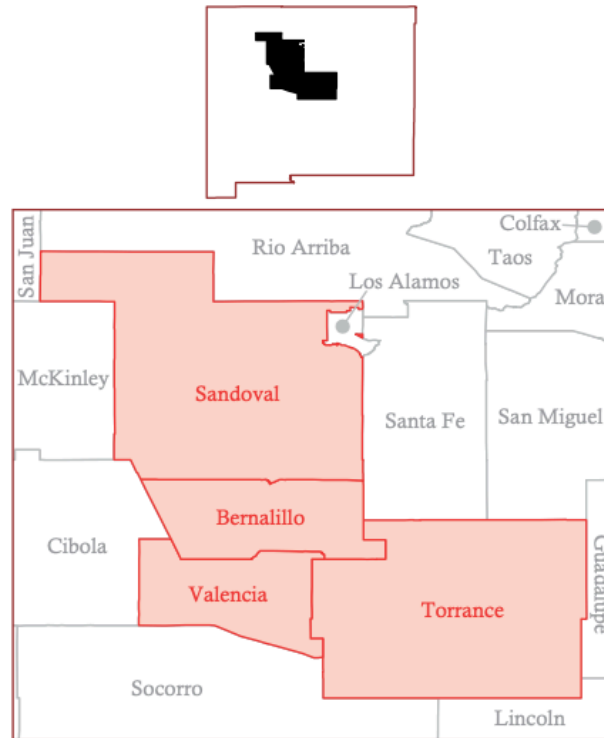


Figure 6. Map showing the size of the Albuquerque HMA. Reprinted from United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016, April 1). Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis. Retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/AlbuquerqueNM-comp-16.pdf>

## Albuquerque's History

Prior to 1540, the Albuquerque area was home to the Tiwa Pueblo people of the Rio Grande Valley, now known as the Sandia Pueblo people (New Mexico Tourism Department, 2020). In 1540, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado led an expedition of 300 Spaniards through present-day Albuquerque in search of Quivira, one of the Seven Cities of Gold (Albuquerque City History, 2008). In 1598, Don Juan de Oñate claimed the Albuquerque area for Spain. In 1706, King Philip of Spain gave Spanish colonists permission to settle the area. The Spanish

colonists renamed the city “La Villa de Alburquerque” to honor the Duke of Alburquerque in Spain (Visit Albuquerque, n.d.). Over time the “r” was dropped, and Albuquerque became spelt as it is today. Spain’s domination over the Indigenous people living in what is now the Mexico and New Mexico region, created a large majority of mestizo people, who are of mixed blood between white Spanish colonizers and Indigenous people. Mestizo people to this day make up the majority of the Mexican population (Griffin & Cline, 2020). In 1821, Mexico won their independence from Spain (Albuquerque City History, 2008). In 1848, the Mexican-American War ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and in 1851, New Mexico became a United States Territory. In 1912, New Mexico became the 47th state of the United States.

Albuquerque remained dominated by people of Hispanic heritage, descendants of the Spanish colonists and Indigenous peoples, up until 1940 when large numbers of white people began moving into the area to work for the federal government (Waldron, 1971). During the 1940s, New Mexico was selected for the development and testing of the atomic bomb, which caused people to move to Albuquerque to work at places like Sandia National Laboratories and Kirtland Air Force Base (World Population Review, n.d.). As a result, between 1940 and 1970, the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area’s population increased by almost 800%, from 40,000 to 315,000 (Waldron, 1971). According to Bryan (2006), during this period “Most of the city’s population growth occurred in the Northeast Heights, where major housing subdivisions were being developed.” Two large shopping malls, Winrock Center and Coronado Center were developed in the Northeast Heights area, in 1961 and 1964, respectively (Bryan, 2006). As a result, large department stores like Sears, Dillards, Montgomery Ward, and Roebuck and Company left the downtown area. Smaller shopping centers, hotels, restaurants, and movie

theaters were also being constructed in the eastern part of Albuquerque, which made Downtown Albuquerque home to predominantly government and financial institutions. Additionally, many people would travel along Fourth Street and Route 66, on Central Avenue, until the completion of the interstate highway system in the 1960s, which redirected traffic from the downtown area.

## Albuquerque in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of white people in Albuquerque have continued to live in the northeast part of town, while the southwest part of town has remained predominantly Hispanic (Statistical Atlas, 2018). Using OpenStreetMap's demographic data from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, we can see that white people concentrate in the northwest part of Albuquerque, while people of color live in the southern parts of town, which can be seen with the redder areas on the map signifying a greater percentage of each race living in those areas (Figure 7).

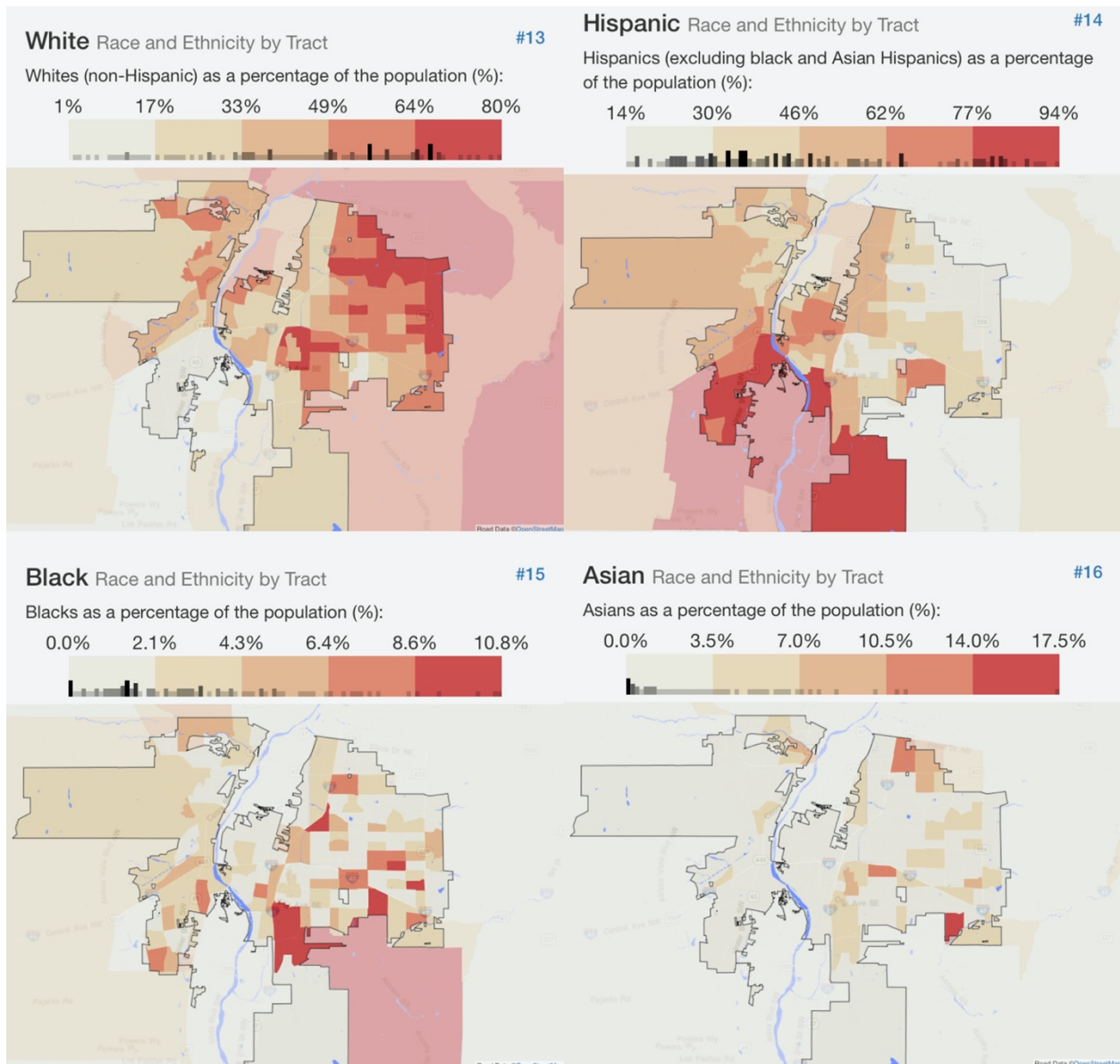


Figure 7. Maps showing race and ethnicity percentages by census tract. Reprinted from Statistical Atlas. (2018, September 10). Race and Ethnicity in Albuquerque, New Mexico (City). Retrieved May 17, 2020, from <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/New-Mexico/Albuquerque/Race-and-Ethnicity>. Maps made available by © OpenStreetMap contributors under the Open Database License, [www.openstreetmap.org/copyright](http://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright)

Similarly, Figure 8 is a 2017 map of median household income in Albuquerque, which shows that the census tracts with the highest median household income were census tracts 37.31, 37.29, and 37.32 with a value of \$140,833, \$127,250, and \$116,850, respectively (Data USA, n.d.). All three of these census tracts lie in the northeast part of town, where a large majority of white people live. Meanwhile, Census Tract 21 has a median household income of

\$21,932 (Data USA, n.d.). Census Tract 21 is 48% Hispanic, 33% white, 9% Native American, 7% Black, and 3% two or more races (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Within Census Tract 21, 62% of people are low income (EJSCREEN Mapper, 2019), and 75% of children under 18 are living below the poverty line (United States Census Bureau, 2018). When comparing race and ethnicity with median household income, the maps show that the northeast part of town is largely white and wealthy, while the downtown area consists of low-income people of color, who are largely of Hispanic heritage. Many of the people who live in Downtown Albuquerque have lived there for decades, as is the case for those in Martineztown, Wells Park, and the Barelás neighborhoods, whose families helped to build Albuquerque back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, these same people, whose families have inhabited the downtown area for centuries, are being pushed out by the effects of gentrification.

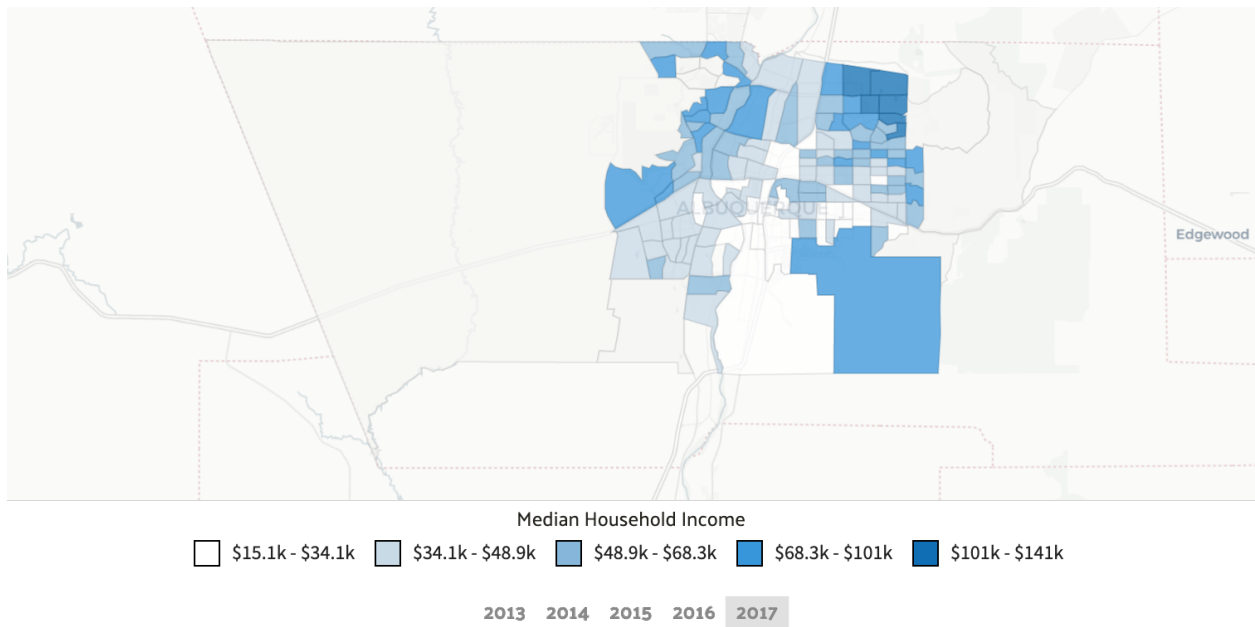


Figure 8. Map showing median household income by census tract. Reprinted from Data USA. (n.d.). Albuquerque, NM. Retrieved May 17, 2020, from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/16000US3502000>

Recently, the City of Albuquerque has been capitalizing on the new zoning code as they are encouraging a variety of mixed-use projects in the downtown area. According to the Albuquerque Journal, there is a \$100 million mixed-use project that will take up five city blocks, which includes a 92-unit apartment building, a Marriott Springhill Suites Hotel, another 228-unit apartment building, and a food hall and market (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Aerial view of The Highlands development being built along Central Avenue. Reprinted from Steve Sinovic. (2018, July). Mixed-use boom in Albuquerque. Retrieved June 09, 2020, from <https://www.abqjournal.com/1196933/mixeduse-boom.html>

Many of the developers of these new projects are taking advantage of the economic incentives being given out by the City of Albuquerque. For example, the Imperial Building at Second Street and Silver received \$4.4 million in funding from the City for their \$19.3 million

mixed-use project in 2015. Another example is One Central, on First and Central Avenue, which received over \$18 million from the City for their \$35 million mixed-use project, which will include a 68-unit apartment building and space for restaurant, retail, and entertainment businesses. (Sinovic, 2018). The \$4.5 million Zocalo Lofts in the Barelas neighborhood will feature a 14,000-square-foot apartment building with 21 units and an additional 10,000 square feet will be designated for retail space. Glorietta Station, at Lomas and Broadway, will “include a restaurant, marketplace, gallery and workspace, along with a distillery” (Sinovic, 2018). Silver Avenue Flats, which is “a \$24 million, five-story project with 132 high-end apartments and commercial/retail space” (Sinovic, 2018). The majority of these developments are occurring in the downtown area (Figure 10), which makes it more likely that gentrification will accelerate, considering most of these developments are targeting wealthier outsiders and not the long-time residents of Downtown Albuquerque.

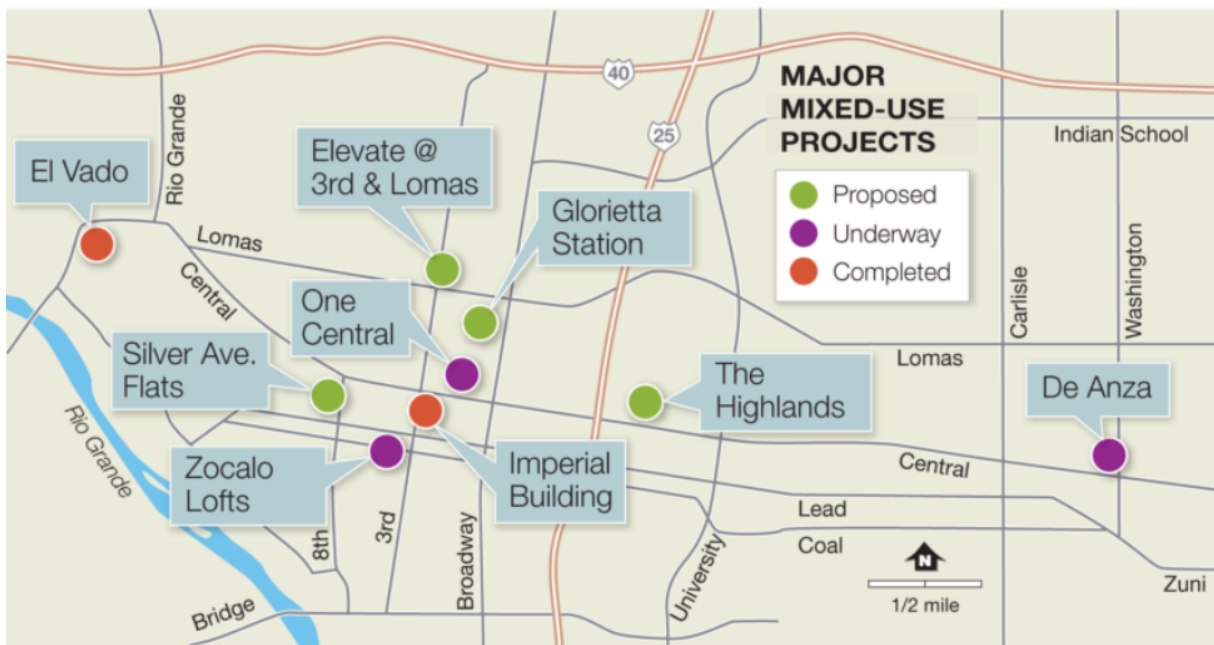


Figure 10. Map showing the major mixed-use developments in and near Downtown Albuquerque. Reprinted from Steve Sinovic. (2018, July). Mixed-use boom in Albuquerque. Retrieved June 09, 2020, from <https://www.abqjournal.com/1196933/mixeduse-boom.html>

Furthering the point that Albuquerque is likely to become more gentrified, the Albuquerque Metro area has begun to attract more large companies like Facebook's \$1 billion Los Lunas data center (Baca, 2019). NBCUniversal pledged \$500 million (Gomez, 2019) in film projects over the next ten years. Albuquerque even applied to be the new location for Amazon's Headquarters 2 (HQ2) (Las Cruces Sun News, 2017), even as Amazon's original headquarters has been a major contributor to gentrification in Seattle (Rice, Cohen, Long, & Jurjevich, 2019). However, Amazon's decision to build HQ2 elsewhere did not stop the City of Albuquerque from working with Amazon, as there is currently a 460,000-square-foot fulfillment center being built on the west side of town (Costello, 2020). The new warehouse is expected to bring 1,000 new jobs to the area. All of this economic development has proceeded with the help of the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, which has been trying to secure major business investments in the area for a long time. As corporations expand into Albuquerque, it is likely that they will bring upwardly mobile and highly educated people from other states, which has the effect of increasing displacement of the longtime Hispanic residents of the downtown area.

## Understanding Gentrification as an Urban Strategy

Smith (2002) describes gentrification as a prominent urban strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century due to globalization and neoliberalism, which he calls neoliberal urbanism. Neoliberalism, a dominant force in America today, is explained by Angela Harris (2006), stating,

Beginning in the late 1960s, and reaching a consolidation of sorts in the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, political conservatives took advantage of racial



resentment, growing economic suffering and vulnerability, and suburban politics to mount a formidable campaign against the New Deal, the American welfare state, and to some extent government itself. Neoliberalism entails a commitment to the dismantling of the economic arrangements sometimes called “Fordism,” and their replacement with an economy driven by substantially deregulated markets (themselves driven by the interests of corporate and finance capital), an economy in which capital’s upper hand over labor has led to dramatically increasing inequalities of income and wealth. Neoliberalism also entails the dismantling of state institutions meant to cushion citizens against economic risk, and an approach to governance that favors “privatization,” “deregulation,” and other policies that transfer political power from governments to markets. (p. 1541-1542)

Neoliberal urbanism has thus encouraged local governments to become entrepreneurs who, with the help of “private agents and urban elites, have turned into promoters [and] developers, producing the city based on competitive logics, in order to scale positions in the global urban hierarchy” (Vives Miro, 2011). In other words, in order for cities to remain competitive in a time of globalization, they must continually be looking for new ways to differentiate themselves. David Harvey (2007) asserts “that neoliberalism is above all a project to restore class dominance to sectors that saw their fortunes threatened by the ascent of social democratic endeavors in the aftermath of the Second World War” (p. 22). There appears to be a causal relationship between neoliberalism and gentrification, as the wealthy class in society begins to

once again expand its dominance over lower classes. In 1872, Friedrich Engels wrote about the housing problem that is inherent in the capitalist mode of production, stating

In reality the bourgeoisie has only one method of settling the housing question after its fashion.... This method is called "Hausman," ... By "Hausman" I mean the practice, which has now become general, of making breaches in the working-class quarters of our big cities, particularly in those which are centrally situated, irrespective of whether this practice is occasioned by considerations of public health and beautification or by the demand for big centrally located business premises or by traffic requirements, such as the laying down of railways, streets, etc. No matter how different the reasons may be, the result is everywhere the same: the most scandalous alleys and lanes disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-glorification by the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but-they appear again at once somewhere else, and often in the immediate neighbourhood... This is a striking example of how the bourgeoisie settles the housing question in practice. The breeding places of disease ... in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers ... are not abolished; they are merely shifted elsewhere! (as cited in Smith, 1982, p. 152)

Both Engels and Smith agree that the housing problem society continually faces is caused by capitalists' desire for profits and the overconsumption necessary to increase profits.

According to Smith (1982), capitalism had two contradictory tendencies, which are, "...the equalization of conditions and levels of development and their differentiation" (p. 142). Capitalism's tendency toward the equalization of conditions and levels of development comes

from the need for continuous economic expansion. In order for capitalism to survive, individual enterprises must continually expand, which requires greater accumulation of capital, to the point where the space between markets is destroyed by capitalists' motive to "provide cheaper and faster access to raw materials and markets" (Smith, 1982, p. 143). Karl Marx describes this process as the "annihilation of space with time," meaning that over time capitalists achieve their objective of removing spatial barriers, so that markets can expand, by finding new ways to provide cheaper and faster access to resources. This results in an effort to achieve equalization of conditions and levels of development, as can be seen through capitalists' effort to expand their influence across the world through globalization. However, at the same time, capitalism works to create differentiation and specialization, with different classes working in different parts of the world, based on different access to resources, which thus creates social divisions based on differences in wage rate. This paradox of capitalism produces uneven development, which in relation to cities, has necessitated the locational switch from urban to suburban, and now back to urban. Smith (1982) contends that these "locational switches are closely correlated with the timing of crises in the broader economy" (p. 150). Using Marx's perspective, Smith explains that crises are a necessary product of the capitalist system, which is "based on profit, private property, and the wage relation" (p. 150). The need to accumulate, under the capitalist system, leads to overproduction and a decrease in profit, which creates a crisis. These crises lead to the movement of capital, across both locations and sectors, and creates opportunity for new markets to expand. This phenomenon is inherent to the structure of capitalism and helps to explain why gentrification is occurring.

America's inner cities were once a place of economic prosperity, however, during "the period when suburbanization was taking place, the redevelopment of the established city was not an economical option," unlike in the suburbs, where ground rent was low (Smith, 1982 p. 149). As the suburbs developed, capital investment shifted from the inner city to the periphery, which caused "devalorization" or disinvestment in the inner city, leading to a rent gap. As Smith (1982) describes it,

"devalorization" leads to physical decline, which in turn lowers the market price of the land on which the dilapidated buildings stand. When, and only when, this rent gap between actual and potential ground rent becomes sufficiently large, redevelopment and rehabilitation into new land uses becomes a profitable prospect, and capital begins to flow back into the inner-city market. (p.149)

The reason gentrification has become such a pressing issue in major cities is because suburbanization and the construction of the federal highway system occurred at approximately the same time all across the country. Now, after decades of disinvestment in the inner cities of America, major rent gaps have been created, which sends price signals to developers and wealthy residents, who now see the urban core as profitable, as is the case with Downtown Albuquerque. This analysis demonstrates that gentrification is a consequence of capitalism; it derives from the economic structure and not the unfettered choices of individuals. Over time, disinvestment in the inner city has not only increased economic and racial inequality, but environmental inequality as well. It is important to evaluate the environmental conditions in Downtown Albuquerque because gentrification creates environmental injustice.

## Environmental Justice and Green Gentrification

In the past, environmental justice advocates have focused on locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) being disproportionately placed in communities of color (Pulido, 2017). However, new challenges such as lack of access to parks and open space, as well as supermarket greenlining and redlining, have become more prominent during a time of increased gentrification (Sullivan, 2014; Anguelovski, 2015; Cohen, 2018;). Supermarket greenlining is when upscale grocers focused solely on healthy and organic foods, “target gentrifying neighborhoods for new stores, signifying environmental privilege and leaving low-income residents with reduced access to reasonably priced food and welcoming shopping spaces” (Cohen, 2018). Supermarket redlining is the “tendency for grocery chains to avoid low-income communities with perceived low demand, limited purchasing power, and higher operating costs” (Cohen, 2018). It is important to note that “Supermarket greenlining produces inequality and exclusion just as supermarket redlining leaves low-income communities with limited access to full service grocers” (Cohen, 2018). Preventing LULUs from being disproportionately placed in low-income communities of color, in addition to providing equitable access to green amenities and grocery stores are all a part of creating communities that are environmentally just.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, following the rezone of Albuquerque’s downtown, members of the Historic Neighborhoods Alliance (HNA) convened during a televised event to discuss the impacts that the decision will have on their neighborhoods (New Mexico in Focus, 2019). The HNA is an organization consisting of local residents who work together to preserve Albuquerque’s diverse culture and protect the most vulnerable neighbors and neighborhoods,

while promoting “a vision of government where communities are empowered to make decisions that are in their best interests” (Historic Neighborhoods Alliance, n.d.). Bianca Encinias, a member of the HNA, summarized the issue that she and many other longtime residents have with the redevelopment taking place in Albuquerque’s downtown, stating

We’re talking about racial inequities, we’re talking about a history of racism within planning and zoning in the United States, specifically being perpetuated in New Mexico, in the city of Albuquerque. Now, I don’t think anyone is against economic development, all of us having been wanting it. It’s about our communities, from Wells Park, to Martineztown, to San Jose, to South Broadway are seeing the least amount of investment from an infrastructure perspective. We’re seeing the least amount of protections, because if you look at the Country Club area, they’re not going to be living near superfund sites like I am in Wells Park because of the way that they’re zoned. So, it’s about which communities are protected and what communities aren’t. Which ones get investments and which ones don’t, so that they can pursue economic development. (as cited in New Mexico in Focus, 2019)

What Encinias is describing is the double insult that people of color have faced in America. The first insult came from white flight in the 50s and 60s, in which white people left the inner city for the suburbs, with the help of federal programs like the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, in order to maintain racially segregated neighborhoods (Garcia, Gee, & Jones, 2016). In the 1930s, President Roosevelt created the federal Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) as part of the New Deal. However, the HOLC designated some neighborhoods as dangerous for bank lending

because of the presence of people of color, especially African Americans (Glantz & Martinez, 2018). Due to America's legacy of white supremacy (Pulido, 2017), neighborhoods that were predominantly non-white were redlined on a map as risky for lending by HOLC. Meanwhile, white neighborhoods and white citizens were disproportionately given access to the federal loan program, which helped to create the racially segregated cities we see today. This program denied people of color, especially Black people, access to homeownership, which consequently increased wealth inequality and made minority communities more vulnerable to displacement.

The second insult comes from the current back-to-the-city movement, where white people are taking advantage of the depressed land values of the inner city. This rent gap was created by decades of disinvestment, caused by the confluence of government subsidies and private investment that disproportionately advantaged white communities and weakened the tax base for America's most disadvantaged communities (Powell & Spencer, 2003; Chapple et al., 2017). The social and material benefits of being white are what Pulido (2000) calls white privilege. As a result, gentrification will disproportionately benefit white people as developers try to appeal to the interests of the upper class, who are predominantly white, both in Albuquerque and the United States (Statistical Atlas, 2018; Owens & Candipan, 2019). In fact, the median household income for non-Hispanic white people in Albuquerque is \$56,800, compared to \$40,900 for Hispanics, \$38,600 for Black people, and \$34,300 for American Indian/Alaska Natives (Statistical Atlas, 2018). Capitalists are aware of the income inequality between races, which is why they prioritize the interests of white people for their developments. As Smith (1982) so exquisitely summarizes,

Gentrification is part of a larger redevelopment process dedicated to the revitalization of the profit rate. In the process, many downtowns are being converted into bourgeois playgrounds replete with quaint markets, restored townhouses, boutique rows, yachting marinas, and Hyatt Regencies. These very visual alterations to the urban landscape are not at all an accidental side-effect of temporary economic disequilibrium but are as rooted in the structure of capitalist society as was the advent of suburbanization. (p. 151-152)

Gentrification is caused by capitalists trying to restore the profit rate, with the help of local and federal government who subsidize their efforts. Restoring the profit rate is accomplished by appealing to the interests of gentrifiers, which in the 21<sup>st</sup> century includes a focus on environmental sustainability. A 2018 Gallup poll found that 70% of adults between 18 and 34 are worried about global warming, compared to only 56% of those over 55 (Reinhart, 2020). Thus, after decades of disinvestment in urban areas, many local governments have begun to implement green initiatives aimed at restoring the urban core as a place to live, work, and play (Anguelovski, 2015; International City/County Management Association, 2016). Creating a “live, work, play” environment is a marketing strategy of mixed-use developments to prospective residents who are wealthy enough to afford such a lifestyle. Green gentrification occurs when reinvestment in the urban core focuses on improving environmental conditions, such as remodeling parks, installing bike lanes, and creating green bus lines, which sends price signals to private developers to move into the area, thus attracting upwardly mobile residents (Chapple et al., 2017; Anguelovski, 2015; Gould & Lewis, 2017). Green gentrification pushes out low-income people and people of color and instead reinforces environmental privilege for



those who already have social, racial, and economic privilege (Gould & Lewis, 2017). As a result, environmental justice advocates are having to evaluate the effects that green initiatives will have in displacing low-income people of color. It is imperative that local governments address the three pillars of sustainability, which are social, economic, and environmental. If any of the three pillars are weaker than the other, for example, the natural environment is improved, but the community's residents are displaced by higher prices, then the initiative is not actually sustainable (Checker, 2011; Wolch, Byrne, & Newell, 2014).

Many Albuquerque residents have voiced their concern over the recent changes to the downtown area. Loretta Naranjo Lopez, another member of the HNA, describes her feelings, stating

I'd like to say how crazy the city looks at things. They came and said, "we want walkability in your neighborhoods." We had walkability in Martineztown. We didn't own cars. Well, a few of us owned them and what they did is, they widened Lomas, they opened up Odelia where homes were established there. And then we had grocery stores next to us, we had five. We named them by first names, and those owners lived in the neighborhood, so they were invested in that neighborhood. We would go to Dan's store, or to Manuel's, or to Archuleta's, down on Mountain and Broadway, to get whatever needs we needed. So, how does it benefit us when you're talking about economic development? We want those little grocery stores that we can walk to. We want the barber shop, the hairstylist that we can walk to. So, we're telling the mayor now, our neighborhood is saying, mayor, we want to meet with you, we want

that property on Lomas and Broadway, and we want to show you how to

develop it so that it meets our needs. (as cited in New Mexico in Focus, 2019)

Naranjo Lopez and Encinias' concerns illustrate how cities like Albuquerque are willing to ignore the voices of people of color and prioritize profit, which disproportionately benefits white people. Although the city of Albuquerque is not engaging in overtly racist acts that target people of color, its program to revitalize Downtown without listening to the concerns of longtime residents will result in the displacement of the city's most marginalized members, low-income people of color. In order to understand the current environmental conditions in these residents face, it is worthwhile to examine studies looking at environmental health conditions, food access, and park proximity.

### **EJSCREEN Data**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Justice screening and mapping tool (EJSCREEN) allows users to identify and compare environmental information for each census tract in the country (What is EJSCREEN, 2019). Using the 2019 version, it is apparent that Downtown Albuquerque's Census Tract 21 is at an environmental disadvantage compared to most of the United States (Figure 12). For example, those living in Census Tract 21 are in the 98<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to the rest of the United States for their proximity to a Superfund site. A Superfund site is a contaminated site that the EPA determines poses great health risks to residents and the environment. There are three Superfund sites in Albuquerque, all located in the southern part of town (Search for Superfund Sites Where You Live, 2020). In fact, the Fruit Avenue Plume site lies within Census Tract 21. The Fruit Avenue Plume site was placed on the National Priorities List (NPL) by the EPA in 1999. Several decades

of improper dry-cleaning waste disposal contaminated the groundwater with hazardous chemicals and exposed residents to five different contaminants, both in the soil and groundwater (Fruit Avenue Plume, 2020). To this day, the EPA has not removed the Superfund site from the NPL, which means the site has not been remediated.

When comparing Superfund site proximity in Albuquerque, it is apparent a major disparity exists between the northeast part of town and the downtown area (Figure 11). As was shown by the income and demographic maps (Figures 7 & 8), those living in the northeast part of town tend to be white and wealthy, and now, it is evident that they also have an environmental health advantage over the long-time Hispanic residents living in Downtown Albuquerque. Due to the close proximity of Interstates 25 and 40 to downtown, those living in the area are also exposed to high levels of air pollution, which can be seen when comparing diesel particulate matter (PM), air toxics cancer risk, and the respiratory hazard index to the rest of New Mexico, EPA Region, and the country (Figure 12). The human health effects of air pollution vary, with short-term exposure being “closely related to COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, asthma, respiratory disease, and high rates of hospitalization (a measurement of morbidity)” (Manisalidis, Stavropoulou, Stavropoulos, & Bezirtzoglou, 2020). The long-term effects correlated with air pollution include chronic asthma, pulmonary insufficiency, cardiovascular diseases, and cardiovascular mortality” (Manisalidis, Stavropoulou, Stavropoulos, & Bezirtzoglou, 2020).

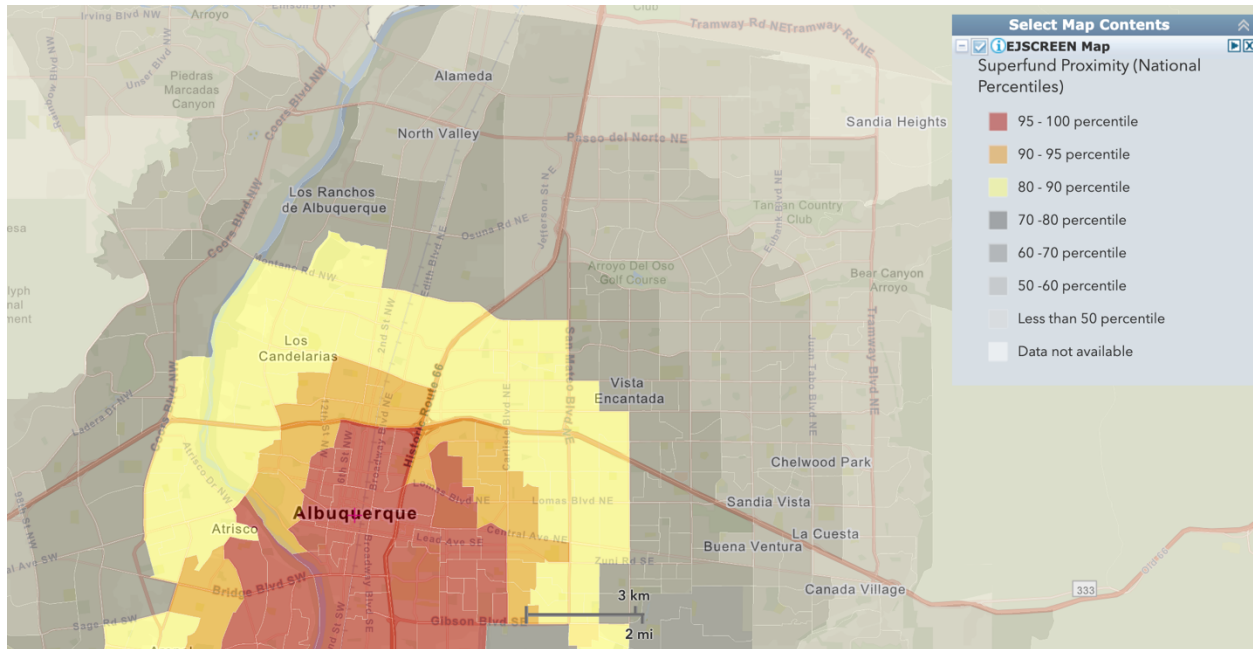


Figure 11. Map showing Superfund Site Proximity in Albuquerque. Reprinted from United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (2019). EJSCREEN Mapper. Retrieved from <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>

Census Tract 21 is in the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for 9 of the 11 environmental factors when compared to the rest of the country (EJSCREEN Mapper, 2019). When compared to the rest of the EPA Region 6, which includes New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and 66 tribal nations, Albuquerque’s Census Tract 21 is in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for 10 of the 11 environmental indicators (EJSCREEN Mapper, 2019; EPA Region 6, 2020). Finally, when compared to the rest of New Mexico, Census Tract 21 is in the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for all 11 environmental indicators. From this information, it is reasonable to conclude that the residents of the downtown area are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards, which will have a disproportionate impact on community members’ health.

Selected Variables	Value	State		EPA Region		USA	
		Avg.	%tile	Avg.	%tile	Avg.	%tile
<b>Environmental Indicators</b>							
Particulate Matter (PM 2.5 in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )	6.83	6.15	90	8.37	10	8.3	17
Ozone (ppb)	51.7	50.4	69	39.4	98	43	91
NATA* Diesel PM ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )	0.781	0.281	95	0.401	90-95th	0.479	80-90th
NATA* Air Toxics Cancer Risk (risk per MM)	34	24	96	36	<50th	32	60-70th
NATA* Respiratory Hazard Index	0.49	0.32	97	0.45	60-70th	0.44	60-70th
Traffic Proximity and Volume (daily traffic count/distance to road)	2000	360	97	400	96	750	90
Lead Paint Indicator (% pre-1960s housing)	0.17	0.18	64	0.17	68	0.28	49
Superfund Proximity (site count/km distance)	1.2	0.14	98	0.081	99	0.13	98
RMP Proximity (facility count/km distance)	1.2	0.24	97	0.82	79	0.74	81
Hazardous Waste Proximity (facility count/km distance)	3.5	0.46	98	0.75	96	4	86
Wastewater Discharge Indicator (toxicity-weighted concentration/m distance)	0.00038	130	68	9.8	58	14	61
<b>Demographic Indicators</b>							
Demographic Index	63%	52%	68	44%	75	36%	84
Minority Population	65%	62%	54	51%	64	39%	75
Low Income Population	62%	42%	81	37%	84	33%	89
Linguistically Isolated Population	1%	5%	29	6%	38	4%	46
Population with Less Than High School Education	11%	15%	44	16%	42	13%	54
Population under Age 5	5%	6%	41	7%	34	6%	42
Population over Age 64	12%	16%	35	13%	50	15%	40

Figure 12. Table provided by the EPA showing environmental health indicators in Census Tract 21 compared to New Mexico, EPA region 6, and the United States. Reprinted from United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (2019). EJSCREEN Mapper. Retrieved from <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>

## Food Deserts

Many studies acknowledge the influx of large chain stores and specialty coffee shops as a sign of gentrification (Chapple et al., 2017; Cohen, 2018; Papachristos et al., 2011). However, gentrification can also be caused by the existence of food deserts, where low-income households do not have access to nearby grocery stores and the costs of time and transportation are too high, forcing them to relocate to save time and money (Cohen, 2018). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food deserts as “low-income tracts in which a substantial number or proportion of the population has low access to supermarkets or large grocery stores. Low-income tracts are characterized by either a poverty rate equal to or greater than 20 percent, or a median family income that is 80 percent or less of the

metropolitan area’s median family income (for tracts in metropolitan areas)” (Dutko, Ver Ploeg, & Farrigan, 2012, p. 5). Using the USDA’s Food Desert Locator map, which allows users to identify food deserts based on census tract data in 2010 and 2015, Census Tract 21 is identified as low-income and low access at ½ mile in both years (Food Desert Locator, 2019). Low access tracts are determined as “Tracts in which at least 500 people or 33% of the population lives farther than 1/2 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket” (Mapping Food Deserts in the United States, 2011). When comparing food desert information across Albuquerque similar environmental disparities emerge, with the southern part of town being a major food desert, while the northeast part of town is free of food deserts (Figure 13).

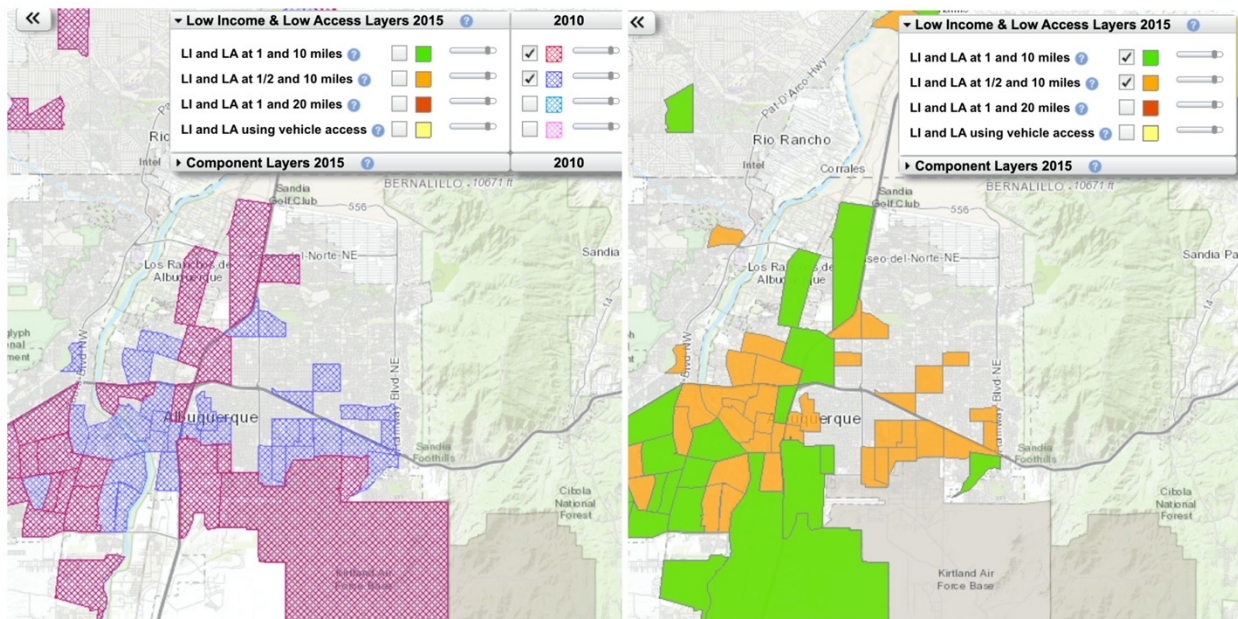


Figure 13. Map showing the location of food deserts in Albuquerque in 2010 (left) and 2015 (right). LI means low income and LA means low access. Reprinted from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). (2019, October 31). Food Desert Locator. Retrieved May 15, 2020, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>

According to a report by the USDA (2009), “Limited access to nutritious food and relatively easier access to less nutritious food may be linked to poor diets and, ultimately, to obesity and diet-related diseases” (p. iii). Many food justice scholars have noted that food deserts exist in the inner city, due to lack of space for supermarkets and supermarket redlining

(Whitacre, Tsai, Mulligan & Institute of Medicine, 2009; Larson, Story, & Nelson, 2009).

Conversely, supermarkets are generally more eager to develop in the suburbs for the exact opposite reasons, plenty of space to build and upper-income households. The USDA report (2009) also found that “Supermarkets and large grocery stores have lower prices than smaller stores,” which is yet another privilege afforded to wealthier and whiter communities.

In 2016, a grocery store named Silver Street Market was finally built in the downtown area, after over 25 years of trying to find a grocery operator willing to move into this low-income area (Dyer, 2016). David Silverman, one of the developers who helped build the Silver Street Market, said “he approached all of the major grocery store chains, but most immediately dismiss areas that don’t meet specific income or population criteria,” suggesting that supermarket redlining has occurred in Downtown Albuquerque (Dyer, 2015). Silver Street Market is a public-private partnership that was pushed for and subsidized by former Mayor Richard Barry’s administration as part of a mixed-use building project. When the grocery store opened, Barry said “he considers the grocery store a key element in Downtown’s revitalization and expects it to drive additional residential and commercial development” (Dyer, 2016). As Barry suggests, a long overdue grocery store in the downtown area has the potential to drive the City of Albuquerque’s revitalization efforts. However, it also has the potential to increase gentrification. In order to understand the effects of the new grocery store on gentrification, future research is needed on Silver Street Markets perception, both to newcomers and longtime residents, as well as its affordability.

In order to better understand food affordability, it is also important to look at food accessibility for those on food assistance programs. In Census Tract 21, there are 16 places to

get beer and coffee (Figure 14) (Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet, 2016), however, there are only three places where people receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits, formerly known as food stamps, can shop (Figure 15) (SNAP Retailer Locator, 2020). Of the three locations, two are convenience stores, which “typically do not carry fresh fruits, vegetables or meat. In addition, these stores carry large amounts of pre-packaged, processed foods with low-nutritional value at inflated prices” (Farm to Table & The New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council, 2011, p. 7). The remaining place is Silver Street Market. The limited options for those receiving SNAP to shop in the downtown area, come during a time when the Trump Administration has repeatedly tried to strip millions of recipients across the country of their benefits (Fadulu, 2019). The latest proposal would put over 12,000 New Mexicans at risk of losing their SNAP benefits, including 897 children who currently have access to the school lunch programs. The Trump Administration’s effort to rescind social programs, like SNAP, is a prime example of neoliberalism. During a time of extreme wealth inequality in America, the Trump Administration aims to remove programs that were enacted to cushion citizens against economic risk. The result of such decisions will likely increase inequality and further fuel gentrification, as many Americans will be forced to choose between food or a place to live.



# BEER + COFFEE guide

toast & roast in Downtown Albuquerque

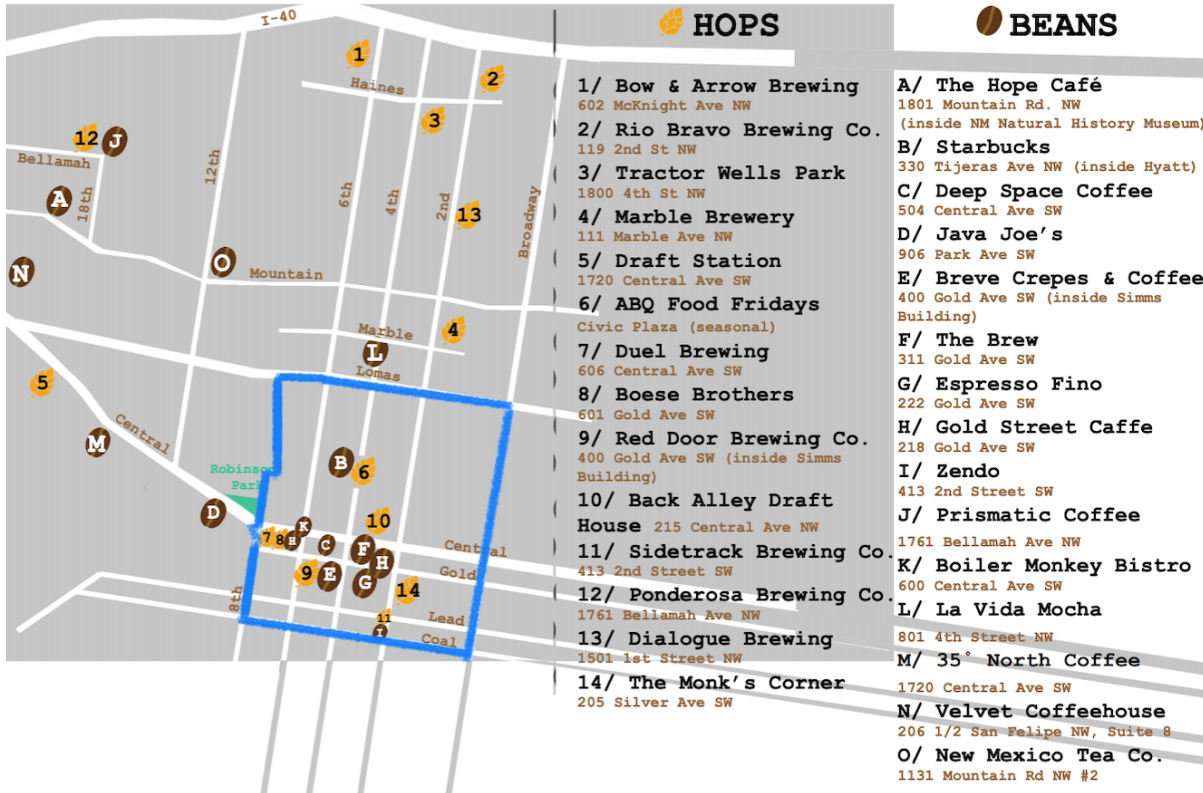


Figure 14. Map showing beer and coffee shops in Downtown Albuquerque. Census Tract 21 is outlined in blue. Reprinted from Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet. (2016). Downtown Brewery and Coffee Map. Retrieved from <https://www.abqmainstreet.org/wp-content/up>

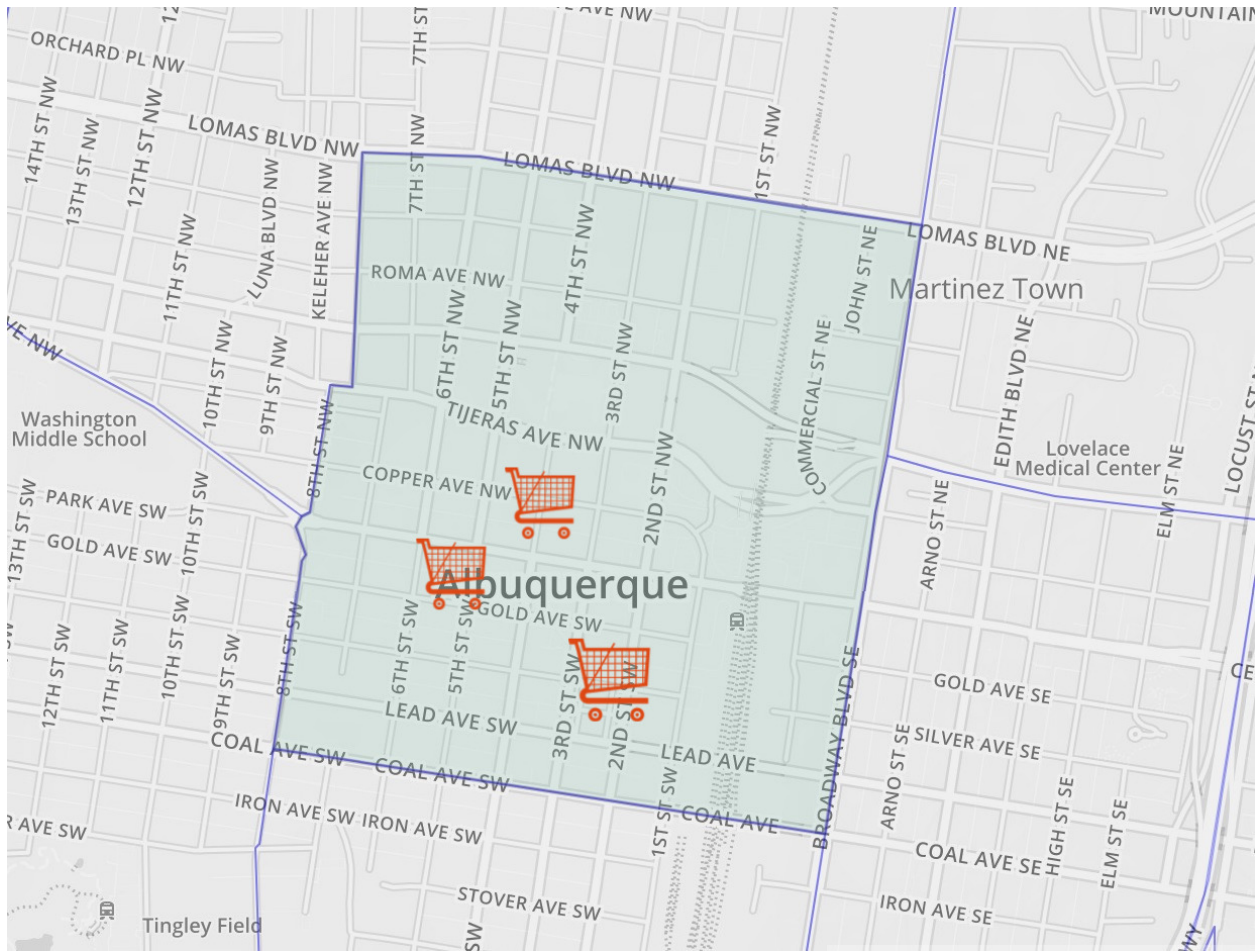


Figure 15. Map showing where people can spend SNAP benefits in Census Tract 21. Reprinted from United States Census Bureau (2018). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Census Tract 21, Bernalillo, NM <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/14000US35001002100-census-tract-21-bernalillo-nm/>

## Park Access

In the United States, there is evidence that “Latino concentrated neighborhoods lack the recreational resources that support active lifestyles, such as public parks” (Garcia, Gee, & Jones, 2016, p. 398). Hispanics are the largest ethnic minority in the United States, at 55.4 million people, comprising 17.4% of the US population in 2014 (Velasco-Mondragon, Jimenez, Palladino-Davis, *et al.*, 2016). In 2018, New Mexico was the state with the largest percentage of Hispanic population in the United States, at 49.1% (Duffin, 2019).

Major health disparities exist for Hispanic people in the United States. For example, approximately 42% of Hispanic adults and 22% of Hispanic children are obese, compared to 32% of white adults and 14% of white children (Hispanic Federation, 2015). Additionally, Hispanic people are exposed to disproportionate amounts of “asthma-inducing air pollution and have the highest rates of asthma in the country,” with Hispanic children being 40% more likely to die from asthma than white children (Hispanic Federation, 2015, p. 7). According to a 2018 report by the New Mexico Department of Health’s Indicator-Based Information System (NM-IBIS), large racial and ethnic disparities exist among adults diagnosed with diabetes in New Mexico (Figure 16). For example, the rate of American Indian/Alaska Native adults in New Mexico who were diagnosed with diabetes was three times the rate of white adults. The rate for Hispanic adults was nearly twice the rate of white adults. Although the survey found that Black/African American and Asian/Pacific Islander adults in New Mexico had higher rates of diabetes than white adults, the sample size was too small for the New Mexico Department of Health to make comparisons. Diabetes poses great risk and has the ability to “lower life expectancy and increase the risk of heart disease. It is the leading cause of kidney failure, lower limb amputation, and adult-onset blindness” (New Mexico Department of Health, 2018). Thus, active lifestyles that promote physical health are of major importance for Hispanic people.

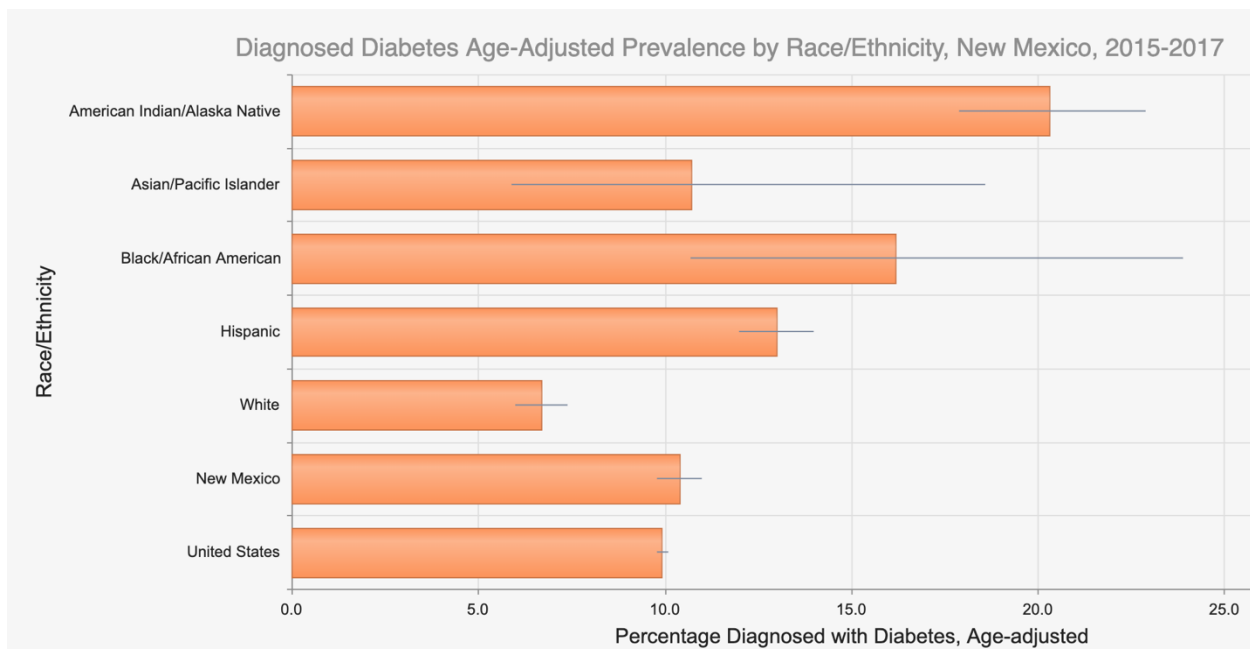


Figure 16. Graph showing the percentage of adults diagnosed with diabetes based on race/ethnicity in New Mexico. Reprinted from New Mexico Department of Health (2018, December 19). New Mexico's Indicator-Based Information System (NM-IBIS) Health Indicator Report of Diabetes (Diagnosed) Prevalence. Retrieved from [https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/indicator/view/DiabPrev1.RacEth.NM\\_US.html](https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/indicator/view/DiabPrev1.RacEth.NM_US.html)

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has created a mapping tool to show residents' proximity to public parks (The Trust for Public Land, n.d.). According to TPL's 2019 report, 87.1% of Albuquerque residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. Albuquerque is ranked as the 34<sup>th</sup> best city for public parks among the top 100 most populous cities. Given Albuquerque's large Hispanic population, having 86.6% of the Hispanic population within a 10-minute walk to parks and open space sounds like a wonderful achievement. However, gentrification scholars are finding that the addition of parks and open spaces runs the risk of accelerating gentrification, and displacement, in desirable urban areas (Anguelovski, Connolly, & Brand, 2018).

TPL identifies park quality based on four characteristics of access, investment, acreage, and amenities (The Trust for Public Land, n.d.). TPL designated residents of Census Tract 21 as being served by the Civic Plaza, which includes a splash pad and 6 picnic tables (City of Albuquerque, n.d.). However, TPL's determinations do not consider the United States' legacy of

racism, which greatly impacts people of color's park access (Mock, 2016). Even if a park is nearby, that does not mean everyone is going to feel safe using the facility. When talking to my family, it was clear that they did not feel safe downtown, especially at night. When TPL creates this mapping tool, it would be useful to include safety as another characteristic to consider.

## Homelessness as a Result of Gentrification

Gentrification causes displacement and in extreme cases, can force low-income people to become homeless. The Eviction Lab's 2016 study shows that 4.72% of families were evicted in Albuquerque, which was 2% higher than the US average for the same year (Brown, 2018). 4.72% is equivalent to 4,541 evictions in Albuquerque in 2016, which is approximately 12.44 households being evicted every day (Eviction Lab, n.d.). The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development defines housing that requires a family to pay more than 30% of their income as a cost burden (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, rent for a one-bedroom and two-bedroom housing unit in Downtown Albuquerque in 2019 was \$700 and \$860, respectively (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2019). Using the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition, a one-bedroom housing unit would require at least \$13.46 per hour and a two-bedroom housing unit would require at least \$16.54 per hour, in order to not be a cost burden. The 2020 minimum wage in Albuquerque is \$8.35 for employees who receive benefits over \$2,500 and \$9.35 for employees who do not receive benefits (New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, 2020). Additionally, New Mexico's current governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has signed into law the New Mexico

Minimum Wage Act, which raises the New Mexico minimum wage for the first time in over a decade. Starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, the state minimum wage increased from \$7.50 to \$9.00 per hour. The New Mexico Minimum Wage Act aims to incrementally increase the minimum wage every year up to \$12.00 per hour by 2023. Raising the minimum wage will help to reduce the cost burden of housing, however, it will not solve income inequality, especially when considering the wage gap problem in the Albuquerque Metro area (One Albuquerque Economic Development, n.d.). For example, the median hourly wage for white people with a bachelor's degree is \$29.10, compared to \$25.00 for Hispanic people, and \$24.70 for other people of color with the same educational attainment (Figure 17). Similar disparities exist for lower levels of educational attainment, with white people continually making more than Hispanic people and other people of color. When comparing median hourly wage based on educational attainment, race, and gender even greater disparities arise. For example, white men make \$32.70, compared to men of color, who make \$27.40, white women, who make \$26.00, and women of color, who make \$22.20. Addressing the wage gaps across gender and race is another crucial aspect of creating a more equitable society in Albuquerque.

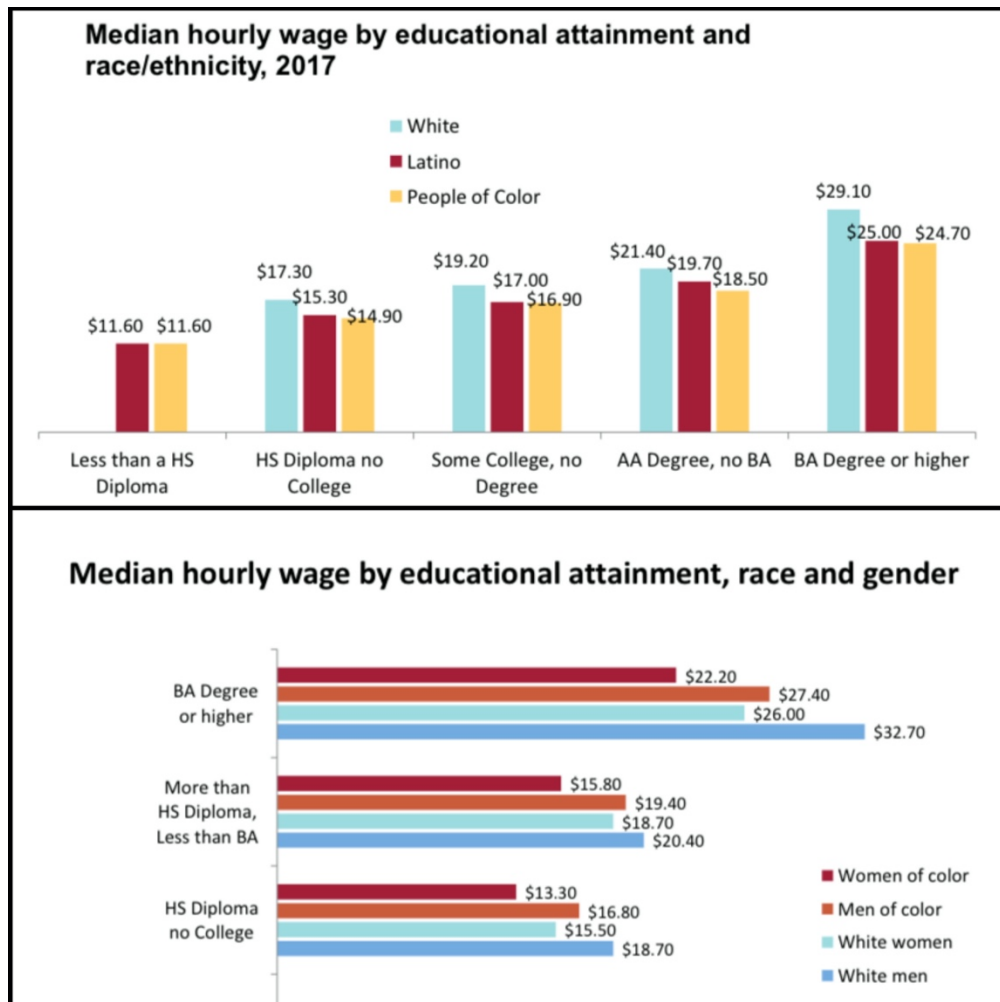


Figure 17. Charts showing wage gaps between race/ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment. Reprinted from City of Albuquerque. (n.d.). One Albuquerque Economic Development. Retrieved June 09, 2020, from <https://www.cabq.gov/economicdevelopment/documents/edd-rollout-presentation-rm-for-website.pdf>

A recent study looking at rent affordability and homelessness found that homelessness increases when renters spend more than 22% of their income on rent (Glynn, Byrne, & Culhane, 2018). In 2017, Albuquerque’s rent was 28.7% of the median income. The study also found that when renters spend more than 32% of their income on rent, homelessness increases at an even greater rate. The 2019 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development found that New Mexico had the nation’s largest percentage increase in homelessness from 2018 to 2019 (Nathanson, 2020).

Albuquerque's homeless population increased by 15% during this time, with a 57.6% increase in chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness is defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development as an individual who has experienced homelessness for over a year or has experienced homelessness four or more times over the last three years (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2019). According to the report, there were 2,464 homeless people in New Mexico in 2019, with 52% being chronically homeless (Nathanson, 2020). As the City of Albuquerque continues to revitalize Downtown Albuquerque, we should expect more homelessness unless residents receive a living wage and are protected from the effects of gentrification.

## Conclusion

When Spaniards colonized the Albuquerque area, they displaced the Sandia Pueblo people through economic, political, social, and physical domination. As a result, the Hispanic population, descendants of the Spanish colonists, came to occupy what is now Downtown Albuquerque. It wasn't until Albuquerque became a part of the United States that a new form of colonization began to occur. Since the 1940's, Albuquerque has experienced major population growth, with many of the new residents being wealthier white people, who moved into the newly-built suburbs in the northeast part of town. Around the 1960's, the creation of shopping malls in eastern Albuquerque and the interstate highway system led to the disinvestment of Downtown Albuquerque. As a result, a major rent gap now exists in the downtown area, which allows for capitalists to profit off the depressed land value by renovating the area and increasing rent prices.



Gentrification, a new form of colonization, has begun to force many longtime residents out of their homes, as they can no longer afford to live in the area or feel alienated by the major physical and social changes to their neighborhood. The longtime residents of the downtown area being displaced, or at risk of being displaced, are largely the Hispanic descendants who helped make Albuquerque what it is today. As the City of Albuquerque continues to push for economic development in the downtown area, wealthier, higher-educated people have begun to move into the surrounding neighborhoods, allured by amenities targeted at upwardly mobile classes. This is illustrated by the million-dollar investments by both private developers and the City of Albuquerque on new mixed-use developments in Downtown Albuquerque. The ART bus, which led to the closure of many small businesses, in addition to the rezoning of Downtown to accommodate more mixed-use projects is indicative of where former Mayor Richard Berry and current Mayor Tim Keller's priorities lie. Undoubtedly, the residents of the downtown neighborhoods want economic development, however, they want the development to serve their needs. Naranjo Lopez and Encinias, who are residents of the downtown area, aren't calling for more coffee shops and breweries, they are calling for new grocery stores, that are healthy and affordable. These longtime residents aren't calling for new high-end apartments, they're calling for transparency and racial equity from their local government, who have ignored their needs and concerns for far too long.

As Smith (1982) describes it, "The logic behind uneven development is that the development of one area creates barriers to further development, thus leading to underdevelopment, and that the underdevelopment of that area creates opportunities for a new phase of development" (p. 151). Gentrification is a symptom of capitalism. Neighborhoods

and cities will continue to become gentrified in this country until more socialized policies are put into place that protect people and their homes from the demands of the ruling class. If the City of Albuquerque cares about its working-class people of Downtown Albuquerque, then more needs to be done to protect them from the effects of gentrification. It is important for local governments to work with their people to create communities that benefit and meet the needs of those living there.

My grandparents are working class Hispanic people, who created a life for themselves in Albuquerque. When talking with them about the changes they have experienced, it was evident that the life they made would no longer be possible today. It is unlikely that a truck driver and banker would be able to afford a house off Rio Grande Boulevard, as homes now range from \$300,000 to a few million dollars. The neighborhood my grandparents live in is mostly owned by people who, like them, have lived there for decades. Many of the homes are nearly a century old and it is a very sobering feeling to know that their neighborhood, where I spent much of my childhood, could one day become gentrified as Albuquerque continues to grow.

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