

*Minneapolis for Whom: A Case Study on How the False NIMBY/YIMBY Dichotomy
Serves White People's Interests*

by

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Georgia Jane Lyon has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Politics.

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Introduction

“As the city grows, everyone must benefit from that growth. Historically, not everyone has.”¹ This promise of equity guided the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota as it embarked on the journey of creating the 100 policies in the most recent update to its Comprehensive Plan, Minneapolis 2040, from 2016-2018. Every decade, Minnesota state law requires the City of Minneapolis to submit an update to its Comprehensive Plan to allow the city to collectively articulate the 20-year-vision for its, “built, economic, and natural environment.”² The scope of the Comprehensive Plan covered a broad range of factors relating to regional development--from housing to transportation to zoning,³ and thus gave Minneapolis a prime opportunity to reflect upon past socioeconomic and race-based inequalities and create an environment that promoted equity going forward.

However, while the City of Minneapolis tried to provide the space for residents to reflect upon the past and consider how to create a more equitable future, various community groups from around Minneapolis played a large role in shaping how residents considered and articulated their support or opposition to this future. As such, this thesis will specifically focus on how community groups voiced their support for or opposition towards Minneapolis 2040 with regards to its proposals to allow for higher density housing development through the elimination of single-family residential zoning or upzoning—two terms that are used interchangeably throughout the thesis. This thesis will begin to do so by examining the main community groups that arose to support and

¹ “Overview,” Minneapolis 2040, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://minneapolis2040.com/overview/>.

² “Planning Process,” Minneapolis 2040, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://minneapolis2040.com/planning-process/>.

³ “Overview,” Minneapolis 2040, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://minneapolis2040.com/overview/>.

oppose higher density housing development, Neighbors for More Neighbors and Minneapolis for Everyone, which can be understood as Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) or Yes in My Backyard (YIMBY) community groups.

NIMBY groups oppose further housing development in their neighborhoods whereas YIMBY groups support such development. NIMBY is a label that scholars and disgruntled community members have applied to various neighborhood or community groups in United States cities that generally oppose new housing development where they live. Over time, NIMBY has come to carry a derogatory connotation since NIMBY groups often represent the interests of white, affluent city residents who oppose housing development mostly for the purpose of continuing to exclude lower income people and communities of color from their neighborhoods. YIMBY arose as a reactionary response to NIMBY. YIMBYs blamed NIMBYs for a shortage of affordable housing in urban centers and began adamantly supporting all housing development in their neighborhoods. They based their support on the understanding of how a free market operates in classical economic theory: an increase in the supply of housing would lead to consumers' housing prices decreasing. In this case, that would benefit renters and homeowners such as themselves. In sum, YIMBY could not exist without the terms of debate set by NIMBY. Although NIMBY and YIMBY may understand themselves as opposites, the shared IMBY root shows how they both assume that one can exert control over an area beyond one's house. As one Minneapolis resident said, "If you say, 'Yes in My Backyard,' you imply that you have a yard to share. You imply that you get to decide whether to share it or not."⁴

⁴ Janne Flisrand, "Yes to Homes, But I'm No "YIMBY," *streets mn*, 1 October 2018, <https://streets.mn/2018/10/01/yes-to-homes-but-im-no-yimby/>.

Therefore, in this thesis, I ask the following: How did NIMBY and YIMBY shape Minneapolis's debate around allowing denser housing development? How did Neighbors for More Neighbors in particular come to understand denser housing development as a policy change that would promote racial equity within Minneapolis? Who exactly did Minneapolis for Everyone and Neighbors for More Neighbors represent within Minneapolis, and how might the work of the Latinx tenants' group, Inquilinxs Unidos Por Justicia (United Renters), provide an alternative understanding of housing development's role in promoting racial equity within U.S. cities?

My answer is two-part. In the first part, I posit that instead of being considered opposites, NIMBY and YIMBY should be considered a false dichotomy that prioritizes white people's housing needs over those of people of color. I review United States cities' racist housing history and then discuss two cases studies that provide background on how that history has played out in YIMBY and Minneapolis specifically. Subsequently, I examine how the community group Minneapolis for Everyone is a NIMBY group that represents the interests of white, affluent neighborhoods who want to exclude others both from their neighborhoods and the city's civic engagement process. Additionally, I claim that the YIMBY-affiliated group Neighbors for More Neighbor's frame for understanding racial equity in housing favors upzoning and private development while failing to imagine housing solutions that challenge the free market, creating questions of whose interests this group really serves. In the second part, I propose that an alternative to this false NIMBY/YIMBY dichotomy would be not to ask whether more housing should be built but ask *how* that housing is being built and *who* controls it. I examine how United Renters has advocated for housing solutions that alter the tenant-landlord relationship as

opposed to concentrating on housing density or zoning. Finally, I synthesize these two parts of my argument to say that the false NIMBY/YIMBY dichotomy serves the interests of Minneapolis's white residents and conclude that scholars and community groups interested in remedying U.S. cities' racist housing history should instead center reducing inequality within or altogether abolishing the landlord-tenant relationship.

Literature Review

Housing discrimination has created and reinforced racial inequities within U.S. cities since the beginning of the 20th century. The high levels of residential segregation seen within and between U.S. cities started in the early 20th century with the Great Migration of blacks from the largely rural South to the more urbanized North.⁵ As black and white segregation declined along state and county lines, black and white segregation increased within and between cities.⁶ This segregation was frequently enforced through such policies and practices as redlining and racial covenants.⁷ Redlining enabled banks to determine the creditworthiness of entire neighborhoods for loans and mortgages based on their racial composition. Broadly speaking, largely homogenous white neighborhoods were deemed highly worthy while neighborhoods with more black, Latinx, or Asian people were deemed less worthy.⁸ Additionally, contractual agreements, known as racially restrictive covenants, barred black, Latinx, and Asian people from renting or owning certain homes. While the 1948 Supreme Court Case *Shelley v. Kramer* declared that the federal government could not enforce racial covenants,⁹ it permitted private parties to continue with this practice for another two decades until the 1968 Fair Housing

⁵ Douglas S. Massey, "Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas," *Research Conference on Racial Trends in the United States. America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001), 393-394.

⁶ Massey, "Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas," 395.

⁷ Adam Gordon, "The Creation of Homeownership: How New Deal Changes in Banking Regulation Simultaneously Made Homeownership Accessible to Whites and Out of Reach for Blacks," *The Yale Law Journal* 115, no. 1 (2005): 189.

⁸ Gordon, "The Creation of Homeownership: How New Deal Changes in Banking Regulation Simultaneously Made Homeownership Accessible to Whites and Out of Reach for Blacks," 189.

⁹ Charles Lamb and Adam Nye, "Do Presidents Control Bureaucracy? the Federal Housing Administration During the Truman-Eisenhower Era." *Political Science Quarterly* 127, no. 3 (2012): 446.

Act outlawed all forms of explicit race-based housing discrimination.¹⁰ Nonetheless, federal law created an environment where housing discrimination thrived in the early-to-mid twentieth century.¹¹ In turn, this helped crystalize race-based inequity by helping whites gain access to homeownership and the wealth associated with while barring people from other racial groups.

Despite the 1968 Fair Housing Act outlawing explicitly race-based housing discrimination, racial minorities still experience housing discrimination. Many scholars have examined how private practices and policies still perpetuate housing discrimination and residential segregation, in particular for blacks. Of any racial group, blacks experience the highest levels of race-based housing discrimination and neighborhood segregation. Middle-class and affluent blacks often remain highly segregated from white people in U.S. cities, suggesting that socioeconomic status cannot explain away this segregation.¹² Additionally, neither educational attainment,¹³ immigration status,¹⁴ nor personal preferences¹⁵ has been found to account for these extreme levels of segregation. Only such race-based factors as real estate agents steering blacks and whites towards homes in different neighborhoods¹⁶, banks approving blacks mortgage applications at a

¹⁰ Lamb and Nye, "Do Presidents Control Bureaucracy? the Federal Housing Administration During the Truman-Eisenhower Era," 446.

¹¹ Gordon 189.

¹² Robert Adelman, "The Roles of Race, Class, and Residential Preferences in the Neighborhood Racial Composition of Middle-Class Blacks and Whites." *Social Science Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2005): 225-226, John Iceland and Melissa Scopilliti, "Immigrant Residential Segregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1990–2000," *Demography* 45, no. 1 (2008): 89 and Massey 409.

¹³ Rebecca Tesfai, "The Interaction between Race and Nativity on the Housing Market: Homeownership and House Value of Black Immigrants in the United States," *International Migration Review* 50, no. 4 (2016): 1009.

¹⁴ Tesfai, "The Interaction between Race and Nativity on the Housing Market: Homeownership and House Value of Black Immigrants in the United States," 1009.

¹⁵ Adelman, "The Roles of Race, Class, and Residential Preferences in the Neighborhood Racial Composition of Middle-Class Blacks and Whites," 24.

¹⁶ Tesfai 1008 and Massey 416.

lower rate than similarly-qualified whites,¹⁷ and withdrawing them at a higher rate¹⁸ can begin to explain these extreme levels of neighborhood segregation.

Meanwhile, for Hispanics and Asians, housing discrimination persists, but is somewhat mitigated by immigration-status and educational attainment. Latinx people who appear to be assimilated with American culture face less discrimination on the housing market than those who are recent immigrants.¹⁹ Similar studies on Asian homeownership also suggest that foreign-born status is the largest measurable factor preventing Asians from being homeowners.²⁰ The negative effects of foreign-born status on homeownership are also exacerbated by a lack of education among Asian refugees in their home countries.²¹ Thus, personal factors must be considered for Latinx and Asian people if their experiences with private practices of housing discrimination are to be properly understood.

In addition to private housing discrimination, city codes and local laws can still be applied to reinforce de facto neighborhood racial segregation. This segregation often operates through the application of zoning and land use laws. Originally, cities devised these laws in the early 20th century to separate residential areas from industrial

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Andrew Hanson and Michael Santa, "Field Experiment Tests for Discrimination Against Hispanics in the U.S. Rental Housing Market." *Southern Economic Journal* 81, no. 1 (2014): 159-160 and Lauren Kivo, "Immigrant Characteristics and Hispanic-Anglo Housing Inequality," *Demography* 32, no. 4 (1995): 600.

²⁰ Jeffrey Burr and Jan Mutchler, "Housing Characteristics of Older Asian Americans," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 27, no. 3 (2012): 233.

²¹ Ryan Allan and Edward Goetz, "Nativity, Ethnicity, and Residential Relocation: The Experience of Hmong Refugees and African Americans Displaced from Public Housing." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 32, no. 3 (2010): 21, and Burr and Mutchler, "Housing Characteristics of Older Asian Americans," 234.

activities,²² but they often group multi-family housing together with industrial activities.²³ However, since zoning and land use laws are written to explicitly apply to a type of housing rather than a type of person, these kinds of segregation and inequity are oftentimes still permitted. This thesis--in its analysis of NIMBY and YIMBY--will contribute more to the discussion on what local governments' laws and community groups abilities to change them might mean for racial inequities in U.S. cities.

The term NIMBY first came into widespread use in the 1980s to broadly describe Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs).²⁴ At this time, NIMBYs were homeowner groups who coalesced around concerns about proposals for nearby energy facilities and waste plants polluting their neighborhoods.²⁵ The whole city might benefit from the construction of such facilities, but nearby neighborhoods would disproportionately bare the localized, negative costs. Such facilities could reduce the property values of the houses in the neighborhoods and public safety while increasing burdens on local public services.²⁶ However, with time, NIMBY groups--increasingly based in affluent, white neighborhoods--also starting coalescing to oppose denser developments with mixed-use or subsidized housing that might bring greater numbers of poor people, racial minorities, mentally ill,²⁷ homeless²⁸, or otherwise undesirable people to the neighborhoods where

²² Tighe, J.L. (2011). Jenna Tighe, "Public Perceptions of Affordable Housing: How Race and Class Stereotyping Influence Views" PhD diss., Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin, 2009, Social Science Premium Collection (1018358058), 68.

²³ Robert Liberty, "Abolishing Exclusionary Zoning: A Natural Policy Alliance for Environmentalists and Affordable Housing Advocates," *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review* 30, no. 3 (2003):583 and Tighe, "Public Perceptions of Affordable Housing: How Race and Class Stereotyping Influence Views," 69.

²⁴ Carissa Schively, "Understanding the NIMBY and LULU Phenomena: Reassessing our Knowledge Base and Informing Future Research," *Journal of Planning Literature* 21, no. 3 (2007): 255–266.

²⁵ Robert Lake, "Rethinking NIMBY," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 59, no.1 (1993): 87, and Tighe, 76-77.

²⁶ Tighe 76.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

these homeowners lived. NIMBYs started to express concerns less about disproportionately bearing the localized costs of waste facilities and more about having greater numbers poor people or people of color in their neighborhoods. Generally, the neighborhoods that were the most homogenous in terms of class and race had the strongest NIMBY responses while those that were more heterogeneous had weaker NIMBY responses because such changes would be less noticeable in these neighborhoods.²⁹ This assisted in perpetuating the existence of predominantly white enclaves around urban centers.³⁰

In particular, this thesis will be situated within the new and emergent scholarly literature on the NIMBY/YIMBY housing dichotomy. Within this literature, NIMBYism continues to be understood as, “linked to racist and wealthy neighborhood preservation.”³¹ Much of this literature involves pro free market and anti-capitalist camps disagreeing over whether YIMBYism is a path to greater economic prosperity and liberation or further oppression. The emerging pro free market camp thinks that YIMBYism could be as much a boon for the development of more affordable housing as NIMBYism is a hurdle. YIMBYism is understood as a movement that could boost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while increasing social mobility.³² Meanwhile, the emerging anti-capitalist camp thinks that YIMBYism’s indiscriminate promotion of market-rate housing development increases inequality by encouraging gentrification and

²⁹ Ibid 99.

³⁰ Erin McElroy and Andrew Szeto, “The Racial Contours of YIMBY/NIMBY Bay Area Gentrification,” *Berkeley Planning Journal*, 29, no. 1 (2017): 21.

³¹ Erin McElroy and Andrew Szeto, “The Racial Contours of YIMBY/NIMBY Bay Area Gentrification,” 8.

³² Myers John, *How to End the Housing Crisis: Boost the Economy and Win More Votes*, London, *The Adam Smith Institute*, Accessed 9 April 2019.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56eddde762cd9413e151ac92/t/598c8b62be42d6f7f8e30ebe/1502382968482/John+Myers+-+YIMBY+-+Final.pdf>.

displacement in urban neighborhoods.³³ One of the seminal anti-capitalist critiques of YIMBYism, Erin McElroy's and Andrew Szeto's article, *The Racial Contours of YIMBY/NIMBY in Bay Area Gentrification*, examines how YIMBYism contributed to the displacement of and violence towards communities of color in San Francisco's Mission District. In this case, they claim that positing the free market as the solution to--rather than the problem with--the overall housing market ignores how the free market is a coercive force for those who cannot afford the higher rents associated with market-rate housing.³⁴ As such, they claim that when YIMBYs asked the City of San Francisco to build more market-rate housing units, they were forming a coalition with housing developers that prioritized the housing desires of white people over the survival of the communities of color in the Mission District. In this way, they see YIMBYism not as a liberatory force but rather another iteration of the exclusion and inequity that NIMBYism enables.³⁵ I will try to expand upon this understanding of YIMBY as another iteration of NIMBY in this thesis and explore how this critique might come into play in Minneapolis.

³³ McElroy and Szeto, 8-9.

³⁴ McElroy and Szeto, 15.

³⁵ Ibid 8.

Historical Case Studies on YIMBY and Minneapolis

To properly understand the roles that NIMBY and YIMBY played in Minneapolis's debate over further housing development, it is important to understand the contexts in which housing development oppresses and liberates communities. This section will do so with two cases studies. The first case study will show how YIMBY's inception in San Francisco in 2014 led to increased displacement of and violence towards communities of color in the Mission District. The second will illustrate how in the 1970s, residents of Minneapolis's Cedar-Riverside neighborhood managed to fight off an urban renewal project that would have destroyed their working-class neighborhood and instead use this as an opportunity to create a stronger sense of community by founding housing co-operatives.

“Build, Baby, Build!”

YIMBY's inception relied on white Millennials conflating opposition to housing in white, middle-class suburbs with the efforts of housing activist groups working to preserve housing for the Latinx community in San Francisco's Mission District. In 2014, YIMBY's founder, then 31-year-old resident Sonja Trauss, brought together members of the Bay Area Renter's Federation (BARF), young, white newcomers in the tech industry, and others interested in greater housing density to push the City of San Francisco to construct more housing. Trauss claimed that The City of San Francisco had artificially lowered the supply of housing stock below its free market equilibrium and that building more housing was the solution, hence giving rise to YIMBY as a rallying cry and

movement. To remedy the housing shortage that they thought years of NIMBYism had inflicted upon the city, YIMBYs adopted a, “build, baby, build”³⁶ mentality with regards to housing construction, demanding that San Francisco build market-rate housing whenever and wherever it could.

Though some anti-gentrification activists of color originally thought YIMBYs focus on land-use and zoning might provide an educational opportunity, the YIMBYs overwhelming whiteness and inability to listen quickly repelled them. The YIMBYs wanted to break coalitions that activists of color had forged between affordable housing and public housing groups and instead collaborate with developers to build more market-rate housing for white newcomers working in Silicon Valley’s booming high-tech industry. When housing activists of color tried to preserve this coalition, the predominantly white congregation of YIMBYs screamed over them at San Francisco City Council meetings.³⁷ Sonja Trauss then proceeded to publicly compare Latinx anti-gentrification activists to xenophobic Trump supporters³⁸ even as black and Latinx residents faced higher rates of eviction, displacement, and police brutality.³⁹ This demonstrates how:

YIMBY narratives of NIMBYism have thus strategically mobilized a unique form of liberalism against housing rights activists’ supposed NIMBY ‘conservatism.’ In other words, YIMBYs, who advocate for luxury and market-rate housing but not public housing, conflate housing

³⁶ Ibid 10.

³⁷ Toshio Meronek, “YIMBYs Exposed: The Techies Hawking Free Market “Solutions” to the Nation’s Housing Crisis,” *In These Times*, 21 May 2018, http://inthesetimes.com/features/yimbys_activists_san_francisco_housing_crisis.html.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ McElroy and Szeto, “The Racial Contours of YIMBY/NIMBY Bay Area Gentrification,” 29.

activists' affordability campaigns with NIMBY preservationist battles. These false confluences and binaries...are best understood within a framework of racial capitalism.⁴⁰

By choosing to focus on the free market as the main method for creating more housing, YIMBY excluded lower income residents of color, who were unable to compete for housing against middle-to-upper class white people in a free market, and thus experienced the free market as a coercive force that displaced them from their homes. San Francisco YIMBY's worked to uphold a political and market environment that prioritized white people's desires over the Latinx community's survival.

The New Town in Town

The Cedar-Riverside neighborhood's opposition to the urban renewal project, the New Town in Town, demonstrates how, sometimes, when communities prevent housing development, they take control of their housing situation. Between 1970-1980, the proposed New Town in Town galvanized Cedar-Riverside residents into creating institutions with specific focuses that combatted the aligned interests of private developers and city officials keen on their neighborhood's destruction.⁴¹ Unlike urban renewal projects in other urban areas around the United States, residential neighborhoods for working-class communities and communities of color were not replaced with real estate that was more profitable for the city and developers but instead was preserved as

⁴⁰ Ibid 31.

⁴¹ Randy Stoecker, *Defending Community: The Struggle for Alternative Redevelopment in Cedar-Riverside*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1994), 5-6.

secure, affordable housing for neighborhood residents in housing co-ops. The New Town in Town did not replace Cedar-Riverside; instead, Cedar-Riverside became the New Town in Town.

The city suggested that Cedar-Riverside's working-class residents were not valuable enough to inhabit the neighborhood's land. The city chose Cedar-Riverside for the site of the New Town in Town because a 1965 survey found a high rate of unemployed people and dilapidated houses.⁴² Thus, in 1970s, Minneapolis's private developers proposed the New Town in Town. This would have capitalized on turning the single-family homes and duplexes in Cedar-Riverside into college-housing and a hospital for the University of Minnesota, which would have generated more profits both for the university and the city.⁴³ When community members complained, private developers told them, "this land is too valuable to have you people living on it."⁴⁴ Cedar-Riverside residents realized that unless they organized, they would lose their homes.

In response, Cedar-Riverside's residents began organizing to form institutions to control the neighborhood that they had come to call home. In their minds, they were not only some people who were at risk of losing their housing but also a community that feared a loss of their alternative, hippie neighborhood culture. First, residents began meeting at the Community Union, an organization that was both a grocery store and the interface with the local housing authority. Given the Community Union's disparate purposes, residents quickly created more institutions bent on democratic participatory

⁴² Stoecker, Stoecker, *Defending Community: The Struggle for Alternative Redevelopment in Cedar-Riverside*.

32.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid 5.

practices with specific focuses to achieve their housing objectives. They established a Tenant's Union to protect residents against drastic rent hikes, and the West Bank Community Redevelopment Corporation (CDC) to allow community members to reinvest and redevelop residential housing in a manner congruent with community interests. The CDC also helped the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood transition from resisting private developers to forming housing co-operatives and a common sense of identity. These co-ops were financed through limited partnerships. The partnership owned the housing and leased the housing to the co-op. The co-op, "[controlled] the housing within the bounds of the lease."⁴⁵ These housing co-ops prevented speculators from purchasing the land and inflating its price, creating more stable, affordable housing relative to other neighborhoods in the Twin Cities.⁴⁶

Therefore, the successful community organizing efforts of the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood empowered the neighborhood not only to reject undesired housing development but fundamentally change who controlled the housing on its land and how. Although the residents of Cedar-Riverside chose to articulate their organizing in terms of, "community consciousness" rather than, "class consciousness", a central piece of this resistance was developing, "a highly developed critique of capitalism, not as workers, but as neighborhood residents."⁴⁷ Ultimately, battles over who controlled the neighborhood's land adopted a class-based nature because of who had control of the economic activities that occurred on the land.

⁴⁵ Stoecker, 161.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 5.

When land is commodified, when service provision is dependent on local and national economic circumstances, and when community autonomy requires economic self-sufficiency, the dynamics of capitalism are intimately involved in the struggle. Thus, community becomes the new site of class resistance--of resistance to the modification of neighborhoods-even though community citizens do not express their struggle in class terms.⁴⁸

The collective Cedar-Riverside consciousness that emerged left the neighborhood with greater control of how housing was built, who owned that housing, and what activities could occur on the land where the housing sat. These housing co-ops built not only housing but also a sense of neighborhood identity through class-based community struggle that fundamentally challenged the notion that private developers should own and develop housing.

Taken Together

A clearer understanding of the first case will help highlight how Neighbors for More Neighbors how has potentially come to center the free market over communities of color in its core platform. The second case study provides a richer background for considering United Renters' work. When taken together and applied to Minneapolis in the present, these cases will assist in exposing how the NIMBY/YIMBY framework limits the city's housing development debate.

⁴⁸ Stoecker 5-6.

Minneapolis for Whom?

The main community group that mobilized to oppose Minneapolis 2040, Minneapolis for Everyone, tried to use rhetoric that suggested that they wanted to protect Minneapolis's vulnerable neighborhoods. Nonetheless, a closer examination of who was using that rhetoric reveals that Minneapolis for Everyone's opposition came from a desire to maintain a city that privileged their members and their participation in the civic engagement process. Prominent members co-opted the language of marginalized communities struggling against oppression to defend the interests of their disproportionately white, affluent neighborhoods. They also called into question the motives of other groups representing marginalized communities and facilitating greater civic engagement, sometimes going so far as to try to hinder their members' ability to participate. This was especially true for Minneapolis Millennials, who they tried to exclude from the city's civic engagement process by cutting off access to one of their key local news sources. Thus, Minneapolis for Everyone was a NIMBY group that represented affluent, white interests within the city and functioned to continue exclusion in the city's civic engagement process.

Minneapolis for Everyone attempted to convince all of Minneapolis's residents that it was working in their interest by advocating for neighborhood's abilities to make housing choices. Initially, this seemed to defend the interests of more vulnerable community members and harken back to the kinds of community organizing done in Cedar-Riverside between 1970-1980. Minneapolis for Everyone called for neighborhoods' power to collaborate with developers, the city, and other partners to learn more about how plans for housing development would influence before they were

implemented. By ensuring that neither the city nor developers would displace lower income residents and communities of color, these measures would reduce, “racial and economic disparities.”⁴⁹ Minneapolis for Everyone also expressed the fear that without provisions in Minneapolis 2040 that protected neighbors’ rights to make housing choices, it would, “benefit developers at the expense of neighborhoods and local businesses, families, older people and the disabled.”⁵⁰ In short, Minneapolis for Everyone’s advocacy appeared to echo calls from community organizations such as the ones in Cedar-Riverside to defend the neighborhood against projects that would displace residents and instead give them greater control over their neighborhoods.

However, the members of Minneapolis for Everyone who used this rhetoric were not from neighborhood-based community institutions but city hall itself, and as such, co-opted the language of vulnerable communities’ and marginalized groups’ struggles to argue that their inability to continue to live in exclusive neighborhoods was oppression. Lisa MacDonald became the leading voice for this group of residents. She published op-eds in local papers and gave televised speeches about the issues with Minneapolis 2040.⁵¹ As a former City Council Member, she represented the interests of affluent, white residents. The area she is from, Southwest Minneapolis, had a median home price of

⁴⁹ “13 Amendments that would actually help achieve the plan’s goals,” *Minneapolis for Everyone*, 23 November 2018, <https://minneapolisforeveryone.org/2018/11/23/13-amendments-that-would-actually-help-achieve-the-plans-goals/>.

⁵⁰ “Do you know what's in the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan?” *Minneapolis for Everyone*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://minneapolisforeveryone.org>.

⁵¹ Lisa Macdonald, “Speech,” *Fox 9*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/fox9kmsp/videos/2202567920019926/UzpfSTU3MTE0MjEyNjYwNTgxMzo2NjE5MTY1MjQxOTUwMzk/>

\$381,700⁵² in 2018 as opposed to \$268,000⁵³ for Minneapolis in general. In 2015, the specific neighborhood she lived in, East Harriet, had a median annual household income that exceeded \$87,000⁵⁴ --compared to \$55,720⁵⁵ for Minneapolis in general.

Additionally, in 2015, East Harriet was 84% white⁵⁶ as compared with Minneapolis as a whole, which was 63.9% white.⁵⁷ The neighborhood whose interests she represented was disproportionately filled with affluent, white residents. East Harriet and the other neighborhoods in Southwest Minneapolis have generally enjoyed the greatest access to grocery stores, jobs, and short commute times, and have generally been listened to in Minneapolis's civic engagement process.⁵⁸ Yet MacDonald spoke as if she and the others she represented had been unfairly barred from the civic engagement process. In various speeches about why Minneapolis for Everyone opposed Minneapolis 2040, she compared its members to a marginalized group. "As marginalized groups have always insisted, nothing about us without us."⁵⁹ Thus, she spoke as if she and those she represented had been excluded from the civic engagement process when they had actually been able to full take advantage of its benefits. In this way, MacDonald appropriated phrases that have

⁵² "East Harriet Home Prices & Values", Zillow, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.zillow.com/east-harriet-minneapolis-mn/home-values/>.

⁵³ Jim Buchta, "Median home sales price hits 268,000 in the Twin Cities," *The Star Tribune*, 16 August 2018, <http://www.startribune.com/median-home-sale-price-hits-268-000-in-the-twin-cities/491032001/>.

⁵⁴ "EAST HARRIET NEIGHBORHOOD," *Minnesota Compass*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/neighborhoods/minneapolis/east-harriet>.

⁵⁵ "Quick Facts, Minneapolis City Minnesota, Income & Poverty," United States Census Bureau, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/minneapoliscityminnesota/RHI125217>.

⁵⁶ "EAST HARRIET NEIGHBORHOOD," *Minnesota Compass*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/neighborhoods/minneapolis/east-harriet>.

⁵⁷ "Quick Facts, Minneapolis City Minnesota, Race & Hispanic Origin", *United States Census Bureau*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/minneapoliscityminnesota/RHI125217>.

⁵⁸ Ryan Johnson, "Minneapolis 2040 Opposition: A Look At The Signs," *streets.mn*, September 25, 2018, <https://streets.mn/2018/09/25/minneapolis-2040-opposition-a-look-at-the-signs/>.

⁵⁹ Lisa Macdonald, "Speech," *Fox 9*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/fox9kmsp/videos/2202567920019926/UzpfSTU3MTE0MjEyNjYwNTgxMzo2NjE5MTY1MjQxOTUwMzk/>

come to define marginalized communities' struggles against oppression to better-situate her disproportionately affluent, white neighborhood's in Minneapolis's civic engagement process.

Furthermore, Minneapolis for Everyone has not only equated privileged residents' need to be more inclusive with oppression but also worked to shut less established groups out of the city's civic engagement process. Minneapolis for Everyone's founder, Carol Becker,⁶⁰ an elected official who serves on Minneapolis's Board of Estimation and Taxation,⁶¹ accused pro-development interests of funding groups who support zoning changes. Among the groups Becker listed were nationally-known organizations that advance economic and racial justice such as Fair Vote and Black Lives Matter. She blamed these groups of, "tearing [Minneapolis's] community apart."⁶² In August 2018, she also filed an application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to trademark the name of Wedge Live, a blog that Neighbors for More Neighbors founders started. Over its lifetime, Wedge Live has helped Minneapolis Millennials receive the information necessary to dissolve their political apathy and ignorance and involve themselves in city politics. Patenting its name consequently made the founders of the Wedge Live hesitant to post there, which limited the ability of Minneapolis Millennials to easily access news on the city where they lived their daily lives.⁶³ Although Minneapolis for Everyone claimed to represent the interests of those who suffered class and race-based inequalities,

⁶⁰ Max Nesterak, "In planning for its future, Minneapolis tries not to repeat the past," MPRnews, 27 July 2018, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2018/07/27/minneapolis-2040-debate-focus-on-housing-fourplexes>.

⁶¹ Carol Becker, "Geek Is Good," Carol Becker for Board of Estimation and Taxation, Accessed 23 March 2019, <http://carolbecker.net>.

⁶² Carol Becker, "Who is funding Minneapolis elections?" E-Democracy.org, 28 October 2017, <http://forums.e-democracy.org/groups/mpls/messages/post/5N69zQ0LRjoYqOtBhERzhO>.

⁶³ Tony Webster, "Minneapolis elected official Carol Becker registers trademark for name of critic's blog," Tony Webster, 11 August 2018, <https://tonywebster.com/2018/08/carol-becker-wedge-live/>.

it also accused groups dedicated to fighting those same inequalities of undermining Minneapolis's community. Further, within the Minneapolis community, it tried to limit the dispersal of information and compromise the ability of certain residents to be civically engaged. Minneapolis for Everyone deployed rhetoric that suggested that its members were being oppressed and excluded, but when compared with who used that rhetoric and how, a picture emerges where members of Minneapolis for Everyone were the actual ones perpetuating exclusion.

In short, Minneapolis for Everyone's definition of everyone was skewed towards the interests of the city's more affluent, whiter residents. Additionally, this group was interested in maintaining a civic engagement process that excluded residents who wanted to counter these entrenched interests. In other words, Minneapolis for Everyone qualified as a NIMBY group for the manner in which it not only tried to stop housing development but also stop those who might have reason to publicly suggest the need for more housing development. Accordingly, Minneapolis for Everyone attempted to ensure not only that there was no development in people's backyards but also that only a select few had access to a backyard in the first place.

Who is for More Neighbors?

Neighbors for More Neighbors served the interests of Minneapolis Millennials who wanted to change zoning laws to create greater housing density. The group originally coalesced around an online blog, which covered local issues and promoted civic engagement at the city level. It soon thereafter zeroed in on upzoning as a method for promoting affordable housing for all of Minneapolis's residents and reducing racial inequity. As such, the members of Neighbors for More Neighbors began to publicly organize in support of Minneapolis 2040, encourage city council members to vote to eliminate single-family residential zoning, and attend annual conferences with YIMBY-affiliated groups from other U.S. cities. However, although Neighbors for More Neighbors approach of equating racial equity with upzoning and greater housing density was successful within the City of Minneapolis, it failed to imagine housing solutions that might not involve private developers, leaving questions regarding which of Minneapolis's residents this approach serves.

Neighbors for More Neighbors originated from the passion that the John Edward's and Ryan Johnson's blog, Wedge Live, inspired over city issues such as housing, zoning, and transportation. The blog was started to counter the anti-renter sentiment that Edwards witnessed at a city council meeting. It produced art, posters, videos and memes that explored zoning.⁶⁴ Johnson and Edwards embarked on this endeavor hoping to transform zoning from an esoteric policy topic into one where people

⁶⁴ Adam Belz, "Minneapolis housing-density backers come together ready for action," *The Star Tribune*, 14 March 2018, <http://www.startribune.com/the-pro-density-movement-in-minneapolis-seeks-to-find-its-voice/476884973/>.

could see the human impact. The satirical manner that Edwards and Johnson used to discuss housing and zoning on Wedge Live provided a space for Minneapolis Millennials to bond over their shared anxieties of gentrification and displacement.⁶⁵ Wedge Lives' capacity for blending news and entertainment convinced many Minneapolis Millennials that upzoning would create a greater supply of housing and make their housing more affordable.

As such, Edwards, Johnson, and some of the Millennials who followed Wedge Live coalesced into Neighbors for More Neighbors, a group dedicated to changing zoning laws to allow for Minneapolis's market to build more housing. Neighbors for More Neighbors quickly rallied around policies proliferating, "naturally-occurring affordable housing, government-subsidized affordable housing, and privately built market-rate housing."⁶⁶ Key among these was advocating for the elimination of single-family residential zoning because, "a large chunk (greater than 60%) of Minneapolis [was] zoned this way, and parts of Minneapolis formerly were not, but [had] been intentionally restricted in the amount of housing they [could] provide."⁶⁷ In the 21st century, single-family residential zoning has contributed to increased gentrification and displacement. Data from the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs demonstrates that the number of neighborhoods with affordable homes to rent or own decreased for Minneapolis's white, Asian, Latinx, and black residents between 2000-

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "How can Minneapolis improve its housing policy?" *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, 1 August 2017, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors/how-can-minneapolis-improve-its-housing-policy-ee142eae962a>.

⁶⁷ "How can Minneapolis improve its housing policy?," *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, 1 August 2017, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors/how-can-minneapolis-improve-its-housing-policy-ee142eae962a>.

2016.⁶⁸ Thus, Neighbors for More Neighbors was able to argue that Minneapolis residents would find more affordable housing if the city would change the zoning code to permit higher housing density.

Once Neighbors for More Neighbors learned of zoning's potential to reverse historic forms of racial inequity, it also started to advocate for upzoning on the basis that it could create a more welcoming, equitable version of Minneapolis. Minneapolis has long been one of the United States' most racially segregated and economically unequal cities despite its purported beliefs in racial and economic equity.⁶⁹ Neighbors for More Neighbors argued that the zoning laws that existed in Minneapolis prior to Minneapolis 2040's finalization upheld de facto race-based segregation in patterns similar to the de jure segregation that the city had historically implemented. Thus, zoning was a holdover from a discriminatory past that carried over into the present. Additionally, Neighbors for More Neighbors showed how current zoning laws could undermine Minneapolis's ability to welcome new people from different cultures in the future. In particular, Neighbors for More Neighbors believed the legal definition of single-family residential zoning only included those who conformed with the white American idea of nuclear family. Occupancy requirements--such as only having one nuclear family in one home--failed to recognize other familial configurations.

Single-family zoning is tied to a culturally-specific conception of traditional family structures. But not all cultures have the same definitions

⁶⁸ Goetz, Edward et al. *The Diversity of Gentrification: Multiple Forms of Gentrification in Minneapolis and St. Paul*. Minneapolis: Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), 23 March 2019. <https://gentrification.dl.umn.edu/sites/g/files/pua4816/f/media/diversity-of-gentrification-012519.pdf>

⁶⁹ Jessica Nickrand, "Minneapolis's White Lie," *The Atlantic*, 21 February 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/02/minneapolis-white-lie/385702/>.

of family or family size, and single-family zoning in Minneapolis has strict occupancy limits. If we want to be more welcoming to diverse ideas of families, our housing policy needs to reflect that.⁷⁰

Thus, Neighbors for More Neighbors' members moved towards thinking about how a zoning code overhaul could create a more racially and economically equitable and inclusive city. They connected values to policy as a means of demanding action.

This action mostly took the form of Neighbors for More Neighbors trying to rally people to support Minneapolis 2040's proposed upzoning. Neighbors for More Neighbors members believed that Minneapolis 2040's emphasis on increasing housing density near transit corridors, making walking and biking more feasible transportation means, and cutting commute times would work in concert with upzoning to reduce the housing problem and create a more affordable, equitable city.⁷¹ "The Minneapolis 2040 Comp Plan is an opportunity to dismantle the institutionalized racist, classist, and exclusionary zoning and land use policies in our city."⁷² As the finalization of Minneapolis 2040 neared, Neighbors for More Neighbors distributed signs for members' yards or windows,⁷³ encouraged supporters to participate in city council meetings and wear purple in solidarity, and arranged pre-prepared talking points for Minneapolis 2040's

⁷⁰ "How can Minneapolis improve its housing policy?," *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, 1 August 2017, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors/how-can-minneapolis-improve-its-housing-policy-ee142eae962a>.

⁷¹ "Neighbors for More Neighbors," *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors>.

⁷² "Minneapolis Comp Plan Review: Access to Housing", *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, 26 May 2018, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors/minneapolis-comp-plan-review-access-to-housing-9a04556728f5>.

⁷³ "Reserve your N4MN signs now!," *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, 17 July 2018, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors/n4mn-lawn-signs-omg-7b6dd9de6255>.

supporters.⁷⁴ By this time, Neighbors for More Neighbors had progressed far from its origins as a blog to a community group that could advocate for Millennials housing interests.

In city council meetings leading up to Minneapolis 2040's finalization in late 2018, Neighbors for More Neighbors' members expertly synthesized a vision for the city's future where greater housing density and greater racial equity were inseparable. They connected housing to their ability to collectively create a good city for themselves and their descendants. As one supporter said, "We're thinking about the future and thinking about the next 22 years from now what we want for our children, what is best for our entire community, whether you can afford a single-family home or not."⁷⁵

Additionally, Neighbors for More Neighbors members at these city council meetings discussed how climate change necessitated greater housing density. Another supporter argued to the committee overseeing the council meetings that the current residents of Minneapolis had a responsibility to care for the city's future. "We are all just stewards of the future, and I would ask the committee to be a steward of our city, plan for climate change, and pursue more diverse housing."⁷⁶ Hence, Neighbors for More Neighbors was able to bring a vision for more racial equity to the city and convince the city to implement that vision.

While Neighbors for More Neighbors approach provides a cohesive framework for integrating racial equity with zoning change and housing development, it cannot

⁷⁴ "Minneapolis 2040: Help Us Keep Momentum," Neighbors for More Neighbors, 8 November 2018, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors/minneapolis-2040-help-us-keep-momentum-b65517a4fa06>.

⁷⁵ "The Future," *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/NeighborsForMoreNeighbors/videos/712046242511409/>.

⁷⁶ "Stewards of the Future," *Neighbors for More Neighbors*, Accessed 23 March 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/NeighborsForMoreNeighbors/videos/267498757240742/>.

imagine methods for creating racial equity in housing without market forces. This is demonstrated through how prominent members distinguish between NIMBYs and anti-gentrification groups. In 2017 and 2018, prominent members of Neighbors for More Neighbors attended the annual YIMBYtown Conference. This conference is where YIMBY-affiliated groups from across the U.S. connect.⁷⁷ At the 2018 YIMBYtown Conference, Neighbors for More Neighbor’s website editor, Antonin Scheiffer, attended a panel about San Francisco YIMBY, which he deemed, “controversial.”⁷⁸ He seemed to accept the panelists argument that anti-gentrification activists should not be equated with NIMBYs, but his acceptance was contingent on anti-gentrification activists’ commitment to negotiating with private developers to increase the housing supply.

Multiple projects in the Mission neighborhood of San Francisco include more affordable housing and commercial spaces that rent at far below market rates. While a tactic anti-housing people prefer is to “concession a project to death,” those who focus on anti-gentrification have been successful in getting more affordable homes built in new developments.⁷⁹

This understanding of NIMBYs and anti-gentrification activists suggests, “anti-housing people” are bad because they obstruct the free market whereas, “those who focus on anti-gentrification” are good because they properly use the free market to build more housing. This understanding of good and bad equates morality to letting the free market function

⁷⁷ “YIMBYtown 2018 Schedule,” *Yimbytown 2018*, Accessed 23 March 2018, <https://yimby.town/schedule/>.

⁷⁸ Anton Scheiffer, “A Few Notes from YIMBYtown,” *streets mn*, 11 October 2018, <https://streets.mn/2018/10/11/a-few-notes-from-yimbytown/>.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

naturally. If morality can only be exercised within the confines of the free market, then morals calls—such as calling for racial equity—must rely on market-based solutions.

Despite Neighbors for More Neighbor’s self-proclaimed commitment to housing equity, it is unclear whether Scheiffer and other members would have accepted anti-gentrification activists if they had argued against the adoption of market-based housing solutions. If so, would Neighbors for More Neighbors primary constituency, Minneapolis Millennials, have been willing to switch their primary focus to what communities of color needed? If not, how could that reveal the racial dynamics behind exactly whose interests Neighbors for More Neighbors serves? Juxtaposing Neighbors for More Neighbors with United Renters, a Minneapolis housing group that coalesced to serve the interests of the city’s tenants of color, could offer a potential answer to this question.

Who is for Housing Justice?

The main question that the predominantly Latinx tenants comprising Inquilinx Unidxs Por Justicia (Renters United for Justice or United Renters, for short) membership are trying to answer is not the YIMBY/NIMBY question of whether to build more housing but rather how to give tenants greater control of the housing they possess. Unlike the YIMBY-affiliated Neighbors for More Neighbors, United Renters does not believe the free market can address housing problems because it makes false assumptions about all parties having equal power and access to information. United Renters believes that inherent inequalities exist between the wealthy private developers and landlords who supply housing and the tenants who rent that housing. Hence, a tenant's bill of and a tenants' union are the only ways to protect tenants' ability to discuss problems, avoid unjust eviction, and hold landlords more accountable for basic maintenance and repair in a free market situation; otherwise, the only other alternative is to establish housing co-ops and abolish the landlord-tenant relationship completely. Examining how the largely Latinx tenants in United Renters grapple with the questions of who controls housing reveals the narrowness of the NIMBY/YIMBY housing debate and speaks to the need to alter or altogether abolish the landlord-tenant relationship. This section will conduct this examination first by briefly reviewing data on race, renting, and eviction in Minneapolis and then lay United Renters ongoing work in greater detail.

Higher rates of renting among residents of color in Minneapolis make them more vulnerable to eviction. According to American Community Survey (ACS) data from 2010-2014, Minneapolis's residents of color were significantly less likely to own their homes than white residents. Only 40.7% of White Non-Hispanic residents rented their

homes. For the other racial groups in the ASC data, homeowners were the minority, and renters were the majority. For Minneapolis's residents of color, rates of renting varied between 68.9% (for Asians) and 79.5% (for American Indian & Alaska Natives).⁸⁰ The fact that Minneapolis's residents of color are disproportionately tenants makes their housing situations more precarious. The landlord that owns their home *could* and often *does* choose to evict tenants of color. Minneapolis's 2017 *City Council Study Session: Housing Stability* report found that, "Evictions disproportionately impact low-income and minority neighborhoods, nearly half of renter households in North Minneapolis had experienced a filing in the last three years"⁸¹ and that two-thirds, "of cases end with tenant displacement."⁸² Eviction is a pressing housing issue for Minneapolis's residents of color in a manner that it is not for the city's white residents, so there is a need for housing groups representing residents of color to mobilize against the conditions that lead landlords to evict tenants.

This mobilization has come in the form of United Renters, which was founded in 2014 to mobilize Latinx tenants to collectively demand better housing conditions from their landlords. Organizers and volunteers from the Lyndale Neighborhood Association (LNA) helped convene the original meeting, but from there, United Renters quickly gained a life of its own.⁸³ Originally, many tenants did not realize that others with the

⁸⁰ "Owner/Renter Status by Racial Group for Minneapolis, 2010-2014, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://medium.com/neighbors-for-more-neighbors/minneapolis-2040-tenant-protections-6206723176ab>. (The numbers come from the U.S. Census Bureau, but Neighbors for More Neighbors compiled them into a colorized bar chart, thus why I cite this group here.)

⁸¹ Brennan, Andrea et al. City Council Study Session: *Housing Stability*: Minneapolis, City of Minneapolis, 9 April 2019. <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/documents/agenda/wcmssp-202906.pdf>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "About Us," *Inquilinx Unidxs Por Justicia*, Accessed 9 April 2019, <http://www.inquilinxunidxs.org/en/about-us/>.

same landlords also suffered from mold, insect and rodent infestations, stolen security deposits, or evictions with little notice, or thought that if they brought these issues to light, they would be evicted.⁸⁴ Once they began meeting and talking to each other, they became aware that, “these problems [were] not individual, isolated cases but larger systemic issues that unite all Minneapolis renters.”⁸⁵ This realization led United Renters to begin holding semi-regular protests outside of Minneapolis City Hall,⁸⁶ at the State Capitol in St. Paul,⁸⁷ and outside the homes of Minneapolis landlords who are notorious for keeping their buildings in ill-repair and unjustly evicting tenants.⁸⁸ As such, United Renters moved beyond trying to protect tenants in the Lyndale neighborhood to protecting tenants more broadly by coming together as a collective body to represent their interests.

Recently, United Renters has been trying to refine its understanding of how free market solutions empower developers and landlords while disempowering tenants.⁸⁹ It has compiled and released the report, *Disparate Cities: The Creation and Exploitation of the Socioeconomic Underclass in the Twin Cities*. This report argues that community groups advocating for such measures as, “deregulation, financial incentives for landlords, subsidies for developers, [and] fourplexes in every neighborhood,”⁹⁰ will not address the

⁸⁴ Ryan Stopera, “Inquilinxs Unidxs Por Justicia,” *Vimeo*, 14 February 2018, <https://vimeo.com/169353385>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ “#IXRentStrike,” *InquilinXs UnidXs por Justicia*, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/inquilinxsunidxs/videos/1606202122807121/>.

⁸⁷ Labor Supports Renters, *Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia Twitter*, 17 January 2019, https://twitter.com/IX_Unidxs.

⁸⁸ “Take a Stand to Stop Evictions,” *Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia*, 17 January 2019, https://twitter.com/IX_Unidxs.

⁸⁹ “Inquilinxs Unidxs Por Justicia,” *Vimeo*, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://vimeo.com/169353385>.

⁹⁰ *Disparate Cities: The Creation and Exploitation of a Socioeconomic Underclass in the Twin Cities*, Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia, 2018, 9 April 2019. http://www.inquilinxsunidxs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Housing-Report_disparate-cities.pdf

affordable housing shortage for Minneapolis tenants. It claims that the assumptions necessary for the free market to work are false because there is a lack of, “perfect power balance between all parties, perfect information between all parties, and perfectly rational decision making by all parties.”⁹¹ As such, free market solutions tend to give more power to those who are already wealthy and further disempower those who started with less power. As a result, wealthy individuals, firms, and corporations can exert greater power in both the market and the political realm by securing, “legislation and regulations that enable them to charge more to consumers.”⁹² In short, consumers are left with less power than suppliers. In the specific case of the Minneapolis housing rental market, this means that when the city approves policies supporting landlords and developers who choose to develop higher density housing, it is leaving power in their hands and continuing tenants’ disempowerment. Developers and landlords still control the housing supply, and as consumers, the tenants are subject to their whims.

Therefore, the *Disparate Cities* report identifies strengthening tenants’ rights and tenants’ unions as mechanisms for increasing tenants’ power relative to landlords’ and creating a housing market that functions closer to a true free market. Strengthening tenants’ rights and unions would give tenants more bargaining power when they negotiated with their landlords. United Renters proposed bill of rights for Minneapolis tenants would cap security deposits and fees at 30-50% of one’s monthly rent, allow tenants to administer repairs, deduct those repairs’ costs from their monthly rent, and

⁹¹ Flynn, Andrea et al: Rewrite the Racial Rules: *Build an Inclusive American Economy*. New York: The Roosevelt Institute, 2016, 9 April 2019, <http://rooseveltinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Structural-Discrimination-Final.pdf>.

⁹²Ibid.

forbid landlords from terminating a monthly lease without cause.⁹³ This bill of rights would give tenants better enforcement mechanisms when landlords violate the terms of leases.⁹⁴ A tenant's union would prevent landlords from using isolation to intimidate individual tenants into remaining silent about issues in the building. Instead, it would provide an association where tenants could discuss ongoing issues across multiple buildings that the same landlord owns. By supporting the right of tenants from multiple buildings to communicate and unite, a tenant's union would bring together a considerable percentage of the people who represent the landlord's monthly income, giving them nearly equal bargaining power to their landlord.⁹⁵ In brief, tenant's unions would start to address the power inequalities and information discrepancies between tenants and landlords, thus creating a housing market that would be closer to a free market.⁹⁶

Furthermore, the *Disparate Cities* report advocates for housing co-operatives as a way to solve Minneapolis's affordable housing problem by attempting to eliminate the landlord-tenant relationship and the power inequalities it entails altogether. Each building in the housing co-op would create its own corporation, but only residents of that building could hold stock in that corporation. The residents of the building could then elect other residents to be the building's board members and give them the power to, "decide an application to join the co-op, handle maintenance, and help resolve disputes between residents."⁹⁷ The co-op, which would also be structured as a corporation, would operate above each of the individual building's corporations. The individual buildings'

⁹³ *Disparate Cities: The Creation and Exploitation of a Socioeconomic Underclass in the Twin Cities*, Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia, 9 April 2019.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

corporations would compose its shareholders, and residents from all of these individual buildings could be board members. Like housing co-ops in Cedar-Riverside, United Renters' housing co-ops would secure affordable housing by executing decisions about holding properties, buying properties, "and, in the long-term, providing loans to those wishing to buy into a member corporation."⁹⁸ This would create a housing model where tenants would be their own landlords or else elect people from their same building or community to be their landlord. Rather than limiting the debate about housing development to a yes or no question, this model would account of for *who* controls that development and *how* they come to control it.

This need for control is prescient for many members of United Renters, who are currently attempting to form the group's first housing co-op to prevent a de-licensed landlord from evicting them. After Minneapolis landlord Steve Frenz failed to fix infestations, mold, and leaks,⁹⁹ housing advocates sued him in 2016.¹⁰⁰ Frenz lost the lawsuit for lying both about the number of tenants living in his buildings and the number of tenants who sued him.¹⁰¹ The lawsuit was settled in 2018. Frenz was forced to pay out \$18.5 million to his tenants, and the city revoked his license to rent out properties.¹⁰² Frenz was able to sell most of his properties after that, but for the five he was not able to sell, he decided to evict his tenants. As of now, many are set to lose their homes unless

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Chloe Jackson, "United Renter's Housing Co-Operative," *GoFundMe*, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://www.crowdrise.com/o/en/campaign/united-renters-housing-cooperative>, and Cinnamon Janzer, "How One Organization Is Standing Up for Tenants in Minneapolis," *Rewire.News*, 31 October 2017, <https://rewire.news/article/2017/10/31/one-organization-standing-tenants-minneapolis/>.

¹⁰⁰ Mark Reilly, "Landlord Stephen Frenz charged with perjury over 2016 lawsuit," *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*, 3 January 2019, <https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2019/01/03/landlord-stephen-frenz-charged-with-perjury-over.html>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

they can take full control of them. The tenants of Frenz's buildings, who are also involved in United Renters are trying to raise money and educate themselves in the logistical tasks involved in running a housing co-op.¹⁰³ Thus, United Renters has been forced to rethink who controls housing because it is the difference between many of their members keeping or losing their homes.

United Renters' work demonstrates how the key housing development question is not whether to build but rather who controls what is built. A greater supply of housing will not make much difference if landlords can still decide whether Minneapolis's tenants have roofs over their heads. Because Minneapolis's tenants are disproportionately people of color, community groups that wanted to represent their interests would need to have one of their main goals be reducing the power inequality between landlords and tenants or abolishing the landlord-tenant relationship altogether. These community groups would need to secure the roofs over tenants' heads before they could even begin considering how housing development might influence tenants' backyards.

¹⁰³ Chloe Jackson, "United Renter's Housing Co-Operative," *GoFundMe*, Accessed 9 April 2019, <https://www.crowdrise.com/o/en/campaign/united-renters-housing-cooperative>.

Conclusion

Since neither Minneapolis for Everyone nor Neighbors for More Neighbors put increasing tenants' power or abolishing the landlord-tenant relationships as a central part of their platforms, they cannot represent the interests of Minneapolis's residents of color. Instead, they each respectively represented the interests of predominantly white, affluent neighborhoods within the city and white Millennials who wanted to use the free market to create higher housing density and lower their own housing costs. Members of Neighbors for More Neighbors in particular upheld white Millennials interests by cultivating an understanding of racial justice that could not comprehend options outside of the free market. As a result, Minneapolis's discussion about housing density was flattened into a yes or no question that neglected the nuances of who controls housing and how. In particular, Minneapolis for Everyone and Neighbors for More Neighbors exemplified this discussion's lack of nuance in City of Minneapolis's discussion of Minneapolis 2040's proposal to eliminate single-family residential zoning.

Consequently, United Renters, and the predominantly Latinx tenants that it represented, were made invisible by this discussion's terms. Furthermore, in focusing on Minneapolis 2040's proposals regarding zoning and housing density, Minneapolis's residents avoided more difficult conversations about who currently controls housing and how the city could find ways for everyone to exercise collective control. This prevented the needs of Minneapolis's tenants of color from being front and center in Minneapolis's housing debate, leaving the responsibility on them to figure out how to keep roofs over their heads and understand how to move from an in-my-backyard-reality to a reality with a collective sense of home through the creation of housing co-operatives.

As such, community groups and scholars intent on remedying the racist housing history of Minneapolis and other United States cities should hone their methods for reducing the inequality in the landlord-tenant relationship or abolishing this relationship entirely. United Renters' work demonstrates how protecting tenants' rights, strengthening tenants' unions, and establishing housing co-ops are measures that community groups in U.S. cities could pursue now to give tenants of color greater control over their homes. In addition, community groups with white constituencies could expand upon United Renters' work by advocating for tenants' rights, tenants' unions, and housing co-ops to local and state governments. This would improve the chances of these concerns being heard in traditional civic engagement settings and also take the burden of advocacy off tenants facing eviction. Meanwhile, scholars should continue to add to the emergent literature on the false NIMBY/YIMBY dichotomy. How does YIMBY allow white Millennials to counter historic forms of racial inequity such as redlining and racial covenants while re-entrenching new forms of racial inequity? They should tie this research to the marginalization of community groups that reject market-based solutions. One way for scholars to accomplish this could be to create a more robust literature on Cedar-Riverside neighborhood between 1970-1980 to learn about how United Renters and similar tenants' groups in other U.S. cities might replicate the neighborhood's success. Another could be to ask if Stoecker's idea of class-based community consciousness could be translatable to a kind of race-based community consciousness. These are some of many possibilities for how scholars might use what happened in Minneapolis to foster housing equity. Hopefully, Minneapolis will provide ideas for new ways to keep roofs over everyone's heads and begin creating a collective home.

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